Communities of Practice Towards Social Change

A JOURNEY THROUGH
THE IDEA CAMP (2014–2017)

MOVING
COMMUNITIES

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'Cooking Together' – a workshop proposed and facilitated by Madrid-based collective Cocinar Madrid. Idea Camp 2017, Madrid (Spain). Pictured: Kholoud Al Ajarma, Idea Maker and recipient of ECF Research & Development grant in 2017.

Photo: César Lucas Abreu

Introduction

by **Lore Gablier**

LORE GABLIER is Programme Officer at the European Cultural Foundation. She was the curator of the last two editions of the Idea Camp held in Botkyrka (2015) and Madrid (2017). She is also co-editor of the book *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* published in conjunction with the 2015 Idea Camp.

In our rapidly changing societies – in which hope is not a given – it seems more urgent every day to look beyond what prevents us from acknowledging that another future can be achieved: one that we imagine and actively shape. Every day, we are reminded of the accelerated polarisation of a world whose horizons seems circumscribed by growing inequalities, an ongoing ecological crisis, an increasing scarcity of resources, and a decline of justice. This, ultimately, has come to be perceived as a failure of democracy, as a failure of our institutions. Or, as one could argue, as a crisis of imagination.

And yet, every day, new initiatives are being born that bring about a different narrative: a narrative in which democracy is not a mere idea but a social dynamic, an embodied practice that stirs the very movement of society. In this flow that touches upon both public and private life, the role of culture is crucial. It provides us with the means, the imagination and the desire to affect the path and direction we are heading towards, giving us a *raison d'être* to act.

Our ambition with the Idea Camp was to shed light on these initiatives undertaken by creative, courageous, committed individuals, whose stories deserve our full attention. This book is about them: It is a tribute to them. With this book, we wish to encourage everyone not only to listen to these stories, but to engage and be inspired by what they tell us, so that these stories can become our shared history.

The journey of the Idea Camp started four years ago with the inception of the European Cultural Foundation's new programme, initially called 'Networked Programme' and later renamed *Connected Action for the Commons*.[1] At the time, it was clear to us – as a foundation – that in order to remain consistent with our long-standing ambition of nurturing and advocating for culture and democracy,

we needed to complete a transition that was already well under way. This transition entailed moving beyond a traditional way of grant-making: to shift our focus from a project-logic to a process-oriented one. This implied that our role was no longer to solely support the completion of a project, but to accompany and support the development of ideas as facilitator and partner in what we came to recognise and call 'a community of practice'.[2]

But how could we achieve such a transition? How, as a foundation, could we reset our *modus operandi* and engage with ideas and processes that need more than just financial support? How could we build trust and understanding when confronted with the possibility of failure, when the expected impact requires long-term commitment? Those are questions worth seeking to answer, and to some extent, the Idea Camp has been an attempt to tackle them head on.

The first Idea Camp took place in Marseille (France) in 2014, and brought together ideas that encouraged communities to rethink public space. In Botkyrka (Sweden) in 2015, we looked at building the cities of the Commons and for the Commons. And in 2017, in Madrid (Spain), we focused on 'Moving Communities', addressing the anxieties and challenges within the communities that are calling Europe their home.[3]

This book offers an insight into both the Idea Camp as a concept and the communities it brought together. It also delves into the issues and strategies highlighted through the different ideas discussed and developed over the last four years. It is articulated through conversations, essays and accounts with and by some of the ECF team who have played a key role in developing the Idea Camp, and some of the inspirational people and organisations whose ideas have helped shape the Idea Camp.

The book opens with a prologue that sets the context: introducing how and why the Idea Camp was born and came about. In the conversation and the texts included in this prologue, emphasis is put on the Commons and the values of sharing and co-creation that informs this centuries-old concept. These have been the guiding principles for the design of the Idea Camp (both as an event and a process) and perhaps constitute the 'shared purpose' that Charlie Tims and Shelagh Wright call upon, while pointing at the difference between communities of practice and networks.[4]

The three subsequent chapters – which are introduced by the editor – revolve around conversations[5] that are informed by the practice and critical insights from some of the Idea Camp protagonists. We start by considering ways of transforming a space into a place. We then discuss how to sustain these places. And finally, we ask ourselves

how such places become home, and what that very notion means to us. Each dialogue is accompanied by testimonies that provide compelling examples of initiatives in which a variety of activities – from cooking to designing and from building to media-making – become strategies for reinventing forms of Commons.

However diverse the backgrounds, resources or urgencies of the initiatives presented in this book, it seems that they all point, in one way or another, at a certain milieu. A turbulent area that questions the very foundation of our communities: how to live together? And while looking back to the past can provide us with necessary learnings, the task ahead also requires us to harness our imagination, and seed a different scenario for the future. A more hopeful future that can surely find inspiration in the ideas, projects and people we were lucky enough to meet and support during the four years that the 'Idea Camp' took place – and from whom, as a foundation, we learned so much.

REFERENCES

1 The *Connected Action for the Commons* programme was initiated within the frame of ECF's 2013-2017 strategic plan, *Connecting Culture, Communities and Democracy*. For an insight into the programme, see the text by Olga Alexeeva published in this book (pp. 15-21).

2 The concept of 'community of practice' (CoP) was first proposed by cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave and educational theorist Étienne Wenger in their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Wenger then significantly expanded on the concept in his 1998 book *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). A CoP can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area, or it can be created deliberately with the goal of gaining knowledge related to a specific field. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop personally and professionally.

3 Read more on each edition of the Idea Camp on the respective pages on the European Cultural Foundation website: www.culturalfoundation.eu/idea-camp-2014; www.culturalfoundation.eu/idea-camp-2015; and www.culturalfoundation.eu/idea-camp-2017/.

4 See Charlie Tims and Shelagh Wright, 'Come On, Come On. Let's Work Together', published in this book (pp. 51-54).

1 PROLOGUE

Connected Action for the Commons: Why We Did It and What We Learned

by **Olga Alexeeva** (with additions by **Marjolein Cremer**)

OLGA ALEXEEVA was in charge of highlighting the outcomes of the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme for the European Cultural Foundation during 2016 and 2017, as ECF's Programme Officer.

MARJOLEIN CREMER is Senior Advocacy Officer at the European Cultural Foundation.

Since its inception in 1954, the European Cultural Foundation (ECF)[1] has been a firm advocate for an open, democratic and inclusive Europe. Like many of the people we have been working with over the past decades, we passionately believe in the power of culture in building societies that are embracing the values of justice, diversity, trust, solidarity and equality. We are convinced that a strong and interconnected European civil society is needed and has a key role to play in catalysing local change and social innovation. From the start, it has been our mission to support and connect cultural change-makers across wider Europe – people and organisations with the drive and skill to challenge and change society, to mobilise individuals and communities. ECF has supported these change-makers through our programmes, grants, awards, partnerships or advocacy.

In 2013, drawing on the experiences and observations from our philanthropic work, ECF embarked on a new 'Networked Programme', which later came to be known as the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme. This was initiated as part of ECF's overall four-year theme *Connecting Culture, Communities and Democracy.* This introduction presents a brief overview of the origins, the evolution and the achievements of this programme that gave birth to the Idea Camp, which is the main focus of this book.

Across Europe, we were seeing the emergence of new forms of cultural cooperation, in which citizens and communities were successfully developing alternative participatory practices that no longer relied exclusively on the state or the market and that challenged the existing power relations. Experimental (digital) models for sustainable development, urban planning, governance or community-building based on sharing economy, participation and cooperation were beginning to flourish.

Our hypothesis was that, in many of these practices, a key role could be prescribed to culture in its broadest sense: as a practice that involves citizens as participants, whereby the lines between activities that are clearly artistic and those that are clearly social are fading away. Through this practice, spaces are created where working together is more important than individual gains. Here, culture becomes a language to describe reality and to express feelings and opinions. It can establish relationships and strengthen social ties within communities; it can be a tool for narrating and debating our societies and it can challenge our perspectives. These are the spaces in which we negotiate ways of living together.

Another assumption we made when designing this programme was that – rather than providing individual support to separate cultural initiatives through traditional project grants – initiating, convening and growing a network of like-minded organisations across Europe would allow for a more effective upscaling[2] of these new participatory trends to a pan-European level. We committed to experimenting with networked ways of working "characterised by principles of openness, transparency, decentralised decision-making, and distributed action."[3] This is how the name 'Networked Programme' was born: we decided to call the programme according to its *modus operandi* and to encourage the network itself to co-decide an appropriate name – based on shared values and advocacy interests.

We chose to kick-start the new programme by identifying, connecting and supporting a constellation of hubs: locally and regionally relevant knowledge centres, firmly anchored in their communities, and at the same time, well-connected with other organisations, both within and beyond the cultural sector. We hoped that, by pooling knowledge and creating a network of local experience across Europe,

we would strengthen these local practices and help them to become more influential in shaping policies – thus contributing to a growing movement that would begin to stimulate change.

Drawing from ECF's existing networks and assisted by a pool of independent advisers,[4] we brought together six organisations from across Europe, meeting for the first time in Antwerp in March 2014: Culture 2 Commons – comprised of Alliance Operation City, Clubture Network, and Right to the City (Croatia); Krytyka Polityczna (Poland); Les Têtes de l'Art (France); Oberliht (Moldova); Platoniq-Goteo (Spain); and Subtopia (Sweden). (A description of each of these organisations can be found at the end of this book, see pp. 149-151).

During the first year, we identified common threads and complementarities within the group: topics such as public space, cultural governance, democracy and economy emerged. We started exploring these topics by first getting to know each other's organisations and then developing and implementing joint activities, both as a group and in different constellations.

Going through the different stages of network-building – similar to the Tuckman team-building model: forming, storming, norming and performing[5] – allowed the group to reach an agreement on shared values (trust, openness, ownership and inclusiveness), shared ways of doing things in the spirit of the networked way of working (e.g., task distribution and ownership, communication tools) and a shared content focus.

In 2015, *Connected Action for the Commons*[6] was launched as a network and as an action and research programme. Its goal was to explore innovative methodologies to empower citizens and to create a sustainable public infrastructure that would nurture the Commons.

While some of the hubs were already familiar with the Commons as a new para-

digm and had been working in this area for a couple of years, many others were doing so without framing it this way.[7] As a group, we embarked on a joint mission to explore and acquire a better understanding of what the Commons means to us in different corners of Europe, by co-developing and exchanging expertise and engaging local communities.

"Through the process of co-learning, familiarising with other hubs' local contexts, exchanging experience and knowledge on notions of commons, participation and institutional innovation and providing interconnectivity of actors, the network has explored potentials for different ways of doing things in culture and elsewhere. The local connected to the European and the international not through a linear organisation of activities but through rhizomic structures developed in this process, often revealing unexpected connections between mobilisation strategies in local cultural fields with international struggles for the commons bringing it back to the local level in the form of struggle against privatisation of highways (Croatia), public space usurpation (Moldova) or neoliberal and anti-immigration policies (Sweden) and taking it again to the EU level by connecting to the European parliamentary intergroup.[8] All the while, the hubs worked on local, national and European level."[9]

At ECF, we saw our role as a catalyser, facilitating and assisting the hubs in scaling up their knowledge and practice of the Commons. Working together we wanted to contribute to the discourse on the Commons in Europe in general, and highlight the role of culture in the Commons in particular. What ECF specifically had to offer was creating the right conditions for advocacy and European-wide visibility through our existing networks. Together with our six hubs, we urged decision-makers in Europe to embed culture as an important perspective and practice contributing to the Commons in their policy deliberations. To build our common case,

we drafted the statement 'Culture and the Commons'[10] and launched it at the European Commons Assembly.[11] This gathering brought 150 local community organisations together from across Europe. A creative diversity of urban planners, community artists, social hackers and members of the *Connected Action for the Commons* network had the rare opportunity to sit together with Members of the European Parliament, and discuss European politics, policy proposals and the protection of the Commons.

We could argue that *Connected Action for the Commons* has now grown into a (self-)empowered network that is promoting new tools for democratic engagement through culture and that the hubs have established themselves as prominent players in a bigger commoning movement.

The hubs and ECF co-edited several publications as tools for awareness and advocacy such as *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* (2015),[12] the magazine *Build the City: How people are changing their cities* (2016)[13] and a Focal Point on Culture and the Commons in collaboration with *Eurozine*.[14] We participated in various events, positioning the work of the network, and co-organised advocacy events (e.g., Foundations' meeting in Botkyrka (2015) or *Innovative City Development* meeting in Madrid (2017)[15]). We brought together foundations, researchers, activists, experts and city officials who are taking a progressive approach to cultural issues, social innovation, urban development and participatory governance processes.

In 2016, in line with the impact assessment and evaluation process that had been an intrinsic part of the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme from the very beginning, we decided to experiment with assessing our efforts in creating this evolving network of projects, people, organisations and communities in a very visual way. The aim was to gain a qualitative sense of the impact that ECF is helping to catalyse. Together

with our partners at inViable,[16] we designed and developed an interactive visualisation tool to grasp the contents, the growth, the interconnectedness and the outreach of this European-wide community.[17]

While the core of the programme consisted of a selected group of organisations ECF had chosen to work with, it had always been in the design of the programme to also reach out to and involve many more organisations and individuals across Europe and beyond. The goal was to encourage them to exchange knowledge and practices, as well as aggregating a critical mass in order to support the case for the necessity of democratic renewal in Europe.

On the one hand, this was achieved by the very nature of the hubs, as organisations that were already very well connected with their local and regional communities and some (inter)national networks. The participation in the programme and ECF's financial support enabled the hubs to deepen and diversify their own activities, strengthen their ties with existing communities and build new connections and alliances in their local and regional contexts.

On the other hand, we introduced some other more open elements and tools to the programme, opening up opportunities to bring together a broader community. Perhaps the best example of this, is the Idea Camp – an ongoing process of building a community of practice, with an offline event and follow-up grants for the research and development of ideas.

Created by the *Connected Action for the Commons* network, the Idea Camp was designed as a three-day collaborative working space that would offer participants the unique opportunity to meet peers from diverse backgrounds and with different visions from across Europe and its neighbouring countries. An intensive programme of inspirational talks, workshops, collective discussions and collaborative working ses-

sions was created to provide a stimulating environment for refining participants' ideas on social change and democratic renewal through cultural practice. The Idea Camp concept was also designed to offer time and space for initiating new collaborations that transcend borders and combine expertise – both between the participants and with the hubs of the *Connected Action for the Commons* network. Each Idea Camp also brought together a wider audience including local citizens and organisations, policy-makers, journalists, foundation representatives, with the aim of involving them in a genuine debate.

After the three Idea Camps that took place between 2014 and 2017 in different locations, participants were invited to submit a concrete plan for further research or investigation of their ideas. A total of 25 proposals were selected after each Idea Camp and were awarded an Research & Development grant – allowing the research and development of business plans, concrete project proposals, prototypes, research papers, media reports, etc. Additionally, as of 2015, Research & Development grant recipients were able to apply for a residency we have been offering in collaboration with and with kind support of Medialab-Prado (2016 laureate of the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture[18]) and Subtopia's incubator KLUMP.[19]

With the Idea Camp, we deliberately took the risk of supporting the conception phase of projects because we felt that cultural practitioners all too often lack the support, the time and the space to thoroughly develop their ideas and establish solid relationships with their project partners. For this reason, we offered in-kind support by providing a platform to meet and exchange with peers in a specific geographic and thematic context, as well as financial support in the form of Research & Development grants. We were aware that some ideas would not come through, and

also, that most of their impact would occur after the action and usually after the formal relationship with ECF had finished.

Each of the three Idea Camps were developed through an intensive co-creation process by all the hubs and ECF, and was then hosted by one of the hubs: Les Têtes de l'Art hosted the Idea Camp which focused on public space, in Marseille in 2014; Subtopia hosted the Idea Camp 'Build the City' in Botkyrka in 2015; and Platoniq was the host of the Idea Camp 'Moving Communities' in Madrid in 2017.[20] An essential part of this process was co-developing an open call for ideas, inspired and informed by the pressing challenges facing our societies, and issues close to the focus of the *Connected Action for the Commons* network. The co-creation process also involved joint design of the Idea Camp programme according to the needs and thematic threads identified throughout the selected ideas, and co-development of a set of experimental methodologies and formats (A conversation focusing on the Idea Camp methodologies is published in this book, pp. 37-41).

Thanks in large part to the Idea Camp concept, what started out in 2013 as a small but ambitious structure of like-minded organisations working in different European contexts has become a growing network of cultural change-makers. With the hubs forming the core of the network, the community was joined by altogether 150 'Idea Makers' over three years as well as other connected actors (individuals and organisations) with whom intense collaborations have emerged. Through their work, creativity and commitment, we believe these individuals and organisations have the capacity

of countering the polarisation, fragmentation and disaffection of our societies.

Within the framework of the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme (2013-2017), we launched several initiatives – including the Idea Camp, publications, projects, campaigns, meetings and online spaces. We supported a wide variety of activities and projects by the hubs and the Research & Development grantees. In the spirit of Catalytic Philanthropy, we considered each initiative like a seed with the potential to grow; every action as an investment in an idea or an organisation with challenges and uncertainties but a relevant potential impact.

By connecting and convening different actors and initiatives, we aimed to create the conditions for a community of practice to emerge – a space where new knowledge and practices could develop through sustainable working relationships. We hoped that this community would continue to grow and flourish by engaging new stakeholders and influencing public awareness about its values.

Taking stock of the programme as it draws to an end, we could argue that we did manage to bring together and grow "a European-wide community that uses the power of culture and creativity to revitalise democracy."[21] We can already see how new meaningful relationships are being built and solidified as the network grows in an organic way, beyond our involvement. At the same time, we acknowledge the challenges of sustaining this community in the near future. This is where we see a task for ourselves as a learning organisation: to harvest the knowledge from our past programmes so that it can inform and shape our future work.

