

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMONS AND CULTURE

KRYTYKA POLITYCZNA
EUROPEAN CULTURAL
FOUNDATION

build
the
city.

The text 'build the city.' is rendered in a large, lowercase, sans-serif font. Each letter is filled with a different photograph, all in a monochromatic orange and brown color palette. The letters are arranged in three lines: 'build' on the top line, 'the' in the middle, and 'city.' on the bottom. The 'i' in 'city.' has a small dot. The photographs include dense foliage, a spade symbol on a sign, a person sitting on a bench, and a field of tall grass.

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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are illiterate has increased from 400 million to 600 million.

There are many reasons for this. One is that the population of the world is growing so fast that the number of children who are illiterate is increasing. Another reason is that the number of people who are illiterate is increasing in many countries, especially in the developing world. This is because many people are still living in poverty and do not have access to education.

There are many ways to help people who are illiterate. One way is to provide them with basic literacy training. This can be done in a number of ways, such as through community-based programs, adult education centers, or distance learning. Another way is to provide them with access to education. This can be done by building schools, providing teachers, and providing materials.

There are many organizations that are working to help people who are illiterate. One of the most well-known is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO has a program called the International Literacy Year (ILY) which was held in 1990. The ILY was a global effort to raise awareness of the problem of illiteracy and to encourage governments and the public to take action to reduce the number of illiterate people in the world.

There are many other organizations that are working to help people who are illiterate. These include the World Bank, the World Health Organization, and many national governments. Each of these organizations has its own programs and initiatives to help people who are illiterate. The goal of all these organizations is to help people who are illiterate to become literate and to improve their lives.

There are many reasons why it is important to help people who are illiterate. One reason is that illiteracy is a major barrier to economic development. People who are illiterate cannot read or write, so they cannot find jobs or start businesses. This means that they are often poor and have a low quality of life.

Another reason why it is important to help people who are illiterate is that illiteracy is a major barrier to social development. People who are illiterate cannot read or write, so they cannot participate in social activities or

take part in decisions that affect their community. This means that they are often excluded from the benefits of social development.

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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are illiterate has increased from 400 million to 500 million.

It is not only the number of illiterate people that has increased, but also the number of illiterate children. In 1990, 100 million children were illiterate. In 1995, the number of illiterate children had increased to 120 million. In 2000, the number of illiterate children had increased to 150 million. In 2005, the number of illiterate children had increased to 180 million. In 2010, the number of illiterate children had increased to 210 million.

The number of illiterate children in the world is increasing rapidly. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. The United Nations has set a goal of reducing the number of illiterate children by 50% by 2015. This goal is ambitious, but it is necessary if we want to create a world where everyone has access to education.

There are many reasons why the number of illiterate children is increasing. One of the main reasons is that many children do not go to school. This is often because their families are too poor to afford the cost of education. In many developing countries, the cost of education is very high, and many families cannot afford it. Another reason is that many children are working to help support their families. This is often because their parents are poor and need the extra income.

There are also many other reasons why the number of illiterate children is increasing. For example, many children are disabled and cannot attend school. In many developing countries, there are no special schools for disabled children. Another reason is that many children are sick and cannot attend school. In many developing countries, there are no health care facilities for children.

There are many ways to reduce the number of illiterate children. One way is to make education free for all children. This would help many families who cannot afford the cost of education. Another way is to provide health care for all children. This would help many children who are sick and cannot attend school. There are also many other ways to reduce the number of illiterate children. For example, we can provide special schools for disabled children. We can also provide health care for children who are sick.

Introduction

by **the Editors**

This publication is a special collaboration between Krytyka Polityczna, the European Cultural Foundation and ECF Labs, with Subtopia (Sweden), Les Têtes de l'Art (France), Oberliht (Moldova), Culture2Commons (Croatia) and Platoniq (Spain), partners in our action-research network: *Connected Action for the Commons*. Together, we strive for a new understanding of what the commons means to us in different areas of Europe, in our cities and in our cultural practices.

Much has been written recently about the phenomenon of the 'Commons', and from many different angles. But culture's contribution to the specific notion of collaborative practices for the common goods in and of our cities requires further exploration.

While this publication cannot fully show how the concepts of culture, communities, democracy and the city are intertwined, it does rediscover, reframe and reconsider previously published historical, artistic, participatory and theoretical perspectives on the subject by a wide variety of authors from different geographical and

professional backgrounds. We believe that it is important to share and explore methods, solutions and technologies that can help to build more humane and environmentally friendly cities and communities, where people not only co-exist but truly live together.

Through our research we found many interesting texts, studies, interviews and cultural examples of what we see happening in our cities and their wider regions across Europe: a powerful bottom-up movement led by citizens themselves, developing new participatory democratic practices that shape our cities and empower us to govern them in a different, collaborative way.

It is inspiring and motivating to witness and support the growing number of local initiatives—be it cultural-social centres, cooperatives, neighbourhood communities—that experiment with new models and challenge existing structures and habits. Urban movements are becoming legitimate agents for change and challenge the status quo on a larger scale.

They show the urgent need for a paradigm shift in city policies.

Here we present articles, interviews and visual materials that focus on the commons from different viewpoints, discuss the relationships between commons and peer-to-peer production or transition towns, examine the class divisions in relation to commons and test political possibilities opened up by mobilising people in support of the commons. Most importantly we present examples of the ways in which citizens organise themselves and act to bring about a new reality that can mirror their attempts to deepen democracy and freedom for everything that we hold in common.

We believe in culture as an innovative terrain for new forms of democratic, institutional, social, political and existential experimentations, and believe it is important to underline and further explore its central role in ongoing struggles over the commons against the backdrop of an ever-changing city landscape. 'Build the City' is about people coming together through culture to reclaim their cities and take control of the decisions

that affect their surroundings, their neighbourhoods and their lives. With this publication we aim to fuel further debate among citizens, cultural practitioners, city developers and all those interested in the commons, culture and the future of our cities.

A note from the editors

This publication draws heavily on texts, links and images posted in ECF Labs (ecflabs.org)—the online community platform developed by the European Cultural Foundation. Several articles in the reader were posted by the community in ECF Labs, or linked to a post in one of the labs (e.g. *From Lamp Posts to Phone Booths* by Noel Hatch, *R-Urban on how to produce a resilient city*—Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou). Some contributors also moderate labs, thematic spaces open to everybody (e.g. Charlie Tims—*Occupolitics!*, Carmen Lozano-Bright—*p2p Square!*). ECF Labs is an 'engine for communities' and an important knowledge resource for the *Connected Action for the Commons network*. ■

*“The freedom to make
and remake our cities
and ourselves is one
of the most precious
yet most neglected
of our human rights.”*

— **David Harvey**, *The Right to the City*

Culture WITH People, Not Just FOR People!

by **Agnieszka Wiśniewska**

What culture do we need?
A culture that's inclusive,
a culture that creates bonds,
on a local level and in touch
with people.

Culture as action

On a local, neighbourhood level, culture has become a language for describing reality, for making the historical past familiar, for exploring one's surroundings. Art has entered public space not merely as decoration but as commentary, inspiring dialogue and reflection on the role of that space (as in the case of Joanna Rajkowska's *Oxygenator*), or as a form of warfare (best represented in Julita Wójcik's *Rainbow*, repeatedly burned by homophobic and nationalist hooligans and renovated by volunteers).

Artists meet sociologists, anthropologists, historians. This is not limited to Warsaw: in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, a town with some 70,000 inhabitants, cultural activists made an exhibition reminding people about a workers' colony founded in the city nearly 100 years ago. They consulted historians and worked with tools used in recording oral history. The exhibition was staged in the middle of the town square.

This is the kind of culture we need: made in touch with people, in collaboration with them, together; accessible to as many people as possible. Only half a year earlier the very same activists initiated a debate about the renovated town square. Some time before, the authorities had gone to considerable lengths to have the square paved with granite, having forgotten to include in

Agnieszka Wiśniewska is a member of Krytyka Polityczna (krytykapolityczna.pl), one of the hubs in the European Cultural Foundation's Networked Programme — *Connected Action for the Commons*.

their scheme the needs of the locals. The square was turned into a granite desert. The activists reacted: they succeeded in calling an open debate with the mayor where ideas to reclaim the town square for people were presented. One was to turn the square into a place that welcomes culture, meaning not an occasional concert by a celebrity star from Warsaw, as is often the case in provincial towns, but actions that are not as much “aimed at” the public as they are performed “in collaboration with” them.

For some reason, at school we are taught quite a lot about the history of Poland. They treat us to more than a handful of world history, while little space is left for tales about our own neighbourhood. We end up knowing more about columns in ancient Greece than about our local town hall. It is simpler with large cities: Gdańsk’s is the history of Solidarity; Wrocław had the Orange Alternative; Warsaw is all about its 1944 uprising. It is around those historical events and facts and narratives about them that a community is built. We have founded our national community on the tales of heroic struggles. What about local communities—how do we go about building them? One possible answer could be offered by people who have not left their smaller hometowns for Poland’s larger cities, as many young

people typically do. These people who have stayed behind or who are coming back to their hometowns after studying etc. are inviting artists and cultural activists from other places to share their knowledge and experience.

Culture as inclusion

The most thrilling phenomena in culture in recent years have taken place in the key sphere where culture is no longer made for an audience but is instead more often perceived as doing something with the audience as participants. This is where the practice of cultural activists meets that of social activists. It suddenly occurs that both groups seek areas and modes that welcome collaboration. They create spaces where working together is more important than the success of an individual. The line between activities that are clearly artistic and those that are clearly social is fading away.

What about instances of cultural actions, new models of operating cultural institutions, where the viewer is an active participant, not merely a consumer of a finished work? Have we got any? Łaźnia Nowa Theatre, at the Nowa Huta post-industrial district of Cracow, invites people to paratheatrical meetings that deal with important social issues. Praska Biblioteka Sąsiedzka

(Praga Neighbourhood Library) in Warsaw is a place where the locals come not only to discuss books, but also to meet and socialise.

The employees of Teatro Valle¹ in Rome, wanting to prevent the privatisation of their facility, started to occupy it. They subsequently opened the space to the public, turning it into a squat, initiating artistic and social activity founded on new principles of collaboration between the theatre people and spectators. The theatre has ceased to be a place that you frequent all dressed up, accessible only to the chosen few. It has become a common space.

Culture as commons

This kind of theatre—not only for the elites—was fought for, on more than one occasion, by activists from Kalisz in central Poland who fought against the absurd pricing policy of the Kalisz Theatre Meetings (KTM). After the director of the local theatre said, in 2013, that one can sacrifice one's

winter holidays for theatre, on the opening day of the festival some of the spectators showed up wearing goggles, skis and skiing poles in their hands. Those people were actually the former patrons of the event who had to quit going to the KTM, confronted with exorbitant prices charged by the management. Tickets for some of the guest performances sold for roughly the same as the total cost of going to another city and watching the production in its original venue. Who were the ideal audience of the KTM, then? It would seem they were the very people who could afford winter holidays. The protesters quoted Sebastian Majewski of the Stary Teatr: "Theatre is not for the elites. Theatre is for everyone."

Sadly, it is still more popular to consider culture as a commodity, with a price tag attached. As long as people are willing to pay the price and buy an expensive ticket in Kalisz, or anywhere else, the management will not see any reason to make it more affordable. The stage is ruled by the laws of the market.

1 The Teatro Valle is a theatre built in 1727 by the art patron Marquise Camillo Capranica inside his spectacular Renaissance palace in the historic centre of Rome. The occupation, which started in June 2011, was meant to prevent the municipality from privatising the theatre. In August 2014, the occupants left the Valle peacefully following a relocation order by the municipality. Over the course of these three years, the Valle became a legally recognised commons (Fondazione Teatro Valle Beni Comune) experimenting with collective and grassroots forms of cultural production, urban governance and civic activism, and sparking a new wave of commonsing across Italy and Europe.

But even from a purely economic point of view, the prevalence of this mindset is pernicious enough, as it excludes a good portion of society from civilisation, denying them cultural skills that are crucial in raising a country's Gross Domestic Product.

Little by little the debate on culture is approaching the parallel debate on the concept of commons. Culture is like public transport: everyone should be entitled to it, with no car owners privileged over the users of buses and trams.

The ever more audible discussions on the city and public space in Poland, on commons in Europe, have set in motion a reconfiguration of the ways in which we think. We have started to ask ourselves questions like: "Who is the city really for: only for those who can afford it or for all its inhabitants? Is it parks and public spaces for everybody that we need more of, or is it parking lots? Are we going to let the business of privatising entire swathes of our cities, only to be turned into shopping malls, go unpunished? Have streets and plazas with nothing but banks all over them anything to do with spaces for human beings?"

Go wherever you like in Europe, and talk to activists and art workers, there'll always be someone talking about commons, goods understood as common resources, accessible

property: both physical goods, as public space, and virtual ones. Artists initiate social debates with their works, activists resort to tools traditionally associated with artists. This is what big European institutions are interested in. They perceive the artists-social activists as partners. This is the kind of culture we need: made in touch with people, in collaboration with them, together; accessible to as many people as possible.

Culture as a social glue

Culture is not there to pay, to bring profit, not in the sense in which making business has to bring profit. Culture counts in a different way. It is its role in creating a community, in narrating the world, in establishing relationships that matters.

In a world where individualism has killed cooperation and the capacity for being and working together, where cooperation sucks and self-reliance seems so cool, we are smoothly and consistently dismantling all social ties. Why am I supposed to do something with my neighbours? I'd rather do it alone.

I am writing this at my cousin's house. He has small children. In his backyard, there is a trampoline, a large one, fitted with a mesh enclosure, for safety. I can see an identical one

roughly a metre away, in a neighbour's backyard, and another one, a little farther off, at the neighbour's neighbour. Each child is jumping on its own trampoline. Will those children want to do anything together in the future? Why won't their parents get together and buy one trampoline for all of them to share? Would they be able to agree over whose backyard should have the trampoline and how to split responsibility of taking care of it between them? Or, rather, no one would like to keep the trampoline in case a child should get hurt and then whose fault would it be? This is the kind of society we are building: lonely children on their trampolines. And only a few children at that. Most will only be able to watch from behind the fence.

Cultural initiatives that challenge this extremely individualised model of the world are worth closer attention, as they help us re-establish social ties and our trust in others.

There are enough large festivals in large cities. At such festivals, we can be no more than spectators, whilst what we need are actions that offer the opportunity to participate. Let's not fool ourselves: for this kind of culture to happen, state assistance is needed. At this juncture, one cannot but take issue with J.F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." Cultural activists have taken the first step: they have done something for their country; now is the time for the country to respond: offer support, recognition, means. Subsidising activities is not enough: though essential, it is limited to sustaining individual projects over the period from June through December, with security and long-term planning being out of the question. Local, common cultural endeavours have to be taken seriously. They deserve it. ■

A Rough Guide to the Commons: Who Likes It and Who Doesn't

by **Charlie Tims**

The commons is a way of describing resources that belong equally to a community, be that community an organisation, a locality or a state. Resources can refer to 'natural resources' like air, water and land or resources created by people like language, culture and tradition. They cannot be controlled by a single party—be they public or private. The International Association for the Study of the Commons emphasises that the commons are forms of “governance for resources which are created and owned collectively”. In other words, a resource cannot be considered to be held in common unless there is a statute, a license or an agreement establishing it as part of the commons. So when we talk about the commons, we are really talking about the governance arrangements

that make something common—Creative Commons Licenses, national parks, blood banks and so on.

But this is all very cold and mechanical. The commons is a spirit as much as it is a technical concept. Evoking the idea of the commons is one of the best ways we have of expressing a commitment to a shared life and a belief that better, more interesting, healthy, cohesive places are those that are accessible and used and shaped by a range of different people. You can hear it in Woodie Guthrie's song *This Land is Your Land*, and in The Kinks' song *God Save The Village Green Preservation Society*:

We are the Village Green
Preservation Society.
God save Donald Duck,
vaudeville and variety.

Charlie Tims
is currently working
as a researcher
with the Doc Next
Network (www.docnextnetwork.org) and is an associate of the think tank Demos.

We are the Desperate Dan
Appreciation Society.
God save strawberry jam and
all the different varieties.

The point to grasp here is that the commons is not fixed—it is a contested concept in culture, policy and law. At different times in the past, governments have legislated and communities have organised to extend commons, and arguably to reduce it. But for many today, the commons—possibly even the very idea of the commons—is under threat from a variety of sources. Here are some threats to the commons in Europe that have been in the news over the last year.

Investor-State Dispute Settlements

Investor-State Dispute Settlements (ISDS) are mechanisms that indemnify a private corporation investing across borders against future losses, which can be recouped at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes in Washington.

It is currently reviewing 501 cases. Originally these agreements were designed to encourage corporations to make long-term investments in new countries. But according to a recent article in *The Economist*,¹ “multinationals have exploited woolly definitions of expropriation to claim compensation for changes in government policy that happen to have harmed their business”.

Campaigners and activists have come to see ISDS as a way of cementing corporate, private interests over democratic will. The Swedish energy giant Vattenfall is currently suing the German government for \$6 billion because, after the Fukushima disaster in 2011, the German government decided to shut down its nuclear energy industry; the Canadian government is being sued by a pharmaceutical company for increasing drug prices; Egypt has been successfully sued by waste disposal and maintenance constructor Veolia for introducing a minimum wage; and Argentina was successfully sued for more than a billion

1 'The Arbitration Game', *The Economist*, 11 October 2014. <http://www.economist.com/news/finance-and-economics/21623756-governments-are-souring-treaties-protect-foreign-investors-arbitration>

dollars for legislating to reduce energy prices in 2001.

ISDSs have received plenty of publicity recently because the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)—a major EU/US free trade deal currently being negotiated—controversially includes ISDS clauses. Three hundred organisations are signed up to a pan-European campaign against TTIP. For these campaigners, TTIP goes far beyond facilitating free trade, but rather entrenches the role of corporations, effectively giving them a veto on future government policies. The World Democracy Movement likes to call TTIP “the end of democracy as we know it”.

Privatising public space

Campaigners see TTIP as one of many frontlines in a war to defend public resources from private enclosure and exploitation. There are many others—for example, Italy’s 2011 referendum on water privatisation and Ireland’s current struggle to keep water in public hands; in the UK there’s a growing campaign to renationalise railways, or at least not to reprivatise previously failing privatised parts that had been nationalised; and in Germany and France there are spirited campaigns to reverse the privatisation of city

services; while there are campaigns against the selling off of municipal housing in Prague and Art House Cinemas in Budapest.

Another struggle is constantly waged over the control of public spaces in towns and cities.

The issue is almost spiritual. Public space—as some of the most iconic photography of the 20th century demonstrates—has a funny way of showing societies for what they really are. For the hopeful, public space doesn’t just symbolise the kind of society we want to live in, or provide a useful canvas for news photographers. It plays a functional role in making democracy. It follows that, if public space is passed into private hands, it will have a detrimental effect on who can use the space and what can happen in it and how well a democracy can function.

It is hard to establish who owns public spaces but the signs of private control are present in most European cities. You don’t have to look hard to find gated communities, private security firms, surveillance systems and districts with special local laws that support the needs of shops and businesses. These measures disperse homeless people and protesters, and they quietly regulate what kind of activity can happen. None of this is that noticeable, but the cumulative effect can be

very bland cities. The issue is also hard to document, as it is difficult to find out and collate information about who owns what. In the UK at least, the task is far from simple. Since 2012, *The Guardian* newspaper has been trying to map privately owned space that people might “reasonably expect” to be in public ownership, with limited results. Attempts by protesters in London to “occupy” financial districts were hampered by the amount of land in private control in the City of London and Canary Wharf. The journalist Anna Minton has chronicled the rise of privately owned public space. She says, “The places we create reflect the social and economic realities of the time and provide a litmus test for the health of society and democracy. That fact that we are setting out to create undemocratic places is simply a reflection of the times we live in.”

Illiberalism

An openly illiberal authoritarianism that claims the sun has

set on the western liberal way is on the rise across Europe and at its fringes. This may not necessarily gate off public streets, or sell off public services but it attacks the commons by narrowing free channels for the circulation of ideas, sometimes by force.

Two-term Prime Minister and now President of Turkey Recep Erdoğan has combined repression of dissent with a gradual incorporation of Islamic values into Turkish society (head scarves at university, no drinking after lights out) with a particularly aggressive form of urban development. The documentary *Ekumenopolis*² makes Istanbul look as though it is in an almost permanent state of preparation for an Olympic Games. Residents and shopkeepers are priced out, bought out or forced out of their homes to make way for huge infrastructure projects and apartment complexes backed by an unstoppable armada of overlapping government, corporate and media power. It was, of course, a plan to turn a city centre park into a shopping mall (in the style

² See http://www.ekumenopolis.net/#/tr_TR

of an Ottoman fortress) that provoked the Gezi Park protests in 2013. The plans for the removal of the park still appear to be on the drawing board. According to *Newsweek*³ there are currently \$100 billion of construction projects slated for the city, including a road tunnel that will divert traffic into the historic centre of the city, an artificial Bosphorus canal and the world's largest airport—seven times the size of London's Heathrow. The government claims the projects are part of an effort to turn Istanbul into a 'global city'. So ruthless is Erdogan's regeneration programme that it has actually led to reports of paramilitary organisations that fight the police and 'defend' areas of the city from 'gentrification'.

Erdogan has admirers inside the European Union. Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban recently declared his interest in creating an illiberal state in Turkey's image. Since he was re-elected in 2010, he has eroded independent institutions, the judiciary and the media,

entrenching his own position and that of his party Fidesz. In April 2011 he passed a constitutional reform, gagging the constitutional court, effectively allowing the government to pass any legislation it wishes. He has also purged state broadcasters and tried to drive the RTL out of the country. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in receipt of funding from international foundations have been blacklisted and it is becoming harder for them to operate. He has also proposed a tax on the internet and incredibly, is trying to introduce mandatory drug testing for all children, journalists and politicians.

This dismantling and erosion of the country's constitutional checks and balances has led the director of European Alternatives, Lorenzo Marsili, to call for the European Union to place sanctions on Orban, which could include suspension of voting rights in the European Council, withdrawal of structural funds or even suspension from the EU itself. In an article published on Open Democracy last year,

³ Alexander Christie-Miller, 'Erdogan's grand construction projects are tearing Istanbul apart', *Newsweek*, 31 July 2014. <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/08/08/erdogans-grand-construction-projects-are-tearing-istanbul-apart-262102.html>

Peter Kreko—Director of the Political Capital Institute, a Hungarian think tank—argues that Orbán's example has powerful admirers across Eastern Europe.

Gold mines

The simplest of all commons is the air that we breathe. It may not be possible to enclose or privatise air, but it is possible to threaten it.

Poor regulation of heavy industry and mining has left Romania with a legacy of some of Europe's most polluted towns and villages, for example. In the year 2000, millions of gallons of poisonous metals and cyanide poured out of a holding pond into the Danube and Tuzla rivers, killing 200 tons of fish and spreading a toxic tide across three countries. In Copsa Mica—a town dominated by smelting works for several generations—96% of children aged from 2 to 14 have chronic bronchitis and respiratory problems.

Despite widespread poverty and unemployment, new mining projects in Romania are hugely controversial. For the last 15 years a Canadian-owned company Gabriel Resources has been trying to open Europe's largest open cast mine in Rosia Montana—an area of Western Transylvania in

the Apuseni mountains. Local residents have refused to sell their houses to make way for it.

In recent years the campaign has assumed great importance. Between 2012 and 2013 it became an animating issue in some of the biggest protests Romania has seen since 1990. Rosia Montana has become a symbol for the concern of the Romanian people at the proposed privatisation of their health service, the cosy relationship between politicians and the media, and the continuing impact of austerity policies. Public outrage has managed to hold back parliament from granting Gabriel Resources the permits it needs for compulsory purchase orders. However, with suggestions that mining companies are starting to construct mines without permits, the struggle seems likely to continue.

Election fail

Democracy is the mother of all commons. Democratic values and the principle of self-government may be very much alive, but it is impossible to avoid the fact that its procedural moments—elections—are not.

Only five countries in the EU27 managed a turnout of more than 50% in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament, which saw the lowest

turnouts on record. In Slovakia the turnout was just 17%. Political parties that reject the very institutions they were being elected to did better than ever.

Turnouts for domestic parliamentary and presidential elections are greater, but with only a handful topping 66%, many countries are governed by parties, presidents and coalitions who have only received a mandate from a very small proportion of the population. Or at least, a much smaller proportion than the period between the end of the Second World War and the end of the century when most countries in Europe averaged turnouts of more than 80%. Whether you blame politicians, voters, the nefarious hand of elites or a more subtle set of long-term social changes—if elections can't command people's confidence, then an important part of the commons will go ungoverned.

Monoculture

Perhaps the biggest threat to the commons comes not

from venal politicians, self-serving corporations and dangerously disinterested voters, but rather, from all of us—from citizens who have internalised market norms and see themselves in an endless competition, blind to the common good and unquantifiable virtues. Fearful of this future shortly before death, Jane Jacobs prophesied 'The Dark Age Ahead' while Tony Judt apocalyptically declared that 'Ill Fares the Land' shortly before he died.

In 2011 Canadian essayist Flora Michaels won the Orwell prize for her book *Monoculture*,⁴ which argues that an 'economistic' way of seeing ourselves has become dangerously pervasive. Economics, as she sees it, is no longer a social scientific discipline but an all pervasive dogma that frames our everyday lives. "It's not that the economic story has no place in the world," she argues. "But without ... other stories we have found essential throughout history, we imprison ourselves. When the languages of other stories begin to be lost, we lose

⁴ Flora S. Michaels, *Monoculture: How One Story Is Changing Everything* (Red Clover, 2011).

the value of diversity and creativity that keeps our society viable. We're left trying to translate something vitally important to us into economic terms so we can justify even talking about it... we end up missing what it means to be human."

These sentiments are echoed by the popular philosopher Michael Sandel, who laments a social shift from "having a market economy to being a market society" and the detrimental impact that this has on the discussion of competing values. If it is possible to sum up the desires of the post-2008 protesters across Europe it is perhaps that they want to live in something other than an economy. They too have come to see economics as a kind of dogma that needs to be overthrown—ironically in much the same way as the forefathers of economics saw the Church during the Enlightenment. One dogma for another.

For the commons!

Across Europe there are hundreds of organisations, networks and individuals that are passionate about these issues and campaign for the commons. What distinguishes these groups from other civil society groups is that they are arguing for and trying to create

new kinds of common space. They are interested in reclaiming institutions, communities and buildings through agreements, rules and other devices to make them more accessible, democratic and useable. This, perhaps, is why *Occupy* has been such a powerful idea. It is metaphor for what these groups wish to achieve in other areas of public life—groups committed to reclaiming space.

That's not of course to say that they aren't concerned about fighting for rights and threatened class groups. But the desire to claim, demarcate and create new rules for space is perhaps a new way of voicing these concerns and expresses a desire to engage with the means of making new space rather than simply making demands.

The great symbolic, theatrical struggles for power used to take place at factory gates—now they take place in space. David Harvey calls it a fight for the 'Right to the City'. Teatro Valle call it a spatial struggle. In Spain the municipalist parties are demanding a *right to decide*.

Reclaiming the political party

Europe has a new, 'new left' and it is animated by the desire to 'reclaim democracy'. A group of new political parties has emerged with an aspiration

to reclaim collective decision making from what they see as a corrupt and broken political system. They aim to make a new kind of political party. Spain has *Podemos*, Partido x, Procés Constituent and across the country there are municipal parties that performed particularly well in municipal elections. Barcelona has Barcelona en Comu; Madrid has Ahora Madrid. They are all committed to ‘bottom-up’ decision making and challenging the old order. For many involved in these parties, new forms of participation are an end in itself.

Elsewhere in Europe attempts to reinvent the political party are less evolved but the appetite is clear. Denmark has the Alternative founded by Denmark’s only independent MP Uffe Elbaek. Alternative describes itself as an ‘international, environmental and entrepreneurial party’ and took around 5% of the vote during recent elections. Scotland’s movement for independence is headed up by the Scottish Nationalist Party, which includes the ‘against the lot of them’ vote. But on their fringes are groups like Common Weal and Bella Caledonia, which may yet produce a new *Podemos* style political party. In Poland 36-year-old Slawomir Sierakowski leads Poland’s Krytyka Polityczna—or Political Critique movement (a magazine, cultural centre and think tank). It is not

a political party, but may become one in the future. To be consistent with Sierakowski’s ideas, it would need to be markedly different from what the other parties offer.

In 2013 and 2014 there were mass protests in Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Bosnia—the latter opened its own self-organised, democratic ‘plenums’ across the country. It remains to be seen whether these countries will found parties like those in Spain and Greece and try to construct an alternative way of doing politics.

Italy of course has the Five Star Movement started by the Italian comedian Beppe Grillo in 2008. Five Star is committed to opposing and disrupting the institutions of representative democracy, passing decisions, via opinion polls, back to voters. The party finished third in last year’s parliamentary elections. Its MEPs signed a contract that could make them liable for a 250,000 Euro fine if they are found to have broken the party’s code of conduct. The party is controversial and some critics suggest that passing votes back to party members is a vehicle for Grillo to exercise more control over his party rather than less. *The Economist* (smugly) calls it “simultaneously the most and least democratic of Italy’s political movements. And that theory, everything from the choice of election candidates to the removal of elected

representatives, is decided online by the party rank-and-file. In practice, what Mr Grillo and Mr Casaleggio say goes, and neither was chosen by anyone.”⁵

Further afield the Net Party in Buenos Aires recently contested municipal elections on the pledge that they would pass all their voting decisions back directly to their members. Although Argentina is far from Europe, the Net Party’s Democracy OS operating system for ‘liquid democracy’ is proving popular with social groups in Europe. On their Wikispace, they provide a list of 20 affiliated parties from across the world.

Reclaiming public space

The movement to reclaim public space across Europe includes a huge range of actors and approaches. Street artists, performers and free-runners who play with the social conventions of public space. Squatters, occupiers and campaigners who defend, occupy and reanimate neglected parks and buildings.

Violent protest movements who fight the police and forcibly claim the streets as theirs. Most of the organisations and artists ECF supports fit in somewhere here.

These are not new strategies but they produce symbolically important events for movements preoccupied with reclaiming space. According to Igor Stiks of the University of Edinburgh, reclaiming public space has been particularly important for activists in the Balkans: “The Right to the City movement in 2009/2010 in Zagreb mobilised thousands in defence of a square in downtown Zagreb; in Dubrovnik citizens organised to defend a nearby hill from being turned into a golf resort; in Bosnia’s second largest city, Banja Luka, citizens tried to defend one of the few public parks; in Belgrade smaller mobilisations were triggered by cutting down old trees in one of the main streets, so as to obtain more parking space, or by destruction of a neighbourhood park; in Bulgaria in 2012 people demonstrated against the privatisation of forests;

⁵ Beppe Grillo, ‘Falling Star’, *The Economist*, 9 December 2014. <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21635792-beppe-grillo-says-he-tired-and-his-movement-tired-his-autoocratic-leadership-falling-star>

in Romania in 2012 against the privatisation of emergency services, and again against an ecologically disastrous gold mine project in Rosia Montana.”⁶

In Poland, reclaiming public space and control of urban life is exercising a new generation. Civil society groups like The Right to the City, The Inhabitants Forum and the Housing Movement, operating under nationwide Urban Movements Congress, have successfully campaigned for participatory budgeting for planning consultations and against Krakow’s bid to host the Olympic Games. In recent elections the Urban Movement, which ran for the first time in elections as a nationwide coalition of city activists, won the mayoral seat in Gorzow Wielkopolski, western Poland, and a number of city council seats in cities like Warsaw, Poznan and Torun.

The struggle for public space takes place indoors too. In recent years both at Embros in Athens and Teatro Valle in Rome, groups

of activists have come together to occupy theatres and keep their work alive. At Teatro Valle, occupiers rallied under the slogan, “Like air and water, culture is a *commons*” and “Teatro Valle is a *commons*”. They set about creating transparent and democratic ways to run the theatre. These occupations are symbolic and real interventions in keeping the gift-economy of culture alive when its value isn’t recognised by the state or possible within a purely market-based approach. In a similar but less direct way, Liberate Tate in London has been periodically occupying Tate Modern to embarrass it into divesting itself of oil sponsorship.

2014 also saw protests sparked across Spain in response to an attempt by the Barcelona government to shut down the Centro Social Autogestionado Can Vies, a social centre in Barcelona that had been occupied since 1997. In the wake of protests in Barcelona, Valencia and Majorca, the municipal authorities agreed to suspend the demolition.

⁶ Igor Štiks and Srećko Horavat, ‘The New Balkan Revolts: from Protests to ple-nums and beyond’, *opendemocracy.net*, 12 March 2014. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/author/igor-%C5%A0tiks>

At the time of writing this, at the end of May 2015, there are seven social centres in Barcelona in former bank buildings that are under eviction orders and many other struggles to defend other social centres in Spain—like the campaign to save Casa Grande del Pumarejo in Seville. In Bologna in Italy, street artist Blu recently painted a mural on the side of XM24, a social centre that has had to fight several battles against demolition.

Reclaiming housing

Europe has a growing housing movement that seeks to defend tenants from landlords, campaigns to stop people being priced out of their homes and argues for housing at an affordable price. Housing is a commons issue because people in precarious accommodation are restricted from having a place in the commons. Few in it would argue for all housing everywhere to be placed in common ownership, but the movement is committed to stopping housing becoming a tradeable commodity—ensuring that it can be accessed by all people without fear of being exploited. We may not all want to live in an intentional community, but that doesn't mean that a house should be treated as an exclusively private commodity.

Interestingly though, the outrage at the #poordoor—separate entrances for people living in lower value housing in luxury developments—illustrates that many people feel there should be 'a commons' of sorts in private buildings.

Since 2006 in Paris a group of artist-activists *Jeudi Noir* (Black Thursday Collective) have been campaigning and launching direct actions on housing issues. Among many demands they ask for a cessation in increases to rent controls and pressure politicians to honour commitments to affordable housing. Their direct actions have included occupying an apartment near former President Sarkozy's Paris home as well as staging parties in, and occupying show-flats in luxury housing developments. These tactics have been copied in London, which has a rapidly growing network of small groups campaigning on housing issues. In Scotland there is a new campaign to control rents. Most cities across Europe are affected by evictions, foreclosures, unscrupulous landlords and the lack of affordable or public housing—especially in the south and in the most unequal cities.

MIPIM—a massive international conference for the regeneration industry held in Cannes every March—has become a target for all these groups.

What passes for common sense

So there you have it. Some threats to the commons and the rearguard to shore them up. As I mentioned before, Erdogan still hopes to see Gezi Park in Istanbul turned into a shopping centre. Making sure it gets built

is clearly about more than creating somewhere for people to go shopping. Maybe that's because these kinds of disputes aren't just about claiming a commons, they are also an attempt by those with power and those without it, to determine what passes as common sense... ■

Friendship is a Commons

(excerpt)

by **Dougald Hine**

I want to draw attention to two different ways of speaking about commons. These two ways of speaking coexist and often get muddled up, in a way that is problematic. So if I could make a contribution to the growing conversation that is taking place under the banner of the commons, it would be to invite us to notice this difference within our ways of speaking.

The first way of speaking about the commons is to talk about it as a pool of resources to be managed. A typical example is found in a summary of Elinor Ostrom's *Governing the Commons*. This is offered as a definition:

The commons is a general term for shared resources in which each stakeholder has an equal interest.

The second way of speaking about commons is as

an alternative to treating the world as if it is made up of resources. In *Silence is a Commons*,¹ Ivan Illich says that he wants to make “the distinction between the *commons* within which people's subsistence activities are embedded, and *resources* that serve for the economic production of those commodities on which modern survival depends”. Instead of the commons being a pool of resources and a particular approach to managing them, Illich defines the commons as the opposite of the resource.

He talks about the history of the commons in Europe, the commons that were enclosed: as part of the entry into modern industrial capitalist society, the land was taken away from people. He talks about how these commons were governed

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by an ‘unwritten law’, a fabric of interweaving customs by which different people within a community had different relationships by which it was understood that they could make use of particular areas of land for hunting and fishing, for grazing, or collecting wood or medicinal plants to meet their own needs, along with different obligations to that land. “It was an unwritten law,” Illich says, “not only because people did not care to write it down, but because what it protected was a reality much too complex to fit into paragraphs.”

The first thing I want to say about that complex reality is that its complexity was not a problem for people. It may have been a problem for landlords and for governments, because a way of living that is unwritten is, by definition, illegible. In *Seeing Like a State*,² James C. Scott presents the story of the way in which states and other top-down systems have a problem with complex, illegible social realities, which is not necessarily a problem for the people who live within and make

their life work inside those complex, illegible social realities.

Illich also frames this opposition in terms of industrial society, the industrial production of commodities, and something he calls ‘the vernacular’. He draws this as an axis on a graph, but an axis that is not a straight line: at one end it rises straight to a single point, but at the other it branches like a root system in a thousand directions. The industrial society is the end where it becomes a straight line: development provides us with a model by which the human needs of everyone on earth are identical, defined in the same way and to be met by deploying the same systems of flush toilets, regardless of the local context. At the other end from this homogeneous industrial society of resources and commodities, you have the proliferation of the vernacular. The vernacular corresponds to what, in a Marxian vocabulary, would be distinguished as production for use value rather than for exchange value, but Illich’s intention

- 1 This article is from Ivan Illich’s remarks at the “Asahi Symposium Science and Man — The computer-managed Society”, Tokyo, Japan, 21 March 1982. See <http://www.preservenet.com/theory/illich/Silence.html>
- 2 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1999).

was to frame this more broadly. Going back to its Latin roots, the vernacular refers to the home-made, the home-brewed, the home-spun.

Another important distinction is introduced by Iain Boal, who points out that a commons is not the same thing as a public space. A public space is a modern phenomenon, conceived in terms of atomised economic individuals dealing with each other within this realm that we call the public. He points out something fascinating in relation to Garret Hardin's 'The Tragedy of the Commons',³ which is one of the most influential and problematic texts on the commons. Hardin argues that commons inevitably collapse because one person takes more than their share and this damages it, until over time the existence of the commons as a whole is compromised. This is an argument that says: we have to privatise things, we have to marketise things, because otherwise the free-riders will eventually erode the commons. What Boal points out is that

Hardin was writing this in San Francisco in 1968, when the front pages of the newspapers were reporting the collapse into a Hobbesian nightmare of the first wave of hippie communes. So if you want to understand sympathetically, rather than only critically—which is the first way I would invite you to understand it—Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons myth, it is really the Tragedy of the *Communes*. Boal's argument is that the communes failed because they were based on a utopian ideal that they were creating a public, universal space that anyone could turn up to and access equally, and that this is quite different to a commons, in any historical sense. A commons is a fabric of relations that is built and rebuilt and renegotiated over generations.

So, we have these two ways of speaking: commons as a pool of resources to be managed, and commons as an alternative to treating the world as made up of resources. Of these two ways of speaking, people who talk about the commons in terms

³ Garret Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', originally published in the journal *Science*, 1968. See http://www.mcleland.org/Class_reading/Hardin_Tragedy_of_the_Commons.pdf

of resources have historically almost always been *against* the commons and for enclosure, rationalisation and increased production. Because once you look at the commons as a pool of resources, you don't see that complex, unwritten, illegible reality; what you see is the two or three things that you enter into your spreadsheet to describe this forest, and then you seek to improve the productivity of the forest, and you drive out the people who have had a right to graze their pigs there for centuries, you start planting the trees in straight lines, the process that Scott⁴ describes has been set in motion.

So, as Anthony McCann has pointed out, it is a peculiar feature of the wave of enthusiasm for the new commons that a lot of those who speak in favour of the commons today do so in the language of resource management, rather than in terms of social relations. It is by no means clear that we have escaped the tendency of resource management approaches to serve the interests of economic rationalisation as against human sociability.

We live in a heavily enclosed world. The commons were taken away from us. In England, it started in the fifteenth century and was more or less over by the nineteenth century. Laws were passed that overwrote the unwritten laws that had endured and evolved for centuries, that granted new, simple and total forms of ownership to the few, and disenfranchised the rest. Like the industrial revolution that followed it, this process spread from England, in one form or another, to most corners of the world and it continues today. At the height of the English enclosures, it was known as 'improvement'; today it is more likely to be known as 'development'.

The result is that what was once seen as misery is now taken for granted. In 1330, a rich merchant in Florence died and left his wealth to be distributed amongst the destitute, the people who had fallen through the bottom of society. The people to whom the money was doled out were drawn from five categories: the widows, the orphans,

⁴ James C. Scott, *op. cit.*

those who had recently suffered an act of God, those who had to pay rent for the roof under which they slept and the heads of household dependent on wage work. In other words, in the medieval world, to be dependent on having to sell your labour for money as your primary means of staying alive or to have to pay money in order to have somewhere to call home, these things were seen as abject misery. To be a member of society was to be part of a household and even if you were the lowliest member of a very humble household, even with the feudal obligations you were under, you had a security unknown to the wage worker.

No one is saying that this was a beautiful utopia. The point is to recognise that the modern world in which we find ourselves came about not least through the normalisation of people not having access to the means of subsistence, because land and commoning rights had been taken away from them, forcing them into a position where all of their needs had to be met through selling their labour to factory owners and their equivalents. Many will argue that, on a cost-benefit analysis, industrialisation and modernity have given us so much that it ends up being more

than worth the deal. I am not wanting to make the argument one way or another, only to be clear that this was the nature of the trade-off, and that it was frequently made against the will of the erstwhile commoner.

Yet the risk of such stories is that they erect a golden age, to be mourned or scorned, but irrelevant to the fallen condition in which we find ourselves. In place of this, I would rather we remind ourselves that, even within this heavily enclosed world, the process of enclosure is never complete: there are still things that we do not treat as resources. The clearest case of this, perhaps, is that we do not think it acceptable to treat our friends as resources. In English, we have an everyday expression for someone who does that: if you find yourself treated as a resource by someone you thought to be a friend, you say, "I've been used". And everyone knows what you mean, without any need to elaborate a theory to make sense of it.

For this reason, then, friendship may well be a good starting point from which to explore what it means to be part of a commons that is not merely a resource management exercise, but an alternative to treating the world as made up of resources. ■



Reclaimed spaces workshop, 2013
coordinated by: studioBASAR;
drawing by: Cristi Stoian.



El Buen Vivir and the Commons: A Conversation

between **Gustavo Soto Santiesteban** and **Silke Helfrich**

Silke Helfrich Gustavo, *Buen Vivir* (or *Vivir Bien*) is an expression that has made its way into the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, and has become an expression that would summarise an alternative project for civilisation. Portuguese sociologist Boaventura da Souza even took up the slogan, ‘China or Sumaj Kuasay,’¹ which is not self-explanatory. Can you help explain it?

Gustavo Soto *Suma Qamaña*, *Sumaj Kuasay* and *Sumak Kwasay* are Aymara and Quechua expressions that translate into Spanish as *Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien*. They are reused in the construction of a discourse that speaks of a horizon of purposes alternative to the current state of affairs, one that is neither ‘21st century socialism’² nor ‘Andean-Amazonian capitalism’.³ I think *Buen Vivir* is a proposal aimed at making *visible and expressible* aspects of reality that are ignored by the dominant paradigm. It is a proposal from a radical and spiritual perspective of ecology, and is logically *incompatible with development and industrialisation*. It speaks of the possibility of living in common, for which the very concept ‘development’⁴ is not only insufficient but mistaken.

Silke Helfrich is a writer, activist and thinker. She co-founded the Commons Strategies Group with David Bollier and Michel Bauwens.

Gustavo Soto Santiesteban is a writer, semiotician and consultant on indigenous rights at various universities in Bolivia.

Javier Medina, a philosopher dedicated to Andean studies, writes: “There is always more in reality than one can experience or express at any given moment. A greater sensitivity to the latent potential of situations, assumed as a sort of broader social paradigm, may encourage us to think about things not only as they are, in the Newtonian paradigm, but also in terms of where they are heading, what they may become” (quoted in Soto 2010). *El Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien* is the name given to something that is like a new principle of hope grounded in ancestral practices of indigenous communities in the Americas.

Silke Helfrich

So, it is not surprising that Bolivia and Ecuador are the two countries where the debate on *el Buen Vivir* is most alive. In Ecuador, 35% of the population self-identify as indigenous, and in Bolivia, 62%. In a take on the topic, Bolivia’s ambassador in Germany, Walter Prudencio Magne Veliz, his country’s first indigenous ambassador, said: “An indigenous person thinks more like a ‘we’ than as an individual ‘I.’” What does that ‘we’ encompass?

Gustavo Soto

Suma Qamaña implies several meanings manifested in community life: the fact of animals, persons, and crops living together; living with Pachamama (‘Mother Earth’—the water, the mountains, the biosphere) and finally living together with the community of ancestors (*w’aka*). It is a community practice that finds organisational expression in the *ayllu*, which articulates this ‘economy-life’ in the *chacra*—the rural agricultural space where

- 1 Boaventura da Souza Santos, *Diversidades y caminos civilizatorios: ¿la utopía del siglo XXI?* (Belem: FED-AEPS, FSM, 2009).
- 2 Editors’ note: ‘21st century socialism’ is a political expression that gained currency ten years ago, particularly in the context of the World Social Forum. It is also frequently used in Venezuela by the administration of President Hugo Chavez.
- 3 Álvaro García Linera, Interview with Miguel Lora, www.bolpress.com, 10 May 2009.
- 4 See Vinod Raina’s essay criticising the concept of “development” in Part 2.

reciprocity predominates. It is evident that these enunciations are made from the commons, from the community, from the first person plural, and not from 'me', from the individual. Strictly speaking, the 'individual' without community is bereft, orphaned, incomplete.

5 See <http://lareciprocidad.blogspot.com>

Silke Helfrich We find these ideas in many different cultures. It's not just one or the other. Things are not separate, but interrelated. Therefore, Javier Medina, a Bolivian philosopher who is one of the most literate interpreters of the idea of *Buen Vivir*, says it is a display of intelligence that "we Bolivians want to have the State and *also* want to have the *ayllu*, though they are two antagonistic magnitudes..." And he continues: "Our problem is that in not picking up on the civilising nature of both, we confuse them, provoking the inefficiency of both... At this point..., let's not have any more real State: follow the liberal Third World simulation, nor more real *Ayllus*: in their place, docile social movements."⁵ In your opinion, does the *ayllu* persist in contemporary Bolivia? Do they have like a 'physical-social embodiment'?

Gustavo Soto The indigenous *ayllu*, at the 'micro-level', at the local level, persists in the Bolivian altiplano. It is founded on reciprocity more than on the market; on cultural identity more than on homogenisation; on decision by assembly more than the electoral mechanism; on its *de facto* autonomy and its relationship with the 'territory', which is not the 'land'—factor of production—but rather precisely the totality of the system of relationships.

Silke Helfrich Your description of the *ayllu* is reminiscent of the concept of *commoning*, which is discussed so much in this book (*The Wealth of the Commons*⁶) and which expresses much better than the term *commons* where the heart-beat of the debate lies. Both *el Buen Vivir* and *commoning* can only be thought of in their specific social context and as a social process. Indeed, it seems to me that both are more systems of *production in community and at the same time they produce community*.

⁶ David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (eds.), *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State* (Levellers Press, 2012).

⁷ Massimo De Angelis, *The Beginning of History. Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London: Pluto, 2007).

[...]

Silke Helfrich *Buen Vivir* seems to me both strange and familiar. Foreign because of the innumerable references born of a different culture and history. And familiar because it makes me think of *commoning*. Massimo De Angelis writes: “To turn a noun—commons—into a verb [commoning...] simply grounds it in what is, after all, life flow: there are no commons without incessant activities of *commoning*, of (re)producing in common. But it is through (re)production in common that communities of producers decide for themselves the norms, values, and measures of things.”⁷

Louis Wolcher also reminds us that speaking of the commons is not the same as speaking of conflicts over property rights. Rather, it is about “people expressing a form of life to support their autonomy and subsistence needs”. In brief, “taking one’s life into one’s own hands, and not waiting for crumbs to drop from the King’s table”. Or from the table of the nation-state. At the same time, he fears that in the western world we are in an unlucky

position, because “we no longer have cultural memory of another way of being”.

Gustavo Soto This (re)surgence of social theories and horizons that engage in dialogue with the alternative initiatives and quests of the ‘first’ world is very interesting for Latin America. During the 20th century, for example, the discourse, organisational forms, strategies, and vision of progress or ‘change’—if you want to call it that—drew on the ‘lessons’ of European social and political processes. Now, on this Amerindian side, they drink from the communitarian fountains of the Americas, which, we always forget, also inspired the first European utopians. Yet, as you say, it is not just a question of discourses but of practices, which, for different reasons, have withstood centuries, and which are the condition that makes it possible to build another truly inclusive social order, one that is for everyone. It is not at all simply a question of Indigenous Areas or Protected Community Areas. What is needed is a change in paradigm. ■

“In talking about and engaging the commons we must understand this as the creation of a new subject, one that will save ourselves from the homo œconomicus not to defeat him but to free him from his slavery to the state and market.”

— **Saki Bailey**, interview with The Common Sense Forum

The State, the Market and Some Preliminary Questions about the Commons (*excerpts*)

by **Ugo Mattei**

It is a fact that the alliance between state institutions and private property interests has been the force behind the race for colonial plunder, the enclosure of the commons in eighteenth century England, and the increased concentration of capital (the original accumulation of Marxian memory).¹ The recessive world view is instead based on an ecological and holistic approach to the world and displays relationship, cooperation and community as its typical pattern. This model, still present in the organisation of communities in the “periphery” continues to suffer a merciless assault by the structural adjustment and comprehensive development plans of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund,

which push for modernisation. Such modernising efforts have encouraged and resulted in the ‘commodification’ of land, and of local knowledge, supported by a process of cultural adjustment (human rights, rule of law, gender equality etc.) that serves as justifying rhetoric for continuity in plunder.²

[...]

Reducing the commons to commodities actually limits their scope and as a consequence their revolutionary potential based on a legitimate claim for radical equalitarian redistribution of resources.

[...]

Alongside the empirical data now available, we must critically assess our current

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institutions and reclaim our common sense about the issue of resource distribution, perverted too long by the liberal agenda of modernity. The commons project must be as much about a new framework for participatory government as alternative property arrangements.

[...]

The commons are radically incompatible with the idea of individual autonomy as developed in the rights-based capitalistic tradition. In this respect, commons are an ecological-qualitative category based on inclusion and access, whereas property and State sovereignty are rather economical-quantitative categories based on exclusion (produced scarcity) and violent concentration of power into a few hands.

All this, evidently requires the jurist's attention to the difficult and urgent task of constructing the new foundation of a legal order capable of transcending the property-state dualisms inherent in the current order. Given the dominance of private property,

individualism and competition as the basis of the current legal order, the new order must correct this imbalance by focusing on the collective and the commons as the centre, creating an institutional setting reflecting long-term sustainability and full inclusion of all the global commons, including the poorest and most vulnerable (human and non humans). To do so we need first an epistemic (and political) emancipation from the predatory appetites of both the State and private property, the two fundamental components of the dominant imperialistic Western wisdom. Commons lie beyond the reductionist opposition of 'subject-object', which produces the commodification of both. Commons, unlike private goods and public goods, are not commodities and cannot be reduced to the language of ownership. They express a qualitative relation. It would be reductive to say that we have a common good: we should rather see to what extent we are the commons, in as much as we are part of an environment, an urban

¹ See Sandro Mezzadra, "La cosiddetta accumulazione originaria", in AA.VV., *Lessico marxiano, Manifestolibri, Roma* (2008), pp.23–52.

² See Ugo Mattei and Laura Nader, *Plunder. When The Rule of Law is Illegal* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

or rural ecosystem. Here, the subject is part of the object. For this reason commons are inseparably related and link individuals, communities and the ecosystem itself.

Political shift

Today we can see from examples all around us, from global warming to the economic collapse, that the politically recessive but philosophically more sophisticated holistic paradigm offers us a fundamental and necessary shift in the perception of reality. In this context the commons can offer an institutional setting reflexive of the need to reject the false illusion of modern liberalism and rationalism. This is why we cannot settle to see the ‘commons’ as a mere third way between private property and the state as most of the current debate seems to suggest. To be sure, in the current academic resurgence of interest, the commons are reduced to an institutional setting proposed to manage the leftovers of the Western historical banquet that occupies with States and private property (the mythological market) almost the totality of the political scene.