REFERENCES

1   A brief history of the European Cultural Foundation can be found at culturalfoundation. squarespace.com/library/ecf-50-years

2   "Scaling 'up' is influencing a broader system. It often focuses on some of the root causes of problems by directing efforts towards changing the system that created the social or environmental problem. An organization trying to scale up might build on its past success to work on

influencing policy, curriculum, program, or legislative changes, to change widely held societal values and norms, or create ways of re-directing financial resources." Innoweave, 'Scaling Impact', www.innoweave.ca/en/modules/scaling-impact

3   The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 'Network Effectiveness Theory of Change', 2009, as cited in 'A Network Way of Working: A Compilation of Considerations about Effectiveness in Networks', *Non Profit Quarterly*, 30 December 2013. https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2013/12/30/a-network-way-of-working-a-compilation-of-considerations-about-effectiveness-in-networks/

4   Chrissie Faniadis, Rana Celal Zinzir, Stojan Pelko and Juan Freire.

5   See 'Tuckman's team-building model (forming, storming, norming, performing)', *Management at Work: A MindEdge learning resource for better management*, 12 February 2008. http://management.atwork-network.com/2008/02/12/tuckmans-team-building-model-forming-storming-norming-performing/

6   On the *Connected Action for the Commons* network and programme, see www.culturalfoundation.eu/connected-action/

7   'Commons' refers to shared resources and social practices that are maintained by communities in a sustainable way. 'Commoning' is a collective venture of co-development and co-government, challenging the duopoly of the state and the market – where people collectively manage and take stewardship over resources. Commons also refers to a different worldview or ethics. Instead of economic growth or GDP, it looks at a more qualitative set of criteria including equity, resilience, social cohesion and social justice. Co-creating initiatives prioritise these inclusive values representing a cultural and social shift – in this respect culture and creativity are invaluable to revitalise democracy and drive social transformation based on principles of the Commons.

8   As David Bollier explains in his 2015 essay 'The European Parliament Focuses on Commons': "The European Parliament is formally focusing on the commons paradigm through a new 'Intergroup on common goods,' which is part of a larger group known as the 'European Parliamentary Intergroup on Common Goods and Public Services.' Intergroups are official forums of the Parliament at which members, political organisations and movements can air their views and try to rally attention to a given topic." Read more on www.bollier.org/blog/european-parliament-focuses-commons

9   See the concluding remarks by the hubs of the *Connected Action for the Commons* network,

which they prepared together to mark the end of the programme: http://politicalcritique.org/connected-action/2017/connected-action-a-collaborative-statement-by-the-hubs/

10   *Culture and the Commons: Statement by members of the Connected Action for the Commons* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2016). Available online at www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/statement-culture-and-the-commons?rq=Culture%20and%20the%20Commons

11   On 16 November 2016, something exceptional took place in Brussels, in the heart of EU policy-making. 150 local community organisations from across Europe – a creative diversity of energy cooperativists, urban planners, community artists, food producers as well as disruptive social hackers – had the rare opportunity to sit together with Members of the European Parliament. They discussed European politics, policy proposals and the protection of the Commons. For some of the participants it was quite a culture shock and even contradictory to think and speak comfortably in the formal, hierarchical institutional setting of the EU institution. Aim of this 'Commons Assembly' was to reclaim Europe from the bottom-up and to start a visible Commons movement with a European focus.

12   Charles Beckett, Lore Gablier, Vivian Paulissen, Igor Stokfiszewski and Joanna Tokarz-Haertig (eds.), *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* (Amsterdam/Warsaw: European Cultural Foundation/Krytyka Polityczna, 2015). Available online at http://www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/build-the-city-book

13   Marjolein Cremer and Nicola Mullenger (eds.), *Build the City: How people are changing their cities* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2016). Available online at www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/build-the-city-magazine

14   Drawing on affinities between *Eurozine*'s publishing activities and ECF's *Connected Action for the Commons* programme, a focal point was co-edited by the two organisations and launched in May 2016, exploring the prospects for a commons where cultural and social activists meet with a broader public to create new ways of living together: www.eurozine.com/focal-points/culture-and-the-commons

15   Nicola Mullenger (ed.), *Co-making the City: Ideas from the Innovative City Development meeting* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2017). Available online at www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/co-making-the-city-report-2017

16   inViable is a creative scientific agency based in Spain, oriented toward technology design for

sustainability and collective action. See http://inviable.is/

17   For this interactive visualisation tool, see http://connected-action-impact.culturalfoundation.eu/home

18   Medialab-Prado is a citizen laboratory of production, research and broadcasting of cultural projects that explores the forms of experimentation and collaborative learning that have emerged from digital networks. It is part of the Department of Culture and Sports (former Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism) of the Madrid City Council. Medialab-Prado is also the laureate of ECF's 2016 Princess Margriet Award. See http://medialab-prado.es

19   KLUMP Subtopia is an incubator for culture and creative business and social entrepreneurship, based in Botkyrka, Sweden. See www.subtopia.se/delvelop/incubator-klump-subtopia/

20   The three editions of the Idea Camp were made possible thanks to the generous support by OSIFE, Région PACA, Campenon Bernard Provence, Villa Méditerannée, Municipality of Botkyrka, Botkyrkabygge and the City of Madrid.

21   From the 'About' section of the *Connected Action for the Commons* online platform: http://political-critique.org/connected-action/about/

Idea Camp 2014, Marseille (France): Warming up with David Beckett. In the amphitheatre of the Villa Méditerranée.
Photo: Cédric Moulard

Idea Camp 2014, Marseille (France): 'Alternative City Tour' with the association Boud'mer.
Photo: Cédric Moulard

Idea Camp 2014, Marseille (France): Collaborative Media Lab with O2zoneTV.
Photo: Cédric Moulard

Idea Camp 2014, Marseille (France): Collective artistic creation with artist Aurélien Nadaud.
Photo: Cédric Moulard

Idea Camp 2014, Marseille (France): Workshop 'How can we create a new era of citizenship?' with Jon Alexander.
Photo: Cédric Moulard

Idea Camp
2015, Botkyrka
(Sweden):
Arrival at Subtopia.

Photo: Julio
Albarrán

Idea Camp
2015, Botkyrka
(Sweden):
Participants
playing
'Commonspoly'.

Photo: Julio
Albarrán

Idea Camp
2015, Botkyrka
(Sweden): 'Idea
Talk' by Michel
Bauwens entitled
'Commons and
the City'.

Photo: Julio
Albarrán

Idea Camp 2015,
Botkyrka (Sweden):
'Open view' by
Charlie Tims.

Photo: Julio
Albarrán

Idea Camp 2015, Botkyrka (Sweden): 'Ideas on Wheels' – idea development methodology.

Photo: Julio Albarrán

Idea Camp 2015, Botkyrka (Sweden): 'Beyond the Idea' – topical group discussions

Photo: Julio Albarrán
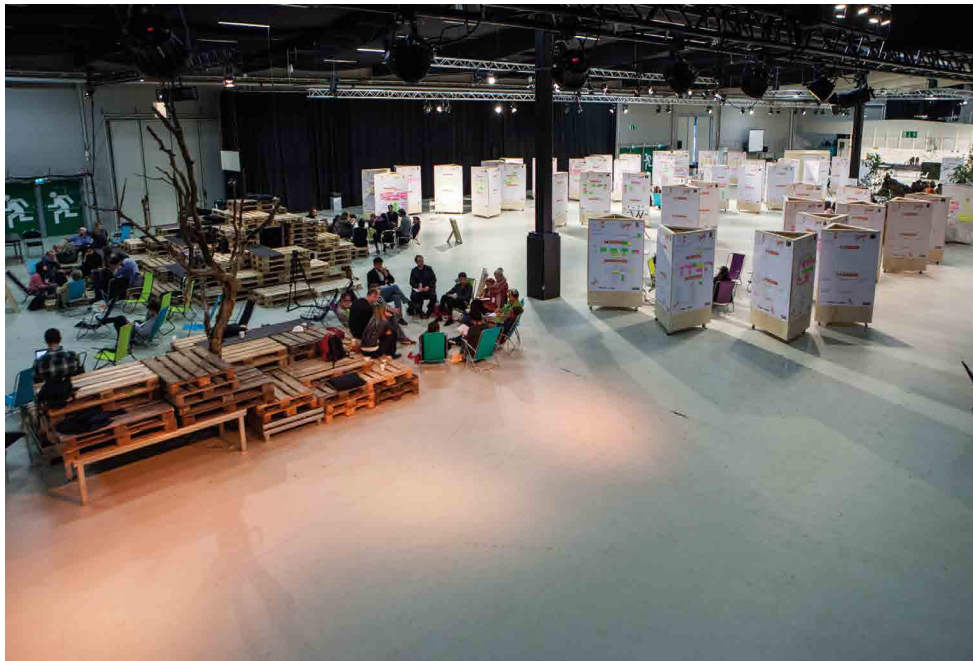
Idea Camp 2015, Botkyrka (Sweden): In the shuttle from Stockholm.

Photo: Julio Albarrán
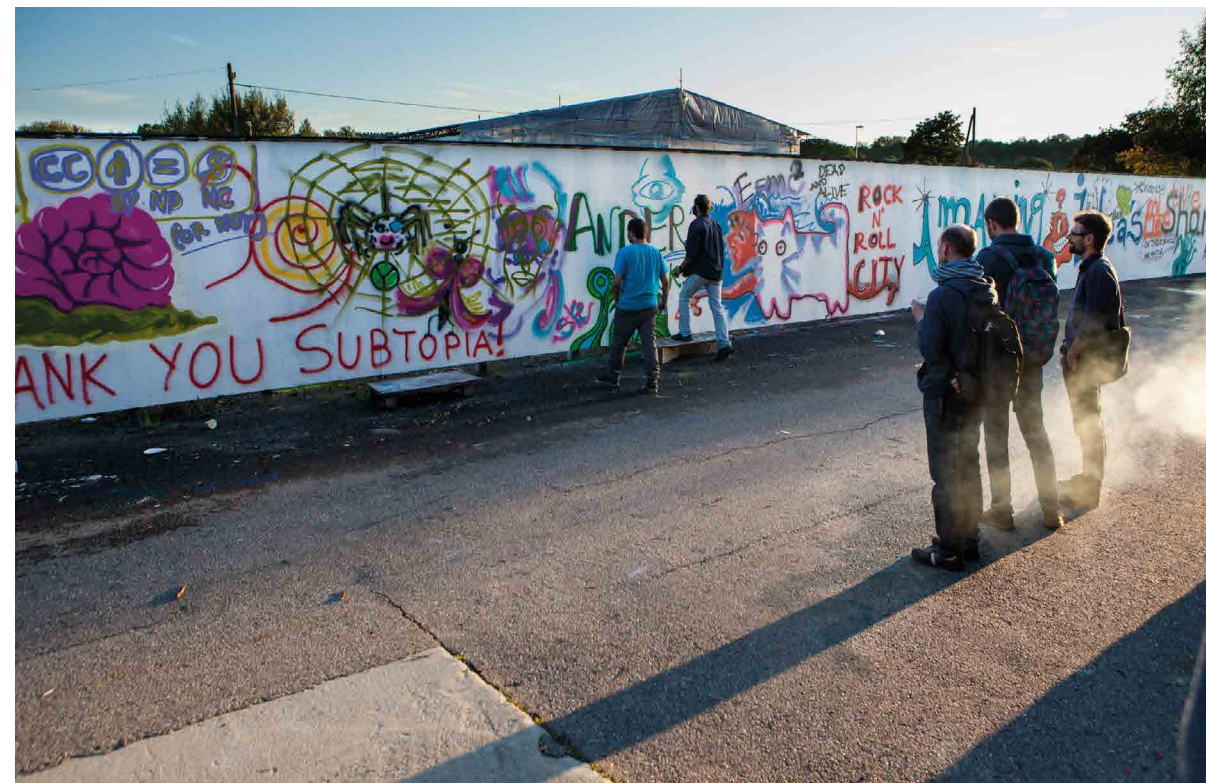
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Idea Camp 2015, Botkyrka (Sweden): 'Open wall' with Hugo Röjgård from the collective Graffitifrämjandet.

Photo: Julio Albarrán
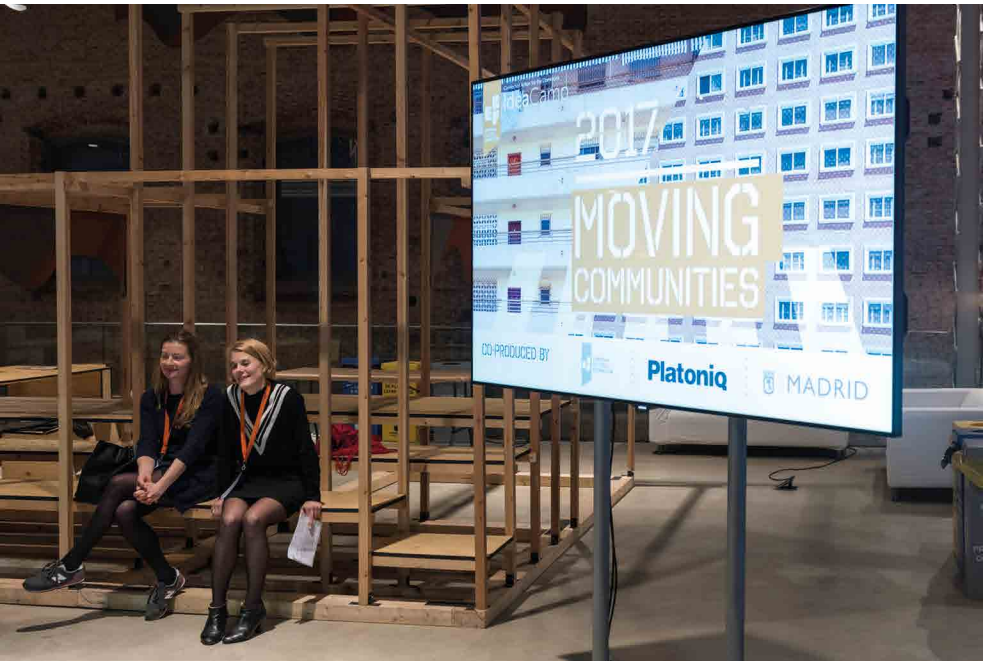
Idea Camp 2017, Madrid (Spain): Welcome evening at Daoiz y Velarde.

Photo: César Lucas Abreu

Idea Camp 2017, Madrid (Spain): 'Cooking Together' – a workshop run by Madrid-based collective Cocinar Madrid.

Photo: César Lucas Abreu

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Idea Camp 2017, Madrid (Spain): 'Idea development' – session entitled 'Set the scenario and the tone for the future'.

Photo: César Lucas Abreu

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Idea Camp 2017, Madrid (Spain): Welcome evening at Daoiz y Velarde. Pictured: Natasha A. Kelly, Idea Maker and recipient of ECF Research & Development grant in 2017.

Photo: César Lucas Abreu

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'On Urban Frontiers' – a walk through the neighbourhoods of Pacífico and Puente de Vallecas, facilitated by the Madrid-based collective La Liminal.

Photo: César Lucas Abreu

Idea Camp Under the Lens

a conversation between **Sam Khebizi**, **Anders Lindgren** and **Olivier Schulbaum**

moderated by **Lore Gablier**

LORE GABLIER is Programme Officer at the European Cultural Foundation, and has been the curator of the two last editions of the Idea Camp held in Botkyrka (2015) and Madrid (2017). She is also co-editor of the book *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* published in conjunction with the 2015 Idea Camp.

SAM KHEBIZI is the Founder and Director of Les Têtes de l'Art in Marseille. He has been working for ten years as an actor, dramaturge and trainer while simultaneously overseeing the emergence and development of the organisation. He is also administrator at ESS Regional Chamber and at SCIC SMartfr, a cooperative of 10,000 members in France, dedicated to cultural project management.

ANDERS LINDGREN worked at Subtopia as head of KLUMP – a growth space for cultural and social initiatives and businesses.

OLIVIER SCHULBAUM is co-founder of Platoniq (agile & social design thinking) and Goteo (social impact crowdfunding) in Spain. Since 2001, he has been carrying out projects where the social uses of ICT and networking are applied to enhance communication, self-training, social entrepreneurship and citizens' organisations.

Each Idea Camp took the form of a three-day programme of talks, one-to-one sessions, workshops, site visits, etc. These complementarity activities were designed in a way that opened participants up to challenges and inspiration, allowing them to be affected and moved by one another.

Our ambition with the Idea Camp was also to support participants in the development of their ideas, and to allow them to engage in a collaborative environment where peer-to-peer learning and openness were key. In order to achieve this, ECF and the hubs that were the hosts of the Idea Camp developed a methodology that evolved from one Idea Camp to the other, according to the specific context where the Idea Camp was held and the respective skills and interests of the hosting hub. This also took account of the learnings and feedbacks gathered over the years.

In the following conversation, Sam Khebizi, Anders Lindgren, Olivier Schulbaum and Lore Gablier look at the guiding principles and values of the Idea Camp. They analyse the methodologies underpinning the concept, and discuss the impact and potential development of this kind of practice in future.

The conversation took place over Skype on Friday, 14 July 2017.

LORE GABLIER: I would like to first discuss your involvement in the development of the Idea Camp and its methodologies. What were your initial guiding principles and core thinking?