On the contrary, we believe that the commons must be promoted to an institutional structure that genuinely questions

the domains of private property (and its ideological apparatuses such as self-determination and ‘the market’) and that of the State: not a third way but an ecologically legitimised foe of the alliance between private property and the state. The shift that we need now to accomplish politically, not only theoretically, is to change the dominant wisdom from the absolute domination of the subject (as owner or State) over the object (territory or more generally the environment) to a focus on the relationship of the two (subject-nature). We need a new common sense recognising, outside of the Western liberal hubris, that each individual’s survival depends on its relationship with others, with the community, with the environment. The first necessary shift that becomes apparent is the move from a focus on quantity (the fundamental idea of the scientific revolution and of capitalist accumulation) to quality—a key notion of the alternative holistic vision.

A legal system based on the commons must use the ‘ecosystem’ as a model, where a community of individuals or social groups are linked by a horizontal mutual connection to a network where power is dispersed; generally rejecting the idea of hierarchy (and competition, produced by the same logic) in favour

of a participatory and collaborative model that prevents the concentration of power in one party or entity, and puts community interests at the centre. Only in such a framework can social rights actually be satisfied. In this logic a common (water, culture, the internet,

land, education) is not a 'commodity' but rather a shared conception of the reality that radically challenges with the arms of critique and sometimes with the critique of the arms the seemingly unstoppable trend of privatisation/corporatisation. ■

Understanding Peer to Peer as a Relational Dynamics (*excerpt*)

by **Michel Bauwens**

Immaterial Commons (CS) vs. the Capitalist Market (MP)

It is important to discuss the complex relationship between so-called 'immaterial commons', marked by Communal Shareholding dynamics, and the capitalist marketplace, marked by MP dynamics. It is of course clear that the so-called Immaterial Commons (CS) are themselves material in many different ways (electricity, telecommunication networks, materiality of the computers and labour). But because of the marginal cost of reproducing digital material, it nevertheless functions in quite different ways than its material infrastructure, i.e. 'immaterial' commons allow for self-allocation of human effort.

Peer production projects are collectively sustainable

as long as new contributors replace those who leave; but they are not individually sustainable because life-long contributions based on free labour do not ensure the social reproduction of the workers who contribute to the commons. Both for-benefit institutions and market entities are needed to ensure long-term viability: the first through fundraising activities, the second through their contribution to the social reproduction of the workers.

However, peer production and capitalism can be said to exist in a situation of mutual co-dependency. As argued by Yann-Moulier Boutang,¹ contemporary capitalism cannot function without the positive externalities of social cooperation, and increasingly those externalities

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that are specifically generated by peer production. However, corporations that benefit from commons of code not only benefit from the surplus value produced by their paid workers, but also from the immense free labour value inherent in the common production. What this means is that, although commons of code are successful in creating use value, the peer producing communities are not able to monetise and capture the surplus value themselves. In this sense, peer production serves the continued existence of the existing political economy, and ensures a pool of relatively cheap if not free labour, since only a fraction of contributions is effectively monetised and can serve for the social reproduction of the workers involved. This means that peer production creates both precarity on the workers' side, but also a crisis of accumulation of capital, since unpaid free labour is driven from the consumption cycle, thus adding to the current effective demand crisis. In the context of this article, I will not

discuss 'solutions' to this contradiction, but it is important to articulate it clearly.

The interrelation between community, association and market entities is therefore inherently contradictory and rife with tension. This can be interpreted as the class struggle in the era of knowledge production.² Communities will be driven to maintain the integrity of their commons; corporate entities are driven by the need to capture 'scarce' and therefore monetisable market value and are driven to partial enclosures of the commons. Corporations can influence the commons through the power they exert over their waged workers, and through the subsidies provided to the infrastructure and for-benefit associations. Every commons is therefore marked by a social tension over the polarity of power, with at least three players, i.e. the community, the corporate entities and the for-benefit institution (one could say the latter plays a role similar to the 'state' in peer production projects).

¹ Yann Moulier Boutang, *Le capitalisme cognitif, la nouvelle grande transformation* (Editions Amsterdam, 2007).

² McKenzie Wark, *Hacker Manifesto* (Harvard University Press, 2004). Wark's class theory based on the conflict between hackers and vectoralist is not entirely adequate to understand peer production class dynamics, but is nevertheless a useful start.

Class aspects of peer production

I am positing that there is an underlying class structure to commons-based peer production. Why is this important and how is this related to my general argument? I believe that commons-based peer production is not a full mode of production within capitalism, as it cannot sustain its own social reproduction. Indeed, the 'surplus value' is clearly captured by the corporations that monetise the value of free software in their own activities. However, I believe that commons-based peer production is a proto-mode of production, just as the shift from slavery to 'coloni' (serfdom) created proto-feudal modes of value creation within the declining Roman Empire, and just as proto-capitalist formations within feudalisms would later coalesce as a dominant capitalist mode of production. For this transition to happen, it is required that a section of the producing class is gradually mobilised into the new mode of value creation (slaves into coloni/serfs, serfs into workers, workers into peer producers), while a similar shift has to occur in the 'managerial' class (i.e. slave-owners into domain-holders; feudal landowners into capitalist investors; capitalist investors into netarchical capitalism). A successful shift would

require a severe crisis in the older mode of production, and the availability of an emergent 'hyper-productive' alternative. While it is not possible to prove or even fully argue this point in this contribution, it stands to reason that corporations switching to commons-based peer production would outperform and outcompete traditional companies using closed proprietary Intellectual Property with exclusive reliance on waged workers; and that a significant number of workers would find it beneficial to switch towards contributions to projects involving commons-based peer production.

So, here is the hypothesis as regards the class aspects of peer production:

In my view, producers are knowledge workers, i.e. a section of the working class involved in the production of immaterial 'symbolic' value, but often not in the same structural position as factory workers. Indeed, the essential difference is that the 'means of production', computers and networks, are at least under partial control of the workers, because of their distributed nature, which greatly facilitates access. The class condition of peer producers is much more fluid than those of the previous industrial class, as they can move from the condition of wages workers, to freelancers,

to voluntary contributors, to small entrepreneurs (who can sometimes themselves become successful for-profit enterprises). On the other side, it is clear that there is a sector of capital that is interested in investing in commons-based peer production, and I call this sector that of 'netarchical capitalism'. Netarchical capital is the sector that understands that value creation is now driven by social cooperation outside of the classic wage relation, and aims to profit from it. Peer producers and netarchical capital have both congruent and divergent interests. Convergent, to the degree that netarchical capital is funding and facilitating social cooperation, through platforms that, albeit under their control, still allow peer to peer socialisation. To the degree that netarchical capital has to fight against the old structures that hold it back, it can often be on the same side as peer producers. However, to the degree that it needs to capture exchange value from the commons and the commoners, and seeks to maximise profits on the basis of it, it also creates

social tension and 'class struggle'. Corporations are always divided between their need and desire to facilitate social cooperation, i.e. the drive towards 'openness', and their need and drive to capture value through closure and control. I have described the nature of this social antagonism, and the unstable nature of the underlying social contracts, in an article for *RePublic*,³ while the Delicious social bookmarking service contains an ongoing tag monitoring such conflicts.⁴

The class antagonism hypothesis that I describe above also informs the ethics of communal shareholding. The exact hypothesis is the following: peer producers are workers and their social condition is determined by tension between their structural position as workers in a wage-labour based dependency, and their desire for autonomy in production through their engagement in production. In addition, in a freelance or 'entrepreneurial' context, there is also a tension between this desire for autonomy and the need

³ Michel Bauwens, *The Social Web and its Social Contracts* (2009).

⁴ See <http://www.delicious.com/mbauwens/P2P-Conflicts>; other related tags are <http://www.delicious.com/mbauwens/Netarchical-Capitalism>; and <http://www.delicious.com/mbauwens/P2P-Class-Theory>

for their social reproduction through the monetisation of their activities. From the point of view of netarchical capital, the contradiction is between their desire to create the conditions for sharing and collaboration, and their need and desire to extract surplus value. I believe there is a potential solution, for the knowledge workers as peer producers, which is the creation of new cooperative market entities, in which the peer producers themselves would be the owners, and with a mission-oriented structure and governance that subsumes the activities of these new type of market

entities to the creation not only of sustainable livelihoods for the commoners (and thus avoiding a seepage of surplus value outside the commons and its reproduction), but also a strengthening of the autonomy of the commons outside of a capitalist context. In this context, the new type of 'for-benefit' market entities would form a counter-economy outside the need for profit maximisation and capital accumulation. Counter-economic coalitions that would practise shared design and open book management could obtain benefits in mutual coordination outside of the classic cash nexus. ■

→ Chisinau Civic Center — open air cinema. Flat Space extension, 2012. With the participation of studioBASAR, Urban Reactor, 3*2*1*0, Oberliht Association.



The Boom of Commons-based Peer Production (*excerpts*)

by **Christian Siefkes**

Today, GNU/Linux is one of the three most popular operating systems (next to Windows and Mac os), used by millions of people. Linux is most popular with companies that need reliable servers. It is frequently used for high-performance applications—more than 90% of the world's 500 fastest supercomputers use Linux.¹

The success of GNU/Linux is based on the fact that—like all *free software*—it is a commons that everybody can use, improve and share. The freedoms that make free software a commons were first defined by Richard Stallman in the 1980s. He designed the *GNU*

General Public License (GPL) as an exemplary license to legally protect these freedoms. The GPL (also used by Linux) remains the most popular free software license.² Another crucial factor is the community that coordinates the development of the operating system. The open, decentralised and seemingly chaotic way of working together pioneered by Torvalds and his collaborators became known as the 'bazaar' model of software development (Raymond 2001). It contrasts with the top-down, hierarchical, meticulously planned 'cathedral' style of development, once used for erecting the medieval cathedrals but

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also characteristic for software development in many companies.

[...]

The GNU/Linux story reveals the essential characteristics of *peer production*. Peer production is based on commons: resources and goods that are jointly developed and maintained by a community and shared according to community-defined rules.³ The ‘four freedoms’ are the most important rules that the free software community has given itself: everybody may use free programs for any purpose, adapt them to their needs, share them with others, improve them and distribute the improvements.⁴

[...]

Peer production provides the capacity to create new commons and maintain and improve the existing ones. Other resources, such as computers, are typically

privately owned, but they can be used to contribute to the shared goals of a project, not for financial gain.⁵

While production for the market aims to produce something that can be sold, the usual goal of peer production is to produce something useful. Projects have a common goal, and all participants contribute to that goal in one way or another. They do so because they share the objectives of the project, because they enjoy what they are doing, or because they want to ‘give back’ to the community. This differs from market production, which is based on exchange.⁶

[...]

Meanwhile, countless other projects use an open style of cooperation similar to GNU/Linux. The free encyclopaedia Wikipedia is the best known example. Ten years after

- 1 See <http://top500.org/stats/list/37/osfam>
- 2 Regarding alternative licenses and their compatibility with each other, see Mike Linksvayer, ‘Creative Commons: Governing the Intellectual Commons from Below’, in David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (eds.), *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State* (Levellers Press, 2012), pp.299–304.
- 3 For an extensive discussion of peer-to-peer production, see Michel Bauwens, ‘The Triune Peer Governance of the Digital Commons’, in David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (eds.), *ibid.*, pp.323–330.
- 4 See the GNU Project, *The Free Software Definition* (2010) at <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>
- 5 Commons are often hybrids of private property and public property that co-mingle private and joint use. See for example Liz Alden Wily, ‘The Global Land Grab: The New Enclosures’, and Mayra Lafoz Bertussi, ‘The Faxinal: A Brazilian Experience of the Commons and Its Relationship with the State’, both printed in David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (eds.), *op. cit.*, respectively pp.132–140 and pp.254–257).
- 6 For a detailed discussion of the differences between market logic and the logic of the commons, see Stefan Meretz, ‘The Structural Communitarity of the Commons’, and Silke Helfrich, ‘The Logic of the Commons & the Market: A Shorthand Comparison of their Core Beliefs’, in David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (eds.), *op. cit.*, respectively pp.28–34 and pp.35–36.

its inception, there are now Wikipedias in more than 200 languages; the English edition alone has more than three million articles. Linux and Wikipedia are important examples of two communities—the *free software movement* (also called *open source movement*) and the *free culture movement*—that are much larger than their respective flagships. There are hundreds of thousands of free software programs and millions of works (texts, images, music, even movies) published under Creative Commons licenses.⁷

Open hardware projects design physical products by freely sharing blueprints, design documents and bills of materials.⁸ In the field of electronic hardware, the Italian Arduino project is especially well known. Many other projects use or extend its products. Free furniture designs are created by Ronen Kadushin

and by the SketchChair project. The Open Architecture Network and the Architecture for Humanity project design buildings whose purpose is to serve the needs of their inhabitants, rather than making building companies rich or architects famous. OpenWear is a collaborative clothing platform that supports people in becoming producers and finding collaborators. Wireless community networks organise freely accessible wireless networks in many parts of the world. The Open Prosthetics Project develops prosthetic limbs. It was started by a former soldier who had lost a hand in war and was unable to find a commercially available prosthesis suiting his needs. A special goal of the project is to improve the medical treatment of people who cannot afford to pay a lot (e.g., in the global south).

⁷ The degrees of freedom granted by the various Creative Commons licenses vary; not all of the licenses assure all 'four freedoms' guaranteed by free software. See Mike Linksvayer, *op. cit.*

⁸ See Benjamin Mako Hill's essay on 'open' versus 'free'. Benjamin Mako Hill, 'Freedom for Users, 'Not for Software', in David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp.305–308.

[...]

Of course, it is neither possible nor reasonable for everyone to have all the equipment necessary for production in his or her own basement. It makes more sense for productive infrastructures to be community-based (i.e., jointly organised by the inhabitants of a village or neighbourhood). There are already examples of this. For example, the inhabitants of the South African town of Scarborough set up a decentralised 'mesh network' that allows them to access the internet and the telephone network. Necessary equipment such as wireless routers are bought by individual citizens. No single person or entity owns the network or large parts of it, and therefore nobody is in a position to shut it down or censor it. The networks run on free software and a large part of the equipment is developed as open hardware.

Community-organised production places are emerging as well. The global Fab Lab network spans over 50 cities on five continents. Fab Labs are modern open workshops whose goal is to produce 'almost anything'. That's not yet realistic, but they can already produce furniture, clothing, computer equipment (including circuit boards) and other useful things. So far, Fab Labs mostly employ proprietary machines whose design is not open,

making it impossible for people to produce their own versions or to improve them. But parts of the community are trying to overcome this limitation. Their goal is the creation of an entirely commons-based production infrastructure, a network of free and open facilities that utilise only free software and open hardware. This would pave the way to lessening people's dependency on the capitalist market, with commons-based peer production producing more and more of the things that people need.

[...]

Physical production is impossible without natural resources. Therefore, peer production won't be able to realise its full potential unless access to resources is managed according to its principles. Digital peer production treats knowledge and software as a commons. Likewise, physical peer production needs to manage resources and means of production as commons, utilising them in a fair and sustainable way and preserving or improving their current state. For this it is important to find modes that ensure that nobody loses out and that everyone's needs (whether productive or consumptive) are taken seriously.

The challenge is huge, but the unexpected success stories of peer production—such as GNU/Linux and

Wikipedia—show that peer production can achieve a lot. And the long history of the commons contains many examples of the successful long-term usage of natural resources and of the successful management of user-built infrastructures. For the future

of commons-based peer production, it will be very important to bring together the perspectives and experiences of commoners from all areas—whether ‘digital’, ‘ecological’ or ‘traditional’. They can learn a lot from each other. ■

“We are dealing with a radical shake-up of the foundations of the order of things, as we have known it. A key manifestation and actor in this process of the emergence of new orders of things are subaltern migrants.”

— Nicos Trimikliniotis, Dimitris Parsanoglou, Vassilis Tsianos,

Mobile Commons, Migrant Digitalities and the Right to the City

Mobile Commons, Migrant Digitalities and the Right to the City (*excerpts*)

by **Nicos Trimikliniotis, Dimitris Parsanoglou, Vassilis Tsianos**

Prolegomena: In a world turned upside down (*excerpts*)

It is well documented that cities are not only spaces of concentrated diversity reproducing new and old types of inequalities.¹ They are also spaces of precarity-and-resistance that constantly redefine the notion of 'rights' through the constant struggles about the character, the meaning and the use of spaces; beautifully painted by Georgiou "the city is a canvas" for city dwellers who constantly "mark their identities" in their "struggles to find a place in the city and a place in the world".² We explore the potentialities for

these precarious spaces to be transformed so as to assume the intimacy and become 'home', affective spaces; in other words, we explore how the 'roughness of street', the kind of micropolitics of encroachment of space is turned into 'commons'. Subaltern and precarious migrants together with other subaltern and precarious subjects are protagonists in these processes.

[...]

We are dealing with heterogeneous transformations and events, different types of explosions, from the *Occupy Movement* events to the rebellions and riots in New York, Paris, London and Athens,

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right through to the revolts in the Arab world. The *Occupy Movement* is as much a global as a local movement responding to the particularities within each society; the *Occupy the Buffer Zone* in Nicosia (OBZ), one of the last divided cities of the previous order of things, speaks then to a broader audience. Hence, what happens in Istanbul, Athens or Nicosia is becoming more significant to New York, Buenos Aires, Shanghai or London than ten, 20 or 30 years ago. This becomes apparent, once we appreciate how London, “a bastion of old capitalism and a global city of finance”³ has also become “a riot city” under “the constant threat” of “a new politics and a new place for political action”.⁴ We witness similar scenes alternating in different cities, from London, Madrid, Athens or Istanbul as the “days

of rage” are spreading, causing panic to the authorities.

The responses by the forces of law and order are typical: they produce “appropriate plans” to combat this “new enemy” in post-cold war world. The titles of the two documents produced by the London security authorities, which emphasized the dangers of “multiple potential attacks by ‘non-state actors’ utilizing cyber technology”, are indicative: “Securing Britain in the Age of Uncertainty” and “A strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty”.

Today it appears rather ironic to claim that the European periphery and core “has changed to the advantage of the periphery”, a view shared by numerous critical cosmopolitan scholars before the economic crisis.⁵ Together with the massive attack on labour rights and freedoms,

- 1 See Manuel Castells, *Luttes urbaines* (Paris: Maspero, 1973); Alain Touraine, *La Voix et le regard* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978); Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: The New Press, 2000); Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012); Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012).
- 2 Myria Georgiou, *Media and the City: Cosmopolitanism and Difference* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p.66.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p.24.
- 4 Clive Bloom, *Riot City: Protest and Rebellion in the Capital* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p.29.
- 5 Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.249.
- 6 Paul Mason, *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions* (London: Verso, 2012).
- 7 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.209.
- 8 See Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene* (London: Verso, 2012).
- 9 Michael Burroway, 'Forging Global Sociology from Below', paper is based on an address to the Conference of the Council of National Associations of the International

there is talk of a “global revolution [...] kicking off everywhere”.⁶ Reversing the Eurocentric paradigm that wants Europe to remain “the sovereign theoretical subject of all histories”,⁷ we claim that the border triangle of Europe is in many instances becoming the centre.⁸ It has in fact become one of the centres where history takes place in a breathless and breath-taking vertigo, which unambiguously calls for “forging a sociology from below”.⁹ The border must indeed be seen as *method*¹⁰

if we are to comprehend what seem to be incomprehensible transformations. We propose a multiple Southern perspective: on the one hand, it is inspired from what can be seen as a social science perspective from the South,¹¹ the Sociology of the South¹² and *Subaltern Studies*¹³ as well as critical race, class, gender and postcolonial studies,¹⁴ on the other hand, it is also a Southern/Eastern and Mediterranean perspective, which essentially describes a kind of *border reflexivity within Europe*. ■

Sociological Association held in Miami, 9–10 August 2005. See <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Global%20Sociology/Forging%20Global%20Sociology.pdf>

10 Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or the Multiplication of Labor* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013).

11 Raewyn W. Connell, *Southern Theory: Social Science and the Global Dynamics of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

12 Eliana Dookterman, “Turkey Bans Twitter”, *Time*, available online at <http://time.com/32864/turkey-bans-twitter>

13 Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

14 See Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Contextualising Feminism: Gender, Ethnic & Class divisions”, *Feminist Review*, No. 15, November 1983, pp. 62–75, and *Racialised Boundaries: nation, race, ethnicity, colour and class and the anti racist struggle* (London: Routledge, 1992); Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous identities* (London & New York: Verso, 1991); Stuart Hall, *The Formations of Modernity: Understanding Modern Societies an Introduction* (Polity Press, 1992); Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene* (London & New York: Verso, 2002); Christopher Kyriakides and Rodolpho D. Torres, *Race Defaced: Paradigms of Pessimism, Politics of Possibility* (Stanford University Press, 2012).

All Cameras are Police Cameras

by **James Bridle**

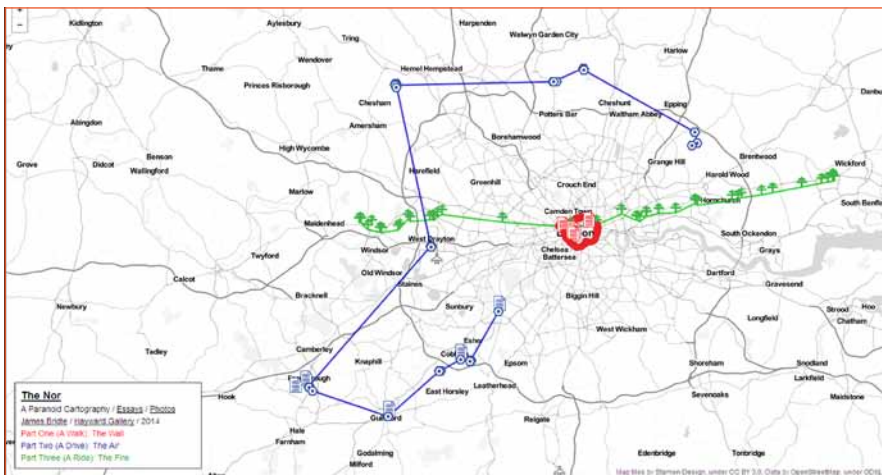
7 November 2014

This essay is the first of a series of reports from *The Nor*, an investigation into paranoia, electromagnetism, and infrastructure, commissioned by the Hayward Gallery, London in 2014/15 as part of *MIRRORCITY*.

On the morning of Thursday, 30 October 2014, I set out to walk the perimeter of the London Congestion Charge Zone, a journey of some 12 miles around the centre of the city. I began at King's Cross, and walked

widdershins, down the Euston Road towards Paddington. At its Western end, the Zone's edge turns down Edgware Road, runs down Park Lane, Grosvenor Place, and Vauxhall Bridge Road, before changing course again across the river

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towards Elephant & Castle, Tower Bridge, Spitalfields, Shoreditch and returns to Kings Cross once more by City Road.

For reasons that will become clear, I did not complete this walk within the day. I did however document the portion that I undertook—roughly, half of the total—in the form of 427 photos of surveillance cameras. I photographed every camera I saw, which could see me (consider this a gross underestimation of the total).¹

The Congestion Charge Zone covers the area enclosed by the Third London Wall. This Wall continues the transformation, begun by the Second, from a physical into an electromagnetic entity. It is made of bits, electrons and radio waves, becoming less and less visible even as it becomes more pervasive.

The First London Wall was built in the late 2nd century by the Romans, in response to a political crisis. Following the murder of Pertinax in 193—the Year of the Five Emperors—the Empire descended into civil war. Clodius

Albinus, Governor of Britain, allied with Septimius Severus, commander of the troops in Illyricum and Pannonia, but soon turned against him, proclaiming himself Emperor with the support of the legions in Britain and Hispania.

When Albinus narrowly escaped assassination by one of Severus' messengers in 196 he put himself at the head of a 150,000 strong army and ordered the construction of fortifications around the city. Albinus did not last long: sailing to Gaul, he met Severus' army at Lugdunum (modern Lyon). In short order he was defeated and beheaded, his headless body tossed into the Rhine, and the head sent to Rome as a warning to other usurpers.

The Romans and their successors rebuilt and re-fortified the Wall for the next 1,000 years. Enclosing some 330 acres, the Wall forced all visitors to pass through seven narrow gates that connected the city to the Roman road system. Following the Blitz, the remaining fragments of the Wall were among the highest structures

¹ You can explore all of these photographs at Flickr: (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stml/sets/72157649048658422/>), and via this interactive map (<http://short-termmemoryloss.com/nor/map>).

still standing in the City, and can still be found extant at Barbican and Tower Hill.

The Second Wall was erected some 1,800 years later on the orders of the City of London Police, following the bombing of the Baltic Exchange in 1992 and Bishopsgate in 1993. Rather than the Kentish ragstone that made up the First Wall, the Second Wall was built of sentry boxes and roadblocks, with access streets narrowed to chicanes to slow vehicles at designated choke points. (As with the redesign of Oxford Street following the Gordon Riots of 1780, and in contrast to Haussmann's strategy in Paris, London pioneered the use of congestion as a tool of state control, which, if nothing else, is true to the sclerotic nature of the city itself.)

The Second Wall, commonly known as the 'ring of steel', extended only slightly beyond the boundaries of the first, as the new loci of value, the towers of global finance, were broadly contiguous with older forms of wealth and power. In 2003, following the 11 September attacks on New York City, but preceding the 7 July 2005 bombings on London itself, the police described the likelihood of a terrorist attack on the city as "inevitable" and widened the ring slightly. But ever since the 1996 bombing of Docklands it had been

both obvious and inevitable that a physically static wall would not be sufficient. Instead, the wall must expand, and diffuse.

Much like its predecessor, the Second Wall still stands, but it has been entirely subsumed within the territory of the Third. Its sentry boxes are frequently left vacant, its gates left open. The only permanently operating components, its video cameras, form an inner processing ring reinforcing those of its successor.

The Third London Wall—that which surrounds the Congestion Charge Zone—was completed in February 2003, and extended the traditional zone of the Wall from the financial district of the Square Mile to the West End, the commercial and entertainment district. In this manner it follows, predictably and admittedly somewhat belatedly, the expansion of capitalism itself into the realm of everyday life.

The core technology of the Third Wall, again pioneered but only partially implemented by the Second, is Automated Number Plate Recognition, or ANPR. Installations of over 800 ANPR cameras record the unique ID of every vehicle that enters the Zone in vast databases for later analysis. When the Wall was initially constructed, the public were informed that this data would only be held,

and regularly purged, by Transport for London, which oversees traffic matters in the city. However, within less than five years, the Home Secretary gave the Metropolitan Police full access to this system, which allowed them to take a complete copy of the data produced by the system.

This permission to access the data was granted to the police on the sole condition that they only used it when National Security was under threat. But since the data was now in their possession, the police reclassified it as 'crime' data and now use it for general policing matters, despite the wording of the original permission. As this data is not considered to be 'personal data' within the definition of the law, the police are under no obligation to destroy it, and may retain their ongoing record of all vehicle movements within the city for as long as they desire.

The ANPR cameras that operate on, within, and beyond the boundaries of the Congestion Charge Zone capture several pieces of data at once, in two forms. The first is raw information: the unique plate number of the vehicle tracked, the date and time of the tracking, and the location. The other two are images: a cropped image of the plate itself, for supporting the automated 'read', and a wider image of whole vehicle at the moment it is tracked, which may also include other vehicles,

the roadway, the driver, passengers and passers-by.

The gradual vacation of the human sentry boxes of the ring of steel, and their replacement with the automated eyes and minds of the ANPR system are mirrored, out of sight, by the replacement of rooms of watchers with databases, and of cartographers with LIDAR systems atop cars, and sensors aboard satellites in low earth orbits. Watching robots, camera drones, these seeing systems operate continuously, beyond the range of human interest and endurance. And they operate, always, from above, giving them the privilege of surveillance.

Surveillance images are all 'before' images, in the sense of 'before and after'. The 'after' might be anything: an earthquake, a riot, a protest, a war. Any system reliant on flow, which is all networks from vehicle traffic to commercial supply to video feeds to the internet itself, views disruptions within the same negative moral context. Surveillance images attain the status of evidence for unknown crimes the moment they are created, and merely await the identification of the moment they were created for. Automated imagery criminalises its subject.

Suspicion is a global variable. Once triggered it bubbles upward through the entire system. Walking

down Park Lane, I was accosted by a man in a suit who demanded to know what I was doing. He took out his mobile phone, pointed it at my face, told me he was going to “circulate my description”.

Shortly afterwards, a colleague of his physically restrained me and called the police. Both men worked at the Grosvenor House Hotel, whose cameras were among those that had been trained on me as I walked, and so are included in my documentation.

When they arrived, the police officers explained that carrying a camera in the vicinity of Central London was grounds for suspicion. I might be a terrorist who posed a threat to the good citizens of London — my own city. Equally I might be casing the joint for some future crime, studying its defences in order to circumvent them.

Carrying a camera thus justified the suspicion of the security guards who stopped me and performed a citizen’s arrest, detaining me until the arrival of the police. This suspicion in turn justified the actions of the police, who threatened me with arrest if I did not identify myself and explain my actions. For carrying a camera, I was told, I could be taken to the station and charged with “Going Equipped”, a provision of the 1968 Theft Act that determines the imprisonment for up to three years of anyone carrying

equipment that may be used to commit a burglary.

Of course, the threats of the policemen were utterly baseless. Of course the use of cameras in public, as dictated in numerous statements by the Metropolitan Police themselves, is not, and should not be construed as, a crime. But, as anyone who has ever encountered the police in an analogous situation knows, the law comes a distant second to the exercise of power itself.

The Fourth London Wall will be made of transponders carried in the vehicles themselves. Various forms of these are already on trial in the United States, where the E-ZPass system has migrated from toll bridges and tunnels and out into the wider city, where it can track the passage of vehicles with radio waves. The introduction of diagnostic data ports in cars has led to the uptake of consumer monitors that also transmit location data, as do many common GPS systems. These systems will soon be formalised in the eCall platform, which will be mandatory in all new vehicles by the end of 2015.

It is also being seen in the development and deployment of roving ANPR, fitted to every police vehicle and soon onto the bodies of council operatives themselves. Finally, the Wall loses all physical definition, becoming

a truly ubiquitous zone, rather than a fixed barrier.

As the intentionality of the camera's image disappears into automation, and the Wall becomes ethereal and obscure, so the image itself dissolves, replaced by data. Cameras no longer see in pictures, but record and process information: the string of numbers on a car licence plate, the dimensions of a human face, the IMEI of a mobile phone, the infrared reflectivity of plants, the depth and tonality of a voice.

Around the time of the Fifth Wall, the system (which once contained actual human sensors, men with spears atop its ramparts), will regain the ability to see individuals. At first, this will be done through the medium of mobile phone tracking, which is also already present within the Zone. The swift shut-down by the City of London of the Renew 'spy bins', which tracked the movements of passers-by, belies the widespread existing implementation of the system in shops and retail zones across the city, continually monitoring the movements of shoppers and passers-by.

At the same time, camera systems deployed at the airports in the outer reaches of the zone have already developed the ability to read human faces, irises, expressions and gaits in exactly the same manner as their ANPR predecessors, and build

unique, storeable profiles from them. While it's always amusing to think of how such systems could be evaded through the use of masks or disruptive patterns, it should be noted that Section 60AA of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, deployed across Central London on the night of 5 November 2014, gives the police the right to define a zone in which anyone refusing to reveal their face may be imprisoned for up to a month.

Each Wall, and the Abstract Wall in its totality, is a model-mirror of social processes. As the Third Wall is the natural product of the expansion of financial systems and logics from the banking sector into every other, and the Fourth Wall addresses the mechanisation of the supply chain and the domination of logistics systems, so the Fifth goes hand in hand with the rapidly expanding privatisation of public space, the latest weapon being deployed against Londoners' lingering desire for the freedoms of city life.

I finished my walk at Vauxhall, as my detention on Park Lane had cost the better part of the early afternoon. I hope to complete the walk at a later date. The decision to stop was made, appropriately enough, in the shadow of Vauxhall Cross, the headquarters of the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6. The blazing red spot on the map, denoting a concentration of cameras, is

accounted for by this—and by the far more mysterious building at 1 Bessborough Gardens on the other side of the river, blank-faced, festooned with cameras, whose neighbours regularly complain of electromagnetic interference.

For contrast, see the statistically unlikely dearth of cameras shown in the area south of the Grosvenor Park Hotel, on the lower half of Park Lane. Of course, there aren't fewer cameras there. It's a high-risk area. An area attractive to thieves and terrorists. But when you've been physically restrained by blank men in suits, lectured and threatened by police officers, you really just want to get away from there as quickly as possible. When you get in trouble for looking at the cameras, you stop looking at the cameras. But you should really be looking at the cameras.

One of the defining characteristics of the Wall is that it is not, and cannot be, voluntary. While some of the strategies listed here are based on cooperation with the Wall system (tachymeters, navigation and check-in

apps, fitness monitors and wearable computers), these are always the accompaniment or introduction to mandatory systems, and are best seen as elective, collaborative trials rather than early adoption or individualistic disruption. Each successive Wall is only erected when the relevant technologies and social systems have arisen that no longer depend on consent.

The Sixth Wall will be built from the things you wear on your body and arrange on the shelves in your bedroom. Nest, QOL, Hue. Automatic. Smart TVs. HAPIfork. Vessyl. Autographer. Memeto. Glass. Dropcam. Jawbone. Fuel. Withings. Fitbit. Healthkit. Little policemen in your pocket, little policemen on your skin.

The Sixth Wall will be made of intelligent dust that settles in the folds of your clothes and communicates your position and heart rate to orbiting satellites. London's citizens will dream, and the images of their dreams will dance on the telescreens of Piccadilly Circus, and be found wanting. ■

On next pages:
→ All images:
James Bridle,
The Nor, Part One: The Wall, courtesy
of the artist <https://www.flickr.com/photos/stml/sets/72157649048658422/>







*“The metropolis is
a factory for the produc-
tion of the common.”*

— **Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri**, *Commonwealth*

WHAT'S THE RECIPE FOR A MUNICIPAL MOVEMENT?

15M COMBO PLATTER

laioflautas (Senior citizen activists)
 Youth with No Future
 Debt Audit
 PAH (Mortgage Action Platform)
 SI SE PUEDE
 PERD NO OLVIDEN
 Occupy
 Anonymous
 Don't vote for them
 Support Universal Healthcare
 DRY (It will Democracy Now)
 Zapotista Uprising
 Copyleft Movement
 No A la Guerra (No War)
 Arab Spring
 Indymedia
 Seattle counter-summit
 Global Movement
 Prague 2000
 Genoa 2001
 Carlo Giuliani's murder

HOUSING MOVEMENT COMBO PLATTER

Aida Guinotao
 Obrero Social (Self-housing collective)
 ILP de la PAH (Citizens Initiative Political Party)
 V for Housing
 Stop Evictions
 You won't own a house in your whole fucking life!
 Housing assemblies
 Corralas (co-housing)

RESISTANCE COMBO PLATTER

Citizen Tides
 Gamonal
 Valencián Spring
 Miners Strike
 General Strike
 Freeze Parliament
 Marches for Dignity
 Surround Congress

RIGHT TO THE CITY COMBO PLATTER

Occupied and/or self-managed social centers and squats
 Metropolitan Observatory
 Critical Mass
 Participatory Budgeting
 Urban Gardens
 Marinaleda
 Art. 47 (Spanish Constitution)
 Energy Poverty

FEMINISMS COMBO PLATTER

Copyleftlove
 Care and domestic work strike
 Feminists Commission (FEM movement)
 Blocking Gallardón's ban on abortion
 Mamen Carmona
 Iyda Herrera
 Ada Colau
 Silvia Federici
 Female and Feminist Leaderships

ELECTORAL COMBO PLATTER

Guanyem ganebem
 BCN en Comú (citizen platform)
 (The Popular Unity Candidates)
 CUP
 Partido X
 Podemos
 Syriza
 Movimiento 5 Stelle
 Best Party
 Active Abstention
 Cooperativism, Social and local markets
 Right to Decent Housing
 Art. 47 (Spanish Constitution)
 Marinaleda
 Energy Poverty

What's the Recipe for a Municipal Movement?

What's underlying the current political situation in Spain? What's behind the new political actors from Spanish civil society? What have we experienced since 15M (Spanish Occupy)? This is an illustrated genealogy that tries to explain the process of some of the social movements that drew on the previous experience of the new parties and citizens' platforms that are changing the public institutions in Spain. This is just one possible itinerary (there are many more)

of the last four years. This was drawn by the artist María Castelló and developed by ZEMOS98 in the context of the project Radical Democracy: Reclaiming the Commons. A project coordinated by Doc Next Network where the Spanish Medialab was coordinated by Sofía Coca and formed also by Lucas Tello, Nuria Campabadal, Guillermo Zapata and Mario Munera. More media and other materials are available on www.municipalrecipes.cc ■

Class Discourse in the Metropolis

by **Carlos Delclós**

Social scientists and urban scholars have been writing for years about how Barcelona's social structure has evolved over the last several decades, as its previously industrial production model has given way to a post-industrial, service-oriented economy increasingly centred around tourism. This transformation has been accompanied by a millenarian fascination with emerging forms of economic production that has eclipsed considerations of changes in the relationship between people and production. Thus, as discourses regarding work grew more abstract and immaterial, class discourse became more absent and less substantive.

In the early 2000s, urban theorist Richard Florida recognised this absence and stepped into the gap with his writings on the importance of the creative class

in economic development. His argument that attracting and retaining highly educated professionals to urban centres leads to growth, urban regeneration and life-satisfaction proved very convincing to city officials looking for a new progressive narrative for the post-industrial scenario. Barcelona was no exception to this, and his work became a standard reference in the city's bid to become a Smart City, characterised by the use of digital technologies to improve economic performance and the well-being of residents.

In such a framework, gentrification is the focal point of class tensions. But recently, Florida and many like-minded urban scholars have begun to strongly question the validity of the term, originally coined by British sociologist Ruth Glass to describe the displacement of low-income residents by more affluent ones.

Carlos Delclós

is a sociologist and writer and editor of *ROAR Magazine*. He is the communications coordinator for the Doc Next Network's *Radical Democracy* project (www.docnextnetwork.org/challenge).

Their argument is that gentrification is an exceedingly vague concept that is difficult to employ scientifically, and that attention should instead be focused on concentrated advantage and disadvantage. It is a somewhat misleading approach to the question, presenting concentrated disadvantage as static and neglecting the role of gentrification as the dynamic through which people are displaced to such areas.

Yet the idea is gaining support among many aspiring 'creatives', not least because it lends itself quite favourably to the fractal identity politics of the post-industrial era. Essentially, the three classes Florida refers to (the creative class, the service working class and the industrial working class) are a broad re-grouping of the USA's Standard Occupational Classification. Florida identifies the creative class with a wide range of occupations spanning tech workers, artists, engineers, musicians, health-care professionals, lesbians and gay men, business professionals, teachers, scientists and what

he describes as 'high bohemians'. Characterised by individualistic lifestyle preferences and cultured tastes, they are popularly associated with an increasingly relevant figure in the urban landscape: the hipster.

Generally imagined as white, male, privileged and effete, the hipster provides critics of Florida's 'urban renewal' recommendations with a compelling enemy through which to sublimate urban class antagonisms. In recent years, the pop-political critique of hipsters has quickly emerged as a widely read sub-genre of internet literature and even made it to bookshelves, perhaps most notably in Spain with Victor Lenore's *Indies, hipsters y gafapastas: Crónica de una dominación cultural*,¹ which is now in its fourth edition. Meanwhile, interest in the working class antithesis of the hipster is also growing, as evidenced by the impact of Owen Jones's *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*.²

On the surface, this interest in identities that embody urban class antagonisms

¹ Victor Lenore, *Indies, hipsters y gafapastas: Crónica de una dominación cultural* (Capitán Swing, 2014).

² Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (Verso Books, 2012).

seems to stem from the inequalities exacerbated by years of economic crisis and austerity in Western Europe. It is tempting to view the hipster vs. chav conflict as one between the creative class and a service working class that has replaced the industrial working class. Yet such a view reifies Florida's conceptual framework by granting the same excessive importance to lifestyle preferences, consumer habits and occupation, overlooking the defining issue facing work and shaping social classes in the post-industrial era: precarity.

Precarity splits occupational classes between insiders and outsiders, establishing a hierarchical gradient that goes beyond questions of occupational prestige to determine the extent to which workers are exposed to a variety of risks such as unemployment, underemployment or poverty, or mental and physical health risks. While it is known to disproportionately affect women, youth and foreign-born residents, there is also evidence that the neoliberal reforms carried out under the guise of austerity are extending precarity across occupational categories to those who previously enjoyed relatively stable employment conditions.

Moreover, although college-educated young people constitute a substantial and growing portion of the rapidly expanding *precariat* (as the economist

Guy Standing has referred to them), there is evidence that the vast majority of the college-educated precariat had parents who did not go to university. Thus, it is reasonable to consider that a class discourse articulated around identities based on lifestyles and consumption preferences—which are more strongly shaped by one's age and educational level than by their social class of origin—might do more to divide and suppress an emerging class antagonism than it does to galvanise it.

In contrast, a cursory examination of the powerful class discourses used by the two most recent examples of massively supported antagonist politics in Spain, the *Indignados* movement for radical democracy and *Podemos*, reveals not only a strong aversion to identity politics of this kind, but also the desire to overcome them by imposing a new narrative with a new master signifier. Slavoj Žižek has frequently and mistakenly dismissed these discourses as a simple demand for a new master directed at an unspecified elite. What he fails to realise is that the goal of both the *Indignados* and *Podemos* was never to engage the political establishment through calls for ethical reforms.

Rather, the target of their discourse was society at large and they were immensely successful in getting their narratives across. By April of 2013, the *Values and Worldviews Survey*

carried out by the BBVA Foundation identified Spain as Europe's most anti-capitalist country, with 74% of the population expressing disdain for the ideology. The country also showed the lowest average rating of the institutions that make up the Troika, including the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank, the main targets of the *Indignados*'s criticism.

Similarly, *Podemos*'s critique of The Regime of 1978 (the year Spain's constitution was signed into law) and *la casta* (the caste) have proven tremendously effective in mobilising massive discontent against the classes benefiting most from the current social order. Applying Ernesto Laclau's theory about the utility of "empty signifiers" for left-wing populist politics, they have successfully brought the *Indignados* slogan ("We are not the left or the right.

We are the people at the bottom and we are coming for the people at the top") into electoral politics.

To counter this threat of collective action, the establishment unsurprisingly seeks to atomise. And to do this, they centre their discourse around the figure of the entrepreneur (*emprendedor*), essentially a re-branding of the creative class, with a telling difference in the Spanish context: here, the self-employed were previously referred to as *autónomos*.

Today, however, this figure has become associated with precarity, a condition that is antithetical to autonomy. It seems that the establishment's most 'creative' response to an emerging class identification based on the employment relationship was to simply re-brand one subset of precarious workers through a strictly occupational distinction. ■

How to Stop Gentrification in London: What We Can Learn from Spain's New Rebel Mayors

by **Dan Hancox**

Imagine if National Health Service (NHS) worker and single mother Lindsey Garrett, who campaigned to save the New Era Estate in Hackney from development sharks, was the next Mayor of London, rather than some slick politician. It's not impossible—for one thing, she is running for the post in 2016¹—but also, that's pretty much what has just happened in Barcelona. Ada Colau, the woman who established the hugely successful direct action housing group the PAH (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca or Platform for People Affected by Mortgages), which has blocked over 1,000 evictions and counting), has just been elected Mayor of the Spanish city, as head of the new

citizens' platform Barcelona en Comú.

The message from Spain is clear: rather than fighting against City Hall, maybe we should be fighting *from* City Hall. Backed by, but independent from, left-wing political party *Podemos*, a wave of city-based radical democratic candidacies has just swept Spain's established parties from power. Ada Colau and Barcelona en Comú have taken the Catalan city,² while the capital Madrid, normally the secure home of the right-wing Partido Popular, has been similarly shaken by a new constellation called *Ahora Madrid*, which seized 32% of the vote³ and will now form a coalition arrangement with the centre-left Socialist Party (PSOE).

Dan Hancox is a freelance writer, interested in radical politics, protest, and pop culture in Britain, Spain and beyond. He notably writes for *The Guardian*, *LRB*, *VICE*, *New Statesman*, *Frieze*, *Five Dials*, *The National*.

Barcelona en Comú is already setting out its store. It is breathtaking because it is so radical and so blindingly common-sense at the same time, but most of all because it is delivering on its promises: there will be fines for banks that hold empty properties in the city; a tax on electricity companies; free transport for under 16s; a review of (often shoddy) working conditions among all City Hall sub-contracted employees; job creation through property renovation; an elimination of official cars; reduction of officials' salaries; a subsidy for low-income households; and a freeze on new hotel building. It is a platform designed to reverse Barcelona's frenetic and untrammelled gentrification, and to reverse the trend of cities as little more than vehicles for ever-widening inequality.

Colau announced her victory saying that she would "govern by obeying the people",⁴ which is a phrase used by the revolutionary indigenous Mexican movement the *Zapatistas*, who have established egalitarian self-government that is independent

of the Mexican state since the 1990s. The fascinating populist paradox in Spain is that these new platforms often have inspiring leaders who look suspiciously like ordinary people. But they are not about their leaders—they have direct roots in the massive, leaderless 2011 *Indignados* movement, and also in local neighbourhood organisations of the big cities. Barcelona en Comú, Ahora Madrid and others seek to turn what is often the sham of modern electoral democracy inside out, and hand it over to the people. As one local put it, "Colau does not represent us—I've voted to change representation into participation."⁵

As David Harvey argued in his 2012 book *Rebel Cities*,⁶ the misery inflicted by contemporary capitalism and state power needs to be tackled based on the realities of people's everyday lives, not via dusty texts written by dead Russians. In the west, the factories are going or gone. Work is often precarious and labour organising is difficult—the city must become the new factory. The terrain

¹ Simon Harris, ITV News, 12 May 2015. See <http://www.itv.com/news/london/2015-05-14/campaigner-who-fought-housing-evictions-to-stand-in-mayoral-race/>

² Miquel Noguer, *El País*, 25 May 2015. See http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/05/25/inglish/1432541816_126570.html

³ Bruno Garcia Gallo, *El País*, 25 May 2015. See http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/05/25/inglish/1432541787_724673.html

⁴ Roarmag.org, 25 May 2015. See <http://roarmag.org/2015/05/barcelona-comu-election-victory/>

⁵ See Twitter <https://twitter.com/BueRubner/status/602455819041529857>

⁶ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012).

on which we organise and fight for justice, equality and real democracy is no longer the factory shop floor, but the actual places where we live. London and Barcelona share similar problems as they grow, gentrify and privatise.

As my hometown of London explodes in size—with 1.3 million new Londoners expected by 2030—its chief subject, the precarious city dweller, is also proliferating at a rate of knots. While each new glass skyscraper in the shape of a kitchen appliance is a new monument to success for some, there does not appear to be a corresponding reduction in inequality or suffering in the capital. On the contrary, in the decade leading up to 2011–12, the number of people in in-work poverty in London increased by 440,000⁷—as real wages stagnated and house prices, rents and living costs soared.

In London we are a long way off the jubilant scenes on the streets of Barcelona and Madrid in May 2015, but there are promising signs that the fight back is beginning.

This astonishing map provides links to 45 housing and anti-gentrification campaigns in the capital—only a handful were in existence a year ago. Skills and experience are being shared from the Focus E15 mums to the New Era residents, from Cressingham Gardens in south London to the Sweets Way Estate in the north.

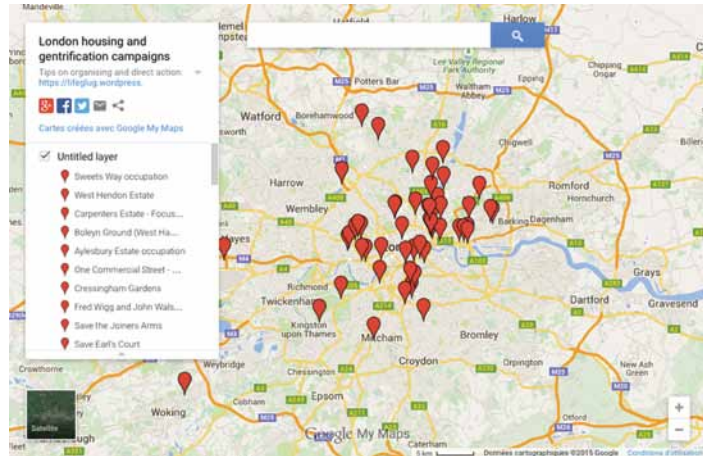
Londoners are mounting hyper-specific, hyper-local campaigns to defend their homes against the *ersatz* golden handshake proffered by the regeneration industry and its patrons in our town halls. These are the most important practical battles of the minute, based as they are in communities, among neighbours, for the essential right to live in the city. Interestingly, their logic is broadening outwards: the recent Reclaim Brixton protest was notable because it objected to gentrification as a general process.⁸

The rapid and recent growth of these campaigns also speaks to the question posed by the new Spanish populism of *Podemos* and its municipal friends in

⁷ New Policy Institute and Trust for London, *London's Poverty Profile 2013*, http://www.london-spovertyprofile.org.uk/LPP_2013_Report_Web.pdf

⁸ See [vice.com](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/brixton-foxtons-smashed-reclaim-demonstration-388), 27 April 2015: http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/brixton-foxtons-smashed-reclaim-demonstration-388

→ London housing and gentrification campaigns. See <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=zFuqvrQCgNdM.kVkOixRLk0I1>



Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza, Cadiz and beyond: how do you build a left-wing alternative whose language and tactics don't reek of a past of failure and irrelevance? *Podemos's* populist philosophy, adapted from the late Argentinian philosopher Ernesto Laclau,⁹ aims to construct "an internal antagonistic frontier" of the people against a corrupt and self-serving elite. In the context of a city, it pulls a veil over the 'old left' because it is based on a new subject: not the Fordist factory worker, but the precarious city dweller.

Their employment is insecure, irregular and poorly paid, of course—but their

housing is insecure as well. In the light of its rapid gentrification and the deep-set Spanish housing crisis, it makes perfect sense that Barcelona's new Mayor is the leader of the PAH, the radical anti-eviction movement that has garnered 89% approval in polls. Tellingly, a documentary about the PAH has been doing the rounds among London's growing number of housing activist groups recently.¹⁰ With unaffordable housing the new norm in London, this emerging 'antagonistic frontier' is forming against a property developer and landlord class that is being subsidised country-wide

⁹ Dan Hancox, *The Guardian*, 9 February 2015. See <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/09/ernesto-laclau-intellectual-figurehead-syriza-podemos>

¹⁰ See YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caD17RKJfbc>

by the tax-payer to the tune of £26.7 billion a year, via tax breaks and housing benefit.¹¹

So how do we follow Spain's example and make the leap from those 45 localised campaigns to City Hall itself? The London Mayoral elections in 2016 will see a few interesting candidates on the ballot—Lindsey Garrett from the New Era Estate, for one; Sian Berry from the Greens, for another. A new non-partisan organisation on the Spanish model, Take Back the City,¹² was launched in London recently, with the notion that they might find and support a “people’s candidate for Mayor” in 2016. Hopefully this goal will only be a one side-product of a much wider effort to empower the city’s marginalised communities. Take Back The City is formed from the same mindset as the new wave of housing campaigns,

with no more storied an ideology than the notion that the city should belong to all its citizens, not just the rich and powerful.

We are many, and they are few, and we have to remind ourselves of that as we gaze up at the opalescent, mocking hubris of The Shard. As a famous Spanish radical from a few generations prior to Ada Colau said, “it is we who built these palaces and cities—and we can build others to take their place”.¹³ To the millions of Londoners who have been abandoned, ignored or exploited by politicians and bosses; to young people herded out of public space and out of free education, permanent renters, migrants, victims of racist policing, the disabled, carers, the insecurely housed, the underpaid and unemployed—it’s time to take back our cities. ■

¹¹ Hilary Osborne, The Guardian, 9 February 2015. See <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/feb/09/private-landlords-gain-26-7-billion-uk-taxpayer-generation-rent>

¹² See <http://takebackthecity.org/>

¹³ Buenaventura Durruti. See <https://libcom.org/history/durruti-buenaventura-1896-1936>

*“The fight for
the commons in
cities is essentially
a fight to reclaim
democracy — and
to re-imagine how
city life is organized.”*

— **David Bollier**, *The Commons, Political Transformation and Cities*

Watching Radical Democracy: Doc Next Network goes looking for alternative democracy & finds an urban movement for the commons

by **Charlie Tims**

Initiated by the European Cultural Foundation in 2010, Doc Next Network (DNN) is a platform of media-interested organisations from across Europe that collaborate with one another on projects that use film and media to explore social issues. DNN believes in using media in collaborative ways, often working directly with citizens and social agents. Their hope is that this approach will result in powerful new stories about life in Europe.