SAM KHEBIZI: When we started discussing the Idea Camp during spring 2014, we had the concept – bringing together 50 participants and their ideas – but we didn't know how to deal with it. The Idea Camp was scheduled in Marseille the coming September so the timeframe was a huge challenge. But this helped release creativity. We collectively mobilised our experiences and expertise to design a programme and a methodology that would be useful for the Idea Camp concept in the future. This was also the first collaboration between the hubs in the *Connected Action for the Commons* network.

OLIVIER SCHULBAUM: Platoniq had already been developing methodologies for collective idea development for some time. We also have experience in organising very technical Hackathons. The Idea Camp was thus an opportunity to scale up the models we were using – ranging from design thinking to co-creation. For us, there were two main challenges: working with very embryonic ideas in an open space bringing together 50 people; and building up a community out of an event. We were asking ourselves: 'How to make the space more collective? How to move the ideas around?' For the first Idea Camp in Marseille, we combined parts of methodologies that we had used in the past together with some of Sam's ideas. And that translated into a physical support: a board on wheels on which we mounted the canvases of the idea development scenario.

ANDERS LINDGREN: I would say that it was also a fluke: the boards were at our disposal in La Villa Méditerrannée [venue where the 2014 Idea Camp was held in Marseille, France], and Sam proposed to use them. This inspired us to come up with the concept of the 'Ideas on Wheels'.

LORE GABLIER: The 'Ideas on Wheels' methodology was implemented in the Idea Camp in Marseille in 2014, and further developed for the Idea Camp in Botkyrka in 2015. How does the methodology work?

ANDERS LINDGREN: We needed to find how to bring together 50 people in a coherent and compelling manner. We wanted them to be active, to interact and get to know each other, to be open and share ideas. We also figured out that it would demand a lot of energy for them to understand the context in which they found themselves, and to relate to each other. That would leave them with little energy to be creative, so we needed to make it very easy for them to do the work they had come to do. So we designed a methodology that was straightforward and self-explanatory.

OLIVIER SCHULBAUM: The content of the idea development scenario was an adaptation of various techniques and principles from creative thinking, rapid prototyping and agile development. The canvasses that we designed were intended to guide participants to ask the right questions by filling in 'boxes' as an initial step toward later designing new scenarios and models in a group or organisation.

ANDERS LINDGREN: It was clear from the beginning that bringing together 50 participants who were not there to solve a common problem but to develop their own idea – with the help of others while also being at hand for others – implied the need for a very visual design that would allow people to immediately interact. It was also crucial that the designed space and the programme conveyed the feeling of a safe space: the Idea Camp was not about competition but about providing a space where people could trust each other.

SAM KHEBIZI: Our decision to use the boards available at the Villa Méditerrannée is also a good illustration of the way we conceived the Idea Camp. Each Idea Camp takes place in a particular context with a specific dynamic. We always felt that it was important to take into consideration the context, to be aware of the way the Idea Camp would relate to it and how it would be translated into reality. We had to ask ourselves: here is what we

have, what can we do with it? When organising an event such as the Idea Camp, it is crucial to acknowledge all the parameters: where we sleep, eat, how we laugh together, etc. In that sense, the Idea Camp reminds us of the basis of our relationship to space. Space is not neutral. It has a big impact in the way we learn, connect, work. We had to make sure the space we offered gave participants the opportunity of connecting in many different ways – one to one, in workshops, in big groups and through site visits.

LORE GABLIER: For the Idea Camp in Madrid in 2017, we implemented 'Moving Communities': a six-step methodology designed by the Platoniq team on the basis of the 'Ideas on Wheels'. The methodology also incorporates a digital component – the 'Roadbook' (See roadbook.ideacamp2017.eu). Could you describe this methodology?

ANDERS LINDGREN: The 'Moving Communities' methodology (www.ideacamp2017.eu) is based on collective conversations. Therefore, the Idea Makers would not focus too much on their own ideas, but on the overall concept of the idea development. This was an interesting development.

OLIVIER SCHULBAUM: The six-step scenario addresses partnerships, strategy, sustainability, storytelling. The physical supports of the 'Ideas on Wheels' became what we called a 'Digital Roadbook' – a dashboard that allowed the participants to keep track of their development. The 'Digital Roadbook' is the space where they translated the inputs that they got into their own project. Introducing a digital tool also allowed us to measure the improvement of an idea after the Idea Camp. And the Idea Makers would take home their 'Roadbook', and share it with members of their organisation, and apply it. I think this is even more interesting.

ANDERS LINDGREN: This way of sharing the development of ideas as part of a Commons and leaving traces is a political statement, I would say. It is about resistance and resilience. Being open is one of the greatest tools to counteract other forces that are more driven by the market or the capital. You can use this to develop a community instead of being left alone, and by yourself. It is about being together.

OLIVIER SCHULBAUM: Creating a methodology is creating a space, a type of relationship. What you define is a set of rules and a space, and this is like building a Commons. I would say that the Idea Camp is a Commons because it encompasses three essential aspects or ingredients of the Commons: it implies something to take care of collectively – i.e., the ideas, the space and the relationships that we are building; it includes some rules that are very important when defining the resource as a Commons – here the rules are basically the methodologies and the programme itself; and finally, it suggests the idea of sustainability – both in term of the Idea Makers taking care of their own sustainability, and of ourselves as a network taking care of the sustainability of the Idea Camp itself.

LORE GABLIER: The Commons is a core value of the Idea Camp and its methodologies. It also relates to the decision to release the methodologies with a Creative licence, and make them freely accessible online.

OLIVIER SCHULBAUM: We believe that applying this type of licence is the best way to proceed: it's more ethical, it's self-promotional for the people who are developing methodologies, and it ensures that people can improve their own processes. By publishing the methodologies online we are reinforcing the idea of temporal Commons in the analogue space into something that is digital, something we can trace, which enhances another type of relationship with the material. I would add as well that our main question when developing the Idea Camp in Madrid was: Can we do an Idea Camp tomorrow in the streets because there is a necessity for it? Can we use the Idea Camp methodologies in a city? We believe that the Idea Camp methodologies can be used very organically. The 'Moving Communities' is especially easy to implement: you just need chalk to draw the canvases on the street. And then you can reproduce these conversations taking place simultaneously, in which the methodology would support the moderation and ensure that someone is capturing what is discussed. We need more storytellers to talk about the stories and solutions that the ideas bring.

ANDERS LINDGREN: What Olivier is saying is very important. And I would add to this that it is also crucial to consider what happens after the Idea Camp. We have developed methodologies intended to help ideas germinate. But then, what happens when the Idea Makers go back home: Will they go back to their old habits? This is not necessarily bad, but we have to think also how we can make an impact and affect people when they are actually implementing their ideas. In that respect, it was important to create templates, canvases that would be available as an open source, and could continue to be used beyond the Idea Camp.

LORE GABLIER: How has working on the Idea Camp affected your work and the work of your organisation?

SAM KHEBIZI: Les Têtes de l'Art is used to working in a non-formal education context where art and culture are tools. Our question is: How do we learn? We don't learn only through conferences or one-to-one exchanges: we also learn by providing different perspectives and ways to reflect on our own practice and knowledge. This is how to make us move collectively. What we tried to bring to the Idea Camp was a way to learn from each other, involving the local community, and sharing knowledge at the European level. The Idea Camp also helped us to strengthen our position and legitimacy in the local context. At the time, Les Têtes was not yet identified as an organisation working on the European context or on European topics. And now there is no debate: even when a political change occurs, we are identified as a major organisation in the South of France.

ANDERS LINDGREN: As Olivier said, Platoniq is very advanced when it comes to developing methodologies, whereas I had been working more intuitively, seeking my own way. I was not familiar with these kinds of methodologies or ways of learning, so for me personally, it was a great learning curve. Being connected to that world also means a lot to Subtopia. We were already a cluster and a workspace, but now, we also provide development methodologies. We also made a book that includes the methodologies that we use and are now doing trainings and learnings on our own. Another great learning that I take away from my involvement in the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme

is that openness is a preferred mode. It is an exercise for people to reveal their business secrets, or be out in the open to get more help.

OLIVIER SCHULBAUM: As well as scaling up some of the methodologies that we tested before, we also learned something in relation to the theme of the 'Moving Communities' Idea Camp that we hosted. We had to work more in urgent terms, because of the pressuring issues related to migration, displacement, the threat of radical politics, etc. This very much relates to the idea of resistance that was mentioned earlier. We learned that the methodologies to build ideas also serve to answer urgent or burning issues and they can be used outside of the context of an Idea Camp. You don't need so much production or money to enhance political and social responsibility. Using this type of methodology works; it can be applied very quickly, very informally, on the streets.

LORE GABLIER: Thank you so much for your insightful analysis, which reminds us that everything is always moving and changing. We need to make sure we're on board with all the latest developments so that programmes like these are making the biggest impact over the long term for communities across Europe.

The 'Ideas
on Wheels'
[version 1]
methodology, Villa
Méditerranée,
Marseille, 2014.
Photos: Cédric
Moulard
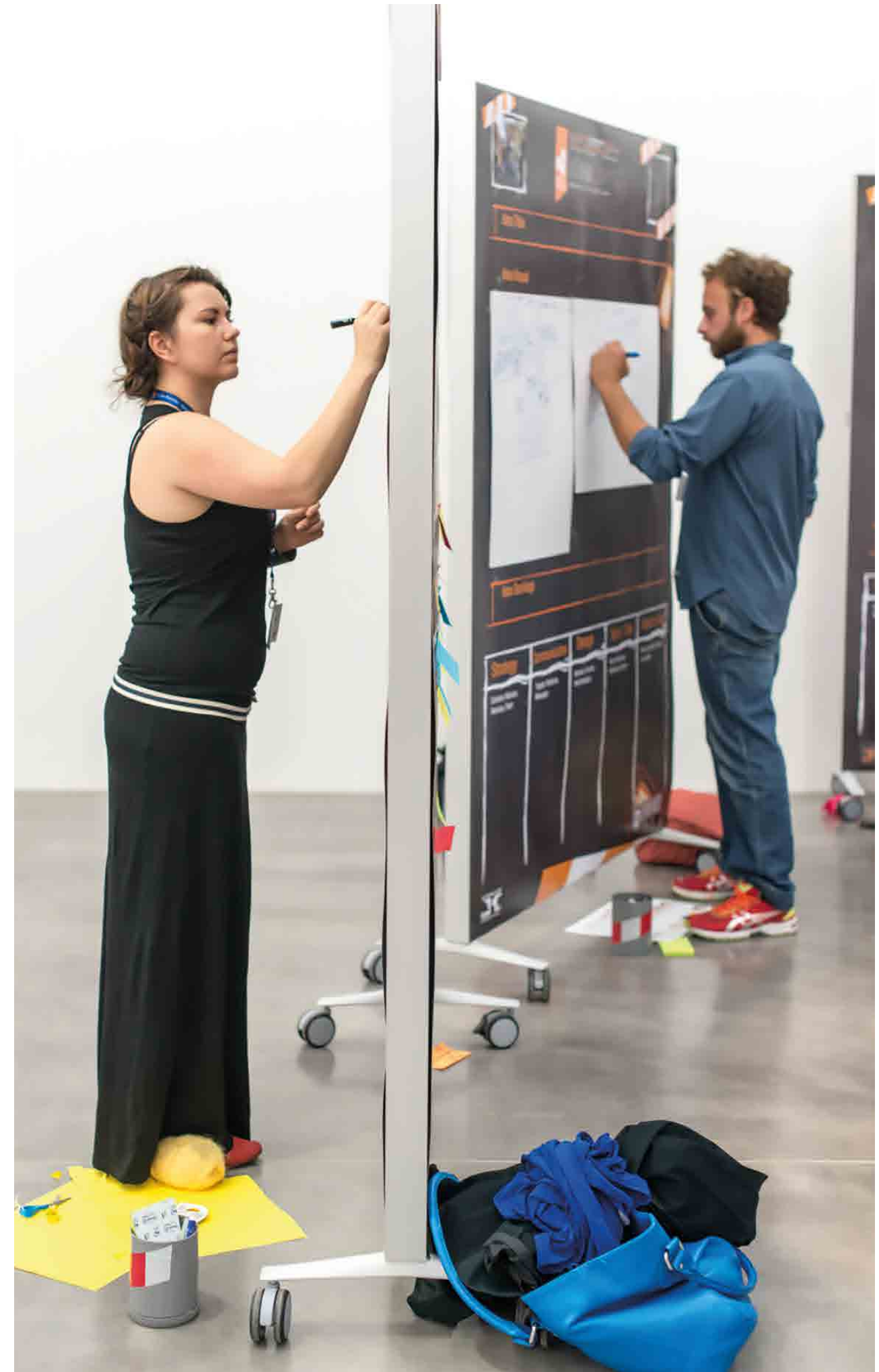
'Ideas on Wheels'
[version 2],
Subtopia,
Botkyrka, 2015.
Pictured: Juan
Lopez Aranguren,
Idea Maker
and recipient of
ECF Research
& Development
grant in 2015.

Photo: Julio
Albarrán

'Ideas on Wheels'
[version 2],
Subtopia,
Botkyrka, 2015.
Pictured: Steve
Threlfall, Idea
Maker and
recipient of ECF
Research
& Development
grant in 2015.

Photo: Julio
Albarrán

'Ideas on Wheels'
[version 2],
Subtopia, Botkyrka,
2015 Canvas.

Photo: Julio
Albarrán

Installation view of the 'Moving Communities' methodology', Daoiz y Velarde, Madrid, 2017.
Photo: César Lucas Abreu

Sam Khebizi facilitating Step 3 ('Stakeholder engagement strategy') in the 'Moving Communities methodology', Daoiz y Velarde, Madrid, 2017.
Photo: César Lucas Abreu

'Moving Communities' methodology, Daoiz y Velarde, Madrid, 2017. Step 3, 'Stakeholder engagement strategy'.
Photo: César Lucas Abreu

'Moving Communities' methodology, Daoiz y Velarde, Madrid, 2017. Step 5, 'Vision statement and expected impact'.
Photo: César Lucas Abreu

Come On, Come On, Let's Work Together

by **Charlie Tims** and **Shelagh Wright**

CHARLIE TIMS is a researcher, interested in creativity, public spaces and learning. He has worked with ECF on-and-off for a number of years, and currently works with Create Associates, a London-based consultancy that writes strategies for community and culture.

SHELAGH WRIGHT works with a diverse range of people and projects around the world on cultural and creative economy development, sustainable practice, activism and new leadership. She is London-based but a passionate internationalist.

There's a shared experience. You're close for a few days. It feels intensely inspiring. Ingrid has set up a Facebook group, there's also a Whatsapp – and Marco, Henrietta and Lucas are going to talk on Skype in a few weeks' time. Dietmar's creating a toolkit, which he'll email round by next Friday. Imed wrote some minutes. But will this spirit really keep going? Should it? Will you actually email Julio about that film he's trying to fund? Or will this all seem like a dream on Monday morning, when you're across an ocean, back at home, wearing different clothes and your phone works properly?

The creation of any new practice – new projects, artworks, organisations – is a social process. The very newness of these projects means they can't easily be organised into a 'course'. It's hard to make things happen in a new way by using old techniques and formal ways of doing things. Art comes to life in strange places. Tech companies start on students' sofas. Freelancers and small creative enterprises tend to arrange themselves in small spaces where they can socialise and learn from each other as they work. Ideas and actions come to life in scenes, DIY spaces, milieux, hubs, through friends and other communities.

Management professors Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger coined the term 'communities of practice' to refer to the kind of horizontal learning that happens within a group, as opposed to learning that comes down from the professor at the lectern.[1] They had observed that apprentice mechanics learned more from one another than they did from their teacher and concluded that "communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour." Lave and Wenger were looking at forms of learning but the term resonates for those of us who are trying to build or rebuild community in new ways.

To work in new ways, we need communities in which ideas can grow unexpectedly and be improved on, and where we can share practical advice of knowhow about what works and what doesn't work. Wherever new culture and ideas are forming – whether that's in Syria, where artists are finding new ways to communicate and relay the conflict; in Spain, where Enorme Studio, Basurama and PEZ Estudio are innovating in urban planning and public space; or in Blackpool (a seaside town in the north of England), where teenagers are inventing a new hybrid

of grime music – there is usually a group sparking off each other 'in a domain of human endeavour', sharing ideas, learning and practical advice in real time. These communities emerge from an urgent need to work out how to keep breaking new ground. It's less like learning how to drive a train – and more like learning to lay the track in front of it as it moves.

Travel has a powerful relationship to new ideas – especially in Europe. A 'grand tour' from London to Italy through Europe's great monuments, architecture and paintings was once a rite of passage for anyone who wanted to be considered educated. In 1987, four unremarkable promoters from south London travelled to Ibiza and discovered Amnesia – a club in a dilapidated farmhouse where a Brazilian DJ called Alfredo played an incongruous mix of records to people taking ecstasy. They took some and returned to Britain, starting clubs that would change going out in Britain. As one of the group, Nick Holloway, told *The Guardian* in 2007, "We were all standing in the pool, holding hands listening to Art of Noise's 'Moments in Love', like a load of wallies. All chilled out and loved up, thinking it was going to change the world... We came back literally wearing the T-shirts and holding the flyers and within five months, Paul started (the club) Spectrum, Danny started Shoom and I started the Trip... It was no accident. We knew it was going to be huge."[2] Equally the Brazilian Circuito Fora do Eixo (Out of the Axis Circuit), which emerged during the mid-2000s, grew through community from a local sharing economy for musicians and promoters to provide a whole parallel system for the sharing of culture and music across Brazil and beyond.

It's partly why Brexit seems so bad for creativity – travel will be harder all round and new ideas will suffer. While the European Parliament is debating whether it will give every 18-year-old in Europe a free

Interrail pass, in the UK we are travelling in a different direction.