I have been working with DNN for the last year digging around in its media archive, looking for stories, connections and associations.

This article is the story of *Radical Democracy*—a eighteen-month project

by DNN co-funded by the Open Society Initiative for Europe that used media making as a way of researching, celebrating and supporting people across Europe who are calling for better forms of democracy.

In the run up to the elections to the European Parliament last year, we announced a media challenge inviting film and media makers from across Europe to craft videos that proposed ways to improve democracy. More than 200 videos were submitted. They came from campaigners, amateur film makers and hobby media makers.

Much dissatisfaction with democracy was expressed. Here are some examples.

Charlie Tims is currently working as a researcher with the Doc Next Network (<http://www.docnextnetwork.org/>) and is an associate of the think tank Demos.

Censorship

Here are two frames from an animated film *Backward Run* by Turkish animator Ayce Kartal. The animation shows how control of television and newspapers kept the 2013 Gezi Park protests from public view.

↔ *Backward Run*
by Ayce Kartal,
2013, courtesy
of DNN Media
Collection (CC BY-
NC-ND 3.0).

**Repression**

These two frames are taken from *Grayscale* by the Ninotchka Art Project, which questions how much Spain's policing of public protest has changed since Franco's dictatorship.

↔ *Grayscale* by
Ninotchka Art
Project, 2013,
courtesy of DNN
Media Collection
(CC BY-SA 3.0).





↔ *I Believe* by ZEMOS98, 2013, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Venal politics

Many videos submitted to the video challenge poked fun at vain and power-hungry politicians. These frames are taken from *I Believe*, made by the Spanish collective ZEMOS98.



>More lobby! Bribe is my right! National Offshore Bank

↑ *Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party* by Áron Halász, 2013, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

Big business

Fear of powerful corporations and oligarchs bending democratic institutions to their will featured in many videos. The *Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party* submitted by Áron Halász shows an ironic protest in support of bankers and oligarchs.



Excluded groups

If measured in video minutes alone, the greatest problem with democracy in Europe, according to the Radical Democracy Video Challenge, was the low status of individuals and groups suffering discrimination, exploitation and criminalisation. This list included homeless people criminalised for living on the streets in Hungary, asylum seekers, sex workers, disabled people, gay people, transsexuals and women. This frame is taken from *A little piece of land* made by Marjolein Busstra. It shows 'urban nomads' struggling for the right to live on a strip of wasteland on the edge of Amsterdam.

↑ *A Little Piece of Land* by Marjolein Busstra, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0).



↑ *I Can Be There Too?* by Emese Jerne, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY 3.0).

Alternatives

As well as all this dissatisfaction and frustration, alternative systems of democratic representation were proposed in some videos. *I can be there too* argues for a democracy featuring the idea of random citizen representation in governments. An election by lottery rather than vote. In the film, Emese Jerne sees her number selected on national television. Later we see her arriving at the parliament to take office.

In 2014 the Belgian Youth Parliament dissolved itself calling for elective democracy to be replaced with a citizen lottery.



Another video made by a Polish film maker, Inga Hajdarowicz, focused on participatory budgeting in Medellín, Colombia. Participatory budgeting is a process of deciding how a proportion of a city's budget is spent through a series of public dialogues. Here is a shot of Adriana Giraldo Soto showing building works paid for by participatory budgeting that is improving her community.

↑ *Meet Two of Them* by Inga Hajdarowicz, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-SC-NA 3.0).

Taking democracy closer to everyday life

But systemic proposals like this were few and far between. Where films drew attention to alternatives and hope, 'radical democracy' was interpreted to mean acting locally to defend housing from developers, protecting and supporting the growth of public spaces and challenging institutions to be more publicly accountable. You could say that, for these video makers, radical democracy was about applying the principle of democracy to everyday life.



Hope Area #2 made by Jeanne Dressen opens a window on the Paris Occupy protests in 2011.

↑ *Hope Area #2* by Jeanne Dressen, 2012, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-SC-NA 3.0).



← *A Winter's Tale of Spring* by Ermni Kadic, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY 3.0).

Ermni Kadic's *A Winter's Tale of Spring* tells the story of Bosnia's plenums—assemblies that formed during protests across Bosnia during Spring 2014.



A series of videos submitted by Vladimir Turner show artistic interventions that symbolically challenge the power of advertising in public space.

↔ *Merrygoround* (2012), *Enlightenment* (2013), *Urbania Jones* (2012) by Vladimir Turner, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC 3.0).

Emeko Fil Gullarie's *Grand Mansion of el Pumarejo* shows the depth of feeling among people in Seville, Spain who are campaigning for a publicly owned apartment to stay open.



← *Grand Mansion of el Pumarejo* by Emeko Fil Gullarie, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

In *Fight Visual Pollution*, Marija Jacimovic calls for political posters to be cleared away from public spaces after elections have passed.



← *Fight Visual Pollution* by Marija Jacimovic, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

Reclaiming the commons

Films like this showed campaigners and artists symbolically, literally and legally trying to claim space in cities, disrupt its rules and replace the dominating influence of one group with a democratic spirit. In the second phase of Radical Democracy, we referred to this action as ‘reclaiming the commons’—because for these struggles, protests and campaigns to be successful, they would need to establish new common spaces, goods and resources in cities. These spaces would need to be accessible and influenced by the people who used them.

In this second phase, after the original Media Challenge, the four media making hubs of Doc Next Network in Spain, Poland, Turkey and the UK worked with local campaigning organisations. They aimed to help these campaigns with videos and other forms of media. The campaigners worked in three related areas—reclaiming home, public space and political parties.



Homes

Here are some frames taken from two videos made in London that aimed to support people campaigning to improve the conditions of tenants who rent privately in London. The first of the two videos aimed to inform the viewer about the diminished status of property guardians—effectively legal squatters who waive what few rights tenants have in London for cheap rents in buildings that are awaiting development. The guardian is in the bottom left hand corner of the shot.

This next frame is taken from a documentary that illustrates the socially destructive nature of London's rental market.

In this scene, a landlord explores his tenant's underwear drawer—an act that, although illegal, would be hard for a tenant to challenge—given the fact that landlords need no

↑ *Who Guards the Guardians?*
by DNN UK Media Lab, 2015, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).



← *Londonville* by DNN UK Media Lab, 2015, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

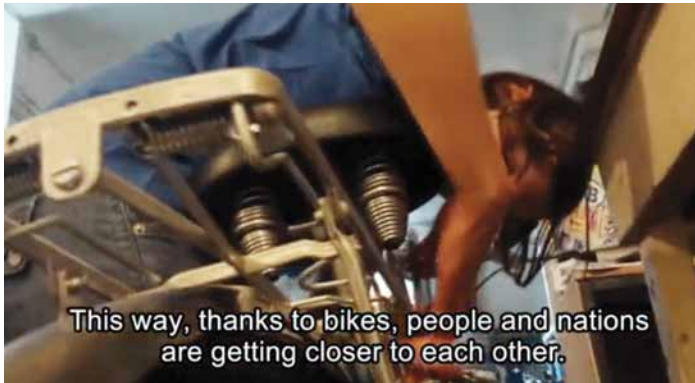
reason to evict their tenants in England and can do so with little notice.

In the final scene of the film—which shows the dog-eat-dog, rent-or-be-rented nature of London's housing crisis—all the tenants, landlords and estate agents take hammers to the set and destroy it.



These films show that it's possible for governments to fulfil their legal responsibility to provide people with shelter, but what results can often be far from what might be called a 'home'. For these video makers, thinking of housing as part of the commons may not necessarily mean 'sharing your home with other people'—but it does mean that homes in cities are not possible if housing is left to be part of the market like any other commodity. A common good, perhaps.

↑ *Londonville* by DNN London Media Lab, 2015, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).



This way, thanks to bikes, people and nations are getting closer to each other.

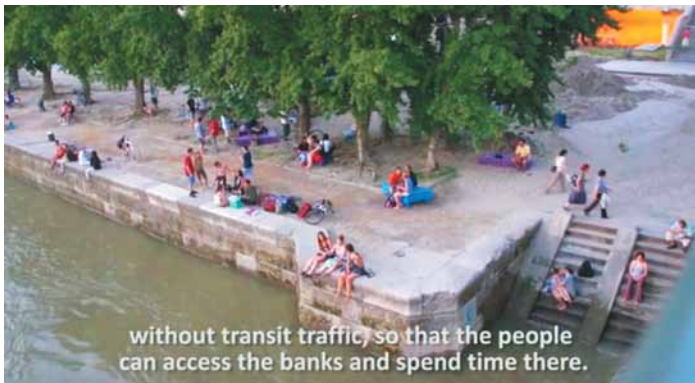
← *Autonomy on Two wheels* by Attila Endrődi-Mike, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Public spaces

Videos that celebrate new urban community culture—bicycle fixing workshops, people who act, play and educate in public spaces & social centres—featured strongly in the original challenge.

Autonomy on two wheels is a beguiling portrait of two young Hungarians who dream of making Budapest into a cooperative city and have started a bicycle fixing workshop and community.

In the same city, *Valyo* shows the work of the Valyo Group, which is trying to bring the life of the Danube closer to the city.



without transit traffic, so that the people can access the banks and spend time there.

← *Valyo* — *Meet the River* by the Valyo Group, 2014, courtesy of DNN Media Collection © Valyo Group.

Here are some frames from *Open Jazdow*—a campaign to preserve some under-appreciated but unique wooden houses and support the growth of a public space around them.



The houses are modular constructions, like Lego bricks.

↓ *Open Jazdow* by DNN Polish Media Lab 2015, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).



The plan was to produce a lot of elements in one factory,



← *Open Jazdow* by DNN Polish Media Lab 2015, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

And here are two people campaigning to save them.

The Urban Movement in Poland that initiatives like *Open Jazdow* are part of has been effective in influencing mayoral elections and has also successfully campaigned against the Krakow 2022 Olympic Games. But it's worth mentioning too that what began as a call for green space—a green commons—has become a call for more democracy. Both Lodz and Sopot have recently introduced participatory budgeting in response to pressure from the urban movement. It probably wasn't a coincidence that the video about participatory budgeting we looked at earlier was made by someone from Poland.

Political parties

In Spain, new parties have formed in cities with the aim of claiming politics with the same principles they have used to claim spaces and buildings during protests and occupations of recent years. At the end of May, candidates from new municipal parties—keen on collective decision-making processes, openness and mistrustful of free-market economics—stood in elections all over the country.



← *Municipal Recipes* by DNN Spanish Media Lab 2015, courtesy of DNN Media Collection (CC BY-SA 3.0).

In Barcelona the municipal government is, at the time of writing, controlled by Barcelona en Comu and its leader Ada Colau. *Municipal Recipes* is a film made by ZEMOS98 in the spring of 2015, which shows candidates, activists and campaigners involved in these campaigns.

They express a deep and profound faith in the power of widespread participation in decision making to make cities better.

Sadly Guillermo Zapata (pictured in the centre of the table), although being elected in Madrid and appointed as the culture spokesperson, has already had to resign over a few ill-judged Tweets he made several years ago.

So to wrap things up. When the video challenge phase of the project pointed to alternative forms of democracy, radical democracy meant applying 'democratic' principles to everyday life in the city. Taken to their logical conclusion, this action means an urban commons, or urban common goods need to be established. That's why the project focused on establishing common goods in three areas—housing, public space and better democracy. The criticism of these movements is that they lack democratic legitimacy as the people involved are unaccountable, self-appointed interest groups. But it seems that in many instances, rather than rejecting them, reclaiming the commons is/leads to a strategy for renewing democratic institutions. ■

Commoning in the City

by **Dougald Hine**

In the architecture museum on the island of Skeppsholmen, in the heart of Stockholm, 11 of us have been brought together to spend two days thinking aloud around the theme of Commoning the City. The human rights researcher Saki Bailey provides a forensic analysis of the foundations of property law. The artist Fritz Haeg tells us what happened when he opened his home in Los Angeles to the public as a space for collective learning and collaboration. Alda Sigurðardóttir leads us through a version of the visioning process that was used by the national assembly of citizens, following the economic and political collapse in Iceland. Meanwhile, Fredrik Åslund—the founder of a Swedish think tank, the name of which translates as Create Commons—has the best t-shirt slogan

of the event: “Home-cooking is killing the restaurant industry”.

I am the night watchman on this team, sent in to replace the Swiss author, P.M., the man responsible for the anarchist utopia *bolo’bolo*, who has had to pull out for family reasons. Taking his place in the open conference that is the centrepiece of the two days, I realise that this is the first time I have spoken in public on the subject of the commons. For most of the others, this is a term that has been at the heart of their work for years or decades. Meanwhile, this event itself is evidence of the new importance that it is taking on: ‘commons’ is becoming a charged word, following a path similar to those taken by words such as ‘sustainability’ and ‘resilience’, raised as a banner under which an increasing variety of people

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and organisations wish to place themselves.

At such moments, there can be mixed feelings for those who have a long history with the word in question: there is room for a sense of vindication, but also concern at the new meanings, or new vaguenesses, that accrete to a word as it comes into vogue. As a relative outsider, it is interesting to observe people coming to terms with this, and certain questions arise: not least, why is this happening now?

Of everything I hear during these two days, the answer that most impresses me comes from Stavros Stavrides: 'commons' has become useful, he argues, because of a change in attitude to the state, a disillusionment with the 'public' and a need for another term to take its place. The public sphere, public values, the public sector: all of these things might once have promised some counterweight to the destructive force of the market, but this no longer seems to be the case.

We are not witnessing a turn towards anarchism, exactly, but something more pragmatic: a shift in the general mood, reflecting the reality of people's experience after five years of this unending crisis, itself coming after decades of neoliberalism. It is the attitude that underlies the Squares Movement, from Tahrir to Syntagma, the Puerta del Sol and Zuccotti Park.

If those camping out in cities across three continents were reluctant to distill their discontent into a set of demands on government, this was not simply a utopian refusal to engage with the compromises of political reality; it was also a conviction that to put hope in government is now the most utopian position of all. This is also the attitude that has driven the rise of Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement, and it has all the uncomfortable ambiguities that such an example suggests.

Into this vacuum, the commons enters as an alternative to both public and private. I find myself wanting to push this further, to suggest that it indicates a significant historical rupture, in at least two senses: a breaking of the frame of politics as a tug of war between the forces of state and market; and the failure of the project of the public, the promise of liberal modernity to construct a neutral space in which we could meet each other as individuals with certain universal rights. This latter point is particularly uncomfortable, we discover during our conversations in Stockholm, since many of our ideas of social justice are founded on that framework. Yet if it is true that the rise of the commons reflects the failure of the public, it is not clear that we can simply expect to borrow its assumptions.

A politics that has abandoned the public might justly be called a post-modern politics. We have already seen the cynical form of such a politics in the hands of Bush, Blair and Berlusconi: the reliance on controlling the narrative, the disdain for 'the reality-based community'. Against this, the appeal to older public values looks sadly nostalgic. (Think of Aaron Sorkin's latest series for HBO, *The Newsroom*: its opening titles, a montage of a nobler age of American journalism, the series itself offers a kind of liberal wish-fulfilment, while Obama presides over drone wars and assassination lists.) The attraction of the commons, then, may be that it promises the emergence of a non-cynical form of post-modern politics.

If the commons was to hand as a reference point for such a politics, this was to no small extent the result of the emergence of new modes of collaboration, facilitated by—but not limited to—the internet. A great deal of excitement, some of it well-founded and some of it hype, has centred on the disruption to our forms of property and modes of production being brought by the ways in which people are using networked technologies. It hardly helps that attempts to articulate the genuine possibilities of these technologies that are inevitably entangled with the interests of venture

capital firms and huge corporations, a libertarian ideology, and a California-inflected mythology about the evolution of human consciousness.

Apart from anything else, these entanglements obscure the extent to which the most appealing aspects of the internet are often as old as the hills: many of the modes of community and collaboration that have come into being around these technologies are recapitulations of earlier social themes, marginalised by the structure and scale of industrial mass societies.

One of the defining characteristics of such societies has been the marginalisation of human sociability: domestic space becomes a private sanctum, strangers no longer speak to one another in the street, while there is a compulsion to choose the more profitable and efficient mode of any productive activity over forms whose inefficiencies might allow more room for sociability and meaning within the activity itself. Describing the organisation of activity within cities, the sociologist Ray Oldenburg identified the phenomenon of the 'third place': neither the home nor the workplace, but the convivial meeting point—whether pub, cafe or hair salon—whose importance to the life of a local community is out of proportion to the amount of time we

get to spend there. Where Oldenburg views this as an eternal feature of human societies, we might recognise the third place as a kind of native reservation: an enclave in which our indigenous sociability exists under license, while the rest of the social landscape is subject to the demand for efficiency.

Against this, it is striking that the online spaces that inspire greatest attachment seem to be those that have something in common with the campfire, the bazaar, or indeed the commons, and that such pre-industrial social forms have been a recurring reference point within internet culture. These spaces exceed the boundaries of the third place, both in the range of activity taking place within them and the amount of time that many devote to them. Even the structure of the internet itself resembles not so much the 'information superhighway' envisaged by politicians in the 1990s as the proliferating web of trade routes that centred on the Silk Road. (The historical analogy is also implicit in the argument made by the information activist Smári McCarthy, that the radical possibilities of these technologies are under threat from 'the industrialisation of the internet'.)

There are deep ambiguities here: technologically, the internet represents an intensification of many of the dynamics of the industrial era; yet in

the new social spaces that have accompanied it, people have had powerful experiences of what it means to come together, work and build communities under conditions other than those that dominate the real-world communities and workplaces we have inherited from industrial society.

Whatever else, these ambiguities imply the political nature of such spaces: the new forms of collaboration easily turn into new forms of exploitation—the line between crowdsourcing and unpaid labour is poorly marked—and hence our conversations in Stockholm also touch on the need for new forms of collective organisation.

The historical commons might suggest another element within the resistance to exploitation and the formation of a new politics. As Ivan Illich and Anthony McCann have argued, historically, the commons was not simply a pool of resources to be managed, but an alternative to seeing the world as made of resources. Specifically, the commons was not something to be exploited for the production of commodities, but something that people could draw on within customary limits to provide for their own subsistence.

During the generations of enclosure and industrialisation, the meaning of the term 'subsistence' was turned upside down: a word which, in its

origin, referred to the ability to ‘stand firm’ came to signify weakness instead of strength. In the language of economics, ‘subsistence’ now stands for the barest and most miserable form of human existence. The irony is that this inversion took place just as the means of subsistence were being taken away from the greater part of the population, not least through the enclosure of common lands to which they had previously enjoyed claims of usage.

To reclaim subsistence as a condition of strength, especially when compared to total dependence on wage labour, is not to confuse it with the fantasy of self-sufficiency that has a particular grip on the American imagination. When Illich speaks of “the commons within which people’s subsistence activities are embedded”,¹ he is describing a fabric of social relations, a patchwork of customary law.

Reclaiming the concept of ‘subsistence’—the ability to stand firm, to meet many of our own needs, without being wholly

at the mercy of the market or the state—may be an important piece in the jigsaw of a 21st century politics. If the Pirate Party marks one end of the new politics of the commons, perhaps the other end looks something like the Landless Peasant Party.

How do we handle it, when words that have mattered to us gather a new momentum and get raised as banners? Of course, I hope that good things will flourish in the name of the commons in the years ahead. At the same time, the experience of many who have worked for the goal of ‘sustainability’ suggests how disorientating such a journey can become. ‘Subsistence’ is hardly the only example of a word that has come to mean the opposite of what it once did.

That words fail us is not a mistake, it is in the very nature of language. In the plenary session that brings our time on Skeppsholmen to a close, I find myself again quoting that passage from Illich about “a reality much too complex to fit into paragraphs”. If what

1 Ivan Illich, ‘Silence is a Commons’, remarks at the “Asahi Symposium Science and Man — The computer-managed Society”, Tokyo, Japan, 21 March 1982. See <http://www.preservenet.com/theory/illich/Silence.html>

matters most is the part that is hardest to write down, then the challenge is to stay faithful to this: to tack towards the unwritten, rather than setting a straight course towards an approximation. Ultimately, all our language is provisional, an endless reaching towards what we are trying to say.

Such statements sound close to those made by the kind of theorists of post-modernism whose students often fall into cynicism. Yet the provisional nature of language need not be a source of despair: it can be sufficient to our situation. The trick is to hold our words lightly, to be willing to let them go, for no word needs to be sacred. And as I write this, four weeks after those conversations in Stockholm, it occurs to me that perhaps I am just stumbling towards what P.M. himself would have said to us, had he been able to make the trip from Switzerland.

Here he is, in an interview from 2004, explaining

what led him to the invention of *bolo'bolo*:

The original idea for creating this weird secret language came up because the European left-wing terminology was no longer viable. Nowadays when people talk about communism, that's gulag, no one wants to hear about it. Or if people talk about socialism, then they are speaking of Schröder's politics—retirement cuts—and no one wants that, either. And all of the other standard left-wing expressions such as 'solidarity', 'community', they're all contaminated and no longer useful. But the things that they stand for are actually quite good. I don't want to suffer because of terminology for which I am not to blame; instead, I'd rather create my own. It would probably take longer to explain that the communism that I am talking about is not the one that I saw. It is easier to simply say I am for *bolo'bolo*, and then everyone starts to think of the things all over again, to re-think them. ■

Transition Towns, or the Desire for an Urban Alternative

by **Adrien Krauz**

The entry of the term 'transition' into the vocabulary of public action shows that questions regarding how to build more sustainable models for society are still relevant. The response offered by 'transition towns' is a model for action involving a variety of local and citizen-led initiatives that are based on a method for sustainable environmental development called 'permaculture'.¹

Faced with the threat of an environmental crisis, our Western societies created the notion of 'sustainable development'. Defined and understood as a development model that seeks to strike a better balance between ecological, social and economic dimensions, as well as a means of managing natural resources that takes the needs of future

generations into consideration, this term has today been integrated into public policies and planning and development practices.

The idea of 'transition', by contrast, is a concept that is currently emerging. It seems to pick up where 'sustainable development' left off in terms of public policy. This latter term—after more than 30 years of existence—no longer has sufficient clout in the context of the current ecological crisis. The notion of 'transition', which has made occasional appearances in specialist milieus since the early 1980s, is now at the heart of debates in various arenas: public institutions, academia and activist circles, as well as among citizens. It takes several forms and can have a number of different meanings, depending

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on the context ('ecological transition', 'energy transition', 'post-carbon transition', 'sustainability transitions', 'citizen-led transition', 'transition towns', etc.). Furthermore, it is gradually being incorporated into the linguistic register of public action in France and Europe.

Of these approaches, it is 'transition towns' that are garnering growing interest through the spatialised dimension of the notion that they underpin. Since 2006, this "unidentified political object"² is made up of local and citizen-led initiatives and experiments that seek to develop lifestyles that are less oil-dependent. The towns that have joined this movement have a practical guide on which to base their actions—the *Transition Handbook*,³ drawn up by one of the movement's initiators, Rob Hopkins—and are certified and structured by an NGO, the Transition Network. Transition towns can now be found in over 40 different countries, forming what observers call the 'Transition Movement'.⁴ The combination

of the words 'transition' and 'town' may raise a number of expectations among urban planners and other development professionals, in anticipation of alternative practices in their disciplines. The establishment of urban planning as a discipline was built on a desire for social reform and the constitution of models, the first of which took the form of utopias.⁵ The word 'transition' itself indicates a horizon of expectation that is reminiscent of this desire for reform. How does the 'Transition Movement' address the question of space and the way space is used and developed? Does this outlook stem from a desire to return to a utopian situation or a model of some kind? And if so, to what extent?

Peak oil and local resilience

The 'Transition Movement' emerged in England in 2006 at the initiative of Rob Hopkins, an environmental activist who teaches permaculture at Kinsale College of Further Education

1 Permaculture — a form of environmental design inspired by natural ecosystems — was developed in the 1970s in Australia.

2 See Simon Cottin-Marx, Fabrice Flipo and Antoine Lagneau, "La transition, une utopie concrète?", *Mouvements*, 75 (2013), pp. 7–12.

3 Rob Hopkins, *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (Green Books, 2008).

4 See Luc Semal, "Politiques locales de décroissance", in Sinaï, A. (dir.), *Penser la décroissance. Politiques de l'Anthropocène* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2013).

5 See Françoise Choay, *L'Urbanisme, utopies et réalités* (Paris: Seuil, 1965).

in Kinsale, County Cork, Ireland. Hopkins is conscious of the imminence of peak oil, announced by many experts as the moment when the global production of oil will reach its maximum output level before decreasing until all resources are exhausted. In our completely oil-dependent societies, the prospect of 'peak oil' heralds disastrous consequences.

Hopkins works with his students on 'energy descent action plans' (EDAPs) with the aim of offering solutions for transition towards a 'post-oil' future. In 2006, in Totnes in Devon (south-west England), he organised the first experimental 'transition town'. In 2008, he wrote the above-mentioned *Transition Handbook*, in which he explains the reasons for "making the transition" towards less oil-dependent lifestyles. He proposes a 12-step method for launching a "transition initiative", from the creation of a temporary "steering group" to the construction of an EDAP. This handbook and its various translations have led to a rapid increase in

the number of local transition groups, as well as the internationalisation of the movement. As of September 2013, it comprised almost 500 official initiatives in 43 countries.⁶

Raising awareness of 'peak oil' is at the very heart of the Transition Movement. As a result, a sense of urgency emerges, making—according to the Movement—the prospect of post-carbon transition inevitable. The issue at hand is therefore one of inventing and promoting 'post-oil' lifestyles that can be built on the reinforcement of communities' 'resilience'—a concept taken from the environmental sciences that, in this context, designates the ability of a system (here, a community) to resist an external shock (the scarcity of oil). This capacity for 'resilience' amounts to reducing communities' dependency on oil by pursuing an 'energy descent' objective, in other words a reduction in energy consumption, together with a relocation of production, in particular of food.

The strengthening of inter-community ties and the 'Great Reskilling', which

⁶ More detailed data can be found here: www.transitionnetwork.org/initiatives

involves reviving vernacular skills (cultivating, repairing, making, etc.) that fell into decline with the advent of cheap energy, also forms part of this local 'resilience'. The Transition Movement defines its approach as resolutely inclusive, positive and practical. It eschews conflict and criticism, preferring to foster commitment through the construction of real, tangible alternatives. This approach, which professes to be apolitical, is, however, also a source of criticism: objections focus on the absence of questions relating to social justice or equality, or underline the fact that it forms part of a movement that depoliticises environmental issues.⁷

With regard to this approach, measures that seek to 'relocate' exchanges, such as locally sourced veg-box schemes, local and complementary currencies, LETS (local exchange trading systems) and time banks or waste recovery centres (places where discarded objects can be reused or recycled) clearly have their place within the Transition Movement. But it is through

efforts to reintegrate agriculture into the city that the work of 'transitioners' is most visible. This takes the form of actions and projects (community gardens, composters, crop plantation in public spaces, city roofs used for agriculture) that reflect the fact that the movement's foundations lie in permaculture. This in turn forms "the design 'glue' and the ethical foundations [used] to underpin Transition work".⁸

Permaculture: a social project for sustainable prosperity

Permaculture (a contraction of 'permanent agriculture') is an alternative approach to agriculture developed in Australia in the 1970s by biologist Bill Mollison and environmental designer David Holmgren, both environmental activists. Alongside the rise of a 'third world' environmentalism, permaculture developed in response to observations of the damage produced by industrial agriculture on cultivable land, and the high levels

⁷ For a broader analysis, see Anneleen Kenis and Eric Mathijs, "(De)politicising the local: the case of the Transition Towns movement in Flanders (Belgium)," *Journal of Rural Studies*, 34 (2014): pp.172–183. Christian Jonet and Pablo Servigne, "Initiatives de transition: la question politique", *Mouvements*, 75 (2013): pp.70–76. Paul Chatterton and Alice Cutler, *Un écologisme apolitique. Débat autour de la transition* (Montreal: Écosociété, 2013).

⁸ Rob Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p.137.

of energy consumed, as well as the asymmetries in development it generates.⁹

As an alternative, Holmgren and Mollison proposed the creation of “adaptive, integrated systems for the self-perpetuation of plant and animal species useful to humankind”.¹⁰ By imitating the relationships and structures observed in nature, they suggested a series of operating principles (including observation, adaptiveness, energy conservation, diversity and the use of simple, small-scale solutions) that could be used to obtain efficient, sustainable production systems.

Permaculture is more than just a set of organic farming techniques: its originators present it as a contribution towards the construction of a “truly environmental science in education and life” and a model that incorporates “ecology, energy conservation, landscape design, urban renewal, architecture, agriculture [...]”.¹¹ Their approach takes as its starting point the observation that “societies need shared ideals and long-term goals” and that

permaculture “may be one of the contributions towards such ends”. Holmgren and Mollison assert that they have taken into account “problems of unemployment [...], of urban neurosis, and of the feeling of powerlessness and lack of direction common to many of us in today’s world”.

In this sense, permaculture claims to be a solution capable of bringing sustainable prosperity to society, based on a truly global vision.¹²

Over the last 25 years, the definition of permaculture has evolved to incorporate inhabitants, their constructions and the ways in which they organise themselves, shifting from a vision of permaculture as “permanent or sustainable agriculture” to one of a “permanent or sustainable culture”.¹³ Moreover, Hopkins declares that he sees the Transition model as an attempt to create permaculture on the scale of the city.¹⁴ For him, it is a question of rethinking human establishments in the light of a renewed relationship with nature as the key to humanity’s long-term existence.

⁹ See David Holmgren and Bill Mollison, *Permaculture One: A Perennial Agriculture for Human Settlements* (Melbourne: Transworld, 1978).

¹⁰ David Holmgren and Bill Mollison, *ibid.*, p.15.

¹¹ David Holmgren and Bill Mollison, *ibid.*, p.16.

¹² Emmanuel Pezrès, “La permaculture au sein de l’agriculture urbaine: du jardin au projet de société,” *Vertigo* — la revue électronique en sciences de l’environnement, 10(2) (2010). Accessed 14 May 2015, see <http://vertigo.revues.org/9941>

¹³ David Holmgren, *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability* (East Meon: Permanent Publications, 2011).

¹⁴ Interview with Rob Hopkins by Sami Grover, 27 Maroh 2007, available online at the following address: www.treehugger.com.

From a development standpoint, this means creating a symbiotic relationship between the town and the country, with “the production of food within the city and the production of fibres, fuel [...] and proteins in nearby rural areas, and an exchange of services, assistance and skills”.¹⁵ In town, this means converting potentially productive spaces (“All cities have unused vacant land; roadside verges [...], conservatories, concrete roofs, balconies, glass walls and south-facing windows.”¹⁶ These spaces are used to recover energy and produce food, leading to architectural adaptations relating to the position of windows, the layout of balconies and roofs, and the installation of trellis systems, for example.

In his *Transition Handbook*, Hopkins proposes a ‘vision’ for England in 2030. He imagines urban agriculture as a priority for urban planners and for communities (“we have redesigned cities in order to make them productive places”.¹⁷ He sees the return of market gardens

on the fringes of cities and in large urban parks. In terms of architecture, he foresees an increase in the energy efficiency of dwellings, the development of group housing, the use of local and natural materials such as rammed earth, straw, hemp and wood, or recycled materials, as well as a nationwide training programme in building techniques. These spatial measures go hand in hand with a slower pace of life and changes in residents’ habits, leading to a greater rootedness in their cities and their ‘bioregions’,¹⁸ as well as increased participation in what is consequently a more ‘vibrant’ local life.

Urban planning based on a hybrid of the natural and social sciences

Through its reformatory scope and its description of measures for a more desirable use of space, the Transition Movement could be considered to have characteristics in common with certain urbanistic

com/culture/rob-hopkins-of-transition-town-totnes-and-transition-culture.html

15 David Holmgren and Bill Mollison, *op. cit.*, p.111.

16 David Holmgren and Bill Mollison, *ibid.*, p.114.

17 Rob Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p.110.

18 The notion of ‘bioregions’ was influenced by the work of Patrick Geddes and, later, Lewis Mumford on regionalism. It was conceptualised in order to define a scale of development capable of taking environmental problems into consideration (see Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1985); Robert L. Thayer, Jr., *LifePlace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003); Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, “Reinhabiting

or pre-urbanistic models described by Françoise Choay.¹⁹ For example, in the *Transition Handbook* and *Permaculture One*, references are made to William Morris and Ebenezer Howard, as well as to Kropotkin and Lewis Mumford. The origins of the Transition Movement appear to lie with the 'culturalist urbanists'—through the importance accorded to the community, through its criticisms of industry and technological progress, through a certain nostalgia for a pre-industrial past considered more 'resilient', and so forth. In this way, it places itself within a utopian lineage, while also introducing new elements that enable it to move beyond this ancestry.

For example, the definition of a desirable future society no longer takes place 'nowhere' but instead in the multiple possibilities offered by a model for action. In this respect, the Transition is rooted in reality. Unlike "utopias of spatial form", and their tendency for closure,²⁰ it proposes a practice for transforming the real where

the vision acts as a catalyst or compass rather than a plan. Furthermore, the Transition does not base its alternative paradigm on 'culture' or exclusively in social relations but on a new link with nature considered as the prelude to a 'permanent culture', yet without adopting an anti-urban stance.

Accordingly, the Transition Movement would seem to stem from an 'environmentalisation' of culturalism. This enables it to firmly tie development practices to a more in-depth knowledge of ecological systems. In doing so, it re-examines urban planning from a different angle: while it is typically considered a rational science or interpreted from the standpoint of the social sciences, here it appears as a hybrid branch of knowledge that combines aspects from both the natural and social sciences. The Transition Movement raises the question of a design and development rationality that seeks to move beyond 'sustainable development' approaches by focusing on the local and

California", *The Ecologist*, 7(10) (1977): pp.399–401). Currently, the concept of the 'urban bioregion' lies at the heart of the work of the Italian territorialist school, led by Alberto Magnaghi (see Alberto Magnaghi, *La Biorégion urbaine. Petit traité sur le territoire bien commun* (Paris: Eterotopia, 2014).

¹⁹ See Françoise Choay, *op. cit.*, and Claire Carriou and Olivier Ratouis, "[Quels modèles pour l'urbanisme durable?->695]", *Métropolitiques*, 25 June 2014. Accessed 14 May 2015, URL: www.metropolitiques.eu/Quels-modeles-pour-l-urbanisme.html. Also available in English (translated by Oliver Waine): "[Is there a model for sustainable urban planning?->743]", *Metropolitics*, 27 November 2014. Accessed 14 May 2015, URL: www.metropolitiques.eu/is-there-a-model-for-sustainable.html

the specificities thereof, while also establishing the essential conditions for the self-replication of ecosystems.

Principles rather than a model

The idea of transition calls for us to abandon one situation and achieve another, more desirable one. In this sense, it seems to mobilise both utopia, as “a situationally transcendent idea”,²¹ and a project-based approach, as it strives to build a trajectory, however uncertain, towards this desired situation. There is no question of an overarching rational planning approach, or of seeking ‘one best way’, but rather of opening

the field of possibilities and of recognising the various means of reaching this goal. In this way, the Transition Movement is guided by principles, values and one or more visions that act as compasses that orient its development. It makes use of experimentation, training and individuals’ capacity for reflection.

Although it maintains links with texts that are considered utopian, the Transition Movement does not propose any kind of urban model. It calls into question our ability to construct our future in a collective, considered manner, by proposing alternatives that aim to be both radical and realistic. ■

20 David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

21 Karl Mannheim, *Idéologie et Utopie* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1956).

→ Chisinau Civic Center — open air cinema, 2012.

→ Chisinau Civic Center — people’s park, 2014. Dance performance by contact improvisation group in Zaikin Park.





A Brief History of P2P Urbanism (*excerpts*)

by **Nikos A. Salingaros** and **Federico Mena-Quintero**

P2P (peer-to-peer) Urbanism joins ideas from the open-source software movement together with new thinking by urbanists, into a discipline oriented towards satisfying human needs. P2P-Urbanism is concerned with cooperative and creative efforts to define space for people's use. This essay explains P2P-Urbanism as the outcome of several historical processes, describes the cooperative participation schemes that P2P-Urbanism creates, and indicates the possible outcomes of applying P2P-Urbanism in different human environments.

[...]

The combination of peer-to-peer and urbanism

The P2P-Urbanism movement is quite recent, and it is

drawing in urban designers and planners who have been working independently for years, mostly unaware of similar efforts being made in other regions of the world or even close by. (Some reasons for this isolation will be explored in the later section "Potential detractors of P2P-Urbanism"). People who join P2P-Urbanism represent a heterogeneous group consisting of individuals championing collaborative design and user participation in planning; New Urbanists tied to the commercial US movement of that name; followers of Christopher Alexander; urban activists; and others. Gradually, practitioners in other fields will learn about P2P-Urbanism and bring in their knowledge where appropriate. Candidates include Permaculturists (who design

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productive ecosystems that let humans live in harmony with plants and animals) with a deep practical understanding of Biophilia,¹ advocates of vernacular and low-energy construction, and various independent or resilient communities that wish to sustain themselves 'from the ground up'.

P2P-Urbanism is all about letting people design and build their own environments, using information and techniques that are shared freely. The implications of this have a broad scope.

In parallel to the free/open-source software movement, designing a city and one's own dwelling and working environment should be based upon freely available design rules rather than some 'secret' code decided upon by an appointed authority. Furthermore, open-source urban code must be open to modification and adaptation to local conditions and individual needs, which is the whole point of open-source. For example, the DPZ 'SmartCode'² not only allows but also requires calibration

to local conditions, and for this reason it pertains to P2P-Urbanism despite the corporate parentage of many New Urbanist projects.

One implication of this new way of thinking about the city is to encourage reclaiming common open space in the urban environment. A significant phenomenon in 20th century urbanism has been the deliberate elimination of shared public space, since the open space surrounding standalone modernist buildings tends to be amorphous, hostile and therefore useless. Attractive public space was recreated elsewhere under the guise of private, controlled space within commercial centres. In this way, common space that is essential for citizen interactions (and thus forms the basis of shared societal values) has been privatised, re-packaged and then sold back to the people. P2P-Urbanism reverses this tendency. In the next section we will explore how free participation changes the way in which urbanism is done.

- 1 Permaculture, <http://www.permaculture.org.au>
- 2 The SmartCode is a model transect-based planning and zoning document based on environmental analysis. It addresses all scales of planning, from the region to the community to the block and building. The template is intended for local calibration to your town or neighbourhood. As a form-based code, the SmartCode keeps settlements compact and rural lands open, literally reforming the sprawling patterns of separated-use zoning. The original SmartCode was released by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Cie (DPZ) in 2003, after two decades of research and implementation. It has been continually updated with input from scores of practitioners from numerous disciplines. Since 2004, the model code has been completely open source and free of charge.

Participation schemes for urbanism and architecture

Centrally-planned environments or buildings are often designed strictly 'on paper' and subsequently built to that specification, without any room for adaptation or for input from the final users. In fact, the worst examples are the results of speculative building with no adaptive purpose in mind. However, there has always been a small and underutilised intersection of P2P thinkers and urbanists/planners that have promoted participatory events outside the official planning system. Those urban interventions have tended to be temporary rather than permanent because of the difficulty of implementing changes in the built fabric.

Although the present group behind P2P-Urbanism was formed only in 2010, participatory planning and design go back decades, particularly in the work of J.F.C. Turner on self-built housing in South America.³ Christopher Alexander's most relevant work is the book

A Pattern Language from 1977,⁴ followed by *The Nature of Order* from 2001–2005.⁵ More recent P2P collaborative projects based upon the idea of the commons were developed and applied by Agatino Rizzo and many others.⁶ These projects rely explicitly upon defining common ownership of a physical or virtual region of urban space.

After decades of central planning that ignores local conditions and the complex needs of final users, and that tries to do away with the commons for monetary reasons, people have forgotten the principal geometrical patterns that generated our most successful human-scaled urban spaces throughout history. There has been an important loss of the shared knowledge that once let people build humane environments without much in the way of formal planning.

Successful urban design has everything to do with real quality of life and sustainability. With the modernist or post-modernist status quo, the main consideration for construction has been the visual impact

³ John F. C. Turner, *Housing by People* (London: Marion Boyars, 1976) http://www.amazon.com/Housing-People-Autonomy-Building-Environments/dp/0714525693/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpi_1

⁴ Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein, Max Jacobson, Ingrid Fiksdahl-King & Shlomo Angel, *A Pattern Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) http://www.amazon.com/Pattern-Language-Buildings-Construction-Environmental/dp/0195019199/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpi_1

⁵ Christopher Alexander, *The Nature of Order: Books One to Four* (Berkeley, California: Center for Environmental Structure, 2001–2005) http://www.amazon.com/Phenomenon-Life-Nature-Building-Universe/dp/0972652914/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpi_3

⁶ Agatino Rizzo's CityLeft, <http://cityleft.blogspot.com/>

of the finished product. In contrast to this, P2P-Urbanism has just as much to say about the process of planning as the final, adaptive, human-scale outcome. It represents a set of qualities and goals that are widely sharable, and which go far beyond architecture and urban design. Principles of good urbanism and architecture are widely shareable and acceptable by 'everyday people', but they are not entirely obvious. For example, it takes careful explaining to convince people that a pedestrian network can be woven into car-centric cities, and that rather than making traffic chaotic, this will in fact reduce traffic, which is something that everyone would appreciate. In terms of evolutionary design, a step-by-step design process that re-adjusts according to real-time constraints and human needs leads to the desired final result, something impossible to achieve from a pre-conceived or formal design.

Let us consider briefly the kinds of participation that can be open to different people. Architects of course deal with the design of buildings. An architect familiar with the needs of a certain region may know, for example, that an 80cm eave is enough to protect three-metre tall storeys from rainfall, in a particular region with a certain average of wind and rain. A builder may be well versed in the actual craft of construction, that to build this kind

of eave, with the traditional forms used in this region, requires such and such materials and techniques. The final dweller of a house will certainly be interested in protecting his windows and walls from rainfall, but he may want to have a say in what kind of window he wants: if he wants it to open to the outside, then it must not bump against the wide eave. Thus it is important to establish communication between users, builders, designers and everyone who is involved with a particular environment.

Our hypothetical rainy region will doubtless have similar problems to other similar regions in different parts of the world. P2P-Urbanism lets these geographically separated people connect together to learn from each other's experience. Trial-and-error can be reduced by being able to ask, "who knows how to build windows and eaves that will stand this kind of rainfall?", and to get an answer backed by evidence.

Bigger problems can be attacked in a similar way. Instead of abstract, philosophical-sounding talk like "the shape of the city must reflect the spirit of the age", and "windows must be designed to mimic a curtain wall" (why?), we can look for evidence of cities that are humane and livable. We can then adapt their good ideas to local conditions, drawing upon the knowledge

of all the people who participate in the P2P-Urbanism community.

Construction firms that embrace P2P-Urbanism may end up being well-liked in the communities where they work, for they will actually be in constant communication with the users of their 'products', rather than just doing hit-and-run construction that is not loved or cared for by anyone.

Up to now, residents have not been able to make any changes on 'signature' architecture projects, and not even on the unattractive housing blocks they happen to reside in for economic reasons. P2P-Urbanism instead advocates for people being allowed to modify their environment to suit their needs, instead of relying exclusively on a designer who does not even live there. P2P-Urbanism is like an informally scientific way of building: take someone's published knowledge, improve it and publish it again so that other people can do the same. Evidence-based design relies upon a growing stock of scientific experiments

that document and interpret the positive or negative effects the built environment has on human psychology and well-being.⁷ People's instinctive preferences can be driven either by Biophilia (a preference for organic environments) or fashion (with sometimes disastrous consequences).

A central feature of New Urbanist projects is a 'charrette' that involves user input beforehand, although sometimes applied in only a superficial manner. Nevertheless, in the best cases, a charrette process is not just an opinion poll; it is also a non-dogmatic educational process, a dialogue among stakeholders leading to a final agreement. The result reaches a higher level of understanding compared to where the individual participants started from.

Consequences for marginalised people

Some proponents of the movement view P2P-Urbanism as a way to give power to marginalised people,

⁷ Nikos Salingaros, "Life and the geometry of the environment", *Athens Dialogues EJournal*, Harvard University's Center for Hellenic Studies (November 2010) <http://zeta.math.utsa.edu/~yxk833/lifeandthegerometry.pdf>

in terms of creating the environment in which they live. This point of view is true, but it is not the whole story. A P2P process will have to somehow channel and amalgamate pure individualist, spontaneous preferences and cravings within a practical common goal. There is a vast distinction between good and bad urban form: only the first type encourages socio-cultural relations to flourish; bad urban form leads, among other things, to neighbours who never even interact with each other.

A top-down way of thinking and urban implementation has always determined accessibility to public housing and facilities built by government, and has fixed the division of power in the urban arena. We want to facilitate integration of people now separated by differences of social status, using the built environment to help accomplish that.

Marginalised people or minorities will find tremendous power in being

able to build their own environment inexpensively, and knowing that they are building something good. There exists a precedent for this in the various eco-villages in Mexico that do their own construction, with local materials, and where everything is hand-built. P2P-Urbanism provides the key to successfully integrating the two existing ways of doing things: i) large-scale planning that alone is capable of providing the necessary infrastructure of a healthy city; and ii) informal (and most often illegal) self-built settlements that are growing in an uncontrolled way in the developing world.

For marginalised people we can expect consequences similar to what has happened with the use of free/open-source software in developing nations: local expertise is formed, a local economy follows, and the whole country is enriched by being able to take care of its own problems. ■

Stimulating Dissonances

by **Richard Sennett**

In the spirit of Ephraim Lessing, most of us would like to believe that it is possible for all the different people who live in Europe to enjoy a life of peaceful coexistence. In light of this, I would like to share some thoughts on the issue of tolerance, as I believe a great deal of nonsense has been spoken on this particular subject. Nonsense in the sense that many people seem to believe tolerance is a peaceful state in which people live together in harmony. In my view, this is an illusion. It is an illusion that coexistence means living your life in a peaceful state. It is more a case of living your life in a state of 'upheaval', not in the sense of unrest or violence, but in the sense that coexisting with people who are different to you may be something of a roller coaster ride. We need to find a way of coming to terms with

this fact and trying to enjoy the ride. Personally, I think we need to start viewing the frictions we might experience with others as a positive rather than always as something negative. This means that we need to think of these potential frictions as something positive that encourages us to think about our own way of life, whatever the disruptions these frictions may cause.

In this article, I would like to focus on one particular aspect of this issue, namely where we might find a space in which people can experience this kind of diversity and all the unpleasant, stimulating, destabilising and uncertain self-perception that goes with it. I believe this kind of space can be created in a particular type of town or city.

At this point, I would like to quote from Immanuel Kant's excellent essay

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on the subject of peace that he wrote in 1784. In the essay he uses a very insightful expression: “The crooked timber that man is made out of”. Any genuinely open urban environment will be full of people who vary widely in terms of their financial status, ethnicity, politics, sexual orientation and lifestyle and yet share the same space. Does this crookedness need to be straightened out? Albert Speer obviously thought so. He tried to mould the streets, parks, office buildings and houses of German cities, and especially Berlin, into a uniform shape. Today there are other forces at work that contribute to this straightening, including the growing financial inequality that is helping to divide formerly very diverse residential areas from each other. Our towns and cities are becoming more heterogeneous, but not more mixed.

The most popular form of residential area these days is the ‘gated community’. This is what people want if they are given the choice. Kant would not be happy if he could see what was happening in today’s towns and cities. If we look at the quote in its entirety, what he wrote was: “Out of timber so crooked as that from which man is made, nothing entirely straight can be built”. If we accept this, then good citizens should accept neighbours who are different to them without attempting to straighten them out. Kant believed

that even the most diverse of people could live peacefully together. He was of the view that people could not only live together in a relatively chaotic space with all its corners, side streets and unexpected experiences but also actually enjoy life there. He was committed to the ideal of a society that is capable of living with complexity. Personally, I believe that words such as ‘multicultural’ and ‘inclusive’ are now worn-out clichés. I’m starting to wonder whether the right conditions for encounters cannot actually be physically created, whether towns and cities can be designed in such a way that the appropriate spaces are created to encourage encounters.

At this point I would like to give you a short insight into my book *The Open City*, in which I describe what I believe it would take to design such a city. I work on the assumption that a city will always require dividing lines between distinct areas and I generally tend to differentiate between two types of dividing line: borders and boundaries. These are the two fundamental types of dividing line that traditionally develop between different parts of a city.

The open city

The problem that we have today is that we tend to create more boundaries

and so create closed spaces. We seem to have forgotten how to create borders. I started to develop these ideas around 15 years ago when I began teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and spent more time in the company of natural scientists. I met some biologists there who suggested that this difference between open borders and closed boundaries exists in nature too—at least under certain circumstances.

Let's take a look at the difference between a cell membrane and a cell wall. A cell membrane selectively allows the exchange of substances between the outside and inside of the cell. The cell wall, on the other hand, retains as much as possible inside the cell; it effectively forms a rigid boundary. The cell membrane is open in a very special way, in as much as it is both permeable and resistant at the same time. When we think of something being open, we tend to think of an open door, which we can simply walk through. However, the concept of the open door cannot be realistically applied to human coexistence. Openness can still mean that tensions exist—the kind of tensions that are apparent in the interplay between permeability and resistance. The cell membrane tries to take in as many nutrients as possible, while at the same time acting to keep what

is necessary inside the cell. It is this tension between permeability and resistance that creates openness, not the absence of tension—this is a natural phenomenon.

The tiger's no-go area

In contrast, I'd like to use the territory of the tiger in Asia as an example of a natural boundary. Tigers create boundaries by marking what they see as their territory. This territory then becomes a no-go area, a space that the tiger effectively bans others from entering. The difference here is that the territory is an area of limited activity. So in the natural world, the difference between a border and a boundary is that a border defines an area of high activity between different species, while a boundary defines a dead space. My argument is that this principle can be applied to humans and their activities too. When you bring people together in different situations, you create life, but when you separate them, you are effectively sentencing the city to a slow death.

I once took a hair-raising helicopter flight over São Paulo in Brazil and saw a typical example of the kind of boundary often created within cities. On the left hand side of a wall was a favela, on the other side was a very

expensive apartment block. Every floor had a swimming pool on the balcony. The swimming pools overlooked the favela and the favela looked up at the swimming pools. When people ask me “How come there’s so much violence in Sao Paulo?” or “Why can’t the people there get along with each other?” I show them one of the photos I took from the helicopter and this gives them a clear impression of what I mean by the difference between a border and a boundary.

So, how do we create a permeable border like a cell membrane in an urban context? Let me give you an example from the city of Copenhagen. In the old part of the city there is a home for patients suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Many of the residents with Alzheimer’s are brought out to visit the local cafés instead of being kept out of sight—this is an example of permeability. This means that there is a permeable relationship between the inside and outside world. It may not always be particularly comfortable for a tourist if you have to sit in a café with three people suffering from advanced stages of Alzheimer’s—and I can say this from firsthand experience—but it is reality. The truth lies within.

To round off these examples, I would like to say something about liminality. These dividing lines that

I have described to you are liminal spaces and I would like to briefly refer to the work of William James, one of the world’s first major psychologists. At the end of the 19th century, he talked about what he referred to as the spotlight of the consciousness. When we are conscious of something, we shine a spotlight on it and zone those things on the periphery out of the focus of our awareness. According to James, this is the mechanism by which we concentrate on something.