But Brexit is running against the grain. Twenty years of the web and cheap travel seem to have made connecting people easier than ever before. If you have the time, it's easier to connect with like-minded people, easier to find inspiration in other places and cultures. Which is why public bodies, funders and angel investors who are interested in fermenting new ideas create new kinds of places: creative enterprise *zones*, maker *spaces*, idea *camps*, social *labs*.

Communities of practice emerge naturally; they tend to connect people who find each other and identify with one another. But to give real traction to communities of practice trying to work across established geographies and sectors, they need help. Foundations, funders and institutions have the power to combine groups of individuals who might not necessarily come together of their own accord – introducing mentors, small support funds and connections to wider systems of power. This both increases the chance of new ideas flourishing as well as their potential to become "a new model that that makes the existing model obsolete."[3]

Beyond the private sector where new ideas have a profit motive, support for communities of practice takes on a wider social significance. Margaret Wheatley – an anthropologist and professor of systems thinking – sees communities of practice as interventions that are in tune with how change happens in systems. "In all living systems (which includes us humans), change always happens through emergence. Large-scale changes that have great impact do not originate in plans or strategies from on high. Instead, they begin as small, local actions."

Wheatley continues: "While they remain separate and apart, they have no influence beyond their locale. However, if they become connected, exchanging information and learning, their separate efforts can sud-

denly emerge as very powerful changes, able to influence a large system."[4]

While she was writing about change within the education system and the army, the idea that connecting people to one another, and to those with power and influence can create a tipping point of change, is a seductive one. But it is not easy as the power dynamics between emergent communities of practice and big foundations and funders is obviously out of whack. It takes a real commitment from the powerful to act with humility, modesty and accountability to the community of practice. Policy-makers are often not so well equipped by their training, experience and fear of 'risk' (financial, reputational or timescale) to nurture communities of practice. This is a whole area for serious research and development: how do the powerful genuinely step back and empower the emergent to grow? And how do communities of practice resist the temptation to become institutions and start either resorting to old ways of working or just becoming another lobby of self-interest? Maybe it needs its own community of committed people engaged in this practice to work it out?

But let's get back to the meeting. The hack, the meetup, the lab thing. Are you leaving it behind, or is it coming with you? Will you stay in touch and learn from each other, or become just a collection mugshots of people on a website, who shared a box of cigarettes once.

The community is unlikely to grow on its own – especially if this was an international meeting – there will be no serendipitous encounters in the coffee shop next Wednesday. Somebody will need to help make it happen – signpost useful information, post funding opportunities, and most importantly, help make connections for people to ask each other for help and advice. This person will need to broker, to push people towards others they didn't initially realise they could share with. We're all busy – the

great paradox of communities of practice is that those who are truly working out new ways of doing things often lack the time to talk about them.

Communities of practice can start with the desire to develop new connections beyond where they already are and what they already know. But if that is all they aim for they're just a network and won't produce real, sustainable change. They need to be committed to openly sharing their learning and to growing a body of knowhow and ways of doing that can start to create the new 'rules of the game' or a new model or system. Learning in the community has to be shared for all to benefit – those in the community as well as those who will join and come later. They are not a zero-sum game. They are committed to building a Commons for change.

Any community of practice may stand a better chance of succeeding if there is a commitment to another meeting, a commitment to support exchanges in the future. Wherever it happens, learning and practice sharing requires a certain unavoidable amount of commitment – to be honest and open and share information about the realities of getting things done, even sometimes things you'd rather not share.

It might also depend on who is a part of the community. Communities of practice need shared purpose, values and sense of destiny – a 'domain' of practice that everyone involved recognises as relevant to them. Communities of practice need people who have interests similar enough, so they can help one another, but *different* enough to offer alternative approaches. If the balance isn't right, its members will be less likely to share and benefit from the knowhow – the business plans, funding pitches, success and failures – from which others can learn.

Much of this is about the architecture and design of a community of practice. Ultimately, though the community has to be

a *community* – a group of people who sustain and support one another through learning and sharing, who aren't reliant on one central source of organisation and control. This is a question of common resources and how they are sustained, how learning is codified so it can be passed on, active opportunities for others to join the community, etc. So, in some ways it's up to the people who set this thing up, but in others it's up to you, to all of us, who need to find real and practical ways of making change happen.

Charlie Tims and Shelagh Wright co-wrote a strategic paper for ECF in 2012 sharing their unique take on communities of practice. In this short piece, they share some of their findings and reflect on how working together in communities of practice can make change happen.

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[3] Buckminster Fuller, as quoted in Daniel Quinn, *Beyond Civilization: Humanity's Next Great Adventure* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999) p.137.

[4] Margaret Wheatley Ed.D. and Deborah Frieze, 'How Large-Scale Change Really Happens: Working With Emergence', *The School Administrator*, Spring 2007. www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/largescalechange.html

KNOWLEDGE
2 INSTITUTIONS
PARTICIPATION

How to transform a space into a place? This requires enormous amounts of work and commitment. And for those who are embarking on such a journey, this involves listening carefully to the needs, expectations and realities of each other. Throughout that journey, a new – embodied – knowledge is acquired. Just like a farmer who knows how to read the changing patterns in the cycle of the rain from one year to the next, one develops a unique set of behaviours, tools and strategies that help to cope with the tasks and challenges ahead.

In the following conversation, the participants highlight the importance of this type of knowledge, which they refer to as 'non-formal' knowledge. This kind of knowledge represents an invaluable 'capital' that plays a crucial role in the success of any collective undertaking. However, this capital tends to remain in the confines of the very communities within which it grows.

How, then, can we translate this non-formal knowledge into the curricula, expertise and procedures of academies and other public institutions? How can we prompt a transition towards more flexible, hybrid institutions – a task so necessary and urgent?

Drawing on participatory tools and models of governance, the Commons can play a pivotal role in this transition. However, as the participants in this conversation rightly point out, participation entails a number of paradoxes that need to be carefully considered, at the risk of otherwise being turned into a mere brand. Participation is not an end in itself: whenever someone takes part in the design of a project or in a decision, what truly matters is the reciprocity of the relationship. Also crucial is the collective accomplishments that allow participation to become a permanent learning process and the business-as-usual way of doing things.

From Space to Place

a conversation between **Antonija Eremut Erceg**, **Miodrag Kuč**, **Juan Lopez Aranguren** and **Moirika Reker**

moderated by **Vitalie Sprinceana**

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG is an art historian specialising in the protection of tangible heritage. She is currently working with the City of Solin in Croatia. She took part in the 2014 Idea Camp exploring the idea of turning an ex-quarry into an attractive space for the community.

MIODRAG KUČ is an architect and urban planner by education, and today mostly works as an artist and cultural manager. He is the programme co-director of the Center for Art and Urbanistics (ZK/U) in Berlin (www.zku-berlin.org) and coordinates various research projects. He took part in the 2014 Idea Camp with an idea called 'Clash over Trash', which explored the challenges and problems of the public park in Berlin where ZK/U is based.

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN is an architect and the founder of the collective Basurama in Madrid (www.basurama.org). He has been involved in activating abandoned places and working with communities for 15 years. As part of the project 'Auto-neighbour-hood', he spent six years recovering an abandoned space under a motorway, which inspired the idea he presented at the 2015 Idea Camp. Juan is currently editing all the interviews from the Research & Development phase of his project, which will be published online (www.autobarrios.eu).

MOIRIKA REKER is a visual artist and researcher based in Lisbon, Portugal. The idea she took to the 2014 Idea Camp was called 'Urban Orchards: Pick your City Fruit'. It was about planting a community orchard inside one of the parks in Lisbon that used to be part of a farm.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA is a sociologist, activist, journalist and political commentator. He is living and working in Chisinau, Moldova, and is a member of the Oberliht Association (www.oberliht.com).

This conversation took place over Skype on Wednesday, 6 September 2017.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA: In your projects, you all put emphasis on knowledge that you are developing as a tool to solve challenges that arise during the process of transforming spaces. Where, in your opinion, is this knowledge located?

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN: When I attended the Idea Camp, I found out that there was a lack of knowledge sharing not only on a local level but also internationally. I understood that it was a common problem all over the world. We are so focused on doing, on transforming, on working on site that we forget or don't have the time to share. And when you try to learn from academic papers, you find out that they usually describe the practice that is done on site or translate it to an academic world, but don't open up a dialogue. I would say that this knowledge comes from practice and is being developed with the people that we are working with: not only the neighbours, experts, local associations, but all of us. When you start to share and work together, new problems arise. You set a new paradigm, and this new paradigm comes with new situations and new problems that you have to face. That's one of the greatest things that happens when you do things instead of studying them.

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG: I agree with Juan: the best way to learn is by doing. There is so much theory about how to manage or activate space. But it doesn't necessarily apply to your local context. I also agree with the fact that we lack time and opportunities to exchange our knowledge and experiences. As I work with the local government it is not something very common. You have goals and you have to focus on them. Nobody has time for anything. You just go with the flow.

MIODRAG KUČ: I would like to add something that was not said. I think that there is a certain segregation among different typologies of knowledge – especially when it comes to formal education. We consider that all knowledge is important. In our formats

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we used to put people at the same table who usually don't have a chance to cross paths and the results that came out from the project are unexpected and inspiring. My tactic is to set up unusual situations in which new ways of sharing and producing knowledge would be possible. Some personalities or professions can sometimes dominate the others in a discursive way of thinking. We try to develop some kind of cultural sharing where we place all knowledge on a horizontal level. Sometimes we focus on the product: today we have to reach this, and it is not important who you are and what you know, because we are doing it together. This kind of collective intelligence works as a tool to create some kind of togetherness and a sense of belonging.

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN: I want to build on what Antonija was saying regarding informal knowledge: How to balance this knowledge with the formal knowledge that we are used to? Usually the university teaches us how to do, calculate and design things. But there are other competencies that are more related to relationships: How to talk with everyone on different levels? How to foresee a problem and face it? How to incorporate new knowledge and so on? Usually this kind of knowledge that is learned by doing is not legitimised. We should value the mix of both of them. An example: Do you learn more English at school or when you have a girlfriend from Dublin? Both are needed: one to improve the language; the other to practice it.

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG: Working with universities and students, especially from architecture and urban planning, can give you a good mix of these types of knowledge. It is an opportunity for them to practice the things that they are studying. They see different problems they will face and this prepares them for when they leave university. They realise that their disciplines are not only about drawing, but also about people. People use a space in one way or another and when you intervene, something completely different or unexpected happens. The model of working with students was good also for the citizens. When students are involved, when they share ideas and scenarios, people react with trust.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA: Since we have addressed the question of the formal knowledge that resides in institutions, I would like to follow this line of thought: What kind of public institutions are needed, in your opinion, in order to make projects like yours sustainable and successful? Should we reform the existing public institutions so that they will be more receptive? Or do we need completely new ones?

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG: I don't think that we need to erase existing institutions and establish new ones. Rather we should build on the things that we did well, and learn from the things we did wrong. In Croatia, for example, cultural institutions need more flexibility. They also need people from different disciplines to work together. It's not always easy. Sometimes institutions are not so willing to work together. And this is a problem in my context.

MOIRIKA REKER: It is important to keep the non-formal knowledge present at the institutional level, although this is not something easy to do. As Juan mentioned before, there is the academic knowledge, but there is also the institutional knowledge about how things are

done. What's important is not only how you design a project, but also how you put it into practice. Therefore it is crucial that institutions are open to non-formal knowledge. Maybe we don't need new institutions, but to integrate the expectations and demands of the community into the institution.

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN: Institutions have expertise when it comes to making things happen. I started working for the local city council in Madrid and I found out how it works. Sometimes institutions are like black boxes and you don't understand why decisions are being taken. You don't know what happens, how much effort everything takes and how many resources they have. It is important to act to set bridges between formality and informality, to have institutions-in-between that can link the informal world and the formal world, to translate so that people really know what is happening on the other side.

MIODRAG KUČ: I see nowadays more activists becoming part of city councils. This might be a good sign for a transformative power. I think that instead of dismantling official institutions and, for the sake of our discussion, cultural departments of local municipalities, we should really add some kind of quota for them to include people from more activist parts of society. This could reshape the structures embedded in modes of acting when there is no need to transform, when salaries come on time or the workload is too big. On the other hand, besides reshaping or refreshing existing institutions, we need to look constantly for hybrid institutions, especially in the field of culture. Why? Because they are setting new developments, standards; they are the source of social innovation, doing sometimes much more for urban development than planners. From the experience I have working in ZKU, I can say that it's necessary to have a dialogue with the authorities, and to constantly give them new models of how work in culture can be done. Because of this, it's really important for the society and national governments to support the formation of new institutions. And I am not talking only about the NGO sector. I am really talking about unusual civic-public institutional forms that will have access to public funds, beyond neighbourhood or city funding schemes.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA: How do you see the role of culture in reclaiming public spaces and places, for inclusion and for democratisation of public spaces?

MIODRAG KUČ: Culture is the easiest way to communicate claims: spatial, political and any other. Of course we should also be clear what we mean by 'culture'. Definitely it is not the role of culture to just entertain and fill the gaps in your free time. But in the case of, let's say, Berlin where cultural diversity is very high, culture is also a parliamentary discussion in the public space. Many claims from marginal communities are much easier to see in the public sphere and then on the political arena when expressed through culture. For me personally, the role of culture is to ask important questions: Where are we? Where are we heading? And what have we done wrong?

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN: It is true that sometimes institutions are too static or too solid. They have a lot of problems to deal with the unexpected, with the experiments and exploration. The informal world is much faster and more ready to do this kind of thing.

Culture and art play a key role in allowing institutions to experiment without being in a hurry. Through art and culture you can not only ask questions but also experiment with different situations and work with things that are not expected. Culture can be a lab where institutions and society altogether can explore without fear.

MOIRIKA REKER: I agree that institutions are sometimes very static; even cultural institutions are often very rigid and vertical. This is why it is very important to open up to parallel sectors, to have cultural institutions that are spaces for open discussions and experimentation. This experimental part is essential because we don't need to always follow the same system or the same way of integrating culture into public space. Cultural institutions should be more open to experimentation with different groups in society, to experiment with different uses of the same space. We have mostly music or theatre festivals in public spaces. They are great but this is not the only way of organising shared experiences of place. Integrating other ways of cultural expression or exchanges of ideas could open up to new solutions also.

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG: We should definitely support cultural diversity and the use of culture as a tool for participation or for some kind of collective questioning. People are more open for cultural events than other kinds of events. They feel comfortable playing different roles, to say or think things that maybe in some other situations they would not have the courage to do. Culture and cultural events with a participative character can give us the tools to subtly collect good ideas for transforming our way of managing places and spaces.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA: Antonija, you are mentioning cultural events that have a participatory character and I would like to discuss the notion of participation itself. In your projects you are all trying to involve local communities as participants, as active implementers of the project, as stakeholders. And it appears that people want to participate. I would like to see what are the risks or the challenges that you are facing? How to avoid situations when you are doing something that is participatory but people see it as an external expert intervention and don't develop – not just a sense of ownership, but strong ties to the project?

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG: Participation is not an easy process. You should really know the methodologies and tools. Also people who are participating need to have some knowledge about how to participate. Otherwise, you risk exploding. From the perspective of local government, people are afraid of criticism. But if you want the participation to be true you should really analyse the recommendations and criticisms that you get. When people see that things are really changing as a result of their participation and recommendations, they want to participate again. Then they really want to discuss questions and give good recommendations, especially regarding urban planning. Because they know their neighbourhoods. But if you only invite them to participate but never give feedback, this is not really participation.

MOIRIKA REKER: Participation is definitely very problematic. For public institutions it is not easy to have 'ordinary people' participating. It could be the fear of losing control be-

cause in the end the public institution is responsible for what is happening to the place. Also, very often, the word 'participation' is being turned into a slogan. Every city wants to be known as open to participation although this participation is not real. For instance you can vote or you can make suggestions. For a citizen to be really able to participate is a significant issue. Even if a suggestion is not taken further, the fact that time is spent assessing it is very important. What I realised after a few years talking to people who really wanted to be part of the transformation of their city is, as Antonija mentioned, that they know their neighbourhood. Sadly, very often there is not much communication between urban planners and the residents. Some people told me that they tried to do something, and when they realised that their participation was not taken into account, they became suspicious and distrustful of further participation. So it's important to be open to participation not only as a slogan.

ANTONIJA EREMUT: There is no absolute participation. It is always someone who gives an idea and someone who decides. Now the question is this: Will the person or the body who decides consider all the pros and cons? I have experience from both sides and I see the challenges of both of them. It's really difficult.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA: Juan, you are currently working with the city council of Madrid. How does participation look from that perspective?

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN: In my opinion, participation is a very wild word. None of us is trained in participation. Sometimes people who are quite close think of participation in a very different way. For one, it would be a consultation. For another, it would be co-designing. And for another, it would be to construct with their own hands. For institutions and for people who have been doing things in the same way for a long time, participation is really scary. When we start working on participatory processes, we try to define aims, goals and capacities of each of the people or entities that are going to participate. So we can then set a framework where everyone is comfortable. Later on, all of us can agree on the limits of this framework, and if it needs to be transformed or adapted to other aims, desires or needs. Participation is a really flexible way of doing things. The same people can aim to participate in the beginning of the project, and later on, they can decide to do it in a different way. So it has to be flexible if you want people to stay involved. On the other hand, is it the goal of participation to keep people doing things together? Sometimes participation is for something else. To me, this is a debate that is quite complex, but at the same time quite nourishing and healthy. Because it forces us to know the people we are working with, and to exchange a lot with them.