Liminality, on the other hand, is an altogether different state, both psychologically and psychophysically. It is the very definition of peripheral vision. The conical field of vision in the human eye is a 60-degree circle, so a half circle would be 30 degrees. According to James, we naturally focus our view on a central point, but the question urban planners have to ask themselves is what can be seen on the periphery of that particular view. This is about liminality. It is about seeing the bigger picture and not just the centre. This is the basic principle espoused by the English psychologist and paediatrician Donald Woods Winnicott and deals with the way we view things on the periphery.

I believe that it is possible to create spaces in which people can experience a permeable membrane type

of life; spaces in which many different types of people are brought together. Wouldn't this result in people integrating? Not necessarily. But it would at least create the kind of physical environment in which people could integrate.

I believe this is really important. Most of the experiences we have in cities are silent ones. I'm not talking about reading out the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights every time we go to buy a piece of cake or a bottle of milk. But people generally remain silent around people who are different to them, even though they are sharing the same physical space. Their experiences of coexistence tend to be of a physical nature, rather than a verbal one. I also believe urban planners have got it wrong, because they should be creating a physical experience in which seeing the way somebody moves, for example, or noticing whether they wear a burka or how they stand next to somebody else can actually lead to learning how to live together, no matter how disturbing that might seem. Ironically, the supporters of the Pegida movement live in an area of Germany with one of the lowest percentages of foreigners. It doesn't really surprise me that these people, who have very little actual contact with Muslims, think that all Muslims are terrorists. The reason for this is that

they don't actually live in close contact with any Muslims.

Urban planning needs to be completely rethought. We need to be focusing on precisely these peripheral zones between different urban areas. For example, we should be building schools on the edges of communities rather than in the middle of them. And, as in Copenhagen, we should take people who suffer from that terrible disease into the city, instead of keeping them in isolation. We need to start thinking of these peripheral zones between urban areas as our natural environment. They may not be the most attractive areas, but they are important. I believe this is where urban planning should start.

I would like to quote Kant once again, as he is often held up to support arguments in favour of cosmopolitan behaviour. It is worth remembering that the French word *cosmopolite* was originally used to describe diplomats. They were meant to be able to move easily from place to place, culture to culture, without becoming integrated or a part of them. In the 19th century this idea of mental mobility stood in stark contrast to the idea of physical mobility. In those days, a cosmopolitan person was somebody who could move around a city like one of Baudelaire's *flâneurs* and observe the various comings and goings from

a distance. Cosmopolitans still felt at home no matter how far from home they might be. In the words of the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, they felt they had a right to the whole city.

The advantage of this kind of attitude is that it stops people living lives full of fantasies about other people, as is the case with the supporters

of the Pegida movement. They harbour strange ideas about Muslims for the simple reason that they never actually come into contact with them. My idea of a mixed city basically involves expanding the peripheral zones between areas, rather than creating concentrations of specific communities, so that people can coexist in all areas of the city. ■

→ Chisinau Civic Centre — people's park, 2014, Park Fanfare on the stage, by studio-BASAR.

→ Chisinau Civic Centre — people's park, 2014, stage in the park, by studioBASAR.



“The commons is not a magic wand. It’s simply an opening, a pathway, a scaffolding to build anew. Indeed, a commons works only if there are commoners participating in it.”

— **David Bollier**, *The Commons, Political Transformation and Cities*

Creative and Collaborative

by **Tessy Britton**

Although 2011 was a year in which the headlines were stolen by revolt, riot and demonstration, highlighting large-scale, sometimes violent, rejections of the status quo, it was also a year in which creative and collaborative local projects pushed through in sufficient numbers globally for patterns and longer-term implications to become clearer than ever before.

As regular citizens, we have a number of well-established routes to participating in society. We participate through being consumers, supporting the economy, circulating money through this vast system to provide valuable livelihoods for ourselves and others. We also participate through generosity, giving what we can spare to worthy causes and volunteering to help people with fewer advantages, both at home and abroad. Many of us choose

to get involved in social governance roles, representing stakeholders and groups in a variety of ways. We take on formal roles and responsibilities, through school governance, standing for local councils, acting on committees and community forums, and of course voting in elections. As a way of ensuring fair and equitable accountability on decision-making, we often get involved in public consultations and when we don't consider our concerns are sufficiently well heard, our frustrations spill over into challenging decisions more directly through campaigning and protesting.

With such a comprehensive and varied range of opportunities to participate in, why are we seeing people engaging in their communities in new ways—and how can we define some of those differences more clearly?

Tessy Britton is co-founder of the Civic Systems Lab, and Director of Zero Zero, a collaborative studio of architects, strategic designers, programmers, social scientists, economists and urban designers practising design beyond its traditional borders (www.project00.co).

Here's a simple example of these new creative and collaborative behaviours: a person has an idea of how their street or community might look or feel different. Maybe they think a few benches in their street would create new opportunities for neighbours to get to know one another better through informal contact. Historically, they could take their idea to the local authority or their ward councillor—to be supported or not. But if that person knocked on a few neighbours' doors, described their idea and managed to collect some donations and together, they could buy a bench or two, or even go so far as to design and make their own benches, perhaps with materials from their own gardens, then this would be significantly different to asking the authorities to respond to your suggestion. They wouldn't be acting out of charity, or representing anyone, or campaigning. They had a creative, socially informed idea and, working collaboratively with neighbours, they made it happen.

This same pattern is appearing all over the place, through community fruit collections, skill sharing, resource sharing and tons of projects relating to food—growing, cooking, making and learning—and what we are seeing is culturally very different from what we have witnessed before. Knowledge about systems, the social

needs of people, the ideas and methods of making these social projects successful, is slowly becoming more widespread. Professionals are deploying their expertise in their own communities voluntarily. There is a much deeper and wider appreciation of the idea of waste, the current waste of people's talents, ideas and energies, as well as the physical resources lying empty. Collectively, these different strands of thinking represent opportunities to act in clever and successful ways that have the potential to transform how we live day-to-day.

Five years ago, if someone told you that their street had joined together to rent a space to serve as a creative common community space, you would have been very surprised. But last month in Rotterdam I spent the morning in one of these spaces, called the Living Room. This beautiful space is paid for by membership from the community, each paying 3 Euros per month, and managed by volunteers. In Israel, the practice of communities renting a shared house for community activities is becoming commonplace in some areas.

People across the globe are rediscovering the pleasures and benefits of common activity: neither as passive consumers of culture, nor as needy recipients of charity, but as active makers and designers of where they

live. There is a new sense of agency emerging, of optimism and of control, and it is revealing itself through real, positive activity on a human scale, not through theorising or large systemic change.

For nearly four years, I have been working on a project called Social Spaces,¹ concentrating obsessively on understanding these phenomena in great detail, as they have emerged. We now have 45 collaborative books in production—*The Community Lover's Guide to the Universe*²—collecting stories of these new types of local project from places around the world.

Over the past 15 months, we have worked in over 80 communities, asking 2,000 people what they would like to see more of in the places where they live. Not a single person has asked for more restaurants, clothing or jewellery shops. Instead, people from all around the UK told us that they want to live in communities where the divisions between age, culture, wealth (and lack of it) are bridged. They told us that they want

to live in beautiful places and, very importantly, that they want new types of common space, places where they can start the work of building more sociable communities. They say that they want to create a sense of community, to pool their own ideas, talents, and build on their innate resourcefulness and resilience through simple activities. When added together, they believe that these activities can start to make significant steps towards transforming their communities, and individual pieces of research confirm this. What has emerged from this work is an amazing collective vision: a home-made vision that is not being imposed by social theorists, the media or Hollywood.

It is important to understand and analyse what effects this new type of participation may be having, because at scale this new independent creativity, often happening without the need for funding or permission, has the potential to seriously disrupt many of our existing systems.

If local people can connect with one another easily,

¹ See <http://www.civicsystems-lab.org>

² See <http://www.community-loversguide.org>

can improve their neighbourhoods through collective activity, can deploy sophisticated and strategic thinking to their project designs, improving health and well-being, reducing unemployment and crime, without so much as a nod towards politicians, might this effectively drain those politicians of power?

Perhaps you are thinking that the patterns of activity I have been describing fit rather well with the stated ambitions of today's politicians: citizens getting more involved, relieving the state of financial burdens, generating positive, networked effects that no linear, direct government interventions could achieve. Yet despite this apparent fit, it may turn out that a significant shift in politicians' behaviours is needed, if they want to stay relevant in such a scenario.

One example of what this looks like in real life is that of an impressive small group of people I met in a town in Cornwall. They had successfully negotiated with an energy company to create a large community fund that would make it possible to become collectively self-sufficient in generating green energy through rooftop solar panels, etc. This fund will be managed by the community, for the community. Not a single line of responsibility or credit for the project passes through the existing local democratic system.

If you are a local councillor, you might easily fall in love with all this place-shaping and making. You have vegetables popping up all over the place, more people riding bicycles, more people smiling. New projects are blossoming: there are new children's nurseries co-managed by parents, people are sharing their stuff, sometimes people knit jumpers for the lamp posts. OK, sometimes it might seem a little quirky, but we like it, and it is happening.

As a result of all this new sociability and industrious activity, crime is going down, unemployment is going down—you know, all by itself—without you, the councillor, making a budget decision or lifting a finger. So how exactly do you get re-elected, if there is no direct route of attribution between you and all this community transformation?

The penny finally drops for this particular councillor. She or he is going to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in, because they realise that it's the only way to remain relevant. Before you know it, they are digging up vegetables and painting walls, removing administrative barriers to community progress, and connecting people, ideas, expertise and resources both in the community and in the council, as though their life depended on it.

Doesn't sound too bad does it,
from a citizen's perspective?

So the next time someone asks
you to plant carrots, build a bench,
transform an empty space, bake

a pie—don't think of these
as small or trivial acts. Who
knows, they could turn out to be
the most politically radical things
you could do. ■

LabGov—Laboratory for the Governance of the Commons

a discussion between **Michel Bauwens** and **Christian Iaione**

A commons-based economy cannot thrive without appropriate institutions, especially those that represent a 'partner state' approach. Professor Christian Iaione of LUISS University (Guido Carli Free International University for Social Studies) in Rome is a pioneer of such institutional innovation in Italian cities. His work with the city of Bologna on Bologna's Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons is a breakthrough. This regulation allows citizen coalitions to propose improvements to their neighbourhoods, and the city to contract with citizens for key assistance. In other words, the municipality

functions as an enabler, giving citizens individual and collective autonomy.

More than 30 projects have already been approved in this context and dozens of Italian cities are adopting this regulation. The co-Mantova project in Mantua, Italy is one such example. It has been set up for citizen-based social innovations using a multi-stakeholder approach that includes Professor Iaione. In the interview below, we asked him about his motivation, the ideas that have shaped his work, his urban commons projects in Bologna and Mantua, and how he sees the expansion of this approach in cities throughout the world.

Professor Christian Iaione is the coordinator of LabGov.it (Laboratory for the Governance of Commons), Associate Professor of Public Law at Guglielmo Marconi University of Rome and Visiting Professor of Governance of the Commons at LUISS University of Rome.

Michel Bauwens is a theorist, author and researcher. He is the creator of the Foundation for Peer-to-Peer Alternatives, and one of the keynote speakers at the European Cultural Foundation's Idea Camp 2015 — 'Build the City'.

Michel Bauwens Before we explore your work, what sparked your passion for urban commons?

Christian Iaione I grew up in Southern Italy, but with an Anglo-Saxon imprinting. My parents lived in the US in the sixties. They eventually decided to go back. My father told me they made this choice because they wanted to give back to their country. In the 1970s, they were both Vice-Mayors in their respective hometowns (Contrada and Atripalda, near Avellino). The first time I went to the US was 1980. I was five years old and running away from a catastrophic earthquake that hit my city and its county (Avellino). Schools and other public services were shut down. My mother, my brothers and I fled to New York and New Jersey to stay with friends and relatives. My father decided to stay in Italy to take care of his city and his citizens.

These were the first lessons I learned about life and the US. The sense of duty that my father taught me with his example, and that the US can be a welcoming land for those in need. Almost 20 years later in 1999, I enrolled in the University of California Berkeley Extension Program. In Berkeley I learned the importance of becoming a unique human able to collaborate with other unique human beings, rather than competing to be the first of my class. I came back to the States for a third time to intern at the International Law Institute in [Washington] D.C.—a city where you can feel the immanent presence of power and how distant institutions can be from the needs of citizens and how reluctant they are to innovate, but also how you can find innovators within government. Lessons learned: if you want to change something you have to change it from the inside by finding those who are willing to work with you. I then had the opportunity to work and develop my academic studies as a research fellow at New York University School of Law. It was there that I developed the theoretical framework for local public entrepreneurship, which is the basis of the CO-Mantova project and the idea of the city as a commons. My study on the tragedy of urban roads and experiments in Bologna led to this.

Michel Bauwens You run LabGov—LABORATORY for the GOVERNANCE of commons dealing with new commons-centric urban governance. LabGov is part of an important Italian academic institution, LUISS University, and, in particular, the International Center on Democracy and Democratization led by Leonardo Morlino—a prominent international political scientist. What is LabGov?

Christian Iaione LabGov is an in-house clinic for social, economic, institutional and legal innovators who carry out empirical work to implement innovations in public policy based on collaborative governance and public collaboration for the commons, subsidiarity, active citizenship, sharing economy, collaborative consumption, shared value, and collective impact. I co-produce the clinic with young people graduating from LUISS University. I designed this programme having in mind a powerful new social class that is on the rise. It is a class of active citizens, social innovators, makers, creatives, sharing and collaborative economy practitioners, service designers, co-working and co-production experts, and urban designers.

This social class is pushing or nudging society, business and institutions towards new frontiers. Students should have the opportunity to join this social class and help it move the frontier forward. That is why, through the clinic, student interns develop projects that must come to life. Students must implement innovation in areas where innovation has not been brought yet or amplify the innovation in existing projects. In 2013 LabGov was devoted to the subject 'The City as a Commons', while in 2014 it was focused on 'Culture as a Commons'.

In the academic year 2014–2015, the focus of study is green governance, to be understood as a social, economic, institutional and legal technology. Therefore, this year the LabGov is devoted to the 'land as a commons: environment, agriculture and food'. All the real life projects we design in the Laboratory are then proposed to real life actors that are willing to experiment with the ideas we seed. LabGov is a non-profit rooted in the university but working on the outside. LabGov intends to update the Triple Helix concept of the university-industry-government

relationship because we believe in a Quintuple Helix approach (embedded in LabGov logo) where universities become an active member of the community and facilitate the creation of new forms of partnerships in the general interest between government, industry and businesses, the not for profit sector, social innovators and citizens, and other institutions such as schools, academies, plus research and cultural centres.

Michel Bauwens

You are known as one of the key authors of the new regulation on collaboration for the care and regeneration of urban commons, which was adopted by Bologna and is now being adopted by other Italian cities. What exactly does the “Regolamento sulla collaborazione per i beni comuni urbani” entail, and are there already practical consequences?

Christian Iaione

The Bologna Regulation is part of the ‘The City as a Commons’ project that LabGov started in 2012. It consists of two years of field work and three ‘urban commons governance labs’. The Bologna regulation is a 30-page regulatory framework outlining how local authorities, citizens and the community at large can manage public and private spaces and assets together. As such, it’s a sort of handbook for civic and public collaboration, and also a new vision for government. It reflects the strong belief that we need a cultural shift in terms of how we think about government, moving away from the Leviathan State or Welfare State toward collaborative or polycentric governance. This calls for more public collaboration, nudge regulations¹ and citytelling.

¹ ‘Nudge’ regulations focus on preventing people from making so-called ‘bad’ decisions that may harm themselves, like over-eating or buying less energy efficient appliances. The subjective nature of what can be labelled as a ‘bad’ decision means that the potential scope of ‘nudge’ regulations is unlimited. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nudge_%28book%29

I have been researching the topic of the commons for quite a long time, and at some point I realised that the city could actually be interpreted as a collaborative commons. I synthesised my research in a paper ‘City as a Commons’² presented at a conference in Utrecht and later published in the Indiana University Digital Library of the Commons. This was the background study for the Bologna and Mantova projects. I am now working with Sheila Foster from Fordham Law School on a more comprehensive study that is going to lay out a theoretical framework building on the background studies I developed in Italian (see an article titled ‘La città come bene comune’³) and the empirical work I am carrying out in several Italian cities.

² Paper presented at the Second Thematic Conference of the IASC on “Design and Dynamics of Institutions of Institutions for Collective Action: A Tribute to Prof. Elinor Ostrom”, 29 November—1 December 2012, available at the Digital Library of the Commons.

³ See <http://www.aedon.mulino.it/archivio/2013/1/iaione.htm>

Michel Bauwens We met at the presentation of co-Mantova, an ambitious project to revive the local economy with young social innovators, which also proposes an innovative five-fold local governance scheme. Tell us why Mantova needed this, how the process with youth worked, and how the city, province and Chamber of Commerce came to accept the process. Above all: what’s next?

Christian Iaione co-Mantova is a prototype of a process to run the city as a collaborative commons, i.e., a ‘co-city’. A co-city should be based on collaborative governance of the commons whereby urban, environmental, cultural, knowledge and digital commons are co-managed by the five actors of the collaborative/polycentric governance—social innovators (i.e., active citizens, makers, digital innovators, urban regenerators,

urban innovators, etc.), public authorities, businesses, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions (i.e., schools, universities, cultural academies, etc.)—through an institutionalised public-private-citizen partnership. This partnership will give birth to a local peer-to-peer physical, digital and institutional platform with three main aims: living together (collaborative services); growing together (co-ventures); making together (co-production).

The project is supported by the local Chamber of Commerce, the City, the Province, local NGOs (non-governmental organisations), young entrepreneurs, SMES (small and medium-sized enterprises) and knowledge institutions, such as the Mantua University Foundation, and some very forward-looking local schools.

The first step was ‘seeding social innovation’ through a collaborative call for ‘Culture as a Commons’ to bring forth social innovators in Mantua. Second step was the co-design laboratory ‘Enterprises for the Commons’, an idea camp where the seven projects from the call were cultivated and synergies created between projects and with the city. The third phase was the Governance camp, a collaborative governance prototyping stage that led to the drafting of the Collaborative Governance Pact, the Collaboration Toolkit and the Sustainability Plan, which was presented to the public during the Festival of Cooperation on 27 November 2014.

The next step is the fourth and final phase: the governance testing and modelling through the launch of a public consultation in the city on the text of the Pact and a roadshow generating interest in CO-Mantova among possible signatories belonging to the five categories of collaborative governance actors. We also may have CO-Mantova opening up a Commons School.

Michel Bauwens What are the prospects for public collaboration and commons-oriented local governance schemes? What do you see happening elsewhere and what do you want to see change in the near future?

Christian Iaione This really depends on the local context. In my opinion, people are what matters the most, and the best entry point is always to find the people or group who believe in change, and in doing things better by pushing the boundaries of institutional innovation. You need people with around-the-clock commitment beyond their official duty both to the community, the institution and to excellence.

You always have to take into account that public officials are likely to be very cautious, since changing one thing tends to impact other things. Innovation is not the result of revolution, but it's quiet, not necessarily slow, but difficult and involves a continuous negotiation process. This is something that you have to 'figure out on the ground'. If you manage to implement change with the public administration rather than using political drivers, your change is much more likely to be permanent.

There are some good examples about how public collaboration and commons-oriented local governance schemes are taking place. Florence is one example where collaboration has been seeded in several institutions and projects that the city is already running. The new mayor and new commissioners have already shown interest in expanding the reach of a collaborative approach within the city government.

Moreover, a growing community of innovators is working in Italy to foster collaborative practices, sharing economy and social innovation. One example is the Sharing School that was held from 23 to 26 of January 2015 in Matera, the 2019 European Capital of Culture.

Michel Bauwens What else are you working on? What are your long-term goals?

Christian Iaione We are talking about a cultural shift. The new governance model proposed is a new way for us to relate to almost everything, from economy to society as a whole and to other people, in other words: our vision of the world changes. Whether this cultural paradigm takes expression in sharing a car, or caring about where

the trash ends up, this is all part of a 21st century way of living: a way of sharing things, sharing services, sharing spaces, sharing production and sharing responsibilities.

You need a 'nudging class' instead of a ruling class, a class that has the drive to convince and nudge society and institutions towards a sharing and collaborative paradigm. But you cannot force change, you have to nudge people to share and collaborate.

For this reason, since 2012, I've suggested the creation of a federalised network of local hubs of expertise gathering best practices, starting up experimentations in different territories, spreading governance culture and disseminating knowledge among Italian territories. This National Collaboration Network could become a hub that provides collaboration toolkits, regulations and governance schemes, as well as training programmes and day-by-day assistance for local administrators to help them drive change toward sharing and governance of the commons. This could accelerate the shift towards a 21st century paradigm of public administration.

Michel Bauwens What other cities are you allied with or are learning from? Is CO-Mantova part of any networks or associations that support commons-based urban development?

Christian Iaione Many other cities are taking the route synthesised by CO-Mantova and opened by Bologna with its regulation on collaboration for urban commons. Milan, Florence, Rome, Naples, Battipaglia and Palermo have decided or are deciding to invest energy, skills and other resources on the challenge of collaboration. They increasingly believe that only through co-design and bottom-up processes of civic and economic empowerment is it possible to face the challenges that congestion, agglomeration and density that cities will face in the future.

Michel Bauwens How are LUISS students or LabGov interns involved in CO-Mantova? And what feedback are you getting from them so far?

Christian Iaione LabGovers', as we call LabGov interns, participated actively during all the phases of the Mantova project. They supported project design and field implementation. They handled internal and external communication, organised the workshops and conferences, and facilitated the different project working groups, which, for instance, created the Collaboration Pact, the Collaboration Toolkit and the Sustainability Plan.

For them, CO-Mantova was their first fieldwork and occasion to test the competencies acquired during their university studies, and through the colloquium that LabGov holds every year on commons governance, sharing economy, social innovation and nudge regulation. LabGov helps young, talented students develop useful skills for their careers. These are all skills that, due to the continuous transformation of society, you will not find in books or learn in a classroom. For this reason, LabGov teaches collaboration, service design, project management and the sharing of roles and responsibilities through a 'learning by doing' approach. Thanks to LabGov, young students and graduates enter the working world better prepared than their colleagues. I am confident that LabGovers will hold important positions in society and will be the driving force of change by fostering collaboration and a commons-oriented economic approach.

Michel Bauwens In conclusion, how do you see the inter-relationship of the commons, city governments, citizens, market players and market institutions?

Christian Iaione The job of city governments, and maybe every government layer, is changing. Their function is less about commanding or providing. They are increasingly acting as a platform that enables collaboration between citizens and social innovators, not for profit organisations, businesses and universities—the five actors of collaborative governance—to unleash the full potential of urban, cultural and environmental commons, promote a sustainable commons-oriented development paradigm, updating the concept of State or government and

therefore implying as Neal Gorenflo would say a “shift in power and social relations”. Market institutions are more interested in this process than one might think. This is the main take away of the Mantova experiment. In fact, it is the local Chamber of Commerce, the local cooperative movement, the local businesses and the young entrepreneurs that are investing more in this innovative project than other sectors. SMEs and big companies alike are looking for new, innovative approaches to the way value is produced. The race to the bottom that globalisation has triggered is no longer an available strategy for a knowledge economy system like Mantova. Economic actors increasingly understand that they should invest in producing collaborative value and create collaborative economic ecosystems that foster creativity, knowledge, identity and trust.

This new phenomenon represents an opportunity to revolutionise the current state of play of the society, economy, institutions and law. This new social, economic, institutional and legal paradigm is going to characterise the 21st century as the ‘co-century’, the century of commons, collaboration, cooperation, community, communication, co-design, co-production, co-management, coexistence, co-living. For all these reasons, it is urgent to design the rules and institutions of this new century. LabGov is working on this frontier and is doing it together with experts, organisations and individuals that represent what we think is a newly rising social class, a class of economic and institutional innovators. ■

Bologna Celebrates One Year of a Bold Experiment in Urban Commoning

by **Neal Gorenflo**

It all began with park benches.

In 2011, a group of women in Bologna, Italy wanted to donate benches to their neighbourhood park, Piazza Carducci. There was nowhere to sit in their park. So they called the city government to get permission to put in benches. They called one department, which referred them to another, which sent them on again. No one in the city could help them. This dilemma highlighted an important civic lacuna—there simply was no way for citizens to contribute improvements to the city. In fact, it was illegal.

Fast forward to 16 May 2015. The Mayor, City Councillors, community leaders, journalists and hundreds of others gathered

at the awe-inspiring MAST Gallery for the opening ceremony of Bologna's Civic Collaboration Fest celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons, a history-making institutional innovation that enables Bologna to operate as a collaborative commons. Now Bologna's citizens have a legal way to contribute to the city. Since the regulation passed one year ago, more than 100 projects have signed 'collaboration pacts' with the city under the regulation to contribute urban improvements with 100 more in the pipeline. It was an impenetrable ceremony filled with ceremony, emotion, historical significance all in a context of tough political realities.

Neal Gorenflo is the co-founder of Shareable, an award-winning news, action, connection hub for the sharing transformation. In addition to his work at Shareable, Neal is an adviser to the US Solidarity Economy Network, OuiShare, Peers, Mayor Park of Seoul in South Korea and is a former Innovation Fellow for Mayor Lee of San Francisco.

City Councillor Luca Rizzo Nervo opened the ceremony with a rousing speech. He said a new day was dawning where 'no you can't' was turning into 'yes we can together', where citizens are self-determining, and where a new, empowering relationship between citizens and city had begun. He said he was tired of the old, pessimistic rhetoric and that the regulation opened up a new, hopeful development path that takes 'active citizenship' to the next level. He ended with a vision of Bologna as an entire city powered by sharing and collaboration as part of a global network of other cities on the same path.

Administrator Donato Di Memmo, the urban commons project leader, spoke to the importance of the urban commons for urban art, digital innovation and social cohesion and the need for improvement in the application of the regulation. He said that relationships are the starting point and that with training and more visibility the regulation could meet the high expectations for it.

We heard from the leaders of three projects that had signed pacts. Michela Bassi spoke of the impact of her Social Streets project, which has moved from a network of neighbourhood Facebook groups to a non-profit with a set of tangible projects including an outdoor ad turned into a neighbourhood bulletin

board. Veronica Veronesi introduced Reuse With Love, a group of 50 neighbours who joined forces to fight waste and improve the lives of children and the poor. Annarita Ciaruffoli of Dentro Al Nido (Inside the Nest) spoke of how the regulation was helping to restore schools.

Stefano Brugnara, President of Arci Bologna and spokesperson for the Bologna Third Sector Forum, an association of local non-profits, spoke of the durable role of non-profits under the new regulation; that they don't get subsumed by it, but rather can be strengthened by it, especially if there's transparency in its application. His comments hinted at a concern that non-profits would be weakened by the regulation.

Giovanni Ginocchini of Bologna's Urban Centre commented on urban transformation from a physical standpoint including fighting graffiti, renovation of the city's famous arcades, green lighting in public spaces and better social housing.

While the proceedings included a diverse set of stakeholders, Mayor Virginio Merola was clearly the headliner. He gave an engaging speech filled with emotion and historical reflection. His main point, which was a reminder of Bologna's long history of civic innovation, was that Bologna's people and their cooperative culture are the city's

most important assets, the things that set it apart. He said the regulation was taking this tradition to the next level.

He got emotional at points in his speech, pausing to hold back tears. This stirred the audience. He connected. He spoke of the need for citizens to love each other and to have the freedom to do the best for oneself and others. He said it's easy to get depressed by the daily news, but that the DNA of Bologna is the ability of citizens to fulfil their dreams. He spoke about the increasing diversity of the city—only 30% of residents are Bologna born—and the need to focus on commonalities, common assets, human rights and equality. He urged the audience to create an intelligent city—one based on great relationships—as opposed to a merely smart city. He concluded that, while there's a need for much more citizen action, that this doesn't mean the end of hierarchy. The city still needs dedicated civil servants.

The Mayor has been criticised as “the mayor who cries”

and for not having a vision. I got word after the ceremony that the Mayor said the urban commons is now his vision. I was blown away how aligned his and Luca Rizzo Nervo's vision is with Shareable's and our Sharing Cities Network. Perhaps it's more accurate to say that our vision is aligned with theirs as Bologna has a 1,000-year history of civic innovation that includes the first university in the Western world, self-rule as an independent city-state during the Middle Ages, and more recently the rise of the region's famously large cooperative sector. One conclusion of Robert Putnam's influential book about Italy, *Making Democracy Work*,¹ was that northern Italians were richer than their southern cousins because they were civic, not the reverse as he had previously thought. The Mayor's speech about the cooperative spirit of Bologna was not hot air. It had the weight of history behind it. It spoke to a necessary and feasible revival of it.

After the Mayor spoke, and at the invitation of our

¹ Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton University Press, 1993).

host, Christian Iaione of LUISS LabGov, Fordham University professor Sheila Foster, commons activist David Bollier and I gave short talks about the urban commons. Sheila focused on the potential of the urban commons to foster human development. David spoke about commons-based economic development and Bologna's potential to inspire other cities. And I spoke about the how living day-to-day in the commons builds citizenship.

The ceremony was concluded in the most fitting way possible. All the leaders of projects operating under the regulation were invited on stage. The Mayor gave each a USB key to the city with a copy of regulations on the drive. The USB key was the brainchild of Christian Iaione and Michele d'Alena, the civic collaboration project leader. What a great idea. It created a joyful moment that symbolised a shift in power from elected leaders to citizens.

The next day Christian Iaione and Elena De Nictolis, Alessandra Feola and Elia Lofranco of LUISS LabGov gave a delegation including Sheila Foster and I a tour of projects that were active that day. Our first stop was one of seven citizen groups painting buildings in the city's historic centre. Painting is a big deal because of an abundance of graffiti and the need to maintain the ancient buildings, which is crucial

for quality of life, not to mention the tourist trade.

There I saw the regulation's multi-stakeholder collaboration in action. The painting crew was a non-profit, Lawyers at Work. The municipal waste management company Hera had dropped off the painting kit earlier in the day. It included paint that met the city's historical code, brushes, smocks to protect clothing, cones to mark off the work area and more. Hera had also cleared the painting project with the building owner and city. The city hosted an online map that showed all the projects active that day and their location. Citizens could track and join projects online or do it spontaneously. A neighbour had joined Lawyers at Work when they happened by the worksite, something that happens regularly with Bologna's urban commons projects. Neighbours also share project activity on social media, which can spark more activity and civic pride.

My idea of placemaking was radically upgraded by witnessing the regulation in action. Here the making part of placemaking was brought to life in a vivid and dynamic way. No longer was placemaking for urban design experts who plan everything out in advance, but rather it was for everyone in a real-time multi-stakeholder dance that included both planned and

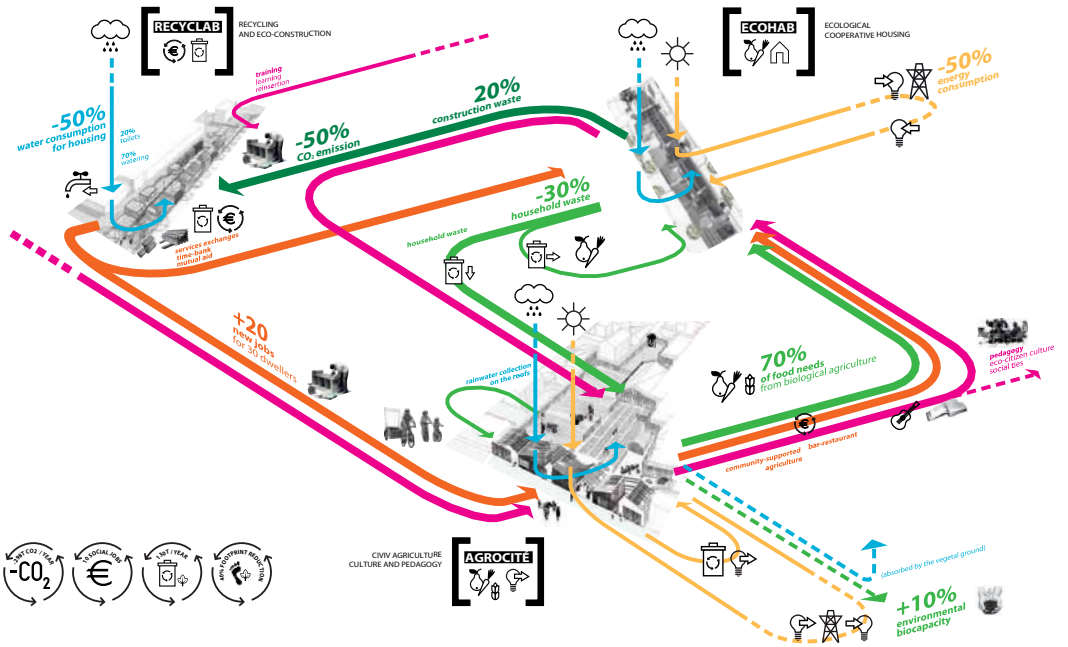
spontaneous elements. I began to see the possibilities of an entirely new way to live in a city that was even more creative, enlivening and social than what cities already offer.

In between stops in what turned out to be a long, vigorous walk, I had the chance to chat with Sheila Foster and Christian Iaione who had just co-authored a soon-to-be published paper conceptualising the city as commons from an administrative law standpoint. Two points stood out in our conversation. First, that a new era was dawning where citizens are active co-managers of the resources they use in cities instead of passive recipients of services. Secondly, that the old idea of commons needed an upgrade in the urban context. Most academic studies of commons revolve around relatively isolated natural resource commons like forests, fisheries and pastures. Urban commons must by necessity be embedded in a dense weave of institutions. They can't be as independent of the market and government as the natural resource commons that Elinor Ostrom was famous for studying. Room must

be made for urban commons in a city's administrative law and processes. In addition, they must be productively linked to other sectors of with a city. This arguably makes urban commons more complex to set up, but could provide more protection for them than what's typical for natural resource commons, which are prone to closure. This highlighted the importance of Bologna's urban commons regulation. It has opened space for the urban commons to flourish in Bologna and is already leading the way for other cities in Italy and beyond.

After a couple of other stops, we ended our tour at Piazza Carducci. I wanted to see where Bologna's urban commons began. I got my wish. The park was ordinary, and that's just the point. The most extraordinary social innovations can begin in ordinary places with a simple wish. This was such a place, and it was beautiful to me for that reason. All of us gathered on one of the benches for a picture to commemorate the pioneers of Bologna's urban commons, the women of Piazza Carducci. ■

RURBAN PILOT FACILITIES AND CYCLES



R-URBAN
 Pilots Facilities.
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R-URBAN or How to Co-produce a Resilient City (1st excerpt)

by **Constantin Petcou** and **Doina Petrescu**

The 'right to resilience'

'Resilience' is a key term in the context of the current economic crisis and lack of resources. In contrast to sustainability, which is focused on maintaining the status quo of a system by controlling the balance between its inputs and outputs, without necessarily addressing the factors of change and disequilibrium, resilience addresses how systems can adapt and thrive in changing circumstances. Resilience is a dynamic concept with no stable definition or identity outside the circumstances producing it. In contrast to sustainability, which tends to focus on maintaining

an environmental balance, resilience is adaptive and transformative, inducing change that harbours vast potentials for rethinking assumptions and building new systems.¹ Although the current resilience discourse is not to be embraced uncritically without paying heed to the sometimes naïve and idealistic comparison of social and biological systems and their adaptability to engendering well-being, the concept of 'resilience' itself has the potential to include questions and contradictions addressed in terms of political ecology.²

R-URBAN³ maintains that urban sustainability is a civic right and

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creates the conditions for this ‘right to sustainability’ to be exercised, not only as a right to rely on and *consume* sustainability (provided by the remains of the welfare state or bought from private providers), but as a right to *produce* it (allowing citizens’ involvement in decision-making and action). Although sustainability is on the agenda of many urban projects today, this does not necessarily imply that all these projects are political in their approach to the issue.

A politico-ecological approach like that of R-URBAN will not just positively and uncritically propose ‘improved’ development dynamics, but also question the processes that bring about social injustice and inequitable urban environments.⁴ Some voices such as David Harvey⁵ argue that the transformation of urban spaces is a collective rather than an individual right,

because collective power is necessary to reshape urban processes. Harvey describes ‘the right to the city’ as the citizens’ freedom to access urban resources: “it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city”.⁶ In this sense, R-URBAN follows Harvey’s ideas and facilitates the assertion of this ‘right’ through appropriation, transformation and networking processes, and the use of urban infrastructures. R-URBAN perhaps differs from Harvey in scope, as it does not seek to institute a large-scale global movement opposing the financial capital that controls urban development, but instead aims to empower urban residents to propose alternative projects where they live, and to foster local and greater networks, testing methods of self-management, self-building and self-production. In this respect, R-URBAN is perhaps

- 1 See Brigit Maguire and Sophie Cartwright, *Assessing a community’s capacity to manage change: A resilience approach to social assessment* (Bureau of Rural Sciences, May 2008). Available at http://www.tba.co.nz/tba-eq/Resilience_approach.pdf
- 2 We are here joining the ranks of political ecologists who criticise the superficial understandings of politics, power and social construction popularised in resilience rhetoric (see Alf Hornborg, ‘Zero-sum world: Challenges in conceptualizing environmental load displacement and ecologically unequal exchange in the world-system’, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 5(3–4), 2009, pp.237–265).
- 3 R-URBAN is a bottom-up strategy that explores the possibilities of enhancing the capacity of urban resilience by introducing a network of resident-run facilities to create complementarities between key fields of activity (economy, housing, urban agriculture, culture). R-URBAN initiates locally closed ecological cycles that will support the emergence of alternative models of living, producing and consuming between the urban and the rural.
- 4 Some of these ideas were first developed in Clare Brass, Flora Bowden and Kate McGeever, ‘Co-designing urban opportunities’, *SCIBE Working Paper No. 4.*, 2011 [<http://www.scibe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/04-PSI.pdf>].
- 5 David Harvey, ‘The Right to the City’, *New Left Review*, 53 (9–10), September–October 2008, pp.23–40.

closer to Lefebvre's idea of 'the right to the city'. Lefebvre imagines a locally conceived emancipatory project, emphasising the need to freely propose alternative possibilities for urban practice at a level of everyday life. He proposes a new methodology, called 'transduction', to encourage the creation of 'experimental utopias'. Framed by existing reality, this would introduce 'rigour in invention and knowledge in utopia' as a way of avoiding 'irresponsible idealism'.⁷ Lefebvre underlines the key role of urban imaginaries in understanding, challenging and transforming urbanity and opening the way to a multiplicity of representations and interventions. From this perspective, R-URBAN is a 'transductive' project, both rigorous and utopian, popular and experimental. It is a bottom-up approach based on the aggregation

of many individual and collective interventions that complement each other, forming metabolic networks that stimulate circulatory changes while simultaneously informing one another. Such networks will accommodate multiplicity and valorise imagination at all levels.

R-URBAN could hence be suspected of aligning itself opportunistically with the 'Big Society' principles proposed by the UK's Tory Prime Minister, David Cameron, to implement "the idea of communities taking more control, of more volunteerism, more charitable giving, of social enterprises taking on a bigger role, of people establishing public services themselves".⁸ But the essential difference is that R-URBAN is not responding directly to the onset of the financial crisis and is not embracing a programme of economic resilience

⁶ David Harvey, *ibid.*, p.23.

⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (New York: Blackwell, 1996).

⁸ Speech delivered by British Prime Minister David Cameron on Big Society on Monday, 14 February 2011. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-on-big-society>

in which the state is absent: such a programme would explicitly promote the reliance on unpaid work to mask the disappearance of welfare structures and the massive cuts in public services. The R-URBAN strategy is not relegating economic responsibility to citizens because the state is unable or unwilling to assume it any longer, but claims the social and political right to question the state's power in terms of its role and responsibility. Local authorities and public institutions are integrated in the strategy as equal partners, assuming the roles of enablers, sponsors and administrators. In addition to urban residents and civic organisations, public institutions (e.g., city councils, regeneration offices, public land trusts, schools and cultural agencies) are also invited to take part in this experimental utopia, and to challenge their routines. It is not only the residents who must “change themselves by changing the city”, as claimed by Harvey,⁹ but also the politicians and specialists presently in charge of a city.

As such, R-URBAN is not only about grassroots innovation to meet social, economic and environmental needs, but also about political critique and ideological expression, affirming the necessity of new social and economic agencies based on alternatives to the dominant socio-technical regime. R-URBAN gives its

self-organised constituency the means to act locally on a neighbourhood scale, and creates opportunities for actions and activities that could change their future. It affirms their ‘right to resilience’.

Concentrating on spatial agencies and civic hubs, R-URBAN tries to supply tools and spaces that will manifest citizens' existing resilient initiatives and practices. Spatial planning processes contribute to expressing ecological cycles in tangible ways, and help facilitate citizens' experiences of making and doing.

In parallel to its civic hubs, which represent a new ecological urban infrastructure, R-URBAN also puts new political and democratic tools in place: forms of self-governance supporting the emergence of different kinds of formal and informal economic organisation across the network. These are all part of a cooperative civic land-trust, the entity that will govern the entire R-URBAN project. Being transferable and multipliable, these tools are realised in cooperation with other partners and concerned citizens.

Micro-social and cultural resilience

Unlike other initiatives exclusively dealing with sustainability from a technological and environmental

perspective, R-URBAN advocates a general 'change of culture', understood as a change in how we do things, in order to change our future.

R-URBAN proposes new collective practices, which, in addition to reducing the ecological footprint, also contribute to reinventing near-at-hand relationships based on solidarities (i.e., ways of being involved and deciding collectively, sharing spaces and grouping facilities, rules and principles of cohabitation). The transformation needs to take place on the micro-scale of each individual, each subjectivity, to build a culture of resilience. As Rob Hopkins puts it, "resilience is not just an outer process: it is also an inner one, of becoming more flexible, robust and skilled".¹⁰ The culture of resilience includes processes of re-skilling, skill sharing,

social networking and mutual learning. These micro-social and micro-cultural practices, usually related to individual lifestyles and activities (e.g., food cultivation and waste collection, car-sharing, exchanging tools and skills with neighbours), elicit attention to details, singularities, and the creative and innovative potentials found on the level of everyday life. R-URBAN maps this local capacity to invent and transform in detail, but also, in parallel, the administrative constraints that block it, proposing ways of bypassing them by way of restated policies and structures.

Commons and commoning

The issue of commons lies at the heart of discussions revolving around co-produced democracy. Michael

⁹ David Harvey, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Rob Hopkins, 'Resilience thinking', *Resurgence* (2009), p.15.

Hardt and Antonio Negri¹¹ define commons as something that is not discovered but produced biopolitically: We call the currently dominant model 'biopolitical production' to underline the fact that it involves not only material production in straight economic terms, but also affects and contributes to producing all other aspects of social life, i.e. the economic, cultural and political. This biopolitical production and the greater number of commons it creates support the possibility of democracy today.¹²

A sustainable democracy should be based on a long-term policy of commons, as well as the social solidarities understood as such. "Creating value today is about networking subjectivities and capturing, diverting and appropriating what they do with the commons they give rise to".¹³

According to Ravel and Negri,¹⁴ the revolutionary project of our time is all about this capturing, diverting, appropriating and reclaiming of commons as a constitutive process. This is a reappropriation and reinvention at one and the same time. The undertaking needs new categories and institutions, new forms of management and governance, spaces and actors—an entire infrastructure both material and virtual.

R-URBAN endeavours to co-produce this new infrastructure that is simultaneously a reappropriation and a reinvention of new forms of commons, ranging from collective, self-managed facilities and collective knowledge and skills to new forms of groups and networks. The facilities and uses proposed by R-URBAN will be shared and propagated on various scales, progressively

¹¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: Guerre et démocratie à l'âge de l'empire* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).

¹² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Ibid.*, p. 9–10, authors' translation.

¹³ Antonio Negri and Judith Ravel, 'Inventer le commun des hommes', *Multitudes* No. 31 (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2008).

¹⁴ Antonio Negri and Judith Ravel, *Ibid.*, p. 7, authors' translation.

constituting a network that is open to various users and includes adaptable elements and processes based on open-source information.

Rather than buying it, the R-URBAN land trust currently established in Colombes, France bypasses the fixation on notions of property and negotiates land for (short and long term) uses rather than ownership. The right to use is an intrinsic quality of commons, as opposed to the right to own. As in previous projects, a specific focus here is on urban interstices and spaces that evade financial speculation, if only temporarily. This is also the position of Holloway¹⁵ who, having analysed various forms of and initiatives for transforming society,

concludes that “the only possible way to think about radical change in society is within its interstices” and that “the best way of operating in interstices is to organise them”.¹⁶ This is exactly what R-URBAN does: it organises a range of spatial, temporal and human interstices and transforms them into shared facilities; it sets up a different type of urban space, neither public nor private, to host re-invented collective practices and collaborative organisations; it initiates networks of interstices to reinvent commons in metropolitan contexts. This type of organisation involves forms of *commoning*, ways of ensuring the expansion and sustainability of the shared pool of resources, but also ways of commonality as a social practice. ■

¹⁵ John Holloway, ‘Un mouvement ‘contre-et-au-delà’: À propos du débat sur mon livre’, *Variations: Revue internationale de théorie critique*, 18(04), 2006, pp.15–30.

¹⁶ John Holloway, *ibid.*, p.19–20, authors’ translation.

From Lamp Posts to Phone Booths: Using Technology to create Civic Spaces

by **Noel Hatch**

British journalist Paul Mason recently listed “the 10 things a perfect city needs”,¹ ranging from hipster economics to political unrest, but with no mention of public space!

Other city indexes focus on public space, like those produced by the EIU² and Monocle.³ Where they differ from Mason’s is their data-driven approach.

If you took their methods to their logical conclusion, we could end up living in a world where democracy is replaced by a Panopticon, tracking everything to ensure the places we live in are aligned with these indexes. Imagine your council’s promise in 2030: “If it’s not measured, it won’t get done.” Part of the smart city movement believes we’ll soon be able

to create algorithms for how cities should be run.

While one day the smart city may be able to track every interaction we have with the spaces around us to design the optimal ‘user experience’, we value public spaces in much more instinctive ways—like our trip to the seaside as a child or our first kiss in the park.

However, we’ve had smart city movements before, from Roman builders to Victorian engineers, transforming our lives for the better, introducing new technologies to help us travel more quickly, to managing our sewage more efficiently.

Nowhere is this more visible than by the sea. As Dan Thompson highlights,⁴ seaside towns were “the places

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that industry carried out its research and development. They are scattered with rusted remains of prototyped cutting-edge technology, from concrete seawalls to mechanical marine lifts.” The difference nowadays is that it’s become much easier for citizens to use the infrastructure that technology runs on to carry out our own research and development, from creating a website to 3D printing a house. So before we throw the 3D printed baby out with the bathwater, let’s explore how we can support citizens to use technology to make the best use of the spaces around them.

But first we need to explore the opportunities there are for people to make the best use of the spaces around them. Let’s understand what motivates people to use public spaces, using Demos’ typology of different users of public space.

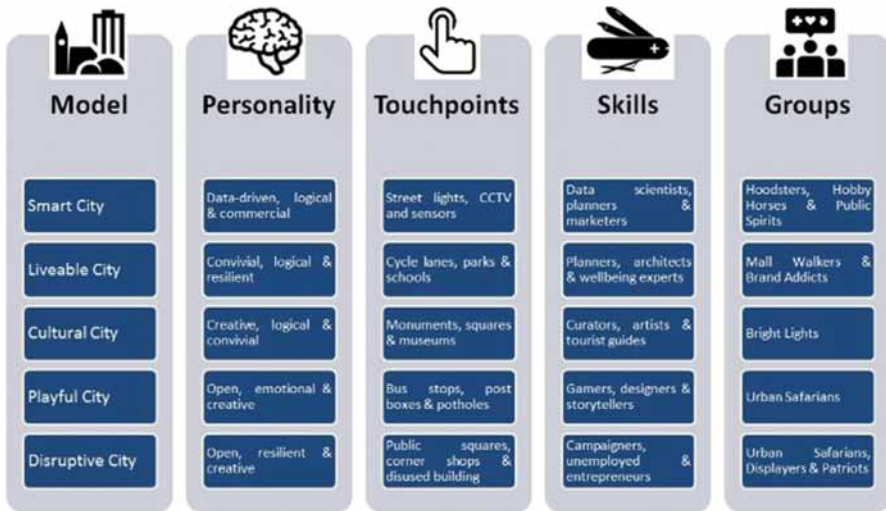
What influences people most in whether public spaces meet their needs, is the level and type of interaction they expect to have with others. Some groups look to spaces where institutions will

structure and control interaction like shopping malls, churches or sports clubs. Other groups prefer to use public spaces as infrastructure to create new forms of interaction, from doing hobbies together, watching over the neighbourhood to more spontaneous interventions.

There are different models of how cities should be designed. As you can see from this diagram, they cater to very specific types of users of public spaces. The challenge our society faces is that it’s becoming increasingly difficult to relate to people who don’t think or act like us. People who don’t feel comfortable interacting with people they don’t know feel threatened by those who want nothing more than this. People who want things to stay the way they’ve always been are challenged by those who want to disrupt the way things are done to stimulate innovation.

Trying to organise public spaces based on the design principles of a particular model will therefore always create inequalities between

- 1 Paul Mason, ‘The 10 things a perfect city needs’, *The Guardian*, 25 August 2014. See <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/25/10-things-a-perfect-city-needs>
- 2 See http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=liveability2014
- 3 See <http://monocle.com/film/affairs/quality-of-life-survey-2014/>
- 4 See <http://mrdanthompson.wordpress.com/2014/09/01/folkestones-on-the-edge-of-something/>



different groups. What's most important is to support different forms of interaction that can complement each other.

So how can we create 'in between spaces' that are at the intersection of spontaneous and curated activities, of formal and informal design and of intimate and collective interactions?

We can invert roles, getting citizens to be the designers of their local parks. We can subvert resources, filling sweet machines with seed bombs so children can grow their own food. We can graft practices from other fields,

like using sensors and gaming to get lampposts to talk to people. In other words, we can find new ways of using existing resources that may never have been used in public space.

As Demos argues: "If we can get the micro public spaces of street corners, cafés, malls and parks to flourish in a way that simultaneously meets people's personal needs and the wider common good, then this intelligence and the patterns of interaction stimulated might just 'trickle up' and start creating patterns and value on the next scale up." ■

“Change life!” “Change society!” These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space.”

— **Henri Lefebvre**, *The Production of Spaces*

The Civic Public as a Constellation

by **Pelin Tan**

The creation of instituting society, as instituted society, is each time a common world (kosmos koinos), the positing of individuals, of their types, relations and activities; but also the positing of things, their types, relations and signification—all of which are caught up each time in receptacles and frames of reference instituted as common, which make them exist together.¹

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS

Embodiment

Does one particular physical place in our cities ensure the notion of a civic public? In what moment and specific urban staging does the 'civic' perform to be able to embody itself as 'public'? Urban squares in cities are often described as the public space where, when confronted with hegemony, a group of individuals

comes together as a collective body and begins to act as a social subject. But the emancipation of this social subject as it rises against hegemony is only possible through an embodiment that is both collective and relational.

In contrast to common urban history in Western societies, where the embodiment of collectives is usually tied to a particular space within the city, in many Ottoman cities, for example, public space and the social subject exist more or less as a constellation. Architectural historian and theorist Uğur Tanyeli often questions the dualistic structure of private and public space in Western societies.² According to him, in Ottoman cities such duality never existed; instead, their complex lifestyles and heterogeneous communities created multiple spatial experiences and therefore opportunities to embody

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a civic public. Therefore, the meaning and practice of public space here was layered, multiple and performative, which is rather different from the more restrained practices we tend to see in Western cities.

Accordingly, instead of fetishising the square—understood as a site that will originate a civic public—we should consider different forms of organisation and constellations where this civic public can embody itself. Constellations here mean both the spatial experience in the urban territory and the nature of collectivity, which consists in types of collaboration, the practice of ‘commoning,’ and alternative economic currencies. Recent events witnessed in parks and squares such as Zuccoti Park, Gezi Park, Tahrir Square and others are not only a resounding call towards an active civic public, but also showcase alternative forms of collaboration in everyday practices. Although public uprisings in demand of non-clerical democracy often take place in temporary urban spaces that

are temporarily occupied or made use of, they also resort to the long-term practice of commoning, as an experience embodied within the urban. Both result in the occupation and transformation of space from anonymous or non-significant to collectively significant.