MIODRAG KUČ: Personally, I become more and more sceptical about participation as a tool. Through some kind of strange development, especially here in Berlin, participation started to be used to cover a real problem and make some kind of playful stage for democratic expression. In the end, the power to decide is not with the ones who participated. There is also something very specific about participation: a lot of time is invested in it. But who in this kind of society has the time to participate? My direct experience is that it would generally be white middle-class people with some extra time. These people would push their ideas and these might eventually be translated and have spatial consequences. For me, it's

a big political question: How does participation reach all corners of society as sometimes the process is too designed. I am more interested in access to resources.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA: I agree with you, Miodrag. You also mentioned the notion of time: in a way, it contextualises our discussion, or inserts it into the larger context of neo-liberal capitalism in which we are living. Under the pressure of real estate, capitalist consumerism, gentrification, privatisation and tourism, big parts of our cities are increasingly becoming 'non-places'. Maybe you are familiar with this concept by the anthropologist Marc Augé: basically, his idea was that these are places of transitory passage where we are anonymous. It's like the shopping mall: it's a place where you consume, and not a place to engage with. In a way, the non-place of a shopping mall is being generalised to the level of the whole city. One of the most important features of these non-places is their relationship to time: we are allowed to occupy or move through them only for a short time, they cannot be inhabited. What is the way of transforming these non-places into places of human interaction, where we are not just anonymous but human beings with dignity?

MOIRIKA REKER: My idea was to create a place in the public park where people are allowed to spend time together and get to know each other, instead of just passing by. Transforming a public park into a common garden: that was my goal. You are absolutely right to stress the issue of tourism. Lisbon, for instance, has become a very popular tourist destination so a lot of projects are being developed to build new squares or renovating buildings that were falling apart. In a way, this is very nice because the city is being cleaned up. But at the same, there is of course a lot of pressure of gentrification processes because all these old neighbourhoods are now being occupied by tourists or by people who want to make money through tourism without regard for the local residents. We are witnessing a lot of transformations of old places (used by local people) into places built for the comfort of the tourists. It is of crucial importance for the city to decide if it wants to be like every other city, to lose its identity. At the same time, there is a counter movement of people, especially young people, who are trying to regain access to places.

MIODRAG KUČ: The concept of time as scarcity is quite metaphysical. We have a problem now in Berlin: a big portion of the city – what we call the 'tourists' bubble' – is really becoming a non-place as a whole. An entire part of the city is getting alienated from the people who live in the neighbourhood. It's problematic that this urban fragmentation is being considered normal or a 'natural' consequence of urban development. One of the roles of cultural institutions is to fight this urban development. That's why we had a lot of marches before the federal elections at the end of September. We have to go not just on the streets, but also to open new processes. It is not enough to just say things loudly, but we also need to take other steps: do juridical claims, explore and use all possible democratic rights, run new initiatives, etc. I'll just mention some of them: the right for living in the inner city, social housing. All these things are becoming more visible to everybody. In that sense, dignity means not only to have more square metres in a park, but to have your voice heard, and this is one of the biggest challenges of the city. We are just one district that is quite central and at the same time problematic, but this applies to the whole city. Sometimes on the

neighbourhood scale you can see the much bigger problems of the society in general. We should always look into our immediate surroundings through a range of different scales. The fact that we are part of the neighbourhood traffic simply by virtue of living there implies that we are part of a capitalist reproduction. It's necessary that this is understood by everyone, not just by cultural agents and intellectuals.

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN: For one of our projects, we work in one of the lowest-income neighbourhoods in the city of Madrid, with the largest population of immigrants. The problem of dignity was mainly a problem of identity: how residents identify themselves, and how they thought they were perceived from outside. When trying to work with dignity and identity, time is one of the main tools. You need to work deeply in many different ways. Cities are such complex monsters: you cannot just do collaborations, events; you have to work on all levels. It is also about feelings, about context.

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG: I think that time is a very important parameter in every process because it gives us an opportunity for an open ending. The neighbourhood where I started implementing the project was sometimes called 'Beirut' among the inhabitants. It was a former cement worker settlement in which deprived people live: they do not own the houses that were built by the cement factory. So people have a very negative image of that area now. At the same time almost everybody in Solin has someone in their circle who has worked in the cement industry. So they are really attached to it and somehow are proud of it. And on the other hand, it also caused big discussions in the city. You cannot easily intervene or improve things there. So my intention with this project was to give time to the people so they can intervene and adjust the place to their needs in future. Time can really give us an opportunity to transform the mental picture of some areas, and give us the space for thinking and working slowly. Time is a very important factor that is often neglected.

VITALIE SPRINCEANA: I'll have one last question and I'll address it first to Miodrag because it relates to the issue of scale that he was mentioning earlier: the multiple scales on which we are working, thinking, but also in which we are embedded. On one hand, most of your projects have a local focus – a city, a neighbourhood. But at the same time, you are addressing problems that go beyond the local level: housing, trash, urban gardening, etc. What is your way of addressing the issue of multiple scale, of going 'translocal'?

MIODRAG KUČ: Another big question! After years of just doing things, we came up with four discursive pillars that aim to explain theoretically to ourselves what we are doing. One of them is called 'Bridging global discourses and local practice'. Basically, it's about inviting artists in residency to rethink the immediate surrounding or locality as a starting point for their work. And this somehow seems to show very interesting results. For example, perception of what is semi-public in Africa is very different from in Germany. So we try to hear all these perspectives of people who actually come 'decontextualised' in our surrounding. It's very important to discuss this sometimes very Eurocentric view of what public space is with people from the so-called 'Global South'. One of the main ways to deal with this locally is to make a new education format. We are trying to transform ourselves into some kind of critical urban pedagogy centre in

order to open up possibilities for developing non formal educational formats: they can be short workshops of three hours; they can be part of already existing formats; they can be part of Erasmus mobility.

JUAN LOPEZ ARANGUREN: There is a global problem that we are facing now locally. We need to introduce as many different actors as we can. We usually don't get in touch with each other. We don't know what others are doing that could be linked to our own experience, and can give another dimension, a more complex answer to the situation. From my experience, it is sometime not about proposing something new but being able to coordinate, identify those who are facing a similar situation. Of course, one of the main challenges is to be able to coordinate not only locally but also internationally. So we are able to face a situation globally.

ANTONIJA EREMUT ERCEG: Most of the time, I am really focusing on the level in which I can have an impact, and that's definitely local and regional – and mostly on a practical level and not a theoretical one. But we are also part of a transnational exchange of knowledge networks. We share our experiences with other stakeholders and institutions. It is inspiring for the local community to see that there are other people, other institutions, other cities that are dealing with the same problem, and from which we can learn in order to avoid making the same mistakes. Although Croatia is a very small country and considered as being less developed, we also have things to share.

MOIRIKA REKER: We are all facing different issues at the local level that we share on the global scale. And as Antonija was saying, by being part of international groups we can find help, learn about other solutions, and better address problems that we have at the local level. Even though we are not always aware of it, we are all engaged at the global level.

Antonija Eremut Erceg's and Moirika Reker's projects are featured in Build the City: How people are changing their cities *(Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2016).*

Places for Sharing: Tools for Place-making and Social Research

by **Jekaterina Lavrinec**

JEKATERINA LAVRINEC, Ph.D., is an urban researcher, participatory artist and educator in urban studies. She is a co-founder of Laimikis.lt, urban games and research Lab (since 2007) that launched creative communities' initiatives in underused urban spaces and created conditions for inclusive cultural development. As an Associate Professor at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, she is a co-founder of the Creative Industries programme, where she teaches courses in urban studies and creative communication in public spaces. She participated in the Idea Camp in Marseille in 2014. Her idea 'Open Code Urban Furniture: Co-Design Workshops' was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant in 2015.

Public places play an important role in our cities: they are spaces for social contact. By providing comfortable conditions for people to sit, to meet, to have open discussions, to freely perform individual and collective activities, public places can foster inclusiveness and interactions between different social groups. Design solutions can serve to 'adjust' the level of openness and activeness of public places. In his classical study *The Social Life of Small Public Places* (1980), William H. Whyte demonstrated how urban design prolongs and shortens the time of stay in the urban places.[1] For example, the length, location, mobility and variety of sitting places (benches, chairs) all contribute to the popularity of a place. However, as well as its direct function (e.g., sitting, throwing away garbage, providing light, etc.) urban furniture might have a number of extra functions, generating playful scenarios of cooperative use. In part, it depends on the activeness of the users: for example, for those who practice *parkour*, urban settings emerge as a number of challenging obstacles and inviting possibilities.

However, in cities around the world there are lots of deactivated public places where social contacts are reduced to a few formal scenarios. The problem of *non-places* that lack their identity, history and scenarios for social contacts was formulated by Marc Augé in his study on supermodernity and non-places.[2] According to him, non-places might look like social places, yet they are designed for avoiding social contacts. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, "the main feature of the 'public, but not civic' places [...] is *the redundancy of interaction*. If physical proximity – sharing a place – cannot be completely avoided, it can be perhaps stripped of the challenge of 'togetherness' it contains, with its standing invitation to meaningful encounter, dialogue or interaction. If meeting strangers cannot be averted, one can at least try to avoid the dealings."[3] Moreover, some cities or districts lack formal public places.

In Vilnius, the Laboratory of Urban games and research 'Laimikis.lt' started dealing with the problem of deactivated public places in 2009. Back then, in Lithuanian cit-

Burbuliatorius – soap bubble gatherings that take place in public spaces across Lithuania and in cities around the world every second Monday in summertime. Launched in 2009 (http://laimikis.lt/).

ies there were a number of post-Soviet spaces that were not being used in new ways after ideological Soviet monuments were removed in the early 1990s. With huge recreational potential, these places were used mostly for transition, to get from one location to another. To bring these recreational places back to the 'mental maps' of residents, we have been developing and launching periodic mass gatherings. One of them, 'Burbuliatorius – soap bubbles gathering', started bringing people together every second Monday in summertime just to spend an hour or two together, blowing soap bubbles. The initiative has spread across Lithuania and to other countries.

Collective periodic actions bring new life to big public places. By making simple things (like soap bubbles) together with strangers and by synchronising with other cities, rare experiences of *togetherness* are created. Urban ritual

as a repetitive collective action breaks routine and brings new stories and new meanings to these public places. Shared emotions, stories, experiences and needs of the actual users of these places must be taken into account while developing new visions for these forgotten places. However, participatory urban planning is not widely used in planning processes in Lithuania. We believe that, by creating conditions for people to share some time making things together in public places, we are building the groundwork for public dialogue on the further development of these locations. Shared and articulated experiences of various groups of users of urban spaces are a basic condition for inclusive urban development.

Shared experience is an important component in revitalising any kind of public place. In small public places playful interactive objects create a pretext for conversations between strangers. For example, by installing a Street

Blog anywhere in the city, the Laimikis.lt team provided a place for discussing various topics and sharing small items. Being installed on the streets, a spot for meeting and talking is established. Creative objects in the streets are able to create small temporal public places. They turn transitional spaces into a spot for meetings and sharing experiences.

After posting a message on the Street Blog, leaving items for others, people usually return, looking for some reciprocal gesture from other users. By providing passers-by with the possibility of leaving a message, picture, or a book for another stranger, little by little you create a temporal urban network of the returning users. It is the very first step in

developing a sense of trust between strangers in the city.

As an object with multiple functions (a place for writing, discussing, sharing some items), the Street Blog brought us to the idea of multifunctional urban furniture for sharing. This place-making tool is effective in neighbourhoods where there is a need for public places. When approaching the neighbourhood, we identify spots that can be developed into places for meetings and gatherings. After that, a series of open events are launched on those spots, which little by little, gain symbolic value and turn into public places. Temporal furniture and art interventions might be tested on the spot during this

Interactive objects that provide a space for direct and indirect contact between its users is one of the tools for revitalising small public places. Developed in 2009, the Street Blog provides a place for sharing messages, drawings, books and small objects (http://laimikis.lt/).

Dragon's field

Giedraičių g.

Wooden houses (residential)
C19 – the beginning of C20

Krokuvos g.

Skyscrapers (offices),
the beginning of C21

Block of flats
the end of C20

Neighbours' notice board

Little free library

Swings

Sport equipment
(2 pieces)

Module urban
furniture (4 pieces)

Street standpipe

period. If short-term interventions succeed, permanent urban furniture can be co-developed and installed. For example, after several years of creative actions and art installations in the neighbourhood of Shnipishkes in Vilnius, residents of the neighbourhood chose an alternative name (Dragon's Field) for the municipal plot where community meetings and events took place. Collective creative activities bring new meanings to the places, turning them into sites of shared experience.

For the development of public spaces in the neighbourhoods, we created a construc-

tion set that could be adapted to the needs and wishes of different groups of residents. It was named Open Code Urban Furniture. The idea was to provide people in the neighbourhoods with flexible tools for place-making that could fit with various needs. This module urban furniture was created in 2015, with ECF's support. A construction set consists of several wooden and concrete modules (cubes), which are instrumental in arranging a space for sharing (see Issuu Laimikis.lt for the schemes). The construction set proposes only basic forms and principles, while leaving lots of space for the co-design process (con-

figuration of the blocks and unlimited choice of colours). The solution was inspired by the Tetris game. It was a result of Laimikis.lt cooperating with the local maker-space and with the groups of residents from four neighbourhoods in Vilnius.

What we found was that urban furniture can be instrumental not only as a place-making tool but also as a research tool to shed light on the essential characteristics of public spaces and the needs of communities. Depending on the level of

trust and safety in each neighbourhood, different configurations of the urban furniture were arranged. The co-design process is essential in creating a sense of ownership among the users of the public places and residents of the neighbourhoods. Being set as a long-term programme (not as one-off event), open creative activities in public places are instrumental in shaping the identity of the locations (squares, neighbourhoods, districts) and in activating local networks of mutual trust.

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[1] William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Public Places* (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1980).

[2] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (New York: Verso, 1995).

[3] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

↖
Map of growing activities on the Dragon's Field, Shnipishkes, Vilnius in Lithuania.

→
Module urban furniture serves both as a tool for place-making and as a research tool to study the level of safety and trust in neighbourhoods.

OPEN CODE URBAN FURNITURE

A construction set, adaptive to the needs and wishes of different neighbourhoods. Instrumental in arranging spaces for sharing.

Developed by

Powered by:

The research undertaken to develop this idea was supported by the European Cultural Foundation.

PROPOSED SET OF DETAILS
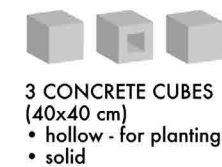
3 CONCRETE CUBES
(40x40 cm)
• hollow - for planting
• solid

3-4 WOODEN DETAILS
open for many scenarios:
• sitting, planting, keeping and sharing things,
• playing, arranging neighbours' picnics and more

FIND YOUR OWN CONFIGURATION
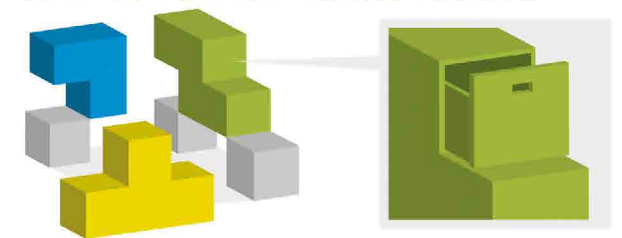
CHOOSE THE COLOURS
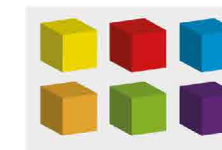
• laminated: black
• laminated: white
• non-laminated - for colouring
• concrete details = concrete colours.

This construction set was co-developed with resident of four different neighbourhoods in Vilnius (http://laimikis.lt/).