Event

According to French philosopher Alain Badiou, an event is political if its material is collective, or if the event can only be attributed to a collective multiplicity.³ Within this framework, how can the event of urban resistance transform itself as a collective civic embodiment? Why did Gezi Park and Taksim Square become the urban spaces to experience citizenship, and what is their relationship to other sites of urban resistance such as Syntagma Square, Tahrir Square, Zuccotti Park or movements such as the Stuttgart 21 protest? And how, after its invasion by the police, did the Gezi Park resistance transform

1 Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Translated by K. Blamey (Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT Press Cambridge, 1998).

2 Uğur Tanyeli, *Genişleyen Dünya Sanatı, Kent ve Siyaset: 9th International Istanbul Biennale* (Istanbul: IKSİV, 2005).

itself into urban assemblies in different districts and parks within Istanbul?

In the last five years we have participated extensively in and witnessed many instances of how city centres host—spatially—urban uprisings all over the world. Urban resistance, street riots and occupying parks or squares to protest against capitalist society and authoritarian governments, which have proven themselves as strategies since the 1960s, seem to be the only concrete collective action nowadays that is political though non-partisan. As David Harvey explains when referring to Lefebvre's "revolutionary moment" in his recent book *Rebel Cities*, "reinventing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanisation."⁴ Addressing urban centres, Harvey continues: "there is an impulse towards and longing for its restoration which arises again to produce far-reaching political effects; as we have recently seen in central squares."⁵ Thus, we can see how a collective

power that derives its visibility and action from the urban territory can create its own heterotopic site, which is the moment when the public collectively re-inhabits and reclaims urban space despite their differences.

In the case of Gezi Park, recent events testify to a new urban space of conflict where a collective power is actively exercised, namely as the meaning of coming together in public space is appropriated as a form of protest against urbanisation. The heterogeneity of the public and the strategy of passive resistance against police force, as well as the common drive to reclaim everyday life against a neoliberal system via a park, has a lot of similarities with other urban movements such as the K21 protest in Stuttgart or the on-going anti-nuclear protest in Tokyo park following the Tsunami of 2011. However, we can see how this spontaneous and specific instance of 'coming together' is also a force of accumulation that has an impact in other local movements in Istanbul. This can

³ Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics* (London: Verso, 2005) p.142.

⁴ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012).

⁵ David Harvey, *ibid.*

be seen in the anti-nuclear protests in Turkey, protests by the Istanbul Chamber of Architects, the Istanbul Chamber of Urban Planners against urban destruction and the centralised upside-down projects such as 3.Bridge for Istanbul, the Taksim Square construction and other related movements.

Aside from calling authorities to participatory, grass-roots urban decision-making strategies directly in the sites where this radical democracy is taking place, these parks and squares of urban resistance also foster the formation of a radical form of citizenship. The project Decolonizing Architecture by architects Alessandro Petti and Sandra Hilal is a reference on practices of commoning and radical citizenship in spaces of conflict urbanism, as seen in their study of the formation of a refugee camp “where a citizen is stripped of his or her political rights, reduced to bare life”. Conflict urbanism and urban uprising are still a hope against forceful urbanisation, as they introduce an instance of “irruption”

where a civic public can perform spontaneously through a collective action to create something radically different, as stated by Lefebvre.⁶

Crisis

How can self-organised, self-regulating networks and collective structures such as the occupy movements in urban space inspire economic models, especially where the generation and re-distribution of wealth are concerned?

And how can these spaces, under exceptional conditions, serve as ‘common knowledge’ based on the practice of ‘commoning’? Nowadays, we discuss precarious working conditions and their effects on immaterial labour. Immaterial industries, according to Bifo: “...asks instead to place our very souls at its disposal: intelligence, sensibility, creativity and language”.⁷ Currently, our understanding of the nature of precarious labour is mostly based on a time/work frame that leads to labour exploitation

⁶ David Harvey, *ibid.*, p.XVII.

⁷ Franco Berardi "Bifo", *The Soul at Work — From Alienation To Autonomy*. Translated by F. Cadel and G. Mecchia (Los Angeles, London: Semiotext (E) Foreign Agents Series, 2009) p.192–193.

and lack of employment security, but these conditions do not necessarily correspond to our relative experience in different work types. Rather, precarious labour and the conflict of production exist in a totally different way within autonomous structures and networks. We can witness some examples of this in different geographies, where autonomous structures and collectives whose labour is based on relational collaboration and self-organisation are actively being pursued and developed.

There are practical cases of self-organised labour structures managing well on their own, not only to sustain production but also to maintain fluid networks of creative collectivism and collaboration. The practice of collectives or self-starting ventures by architects, artists and designers such as RAD (Kyoto), Hanare (Kyoto), Woofers Ten (Hong Kong) or Souzy Troust (Athens), to name just a few, is a reaction to the current economic crisis, which cannot be separated from the political one. This crisis is inert and has certainly influenced institutional structures and governmentality (government, cultural and creative infrastructures such as design offices and art related spaces).

Within this context, as a result of the economic crisis in the country, Kyoto-based RAD (which stands for Research for Architecture Domain),

a small shared space by architects and cultural activists, positions itself against the conservative institutionalism of architecture in Japan. The option to work on a variety of fronts is tied not only to the need to diversify sources of income but also with a desire to establish a practice of critical thinking within the sphere of design in the company of like-minded individuals. Collaborating with cultural activists and running a café and social kitchen, the Hanare collective (also in Kyoto) is a financially self-sufficient practice that deals with the pressing social issues of everyday life. In Athens, a collective formed by artists, architects, designers, NGO workers and immigrants runs the space Souzy Troust, established as a food/sewing/art/design space based on the free exchange of labour. The collective Woofers Ten in Hong Kong rejects neoliberal production and focuses on self-organised urban actions and public interventions.

Most of these groups and networks are involved in anti-nuclear and ecological protest, urban pedagogy based on tools of empowerment and self-learning, teaching, acting, research, reclaiming alternative urban space, social media, urban farming and the requalification of city centres against aggressive real estate development plans. Additionally, they also undertake daily activities collaborating

with temporary workers, the homeless and disenfranchised communities to create support structures for these groups. Besides their autonomous structures, they also try to create models that are critically connected to new forms of social relations and commoning.⁸ Examples of this can be seen in the organisation of discussant groups, collective actions, urban movements and general meetings.

From this perspective, their work can be seen as a research method for the practice of commoning—the being in common. I think the meaning of ‘commons’ is not what we own or share or produce as property, ownership, economical means or accumulation, but more along the lines of what David Harvey points out as “social relations” that are closely connected to everyday life.⁹ According to political economist Massimo De Angelis, “Commons are a means of establishing a new political discourse that builds on and helps to articulate the many existing, often minor struggles, and recognises their power to overcome capitalist

society.”¹⁰ He defines three notions in order to explain that the commons are not simply the resources that we share but a way of commoning: the way in which resources are pooled and made available to a group of individuals who then build or rediscover a sense of community, and the resulting social process of ‘being common’.

Also today, food sociologist and activist Raj Patel focuses on how we define commons. He says: “Commons is about how we manage resources together.”¹¹ His argument is not only about managing and sustaining food growing and sharing but also about how food-related movements should be in solidarity with other movements. ‘Commons’, as understood here, is not a simple concept about collective sharing or ownership. It holds a sensitive position within a defined community and public, especially in contested territories or cities undergoing or under threat of neoliberal destruction of their built environment. Negotiation and the conflict of values are key

8 A useful commentary on this was made by art writer and curator Pauline Yao in the context of art production and collectives: “Art collectives, alternative art spaces, deterritorialized social and relational practices all fit within this schema and present possible critical models for how we understand and witness the ways in which art can exert its own energy upon a given environment or social context, rather than simply emerge as its by product.” Pauline Yao quoted from “A Game Played Without Rules Has No Losers,” *e-flux Journal*, 7 June 2009, New York.

9 David Harvey interviewed by Pelin Tan, Ayşe Çavdar (June, 2012, Istanbul). David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012).

10 An Architektur, 2010. On the

in such commoning practices. Claiming the commons based solely on the idea of the collective use of property would therefore not constitute an example of commoning.

As Stavros Stavrides argues, more than the act or fact of sharing, it is the existence of grounds for negotiation that is most important. Conceptualising commons on the basis of the public, however, does not focus on similarities or commonalities but on the very differences between people that can possibly meet on a purposefully instituted common ground. We have to establish grounds for negotiation rather than grounds for affirmation of what is shared.¹²

To go back to exemplary cases of collectives in this text, it is important to note that the labour exchange strategies they operate are generally based both on immaterial and physical labour. Here, the alienating forces of immaterial labour disappear and the surplus is handled on the basis of ethics rather than capitalist market imperatives. The relational network established

here is more of an instant community that chooses to think and discuss together rather than a normative structure. Self-organisation is not a simple hierarchy based on certain labour activities and their division, but conversely, it is a work/labour structure that allows one to be a farmer in the morning and a graphic designer in the afternoon. To reiterate Stavrides' sharp analysis, collaboration is not about affirmation, but negotiation. It is about debating critical issues in an urban space that is itself a pressing and compelling concern.

In summary, creating collective, non-clerical, political action in the urban space is not about the organisation or the event itself, but about co-existing and functioning together to achieve *commoning*. This is rooted on a re-consideration and realisation of our practices of collaboration, alternative economies, autonomous networks, self-organisation and surplus strategies, which are different from what neoliberal realities and production logics try to force us upon us. The Gezi

Commons:

A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides," *e-flux Journal*, 17 June 2010, New York.

11 R. Patel, *The Hungry of Earth*, *Radical Philosophy*, No.151, Sept./Oct. 2008, London.

12 An Architektur, 2010. "On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides," *e-flux Journal*, 17 June 2010, New York.

Park experience is about collaborating, moving in solidarity despite our differences, voluntary work, a non-partisan, non-clerical yet democratic platform, and friendship. Before the government dispersed the Gezi Park protestors, food, beverage, and all other needs were managed by self-initiated groups. Furthermore, a vegetable and flower garden was even set up in the park. As seen here, all self or collective initiatives are based on voluntary labour exchange in general terms, but they also beyond, as exchange labour in this case is not a practice where one could be called a 'volunteer'. Being a 'volunteer' here both exceeds and diminishes this new form of working together, as the 'voluntary' in labour repre-

sents the very source of the power of collective action.

As the civic public appeared as a collective social subject in resistance first in Gezi Park and Taksim Square, it later spread all over the city of Istanbul in the form of urban assemblies. This constellation of the civic public embodied itself into several public forums held every evening, where discussions and open speeches took place to make decisions for further actions of commoning. The constellation leads to questions: What kind of democracy do we want? How can we turn the urban territory into a site of resistance, prolonging the civic effects of occupation instead of 'fetishizing' as specific place? ■

The City Belongs to Everybody: Claiming Public Spaces in Chisinau

by **Vitalie Sprinceana**

Introduction

At the Chisinau City Council meeting on 5 September 2013, a scandalous, unusual informal alliance sprang up between representatives of the Liberal Party (PL—the party of the Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca) and those of the Communist Party. Together they decided to give allotments, green areas and other city property to the representatives of these parties and certain affiliated groups.¹ The Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) boycotted the meeting, accusing PL and PCRM (Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova) of making dubious deals under the table to divide city grounds and spaces between themselves.² The Mayor of Chisinau, in turn, accused the PLDM of thievery of public

property, ineffective management and dubious administration of the Chisinau Airport and the Economy Bank.³ These accusations aroused suspicion from a small group of civil society members, but their misgivings came too late and had no bearing on the decisions already adopted by the local administration.

This anecdote illustrates an all-too-familiar scene in current Moldovan post-Soviet politics, including the arbitrariness of ideological platforms; the importance of economic interests over slogans and party rhetoric; and the weakness of civil society and activist groups. Such groups are constantly unable to voice criticisms, and are therefore excluded from the decision-making process, and condemned for their supposedly reactive attitudes.

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In short, the political landscape of Chisinau comprises three groups: an administration that acts mostly on behalf of business interests; scattered groups of activists; and the mostly passive citizens.

The paradigm has remained mostly unchanged over the last 20 years. Chisinau, along with other parts of the country, did not previously witness massive urban protests that targeted the city and its problems.

The most tense moments of recent Moldavian history were related to more general themes of national identity (1989), social policies (2000) and elections and democracy on a national level (April 2009).

Major problems of the city — the urban public space, the policies of discrimination and exclusion within the urban space, urban citizenship, the right to the city, decision-making transparency in local public administration — have been ignored, either pushed to the edge of the public discourse or, in the best case, merely assimilated into wider political debates such as that

of communism versus democracy (e.g., in the 2003 election campaign for the local administration). The result of this continued disregard can be attributed to the deplorable state of public space in Chisinau. Within the last 20 years, the city has suffered a series of transformations that had detrimental consequences:

- Existing public spaces (parks, sport and cultural infrastructures, recreational areas, courtyards near housing blocks and playgrounds, etc.) degraded due to looser administration of the spaces by local authorities. The privatisation/fencing of public property resulted in the transformation of public spaces (parks, green areas, etc.) into private spaces where hotels, restaurants and other commercial buildings were erected.
- A rise in the number of cars led to a daily overload of traffic in the city centre (the amount of daily traffic in Chisinau has increased several times within the past 20 years). The absence of available parking spaces has also turned most of the sidewalks and the areas between

1 See <http://unimedia.info/stiri/doc-edina-CMC-loc-pen-tru-tranzaii-frauduloase-65204.html>

2 See <http://www.inprofunzime.md/stiri/politic/pldm-a-boicotat-sedinta-consiliului-municipal-pl-si-porm-au-facut.html>

3 See https://www.adevarul.ro/moldova/politica/haos-sedinta-cmc-nu-vorba-despre-aliana-pldm-trebui-vina-munca-nu-aranche-acuzatii-1_52286987c7b855ffc7b855ff-564b98ab/index.html

- blocks and roads into parking areas, thereby limiting space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Intense migration from rural to urban areas and the subsequent need for residential buildings has resulted in the explosion of the construction industry. Between 2005 and 2010 over 10,000 new apartments were built in Chisinau,⁴ resulting in the deforestation of green areas, reduction of spaces between housing blocks and the destruction of playgrounds and recreational areas.
 - The commercialisation of public spaces resulted in an explosion of street advertising and vendors (of newspapers, baked goods, cigarettes, alcohol, clothing, fast food, *kvas* and other refreshments, etc.)
 - The public/social activities (recreation, socialisation, rest, artistic activity) of public spaces have been substituted with profit-making entities (parks, public toilets, water sources, etc.). The city has thus not only lost public spaces for said social activities, but has also become devoid of free public toilets and sources of drinking water.
 - The citizens have been continuously excluded from decision-making processes concerning urban policies, city development, local project financing and more.
 - The city centre has been taken over by large commercial projects such as those of Sun City (a mall), Skytower (an office building), the Nobil Hotel and Grand Plaza (a residential complex).
 - The historic city centre and its existing social structure have been destroyed. Within the past 17 years, of the 977 architectural sites that formed the centre, 78 (nearly 10%) have been completely demolished, and another 155 have undergone reconstruction that has significantly altered their uniqueness and authenticity.⁵
 - Certain political and religious groups took over public spaces in a way that excluded others (religious minorities, economically disadvantaged groups, etc.) from use of those spaces. Other 'visibility policies' and police-enforced political control of the spaces contributed to the marginalisation and exclusion of groups that do not fit into the image
- ⁴ Construction in the Republic of Moldova. National Statistics Bureau, Chisinau, 2011, p.58 (see http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Costruotii/2011/Constructii_2011.pdf).
- ⁵ *The Black Book of the Cultural Patrimony of Chisinau*, 2010.

of a 'decent' city, such as homeless people, beggars, prostitutes, people with alcohol or drug addictions, etc.

Such transformations are not unique to Chisinau. Most post-Socialist cities have undergone similar processes related to the political-economic context. They have encountered accelerated reforms for the introduction of the market economy, the de-industrialisation of urban economies and the growth of the services sector, the rise of consumption, the gradual dismantlement of the social state, the rise of social inequality, political and religious populism, and the consolidation of some political-economic oligarchies at local and national levels.⁶

Claiming public spaces in Chisinau: Methodological introduction

This article intends to describe several urban activism movements from Chisinau that differed in vision, strategies, ethnic and political compositions, messages and symbols. These movements are rather

recent, having taken place in the last two to three years, although some of the organisations became active much earlier. The Oberliht Association, for example, a participant in the protest at Europe Square, has been active in the public space of Chisinau since early 2000.

My perspective is twofold, as both an activist and a sociologist. Therefore this text will speak in two voices that may sometimes overlap but in other cases will speak distinctly. As a sociologist I will attempt to anchor my observations, the facts and the activities in the context of contemporary social theory. My activist perspective will be influenced more personally, as I participated directly in various ways (in the organisation of the activities, dissemination of materials, etc.). I fit this methodology within the tradition of public sociology, inaugurated by Michael Burawoy.⁷ I understand my approach not only as one of theoretical reflection upon social processes, but also as a presentation of one type of local activism that might be

⁶ For a wider discussion see Sonia Hirt, *Iron Curtains Gates, Suburbs and Privatization of Space in the Post-Socialist City* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley & Sons, 2012) and Kiril Stanilov, *The Post-Socialist City: Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe After Socialism* (Springer, 2010).

⁷ Michael Burawoy, "For Public Sociology" in *Public Sociology: Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Policies and the Profession the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Dan Clawson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) pp.23–64.

connected to other types of activism, and as a development of some recommendations that might facilitate other urban movements.

I will present three cases of activism in terms of claiming public space: the Anti-Sbarro protest from Europe Square; the movement for the revitalisation of the Cantemir Boulevard axis; and the reconstruction of the Rotonda in Valea Morilor Park.

I examine these three cases within the theoretical framework of 'reactive protests versus proactive protests' or 'from opposition to proposition'.⁸ This conceptual model was developed following a reflection upon anti/alter-globalisation movements such as the World Social Forum (wsf) and the 1999 Seattle protests.

The category of reactive protests, as defined generally, includes protests that are 'anti' actions, through which the social movement, group of activists, or civil society opposes an action of the state or local authority, of the economic agent, or of other

groups of citizens. Protests against demolition of historic monuments and illegal constructions can be included in this type of protest.

The category of proactive protests, on the other hand, refers to protest actions by which the social movement, group of activists, or civil society not only opposes a certain type of action, but also implements reform projects or offers suggestions for alternative practices.

The distinction between these categories—which appeared from contemporary Gramscian reflections on discursive dominations and the possibilities of combatting neoliberal hegemony through 'alter-hegemonies'—is obviously not absolute. It should be perceived as a flexible continuum rather than a dichotomy. Such flexible approaches⁹ are aware that the protest isn't fixed in a linear scheme, but rather under a dynamic logic, in which the reactive and proactive aspects coexist. As arbitrary as it is, the distinction is still necessary because it guides the protest movements, allowing them

⁸ Marian Pinsky, "From Reactive to Proactive: The World Social Forum and the Anti/Alter-Globalization Movement," *McGill Sociological Review*, Volume 1, January 2010, pp.3–28; Gary Marks and Doug McAdam, "Social Movements and the Changing Structure of Political Opportunity in the European Union 1," *West European Politics* 19:2 (1996), pp.249–278; Steven M. Buechler, "New Social Movement Theories", *Sociological Quarterly* 36:3 (1995), pp.441–464.

⁹ See especially Marian Pinsky, *ibid.*



to not only identify the fact that they oppose a certain cause (via the reactive phase), but also to recognise and

contest what the dominating discourse may present as 'natural' or 'the only possible solution' (in the proactive phase).

↑ The former construction site of the Sbarro Pizzeria, Chisinau, after the fence was dismantled, January 2013.

Case 1: The Anti-Sbarro protest in Europe Square

a) Chronology

The Europe Square, situated at the entrance in the 'Stefan cel Mare si Sfant' Public Garden, was

inaugurated by the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to the Republic of Moldova and the City Council of Chisinau in 2008. A presentation of the EU logo redesigned with

flowers and a newly installed flag marked the occasion. The political significance was obvious—the newly elected Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca represented the Liberal Party, a political formation whose platform placed great emphasis on accelerating the country's European integration. This directly opposed the governing party of the time, which had a pro-Eastern, Communist orientation.

The new leadership of the city invested enormously in the symbolic aspect of this location; it is where the Mayor annually presents to the citizens his report of the year's activity. Indeed Europe Square was built deliberately as a monument-space that symbolises the European aspirations of Moldova.¹⁰

In the beginning of December 2012, a fence went up around the square indicating new forthcoming construction. The first person to signal this new construction site was the activist Oleg Brega, on the web television platform Curaj tv.¹¹ Later some texts appeared about this construction site

on personal blogs, on some public platforms and on social networks.¹² There was much controversy about the lack of information on a supposedly public entity.

Finally on 17 December, the Mayor commanded the directors for architecture and public relations at the city hall to provide the public with more information on the construction of the square.¹³ These authorities merely offered that the construction was 'perfectly legal', which did not satisfy the activist communities, including the NGO My Dear City and other organisations such as Save the Green Chisinau Association, Salvgardare Association, Oberliht Association, the Agency for Inspection and Restoration of Monuments, as well as informal groups of other active citizens and bloggers. These groups agreed to organise a public protest for 26 Wednesday. In the meantime, they created a Facebook page and a blog dedicated to the protest (<http://gradina-publica.blogspot.com/>).

¹⁰ In the Republic of Moldova, the process of adherence to the EU represents more than a technical process, of negotiation of policies: it was conceived as a national project of modernisation and as a civilising choice.

¹¹ See <http://curaj.tv/local/chisinau/constructie-noua-la-intrarea-in-parcul-central/>

¹² Vitalie Spranceana, National Culture as a Drinking House. About the Stefan cel Mare si Sfânt Public Garden (see <http://voxreport.unimedia.info/2012/12/15/cultura-nationala-ca-o-carciuma-despre-gradina-publica-stefan-cel-mare-si-sfant/>).

¹³ See <http://www.privesc.eu/Arhiva/14079/Sedinta-saptamanala-a-serviciilor-primariei-Chisinau-din-17-decembrie-2012>

The online social networks not only brought people together who did not know each other, but also facilitated organisation of the protest. The activists were able to efficiently share the tasks: soliciting the official documents from city hall, researching the legal aspects to prepare juridical criticisms, printing the banners and slogans for the protest, etc.

Several days before the protest, the Europe Square construction site also caught the attention of the mainstream media.¹⁴ The public debate was therefore widened. On 25 December, the day before the protest, the entrepreneurs made a public statement that they intended to build a pizzeria that is part of the American chain 'Sbarro'.¹⁵ Later that day, the activists participated in a workshop organised by the Oberliht Association to write protest slogans.

The protest was held, as planned, on 26 December, and without any major setbacks. The press, widely present, reflected generously the event and gave

voice to the protestors' statements. Because the construction didn't comply with all legal requirements, lacking the approval of the Ministry of Culture and the National Monuments Council, the protestors demanded that construction should be suspended, that public consultations should be initiated, and as a measure that would prevent similar situations from happening in the future, there should be increased transparency and citizens' participation in decision-making processes.

At that moment, Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca ordered construction on this site to stop until the circumstances could be clarified. Thus the first objective of the protest to stop the construction was successfully accomplished. However, the same evening, under the pretext that the Mayor's order had not yet been presented to them, the entrepreneurs continued construction, pouring the concrete foundation of the future pizzeria.

An activist who witnessed this by chance immediately passed the news on via social

14 See: A new cafeteria with terrace in the centre of the capital. The building will be placed near Europe Square, (see <http://unimedia.info/stiri/foto-ounoua-cafenea-cu-terasa-in-centrul-capitalei--localul-va-fi-amplasat-in-preajma-scuarului-europei-55580.html#!prettyPhoto>); Natalia Hadarca, A new "pig-house" in the center of Chisinau? (see http://adevarul.ro/moldova/social/onouacostereata-centrul-chisinaului-1_50d82da5596d720091300cd5/index.html).

15 Unimedia: What would be built in Europe Square and what are the owners' reasons, (see <http://unimedia.info/stiri/video-cese-va-construi-in-scuarul-europei-si-care-sunt-argumentele-proprietarilor-55659.html>).

networks. Several activists, accompanied by television reporters, went to the site and filmed the process. Mayor Chirtoaca also appeared, promising to punish the entrepreneurs for wilfully disobeying city hall orders. The next day, the secret construction was broadcast on television and drew much commentary.

At the weekly city hall meeting on 28 December, the authorities reconfirmed their intention to cancel the construction authorisation and to restore the historic ground to the public garden space. The fence was removed the same day and the pizzeria foundation was demolished in the beginning of March 2013.

In a way, the protest against the construction in Europe Square, with its effective social mobilisation, media presence, pressure on the authorities, and eventual dismantling of the illegal construction, is an exemplary story of success. Furthermore, in order to avoid future scandals, city hall began to publish all construction authorisations granted and applied for on its

official website. More broadly speaking, the protest also initiated the practice of opening up sensitive subject matters regarding historical sites to public debate.

However, from a different point of view, the protest encountered several failures. First, as one of the protest participants pointed out, “although the construction itself was stopped, the bureaucratic machinery of the directions that give illegal authorisation still remained functional and untouched”.¹⁶

No official in the long bureaucratic chain that initially authorised the construction has been prosecuted; Mayor Chirtoaca only promised that he would withdraw his personal trust in the guilty individuals. The effort also failed to generate a debate large enough (i.e. involving at least a majority of the city) about urban citizenship, participative democracy, exclusion and the right to have a voice.

But if we bear in mind that the activist scene is ethnically and linguistically disjointed, the protest had a generally favourable result.

¹⁶ Vitalie Sprinceana — how we protest (about Europe Square, Sbarro and Mayor Chirtoaca), (see <http://www.sprinceana.com/2012/12/27/cum-protestam-despre-scuarul-europei-sbarro-si-primarul-chirtoaca><http://www.sprinceana.com/2012/12/27/cum-protestam-despre-scuarul-europei-sbarro-si-primarul-chirtoaca>).

b) What lessons can we learn from this protest?

I will not elaborate on all the circumstances and factors that influenced the events that transpired (anyway we do not know much about what took place behind bureaucratic curtains), but I will just comment on some I consider noteworthy.

- **The legalist moment:** The entrepreneurs did not have all the documents in order. A decisive factor in making the legal aspects clear was the presence and active participation of Mr. Ion Stefanita, the Director of the Agency for Inspection and Restoration of Monuments (AIRM), an institution affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and responsible for protecting the heritage of the Republic of Moldova. As a member of the National Monuments Council, the institution that would have granted the entrepreneurs authorisation should they have warranted it, Mr. Stefanita knew that they had not properly received approval from the Council. This allowed the activists

to position themselves clearly within the legal context, with all its practical and moral advantages—the invocation of law, naming/calling practices. The entrepreneurs didn't have any other choice than to 'populate' the legal field and to suffer the negative moral and symbolic consequences of this positioning.

- **The symbolic moment:** As studies of social movements demonstrate, a vital tool in such movements are the symbolic policies, or the ability to build and manipulate symbolic interpretations,¹⁷ which can catalyse the growth of activist networks or generate additional pressure upon political actors. In the case of the Europe Square protest, the symbolic strategies were moulded on an abundance of pre-existing symbolic formulations: the Classics Alley, the “Stefan cel Mare si Sfânt” Public Garden, the most important monument of Chisinau that has existed in the centre of the city for 200 years, the monument of the national poet Mihai Eminescu, Europe Square

¹⁷ Margaret E. Keck, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Cornell University Press, 1998) pp.22–23.

and the Mayor's declared commitment to the project of European integration, his own image of young reformists consistently promoted by the Mayor, etc. The activists subverted the rhetoric of the authorities to use it against them. Thus the slogan, "The Public Garden resisted for 200 years under authoritarian regimes but now is on the edge of vanishing in 20 years of democracy" combined references to the democratic rhetoric of the Mayor and the authoritarian rhetoric from which he claimed separation. Another message, presented as a collage, showed Mihai Eminescu, the national poet and guardian figure of the democratic right, with a Sbarro pizza beside him. The poet was depicted as saying he would like a pizza for his birthday (coincidentally, his birthday is celebrated on 15 January). This strategic collage aimed to reveal an inconsistency. On the one hand the authorities self-importantly celebrated Eminescu every year; and on the other hand they intended to build

a commercial pizzeria right by the monument!

▪ **The technological moment:**

Much has been written about the role of information technology in protest movements, both positive and negative.¹⁸ The "Twitter revolution from Moldova" on 7 April 2009 put the country on the map, making it a prominent focus in studying the impact of technology on the political process.¹⁹ The Europe Square protest certainly benefitted from effective use of the internet. One might even say that the protest would have been less successful if the participants had not used it. They created several discussion groups on Facebook, as well as a blog on which to post daily updates, explanations, scanned copies of official documents, protest resolutions, etc. The blog was also a useful place to compile feedback from the press—including links to news sites, television channels and other media presentations. The use of Facebook also led to connection via mobile phones, which has continued past the end of the protest. Other blogs and discussion

¹⁸ For enthusiastic opinions see especially Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (Basic Books, 2007). For a critical view over the liberating potential of the internet, see Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (Public Affairs, 2012).

¹⁹ *Twitter Revolution. Episode 1: Republic of Moldova* (Chisinau: ARC, Stiința Publishing Houses, 2010).

forums, namely voxreport.unimedia.md, also helped to raise the visibility of the protest.

Unfortunately, the protest

- also suffered negative aspects of technology. Several activists received anonymous Skype calls trying to intimidate them.²⁰ Even though these calls failed to achieve their goal of causing rifts among the activists, they still showed the potential vulnerabilities of online communication during protest actions. Ill-intended anonymity can erode the fragile trust of an eclectic community that only knows each other online!

- **The communicative moment:** Throughout the duration of the protest, the participants maintained a distinct voice and tried to make it heard despite the media turmoil. Especially important was to answer, at each step, three fundamental questions: *Who are we? Why do we protest? What are the claims of the protest?* Sometimes local media misinterpreted certain aspects. For example, the fact that city hall was guilty of bad management of public property resulted in identifying

the Mayor as responsible for creating the conflict. This, in turn, allowed certain press to interpret an anti-Mayor logic, against the party that he represents. Another logic attempted to guess some violent traits of the protest actions. Due to such misinterpretations, keeping a voice of our own where we could was crucial to the success of the protest.

- **The political moment:**

In many regards, the protest actions from Europe Square represented political innovations within the Moldovan political context. First, the activists managed to build a new field of action and discourse outside the traditional political space. This new political field has centred on the issue of public space and served as a platform for the discussion of some broader political themes—urban citizenship, symbolic policies, the right to claim the city—that often escape narrower partisan discourses, as well as of social movements in Moldova. Second, the theme of political space turned out to be one that

²⁰ The conflict related to the construction from Europe Square is growing: a protester claims to be intimidated by phone (see http://www.noi.md/md/news_id/18156).



could transcend the ideological, ethnic and linguistic barriers that fissure the activist medium in Moldova. The protest brought together

organisations of artists, Russian-speaking activists, Romanian-speaking activists, left-wing activists and right-wing activists.

↑ The imaginary line along the Cantemir Boulevard, Chisinau. Oberliht mapping workshop, 2012

Case 2: Cantemir Boulevard

The project of Cantemir Boulevard, led by architect Alexei Shchiusev, emerged immediately after the war

in a development plan for the city of Chisinau. According to the plan, the lower part of the city was to be

demolished in order to give way to a spacious boulevard that would allow for the synchronisation of the upper part of the city with the lower part. The mass destruction resulting from the Second World War—which partially or totally destroyed approximately 70% of the city's buildings²¹—and immense respect of Shchiusev's authority allowed the authorities to carve the city as they pleased.

The first plan intended for Cantemir Boulevard to end at Cosmonauts Street, but in 1972 the boulevard was extended to reach Calea Iesilor Street. Only several parts of the projected boulevard have actually been built, however: the Cosmonauts Street, the part between Negruzzi and Ismail Streets, and the part extending from Calea Iesilor.

Surprisingly, the idea of building Cantemir Boulevard survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and has continued under democratic leadership and its General Urbanistic Plan (GUP), adopted in 2007.²² The leadership argued

the boulevard could make road traffic through the central sector more fluid, and connect the Chisinau Airport with the Buiucani district. A large community of architects criticised this initiative on the grounds that it would violate national laws and international conventions signed by the Republic of Moldova protecting historically significant parts of the city, which includes the city centre.²³

The architects accused city hall of adopting decisions without consulting specialists in the field. Afterwards, the GUP was rejected by both the Moldova Academy of Science and the Ministry of Culture.

At the time of writing, Cantemir Boulevard remained in limbo. The discussions surrounding the GUP had shifted to the Zonal Urbanistic Project (ZUP), which likewise hopes to improve the city centre and to build the boulevard.

In response, a group of artists and architects launched a project to prevent the building of the boulevard, the mass destruction of historically

21 Virgil Păslariuc. *Who destroyed historical Chisinau?* (see http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/cine-devastat-chisinaul-iulie-1941).

22 The General Urban Plan (see <http://www.chisinau.md/category.php?l=ro&idc=500>).

23 See <http://unimedia.info/stiri/-1212.html>

significant architecture, and the subsequent negative impact on community life. They aimed to engage locals—both temporary and permanent residents, service workers, passers-by—in various activities that would strengthen local identity, revitalise some abandoned public spaces and attract and inspire other parts of the city.

The first stage of this project of revitalisation, which took place from 2–6 July 2012 and was organised by the Association of Young Artists Oberliht (Chisinau, Moldova) and Planwerk (Cluj, Romania), was a workshop on mapping the public spaces of Chisinau.²⁴ The programme included an exploration of new criteria and ways of cataloguing the city's public spaces, conception of a new grid for evaluating selected public spaces, and tours of the mapped zones. It also identified ten locations of the would-be Cantemir Boulevard with potential for revitalisation.

The second stage was the creation of a reading group called 'Public Space

in Post-Socialism' led by sociologist Vitalie Sprinceanu, which was held in the summer and autumn of 2012 and gathered students, artists and activists. This reading group, also present on social networks, aimed to familiarise its members with the fundamental theoretical concepts necessary to understand urban policies, urban democracy, the right to the city, and the regional and local transformations that occurred in post-Socialist areas over the last 20 years. A direct result of the group was the organisation of a regularly updated online library containing relevant texts, both classic and contemporary, in Romanian, Russian, English and French.²⁵

The third stage was to conduct a survey-questionnaire for the users of the public space from the chosen ten locations along Cantemir Boulevard. Sprinceanu developed the questionnaire in collaboration with several students from the Faculty of History and Philosophy, the Department of Philosophy and Anthropology of the State University of Moldova and

²⁴ Mapping of Public Space in Chisinau workshop (2012–13) (see <http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/atelier-cartografiere/>).

²⁵ See <http://chisineu.wordpress.com/biblioteca>

conducted the survey from March to April 2013. The survey included questions about the activities of the places, civic involvement, wishes and visions for changes in the locals' use of public space, mechanisms of social inclusion or exclusion, and emotional attachment to the place. The results were publicly presented in May 2013.

The most interesting—and perhaps most useful—feedback was the prevailing scepticism among users of the public spaces regarding the possibility of their being involved in decision-making processes. A large majority of those surveyed expressed that they would gladly participate in and have many ideas for the renovation of these spaces, but were doubtful whether authorities would pay any attention to them.

As such, this community of artist-activists decided that the project they launched must not only be done for the citizens, but also by them. They organised, through international participation as a part of the project *SPACES: The Civic Center of Chisinau*,

a series of artistic events on Cantemir Boulevard concerning the revitalisation of the ten identified locations. Architects Alex Axinte and Cristi Borcan from studioBASAR in Romania organised a public workshop of urban interventions for 7–13 September 2013.²⁶

This workshop was followed by a hands-on rehabilitation project by residents at the intersection of Ivan Zaikin and Sf. Andrei Streets, as well as a picnic and film screening. As part of the same project, Slovak artists Jana Kapelova and Michal Moravcik conducted an intervention in a different location, on Balanescu Street, reusing old furniture gathered from local residents.²⁷ Swedish artist Karl Hallberg contributed an intervention of his own, in 'Triangle 2', on the intersection of Pruncul, Sf. Andrei, and I. Doncev Streets.²⁸

One of the great difficulties in evaluating the success of these movements is in the fact that they are almost always works-in-progress. Such is the case with Cantemir Boulevard. It is still

²⁶ The Chisinau Civic Centre: Recovered Spaces. Urban Interventions Workshop with studioBASAR (Cristi BORCAN) and Tudor ELIAN [RO], 7–11 September 2013 (see <http://chisineu.wordpress.com/2013/08/23/spatii-recuperate/>).

²⁷ See <http://chisineu.wordpress.com/2013/09/21/daca-nu-va-trebuie-film/>

²⁸ SPACES: Intersections, an installation by Karl Hallberg, 20 September 2013, 17:00 (see <http://chisineu.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/intersectii/>).

too soon to evaluate its chances of long-term success. Fortunately, the boulevard plan is still in discussion and there is strong enough opposition from the artistic community against its construction. On the other hand, entrepreneurs and commercial agents have taken advantage of the chaos of GUP and ZUP to demolish and rebuild large parts of the area without the approval of the authorities. As indicated by one of the activists, there is a risk that the Cantemir Boulevard zone could be completely demolished even before any decision is made on its plans.

In these circumstances, two communities gain particular significance.

The first of these is artist communities, specifically those within urban activism. They decidedly enrich the symbolic repertoire, make activist movements more attractive, and bring about new reflections and artistic practices in public space. Urban activist-artists are as opportune

as 'regular' local artists are obsessively separate from politics. This is a consequence of the excessive politicisation of art in the Soviet period and tendency to keep any political art to 'quiet' themes such as anti-Communism, national identity or orthodoxy. The possibilities of art interventions are truly limitless, both in real space and in virtual space.

The second community is that of foreign artists. Their significance lies in the possibility of establishing transnational connections. However, this community is not without its complications. Although its efforts could improve the visibility of local actions outside the country, it could also take away opportunities from local Moldovan artists; art interventions in public spaces could become a privilege of foreign artists, leaving Moldovan artists to search for other niches. There is a difficult balance to strike between their respective involvements.

Case 3: The Rotonda from 'Valea Morilor' Park

a) Chronology

Valea Morilor Park (known during the Soviet era as the 'Central Culture and Recreation Park of the Leninist Komsomol of Moldova, Leonid Brejnev') was developed by architect

Robert Kurtz and began construction in 1950 under then-Secretary of the Moldovan Communist party, Leonid Brejnev.²⁹ The eponymous youth division of the Communist Party, the Komsomol, and other young people throughout the city carried



out the actual construction of the park, the lake and cultural objects. In the seventies, the main entrance at Serghei Lazo Street, where the Rotonda and the Cascade Ladder are situated, became an important centre of cultural life and recreation for the city residents.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the lake became filled with mud and the surrounding park significantly degraded. Although the authorities organised a thorough cleaning and reconstruction of the lake from 2006 to 2011 so it

could re-open to the public, other parts—including the Cascade ladder, the street lights and nearby roads—remain in a state of disrepair and disuse. The Rotonda also became covered in graffiti and its base a site of public garbage disposal.

The park's condition moved Moldovan immigrant Antonina Svalbonene, originally from Greece, to put out a discreet call on Facebook for the revitalisation of the Rotonda. In January 2013, she urged city residents to organise a collective cleanup of the area

↖↑ The Rotonda before (left) and after (right) the reconstruction (2013–2015).

29 *Chisinau: an encyclopedia* (Chisinau: A. I. Timush, 1984).

surrounding the Rotonda, especially the steps and pavilion. The response was positive: a small but slowly growing community consolidated on the Facebook group, 'Vosstanovim Kishinev' (Russian) or 'Sa restabilim orasul Chisinau' (Romanian), which translates as 'Let's recover Chisinau' in English.³⁰ After further deliberations, the group decided to organise a cleanup for Sunday, 3 February 2013.

Despite the cold weather and the snow, several dozen people went to the park, where they set to work cleaning the area. They gathered the withered leaves and branches, the plastic and metal trash, and other garbage. The cleanup attracted the attention of several politicians, including a former mayoral candidate, as well as several television stars, journalists, bloggers and activists. This civic action, all the more admirable considering the weather conditions, was widely presented in the media later, both through 'traditional' media (some of which were present at the cleanup)

as well as social media and blogs. Together they garnered further interest in the area.

City leadership also reacted to this initiative, with Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca promising at a City Council meeting that he would grant the necessary support to restore the Rotonda. He ordered calculations of the finances required, but the presented sum turned out to be extremely high: 600 million lei (around us\$50 million). Some activists suspect that city hall justified its lack of action and withdrawal from the rehabilitation effort because of this potential financial burden.

Meanwhile, for several months, the Rotonda initiative continued within the online social networks; locals decided that they must take the effort into their own hands rather than count on the support of the authorities. They decided that the recovery of the Rotonda meant not only restoring its physical condition, but also restoring the cultural life it once had. This would sustain their motivation and efforts,

³⁰ See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/vosstanovim.kishinev/>

and make them meaningful in the long term.

A second collective cleaning took place on 10 August. This time the activists not only cleaned the area but also painted the Rotonda itself, as well as the fence in the back. The cleanup was followed by a master class of Argentine dance organised by the School of Dance Tango Argentino Chisinau, led by Tatiana Grodinskaia.³¹

On 22 August, the Rotonda hosted its first live concert with the support of the Presidential Orchestra of the Republic of Moldova, drawing 2,000 people to the event. In September several benches and trash cans were installed.

b) Reflections and practices

The revitalisation of the Rotonda in Valea Morilor Park is an interesting case of activist efforts with important transnational and multi-ethnic participation. Like the aforementioned rehabilitation of the Cantemir Boulevard area, however, this is a movement still in development and

its potential outcomes are numerous.

The movement still has to face several challenges in the near future, including the following: building bridges with Romanian-speaking communities; accepting alternative cultural groups; traps of political affiliations; maintaining its civic dimension.

Below I will reflect and elaborate further on significant aspects of the movement:

- **The proactive moment:**

This is perhaps the most significant contribution of the movement. The actions not only helped to restore a space that was abandoned for many years, but also reintegrated it into the city's cultural life. Furthermore, through this movement, the activist community shifted decidedly from the reaction phase to one of social and political creativity. The Rotonda recovery initiative undoubtedly enlarged the protest and activist repertoire of the city.

- **The political moment:**

Even though the organisers and activists took care to remove the affiliation

31 Inhabitants of Chisinau are being called to clean the Valea Morilor Park, <http://www.pan.md/blog/kishinevtsev-zovut-pribratysya-v-parke-Valea-morilor/4112532>

of the cause from any political parties, political influence was palpable at each step. Initially, Igor Dodon, the former mayoral candidate and President of the Socialist party—and therefore a political rival of the serving Mayor—participated actively at the general cleaning from 3 February, both personally and through a youth organisation he leads. His presence as well as his declarations significantly impacted the Mayor's quick reaction, who dubbed the recovery of the Rotonda populist. After this, political interest in the Rotonda diminished for a while, allowing the movement to develop following its own logic and to plan, far from the eyes of the press, its further actions. Eventually, however, some journalists, political activists from another opposing party—the Communist Party (PCRM)—became involved. These included Dimitrii Kavruk, the Editor-in-Chief of the Communist publication PULS, and Constantin Starish, Deputy in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova from PCRM. Even though they claimed exclusively civic, non-party-affiliated participation, their known affiliation represented a challenge for the movement to constantly prove that it positioned itself outside party sympathies.

- The challenge of political affiliations was likely be more acute than

usual in 2014, an election year for the Parliament. In the political context at the time of writing, Mayor Chirtoaca represented a national political party that was in strong opposition to and competition with the other parties, especially the Communist Party.

The success and failures in Chisinau would count immensely on Chirtoaca's election agenda; this is why a successful initiative such as the Rotonda, conducted without support from the local authorities, would be rather uncomfortable for the city administration, which might decide to get involved in order to co-opt the movement and claim its success for the administration. On the other hand, some other political forces such as the Socialist Party, with the most consistently anti-Chirtoaca platform, might decide to claim being part of the success of this movement and to become involved at a later stage of the project. If that happens, we shall see.

- **The ethnic-cultural moment:**

The initiative for the revitalisation of the Rotonda is certainly anchored in the personal and collective nostalgia of a particular social group—a large part of Chisinau's Russian-speaking population (which includes Russians, Ukrainians and Jews). This is one of the project's strengths, but simultaneously also one of its greatest vulnerabilities. The explicit aim

of the community, declared countless times, is to restore the Rotonda as an object of local and national importance, as it was before the 1980s. However, the logic of restoration of a certain past hides several traps. First, doing so anchors the movement in a specific, pre-conceived notion of public space, one 'controlled' and accessible only to certain social groups (the so-called 'good' people, the 'good rest' and 'good music' type). This definition explicitly excludes those of 'unwanted' social groups, like homeless people, but also those of alternative social groups—graffiti artists, rockers, punks, hipsters. Another equally complex trap is in the different Soviet architecture and monuments and their interpretations. For example, there are many Romanian-speaking activists who consider Chisinau overloaded with traces of the Russian and Soviet presence and believe that some of these should disappear completely.³² The city has not yet established a long-term identity strategy—one that

would succeed in integrating the different architectural and historic heritages of the city. This is why, even if the initiative of the Rotonda is an excellent and successful one, too few Romanian-speaking activists find themselves within a project of restoring a Soviet architectural monument. Many of them would prefer a different form of restoration that would include the destruction of pre-Soviet era monuments. Therefore activism confronts a variety of seemingly incompatible restoration discourses, a fact that the community of activists has not yet overcome.

- Another challenge for the Rotonda initiative is a cultural one. The cultural actions for revitalisation of the zone consisted until now of events of traditional or *mainstream* culture: fan-fare music, dance, poetry readings. During a conference dedicated to the public spaces of Chisinau, one of the organisers said that the space was still 'spared' of the interventions of informal and alternative groups such as rockers,

³² See http://www.publika.md/editie/_37L_2576111.html

punks and others. How the community will react to a potential cultural intrusion of this kind, or how and whether it will succeed in integrating into the image of the ‘idyllic Soviet’, is still to be determined.

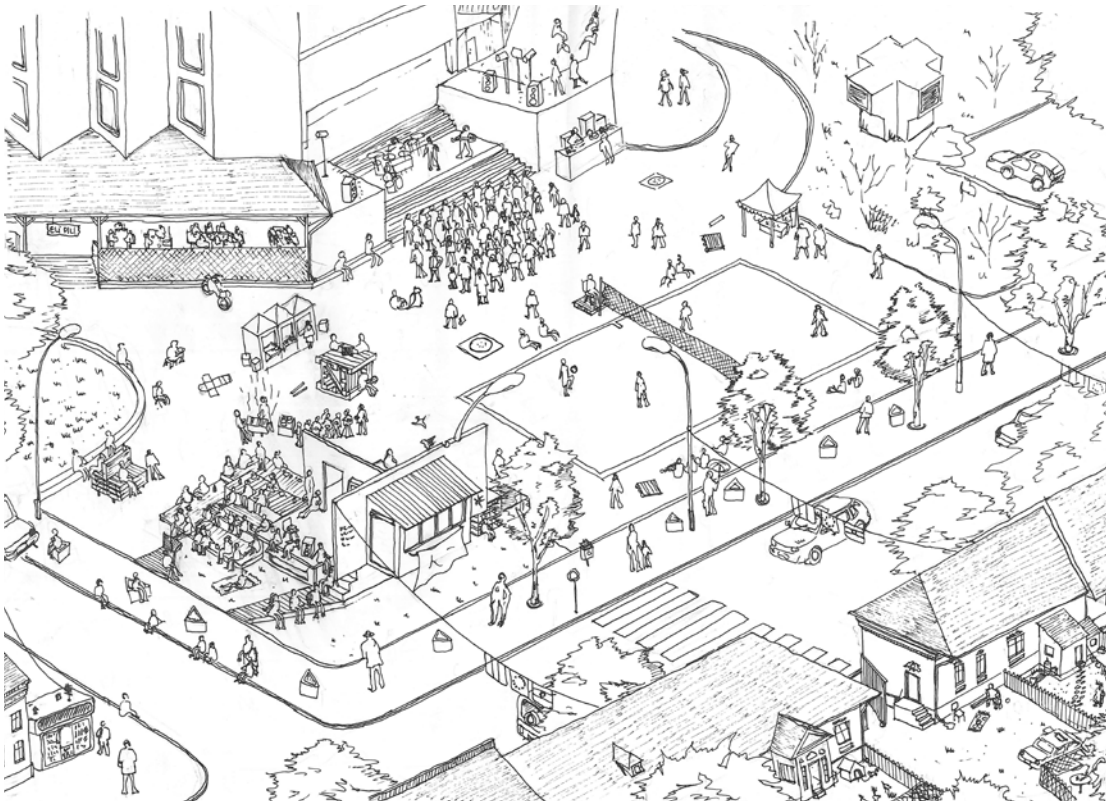
Conclusion

The social movements in Moldova described above have, without a doubt, commonalities with other similar movements in surrounding countries. The dependence of the movements on the internet and online social networks; the use of information technologies for mobilisation and organisation; the effort to enlarge the national and local political discussion by including new and relevant topics, such as urban citizenship, the right for the city, local democracy and transparency of decision-making processes; the inequality of power and resources both among activist groups and among big businesses and local or national authorities. These are some elements that can be found in other capitals of post-Socialist countries as well. Yet some aspects—such as the separation of the communities of activists by ethnic and linguistic criteria, cultural and ideological separation concerning the Communist city heritage, the activist efforts to counteract

traditional political actors’ attempts to co-opt successful movements for their own interests—are unique to the Moldovan context.

Due to all these complexities, it is quite difficult to paint a definitive picture of urban activism in Chisinau. Still, I would permit myself two preliminary conclusions:

- Even if these social movements were to further develop only under the worst circumstances—that is, if they were dissolved or co-opted by other political actors—they would still have made a significant contribution in that they introduced new themes in political debates: of public space, of domination and control over public space and of urban democracy. These themes have already solidified and found a place within the agenda of current political debates in various forms (in topics such as protection of architectural heritage, or preventing exclusion of certain sexual or religious minorities in public spaces, and actions for revitalisation of public spaces). We expect them to be discussed more intensely in the upcoming elections.
- An indirect but very important effect of these movements is the recovery of protest as an instrument of creating political pressure. It allows us to propose new forms of political organisation and cooperation outside the traditional political field, and to use various



communicative means in the arts, such as performance, to express an important message. These elements will help

to build an active urban citizenship and give citizens new, innovative ways for getting involved. ■

↑ B68 — free zone//art space, 2012 drawing by George Marinescu, studioBASAR.



Chisinau Civic Center

by **Vladimir Us**

How can we make, through art, research, urban planning, architecture, institutional creativity and activism, the public spaces of our cities more welcoming, open and democratic?

Initiated in 2012 by the Oberliht Association, the Chisinau Civic Center series of projects and events opened up a dialogue on the issue of public space during a period of transition—questioning the role of common goods and their role in community development. New models for governing these spaces and goods were proposed, as well as forms of institutional innovation that would help to protect or democratise them.

The Chisinau Civic Center series of projects encouraged citizens to get involved in cultural as well as urban and social projects. They could look back at their work through

different lenses such as criticism and protest—to think of the public role that art could have in post-Soviet societies. The project also examined the potential of art to bring about change by organising participatory art events in Chisinau, making use of available public spaces.

All three programmes illustrated below were inspired by and are based on the results of the Mapping of Public Space in Chisinau workshop that took place in July 2012 (<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/atelier-cartografiere/>). The programmes, in turn, stimulated a series of artistic interventions and sociological research by artists and curators, architects, sociologists, historians and other professionals interested in urban development—shedding light on the unequal distribution of spaces and resources that characterises post-Soviet states.

Vladimir Us

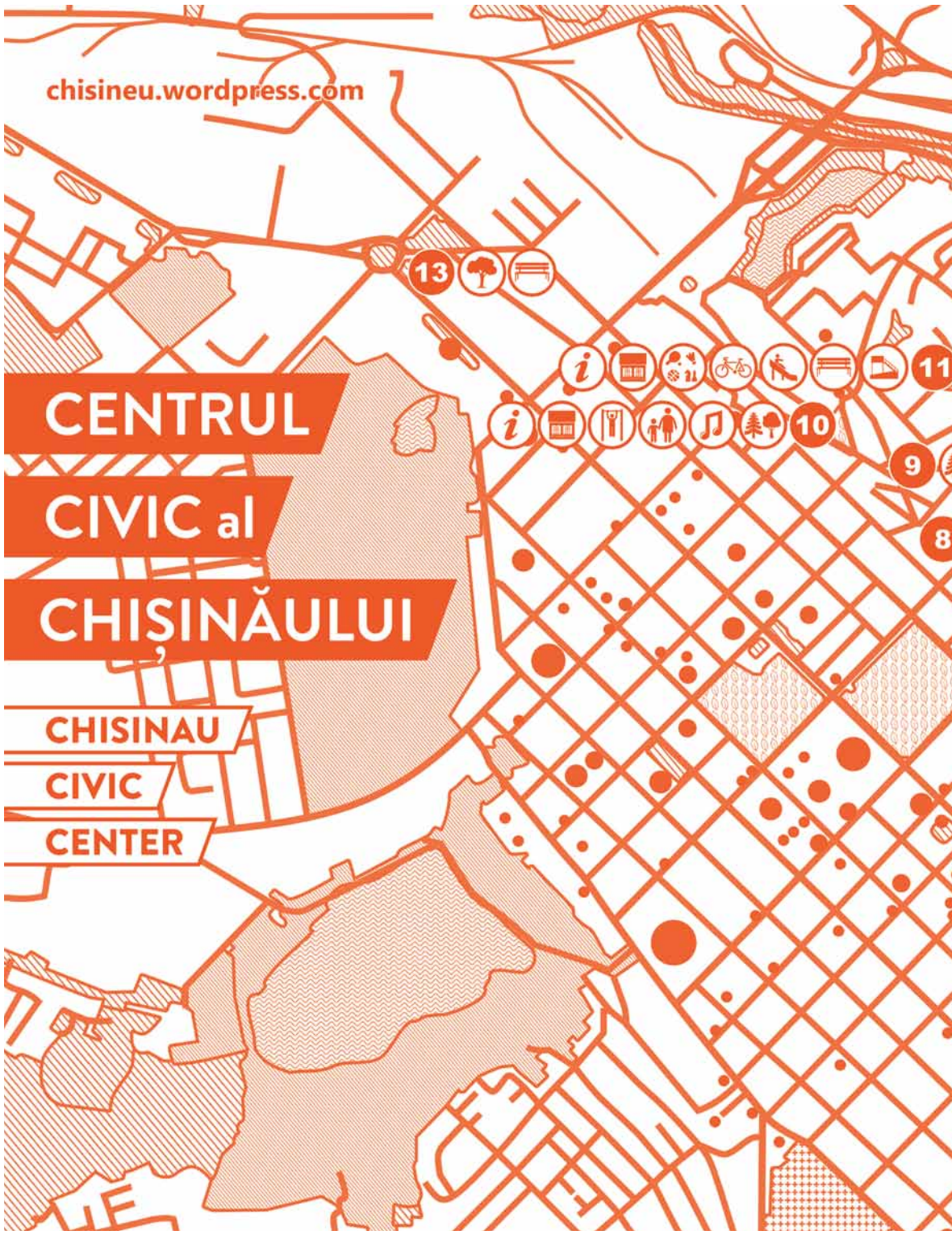
is a Moldovan artist and curator, and the co-founder of Oberliht Association in Chisinau, Moldova (oberliht.com), one of the hubs in the European Cultural Foundation's networked programme — *Connected Action for the Commons*.

← Chisinau Civic Center — Beyond the Red Lines, *If You Don't Need It* by Public Pedestal (Michal Moravcik and Jana Kapelova), 2013. Photo: Oberliht.

→ Chisinau Civic Center, *Alternative Network of Public Spaces for Chisinau*, map designed by Diana Draganova.

**CENTRUL
CIVIC al
CHISINĂULUI**

CHISINAU
CIVIC
CENTER





- informație / information
- orașul vechi / old city
- stradă istorică / historical street
- stradă pavată / pavement
- belvedere
- piață / square
- trecători / passers-by
- zonă pietonală / pedestrian zone
- program public / public program
- întruniri publice / public meetings
- scenă / scene
- evenimente / events
- desen / graffiti
- arbori / trees
- parc / park
- bancă / bench
- teren de joacă / playground
- sport
- teren de sport / sports ground
- produse locale / local food
- piață de legume și fructe
- stație / bus station
- antiparcare / anti-parking

**Chisinau Civic Center —
Open air cinema
(18–31 August 2012)**

[http://chisineu.wordpress.com/
proiecte/centrul-civico-cinema/](http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/centrul-civico-cinema/)

The project consisted of a two-week residency for several collectives of architects and focused on two different spaces in the Moldovan capital of Chisinau: a public square on Bucuresti str. 68 (that in the meantime had become a parking lot) and an abandoned fountain in front of Chekhov Theatre, next to a luxury hotel and a shopping mall. Both spaces provided evidence of the state's failure to maintain open public spaces in the city and provide the necessary public services (for example, lighting, security for pedestrians and proper cleaning). In the square there was also the issue of illegally parked cars in front of the Cultural Department of Chisinau. Several art collectives that used Flat Space (an open structure installed in the square in 2009 that serves as a platform for artistic events) gradually expanded their activities and moved

beyond the 'walls' of Flat Space into the rest of the square, reclaiming it for cultural action. They organised exhibitions, poetry readings, screenings, concerts, artistic interventions and campaigns there. To support the needs of the artistic community, they designed an open-air cinema as an extension of Flat Space. This not only blocked one of the automobile accesses to the informal parking lot, but also accommodated diverse members of the public who came for the film screenings, flea markets, sports and other activities organised within the period of the residency.

During the same time, a special film programme called *Demolition* was screened on one of the exterior walls of the Chekhov Theatre, facing the Leogrand Hotel (*Leopress* SRL), which was responsible for the demolition of an architectural monument next to it in 2011. To create seating, they adapted an abandoned fountain in front of Chekhov Theatre; they cleaned and repainted it, as well as creating a staircase

→ Chisinau Civic Center — open air cinema. Flat Space extension, 2012
With the participation of studioBASAR, Urban Reactor, 3*2*1*0, Oberliht Association.



access into the fountain. As a result, the fountain acquired a new meaning and public function, transformed from a water fixture into an open-air cinema.

**Chisinau Civic Center —
Beyond the red lines
(26 August–
22 September 2013)**

<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/cco-liniile-rosii/>

One of the issues raised by the artistic and architectural community in Chisinau was the construction of Cantemir Boulevard. The boulevard, designed in the 1970s by Soviet architects, was only partially built, but still remains on the official Chisinau General Urban Plan, two decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Moldova's independence. To address this issue, a group of artists, architects and researchers participated in a residency programme and conference to share similar experiences that could enrich their understanding of this situation and reveal new

forms of criticism and protest. This collaboration turned into a series of participatory art works involving Chisinau inhabitants. Together they opened new public spaces for culture and civic engagement in the areas where Cantemir Boulevard was supposed to be built.

The project challenged the way urban plans were designed in the past during an authoritarian regime, half a century later, taken for granted and not even discussed publicly—hindering citizens' participation in the process of urban planning.

**Chisinau Civic Center —
People's Park (11 August–
6 September 2014)**

<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/cco-parc-comunitate/>

Beyond the consequences that the major infrastructure projects could have for the life of the city, the fate of some smaller spaces in the districts of the historical centre also worried the curatorial team. The third Chisinau Civic Center

→ Chisinau Civic Center — beyond the red lines. *If you don't need it*, 2013. Installation by Public Pedestal (Michal MORAVCIK and Jana KAPELOVA).

↘ Chisinau Civic Center — beyond the red lines. *Intersection*, 2013. Installation by Karl Halberg.

On next pages: Chisinau Civic Center — people's park. Consultations with Zaikin Park's neighbourhood, 2014. Chisinau Civic Center — people's park.

Defensive Fruit Tree, 2014. Installation by Angela Candu.

Chisinau Civic Center — people's park. *Picnic in the Park*, 2014. Daniela Palimariu in collaboration with studioBASAR.





PLAN DE AMENAJARE

LEGENDA

- 1. Zona de amenajare
- 2. Zona de servicii
- 3. Zona de locuit
- 4. Zona de activitate
- 5. Zona de agrement
- 6. Zona de servicii de utilitate
- 7. Zona de servicii de transport
- 8. Zona de servicii de alimentare
- 9. Zona de servicii de salubritate
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- 19. Zona de servicii de salubritate
- 20. Zona de servicii de salubritate

NOTA DE EXPLICATII

- 1. Zona de amenajare este delimitata de linia rosie din plan.
- 2. Zona de servicii este delimitata de linia alba din plan.
- 3. Zona de locuit este delimitata de linia alba din plan.
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programme focused mainly on the park located at the intersection of Sf. Andrei and Ivan Zaikin streets. One of the few green spaces from the historical area, the park is situated at the edge of the old centre, once known as one of the most dangerous districts. Characterised by abandonment and decay, it has threatened to disappear into the shadow of real estate interests. Once rehabilitated, the park had

the potential to fulfill some vital needs of the city's residents, including children and parents, as well as young people and the elderly.

The programme put a strong emphasis on involving the residents of Chisinau, especially those who lived nearest to the area. Through their interactions, they settled on a common vision for the park as a public spot accessible and open to all. ■

→ Aqua-park,
2014 by URBalance.



Culture for Democracy: A Central European Perspective

by **Igor Stokfiszewski**

Tense times

I write these words at a time of great tension across the world. In the countries of the European Union, the echoes of euro-parliamentary elections from May 2014 continue to resound, along with the campaigns preceding them, in which either the meaning of union is undermined and national interests put forward ahead of those of the continent, or there is wrangling over the shape of Europe, where political ambitions directed towards the tightening of co-operation between members and concomitant international solidarity are presented as contradicting economic activity that has a negative effect on the trust and bonds between countries. Or we see the defence of an obligatory

federal order whose economic leanings aim to make savings at the expense of public services (health, transport, education, culture, sheltered housing) and whose politics entail a gradual closing of borders, which impacts negatively on public attitudes to 'others'. Even though the elections saw the triumph of the moderate conservatives, surely no campaign has ever heard so many xenophobic, combative and confrontational slogans directed towards neighbours.

Alongside the events surrounding the euro-elections, in the southern belt of the continent and in some of its Western countries, there were demonstrations urging fundamental reform of the Union. Thousands of people marched the streets chanting slogans in which three appeals stood

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out particularly strongly: for inter-human and international solidarity; for a democratic order that would be directed more towards the self-determination of citizens; for the transfer of what is common into citizens' hands—beginning with natural resources, through to public spaces, and ending with cultural and digital goods. These demonstrations added yet another voice to the campaign that began in 2011 by social movements that speak out against the domination of mercantilism and the inefficiency of representative democracy, blaming it for Europe's deepening crisis.

If I have understood correctly the atmosphere prevailing in the societies of western and southern Europe, I would say that they find themselves facing the challenge of progressive economic and cultural social disintegration, and that the way to improve social well-being is by working to establish communities, to forge collective bonds—between individuals and groups—and to form attitudes orientated towards empathy, solidarity and reciprocity. Furthermore, empowering citizens, raising the level of individual participation in decision-making processes, regaining control over common resources are all areas in which work should be done.

Meanwhile, a battle rages in Ukraine to establish a new political

order. It is characterised by a level of ruthlessness that we have not seen in a long time. People are dying, the planes of existential order and sense of what is meaningful are laid waste—both historically and practically. The spectres of nationalism and militarism are awakening. Xenophobia intensifies—with its hostility to others, particularly to Russians. 'The horror!' as Joseph Conrad would say. The situation in Ukraine proves that our perception of individual and collective life in Europe continues to be dominated by concepts of war, hatred and violence.

The post-Communist landscape

Where in the crucible of all these tendencies are we to locate the countries of the central-European belt, beginning with the Baltic countries, down through Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, as far as the Balkans? They seem to have accumulated all the tendencies listed above—social stratification, combativeness, aloofness towards 'others', disintegration of the collective, individual passivity. In the countries of Central Europe, we bemoan, too, how the private is advantaged over what is public and common, the underinvestment of citizens'

voices, the lack of individual empowerment and that of entire social groups, and the low level of participation in collective life. Furthermore, direct proximity with Ukraine and the living memory of the Balkan wars resonate in central European societies through the growth of violent reactions. Just like their Western and Southern neighbours, the countries of the continent's central belt certainly feel the consequences of the changes in contemporary capitalism and the malfunctions of parliamentary democracy—often in an intensely concentrated form, since the free-market experiment was implemented more violently here than in other parts of the continent, and the formation of state systems is still in progress. I referred to tense times: Central Europe, is in fact, marking a quarter of a century since it emerged from Communism and this post-Communist condition is still what distinguishes the region. How can it be characterised?

The Croatian philosopher Boris Buden, in his work

Zone of Transition: On the End of Post-Communism,¹ notes that one characteristic of the condition is the region's ensnarement, as it were, by its Communist past that continues endlessly to constitute the subject of debate and collective passions. Alongside the 'settling of accounts' with Communism, a profound reinterpretation of the historical foundations of collective identity is going on. The traces of its multicultural heritage and convictions are fading, along with the memory of emancipatory battles that emerged out of this heritage, the traces of the cultural legacy of the industrial era—the world of labour and the ethos of the working class. We are left with a patriotically inclined 'mono-society' nurturing national identities and permeated with national versions of religious doctrines.

The de-legitimisation of any progressive agenda due to the catastrophic consequences which, people are convinced, were brought about by 'the dictatorship of the left' (as Communism is perceived), permits the flourishing

1 Boris Buden, *Strefa przejścia. O końcu postkomunizmu*, tr. Michał Sutowski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2012).

of conservatisms and nationalisms that are the bane of the region. Meanwhile, the important role played by the Catholic and Orthodox churches in weakening and dismantling Communist regimes now puts them in an advantageous position from which to conduct an open battle against secularisation on a number of fronts: through language, pressure for legislation and in public spaces, which they appropriate through religious symbols.

Moreover, for Buden, the landscape of the post-Communist part of the continent is the landscape of 'New Europe' "plus capitalism, which is more capitalist than its Western original, and thus more elastic, more relative, more savage, which... has liberated itself to a far greater extent from... state institutionalised forms of social solidarity"² and which is dominated by "an ever-growing chasm between rich and poor, the elimination of all forms of social solidarity, the social inequality which cries to heaven for vengeance, and widespread social traumas", which lead

to "a particular type of social callousness"³ that can be understood in terms of a kind of collective passivity. Changes in the sense of identity linked with economic reforms have yet another tangible consequence: the millions of workers' biographies on which a collective identity has been built for half a century now reveal themselves to be an historical error. These people live in a void, drifting in the direction of nationalistic attitudes. Furthermore, alongside the de-legitimisation of the heritage of industrial culture accompanied by radical changes at the heart of the economy, there has been a corrosion of the positive valorisation of employment law, which today, in this region, begins to grow in importance once more.

However, post-Communist societies share one positive characteristic—according to Buden—which differentiates them from other parts of the continent and provides a glimmer of hope that social change might be possible. This is their passionate engagement with and sincere approach

² Ibid., p.63.

³ Ibid., p.61.

to democracy. Writing about the attitude of ‘Westerners’ towards the Central European revolutions of the beginning of the 1990s, Buden quotes the Slovene philosopher Rado Riha who says that “what fascinated them so much was ‘the assumed fascination without reservation with Western democracy on the part of Eastern Europeans—their naïve, almost blind faith in it’”.⁴ This sincere and enthusiastic engagement was dictated, among other things, by the way life had been saturated with politics—a legacy of communism; it had pervaded every sphere of existence, which meant that the depoliticisation of society happened very slowly. Thus collective behaviour after the Communist era was—as Piotr Piotrowski, the Polish scholar of the region’s art, puts it—characterised by ‘agoraphilia’: “the drive to enter the public space, the desire to participate in that space, to perform critical functions for the sake of and within that social space”.⁵ In Central Europe, there appears to be a smaller distance

between the individual, the social and the political.

What, then, are the challenges facing the democracies of Central Europe? Let us list again those that we seem to share with other parts of the continent: greater empowerment of citizens, raising levels of participation, building community bonds and social integration. The leading slogans here might be empathy, solidarity and reciprocity. Further: the battle to reform concepts of property, the establishment of common goods, the retrieval of public space by citizens. In another area: efforts to weaken eruptions of violence; and looking at yet another area: re-legitimising emancipatory traditions—from workers’ disputes to feminism and the rights of immigrants. And finally, the challenges of: neutralising the influence of the church in the domain of language and in public spaces; absorbing the cultural heritage of labour into the process of creating a sense of identity; nurturing links between individual lives, social impact and politics.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁵ Piotr Piotrowski, *Agorafilia. Sz-tuka I demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie* (Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy RE-BIS, 2010), p.7.

Culture for democracy in Central Europe

Where do cultural practices fit among all these endeavours? In some cases—such as the sphere of language or identity—they are absolutely essential. In others, they play a key role since culture and art, among their many functions, can boost an individual's powers of expression, shape mutual relations, raise levels of participation and mitigate attitudes towards others. In short—culture and art can make a positive contribution to the cause of democracy thanks to the pressure they exert on those things, which seem today to hinder social revitalisation, particularly in the following areas:

- Through stimulating citizens to creative action and establishing platforms for free expression. Making culture a tool with which ordinary people, not experts, can express themselves and experiment imaginatively. I envisage artistic practices as moderating activities of civic self-expression, with culture providing the infrastructure or interfaces.
 - By providing citizens with public spaces for open-air sculptural purposes, and providing buildings as canvases on which to paint. There are so many objects that can be used as material to create structures—so much glass,
- plastic and wood. Let us encourage people to transform it into their own art and place it in spaces they can make their own. I see reclaiming social space by appropriating it for civic art as an essential weapon in the battle for the common good. Furthermore, there are so many icons and symbols that need to be completely rethought in order to balance those of the religious or patriotic imagination that overruns the streets and squares of post-Communist towns. Such icons can emerge only from below, through grassroots collective creation.
- When talking about self-expression, its individual dimension is worth opening out to what is common. The creation of space to build relationships based on reciprocity and empathy, to stimulate the senses—touch, smell—in order to facilitate extra-verbal communication, empathy with others, and to encourage openness; art and cultural institutions have a role to play in all of this.
 - We need to create a common artistic symbolism that can incorporate the multitude of human biographies, experiences and hopes and which can be located in parks, squares, courtyards and railway stations.
 - Another possible area of activity could be a theatre of emancipation history: making streets and squares into stages for presenting the past, action replays

of strikes, revolutionary battles and joyful marches, so that they become the experimental halls of the political rallies of the future. Let us not be ashamed of our fathers, mothers and grandparents who were workers—let us listen to their biographies, honour their grimy hands, the stink of machine oil and their workers' gloves. Let us reclaim emancipation narratives through art—this is what art is for. And in doing so, let us do justice to the truth about our proletarian and peasant roots.

- Our ideas about culture demand a reversal of perspective, so to speak. People create culture by being together, through celebrating common feasts, adapting civic and suburban aesthetics to suit their own needs, and by putting values into practice through interaction with neighbours and with strangers on the metro. It is through strengthening these basic activities that I see hope, in creating the conditions for their unhindered blossoming, devoting the tools of art to the cause of citizens' self-determination and the continuity of cultural movements.
- In this way, one can mark a trajectory along which—as I see it—culture can move for the promotion of democracy in this part of the continent. In what sort of institutional framework or organisational system could this be realised? Here we cross

into the region of *realpolitik* or struggles in the field of culture. Art institutions have been the subject of democratic debate for several years now. Obviously, they demand reform in the direction of co-governance by workers and public participation. This process takes place and develops alongside the struggle of the art precariat to ensure that employment law in this field is observed. One cannot influence democracy through nurturing feudal power structures. In recent years, our countries have experienced the creation of artists' unions, art-activism, and disputes between artistic circles and the state.

- But in this part of Europe we are plagued by a lack of autonomous spaces for cultural-artistic activity that has grown out of the milieu of activists—i.e., those people who prefer the social to the artistic. Practising politics through art—'agoraphilia', which has yielded a crop of powerful political projects initiated by artists in the countries of Central Europe—demands structural strengthening of independent circles that operate within a circuit of social practices beyond the institutional. This is where a radical and real grassroots approach to culture is nurtured that can constitute an effective tool with which to promote democracy; this is where structural boundaries are crossed

through sacrifice, engagement and opposition that takes no account of conditions or circumstances. This is where one can really believe that democracy is an absolute value.

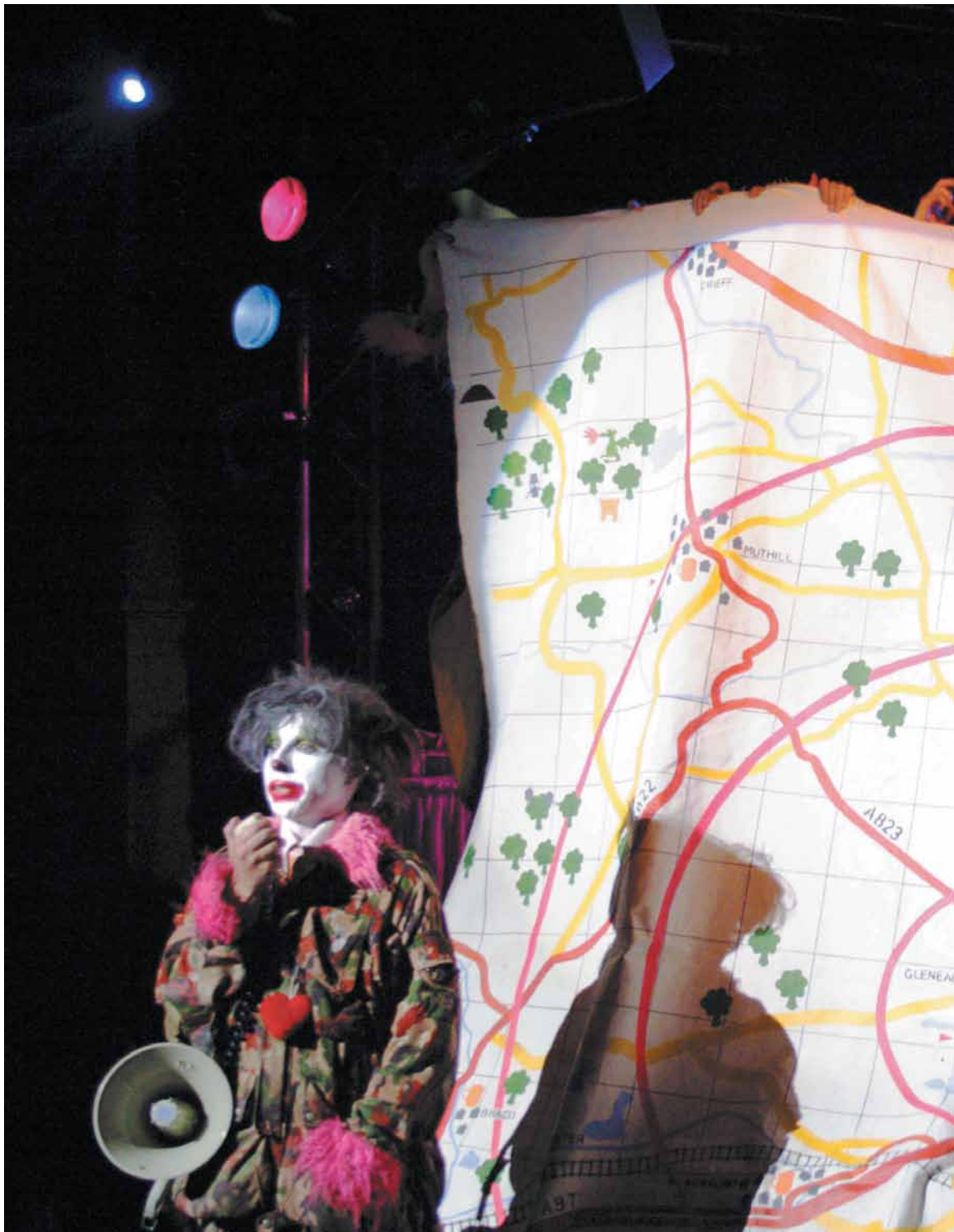
In conclusion

The field of culture can positively and effectively promote democratic processes in Central Europe if its institutional and organisational framework is reformed. This can be done on the one hand by democratising artistic institutions, and on the other through more investment in autonomous organisations that act socially through culture. In both cases, particular awareness of the labour law as it applies to artists is indispensable, as is neutralising the social impact of the growth of instability among the art precariat. It is also crucial to appreciate cultural activities as forming a natural component in

the promotion of social well-being through grassroots practice of being together, social interaction and applying surrounding material resources to one's own imagination and aesthetics.

In such a structural framework, one should pay particular attention to artistic activity that aims to encourage grassroots self-expression through art by non-professional artists. Second, one should encourage practices that are geared towards the community, shaping extra-verbal ways of creating bonds through developing empathy and reciprocity. Third, it is worth stressing the importance of creative initiatives that aim to reclaim emancipation narratives or that appreciate historical identities emerging from the world of industry. Finally, one should stress the importance of discussing the symbols appearing in public spaces that could refresh collective iconography and symbolism. ■

→ *The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination on Tour with the Clown Army*. Free performance announcing operation HaHaHa against the G8 summit. Spring 2005. Photo: Ian Teh.





Isabelle Frémeaux, John Jordan and the Rise of the Insurrectionary Imagination

Isabelle Frémeaux and **John Jordan** in conversation with **Rob Hopkins**

Isabelle Frémeaux The work we do has several dimensions. We do a lot of experiments. We like to call what we do experimental projects or pieces. We like the idea of experimenting collectively and accepting that sometimes things might fail, and that by embracing that capacity for failure we can be more creative. I'm by training an academic and a trainer, so I tend to be more into the training dimension of what we do.

We do quite a lot of workshops and trainings, from a day to two weeks with artists and activists to really see the synergies between arts and activism and often permaculture, and to see how when these three domains merge, we can create synergies for more creative, more efficient, more productive, more resilient projects that we aim to be projects that are geared towards forms of resistance and civil disobedience.

John Jordan What we don't do is 'political art'. We're quite critical of the notion of political art, which for us is art that is about political issues. Occasionally we make films and books but we call those "holidays in representation".

Rob Hopkins is an activist and writer. He is the founder of the Transition Towns network.

Isabelle Frémeaux and **John Jordan** are the co-founders of the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination. It's a collective that, according to Isabelle, "aims at opening spaces, real or virtual, and bringing artists and activists together to work on and co-create more creative forms of resistance and civil disobedience".

The majority of our work is not making films and books, it's actually making these experiments that are really critiquing representation; the idea that most artists will make a performance about climate change or a sculptural installation about the loss of biodiversity or a film about climate justice.

1 See <http://labofii.net/experiments/grrr/>

What we are very clear about is that actually what we like to do, and what we think is vitally important, is to bring artists and activists together, not to show the world but to transform it directly. Not to make images of politics, but to make politics artistic. The reason we work with these two worlds is we think that artists have a lot of creativity, a lot of capacity to think outside the box, a lot of capacity to transform things into poetics, yet often have big egos and not much social engagement.

We think activists—and of course these are generalisations—often have a lot of social critique, capacity to work collectively, but often a failure of imagination. Often they have the same rituals, the same kinds of demonstrations, the same kinds of tools for transforming society. By bringing these two worlds together, we think we can actually create something different.

We are always embedded in social movements. We spent five years as organisers within the Climate Camp and at the same time as organising the camp we were also organising workshops and actions that brought artists and activists together. For example, one project was the creation of a thing called the Great Rebel Raft Regatta¹ where we buried a whole load

of boats in a forest a week before the Climate Camp happened in Kingsnorth in Kent.

The Climate Camp was a self-managed camp developed to create education and alternatives to the climate catastrophe, but it also always had an action at the end of it. This camp at Kingsnorth was actually to stop the building of a new coal-fired power station that was taking place next to a power station that already existed. The project that we did, the Great Rebel Raft Regatta basically brought people together into affinity groups. We buried boats a week beforehand in the forest and with the boat was a bottle of rum. We also gave them a treasure map.

We sent people off in their affinity groups to find the buried boat with the treasure map. They would dig up the boat, sleep in the forest overnight, then at 7 o'clock run out of the forest, take their boat onto the river and go and find and block the power station. We got about 150 people, and one boat managed to block a third of the power station and shut a third of it down. For us, it's really using forms of action that are effective in terms of having an effect on the real world, but also are fun and adventurous. The whole aesthetic of the treasure map and the bottle of rum and the people dressed up as pirates brings a playful element to activism, which we think is absolutely fundamental.

Rob Hopkins You use this term 'insurrectionary imagination'. Could you just say a little bit more about what you mean by that?

Isabelle Frémeaux The imagination has the potential and is a fundamental ingredient for insurrection. We wanted to reclaim the offensive and the defiance that is often lacking in art. Calling it a 'laboratory' would call on the idea of imagination without having what we feel can be quite a bland understanding and bland connotation of the word 'imagination'—which is very often seen as something lovely and creative and child-like—by actually reclaiming the existence of the defiance of what we wanted to do. This is why we put the word 'insurrectionary' in the name of our collective.



John Here's how we describe it on our website:²
Jordan The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (Lab of ii) merges art and life, creativity and resistance, proposition and opposition. Infamous for touring the UK recruiting a rebel clown army, running courses in post-capitalist culture, throwing snowballs at bankers, turning hundreds of abandoned bikes into machines of disobedience and launching a rebel raft regatta to shut down a coal-fired power station; we treat insurrection as an art and art as a means of preparing for the coming insurrection. The Lab of ii is now in the process of setting up an international utopian art/life school on a Permaculture farm in Brittany.

We don't actually believe in the separation between artists and activists, and we don't actually believe in those two terms. We think

² See <https://labofii.wordpress.com/about/>

↑ Policemen encircle the CIRCA (Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army) during the day of action against the G8 — Gleanagles, Scotland, July 2005. Photo: Ian Teh.



the notion of art as a separate action in everyday life is a very recent phenomenon within the Western tradition. In most cultures there isn't a separation of art and everyday life.

We think that activism—this idea that activists have this monopoly on social change—is exactly the same as art having a monopoly on creativity. Actually everyone can and has the capacity and does change the world in some way, all the time. So in a way it's a kind of dialectical relationship, because we wanted to get rid of both those notions. For us, creating an insurrection or some kind of revolutionary change (which we think is absolutely necessary), we have to provide the alternatives to capitalism and the climate catastrophe and resist the problems that are happening that we can't divide.

↑ A rebel clown puts lipstick on and repeatedly kisses riot shields. Resistance against the G8 summit, Edinburgh, Scotland, July 2005. Photo: Labofii.

We see the DNA of social transformation as being two strands. Being the creation of alternatives such as Transition Towns etc., and a resistance, a resistance against the fossil fuel industries, the banks that fund them and so on. One without the other is absolutely pointless, because if we don't resist then we forget who the enemy is and there's a massive danger that our projects become simply experiments in laboratories for new forms of green capitalism. If we don't create the alternatives, then of course we simply have a culture of resistance and a culture that's simply saying 'no' all the time and that isn't sustainable in terms of mental health and personal sustainability because people just burn out.

Historically we see the division of these two movements being absolutely a problem, and I think the 1970s is a classic example. For us in all our projects, we try to make models of alternative forms of living. So we haven't flown on a plane for ten years, despite the fact that we have this international art world career, where most of the people in that world spend their life on aeroplanes. We live ecologically, we live in a yurt in a community where we set up an organic farm, where we put the land into production.

For us that's not necessarily political but that's what we do normally anyway, and resistance work is always done without hierarchy. We teach consensus at the beginning of all our projects and we try and use permaculture principles to make them happen.

As one example, and this is relevant because our latest project is geared towards the COP 21 in Paris, the UN Climate Summit, which is aiming to find a universal agreement on CO₂ emissions and adaptation and so on in December 2015. In 2009, we were invited by two museums to do projects around COP15 in Denmark, in Copenhagen. We were invited by the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol and the Centre for Contemporary Art in Copenhagen.

We had already spent some time in Copenhagen. We published a book on alternatives called *Paths Through Utopias*,

unfortunately only available in French, Korean and German. And we spent some time in Christiania, a self-managed community in Copenhagen. We noticed then, during that time, that there were thousands of abandoned bikes all over Copenhagen. So we thought: there's the material. There's a permaculture principle, "create no waste". We thought let's see what we can do with the waste of Copenhagen with these abandoned bikes. Let's transform them into tools of civil disobedience.

Traditionally, civil disobedience in the Gandhian, Thoreau tradition is through the body and we thought what can we do with the body and a bicycle? We proposed this to the two museums, they both agreed. In the project we worked with the Climate Camp as the movement we were working with and the idea was that we would produce prototypes in the Arnolfini Gallery where we would put 50 people together in an open free workshop. We would teach them the basics of permaculture principles and so on, and we would then go—"ok, what can we do with these bikes", and design a prototype that we'd then take to Copenhagen to scale up.

Then we had an interesting moment when both museums said "you can't do any welding in the museum". So we thought ok, fine, we'll get a container outside and we can put an image in it and it'll be a more public space anyway, so the problem was the solution. Then they had a phone call from the Copenhagen curator and she said, "we've got a container, but there's just one little thing. We just talked to the police in Denmark, and there are certain rules about what is a bicycle."

A bicycle can't have more than three wheels. It can't be more than three metres long etc., etc. If your objects are outside of those rules then you have to write to the police, you have to show them the design and it will take three weeks before they come back to you and say you've got the right to go on the road. So we said, "well that's very interesting, but we're doing civil disobedience. We don't really care whether the bikes are legal or not." At which point there was this pause, and she was like "so you're really going to do it..."



We've had this experience in the art world a lot. Basically, a lot of the art world pretends to do politics. They have these very radical texts and radical propositions. Maybe she imagined we were going to build these objects and stay in the museum, but for us that's not the point. The point is actually to take action. Unfortunately the museum then pulled out, but we did find an ex-squat in Copenhagen that is a sort of art and cultural centre called the Candy Factory and produced a project there. About 200 people ended up being involved and took part in the demonstration against the corporate domination of the UN climate talks.

In a way this is a good example of how we think a lot of so-called political art at the moment, which is very trendy. There are endless biennials, museum exhibitions, theatre festivals

↑ Put the Fun
Between Your Legs:
Become the Bike
Bloc — Installation
before the gallery
was transformed
into an open bike
workshop, Arnolfini
Gallery, Bristol. Au-
tumn 2009. Photo:
Labofii.



that use the word 'political', 'radical', 'socially engaged' and so on. Actually, as far as we're concerned, a lot of it is what we'd call "pictures of politics".

**Rob
Hopkins**

You recently wrote that "the Left is very scared of using desire and the body and capitalism and the Right are brilliant at it". Can you talk us through what the implications of that are, and for Transition as well?

**Isabelle
Frémeaux**

There is a tendency amongst the Left, and of course these are massive generalisations. A tendency to feel that the problem is what people don't know and that therefore if we can produce more facts or figures or information or reports and that people know what's going on; if we can show the maths, if we can have

↑ Put the Fun
Between Your Legs:
Become the Bike
Bloc — The DDT
(Double Double
Trouble) one
of the machines
of disobedience
built and used dur-
ing the direct ac-
tions at the COP15
Climate Summit,
Copenhagen,
December 2009.
Photo: Kristian
Buus.

better pictures of the number of species that are going extinct or the number of people that are being affected, the figures of unemployment etc., then people will react. There's this idea that there is a large number of people who don't act because they don't know.

Whereas we believe that very often the problem is actually what people do know, that they cling on to things and values that have been the structure of their life for a long time, and that what generally makes people move is not rational thinking but much more often desires and fantasies of what could be.

There's a beautiful quote by an American author called Stephen Duncan that puts it very beautifully, about "the dreams of what could be". The dreams of what could be are much more located in the emotions, in the body, rather than in the left brain. It's really important to combine them. It's not a question of throwing the baby out with the bathwater and saying "stop all reports, stop all research, stop all science". But to not overly rely on them.

The numbers should be there as backup, to be used as crutches, but what is going to motivate most of us is to be able to experience emotionally and bodily a life that is more just, that is more healthy, that is more relaxed, that is more enjoyable. That's not something that is purely rational. That is one of the knots that is very complicated to untie, the great lie of neo-liberalism and capitalism, which is that more stuff necessarily means a better life. We know that it's untrue, and yet this is something that is difficult to untie. We will manage to untie that by talking and calling upon people's values.

At the same time, one of the notions that can be of new learning for projects like Transition Towns is that these emotions are the positive emotions of what could be, but also the negative emotions of what we know is wrong with what is going on. Actually, it is a matter of finding the balance and finding how one can feed the other and not overcome the other. Sometimes there can be a tendency to want to deny and obscure the anger and frustration at the injustice and the destruction.

Actually these emotions need to be acknowledged, and need to be used as fuel for resistance, while the emotions of what

could be can be used as a tool to move forward to the alternative. It's the combination of these two emotions that can make the social movements irresistible and indestructible, and very often the movements are indestructible when they're only calling upon one of those. So it comes back to this DNA of the yes and the no, but I think it's very true in the kind of emotions that we call upon in ourselves and in other people.

Rob Hopkins Permaculture is a big part of your work. Could you say a bit about that? Why is permaculture important to what you do?

Isabelle Frémeaux It offers a very inspiring and stable framework; a very stable value framework. To be able to work in the way we want, we thought that the three main pillars of permaculture are a very efficient way of making people understand that actually it's not so complicated. Because the principles are a really good road map for working towards the system, and designs that are productive and resilient and respectful. Personally we feel very touched by the idea that you take nature as your teacher and the more you do that, the less you see nature as this external thing outside of you.

More and more you take it as a tool so that you can reintegrate yourself in nature, which we've been taught to see as this thing... the fact that we very often talk about the environment is telling. It's this thing that surrounds us, that obviously we're not part of. Permaculture is an excellent tool to be able to reintegrate oneself into what is actually our only consistent thing. So we try to use the principles as frameworks for our experiments, and generally the spirit of permaculture is our inspiration.

John Jordan And we have this ten-day training called *Think like a Forest*, which we have done four or five times over the past years. It's actually very inspired—it's a training in art, activism and permaculture and it really looks at what does art bring to activism, what does activism bring to art, what does art bring to permaculture, what does permaculture bring to art and activism and so forth, to look at it as a system of three worlds. That training was actually very



inspired by a training by Starhawk, who's an anarcho-feminist witch. She was very involved in the peace movement in the 80s and the alt to globalisation movement, who has a course called the Earth Activist Training Course that we both attended. This was very much a big inspiration for us many, many years ago.

We modelled our course on that in a sense where there's a permaculture element, but instead of having the witchcraft element, we replaced witchcraft with art. Her thing is earth-based spirituality, activism and permaculture. Ours is art, activism and permaculture. And in a sense, art is magic. It's a form of magic. We think that's one of its powers, that actually things become true when enough people believe in them. Art is very good at weaving the magic that we need in these moments. ■

↑ Think Like a Forest workshop in art activism and permaculture. Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, la.r.O.n.o.e, Brittany, Autumn 2011. Photo: John Jordan.

Not Sustainable Development, but Sustainable Co-living¹

by **Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez**

Developed societies of the global north, buffeted by financial crises and crises of values, the acceleration of time and unrelenting technological progress, now talk of socio-ecological systems. This new way of looking at things stems not only from the urgent necessity to start implementing ecological policies and raise civic awareness, but also from growing financial and economic instability, local and international forms of terrorism, natural disasters and crucial new developments in the humanities, most notably anthropology and sociology. Socio-ecological systems are networks or interconnected systems between

people and nature, capable of maintaining balance in the face of constant change, thus laying the groundwork for resilience.

Resilience stands counterpoised to the idea of socio-technological development. First emerging as a concept within the study of the ecology of systems in the 1970s, resilience evolved into a science dealing with complex adaptive systems, becoming established as the prevalent strategy adopted in risk and natural resources management.² Over the past two decades it has been included in the conceiving of the so-called commons society,³ in social sciences,

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international financial and economic politics, logistics of crisis management, terrorism and natural disasters management, corporate risk analysis, the psychology of trauma, urban planning, healthcare and as a proposed upgrading of the global trend of developing sustainability in the societies of the global north.

The term is used widely, with a variety of connotations: in natural sciences or physics, a resilient body is described as flexible, durable, and capable of springing back to its original form and transforming the energy received into its own reconstruction (a good example of this is the sponge). In psychology, resilience refers to the subject's ability to recover its original state relatively quickly after some significant stress or shock and continuing with the processes of self-realisation

without a major setback. Applied more narrowly in the sphere of cultural work, resilience is more than just the ability to adapt, promoted by the concept of the flexible subject⁴ over the past two decades, which was adopted by corporate capitalism and neoliberalism and triggered the mass movement of precarious labour.

Resilience encompasses exploring reciprocal dependence and finding one's political and socio-ecological place in a world that is out of balance and creates increasingly disadvantageous living conditions. Rather than trying to find global solutions for some indefinite future or projecting a possible perfect balance, resilient thinking focuses on the diversity of practical solutions for the here and now, and on the cooperation and creativity of everyone involved in a community or society. At the same time, resilient thinking

- 1 The term "sustainable living" is taken from an interview with the eco-feminist and activist Vandana Shiva. (See: <http://navdanya.org/news/327-vandana-shiva-traditional-knowledge-biodiversity-a-sustainable-living> and <http://www.vandana-shiva.org/>). Accessed on 25 November 2013.
- 2 A significant text on resilience and ecology is the Canadian ecologist C. S. Holling's, "Resilience and stability of ecological systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): 1–23. A more contemporary work on this topic is Brian Walker and David Salt, *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*, (Washington: Island Press, 2006).
- 3 Commons society, unlike the market-oriented one, proposes a new understanding of natural and social resources as collective and common.
- 4 According to Suely Rolnik, who develops the concept of flexible subjectivity based on Brian Holmes, this is the product of the emergence of the creative class in the 1950s, which meant existential experimenting and a radical break with the dominant forces: "Flexible subjectivity was adopted as a politics of desire by a wide range of people, who began to desert the current ways of life and trace alternative cartographies — a process supported and made possible by its broad collective extension", in *Politics of Flexible Subjectivity. The Event-Work of Lygia Clark*, <http://www.pucsp.br/nucleodesubjetividade/Textos/SUELY/FlexibleSubjectivity.pdf>

looks at the critical and dystopian near future; unable to anticipate or postpone it, it can only react by adapting to it. Similarly as every new concept, resilience too has drawn a lot of unfavourable critical responses, with the main reproaches being its general depoliticisedness (which makes it vulnerable to appropriation by neoliberal thought), its favouring resources while ignoring conflicts, and its focus on re-establishing the previous status quo rather than effecting change.

I began examining contemporary art production in Slovenia, and concentrically beyond its borders, at the time when the Occupy movement came to an end, the all-Slovenian uprising was organised, a government fell and another took office, and drastic austerity measures were introduced. The growing discontent and social, political, moral and

economic crises echoed in conversations with younger artists. I had the opportunity to see how difficult it is to do creative work under these circumstances and in this environment. Young artists, architects, designers, activists, curators and other cultural “fighters” talked about experimenting with artistic practices, further futile transformations of Slovenian freelance cultural workers into self-managing administrative bodies,⁵ the cuts in already minimal public funds, the lack of private initiative, and the emergence of new forms of co-financing such as Kickstarter and concepts of collaboration such as co-working, do-it-together and do-it-with-others.⁶

Keen on inter-connecting, they are increasingly aware of the importance of cooperative economies and the open-source mentality, commoning,

⁵ This phenomenon is discussed by Bojana Kunst in her new book *Umetnik na delu. Bližina umetnosti in kapitalizma (Artist at Work. Proximity of Art and Capitalism)*: “An excellent case in point for analysing the social contradictions of the new forms of production is the status of freelance artists, in particular from the point of view of the bureaucratic ideas for regulating this status we have witnessed in Slovenia over the past two decades, a period in which the artist transitioned from an ‘independent (freelance)’ to a ‘self-employed’ person. At the beginning of the transition, there was still an albeit hazy but nonetheless consensual social sphere of public independent/freelance work, supported as a common good also by the state; precisely because artists are public figures, they are also construed as ‘independent’. Now, however, bureaucrats prefer to speak of them as self-employed, which automatically renders the artist a part of the private economy. This in turn reduces the public consent to support the artist’s work, since the independent public sphere as such is disappearing.” (Ljubljana: Maska, 2012) p.123.

⁶ Deriving from the do-it-yourself (DIY) concept, do-it-together appeared as a term on the internet just under a decade ago, most notably in the sphere of art and activism as a form of collaboration along the principles of the open source movement, non-hierarchical relations, and network co-creation.

producing one's resources or, as Vandana Shiva calls it, "self-making".⁷ This generation tells stories about the generations of their parents and grandparents with a lot of empathy, or assumes the position of co-creators of their own generation. Despite the relevance of the above-mentioned criticism of it, I used the concept of resilience as flexibility as the main metaphor for this triennial survey of the production of younger to middle generation artists living under today's conditions of crisis and with minor, even major disasters following one another. This also ironically refers to the concept of "flexicurity",⁸ which in Slovenia at least remains just unrealised potential.

Blending work and everyday life forms the basis of new economic, ethical and production principles that the younger generation

of artists uses to transform the role of the creative subject in contemporary Slovenian society, or as Bojana Kunst writes on this intertwining of labour and life:

"Labour must think about its modes of production; in the case of contemporary art, these are the (open, flexible, communicative, affective) post-Fordist modes that actually separate work from the materiality of the work process in advance... Today production modes are literally fused with labour itself, the flexibility and communicativeness of the work processes overlap with the openness and processuality of work, while the use of creativity overlaps with experimentation and research; this leaves artists virtually forced to keep revolutionising their production modes... The principal technology of producing work

7 Vandana Shiva talks about self-making or swadeshi as a desire to achieve the ultimate quality in one's own making: "If we're going to live in a world beyond the financial crisis, we'd better start doing things for ourselves, making things for ourselves, growing our food, making our homes, creating our education and health systems. Putting pressure on the state is fine, but ultimately I believe we need to go beyond the centralised state and centralised corporate control. We need to go into decentralised communities that reclaim the capacity to make. And that is swadeshi." Vandana Shiva in an interview for *Yes Magazine*, 2009.

8 The term 'flexicurity' denotes achieving maximum synergy of effects and balance in the conditions ruling the labour market in the EU. The purported goals of flexicurity include allowing greater individual participation in the labour market, reducing unemployment, support in entering the labour market, and easier and faster transition from one contract to another.

becomes visibility, which must be linked to the same material and embodied processes that enable this visibility of work. Oftentimes, this visibility is possible due to the precariousness, flexibility and uncertainty of work, due to fetishising the immaterial and speculative experience as the principal social and communicative experience that artistic work can make possible... As the dividing line between life and work in late-capitalist working processes fades, also the possibilities for an emancipatory alliance between work and life dwindle, an alliance born out of the incessant politicising of this difference, which makes apparent the paradoxes of contemporary autonomy, the illusory option of choice, and of organising one's life..."⁹

Despite these inevitable facts, young artists enter into dialogue with biotechnology, critical

theory and political activism, underscoring on the other hand the cyclical nature of time by reviving traditional knowledge and techniques. Searching for strategies to work and also survive, strategies that become at the same time a way of collaborating and co-producing, coupled with the contents of their work have become one of the many inspirations in structuring the triennial. New approaches to securing financial resources for survival have led to new ways of collaboration, in which the isolation of being stationed in front of one's computer is no longer enough; it must be upgraded with socialising and discussions, which also means sharing the responsibility for (co-)financing the place hosting the socialising.¹⁰

The triennial gave prominence to practices that can be seen as analogous to the concept

⁹ Bojana Kunst, *op. cit.*, pp.120–123.

¹⁰ Initiatives such as Coworking at the Kino Šiška and Creative Cooperatives in Španski borci are two good examples of such collective approaches.

of resilience, i.e., community-oriented, situated,¹¹ participatory, performative, architectural, feminist, socio-ecological, civic and other discursive practices exploring new (or revived) community principles, such as the “do-it-together”, urban gardening and co-working, as well as the fundamental social question of co-existence.

Coexistence or co-living is a major factor in raising awareness of mutual dependence in micro-localities. As an old African proverb says, if you want to go fast go alone; if you want to go far go together. The Metelkova neighbourhood in the Tabor district of Ljubljana has evolved into an amazing cultural quarter, starting with the Autonomous Cultural Zone Metelkova, now celebrating its 20th anniversary of persistent self-defining and unrelenting struggle for survival this year, and

the Bunker Institute, which has been managing the Old Power Station for years now, animating the space with projects exploring various principles of co-living and co-working.

Considering the relations and collaborations set up at, by, and for the triennial, the complexity of, and contrasts in the nature of, the spaces and the initiatives involved cannot be ignored, contributing to antagonisms and disagreements before, during, and after the triennial. Bratko Bibič dedicated a subdivision of a chapter in his contribution “Improvizacije na temo 93/13” (“Improvisations on Theme 93/13”) for the *Metelkova* anthology, published in honour of the 20 years of work of Autonomous Cultural Zone Metelkova City, to these relations, writing about the complexity of the problems of coexistence between

- 11** Institutions and artistic practices following the principle of situatedness or embeddedness by activating their micro-locations, the locality of the subjects, change and adapt to their local conditions. The international network Cluster, founded in 2011, brings together seven European contemporary art institutions and one from Israel; the institutions are largely located on metropolitan peripheries or in residential areas and work interactively with their local contexts.

the ACZ Metelkova and the Museum square and its institutions: At the meeting of the Forum of the ACZ Metelkova City, which serves as the decision-making instance a propos of the common issues of the ACZ Metelkova City, held in June 2013, the following conclusion was adopted [regarding the invitation issued by the Director of the MSUM and the curator of the 7th Triennial u3 to Metelkova City to present its activities and participate in the Triennial: that there is no consensus to participate in the exhibition, although the discussion clearly left open the option 'for every individual to participate individually'. Among other things, the members of the ACZ Metelkova City wrote in their conclusion that 'the invitation from the +MSUM was gentrification pure and simple, they're trying to create a reserve in which

Indians play themselves.'¹²

The triennial was processual by nature. Most works exhibited at the MSUM+, the Škuc Gallery, the SCCA Project Room, and the performative projects in the Museum square were more than just art works, they were also documentary pieces, fragments of narratives, witnesses of long-term or lasting processes in which they activated or altered subsequent gestures and activities. The triennial gave prominence to time and space, unfolding at several locations in the desire to give the young generation an opportunity to express their potential through addressing urgent local and global socio-political problems and to contribute to the debate in and over existing Slovenian cultural policy. There was a programme of performative projects and debates that highlighted the symptoms and

¹² Bratko Bibič, "Improvizacije na temo 93/13," *Metelkova* (Ljubljana: ČKZ, 2013) p.188.

unease of, and the existing or emerging relations between neighbours in, the urban space in which the Museum square with its four museums is located and which directly relates to the legendary Autonomous Cultural Zone Metelkova. Employing a variety of approaches, some of the participating artists and neighbours also reacted critically to the concept.¹³

Debates were organised in collaboration with individual agents, group initiatives and structures. The main topics of the debates related to the concept of resilience via the particular interests and activities of the participating initiatives. The guests and the public discussed hybrid spaces in art, the economic position of artists in present-day society (both from the local and international perspectives), contemporary production models and institutions,

abstract and concrete spaces of capitalism, the role and influence of new technologies on the individual and society and the biopolitics of the centres of power. For the most part they revolved around problems experienced by particular institutions, structures, initiatives and individuals in the shared space of the Metelkova neighbourhood and the Tabor district, and on the possibilities of connecting and networking in the field of politics and culture. The last debate in particular, about the work of the international network Cluster, stressed the importance of solidarity in view of the fact that all agents in a particular country are dependent on the same cultural politics, which puts their struggle for survival in a mutually dependent relationship with their collaboration with one another.¹⁴

¹³ Such examples were one of Maja Delak's actions in the *Transmittance* performance, the debate organised by DPU, Leja Jurišič and Teja Reba's *Sofa*, and the installation/barrier blocking the passage between the Museum square and the ACZ Metelkova City bearing the legend "No pasarán" [they shall not pass].

¹⁴ From Adela Železnik's opening remarks at the debate with the Cluster network, 29 September 2013.