Office of Displaced Designers (ODD)

by **Shareen Elnaschie**
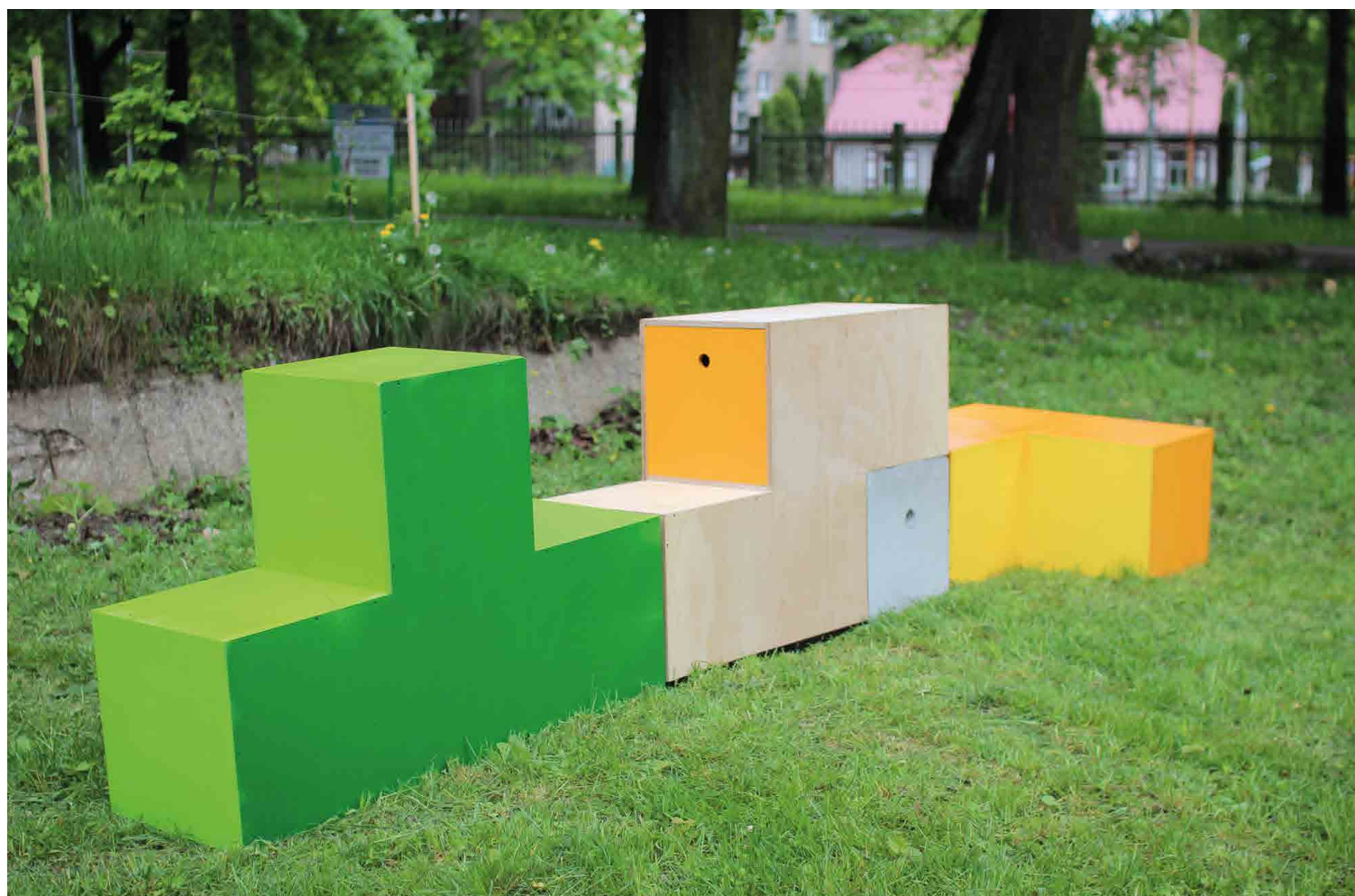
SHAREEN ELNASCHIE is an architectural and urban designer, and action researcher working at the intersection of international cooperation, sustainable development and humanitarian aid. She is also a design educator. Shareen co-founded Office of Displaced Designers with Kimberly Pelkofsky in August 2016. She participated in the Idea Camp in Madrid in 2017. Her idea 'ODD' was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant in 2017.

When consuming mass media, it's easy to forget that a refugee is just a normal person who has been defined by the abnormal situation in which they find themselves. It is a term that overlooks the individual, compounding ideas of 'otherness'.

Lesvos, the largest of the Greek Aegean islands, forms part of the frontier between mainland Greece and Turkey, and has been an important landing point on the migration route for those escaping war-torn countries. In 2015, its geographical location threw the island to the forefront of the so-called European refugee crisis, when thousands reached its shores, putting strain on an already struggling economy. When the EU-Turkey deal came into effect in March 2016, the flow of people was diverted and the numbers of new arrivals to the island dropped significantly. However, those lucky enough to have found a degree of safety were now trapped in a seemingly endless limbo; restricted from moving forward but unable to turn back. For many individuals, there was a strong sense of time being wasted and being isolated from the rest of the city.

Whilst Lesvos has generally been extremely sympathetic to the issues faced by refugees, it can be hard to translate empathy into connection. With limited economic opportunities, a lack of cultural understanding, and suspicions surrounding the humanitarian response and their motivations, relations between the displaced and host communities are strained. Interactions are largely transactional, limiting the chances for any meaningful connections.

Office of Displaced Designers (ODD) is an architecture and design organisation that takes a creative approach to these issues, challenging the typical narrative and misconceptions about refugees. We are a future-focused organisation that facilitates skills-sharing and professional development opportunities for both refugees and locals on Lesvos who either have a background in design or who have a keen interest in learning new design-related skills. We strive to improve cultural understanding by providing professional training programmes in design for diverse groups united under the umbrella of 'creative community'. Our practice is embedded within the context of Lesvos where we use workshops and projects as opportunities to explore and celebrate the place in which we are located.

Co-design holds much potential as an approach to complex issues. It can highlight the things that people have in common: interests, goals, and ambitions for the future, rather than differences, using them as catalysts for positive change.

For many, these moments are brief. Lesvos is still a place of transition and our participants move on and resettle across Europe and beyond. But the work they have created and the conversations they have shared remain.

Participant recording sounds of the city during the 'Sounds of Lesvos' workshop.

Participants creating cyanotype prints during the 'Visual Storytelling About Place' workshop.

Prototyping a social gaming tour of the city of Mytilene (capital of the Lesvos island).

Pop up exhibition showcasing works produced during the 'Sounds of Lesvos' workshop, facilitated by metaLAB (at) Harvard.
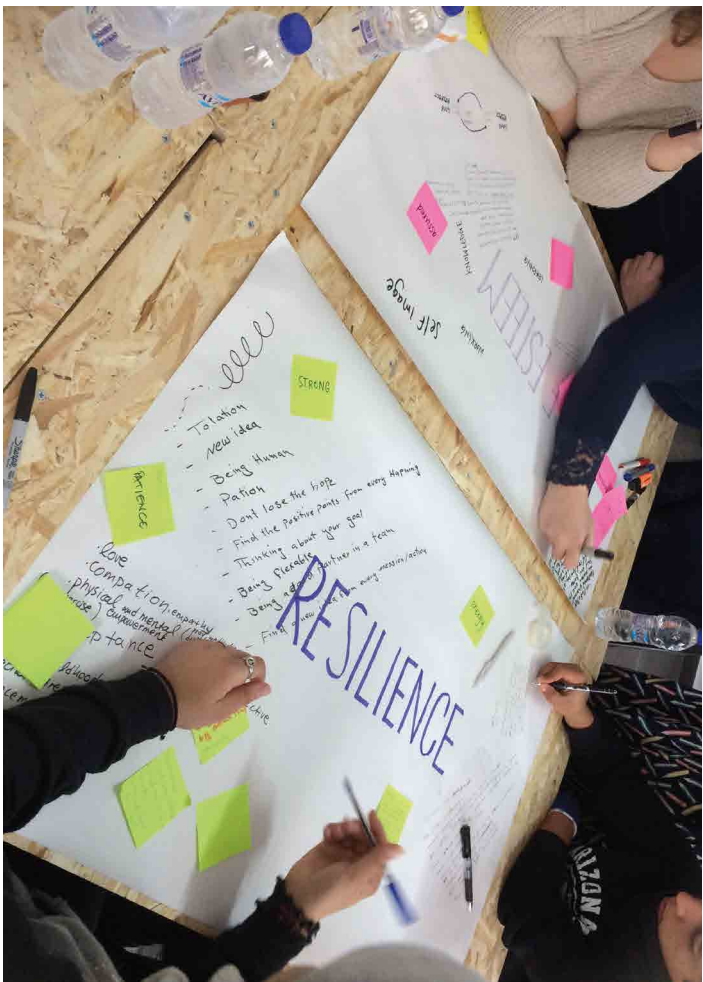
Discussions on vulnerability, resilience and self esteem during a documentary film making workshop.

Summer Cinema in the Open Air

by **Nicolai Chirnev**

NICOLAI CHIRNEV was born in a Russian speaking family of Bulgarians in Gagauzia Autonomy of Moldova, in 1991 (the same year Moldova gained independence). He studied history, geography and cultural heritage at the Pedagogical State University in Moldova. Films play a very important role in his life – he strongly believes in their educational potential and positive influence on the society. Nicolai is currently working as a tourist guide and participated in the Idea Camp held in Botkyrka in 2015. Nicolai's idea 'Summer Cinema in Open Air' was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant in 2015.

The social, political and economic issues in Moldova are so complex that cultural projects have never been a priority, especially for state institutions, even those that are responsible for cultural development. I was often running into this problem during the first three years (2013-2015) when I was looking for financial support for repairing an old Soviet summer theatre and transforming it into a modern open air cinema. The money I requested in my letters to municipality structures, private companies and embassies was so ridiculously low in comparison with their resources that – apart from idea that people working there just don't care – I couldn't find another explanation for all the refusals I received.

In spring 2015 I read an article about ECF's call for ideas for the Idea Camp and I decided to apply. That decision changed my life. My project was chosen (alongside 49 others). I honed my idea at the Idea Camp in Sweden, applying later in October for a Research & Development grant. You can't imagine my joy when I found out that I got a grant! I was thinking: "I did it! I can be happy now!" But that was too optimistic.

All the problems I encountered along the way were about the permissive documents from municipality structures that were needed to to make any progress in all the reconstruction process.

The first 'surprise' from the municipality came some weeks later. On a December morning, we came with an architect to make some plans and we saw how the beautiful iron arch, covering the whole theatre construction, had been cut down. The workers said to us that it was a municipality order.

CINEMATOGRAFUL BUIUCANI

2015

2016

2017

Summer cinema 'Cinematograful Buiucani', Chisinau, Moldova.

And that happened right after some local TV Channels showed an interview with me about the Open Air initiative.

The second 'surprise' was about my private discussion with a 'high' official from the municipality. All his words could be summarised into one phrase: "We are working hard here, but you are just disturbing us with your pink childish ideas."

But the biggest 'surprise' was about the general term of getting all the necessary documents. That took one and a half years(!), although it should take (by law) just three months. Only my perseverance was 'moving' the process forward. The documents of such a big cultural project for Chisinau were awaiting signature. They laid for many weeks on the official tables in the same pile as applications to build supermarkets, apartments and gas stations. Very often I couldn't get to the right person to talk to. I had to wait for weeks, so eventually they let me talk

for a short time to the responsible official and I could convince him. That all came on top of hundreds of unanswered calls and hours waiting in vain.

Anyway, we screened the movies all through the summer of 2016, even if the cinema wasn't built. At the end of May 2017 we finally got the last signature from the Mayor (some days later he was detained by the National Anti Corruption Center and now risks spending the next seven years in jail).

Our team of students was waiting 15 months, and finally got to reconstruct the open air cinema within three weeks. The

grand opening took place on 9 July 2017. About 200 people came. Now we have a lot of partners, and we are screening movies of all kinds, from all over the world. Looking back, I have realised that the only thing that encouraged me to keep calling, talking, trying was the support of hundreds of people coming to us to watch movies and many young people from different communities offering to help.

The work to strengthen local communities, for whom this project was initiated, has only just started – but the foundation for this work has already been laid for sure.

Summer cinema 'Cinematograful Buiucani', Chisinau, Moldova: public in 2016.

Summer cinema
'Cinematograful
Buiucani',
Chisinau,
Moldova: public
in 2017.

RESPONSIBILITY
3 SUSTAINABILITY
SELF-ORGANISATION

For an initiative to have the potential to make a real and lasting change in communities, sustainability becomes paramount. Mechanisms of survival and continuity are translated into strategies and methodologies that need to be constantly adjusted and tested. Initiatives need to adapt and fine-tune according to the rapidly changing social, economic and political contexts in which many different interests and viewpoints converge.

While discussing issues of sustainability, the participants in the following conversation identify key challenges such as: How to balance the autonomy of self-organised initiatives and the need for alliances with stakeholders who have institutional and commercial interests? What type of economy can empower self-organised initiatives instead of weakening them? How to deepen the social impact beyond immaterial values and create physical spaces for community development?

Beyond economic and strategic considerations, sustainability relies most importantly on the social fabric out of which any collective endeavour is created. This brings its fair share of assumptions, disagreements, misunderstandings and discrepancies. How, then, can we transform conflict into a constructive dialogue where positions are negotiated and strategies are plotted? This question proves to be, as the participants in this conversation argue, one of the most challenging but also one of the most pressing considerations.

From Conflict to Dialogue

a conversation between **Reem Khedr**, **Ruben Teodoro**, **Steve Threlfall** and **Bea Varnai**

moderated by **Igor Stokfiszewski**

REEM KHEDR works with Mahatat for Contemporary Art – an initiative for art in public space and community art based in Cairo (www.mahatatcollective.com). The two main goals of Mahatat are to provide accessibility to art and support the decentralisation of art. For the Idea Camp held in Botkyrka in 2015, Reem proposed an idea entitled 'City Shadow', which was about transforming abandoned spaces through art. A toolkit documenting the process was published online.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI has been working with Krytyka Polityczna (www.krytykapolityczna.pl) in Poland for 11 years. He is jointly responsible for the cultural activities and researches, and international affairs. He notably co-edited the book *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* (Amsterdam/Warsaw: European Cultural Foundation/Krytyka Polityczna, 2015) and is the editor of the e-book *Culture and Development: Beyond Neoliberal Reason* (Warsaw: Institute for Advanced Study, 2017).

RUBEN TEODORO is a member and co-founder of an art and architecture collective in Lisbon called Colectivo Warehouse (www.warehouse.pt). The collective mostly operates in the cultural and social fields, working on art installations, community and collaborative projects. The idea that he presented at the Idea Camp in Madrid in 2017 – 'Habitatis Festival' – is an itinerant festival that would be hosted by different communities in Europe without proper living conditions.

STEVE THRELFALL is co-founder of the collective We Make Places in Liverpool, UK (www.wemakeplaces.org). One of the main projects that the collective developed is The Flyover, which is about taking back a considerable piece of highway in the city and reinterpreting it as a public space. The idea that he presented at the 2015 Idea Camp was called 'Urban Workbench', a learning project, mixed with workshop facilities, and both traditional and digital manufacturing. It focused on addressing issues of social isolation and giving communities voice in taking control of spaces and places in their neighbourhoods.

BEA VARNAI is working with UrbaMonde, a non-profit organisation based in France and in Geneva (www.urbamonde.org). UrbaMonde supports and scales-up community-led housing initiatives (cooperative housing, community-land trust, co-housing initiatives, etc.) that are essentially self-organised, non speculative and participatory in nature. At the Idea Camp in 2015, Bea presented an idea for a community-led housing online platform (https://psh.urbamonde.org).

The conversation took place over Skype on Monday, 4 September 2017.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI: I would like to start our discussion by inviting you to reflect on your position within the processes that you are being part of or that you are initiating. Do you see yourself as a leader or a facilitator? Is your position neutral or do you consider yourself as an agent of the community?

RUBEN TEODORO: Since we have a very technical background, this puts us in a position where we have to relate to a lot of different actors and entities. Mainly, we have a mediation or facilitation role. In our position, what's interesting is the ability to involve different people. Trying to combine and to bridge communities, public institutions, some housing programmes. We also have to go back and do the more technical work. Most of the time, it's a combination of technical work that is needed and a very extensive work of mediation.

STEVE THRELFALL: I guess, weaving through my background in architecture, co-design has always been part of my practice. Looking at The Flyover, our provocation to take back public space from the highway network in the centre of Liverpool, performance art is also a big part of what we have been doing to engage people with space. Whilst my background is in design and architecture, I am a true believer that it is the activities of citizens before architecture that define public space. Participation in space prior to physical interventions is a logical means to engage people in the definition of public space. Performing arts and creative dialogue are helping us define future visions for The Flyover. These have helped us reach adjacent neighbourhoods, even those displaced through social cleansing of housing projects in the vicinity. The 'social capital' that this project

has built (boosted with a crowdfunding and media campaign) has assisted political negotiations with the municipality and drawn support from social housing providers.

BEA VARNAI: When addressing affordable housing and participation in relation to the way cities are produced, we shift from the logic of profit-making to a needs-based approach, and to an approach rooted in the Commons. This is a very political message in itself; a vision that you put out there, that you try to make more visible. But also, there are very concrete political mechanisms or policies that can enable the Commons-based production of the city. These can relate to access to affordable land and to finance, but also to facilitating access to technical assistance for the users – the residents. Insisting on the right of every citizen to shape their living environment is a political position in that sense, and part of our work is to insist on the partnerships that we can build between communities, local governments, national governments, and a variety of actors, to change the logic of profit-making in the city.

RUBEN TEODORO: Processes and projects that involve communities are always very complex and require a lot of time and energy. They unfold different positions throughout the process itself. Sometimes, you face different positions and have to adapt. Of course, it is impossible to be neutral: you always have to push in one direction or another, trying to understand the needs of the project and the communities. There are moments in the process that demand taking a position. Saying this, and going back to the political, when addressing projects with communities: the community itself is always very political. You always have different movements inside the community itself: you have leaders, and different perspectives... In our experience, we cannot say that we are neither neutral nor only on one side of the project.

STEVE THRELFALL: I would question whether any of us could succeed in what we are doing by being neutral. All the projects that we are involved in request a lot of negotiations. I would say that everything we do is very much being an agent of the community. A big thing I guess is understanding empathy, and understanding people's different positions as an actor. Understanding where everybody is coming from is very important.

REEM KHEDR: Combining community work and art, or transforming public spaces by using art, is not very common in Egypt. Sometimes we face scepticism from some stakeholders: residents who are living in the neighbourhood where we plan an artistic intervention, or the police who are in charge of the security of the place. In Egypt, there is this question around public space: Who can use it? When and where? Since we're working on a community level, we have to be the mediators: we try to mediate between the artists and the audience or residents of different neighbourhoods. We have to mediate between the public authorities, and between the artists who are making the interventions. We also try to document everything that we do.

Sometimes, when we talk to someone about what we did, the vision is not always very clear so we show pictures. And then, when the intervention takes place, the local community starts understanding the process and becomes part of it. Sometimes, they become the multipliers who later on decide to do something similar. When the role of facilitator comes, we try to help out by sharing experience, our knowledge and experti-

se. Sometimes we play the role of mentor, especially with young cultural operators who have decided to take on the umbrella of certain projects that need to be done with the community or in a public space.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI: The question of conflict is very relevant for understanding community processes as a whole and long-term perspective. Can any of you share an experience of a conflictual situation that was relevant to your processes?