One of the potentials of contemporary art is that it can lead to sustainable (co)living by enhancing social cohesiveness and providing possibilities for agency, for addressing conflicts, and translating knowledge beyond the borders of individual communities or disciplines. It gives everyone

involved in the process of both its creation and reception a chance to change the way they think about themselves, others and the way things in everyday life work. It was this curator's secret wish that the resilient practices in contemporary art could enable creativity *with*, rather than just *for*, people. ■

*“Migration is not
the evacuation
of a place and the
occupation of a different
one, it is the making
and remaking of one’s
own life on the scenery
of the world.”*

— **Dimitris Papadopoulos** and **Vassilis Tsianos**,

‘The Autonomy of Migration: The Animals of Undocumented Mobility’

Excerpt from a speech given by Madjiguène Cissé on the occasion of her receipt of the Wilhelmine von Bayreuth Prize 2011

It is a great honour for me to be the fourth recipient of the *Wilhelmine of Bayreuth Prize for tolerance and humanity in cultural diversity*. To be awarded a prize of such distinction, following eminent personalities of worldwide renown, is not an easy matter. One is tempted to ask oneself what one has done to merit such a great honour.

As the second child of parents of rural origin who were impelled to move to town by recurrent drought, I first saw the light of day in Dakar, then the capital of French West Africa (AOF). My father did not himself have the chance to go to school and was self-taught. However, he was a true visionary and insisted that I, the only daughter of the family, should have

the same opportunity to study as the boys since, as he said, we are entering an era in which education is going to play a big role in society.

Brought up with much rigour and respecting one's neighbour, values such as *jomm* (courage), *kersa* (shame) and *mugne* (patience) were instilled into me from a young age, all this being framed by a spirit of solidarity. I often heard my mother say "Nit nitaye garabam" or "man is the remedy of man". As children of poor families relegated to the periphery of the urban centres, we grew up in spaces where only mutual solidarity allowed people to make ends meet. Pleasures were shared, as well as sorrows, and the most urgent assistance was provided by a community

Madjiguène Cissé is the founder of the Network of Women for Sustainable Development in Africa (REFDAF), which works to help women access resources so that they can adopt more sustainable agricultural methods and enjoy more autonomy and greater food security.

eager to maintain their balance in a situation of extreme poverty, of almost permanent crisis. Courage, ingenuity, and initiative by women have always impressed me. I began my 'social' commitment in primary school when I read and wrote letters for the adults who were almost all illiterate.

Our own history—of my people and of our nation—has always been hidden from us by the colonisers in order to maintain their domination. Only much later did I learn that, according to oral traditions, as early as in 1222 the 'Mande Charta', a first declaration of human rights for people in Africa, was declared by Soundiata Keïta, Emperor of the Mali Empire. In this he called for respect for human life, respect for one's neighbour and social justice, while condemning two serious evils, notably hunger and slavery, thus making his people subject to the rule of law.

My commitment to human rights dates back to that period in my childhood. I did not understand why the people were and remained deprived and I only thought about helping them in the best way I could. I began to think about solutions and I started to make small contributions: teaching literacy courses, providing school assistance, organising cleaning actions. When the strong wind of May 1968 reached us also in Africa, the question

of rights reached quite another level for me: the right to a decent life, to normal conditions of education, to health. Thus, I made efforts to bring about changes that were modest but still useful for the people.

Much later, my participation in the struggle of the Sans-Papiers (illegal immigrants) was the continuation of my early commitment. Increasingly, I realised the absurdity of the situation: that human beings should be deprived of their basic right of movement. This is simply unjust.

Immigration laws have certainly become more exacting and more coordinated on a European scale; this is also because of a paradigm shift. Europe uses increasingly stringent measures to limit, and even suppress, the right to travel freely. Foreigners living on European territory are insidiously pushed into illegality by the conditions and criteria required when seeking extension of residence permits. These are undignified and frankly unbearable. For example, a foreign student or worker being required to queue up in front of foreign national registration offices at 4 o'clock in the morning in the hope of being let in at 9 o'clock; families end up being separated, with estrangements encouraged and with children being controlled when leaving school. The hardening of immigration policy becomes

evident before a foreigner even sets foot on European soil. Be it a businessman, professor, human rights activist, student or trader, the applicant for a visa has to undertake a real combative encounter and undergoes all sorts of vexations and humiliations to his dignity as a human being in order to get an entry visa for European territory. This creates frustrations that are not conducive to good relations between Europe and the countries of the South.

This policy against human rights is often justified by the need to preserve economic stability, notably employment, within a Europe that has, for many years, pursued ultra-liberal policies. And now Europe is about to undergo draconian austerity measures very much like those structural adjustment plans imposed in the 1980s on the countries of the South by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The payment of interest on the debts of the Southern countries, together with bad governance, has gradually suffocated our economies, jeopardising all economic, social and cultural development.

In Africa, from the first, mutual social assistance and solidarity permitted the populations to resist the exacerbation of poverty. Then, gradually, social movements and organisations arose. The most vulnerable strata of African

society have thus reunited and organised themselves in order to take their destiny into their own hands.

In Senegal, REFDAF (Réseau des femmes pour le développement en Afrique) was born in 2000 by the will of women who were victims of austerity policies and of the lack of political will among our leaders to get out of the diabolical circle of poverty. By combining women's networks and their grassroots associations, REFDAF wishes to promote a new vision of economic and social development in Africa and to reflect the role of women in the creation of conditions for sustainable development.

The majority of women live in unacceptable conditions: without running water or electricity, without rewarding outlets for their produce, sometimes without a roof. Their most fundamental rights are plainly ignored: the right to health, to education, to training, the right to entertainment...

To redress this situation, REFDAF has created Local Product Exchange Platforms (Espace d'Échanges). This is a project whose first step has been to buy market stalls and shops for women in the big markets of Dakar in order to allow women to sell their local products at just prices. A chain develops from the woman who cultivates land, raises birds or processes her products, up to the marketing spaces

for primary or finished products, under the control of the women themselves who, in this way, have a comprehensive vision of the process, from production to marketing.

Another equally important initiative, the project of the 'REFDAF Women's Housing Area' (Cité des Femmes du REFDAF) came into being in December 2002. The aim is to allow women to be owners of their plots, something rare in Senegal where only 2% of women are landowners. The REFDAF women opened a communal bank account in January 2003 and have already saved, despite their meagre incomes, more than 80 million Franc CFA (€120,000). Women themselves have drawn up the plans for this housing estate, located where they want to live, a communal habitat that takes into account local requirements such as climate, independent access to renewable energy, access to education, health etc.

All these projects are part of the aspect of 'training' women: an area that REFDAF is very insistent on in its programmes, in order to fill in the gaps within their education and to offer new perspectives to every one of them. In this way, wherever possible, REFDAF organises qualifying training in literacy, IT, advocacy and lobbying financial management, and training to obtain a driving license.

Finally, in the same perspective of opening up possibilities, REFDAF is involved in setting up a large movement to include other African women, with the main objective of making a female civil society emerge that is strong and capable of making an impact on the orientations, as well as the actions, that mark societal advance. REFDAF aims at 'forming' female citizens in a comprehensive sense, who can then take responsibilities in their societies.

As you can see, REFDAF's mission is to make a sustainable contribution to the development of Senegal and of Africa, but also to link up with that new form of global thinking that emphasises, above all, the human being and its harmonious development.

Today, in times of multiple crises, of lacking orientations, of conflicts, Africa interrogates itself, and is questioned about, what contribution it can make to the concert of nations. This question imposes itself on all of us inhabitants of the earth. In Europe, the currently raging crisis acutely raises the question of which mode of development we want and which would create a balance for all. In Africa, the crisis has taught us to manage day-to-day life differently, to initiate a holistic development that takes into consideration a reasonable exploitation of our resources, investing not

only in the present but also in the future. The models we follow are still of an empirical kind whose theoretical frameworks remain to be formulated. We therefore invite the intellectuals and researchers of the Institute for African Studies of the University of Bayreuth to engage with us in this reflection process:

- How to promote solidarity with, and acceptance of, the other, since we all belong to one and the same humanity?
- How to link up with nature to preserve our ecosystems?
- What kind of humanity do we want for ourselves and for the coming generations? ■

R-URBAN or How to Co-produce a Resilient City (*2nd excerpt*)

by **Constantin Petcou** and **Doina Petrescu**

R-URBAN, an agency of co-produced urban regeneration

R-URBAN is one of the many small-scale initiatives to have emerged in response to the slow pace of governmental procedures and the lack of consensus in further addressing the challenges of global crisis and evaluating their consequences for people's lives. New approaches to urban regeneration are desperately needed in times of economic crisis, and could benefit from the increased social capital attending the diminishment of financial capital. R-URBAN was conceived as an open source strategy enabling residents to play an active part in changing the city while also changing their ways of living in it.

This strategy creates a network of citizen projects

and grassroots organisations around a series of self-managed collective facilities hosting economic and cultural activities and everyday practices that contribute to boosting resilience in an urban context. The network, which acts through locally closed circuits, starts at a neighbourhood level and progressively scales up to the city and regional level. In a Guattarian ecosophical vein,¹ the strategy considers social, ecological and economic aspects as equally essential for resilient processes. R-URBAN addresses communities from urban and suburban contexts, involving a diversity of actors (i.e., residents, local authorities, public organisations, professionals, civic stakeholders) to take various responsibilities in the project's governance. In contrast to other regeneration projects conceived by

Doina Petrescu is Professor of Architecture and Design Activism at the University of Sheffield.

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specialist teams and facilitated by managerial structures, the architects and planners here take an active role as initiators, facilitators, mediators and consultants in various civic partnerships brought about by the project. This leads to a more effective, faster and more sustainable implementation, and allows for greater participation of non-specialists in co-producing it. The projects are conceived as processes that not only result in a physical transformation of urban contexts, but also contribute to the social and political emancipation of those living and acting in them.

Although anchored in everyday life and committed to radical change, R-URBAN is also part of a specific tradition of modelling resilient development starting with Howard's *Garden City* (Howard, 1889) and Geddes's *Regional City* (Geddes, 1915) and continuing today with the *Transition Town* (Hopkins, 2008). But in contrast to these models, R-URBAN is no direct application of theory, but tries to develop an exploratory practice and a theoretical analysis, both

of which constantly inform one another.

As opposed to the Garden City concept, R-URBAN does not propose an ideal model of transformation, but deals with the collapse of modern urban ideals and their many failures in addressing the future. Also, R-URBAN picks up from the Regional City concept the idea of regional dynamics, but in this case on the basis of bottom-up initiatives of local residents. It considers both large-scale processes and small-scale phenomena. Global concerns are addressed locally, but within the existing conditions. The R-URBAN transformation is realised in successive stages by investing in temporarily available spaces and creating short-term uses able to prefigure future urban developments.

R-URBAN also incorporates many Transition Town principles, although it does not necessarily operate on a 'town' scale, but negotiates its own (e.g. a block, neighbourhood or district), depending on actor participation. No pre-existing communities are targeted;

¹ Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: Continuum F., 2008).



instead, new communities formed through the project must agree on their own rules and the principles to be followed in its management. With its civic hubs and collective facilities, R-URBAN tries to lend visibility to the networks of solidarity and ecological cycles it creates. Architecture plays an important role here: that of hosting and showcasing resilient practices and processes, and of rendering tangible and concrete what would otherwise only remain a discourse. Also, architecture is not only physical, but social and political as well. The inspirations we took from social theorists and

philosophers like Guattari, Gorz, Lefebvre, Harvey, Negri and Holloway have been constantly challenged by the reality of our active research approach.

R-URBAN in Colombes

After three years of research, we proposed the project to various local authorities and grassroots organisations in cities and towns of France. We conceived of it as a participative strategy based on local circuits that activate material (e.g., water, energy, waste and food) and immaterial (e.g., local know-how, socio-economic,

↑ R-URBAN
in Colombes:
Agrocity.
Photo credit: atelier
d'architecture
autogéré.

cultural and self-building) flows between key fields of activity (e.g., the economy, housing and urban agriculture) already contained or implemented in the existing fabric of the city. In 2011, R-URBAN started in Colombes, a suburban town with 84,000 residents near Paris, in partnership with the local authorities and a number of organisations, as well as with the involvement of a range of local residents. In its initial four-year period, the project is intended to gradually create a network around a number of 'collective hubs', each of them serving complementary urban functions (i.e., housing, urban agriculture, recycling, eco-construction, local culture), that bring together emerging citizens' projects. Within a context of welfare services being withdrawn, these collective facilities will host self-provided services and citizen-run production units that will simultaneously play a strategic part in locally closed economic and ecological cycles.²

Colombes offers a typical suburban context with a mix of private and

council housing estates. Suburbia is a key territory for R-URBAN: although specific to a modern conception of city, it is one of the most crucial territories to be redeveloped and regenerated in the interest of resilience today. With its mix of private and council housing estates, Colombes is confronted with all kinds of suburban problems, such as social or economic deprivation and youth crime, typical of large-scale dormitory suburbs and the consumerist, car-dependent lifestyle in more affluent suburbs with generally middle-class populations. Colombes nonetheless also has a number of advantages and assets: despite a high unemployment rate (17% of the working population, well above the national average of 10.2% in 2012), Colombes boasts many local organisations (approximately 450) and a very active civic life.

Drawing strength from this very active civic life and from the cultural and social diversity of Colombes, we started by launching several

² For more information, see <http://r-urban.net>



collective facilities, including recycling and eco-construction projects, cooperative housing and urban agriculture units, which are cooperating to set up the first spatial and ecological agencies in the area. Their architecture showcases the various issues they address, such as recycled local materials, local skills, energy production and food cultivation, by means of specific devices and building components. The first three pilot

facilities—Agrocité, Recyclab and Ecohab—are collectively run hubs that catalyse existing activities with the aim of introducing and propagating resilient routines and lifestyles that residents can adopt and practise on individual and domestic levels, such as retrofitting properties to accommodate food cultivation and energy generation.

Agrocité is an agricultural unit comprising an experimental micro-farm,

↑ R-URBAN in Colombes: Inauguration of the Agrocité, 2013. Photo credit: atelier d'architecture autogéré.



← R-URBAN
in Colombes:
Recyclab, 2015.
Photo credit: atelier
d'architecture
autogéré.

community gardens, educational and cultural spaces, plus a range of experimental devices for compost-powered heating, rainwater collection, solar energy generation, aquaponic gardening and phyto-remediation. Agrocité is a hybrid structure, with some components run as social enterprises (e.g., the micro-farm, market and cafe) and others by user organisations (e.g., the community garden, cultural and educational spaces) and local associations.

Recyclab is a recycling and eco-construction unit comprising several facilities fostering and reusing locally salvaged materials, recycling

and transforming them into reco-construction elements for self-building and retrofitting. An attendant 'fab lab'³ has been set up for the residents' use. Recyclab will function as a social enterprise.

Ecohab is a cooperative eco-housing project comprising a number of partially self-built and collectively managed ecological properties, including several shared facilities and schemes (e.g., food cultivation, production spaces, energy and water harvesting, car sharing). The seven properties will include two subsidised flats and a temporary residential

³ 'Fab lab' is short for 'fabrication laboratory', a small-scale workshop equipped with various fabrication machines and tools enabling users to produce 'almost anything'.

unit for students and researchers. Ecohab will be run as a cooperative.

R-URBAN's collective facilities will grow in number and be managed by a cooperative land trust that will acquire spaces, facilitate development and guarantee democratic governance.⁴

In parallel, the strategy will be propagated on larger scales: regionally, nationally, Europe-wide. The art and architecture practice 'public works', R-URBAN's partner in London, is currently developing a connected project in Hackney Wick: R-URBAN Wick.⁵ The first R-URBAN facility in Hackney Wick is a mobile production unit: Wick on Wheels (wow). This unit encourages collective production in situ, using local materials, resources and knowledge. It is a participatory project engaging with residents and local artisans to produce, reuse and repurpose.

Flows, networks and cycles of production and consumption will emerge between the collective facilities and their neighbourhood, closing chains of demand and supply as locally as possible. To overcome the current crisis, we must try "to produce what we consume and consume what we produce", as the French philosopher André Gorz puts it.⁶

R-URBAN interprets this production and consumption chain broadly, well beyond the material aspects, to include cultural, cognitive and affective dimensions. The project sets a precedent for a participative retrofitting of metropolitan suburbs where the relationship between the urban and rural is reconsidered. It endeavours to demonstrate what citizens can achieve if they change their work routines and lifestyles to collectively address the challenges of the future. ■

⁴ For more information about the R-URBAN cooperative land trust, go to <http://r-urban.net/en/property/>

⁵ This collaboration is supported by the Life+ programme in a partnership between aaa, the City of Colombes and public works.

⁶ André Gorz, *Ecologica* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2008), p.13.

Kicking Off a Year of “P2P Plazas” Research and Cartography

by **Carmen Lozano-Bright**

2014 ended on a good note. Last October, I had the opportunity to participate, together with 49 other project initiators, in the Idea Camp event in Marseille. The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) promoted this event, geared towards shaking up our views on public space. After the three-day gathering, all 50 participants were invited to present a Research and Development project to be funded during 2015. ECF announced a set of 25 R&D grants last December, and ‘P2P Plazas: a Southern European network’ was in.

Today, Europe struggles through a volatile reality. Severe economic blight and the industrial dissolution suffered over several decades have devastated the social and economic outlook of our cities and rural areas. Consequently,

many industrial buildings and factories are left empty, inactive; the public sector also has abandoned buildings and lots. Basic services like education, health and culture are cut as the Welfare State is contested. Paradoxically, this atmosphere has empowered citizens to reclaim their own environments and heritage, shaping innovative roles in their production and consumption of culture and public space.

Considering what Henri Lefebvre calls the “rhythmic character of the city”, we should heed the noises and voices of public space as unique expressions of Southern European spirit, through disruptive movements including Spain’s 15M, Greek and Italian street protests in 2011 and the Taksim Square and Gezi Park occupations in

Carmen Lozano-Bright is the recipient of an R&D grant from the European Cultural Foundation for her research into Southern European commoning practices. She moderates the p2pSquare! Lab on ECF Labs, ECF’s online community space (<https://ecflabs.org/lab/p2p-square>). She is a member of Platoniq in Barcelona, Spain (www.youcoop.org), one of the hubs in the European Cultural Foundation’s Networked Programme — *Connected Action for the Commons*.



Istanbul. Movements that emerged rapidly and seemed ephemeral from outside reveal themselves to be widespread over local contexts. What once was underground has become commonplace, accepted: urban gardens, self-managed social centres, open schools, fablabs, squats, active urban squares, hacklabs, medialabs, makerspaces, connected by scores of networks.

We're calling this Southern European phenomenon "P2P Plazas": places where bottom-up initiatives connect actions among peers (citizens). Peers decide for themselves what to do to invent and participate in new forms of cultural production and consumption, far from the established so-called "Cultural Industries".

Frontiers that were strictly demarcated today merge and interact. Each local area contains its own unique context for its open spaces; community relationships to that context determine the eventual re-use and re-invigoration of those places. Abandoned factories become new types of work spaces

(fablabs, makerspaces, worker cooperatives), open lots may become community commercial spaces (artisan and local food markets). The neighbourhood's cultural associations with the original space guide its rebirth, not only its original use or legal zoning. These places host practices steeped in site-specific knowledge and learning, giving a deeply expanded, personal significance to commons-managed public space.

Although these practices surround us, there is no 'big picture' to explain the deep significance of these transformations on our societies.

Each space finds its way through different legal (and illegal) formats, agreements and contracts with private and public owners. If we could affect a clearer view by mapping these experiences throughout Southern Europe, including the management and legal aspects of how they're (re)signifying their environments, we would provide a catalogue of prototypes to be replicated.



Mapping these p2p (peer-to-peer) practices also reveals their Achilles' heel: sustainability. It is crucial that local governments understand these transformations, provide support and tools for citizens to promote their own initiatives. Future developments out of this research could prototype p2p practices to establish a Southern European network with the common ground of sharing tools, knowledge and legal frames.

Through this year-long investigation, we will listen to those noises and rhythms that sustain our cities, and shape a 'least common legal frame' serving institutions and citizens to establish dialogues and understandings. The communities reshaping their local environments are central to this research. We must feel the active beating heart of our cities, and to join hands across borders. This is a way to build Europe together.

This research requires the support of foundations and institutions that believe in investigation for social change. The peer-to-peer experiences we learn from are mostly based in community volunteer work. Archiving and researching are not prioritised as are other, more tangible and immediate tasks. Works that create a big picture do exist, but without time, effort and communication devoted to research, creating the overall map isn't possible. Isolating the tools adapted in local contexts can provide a bellwether for paradigm changes, and help us identify innovations in social, political and economic opportunities.

This proposal emerges from a local perspective of engagement with the routine at *El Campo de Cebada*, a commons-oriented plaza in Madrid. It has expanded to other territories through the digital sphere. The context of this



research includes a central cluster based in Madrid collaborating with several feeder nodes (starting elsewhere in Spain, Greece and Italy, then throughout Southern Europe). The network extension will operate in the digital context through an internal/external communication toolkit.

Coincidentally, Spain held local elections in May 2015, especially noteworthy for the emergence of new political actors. The research includes meetings with political parties and citizen candidates to assess their position on these questions, and evaluate their willingness to implement a 'least common frame'.

This research does not emerge out of the blue. It's

inspired by many—many!—existing initiatives that have helped build a common cartography. For example (and these are all in Spain, for the moment): La Aventura de Aprender (The Learning Adventure); Arquitecturas Colectivas (Collective Architectures network); cartographies by Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas (VIC), among others.

Throughout 2015, we have been working hand in hand with other closely related research groups, like Straddle's guide for activating public space (Barcelona); Adelita Husni-Bey's investigation on housing and squatting (The Netherlands and Italy); Radarq's open source urban

↑ Any given day at El Campo de Cebada, Madrid. Spring 2013, photo credit: Carmen Lozano-Bright.

↵ Open University at El Campo de Cebada, Madrid. 3rd edition, summer 2015, photo credit: Carmen Lozano-Bright.



← Urban garden in an abandoned lot. Vallcarca, Barcelona. Winter 2015, photo credit: Carmen Lozano-Bright.

→ Navarinou Park, Athens, May 2015, photo credit: Carmen Lozano-Bright.

furniture (Barcelona); the intense activity at Pollinaria (Abruzzo, Italy); and also the research by Catherine Lenoble—a little detached because of its field, but sharing a huge common ground and perspective—on digital toy libraries. The research and

communication will also be supported by the Guerrilla Translation team.

We'll be watching other necessary projects with great impact potential, including ZEMOS98 (Seville, Spain), Sarantaporo.net (Athens) and 1+1eleven (Puglia, Italy). ■



Between Random and Democratic Practices: The Commons Board Game

by **Carmen Lozano-Bright**

We arrived in Seville with a mission and few rules: to sit down for three days to produce the *Commonspoly*. In other words, starting from the common idea of Monopoly, the game we've all played, we had to think about a derivation of the board game whose goal wasn't winning through accumulation but through collaboration. And making it a prototype. And explaining it to inexperienced players. All of this in three days. It was table number 5 of the Hackcamp #reclaimthecommons and luckily we got a place near the coffee machine patio.

There was a matter to clarify before getting down to work. The origin of the famous board game on which you play capitalism and real estate speculation has little known roots. Its predecessor was called *The Landlord's*

Game and was patented in 1904 by Elizabeth 'Lizzie' Magie. The goal of this North American woman's design was to explain the perverse effects of monopolising land and the usefulness of taxing property. She was convinced that educating children in the belief that the accumulation of goods had unfair consequences would show its effect when they were adults. On her own she produced several editions with different distribution companies until she sold the patent to Parker Brothers in 1935 for \$500. From then on, the company produced the famous *Monopoly* and its unending variations in geography and subjects.

Returning to the roots was a key step to understanding the challenge of producing *Commonspoly*: restoring the board game and

Carmen Lozano-Bright is the recipient of an R&D grant from the European Cultural Foundation for her research into Southern European commoning practices.

giving it back some of the features Lizzie conceived more than a century ago. The key wasn't to produce a new game with the resulting waste of hypothetical production and distribution processes, but hacking the board game every family has at home and playing it with different rules. 'Repair' in Spanish is a word with more than one meaning. This variety of meanings contributed to defining our new board game: it can mean repair in the sense of fixing, in its Spanish term *reparar*; it also means to realise; in addition we were also inspired by the free interpretation in English of 're-pair' as re-couple or reunite.

After three working days, we found the key: in *Commonspoly* you're playing against time. In a set number of turns, the goods at stake will be privatised. And the players are challenged to liberate them for the commons. The dice determines the stage of the game for each object at stake on a scale that ranges from 'Pure Mad Max Horror' (near Margaret Thatcher's wettest dreams) to 'Commonsfare Utopia' (a fantasy beyond Elinor Ostrom). The scale comprises private, public and communitarian goods.

The goods under threat belong to four categories: urban, environmental, related to the body and to knowledge. In order to prevent privatisation, each player has 'welfare

points'. And, as in real life, the initial well-being conditions are not the same for each player. They differ according to gender, class, citizenship and skill. Furthermore, by investing welfare to unblock the privatisation of goods, players gain legitimacy points.

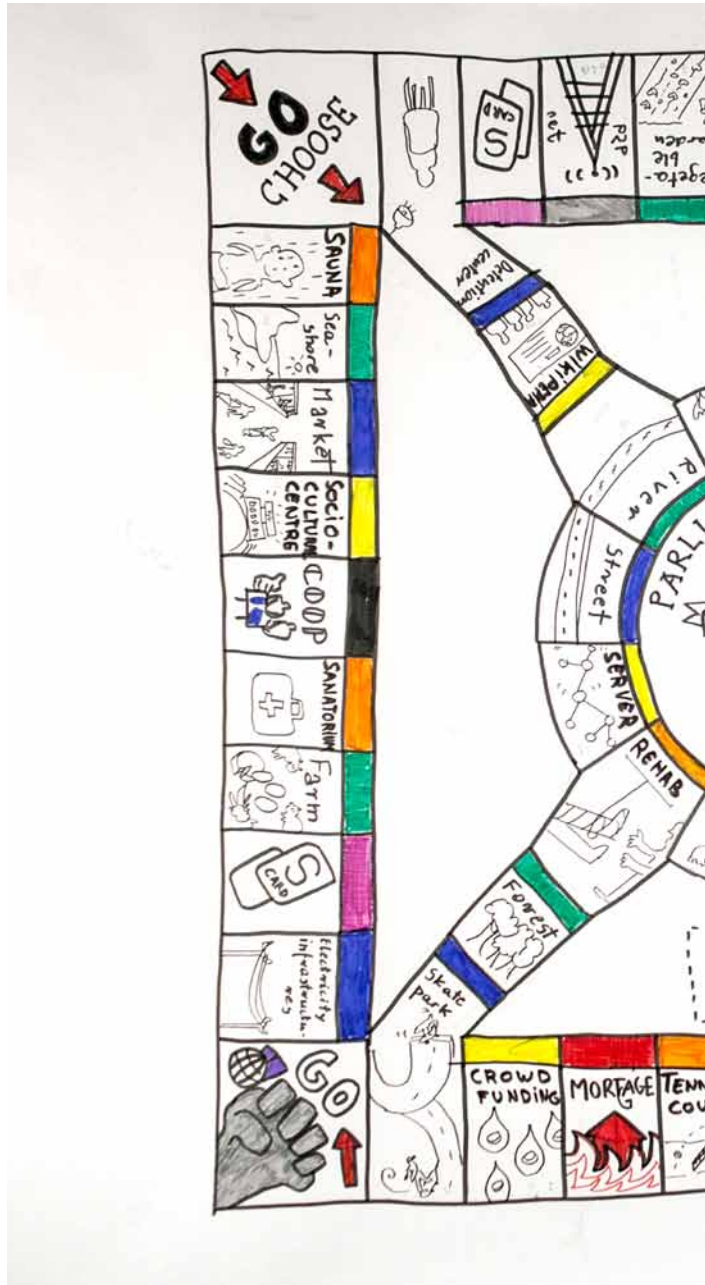
Legitimacy and welfare are liable to disappear, at least to a great extent, if the player happens to fall into the square called *Tragedy of the Commons*. Time is also lost—in the form of turns—while points are won if chance takes us to the Bureaucracy or Assembly squares.

But why play if there's no competition? Does a board game rewarding 'good', where the commons is the best and only possible world, make any sense? Of course not. The challenge is in the ability to preserve the commons in general without losing one's individual well-being. From this point of view; no one is the winner—we all 'don't win'.

The scale of the game has many things in common with the camps that filled squares in 2011. We mean that *Commonspoly* is not a particular city, nor does it refer to a global board. Instead it represents a link with the ephemeral villages built and dismantled in so many cities and in so many formats: from 15M to Occupy, from the Arab Spring to Syntagma, from Brazil to Gezi Park.

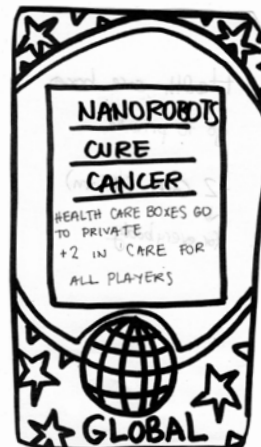
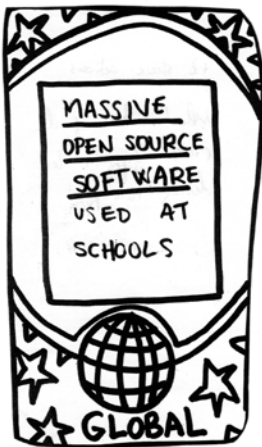
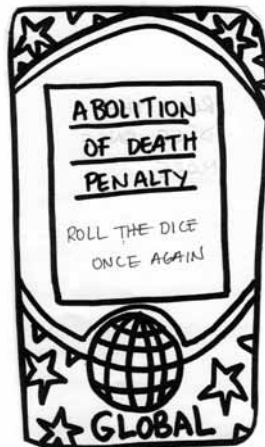
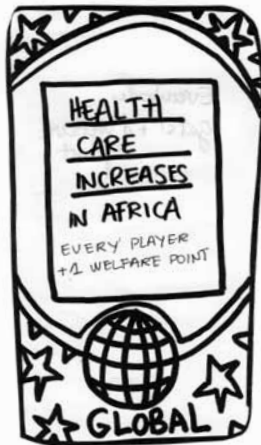
Commonspoly is, finally, a little representation of the board game of life: it is decided somewhere between random and democratic practices. But in order to achieve an open code game it was necessary to supply it with documentary evidence and define certain rules. For this task we had the help of Rubén Martínez from the epilogue of his Audiovisual Source Code *We're all contingent, but you are necessary*. The sound of Thomas The Tank Engine & Friends singing *Rules & Regulations* inspired some of the rules and situations of the game.

This little corner of the hackcamp, where we pooled knowledge, opinions and fun, was composed very wisely of Virginia Benvenuti, Carla Boserman—irreplaceable drawer of cards and boards— Vassilis Chryssos, Francisco Jurado, José Lauhé, Carmen Lozano, Rubén Martínez, Peter Matjašič, María G. Perulero, Natxo Rodríguez, Igor Stokfiszewski, Menno Weijs, Mario Munera and Guillermo Zapata in the task of activating the scene. ■





← Original drawing of Commons-poly board by Carla Boserman. Board designed and developed by members of Table 5, 'Reclaim the Commons' hackcamp — 17th Edition of the ZEMOS98 festival. Photo: Julio Albarrán.



NAME: CASH CRISIS

TYPE: BANKER CARD

+/- THINGS: -2 ~~WELLFARE~~ OCCUPY

+/- MOVEMENT: +1

SPECIAL: NO WELLFARE POINTS THIS TURN

SITUATION

NAME: CCTV SECURITY RECORDER

TYPE: BANKER

+/- THINGS: -2 WELLFARE

+/- MOVEMENT: -1

SPECIAL: (empty)

SITUATION

NAME: RATES ~~RISE~~

TYPE: BANKER CARD

+/- THINGS: +1 OCCUPY

+/- MOVEMENT: -2

SPECIAL: -1 CARE

SITUATION

NAME: LEGALIZATION OF NON-RECOURSE DEBT

TYPE: BANKER CARD

+/- THINGS: OCCUPY -1

+/- MOVEMENT: 2

SPECIAL: +3 WELLFARE POINTS

SITUATION

NAME: NEW P2P CASH PLATFORM DEVELOPED

TYPE: COMMONER

+/- THINGS: +2 SHARE

+/- MOVEMENT: +1 MOVEMENTS

SPECIAL: EVERY PLAYER RECEIVE 1 WP

SITUATION

NAME: POPULAR LEGISLATIVE

TYPE: COMMONER CARD

+/- THINGS: +1 SHARE

+/- MOVEMENT: +2

SPECIAL: MAKE UPONE PVE

SITUATION

NAME: Set Free a Rank of data centers

TYPE: COMMONER CARD

+/- THINGS: +1 on sharing

+/- MOVEMENT: (empty)

SPECIAL: SPECIAL IDEA GOOD GIVE +2 ON LEGION

SITUATION

NAME: REFERENDUM ON WORKING LEGISLATION

TYPE: COMMONER

+/- THINGS: +2 REST

+/- MOVEMENT: +2

SPECIAL: Reading headline Freeze for 1 round

SITUATION

NAME: 20% INCREASE IN TAXES

TYPE: POLITICIAN

+/- THINGS: -1 SHARE, ~~WELLFARE~~

+/- MOVEMENT: -1

SPECIAL: +1 OCCUPY

SITUATION

NAME: ELECTIONS

TYPE: POLITICIAN CARD

+/- THINGS: -2 CARE

+/- MOVEMENT: -1

SPECIAL: (empty)

SITUATION

NAME: FREE RIDER in your team

TYPE: POLITICIAN CARD

+/- THINGS: SHARING -1

+/- MOVEMENT: 2

SPECIAL: SPECIAL ASK FOR ONE PLAYER WELLFARE P

SITUATION

NAME: Wave of immigration

TYPE: Politician card

+/- THINGS: CARE +2

+/- MOVEMENT: -1

SPECIAL: SPECIAL People without paper for 1 round

SITUATION

From Public Space to Common Good: Poland's Urban Political Activism

by **Claudia Ciobanu**

“We are the first generation that is not associating public space with oppression, but rather with freedom and the public sphere,” says 30-year-old sociologist and urban activist Joanna Erbel, explaining why activism around public space issues has become so fashionable in Poland over the past couple of years.

To city inhabitants across Poland, the results of this activism are obvious. More people rely on biking for getting to work. There is a rising interest in local and ecological food and a newly discovered passion for urban gardening. Attempts to build residential complexes in green areas are rejected by grassroots campaigns, and many citizens submit projects for financing

from participatory budgets introduced over the last years in several cities.

“Our generation had to find some new focus because topics like state democracy were already taken up by the older generation; so we turned to cities as the subject of our political activity,” adds Erbel. “Finally, people started going abroad and getting ideas. Erasmus probably did more for biking in Poland than any public policy!”

Poland's 'urban movements'

What are today called Poland's 'urban movements' (*ruchy miejskie*) have their roots in 2006–2007 but became more visible in 2011, when a congress of all urban

Claudia Ciobanu is a Romanian journalist based in Warsaw. Her articles have been published notably in *The Guardian*, *Al-Jazeera*, *openDemocracy* and *Inter Press Service*.

movements in Poland took place in Poznan (urban activism is as developed in other cities of Poland as in the capital, Warsaw). In one of the early victories, inhabitants of the Rataje neighbourhood in Poznan forced the Mayor to give up the construction of a commercial residential complex in an area where people wanted to have green space. In the most notorious case, in 2014, inhabitants of Krakow rejected in a referendum the organisation of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in their city following a grass-roots campaign.

It was last year too, in 2014, that the strength of the urban movements became clear during the campaigns for local elections taking place in November. Candidates of the urban movements were present in mainstream media and their proposals became topics of wide debate, some of them (such as better biking infrastructure) being gradually incorporated in the platforms of big parties.

Candidates representing the Covenant of Urban Movements (*Porozumienie Ruchow Miejskich*, the pre-electoral alliance grouping movements from various cities) made it to local and neighbourhood councils in seven cities, including Warsaw, and even won a mayoral seat in Gorzow Wielkopolski and a vice-mayor position in Poznan.

According to Ewa Sufin-Jacquemart from the Polish Green Party, activism around city issues was a response to a mix of neoliberal policies promoted by all post-Socialist governments in Poland and massive investments in infrastructure funded with EU money ever since Poland joined the block in 2004. Poland is a notoriously 'good student' of the EU when it comes to absorbing funds, having made use of around €80 billion from the EU budget over the last 10 years.

"There was construction going on everywhere in Polish cities, roads, gated residential areas, while all urban planning dating from the Communist period was eliminated," says Sufin-Jacquemart. "Less and less public space was available for people and public services were being privatised. Living in the city meant that you have to pay for everything."

"The city movements happened due to the generational change," says sociologist Maciej Gdula from Warsaw University. "The young are not limited by the ideology of keeping up with the West and with indispensable, bitter reforms."

"But the rise of the middle class is also an important reason behind city movements," adds Gdula. "I would link their popularity not only with the increase in the number of people belonging to the middle class, but also with

a specific articulation of the middle class culture—leaders of city movements speak about order in the public space and quality of public services.”

Beyond the middle class

Despite their success, urban movements have been criticised for not going far enough. For one, being driven by this class, they fail to tackle issues that are burning for the poor living in cities. For another, they do not address the structural causes of problems, such as indiscriminate privatisation or austerity politics (importantly, before the local elections, the urban movements from *Porozumienie* declared themselves non-ideological, including both left and right-wingers in their ranks). For the critics, these shortcomings limit the support for and the impact of urban movements.

According to city gardener Iza Kaszynska, some of the most important problems affecting Polish people today are precarious labour contracts (Poland has the largest proportion in the EU of working people on precarious contracts without stability and benefits, at around 30%) and unaffordable housing.

“The fact that urban dwellers spend their entire salaries on rents or credits, or that they do not have access

to affordable public services, which makes them live precarious lives in the city, should be a major issue for urban movements,” says Kaszynska.

“A lot of the urban activism is made by the middle class who do not have these problems with housing or precarious contracts, or do not want to openly identify with this type of precarious situation even if they are in it,” agrees Jakub Zaczek, an activist who is working both against eviction of people from reprivatised homes and against precarious working contracts.

“At the beginnings of urban activism in Warsaw and other cities, we made what I call an intellectual mistake or omission,” explains Joanna Erbel. “Our main issue, especially in Warsaw, was public space because we thought it equals the public sphere and that, if you take people out of the public space, you exclude them. But that was just the beginning and it is not enough. Many of us have since turned our attention from issues of public space to issues of the common good, we started looking at housing for example.

Indeed, an impressive movement against the reprivatisation of public buildings and eviction of people living in them, which gripped many Polish cities over the last years, does seem to point to a way in which activism could move beyond public space

issues to root causes of city life problems while building broad alliances on the way.

According to Jakub Zaczek, the reprivatisation of public buildings in Poland, which has been taking place since 1989, is a highly abusive process, not only because those claiming buildings often falsify their rights to the property with authorities turning a blind eye, but also because Polish authorities are not forced by law to offer alternative housing to those kicked out.

Interestingly, reprivatisations in Warsaw in particular offer an occasion to question what is often a dogma in post-Socialist Central and Eastern Europe, that private property is the core building block of a fair, free and democratic society. Notoriously, Warsaw was virtually effaced at the end of World War II, and the reconstruction of its building stock was done with huge reliance on volunteer efforts by citizens. These same people were then given the right to live as tenants of the city in the new buildings, which became property of the Socialist state. And they (or their heirs) are being evicted today in the name of a pre-war order.

The lack of any protection for the evicted tenants adds insult to injury. Social and communal housing (these are two categories of housing offered by the state for less privileged

people, with social being cheaper to rent and having worse conditions than communal) are very hard to access in Poland because of the limited stock, high rents relative to incomes and tough criteria for accessing this kind of accommodation.

Until recently, a legislative gap made it impossible for those knowing they would be evicted to apply for social housing until the moment they were effectively out of their old homes. In practice, this meant people were pushed into homelessness by state policies.

In this context, tenants supported by activists (often from small leftist and anarchist groups such as Syrena squat in Warsaw or Zaczek's Committee for the Defence of Tenants—*Komitet Obrony Lokatorów*) started resisting evictions. In response, they were often harassed by the new owners of buildings, including via making the building uninhabitable. In an infamous case that became a symbol for the movement, the body of a tenants' rights activist, Jolanta Brzeska, was found in 2011 charred in a forest near Warsaw.

The tenants' movement, driven by the vulnerable people evicted from their homes and supported by radical activists, enjoys the sympathy and sometimes support of city movements. Reprivatisations affect not only people

but also green areas or buildings of historical value, which the urban middle classes are concerned about. Importantly, the movement makes the link between a destroyed green area or an evicted family and the wild reprivatisation strategies of city authorities and the lack of social support for the evicted and for poor families who cannot afford rent in general.

The left is up for grabs

In Poland, a new generation has grown and started having an impact on politics. To be sure, activism in the cities goes way beyond the urban movements and some of the initiatives, among them food or biking cooperatives or squats, are explicitly trying to propose alternatives to a capitalist system they consider abusive.

Yet this fresh activist energy for the moment lacks a strong expression in electoral politics (*Porozumienie* is non-ideological and only interested in the local elections). As in most other Central and Eastern European countries, in Poland too, the left is discredited and the main political parties have a right-wing agenda, no matter what labels they carry.

Poland's main centre-left party (the former Communists in the Democratic Left Alliance, SLD)

hardly reaches 10% of voters' preferences these days and is rejected by the new left activists for implementing neo-liberal measures in the past.

Potentially the best political expression of Poland's new left is the Polish Green Party, which has been steadily growing over the past year, but still got below 3% of the vote at the Warsaw mayoral elections via its candidate Joanna Erbel. According to Ewa Sufin-Jacquemart, it is a struggle to compromise between the needs of ecologists, feminists, socialists and other progressives, all of whom see little chance of party representation outside of the Greens.

The Greens are now collecting signatures to put forward a candidate in this year's presidential elections. Their proposal is Anna Grodzka, a transgender parliamentarian known for her work against evictions, for fairer taxation and for the environment.

"The labels of green and left that the Green Party carries now are not acceptable for those in Poland who would benefit from leftist policies," comments activist Michal Augustyn, who created a popular non-monetary exchange system, *Wymiennik*. In coal-reliant Poland, environmentalists are as marginal as the left, in large part because of systematic pro-coal and anti-green propaganda of all parties in power since 1989.

"I think in Poland there is potential for a party which addresses the questions and demands of the working class together with the problems of the middle class," comments sociologist Maciej Gdula. "The potential is considerable and there are real social forces that can be organised. The obstacles are the lack of leadership and the rather stable economic situation in Poland."

"Maybe in Poland it is not yet the time for a big social movement

such as the ones which stand at the basis of Syriza's or *Podemos*' popularity, but it is definitely the time to start such a movement," says Michal Augustyn. "The middle class in Poland will soon start shrinking, like elsewhere in Europe, so it is important not to build political ghettos around those lifestyle issues but go out and create coalitions with those less fortunate, by listening to them, amplifying their voices and practicing solidarity." ■

A Commons-Intergroup Takes Off in the EU Parliament (*excerpt*)

by **Sophie Bloemen**

Landed in real politics

Among its 28 intergroups, the European Parliament now also counts a Commons Intergroup. The Parliament's main political factions decided on the list of intergroups late last year. In order to form an intergroup there need to be three supporting political groups at least, which can be quite a challenge as each political group can only join a limited number of intergroups.

Even though the intergroups have no legislative power, it can be valuable having such a representation in the European Parliament. At the minimum, it is a multiparty forum where one can exchange views and propose ideas on particular subjects in an informal way. Those who choose to work with such an intergroup, its Members

of Parliament, and civil society or lobbyists, share the notion that a certain topic is important and can focus on how to get things done.

The Commons Intergroup had its launch meeting in May 2015 and will start its activities after the summer. This particular group will allow for discussions on policy from a shared perspective: the idea that 'the commons' is an important and helpful way of framing the important themes of present times.

As there can only be so many Intergroups, inevitably the group is the result of a political compromise. It has been formed by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the Greens, the left group GUE, the large Social Democrat party (S&D) and the group EFDD, which now includes Beppe

Sophie Bloemen is a civil society activist and policy advisor based in Berlin. She coordinates The Commons Network, together with David Hammerstein (<http://commons-network.eu/>).

Grillo with his Five Star Movement. The movement on water as a commons has been instrumental for the mobilisation of the intergroup.

[...]

Fundamental change in sight

We have to take a step back and ask: What are commons? What are common goods? There are distinct definitions: On the one hand, an operational notion would define commons as shared resources, governed by a certain community. On the other hand, a moral notion would say commons or common goods refer to goods that benefit society as a whole, and are fundamental to people's lives, regardless of how they are governed.

These could be many things. Politically it will be more about claiming certain matters as commons or common goods, for example, natural resources, health services or useful knowledge. Tackling core areas of our

co-existence from a perspective of the commons is of great significance. It's important because eventually this will lead to a move towards the sustainable management and equitable sharing of resources.

Another aspect that makes this approach appealing is that the commons movement takes a community and ecological systems perspective. This philosophy moves away from a purely individual rights-, market- and private property-based worldview. No need to elaborate that for many this worldview is at the root of the current economic and environmental crises.

Commons thinking expresses a strong denial of the idea that society is and should be composed of atomised individuals living as consumers. Instead the commons discourse points to the possibility that people can live their lives as citizens, deeply embedded in social relationships. Moreover, that citizens' active participation is important in realising well-being and a well-functioning society. ■

Reclaiming the Commons through Culture and Arts

by **Julie Ward**, MEP

These are turbulent times for democracy.

We have seen years of economic crisis and austerity produce a sense of alienation and distrust. Only last month, in May 2015, we heard of the formation of a far-right group in the European Parliament, bringing together fascist anti-democratic and xenophobic parties that want to tear us apart.

Margaret Thatcher famously said that “there is no such thing as society, only individuals and families”—and indeed, after 30 years of neo-liberalism, we have seen privatisation and commercialisation of many of our public spaces and public goods, and a consumerist culture, which prizes shallow, short-term material gain over all else, and appropriates our common public spaces for private commercial gain.

In the meantime, marginalised communities have been simply left behind as inequalities grow. A lot of the alienation and distrust in politics comes from the neo-liberal attempt to abolish society. On the other hand, new democratic participation is on the move. New technologies, the web and social media have allowed for new connections, new mobilisation and a new common digital sphere. Faced with unemployment and austerity, young people have taken to the streets, or developed new cooperative online business models, and an environmental and social political consciousness.

All this is why the idea of the commons is so relevant today, and why it is so important to promote it, as we strive towards a more open, more inclusive, more participatory and

Julie Ward is a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and a member of the Intergroup for Common Goods and Public Services.

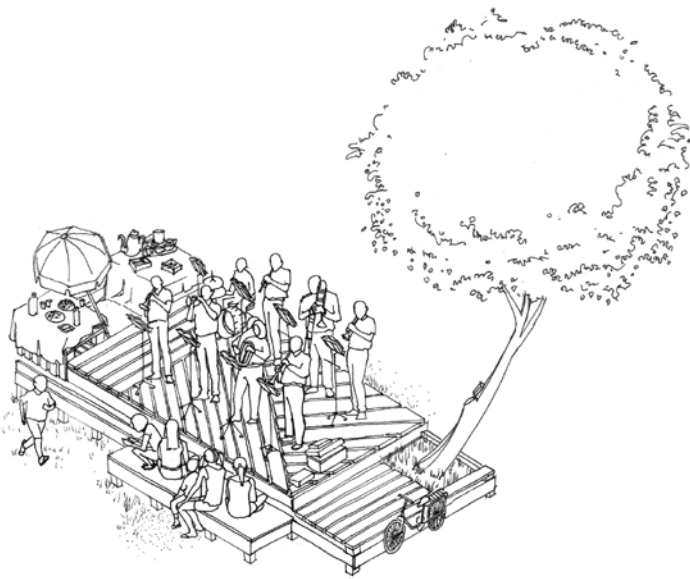
more cooperative model of democracy for the 21st century.

Reclaiming the commons requires the combination of two elements: stories of political alienation, oppression, exclusion, on the one hand, and a fight for engagement and change on the other—that is exactly the role of the arts in generating and expanding our public sphere, and space for public discourse.

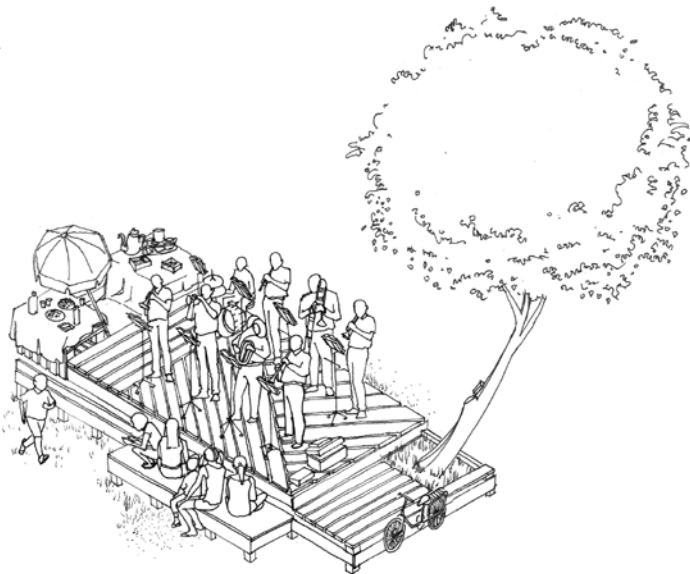
It is with this vibrant creativity, using the arts and with determined inspiration, that we must reclaim our common public spaces. With this drive and creativity, we can make our cities more liveable, more sustainable,

more inclusive and promote innovative economic models that are fairer, more cooperative and put people and planet first.

Drawing on inspiration from existing original and dynamic projects, we can re-shape public discourse, and mobilise progressives across societies, from the alternative and critical left, into the mainstream. Initiatives aiming at reclaiming the public spaces, the commons and the cities, illustrate what we all must assert loudly and proudly—that Thatcher was wrong—society does exist, it is all around us, and our fight for social justice and democracy goes on. ■



Reclaimed spaces
workshop, 2013
coordinated by:
studioBASAR;
drawing by:
Cristi Stoian.



“Since the urban process is a major channel of surplus use, establishing democratic management over its urban deployment constitutes the right to the city.”

— **David Harvey**, *The Right to the City*

Culture hunters

by **Tinni Ernsjö Rappe**

Culture Hunters was created to meet young passionate individuals striving to achieve change in their local areas. In the form of an intense cultural manager course, 25 participants are allowed to strengthen their individual capacity as cultural activists as well as learn from good cases in the company of like-minded youth. A main goal

was to introduce the youth to the bureaucracy of local government and how to navigate it. The project stems from a municipal notion that citizen engagement always needs to be encouraged and was designed in collaboration between local autonomous change makers Fanzingo¹ and the department of Culture and Recreation in Botkyrka.

Tinni Ernsjö Rappe is a Swedish journalist and writer.

- “We picked the ones that had shown a desire to achieve something, who already had drive and then we pushed them on. We wanted to give them contacts, inspiration, points of entry, practical tips and networks,” explains Ceylan Holago, project manager for cultural development at Botkyrka municipality.

Emma Dominguez works part-time at Fanzingo in the Subtopia space, as well as at Konstfrämjandet (an

organisation that works in arts education) and is co-manager of the group. She points out the value of learning the official procedures within the municipality to kids who want to play active roles and influence things.

- “When you know how the municipality works, you know how to make things happen, she says. When I was younger I thought that the people who had power were super-smart and knew

everything about everything. Of course, when you find out that that's not the case, something happens to you."

It was during the project "Alby är inte till salu" [Alby is not for sale] that Emma realised that it was actually possible to influence things.

- "We went to a meeting where we received information about the sales, and we were all so angry. Why hadn't anybody spoken to us about this? We felt completely powerless, but before we left, some of us decided that we would at least try to do something about it. We began taking names for petitions," Emma explains.
- "Of course, hearing about the strength and commitment that your parents showed in their home countries has an effect on you, knowing that they are these amazing people and then seeing that they never get a chance in Sweden. But now I know that I have power, that words are power. That you can shake things up and cause change. I want to teach others how to do that."