RUBEN TEODORO: Conflict is part of the complexity of this kind of processes that involve communities. In our work, when we are addressing slums, social housing and property, conflict is a permanent shadow. Somehow, it is also a tool, a way of provoking something. I have a very interesting example. Some years ago, we developed a community kitchen in a slum in Portugal. During the process, we faced the usual conflicts related to ownership and the local government. Eventually, everything came together and the kitchen was built. But at the end, when everything was supposed to go smoothly, a conflict started within the association in the neighbourhood about who holds the key of the kitchen door. It was not the kind of conflict that we had anticipated, or that we usually face. It was not a conflict between different communities, or between communities and public bodies, but it was a conflict within the community itself. In the end, the solution was to provide sets of keys to all the actors involved: the neighbourhood association, the municipality, our team, and one of the individuals who was using the kitchen on a daily basis. We divided the power of the key between everyone. This project was implemented three years ago and there are still ongoing conflicts related to the leadership.

STEVE THRELFALL: Reflecting on our experience, something that is fundamentally evident is the power we as citizens can achieve through social capital as opposed to economic capital. Historically, those in possession of economic capital have always dominated the competition for space in the city context. We still have a battle in regards to that in terms of aggressive expansion from speculative developers in the city here. However, with social capital, our public space conversations appear to possess more momentum or power than in the past. Community involvement, I guess, has become more visible, particularly through the power of social media and a high-profile crowdfunding campaign. Prior to social media, I believe the swift opportunity to enter dialogue with the heads of our municipality would not have been possible and the conversation would have been closed. As it happened the municipality (the elected Mayor and his cabinet) proactively invited us to meet. For me, social capital is a valuable resource that can bring citizens into the heart of decision-making processes around public space.

REEM KHEDR: I remember when we were doing the sound check for our prototype event in Port Said, a neighbour came out on the balcony and asked us who we were and what we were doing. When I tried to explain her, she asked me to come to her flat. We had a long chat. She said that she was very grateful that we cleaned up the space, but also that she was very anxious because there used to be a lot of drug dealers there. She was wondering if we had permission. At the end of our conversation, she was reassured, but said that we needed to notify everyone in the neighbourhood. On the day of the event,

she showed up with her daughter. She was very enthusiastic and was wondering if we would continue organising events in that place.

But in our case, sustainability remains a question. If we are talking about private owners, for instance, the dynamics of the community usually changes. For instance, in that case, some of the housing close by belongs to a private owner who was not very happy with the kind of lights we used, and the interest towards the space that we raised. Afterwards, some young people approached him to use the space again, but he refused. His reaction has a lot to do with the fact that he was afraid that this would bring other kinds of traffic, and that this might change the structure of the community. Some people are not just sceptical but also reluctant to the idea of change. So for us this is still very much a question: How much sustainability can we aim towards?

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI: I understand very well your challenge, Reem. In my work, I am always trying to encourage and empower the communities in order for them to self-organise, gain autonomy and pursue their own dynamics. Very often, it unfortunately turns out to be impossible. As long as I am involved it works, but as soon as I leave, very often it stops. We are dealing with a lot of challenges regarding the sharing of responsibilities, and how to mobilise the community. Bea, community-led housing: it's quite a high level of self-organisation. How do you achieve this?

BEA VARNAI: That's a good question. We are mostly working on coordination: we connect projects that are already underway, or people who are thinking about setting up such projects. In the area of Geneva we also facilitate the development of new projects. One major aspect is information: if people are aware that there is another option, that's the first step for them to organise. Then, in a context where there are appropriate tools – for example, some cities do have land banks for non-profit housing developers – that's another important thing where we can intervene in terms of political advocacy or showing good examples of city government that do provide these policy instruments. In a context where there is some support, people will organise organically. They will connect with people who can support technical or organisational aspects. Then in contexts such as Eastern or South Eastern Europe where there is not so many experiences in community-led or self-organised housing solutions, nor political or financial support for these initiatives, people also organise out of the simple fact that there is an urgent need. There is an important role for grassroots or political movements and social activism that mobilises public opinion and gathers people who start to think of alternatives to standardised solutions.

RUBEN TEODORO: The issue of self-organisation and autonomy is an important one; it relates to the sustainability of the community itself throughout a project. We have been working a lot lately on projects that aim to provide tools and skills to the communities, so they are able to do the project themselves. One of the major problems that everyone faces in any kind of participatory activity is the problem that shortly after the facilitators stops the project – because they don't receive funding anymore or because the project is done – a lot of these projects disintegrate. Sometimes, this kind of projects are very bad because they create social expectations that create a huge gap. We identified that there are a bunch of skills or capacities (technical, social, financial) and it is also our respon-

sibility to transfer them to the communities so they can continue to establish a project or a process. Without this, it is very difficult for a group to have the ability, but also the time. So it's all these things that are so important.

STEVE THRELFALL: I wanted to bring something that we talked about during my residency at Medialab-Prado in Madrid, which is quite interesting: it's about the strength of mobilised communities. If I'm to compare with Liverpool and the UK in general, Madrid seems to be much more well-organised, but the question of sustainability of self-organised communities still arises. It's a big issue. I feel a key to sustainability is social enterprise. Looking at the self-managed projects I met in Madrid, if there was some kind of income stream for these projects, this would be a vital shift for sustainability. A self-managed community project will typically rely upon the energy and free time that people can give voluntarily to management – the most stress often falling to a single or small group of individuals. If we can look to embed principles of social enterprise, this can only make projects stronger and more secure through financial income. It's not about saying that we need to strip out the voluntary element. Volunteering is a really important ingredient in maintaining a sense of collected ownership. But too often, there is a potential opportunity that is missed. I offer this viewpoint as we are a social enterprise and I am part of a quite broad network of social enterprises that are using 'enterprise with purpose' as a sustainable means of dealing with issues on the ground across the North of England when the state is failing our most vulnerable. Yes, Liverpool is great at social enterprise, but Madrid is very experienced at mobilising citizens and neighbourhoods. There's a great opportunity for our communities to learn from one another to create stronger, more resilient self-managed initiatives.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI: I would like to continue with the question of financial sustainability. There are different types of financial resources and different ways of approaching financial sustainability. Steve mentioned social enterprise as a vehicle that is at the same time community-based and democratic, and also an enterprise. And I was wondering whether others have experience with different, alternative economies that belong to a different paradigm?

BEA VARNAI: Each project or initiative has a different financial strategy. Solidarity mechanisms such as groups savings or solidarity funds play an important role in a number of housing projects. Often, the idea is to put resources in common: those can be of monetary nature but not exclusively. By putting resources in common, the idea is to leverage further funding and further support. When people put together resources, they can approach banks or governments, or public entities more generally. Interestingly, this works in contexts where community-led housing is a recognised actor within the housing market. In other contexts such as Eastern Europe where these housing solutions are not known at all, people are rather met with scepticism. So the group effect works to their disadvantage. The platform that we are setting up seeks to connect peers working on self-organising housing solutions. Rather than just sharing experience, we also want to enable concrete solidarity mechanisms. And one of the things that we are developing at the moment is a solidarity fund between housing cooperatives in Switzerland that could enable communities in different countries in Africa and Latin America to access loans in their own context. In many

cases, the access to affordable finance is the main problem for the development of their projects. With the solidarity fund, we seek to connect people who are members of housing cooperatives, and leverage further funding from public institutions or more ethical banks.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI: I would like to go back to the issue of collaboration with institutional and political bodies. I believe that for some types of activities to be sustainable, collaboration with local authorities and institutions might be significant. Reem, your project is about revitalising abandoned buildings, and I was wondering about your experience of collaborating with public actors?

REEM KHEDR: In March 2015, we did an artistic intervention with a show called 'Opera in Balcony'. It took place in a very old palace in Mansoura – a city in the Nile delta. When we approached the district authorities and told them what we had in mind, they got excited but were also surprised. They never thought that someone would think of such a neglected palace, which had been abandoned for a while and had become a place where people would throw their garbage. And so they offered collaboration: during the two weeks preceding the event, they were sending every day a big truck to remove the garbage, and also controlled the parking by asking the residents not to park in front of the palace. The space was very clean, and we successfully implemented the event. This was a very good example of working successfully with public institutions. But unfortunately, after the event was over, the space returned to how it was before. And the district did not follow up. The same happened in Port Said with 'City Shadows': the local authorities were OK with the concept, but again, they did not follow up.

Usually, local authorities don't follow up because of lack of resources. It is an issue in Egypt where art and culture are not part of the main political agenda. What we are trying to do now is to invest in good partnerships with local and private organisations. However, we know that this is not very sustainable. But collaborating with public authorities is not always easy, especially in these days when there is a sort of crackdown on civil society organisations. There are currently a lot of question marks regarding receiving money from foreign organisations. So far, the Ministry of Social Solidarity has been handling this task of approving every single grant that an NGO receives. This makes things very complicated and bureaucratic. But it's such a critical moment in Egypt right now, especially with the new draft law being passed by the parliament regarding civil society regulation. Everyone is in a kind of holding pattern because we don't know what is going to be tackled.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI: The situation in Poland is not much better. For the past two years, our far-right government has been attacking non-governmental organisations, especially the ones in which part of the funds come from abroad. A new law on civil society organisations is being discussed in Polish parliament, which aims to establish a central governmental body that would orchestrate the 'third sector' through distributing funds. By the way, this body is supposed to be called 'National Institute for Freedom' – well... Luckily, Poland is administratively quite decentralised, regions and municipalities have a lot of autonomy in relation to the central government and a lot of authority in regards to – for instance – organising civil society and culture. Collaborations with municipalities are often positive experiences, the opposite to collaborating with public institutions at a central level.

I would like to ask Steve about his own experience of collaborating with public authorities. Britain is a country where, at least since the 1970s, civil society or non-institutional actors are a live part of activities. Community art, community activities are very often linked to institutional actors. Is this a true image?

STEVE THRELFALL: When it comes to the role of institutions, I guess that most of us have a frustration about the dominance that institutions sometimes have in relation to community art and community activities. But I think that lately, there is a growing number of grassroots organisations gaining more control. I guess, whilst grassroots organisations and collectives don't benefit from repeat core funding as institutions do, smaller grassroots organisations are agile and able to strive for innovation, evolving by having fewer constraints and thinking differently. I don't personally feel the ongoing presence of institutions is a massive obstacle.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI: When discussing sustainability in regards to community-building processes we – rightly –put emphasis on immaterial values and practices: social bonds, peer-to-peer exchanges, on mutuality, deepening the interpersonal relationships. In your work, physical interventions and physical transformation of space seems be an essential asset for the sustainability of commons and communities. Do you relate to that statement?

STEVE THRELFALL: Even though I come from an architectural and design background, the physical intervention is not so important to me. More important than the 'physical' is the 'process' of the journey towards it and the people who develop and implement it. Reflecting again on The Flyover, its future shape is very much in the hands of the communities that we are working with. The initial idea came in response to the city's proposal at that point to demolish a highway structure. The history of this structure is effectively a wound between the centre and the north of the city. Actually, we found many people who have been affected negatively by it felt attachment to this space within the city. Initially we published images of an architecturally enhanced space. Rather than simply stating what was to be built, this imagery served the purpose of pulling citizens into a conversation. As discussed, our processes since have been about participation and performance and the dialogue that creates. The journey for us is not about implementing an architectural vision, but it's about opening up opportunities for people to take ownership and engage with the space. This is essential to the discussions that we have. The future vision and occupation of this space in our city is to be defined through a process of enabling and collaborating.

RUBEN TEODORO: I relate a lot to what Steve just said. And that's maybe because we have a similar background in architecture. We understand that physical interventions are very powerful. And sometimes we have to control ourselves, and remind ourselves that what is important is not the result but how we get there. I think it's also very important that, when there is a physical intervention, everyone involved is very clear from the beginning about what is the goal of that intervention. There might be very different goals, and if this is not well communicated, problems can arise. On the other hand, I also think that sometimes, for the communities, a physical trace functions very well as a proof of their work.

REEM KHEDR: I would like to share a project that we did in an 'informal area' [a place planned by the residents without the intervention of the state] in Cairo last February. It was a visual workshop using recycling that involved residents and professional artists. In this area, there is a lot of material that can be reused. The workshop ended up with the final display of a very big art installation along with some smaller installations done by the children. The big installation lasted for six weeks. Afterwards, the lights inside went off, because the bulbs needed to be changed. And the installation was broken down: people started to dismantle it and to sell different materials that were used. It was a very enlightening experience. We understood that the process is as important as the outcome. We are continuing working in this area using different techniques, and building upon the process that we used.

BEA VARNAI: We tend to see the urban environment as a finished space, as a product. What is really interesting in all these projects that we are talking about is that we are proposing a different vision – a process that is constructed by the people and for the people. This is what our initiatives have in common: we really focus on the people and on processes. And through our work, we try to enable and empower communities to contribute to shaping their environment.

For further insight on the project 'City Shadows', read Rem's interview with ECF from July 2016, at: www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-reem-khedr. The toolkit is available online at https://issuu.com/mahatat/docs/toolkit_en._final_issuu

ECF also conducted an interview with Bea Varnai which is available online at: www.cultural-foundation.eu/library/featured-people-bea-varnai

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Free-market in the schoolyard – introducing the idea of sharing through various methods and tools.
Photo: Lukáš Katriňák

ŠAK – škola a komunita (School and Community)

by **Zuzana Tabackova**

ŠAK – škola a komunita (school and community) is a research and development project exploring the potential of primary schools as catalysts of community-making. The research was positioned within the specific context of post-socialist dormitory suburbs in central and eastern Europe which is a context characterised by weak community ties, a lack of functioning cultural and social infrastructure, and little or no structural support to build up such infrastructure from scratch. In this context, schools have a unique and hitherto underutilised potential: making better use of their already existing resources and of the social networks within which they are embedded can be a viable strategy to create community spaces that would otherwise be expensive to build.

The project was initiated by a group of young architects and urban researchers and realised in close collaboration with two primary schools in Košice, Slovakia. Our exploration started with the pilot project 'ŠAK Belehradská' during 2016, and continued with the project 'ŠAK Užhorodská' during

2017. The project builds on what we consider the four key potentials of schools, namely: their unparalleled spatial assets within the neighbourhood; their underused material resources; their inherent 'meeting point' function; and their symbolic and practical role as spaces of experimentation for young people and adults alike. We ted schools and their communities to strengthen these potentials by connecting resources and people through a process of collective building of common space as a way of creating community and at the same time space for it.

Our main aim was to set up a process of community-making that would be embedded in the local context and could thus be sustained and supported by local people and resources, on a long-term basis and without our continuous input. Therefore, it was crucial to really understand the context, and also to work closely with local actors, empowering them in their community roles and developing structures that they could sustain and that would be useful for them.

ZUZANA TABACKOVA is a member of SPOLKA, a collective of architects, artists and sociologists based in central and eastern Europe. Their aim is to cultivate the public realm through educational activities, artistic and architectural interventions as well as institutional and public dialogue. Zuzana took part to the Idea Camp held in Botkyrka in 2015. Her idea 'ŠAK – škola a komunita (school and community)' was awarded an ECF Research and Development grant.

Our work with the two schools, each of which lasted for approximately six months, consisted of two components: mapping and spatial interventions. During the mapping phase, we focused on exploring the context, mapping its assets and resources, and establishing the first relationships between the space and the people and among the people themselves. These conversations seamlessly progressed into the second part of the process, involving the construction of a common space in the school yard through various spatial interventions, of both a temporary and permanent kind.

The immediate results of the project are not resilient communities or open schools. Those ambitious goals can only be achieved at the end of a much longer process than the one covered by our project. However, the project did set certain local processes in motion and also opened up a valuable debate about the schools and their role in our communities.

The results of the project can be found at: https://www.skolakomunita.sk/

Zuzana also published an essay on her project, which was featured in ECF's focal point on Eurozine 'Culture and the Commons': www.eurozine.com/the-school-as-commons/.