Before she started to work for Botkyrka municipality, Ceylan Holago worked

at Riksteatern for eight years, where she had plenty of time to think about how the resources are distributed in the cultural sector.

- "It's ridiculous that there are all these institutions getting all this money, but that their work reaches so few people. I want to change that. I want to distribute the money better. Everybody should have access to everything," Ceylan says. The first group of culture hunters consisted of 23 youths from north and south Botkyrka. Young, passionate and committed people with the desire to run cultural projects.
- "It's a very diverse mix of people. We brought them together and reminded them that people want to see their work and that they are role models. All those things are important to offset the things people in the suburbs keep getting told: that they don't stand a chance, that they'll never get jobs, that no matter what they do it'll never make a difference," says Emma Dominguez.

In the fall of 2015, Kulturjägarna will move

1 Founded in 2006, Fanzingo is a non-profit independent professional platform for young people who want to share their ideas and thoughts through radio, film, television and writing. It aims to create opportunities for young people in general and under-represented groups in particular, to learn to tell stories from their perspective. Fanzingo's concept has four pillars: social activity, advocacy, education and production.

on to the next phase, and recruit a new group of participants.

- “We consider the effects of empowering individual citizens this way. What are the costs, and what are the benefits? One thing we’re seeing is that it provides a recruiting base for the munic-

ality and its projects. Now, we have a folio of previous participants that the municipality can access when they need people for various projects. I want to offer influence and resources to people who would never have them otherwise. That’s my job,” says Ceylan. ■

Participatory Art as a Vector of Innovative Governance: Reflexivity at the Heart of the Formalisation Process

by **Philippe Eynaud** and **Sam Khebizi**

This research aims to question the formalisation process set up in a social innovation approach. Through a case study, we will demonstrate how developing a reflexive analysis with non-financial institutional partners allowed for significant progress in governance building in an association using artistic participatory practices as a mobilisation tool for the populations on its territory.

Many surveys have demonstrated the capacity for associations to develop institutional logics promoting social innovation.¹ Yet, social innovation is a complex thing to achieve for associations. Indeed, to establish new processes, they must create new

paths and follow isomorphic logic, which can make them fall under the company-based model or the public service concession-based model.²

In order to face this macro-social level of determination and maintain a specific innovation process, associations' collectives must agree locally on the nature of their project, their form of governance,³ and their shared vision of solidarity.⁴ To do so, they need new categories and new concepts. According to Dandurand, social innovation "often comes from citizen initiatives and, upstream or downstream, from outcomes resulting from research in social sciences and humanities, nay arts and literature".⁵

Philippe Eynaud is Associate Professor, IAE Paris, Panthéon-Sorbonne. Winner of the Robert Reix prize 2008, his research focuses on information technology systems and how they contribute to new governance models in the non-profit sector.

Sam Khebizi is the founder of Les Têtes de l'Art association in Marseille, France (www.lestetesdelart.fr), one of the hubs in the European Cultural Foundation's Networked Programme — *Connected Action for the Commons*.

And so, like technological innovation, social innovation can benefit from and develop thanks to cross-pollination between research, experimentation and in-field action. But if this interaction between researchers and practitioners in technological innovation is richly documented, it is not so much the case with social innovation. In this paper, we will question the institutional processes of innovation between an association and outside partners who have both the know-how and the experimentation in this field.⁶ We will seek to understand the conditions for the emergence of innovation, as well as its feasibility and outcomes.

There is a double level to this research. Firstly, it is a classic, qualitative analysis based on important documentation (such as minutes, surveys, emails, website) and 20 semi-structured interviews with all stakeholders. Secondly, it is a dialogue between the Director of the association and a researcher around the institutional process described hereafter

to highlight its major stages and limits. A first draft was prepared by the researcher on data collected during the qualitative analysis approach. It was proofread and commented on by the Director of the association. Following a discussion between him and the researcher, a second version was produced, which was read by two members of the Board of Directors. Their comments led to further discussion. The researcher conducted interviews with members of the Board of Directors, during which debates took place and a third version was written. This version is the final one.

From participatory art to participatory governance

Les Têtes de l'Art (TDA) association can be thus defined: "Les Têtes de l'Art, an artistic mediation association created in 1996, is an interface giving technical guidance for artistic and collective participatory project management, with complementary activities of networking and

- 1 Juan-Louis Klein & Denis Harrison, *L'Innovation sociale: Émergence et effets sur la transformation des sociétés* <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10226263>, 13 February 2012.
- 2 Jean-Louis Laville, *L'association: Sociologie et économie* (Paris: Pluriel, 2013).
- 3 Jean-Louis Laville & C. Hoarau, *La Gouvernance des associations* (Paris diffusion: Cairn.info, 2010).
- 4 Juan-Louis Klein, Jean-Louis Laville & Frank Moulaert, *L'innovation sociale* (Toulouse: Éres editions, 2014).
- 5 Louise Dandurand, "Réflexion autour du concept d'innovation sociale, approche historique et comparative," *Revue française d'administration publique*, 2005, p.382.
- 6 Consequently, we will not restrict ourselves only to academic partners.

pooling/sharing of resources. From the start, we have always meant to make art accessible to all, standing at the crossroads between culture, informal education and social economy. Our vision of culture is one of making ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ people, and our action can be divided into three types of transversal ones: a multidisciplinary approach, a trans-sector action and one from the local to the international level.”⁷

We can see TDA’s project at the crossroads between different worlds: informal education and culture, economy and solidarity, project management and networking and the local and international dimensions. The association’s ambitions are thus transversal. It must “find a balance between representing and mobilising the actors”.⁸ Which leads to the difficult question of how it solves the inherent contradictions of the project. How can collective action be coherent: “Our originality lies in that our cultural mediation approach is dependent neither on the discipline itself, nor on the venue or type of audience. Times

dedicated to exchanges and services—such as guidance, networking, our technical resource platform, our cultural project management cooperative—complete and contribute to project management and enable our members to be part of a project which is common and shared beyond their own, respective actions.”⁹

As early as 1996, the members of the association set out a project taking into account:

- the difficult reconciliation between the logics of territorial attractiveness through culture and that of proximity cultural action involving the residents;
- the necessary coordination of a myriad of micro-cultural organisations throughout the territory;
- a hyper-density of cultural organisations in the city centre of Marseille, which leads to poor visibility, legibility and, paradoxically enough... isolation. These organisations are both in cooperation and competition with each other.

TDA sees in the social economy sector an opportunity to bring together cultural actors despite their differences. This is one of the reasons

⁷ Excerpt from a working document entitled *Enjeux et pratiques de l’ESS*, presented by TDA’s Director before the CRESS Board of Directors (17 February 2014).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

why they have seized the opportunity to work with the CRESS¹⁰ on establishing bridges to provide guidance (and to valorise) collective approaches, and to ensure the legitimacy and sustainability of cultural, citizen action. In so doing, TDA benefits from numerous individual and collective 'Dispositif Local d'Accompagnement' (DLA, a local support measure), on various aspects (budgetary and accounting management, project structuring, communication tools and data management, strategic and provisional job and skill management analysis...).

At the same time, the Director followed a combined work/training scheme at the CNAM (National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts) in Paris.¹¹ This two-year training period gave him the opportunity to conduct an action research project under the direction of researcher Jean-François Draperi.¹² TDA's Director tried to model some principles of his association, and include them in those of the social economy sector. Indeed, he could see that

the cultural sector considered the governance mechanisms as far too formal. From the start, he considered his Board of Directors as being too complacent. There was a lack of balance of power, and it was a real hindrance. His training at the CNAM seemed to be for him the place where he could get inspiration from conceptual and pragmatic tools to meet the demands of TDA's project. After this two-year period, he launched a process that aimed to transform the uses in his association.

Putting theory into practice, he laid the foundations of his association on five cross-sectoral approaches to foster real and active participation: Information—Share—Co-construction—Connect—Qualify.

Thus, a methodology took shape with:

- comprehensive information
- debates
- decision-making spaces
- training spaces.

This methodology was implemented both in a formal way (Board of Directors, General Assembly) and in an informal one (festive events).

¹⁰ Regional Chamber of Social and Solidarity Economy of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region.

¹¹ Management of social and cultural organisations — 1st level.

¹² Lecturer at CNAM and Chief Editor of Reoma.

As a founding director, TDA's Director was faced with the following question: "I have been a founder of this association, I mean to say collective, but at the same time I would like to keep 'control' of the evolution of the association. How can I go on with such a contradiction?"

By giving greater powers to the Board of Directors, he found he could sometimes disagree with them—e.g. when he suggested including the Marseille office of smartfr¹³ in the association. The Board of Directors refused and a consensus was only reached after several weeks' negotiations. Another clash arose when a loss-making financial year required taking corrective action. The Board of Directors wanted to reduce the wage bill. The Director was against this and eventually succeeded. According to a member of the Board of Directors, "He definitely has a global vision of and analysis on the association's great development and strategic axes which, I think, no one else has in the association, because he has managed this organisation

for 17 years. He still is the founder."

At the end of 2008, he started working on participatory governance. He had to overcome the cultural actors' reluctance. TDA's Director: "Our members and partners did not want to be part of it. They often said: Why did you ask for our opinion on figures or planned activities? It was no easy 'trick' and they misunderstood our intentions. It took us three or four years to get there." In order to convince them, he put forward the following argument: the association has grown so that its needs have changed.

According to TDA's Director, it was high time to move from "a complacent Board of Directors to a qualified one [...] the President, for example, was my wife. It could not go on like this. What rules could we find, which would give more power to the Board of Directors and, at the same time, recognise my specific role and my engagement?" To do so, he pushed forward the creation of an artists' committee, in order to involve the artists in the governance.

13 SMart, Société Mutuelle pour artistes — mutual society for artists, was set up in 1998 in Belgium. It aims to give guidance to performers, technicians and temporary workers who face the complex administrative realities of the artistic sector. Its French counterpart was created in 2008.

One must add that the association had about 10 member artists when it was first created, but there were 120 in 2008 and some of them wanted to move forward.

TDA's Director commented: "Our social purpose was participatory art. How could we move forward without participatory governance? Participatory art was our starting point. And we have a collective artistic participatory practice, i.e., we seek debates and confrontations between individuals. Participatory governance is a process that goes beyond statutory, legal frameworks and intends to involve stakeholders in a common project in both vision and decision-making processes. It leads to a collective project where each and everyone finds their place and personal development in the long run."

A researcher, participating in a reflection workshop at TDA, said the same thing: "As far as I am concerned, I think the best possible framework is human rights. Because it is rational enough to legitimise these practices

we awkwardly call participatory arts. If we agree on this reference, it is, I think, logical to conclude that participatory arts wrongly call themselves 'participatory arts'. They should rather put forward the deliberation capacity of the people (and not residents' participation) and assert the universality of the freedom of artistic expression."¹⁴

This is how TDA's artistic approach made sense: "A collective work is when, in fact, there is already a competence. Everyone knows... Everyone is an artist, so to speak. And so, in a collective, you know where you're going, there is a sort of charter. It is a collective. While, in participatory works, you are really free. Anyone can get involved, give something personal during a project they did not even know anything about," (Sébastien Zanello, artist).

Comparing one's own participatory governance with that of other associations

In 2009, TDA set up an engineering platform for

14 Notes on a workshop by Jean-Michel Lucas, aka Doc Kasimir Bisou, lecturer at Rennes 2 University.

small-sized cultural associations located in the same territory. By developing this new pool of activity, TDA was looking for diversification but also for the development of new competences (qualifications, debate, information, decision making) to make its own artistic project stronger. Two years later, TDA heard of a programme launched by La Claie¹⁵ on the PACA Region to work with associations (of all sectors) on the issue of participatory governance. “The project consisted in organising three working seminars with our Swedish partner, Basta social enterprise, which is a social and professional rehabilitation organisation for ex-drug addicts, and who, among other things, gives them a job,” (a project manager at La Claie).

In its application form, TDA insisted on both the work already done in this field, and their will to disseminate the results of the common work and collaboration with La Claie and other associations.

“We still have experiences we want to build and share, nonetheless we think

we could put forward concrete initiatives that we have already tested. It is with this balance between what we can offer and what we expect from other experiences that we apply, because it is well in line with our current preoccupations and the spirit of your project [...] Besides, we have an engineering and mutualisation platform, which enables us to participate in a dissemination phase towards operators on our territory so that all can benefit from this project.”¹⁶

Basta acts as a trigger for the TDA team. “We realised that, most of the time, people’s opinions are solicited along the process, but nothing follows really after that. Basta’s case is an exemplary one in this respect, because this cooperative works with populations who are *a priori* not rehabilitable. What I find fascinating is that these people working there have full access to all sorts of positions within their governance. Indeed, Basta’s leaders are ex-drug addicts who have been employed,” (TDA’s Director). As a result, Basta’s example motivates TDA even more

¹⁵ La Claie (Coopération Locale et Appui aux Initiatives dans l’Economie sociale et solidaire — local cooperation and support to social economy initiatives) is an association (under the 1901 Law), which was created in 1995. Its social object is to give guidance to organisations within the social economy sector through various plans/tools (local support measures, micro-project funding, training, etc.). The association receives support and funding from the European Social Fund, the French State, the Caisse des Dépôts (Deposits and Consignments Fund), the Regional Council and local authorities.

¹⁶ Excerpt from TDA’s application form to La Claie.

to go further in their process of building participatory governance.

Meeting nine associations with the same concern of improving their participatory approaches, even though they were not cultural organisations, stimulated the team members at TDA even further. “With La Claie, we are in an on-going formalisation process of our governance,” (TDA’s Director). It is what the partner, La Claie, hoped for. “And what I find interesting is that we are drafting a practical guide on participatory governance—a valorisation tool for the project and the ten experimentations,” (a project manager at La Claie). The whole approach was an incentive within the TDA team. The salaried employees involved themselves more in operational decision making, as is usually the case in cooperatives. As for strategic decision making, everyone contributed—the Director, the Board of Directors and the employees. All this process took place while, at the same time, the financial situation of the association deteriorated and endangered the consolidation policy for permanent staff. TDA were aware of the necessity to restore a financial balance to achieve their strategic objectives.

This did not stop TDA from enlarging the basis of their participatory governance. They considered involving stakeholders through an artists’

committee, a users’ committee who benefited from the material resource platform and, on a wider scale, they wanted to involve all members. The users’ committee was difficult to mobilise. These members tended to act more like consumers of services and did not feel involved, even though there were many of them. Problems to reach a quorum arose regularly. Moreover, and in spite of a large number of artists who were members of TDA (about 180), the artists’ committee did not find its place easily.

The collaboration with La Claie helped to speed up the elaboration of new statutes at TDA. This change was the result of a need to formalise and clarify how members were involved in the statutory life of the association.

Proposing one’s participatory governance as a model to follow

In 2013, TDA was contacted by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF)¹⁷ as part of its “Connecting Culture, Communities and Democracy” Networked Programme. The idea behind this programme is to reflect upon democratic communities inspired by artistic approaches on a European level. TDA is one of the six selected European hub organisations. It is no longer about participatory governance

‘guidance’—as was the case with La Claie—but rather ‘pushing for’ directions for others. “For us, the fact that ECF chose us is very important. They expect that we carry out objectives. We said we wished that all stakeholders of TDA, as well as all cultural organisations on the territory be part of it on this theme. In so doing, the programme will be a basis for reflection on our relationship with the territory,” (TDA’s Director).

Then everything progressed quickly—financial help to host and co-organise an international meeting in Marseille: the Idea Camp.¹⁸ In October 2014, TDA welcomed 50 project leaders from 23 countries. It gave the association the opportunity at last to gather together a great number of partners around its project. ECF’s programme is stretching over a three-year period, which gives TDA time to valorise the activities launched at a local level, after this meeting. Over 60 local organisations attended to collect information on this programme. After being recognised as a mediator by ECF,

TDA has strengthened its legitimacy at a local level.

TDA is mature enough too to re-open debates on ideas around its project. In April 2013, they invited researchers (Jean Caune, Philippe Henri, Jean-Michel Lucas¹⁹) for a two-day debate on participatory arts with their different stakeholders (employees, Board of Directors, artists, residents, partners). In 2014, they organised a workshop with two other researchers, Claude Paquin and Geneviève Goutouly-Paquin, from Agency Tertius, on the following theme: ‘Beyond Participation—Towards a Relationship Policy’. The purpose of this workshop was to further examine the issue of participation from the associations’ perspective. “We try to multiply action-research approaches. We draw a great benefit from this work with researchers...,” (TDA’s Director)

The whole effort eventually bore fruit in terms of participatory governance. In September 2014, meeting the member artists for a rentrée session was an encouraging success.

17 The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) inspires and involves people in a shared vision of citizenship throughout Europe. It shares and connects knowledge between the European cultural sectors and engages in arts at every level in political decision-making processes.

18 The Idea Camp is part of Connected Action for the Commons, a three-year initiative launched by ECF that aims to connect a myriad of change-makers offering new perspectives on culture’s role in democratic practices all over Europe.

19 Jean Caune is Professor Emeritus at Stendhal University in Grenoble. His work covers aesthetic practices such as cultural mediation processes. Philippe Henri is Lecturer and accredited research director at the Theatre Department of Paris 8 University — Saint Denis. Jean-Michel

“There were many people for this occasion: around 50—many ‘old’ members and many ‘new’ ones. We have people who still find it meaningful to stay with us, and at the same time we do not ‘procrastinate’ since we still attract new members [...] I proposed that the artists’ committee should have a real budget and a role in our networking activities. This will be proportional with the number of members it has. I now expect them to be in charge,” (TDA’s Director).

In conclusion, this research shows how the association’s strength was to build its action on a specific artistic proposition—AND on what Philippe Henri calls the second pillar. “It is still usually set aside by the artistic realms themselves and public cultural policies [...] it is built on a more symmetrical relationship between arts professionals and non professionals and constantly tackles interculturality issues. It positions cultural action at the heart of the artistic project and does not consider it as a mere

complement to a pre-existing artistic work.”²⁰

This major idea is at the heart of TDA’s innovation approach. Indeed, social innovation comes from the connection made between two issues—participatory art and its supportive cultural action. Reflexivity on and around this idea only strengthens this initial intuition. Interestingly enough, the three steps of the formalisation process we have described were not planned by TDA, but each of these steps made it possible for the next. When TDA’s Director chose to be trained at the CNAM, he had no prior, well-defined purpose in mind except to develop his theoretical and technical competences in the field of associations. Yet he felt a need to structure his action through knowledge of something larger than his initial field of activity—culture. This first collaboration with academics opened the way for a reflexivity that he never ceased to develop and expand. During the second phase, two TDA employees met and shared with other associations on experimentation

Lucas is Lecturer at Rennes 2 University — aka Doc Kasimir Bisou.

²⁰ Philippe Henri, *Démarches artistiques partagées #1: des processus culturels plus démocratiques?* (under Creative Commons), 2011 (http://www.editions-attribut.fr/IMG/pdf/No56_Demarches_artistiques_partagees_1_-_Philippe_Henry.pdf).

approaches, thanks to a stakeholder with specific knowledge who acted as a kind of ‘match-maker’ (La Claire). It was a crucial step because it allowed for an open, permanent reflexivity approach to take shape within TDA — and this will have deep impacts on the practices in the association.

The third step legitimises *de facto* the progress made so far by TDA, which can be seen as a promoter of ideas and an inspiring example for others. Inside TDA, the actors have been validated in the efforts already made. As to outside actors, they find TDA’s position reinforced as a cultural mediator at the local territory level.

We can see that the conditions for the process to emerge are essentially due to the project’s nature and the convergence of two ‘problematics’: culture and cultural policy. Its feasibility depends on the Director’s reflection and engagement on the one hand, and on his concern to develop TDA’s transversal mission through dialogue and exchange on the other hand. This results in TDA’s stronger legitimacy on two levels. Inside TDA, the choices made in governance methods have been formalised, tested and perpetuated (steps 1 and 2). Outside of TDA, there is a stronger relationship based on trust with the local actors — beneficiaries, partners or funders — and a greater influence network

(step 3). “I give praise for [TDA’s Director] Sam’s professionalism [...] The project is still evolving and is a mature one; the position is a mature one. In his relationship with institutions, there are few mistakes made [...] For us local authorities, technicians, elected officials [...], receiving a form from TDA is a pleasure.” “In this neighbourhood, TDA is well established and recognised...”

Without relinquishing its innovation process, TDA has succeeded in capitalising on its relationship with the actors from the local area.

We can conclude by giving a few facts on how this article has been ‘co-constructed’ and the role it has played in TDA’s reflexivity process.

Following a mid-term version, feedback from members of the Board of Directors were three-fold. First, details were given that contributed to improving the facts of the text’s chronology and background. Then comments and changes were made to qualify both TDA’s presentation and ‘success story’. “From the inside, you can better judge what really works and what does not work...,” (an employee at TDA). Second, analyses allowed for a richer reflection space. “This text did not bring anything new to me, yet reading it enabled me to connect things together [...] Before that, there was no global narrative,” (an employee at TDA)...

The interviews brought a 'detail' to light: equipment made for the Idea Camp was used to improve the design of the venue for the last internal meeting. "It had never been done before. We always did so for outside events, but never inside [...] Reading the article helped me to connect things together. It seemed obvious

to me then," (an employee at TDA). We thus see a stronger coherence between the first and second pillars, as described by Philippe Henri. "This will lead us to a fourth step, I think—and we will get there with researchers: we need to cross-fertilise skills and vision in order to move on," (an employee at TDA). ■

Les Têtes de l'art—'Place à l'art'

'Place à l'art' is a project that involves participatory artistic interventions in urban space. It is an alternative analytical process that aims to inspire new ways of perceiving and relating to the surrounding area.

Objectives:

- to question, involve, share: presenting, imagining,

desiring public space in a alternative way through temporary participatory artistic projects

- to support on-going artistic endeavors in public space
- to engage a long-term collaboration with the surrounding area
- to initiate cross-sectoral partnerships

2012

'Place à l'Art 2012' (Belsunce district, Marseille): Hall Puget square. Photo credit: Les Têtes de l'art.

2014

'Place à l'Art 2014' (Noailles district, Marseille): the public listening to the town crier. Photo credit: Les Têtes de l'art.

2015

'Place à l'Art 2015' (Belsunce district, Marseille): construction: example of a of urban furniture with the inhabitant and kids of the district, construction by local inhabitants. Photo credit: Les Têtes de together with the collective ETC.







New Models of Governance of Culture

by **Katarina Pavić**

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

The democratic deficit is a matter of culture

The crisis has had numerous negative effects in many vital sectors of European societies, but it has simultaneously revealed the existence of a serious democratic deficit in today's European societies. This deficit is not a completely new discovery, but the recent developments in the political arena and their repercussions on the streets of various European cities point to real reasons to fear that the gap between the decision-makers and the citizens is liable to grow even wider in the near future.

Art and culture are not, and cannot be, excluded from the overall context of the aforementioned issues, not only because the results of the crisis (often represented solely as red figures) are having negative effects on different aspects of cultural and artistic production, but also because ultimately, the culture crisis directly deprives the most vulnerable groups of their fundamental cultural rights. These groups embrace a range of artists and cultural operators, as well as many other citizens affected by policies that restrict their participation in cultural and social life. The threatened closure of 20% of public libraries in the United Kingdom is only one highly publicised example of the current state of art in this respect,¹ and throughout the continent and

Katarina Pavić is a member of Culture 2 Commons (Alliance Operation City: operacijagrad.net; Clulture Network: clulture.org; Right to the city: pravonagrad.org), one of the hubs in the European Cultural Foundation's Networked Programme — *Connected Action for the Commons*.



← Croatian high-ways Referendum campaign (October 2014), Official Campaign Leaflet.

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the world there are probably even more dramatic cases of cultural deprivation of citizens of which we may not be aware, as well as examples of improvements in terms of new governance models deriving from civil engagement. A look at the approach adopted in Croatia and other countries of the region can serve as a paradigm for the development of cultural policy-making under the pressure of a permanent, structural

crisis, at the same time providing an encouraging example of practice in organising citizens for the purposes of democratising the public cultural sphere² and closing the gap between institutions and non-institutional cultural players.

The regional view

Where cultural policy-making in the former

¹ Sources: <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/>, <http://www.cilip.org.uk/>

² For further reading on the cultural public sphere and the challenges determining relationships in this field, see Jim McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy* (Open University Press, 2004).

Yugoslav countries is concerned, the current crisis has exacerbated the ongoing deficiencies in cultural systems, which had been changing very slowly over the past 20 years, since the dissolution of the common State and the violent conflicts that have marked the region's recent history. Apart from financing independent organisations' programmes with a modest share of the State budgets,³ the main instruments of cultural policies in all the countries of the region are still predominantly based on servicing the many traditional public cultural institutions, most of which are deemed remote from the citizens and closed to specific groups of artists, as well as lacking in public participation and transparency in governance. New ideas and demands for reforms and new cultural policy measures have begun to emerge in some countries in the region, and the main protagonists for change are usually the organisations and individuals working in the independent cultural scene.

Most of the organisations forming today's independent cultural scene emerged at the end of the 1990s on the back of the democratisation movements that were sweeping across the region, perpetuating the tradition of the alternative cultural and artistic movements in the previous decades. Very broadly, this scene includes a number of different organisations and initiatives operating across all contemporary artistic and cultural forms of expression. Their work is based on the interdisciplinary approach and experimentation at the intersection of contemporary art and popular culture, and on active engagement in the local communities. At the turn of the millennium, independent cultural organisations began to spring up all over the region. They multiplied not only in quantity but also as regards the diversity of their activities and geographical dispersion, especially after most of the region's countries adopted new laws or significantly liberalised existing legislation on citizens' associations. This was

³ The situation varies significantly among the different countries of the region, with instruments of cultural policies being most highly developed in Slovenia and Croatia. All the countries of former Yugoslavia still have many similarities in their main characteristics, including the overall organisation of cultural policy systems.

when these organisations took their first steps towards building strategic partnerships in order to become relevant actors in the cultural policy field, endeavouring to redefine the cultural systems by promoting the participatory approach to cultural policy-making.⁴

Independents united

In addition to demanding new cultural policy reforms, the independent cultural scene initiated a number of measures geared towards bridging the gap between independent and institutional cultural production, as well as that between the perceptions of producers and consumers of arts and culture. The foundation of the Clubture network⁵ in Croatia was one of the major steps in this direction. Established in 2002 as a platform for direct cooperation between organisations and the formulation of joint programmes, Clubture has achieved significant results in terms of democratising culture and decentralising

cultural production in Croatia. Over the ten years in which it has continuously run its key programme 'Clubture-HR: programme exchange and cooperation', which is based on joint decision-making and peer-to-peer cooperation between organisations, over 1,300 different cultural and artistic events have been organised in almost all the cities, towns and villages nationwide, directly involving over 100 organisations and actively engaging thousands of citizens.⁶

The living, active and heterogeneous structure of the organisations in the platform have made Clubture a catalyst for cooperation and a focal point for bringing in independent cultural organisations from beyond the Croatian borders. Over the years, Clubture has developed other programmes aimed at strengthening capacities, public visibility and the influence of the independent cultural scene in Croatia, including a range of meticulously designed educational programmes that aim to improve the organisations' capacities for strategic

⁴ Further reading: Emina Višnić, *A bottom-up approach to cultural policy-making, Independent culture and new collaboration practices in Croatia* (Ecumest/ECF/The Clubture Network, 2008).

⁵ www.clubture.org

⁶ Further reading: Dea Vidović at al., *Clubture — Culture as the process of exchange 2002–2007* (The Clubture Network, 2008).

management and public promotion of cultural policies.

At the same time, the Clubture network has pioneered the promotion of regional cooperation by involving independent organisations from across the region in an informal cooperation platform. Clubture has also gained international recognition with the first ever coordinated action by regional actors and the European cultural policy-making institutions, involving a public consultation procedure for over 70 organisations from different countries in the region. The action led to the adoption of a series of mutual policy recommendations calling for the implementation of concrete measures to help develop regional cooperation and build partnerships between cultural organisations from the region and the rest of Europe.⁷

Towards new models of cultural institutions

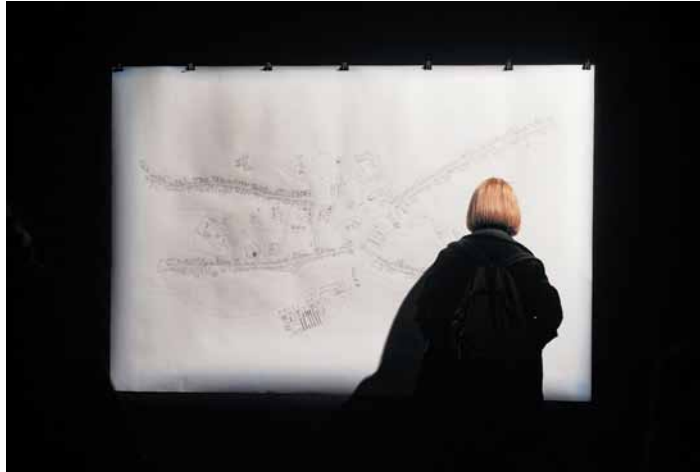
A gradual process of networking, mutual sharing of values, knowledge and

skills and joint programme production by independent cultural organisations was followed by a drive to create partnerships with strategic civil society organisations active in other important spheres of social life (youth rights, environmental conservation and good governance) and with experts in cultural and other relevant public policies. These major efforts to organise a tactical model for change were also accompanied by a whole range of awareness-raising activities involving active engagement with the public, in terms of both participants and audiences and of decision-makers and public cultural administration. Using tactical networking—bringing together independent cultural organisations, artists and experts, and later on developing partnerships with other important societal actors—the independent cultural scene developed a holistic approach to the public cultural sphere, which, far from being isolated from its social context, constitutes its most dynamic part, with

⁷ Further reading: Katarina Pavić and Milica Pekić, *Exit Europe — New Geographies of Culture* (The Clubture Network, 2011) and www.exit-europe.net

↕ POGON —
Zagreb Center for
Independent Cul-
ture and Youth
www.upogoni.org
Exhibition: Sybille
Neumeyer: past
presence, present
absence —
urban aspects.

Pogon — Jedinstvo
factory, February
1–6, 2013.
Photos by:
Damir Žižić
& Barbara Šarić.



the potential to effect a tangible societal transformation.

Thanks to these methods, the independent cultural organisations have demonstrated that the effort to democratise the public cultural sphere is part of a broader struggle for the common weal, primarily fighting corrupt practices in public governance.⁸ In this connection, they have launched a long-term campaign in Zagreb opposing the alliance between the city authorities and investors, which has devastated the city centre pedestrian zone. After almost six years of constant endeavours to bring about genuine changes in the system—during which time the independent cultural organisations have been penalised or otherwise put under pressure because of their engagement, mainly through budgetary cuts in financing their programmes, but also by means of intimidation and negative media campaigns—reforms and major steps towards developing new models of governance and cultural policies have now begun.

Time for transformation

The most useful changes in this field took place in Croatia with the introduction of the first hybrid cultural institution POGON—the Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth⁹—which is the first ever cultural institution based on a new model of public-civil partnership established and managed jointly by the local association of cultural and youth organisations

Alliance Operation City¹⁰ and the City of Zagreb. POGON was established at the end of 2009, and has gained a great deal of influence in the local Zagreb context, where a great many organisations have regular recourse to its material resources for various activities involving the local citizens. The arrival of POGON in Zagreb has also raised the question of the requisite role of the public cultural institutions in the community, as well as that of their openness to changes in governance and programming.¹¹

⁸ In 2006, independent cultural organisations in Croatia initiated the Right to the City initiative, one of the most publicly visible civil initiatives in Croatia and the region, which is active combating against corrupt practices and promoting preservation and good governance of public spaces in Croatia. For further information, see www.pravonagrad.org

⁹ For more about POGON — Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth, see <http://www.upogoni.org/en/>

¹⁰ See <http://savezza-centar.wordpress.com/english/>

¹¹ Further reading: Celakoski et al., *Open Institutions — Institutional imagination and Cultural Public Sphere* (Alliance Operation City, 2011) and <http://openinstitutions.net/>

Another cultural policy reform measure initiated by the independent cultural actors has been the newly established 'Foundation Kultura Nova',¹² a novel institutional format geared towards promoting the development of cultural civil society in Croatia. The Foundation will support cooperation projects between organisations in Croatia, at the national level and on the regional front, it will help develop cooperation between different sectors and provide operational support to foster organisational development.

Conclusions and recommendations: the deficit is not just a problem for others

The cooperation and mutual advocacy practices developed by the independent cultural scene in the former Yugoslav countries have shown that reforming policy measures via bottom-up processes can achieve positive results in terms of narrowing the gap

between institutions and non-institutional actors and directly influencing people's sense of ownership of cultural and other common goods. At the same time, these joint actions help develop dialogue and partnerships between all the stakeholders in culture, thus reducing the democratic deficit by emphasising the active role played by citizens in decision making. Even though the above-mentioned experiences are peculiar to the independent cultural scene and its specific practices, their repercussions are felt in other vital spheres of cultural and political life, as the potential for reform are transposable beyond both the field of cultural and artistic production and the borders of any specific region.

We would accordingly encourage decision-makers and all other relevant stakeholders, especially those from countries in the region of former Yugoslavia, to strive to increase cultural participation by citizens, primarily by supporting critical art and culture produced by independent groups of artists and

¹² The Croatian Parliament adopted the law on the 'Foundation Kultura Nova' in July 2011; the Foundation is currently making the final arrangements to begin operations.



cultural workers, targeting active engagement with citizens as participants, experts, decision-makers and others. In order to bridge the gap between isolated cultural institutions, artist and citizens it is also important to secure the genuine, meaningful involvement of cultural civil society in cultural policy-making, especially by supporting bottom-up initiatives with transformative potential for cultural systems, for the benefit of all.

Furthermore, it is necessary to support, jointly develop and implement policy measures conducive to the realisation of the aforementioned aims, as initiated by civil society actors:

- Bridging measures and structural solutions to facilitate the decentralisation of cultural production and democratisation of culture by means of cooperation among cultural organisations affecting citizens in different communities;
- New types of cultural institutions based on public-civil partnership, applying the principles of co-management open to different groups of artists and citizens;
- New types of cultural policy instruments conducive to further development of the independent cultural scene and of cooperation among cultural organisations, but also between cultural organisations and other important stakeholders in

↑ POGON — Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth www.upogoni.org Jedinstveno Jedinstvo/Unique Jedinstvo: Celebration on the occasion of painting the facade of Jedinstvo factory, September 21, 2013. Photo by POGON Zagreb.



the social, political and cultural sphere.

In this light, it is especially important to emphasise the need to support cultural cooperation within the region's independent cultural scene and between the region and the rest of Europe. Joint work, transfers of experience,

knowledge and practices, and the involvement of more citizens and other relevant stakeholders in the various countries of the region can ensure a knock-on effect and the multiplication of the beneficial effects on cultural policy development that are already emerging in some of the region's countries. ■

↑ POGON —
Zagreb Center
for Independent
Culture and Youth
www.upogoni.org
Corners of Europe
Project.
[http://www.corner-
sofeurope.org](http://www.corner-
sofeurope.org)
Performance:
Chassis by: Ivana
Ivković and Rita
Marcalo, in collabo-
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Gibb-Lodge, Andy
Plant, and Lucy
Barker. Zagreb,
Savica Market.

The Transition Will Not Be Smooth Sailing

Michel Bauwens in conversation with Arthur de Grave

Arthur de Grave Michel, *Save the World*,¹ your last book, is the translation of a series of talks with Jean Lievens published 2013. What happened between then? Do you have the impression that the transition you talk about has accelerated?

Michel Bauwens In this regard, one should make haste slowly. It is clear that the transition to a post-capitalist, sustainable economy will not happen overnight, or even in a few years. It is a long process. Some projects that seemed to work well according to a peer-to-peer logic one or two years ago have since become purely capitalistic. This enables them to grow faster. It contrasts with other more open and truly collaborative projects that have chosen to grow more slowly.

When one has no money, one takes on 'solidarity dynamics'. So yes, it can give an impression of relative stagnation, but I do not worry too much. For this is a major crisis, ecological, social and economic, looming on the horizon. The challenge is to be ready when it breaks out, probably around 2030. FairCoop, WikiSpeed... These kinds of projects are still small and yes, too few. In the coming years, those who are still only the seeds of this transition will have

Arthur de Grave is Editor-in-Chief at *OuiShare* magazine.

Michel Bauwens is a theorist, author and researcher. He is the creator of the Foundation for Peer-to-Peer Alternatives, and one of the keynote speakers at the European Cultural Foundation's Idea Camp 2015 — 'Build the City'.

to develop a stable ecosystem, in order to initiate a real movement.

Arthur de Grave

In an interview with us in 2013, you stated that capitalism and peer-to-peer were still interdependent. Isn't that the real problem? Is this a stable relationship?

Michel Bauwens

No, of course not, how could it be? The value generated by the commons is still largely captured by capital: by adopting extractive models, large platforms of the sharing economy are engaged in a form of parasitic commercial activity. In the old days, capitalism was a way of allocating resources in a situation of scarcity, but now it is an engineered scarcity system. Our system is completely mad: we pretend that natural resources are endless, and we set artificial barriers around what is abundant in nature, i.e., creativity and human intelligence. This is a profound moral issue.

In her book *Owning Our Future: The Emerging Ownership Revolution*,² Marjorie Kelly aptly defines the challenge that awaits us: moving from extractive capital to generative capital. The good news is that this process has already started. First of all, because it is impossible to hide the fact that civil society has now become a value creator. This is an important point, as civil society was mostly absent from the 'classic' capitalist equation. In addition, we are beginning to witness a change in market structures: commercial spheres of a new kind are developing around the Commons. Enspiral [a collaborative

1 Michel Bauwens, *Sauver le monde: Vers une société post-capitaliste avec le peer-to-peer* [Saving the World: Towards a post-capitalist society with a peer-to-peer approach] (Paris: Éditions Les Liens Qui Libèrent, 2015).

2 Marjorie Kelly, *Owning Our Future: The Emerging Ownership Revolution* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2012).

network of social entrepreneurs], in New Zealand, is the perfect example of this type of entrepreneurial coalition.

Arthur de Grave In your opinion, how could the peer-to-peer model free itself from capitalism in practical terms?

Michel Bauwens For a start, we should choose the right strategy. I think that despite all the good intentions, projects that aspire to compete head-to-head with Google or Facebook are doomed to fail. I believe much more in targeted approaches like Loomio [an online tool for collaborative decision-making]. The transition will be a sum of such small victories that will connect with each other. This also requires the creation of new legal tools. We have completely forgotten the tradition of commons and this is really obvious in our legal tradition. We must make room for legal innovation. In this regard, a principle like the copyleft, or the opposite, the copysol [a license that prohibits any interaction with the traditional commercial market] are interesting but imperfect as they are too radical (in their implications). I want to find a third way, one that would provide a balance between the commercial sphere and the commons. This is the goal of the work we began around the notion of Peer Production License, which balances out contribution to the commons and use of these.

Arthur de Grave Will that be enough? Those in whose hands capital is concentrated today have no interest in the emergence of a distributed and fair model...

Michel Bauwens No revolution ever happened without a fraction of the ruling elite taking the side of progress! This means that a cultural shift is needed. Today, Joe Justice [founder of the Wikispeed community] struggles to raise funds, including from ethical finance funds, as Wikispeed does not file patents. The world of responsible finance cannot continue to support models that create artificial scarcity.

As I was saying earlier, when one lacks resources, one works with other people. For initiatives of the commons economy, building a network is an absolute necessity. To get an idea of what this kind of ecosystem might look like, go to Madison, Wisconsin: there, food cooperatives, cooperative credit systems between companies, time banks, etc., gathered to create the Mutual Aid Network. In Madison, the alternative economy can be seen and felt in the streets and took less than two years to happen! The same kind of ambition drove an initiative like Faircoop in Spain.

For now, the main transformative ideas that are penetrating the economy—open economy, solidarity economy and ecology—are applied independently from each other. But when these ideas converge, we will witness the birth of an open source and circular economy. This concept of Open Source Circular Economy is at the heart of the debate we are conducting within the P2P Foundation.

Arthur de Grave I have the feeling that, by focusing on economy and leaving aside the political processes, we have given in to the calls of technological solutionism criticised by Evgeny Morozov. What do you think? Should we relearn how to do politics?

Michel Bauwens Yes, in some ways, but what matters is that politics ended up re-imposing itself through collective learning. The Commons Transition Platform, in which I am very involved, gathers and details the political transformation plans necessary for the implementation of a post-capitalist society. This is also the idea of the approach we applied with the FLOK project in Ecuador. The devised political transition plan, which included civil society at the centre of public- value creation, a market sphere integrating external factors and a State that serves as a facilitator. FLOK was a partial failure, due to a lack of political will and lack of social base on which to lean for support. However, the political vision we have outlined is making its way to Europe (some proposals have been included within the economic programme of Syriza in Greece).

Arthur de Grave Occupy Wall Street and the *Indignados* eventually lost momentum. The Arab Spring was, for the most part, led astray. In Spain, the *Podemos* movement attempts to maintain a balance between bottom-up and vertical power, but at the expense of permanent tensions. How can one overcome the contradiction between the institutional logic intertwined with political practices and horizontality, a concept cherished by social movements?

Michel Bauwens To transfer a concept in real-life conditions over the long term following a pure horizontal logic is very complicated, if not downright impossible. At one time or another, a collective entity has to intervene to transcend individual interests. This also forms part of the collective learning of politics that we had to do. This is also the goal of *Podemos'* experience in Spain. A fully horizontal organisation system causes too much energy loss; conversely, the vertical system should be confined to areas where it guarantees a greater degree of autonomy for everyone. A bit like the Domain Name System when the internet appeared.

Arthur de Grave Are the commons a left-wing idea?

Michel Bauwens Politically, the P2P Foundation is a pluralistic organisation, simply because the logic underlying the Commons spans the entire political spectrum. Solidarity also exists within right-wing parties, some ideas in the ideology of the Front National [French extreme right-wing party] could even be considered as more socialist than what the Parti Socialiste [French Socialist Party] offers today. But the real question is: who benefits from this solidarity? Right-wing parties only show real solidarity with their supporters! So it's on the issue of inclusion that the real fault line between right and left comes to light.

Personally, I have left-wing ideas, and I think that the transition to a commons economy has to benefit everyone. The real challenge is to go beyond the progressivism inherited from the world of work of the last century. In this context, it is not

surprising that European socialism is going through a profound identity crisis.

Arthur de Grave It is true that none of the partisan parties really seized this idea of commons. Was it a mistake? Can we really make this a political topic? The concept of commons remains somewhat abstruse.

Michel Bauwens The jargon of the commons may at first seem technical and hard to digest, which is true. But in the mid-2000s, when I created the P2P Foundation, I decided to completely give up the old political lexicon of the left. At that time, the public did not really know what was hidden behind the concept of peer-to-peer. But as social and cultural practices started evolving, as networks started being used on a daily basis, more and more people adopted this new language. The same will most likely happen with the terminology of the commons.

All will depend on the social movements that will defend this original conceptual arsenal. However, I find you rather pessimistic: the Pirate Party, the European Greens, *Podemos* or Syriza have largely embraced this concept of commons. It is indeed at the core of a new progressive thinking.

Politicising the commons is researching their roots and genealogy. If the law leaves so little room for the commons today, it is because we forgot where they came from. Yet, this type of organisation and management of resources existed long before modern industrial capitalism practices. We must reconnect with this tradition and rewrite this forgotten chapter in our economic history. Politicising the commons is also researching their roots and genealogy. It's the condition to lay the foundation of a new narrative on progress. Changing the world for the better will require considerable efforts on the part of everyone, but I think that peer-to-peer is a vision of society that is worth the sacrifice. ■

“Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of that term, or nothing at all.”

— **David Harvey**, *The Right to the City*

Contributors and Sources

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Charlie Tims, 'A Rough Guide to the Commons: Who Likes It and Who Doesn't'

This text is based on a research briefing originally prepared by the author for the Doc Next Network as an introduction to the Commons and an outline of some of the threats it faces and the movements that support it.

Dougald Hine, 'Friendship is a Commons'

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'El Buen Vivir and the Commons: a conversation between Gustavo Soto Santiesteban and Silke Helfrich'

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Nicos Trimikliniotis, Dimitris Parsanoglou, Vassilis Tsianos, 'Mobile Commons, Migrant Digitalities and the Right to the City'

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James Bridle, 'All Cameras are Polica Cameras'

'All Cameras Are Police Cameras' is the first in a series of essays by James Bridle entitled *The Nor*, and commissioned by the Hayward Gallery in 2014–2015. These essays are accompanied by photographs and a map, and additional content can be found throughout this site: <http://shorttermmemoryloss.com/nor/2014/11/07/all-cameras-are-police-cameras>

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Charlie Tims, 'Watching Radical Democracy'

For more information about videos in the Radical Democracy Video Challenge, see <http://challenge.docnextnetwork.org/> and <https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/videos>

Dougald Hine, 'Commoning in the City'

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Adrien Krauz, 'Transition towns, or the desire for an urban alternative'

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'Laboratory for the Governance of the Commons: A Discussion between Michel Bauwens and Christian Iaione'

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Neal Gorenflo, 'Bologna Celebrates One Year of a Bold Experiment in Urban Commoning'

This article was originally posted on shareable.net on 8 June 2015 under a Creative Commons 3.0 ShareAlike license — <http://www.shareable.net/blog/bologna-celebrates-one-year-of-a-bold-experiment-in-urban-commoning>

Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou, 'R-URBAN or How to Co-Produce a Resilient City'

This essay was originally published in the *Ephemera Journal*, 15 (1), 2015, pp. 249–262 — <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/contribution/15-1petcoupetrescu.pdf>
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Noel Hatch, 'From Lamp Posts to Phone Booths'

This article was posted in the 'Build the City' Lab on ECF Labs, the online community space of the European Cultural Foundation: <https://ecflabs.org/lab/build-city/image/lampposts-phone-booths-using-technology-create-civic-spaces>

Pelin Tan, 'The Civic as a Constellation'

This article was commissioned and published first by architect/writer/curator Jose Esparza for the book of Civic Publics for the 3rd Lisbon Architectural Triennale, September 2013.

Vitalie Sprinceana, 'The City Belongs to Everybody: Claiming Public Spaces in Chisinau'

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Igor Stokfiszewski, 'Culture for Democracy: A Central European Perspective'

Originally published in *Another Europe — 15 Years of Capacity Building with Cultural Initiatives in the EU Neighbourhood* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2015).

Rob Hopkins, 'Isabelle Frémeaux, John Jordan and the rise of the Insurrectionary Imagination'

Published on 2 April 2015 by Rob Hopkins on the Transition Network blog:
<https://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins/2015-04/isabelle-fr-meaux-john-jordan-and-rise-insurrectionary-imagination>
 The interview is an edited version of a longer conversation posted online on: <https://soundcloud.com/transition-culture/isabelle-fremeaux-john-jordan>

Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, 'Not Sustainable Development but Sustainable Co-living'

Originally published in 'U3, The 7th Triennial of Contemporary Art in Slovenia — Resilience', exhibition catalogue (Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MSUM), Ljubljana: 2013)

Excerpt from a speech given by Madjiguène Cissé on the occasion of her receipt of the Wilhelmine von Bayreuth Prize 2011

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Carmen Lozano-Bright, 'Kicking Off a Year of 'P2P Plazas' Research and Cartography'

This article was originally posted on P2PFoundation.net blog on 17 February 2015 under a Creative Commons Attribution — ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License — <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/p2p-plazas/2015/02/17>

Carmen Lozano-Bright, 'Between Random and Democratic Practices: The Commons Board Game'

This article was originally published on the 17ZEMOS98 *Reclaiming the Commons* blog — <http://17festival.zemos98.org/Between-random-and-democratic>

Various — *Commonspoly* board and cards:

Commonspoly was devised and created by a group of artists and change-makers at the 17ZEMOS98 hack camp — *Reclaim the Commons* — in Seville between 15 and 18 April 2015. The group's members are: Guillermo Zapata (facilitator), Virginia Benvenuti, Carla Boserman, Vassilis Chryssos, Francisco Jurado, José Laulhé, Carmen Lozano-Bright, Rubén Martínez, Peter Matjašič, Mario Munera, Maria G Perulero, Natxo Rodriguez, Igor Stokfiszewski and Menno Weijts. Since then, members of the group have continued to work on the rules and dynamics of the game — with sessions at Commons Fest in Athens between 15 to 17 May. They have designed boards and cards with which to play the game, and a provisional set of rules that are being refined through an ongoing process of playtesting.

The *Commonspoly* board and cards are published under a Peer Production License: http://p2pfoundation.net/Peer_Production_License

Claudia Ciobanu, 'From Public Space to Common Good: Poland's Urban Political Activism'

This article was originally published on the website 'Precarious Europe' with the title *Poland: The left is up for grabs* — <http://www.precariouseurope.com/power/poland-left-up-for-grabs>

Sophie Bloemen, 'A Commons Intergroup Takes Off in the EU Parliament' (excerpt)

This excerpt is taken from a longer article originally published on the European Alternatives website — <http://www.euroalter.com/2015/what-we-share-a-commons-intergroup-takes-off-in-the-eu-parliament>

Julie Ward, MEP, 'Reclaiming the Commons through Culture and Arts'

This text is based on a speech given at the Radical Democracy Media Showcase event at the European Parliament on June 16 2015. It has not been published previously.

Tinni Ernsjöð Rappe, 'Culture Hunters'

Originally published in *Subtopia magazine*, n°8, May 2015.

Philippe Eynaud and Sam Khebizi, 'Participatory Art as a Vector of Innovative Governance: Reflexivity at the Heart of the Formalisation Process'

This report is a working paper originally written in French and translated by Sam Khebizi. It has not been published previously.

Katarina Pavić, 'New models of governance of culture'

The article was written within the framework of Council of Europe's Culture Watch Europe Programme. Originally published on COE's website: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/CWE/CWE-TP-Pavic_en.pdf

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'The Transition will not be Smooth Sailing' — Michel Bauwens in conversation with Arthur de Grave

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English translation of the original interview in French between Michel Bauwens and Arthur de Grave. Cross-posted from *OuiShare*. Translation by Clement Defontaine. <http://magazine.ouishare.net/fr/2015/04/la-transition-nest-pas-un-long-fleuve-tranquille/>

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Further Reading and other interesting links

**The Digital Library of the Commons — including
a number of essays on the city and towns:**

[http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/
browse?value=cities+and+
towns&type=subject](http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/browse?value=cities+and+towns&type=subject)

**Library of the Centre de Cultura
Contemporània de Barcelona**

<http://www.publicspace.org/en/library>

**'The Creation of the Urban
Commons' by David Harvey:**

[https://mappingthecommons.wordpress.
com/2012/11/13/the-creation-of-the-urban-
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**Project for Public Spaces —
Barcelona, Market Cities**

[http://www.pps.org/reference/market-cities-
barcelona-offers-a-hopeful-glimpse-of-the-future/](http://www.pps.org/reference/market-cities-barcelona-offers-a-hopeful-glimpse-of-the-future/)

**Introduction: Open Source Public
Space Devices — Paco Gonzalez
(recipient of an ECF R&D grant, 2014)**

[http://ecflabs.org/lab/public-space-makers/image/
introduction-open-source-public-space-devices](http://ecflabs.org/lab/public-space-makers/image/introduction-open-source-public-space-devices)

The City Belongs to All of Us — Phillip Cryan

<http://www.onthecommons.org/city-belongs-all-us>

Quiet Innovation — interview with Christian Iaione

[http://www.sharitories.net/quiet-innovation-interview-
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Center for Research Architecture

<http://roundtable.kein.org/>

Volume journal/Archis:

<http://volumeproject.org/>

**Ephemera Journal — Vol 15, issue 1 —
“Saving” the city: collective low budget
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[http://www.ephemerajournal.org/issue/saving-city-
collective-low-budget-organizing-and-urban-practice](http://www.ephemerajournal.org/issue/saving-city-collective-low-budget-organizing-and-urban-practice)

**Paisaje Transversal (Spanish):
reflexión urbana para la imaginación colectiva**

[http://www.paisajetransversal.org/2015/05/
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Commons Bibliography — proposed by David Bollier

[http://bollier.org/commons-resources/commons-
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