Afternoon of activities open to the public on the schoolyard.
Photo: Lukáš Katriňák

Workshop with pupils – mapping and understanding the space of the school in the context of their neighbourhood.
Photo: Zuzana Tabaková

↑
Participatory collection of ideas from neighbours: what should the common spaces of the school look like?
Photo: Lukáš Katriňák

→
Neighbours building a bench to be placed by the school: the more people join in, the longer the bench will be.
Photo: Lukáš Katriňák
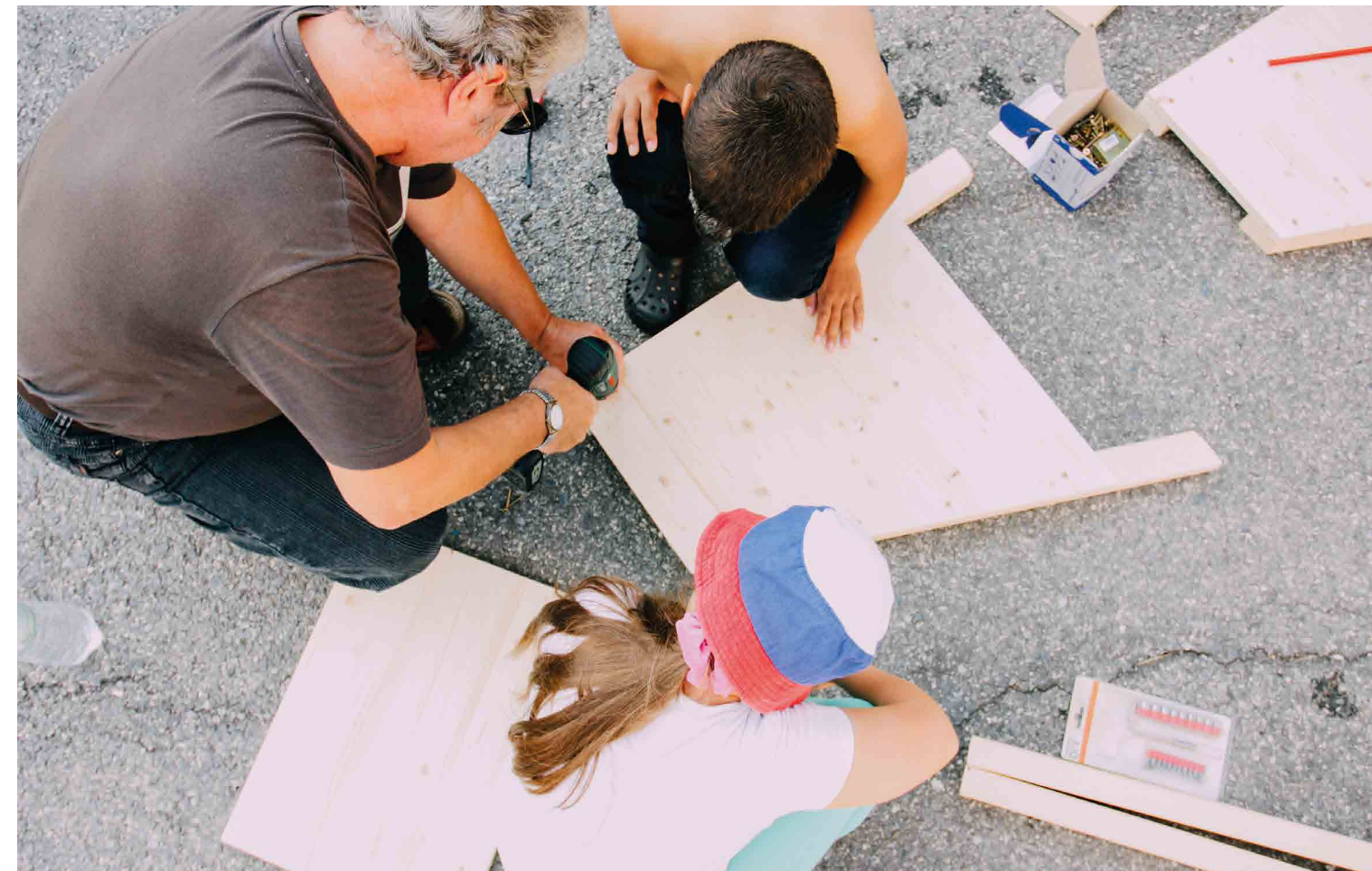
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Neighbourhood picnic in the schoolyard during International Neighbours' Day.
Photo: Lukáš Katriňák

Multi Kulti Kitchen That Brings Us Together

by **Bistra Ivanova**

BISTRA IVANOVA is a social entrepreneur, cultural innovator and integration expert. She is co-founder and chairperson of Multi Kulti Collective (multikulti.bg), one of the leading Bulgarian NGOs working on community development through arts and culture, migrant integration, solidarity, human rights both at a grassroots and policy level since 2011. Bistra took part in the 2017 Idea Camp in Madrid. Her idea, 'Multi Kulti Kitchen', was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.

Multi Kulti Kitchen was born to combine two passions – foreign cultures and delicious food. It started in Sofia, Bulgaria in 2011 as an informal local bottom-up initiative aimed at creating a safe space for dialogue between migrant and local communities through culture, art, cuisine.

One of the main challenges in countries like Bulgaria that are slowly becoming countries of immigration is that foreigners and locals simply do not meet often and do not discuss their experience of living together. This lack of information and understanding often leads to negative media narrative, fake news, hate speech, etc.

In early 2011, our team started inviting migrant and refugee communities to co-create informative, enriching, warm and tasty cultural events where everyone was able to lead or participate in different activities/processes. It was very rewarding to see the immediate success – all participants, hosts and guests were deeply touched by the experience and many friendships/partnerships were formed. Together we managed to em-power migrants; to highlight what they bring in our country; to inspire them to cooperate with locals and become active members of the community; to prove that they are valued and are able to attract positive attention; to provide them with a safe space for engaging in meaningful dialogues with locals; to promote diversity in general.

A few years later, in 2015, we were ready to test whether this model could become a social franchise. We opened a call for implementing partners from other Bulgarian cities with significant migrant populations. We created a lot of interest and managed to select, train, finance and coach six new organisations from around the country. We were able to attend most of the events that we supported and were thrilled to experience that the model was working! It was providing a sense of diversity in the cities. But most importantly, it was providing migrants with a sense that they belong, that they are cherished and understood. The feedback was that it is indeed a simple yet powerful tool for supporting two-way integration and it was

culture that was bringing people together in the first place. We are very much looking forward to expanding the social franchise on a European level.

Social change does not happen overnight. That is why our team started to think more strategically, and the question of sustainability became central – how do we support our partners over the long term, what skills and mindsets are needed to continue, what partnerships are particularly helpful and most of all, what does sustainability mean? We realised we might have a lot to learn from other European initiatives and luckily, ECF supported Multi Kulti Kitchen and our partners on this journey. Together, we are currently co-creating our common vision and sustainability strategy that would help us achieve our goal of social cohesion, creating places where everyone feels appreciated, empowered and welcomed to contribute to the common good.

Multi Kulti Kitchen presents Vietnam, 14 April 2013, Photosynthesis, Sofia (Bulgaria).
Courtesy of Multi Kulti Kitchen archive.
On the left: Bistra Ivanova.

Multi Kulti Kitchen presents Vietnam, 14 April 2013, Photosynthesis, Sofia (Bulgaria).
Courtesy of Multi Kulti Kitchen archive.

What Do You Do Then? The Sad Story of the Rise and Fall of Citizen Journalism in Turkey

by **Engin Önder**

ENGIN ÖNDER has a background in advertising and communication design and founded the Institute of Creative Minds. As co-founder of 140journos, Turkey's trending new media publisher, he has been constantly striving to understand, analyse and talk about developments in Turkey since 2012. Engin is also the author of the book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Erdogan's Galaxy* published by 60pages and Boston Review. He participated in the Idea Camp in Marseille in 2014. His idea '140journos' was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.

I was supposed to write a hopeful story. I had it in my head for a while but following a ruinous series of events in Turkey, it turned into a horror story. Our story, *the reason why I am addressing you right now*, begins with a bitter revelation about the media that we have trusted for years: ill-disposed gatekeepers of media corporations have kept the truth away from public knowledge because of the sickening eco-politics of media. I mean, the situation in which you are both a media boss supposedly protecting people's right to know and bid at government tenders in sectors like energy and construction at the same time. My friends and I sadly witnessed the silence of mainstream media when the Turkish warplanes bombarded and killed 34 civilians from the same family in a town near the Turkish-Iraqi border on the allegation that they were terrorists trying to infiltrate Turkey. No news on TV channels that we watched and newspapers that we read for

years... But there was a storm of information on social media, specifically on Twitter. Getting pissed off at this, we opened up a Twitter account, named it 140journos (https://140journos.com) and took to the street to share what we see with people who wonder.

Thanks to the power of social media, the simple idea behind our passion for information about what's really going on around us turned into an effective alternative media outlet with hundreds of thousands of followers. Despite all the negativity that surrounded me at the time, I was quite hopeful when my idea to travel across Turkey and educate political decision makers in small towns about citizen journalism was awarded the Research & Development grant by ECF. Throughout 2015, my friends and I visited rural cities and educated public relation officers of municipalities from different political parties, college students and local journalists to activate their capacity to have their voice

heard, using social media. We didn't want those people to be out of mind as they were out of sight. We knew that long absent would soon be forgotten. Our efforts that started back in 2012 and fostered with the Research & Development grant in 2015 worked just fine and I managed to create a network of 500 journalistically-acting citizens. *TIME Magazine* was so generous to name me and 140journos as a transformer in Turkish journalism.[1] And one day, the sharp decline began for everything we had built until then.

The truce between the Turkish government and the PKK was over. For the first time in the history of 30-year-long clashes between the two, the war has come down right inside of city centres in Southeastern Turkey. Very strict curfews were declared in many districts. I don't know his real name but I will always remember what the guy nicknamed Semskani from Mardin, a Southeastern city in Turkey, said and almost perfectly described why citizen journalism as we knew had to come to an end: "Dude, I'm

home. I can't send you pictures or anything. There's no electricity and helicopters are flying above my house. If I go up to the terrace, I may not come down alive."

Citizen journalism that has always gotten its power from the street could no longer be practised in an area from which we could not get any healthy information on mainstream media. On the evening news, we were only hearing one narrative. We couldn't trust it. Turkish state news agency was reporting the exact opposite of whatever the Kurdish news agency reported. What do you do then?

We lost the connection with our citizen journalism network in the southeast after this war re-started following a few years of hopeful efforts of peace talks between Turks and Kurds. Then, a wider loss of connection with the rest of the network followed it. Turkey has been attacked tens of times in the second half of 2015 and throughout 2016 by terror organisations. Cars filled with bombs and suicide bombers killed hundreds of innocent people and dragged the entire

country to live in fear. On 15 July 2016, illegal fractions in the Turkish army attempted to overthrow the government and killed 250 people who resisted to the brutal coup d'état. We were all shocked. The government declared the state of emergency the following week. One of the outcomes of this measure has been the ban on any organised protests in any city in Turkey. If people can't get out because they are afraid of bombs, shout out loud on the street because they aren't allowed to do so… How can you get news from the field?

It's been more than a year and a half since the state of emergency was declared. Yesterday, I heard from TV that the parliament extended it for three more months.

That's the fifth three-month-long extension. Is that still really breaking news? I don't think so. What's dead is citizen journalism 'as we know it' because I'm pretty sure that its essence is not dead. It can't be. People still have ideas and things to say. I know it; I feel it. What I learned after all these calamities I witnessed is that it's impossible not to be hopeful. Hope is not a choice. It's indeed a chemical reaction. Remember, we're human beings. Even in the worst condition, we instinctively think things are going to get better. We instinctively want to smile. I do more than smiling, I laugh. I see that it's contagious. When I laugh, people around me laugh. That's where I am now, the very moment that feels there's chance to start over.

Read Engin's contribution in ECF Featured People in: www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-140journos

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4 HOME BELONGING COMMUNITY

The initiatives discussed so far all seem to share a similar drive: to create 'safe spaces' in which communities can rethink ways of living together. These spaces remind us of the notion of home in its broader sense – which goes far beyond the sole definition of home as four walls and a roof. In our current context, however, home is increasingly under threat – whether this takes the form of eviction and gentrification, social exclusion and xenophobia, nativism and the closing of borders.

In the beginning of this book, we argued that hope is not a given: the same is true of home. Like hope, home needs to be brought to life and upheld. But home also entails profound complexities and disparities that should not be forgotten. Home is indeed comprised of multiple layers: cultural, political, historical, economic, religious, sexual. And this is exactly how it should be addressed, as there is no singular home – just as there is no single history.

In the final conversation featured in this book, the notion of home resonates within disparate contexts and realities. Finding a home – or what's more, a common home – proves to be challenging since home is not a continuum: it is an exercise of displacement and imagination. In order for everyone to feel 'at home', we need to challenge the very notion of home from the grassroots up – drawing on the Commons and its call for a society with greater equality – understanding the impossibility of a single home, and acknowledging the multiple histories that lie at its foundation.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD has worked with or at Subtopia in Sweden for almost a decade. He is now working with a multitude of cultural and artistic organisations. He comes from a performing arts background, and has spent a lot of time trying to transform artistic thought into policy actions. Ludvig is also very interested in the conflicts between majority/minority narratives, their owners and effects on excluded communities.

NATASHA A. KELLY is an independent scholar, curator and author based in Berlin. Her project, called 'Blackprint EU' – developed together with two colleagues from Paris and London – aims to create a virtual map of the cities of Paris, London and Berlin, where Black organisations, Black locations and Black historical figures are pinpointed. With these 'story maps', they want to create an education tool that offers communities the space to tell their own stories – free from racist stereotypes.

PARIS LEGAKIS is a visual artist based in Athens. The project that he is developing following his participation to the Idea Camp 2017 is called 'Birds Project' and it involves research into the Exarcheia neighbourhood in Athens where a lot of immigrants and refugees have settled. People will be invited to co-create an event that ideally will take place on the rooftops of the buildings in Exarcheia. The rooftops would thus become temporary places where people can meet, share ideas and re-imagine their homes and neighbourhood.

MONDHER TOUNSI is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree at the American University in Beirut. He previously worked on projects related to women's empowerment, decision-making and entrepreneurship in Young Leaders Entrepreneurs, an association he co-runs (youngleadersentrepreneurs.blogspot.nl). The idea that he presented at Idea Camp 2017, 'Kasserine Catalyse', was developed in collaboration with Beatriz Barreiro Carril, a fellow Idea Maker. The aim is to launch a youth hub in the region of Kasserine, which is the most impoverished region in Tunisia and also where the Tunisian revolution reached its peak.

ELKE UITENTUIS is a visual artist based in Amsterdam. The idea that she presented at the Idea Camp 2014 was called 'We Are Here Occupying the Border'. It was about organising a meeting with refugee collectives from the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, in the city of Vaals where the countries come together. The project is being carried on with an organisation called Here to Support, which was initiated in 2013 (heretosupport.nl).

Finding Home

a conversation with **Natasha A. Kelly**, **Paris Legakis**, **Mondher Tounsi** and **Elke Uitentuis**

moderated by **Ludvig Duregård**

This conversation took place over Skype on Friday, 8 September 2017.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: I would like to start our conversation by asking what the notion of home means to you and in your work?

PARIS LEGAKIS: The concept of home implies several understandings. On the one hand, one could say that home is defined by geopolitical borders. On a smaller scale, it is defined by the social borders that are close to the concept of neighbourhood – and the distinction between public and private space. But for me, home primarily relates to oneself. Home is something that you always carry with you. The body is the home of the soul.

ELKE UITENTUIS: I am a bit sceptical about the idea that the body is a home. Maybe it is all that is left when you are not being recognised as a citizen. The people with whom I work are undocumented. And the notion of home can be difficult to reach when you are in a Kafkaesque, bureaucratic trap. It holds you from creating a space for yourself in the place where you are. What I see is that the people who are in a situation where the only thing left is actually their body find ways to create a home, to survive. But it is a very unsafe and unstable home, because they rely on the help of others, on circumstances that are changing, and on the interests of different parties that they are depending on. The body is a very vulnerable home, I'd say.

MONDHER TOUNSI: It is interesting because I built my project around the notion of home without even realising it. I thought of the marginalised farmers in my region who don't have a home, not in the sense of a physical space to live in, but in relation to their attachment to the country. So home, explicitly in my project, would really be linked to citizenship. It is a guy who does not have any ID because he's really detached from it: he even doesn't know where to get an ID, and he even doesn't need one. He doesn't feel a sense of belonging towards the place where he is from: he is not represented, he is not talked about. And this to some extent relates to a moral empathy. He is a guy who is

ready to house terrorists, to give them food and resources, because he doesn't feel that he is protecting a place to which he belongs. So home for me is really an attachment to an identity, to something that we hold on to. It's the place that we want to nurture, that we want to learn from. And whenever we feel detached from home, we lack an identity. As a consequence, our ethics and our morals and all our actions do not have a strong compass to guide them.

NATASHA A. KELLY: I think I have a different perspective. For me, talking from a Black European perspective, it is the absolute contrary. I was not born in Germany but I grew up here and have lived here most of my life. But I am not accepted as German because of the colour of my skin. So it is not a matter of citizenship, because even with German citizenship, Blacks are not considered German. For me, it is more a form of reclaiming a place, reclaiming belonging. So this is maybe a different idea behind home. I also would like to underline what Paris said – that "the body is the home of the soul" – and propose to extend this sentence and say: "the body is the home of the soul, which I carry in my shoes." Because wherever I go, I have learnt to be at home, not just in the sense of having a physical space around me, but more importantly in the form of heritage. Belonging to the African diaspora is, for me, a meaning of home. Home also means a community, which in a way is a 'forced group', nothing that I choose to go into, but I am happy that it exists: that life and the experiences that we make bring us together forcefully. But community is also a space where we create home for each other. Home is also a feeling.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: I would like to discuss further what Natasha is saying about community. Elke, from your experience, would you agree with the idea that home is the community itself rather than a place in the community?

ELKE UITENTUIS: Of course, the community makes it possible to survive. You're all in the same position, you cannot live on your own so you are forced to be together to be able to survive. Within these communities, I think you create a sense of home, of belonging. You are recognised as an individual, as someone with a specific character. This is very important.

NATASHA A. KELLY: Community is a difficult structure, though. We are inside a society that does not accept us, and a lot that goes on outside this setting also influences the internal structure of the community. We are not only dealing with the outside world, but we also face a lot of struggles and challenges within the community. It is really about negotiating a space within the community as well.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Paris, how in your work do you tackle this instability that is inherent to both the community and the home?

PARIS LEGAKIS: I think that a community should actually be a mirror to reflect ourselves. Communities have internal conflicts between the people living within them. But these conflicts prompt people to look deep within and rethink themselves. I do feel that it's helpful to create a safe structure so people have space for this internal reflection. To go back to the notion of instability, I think from my experience that it's very accurate. The feeling of insta-

bility is very alive. There is a double problematic that affects the people of Athens right now: the crisis that erupted in 2008, and the refugee crisis that is ongoing since last year.

NATASHA A. KELLY: I would agree on the safe space. I think that the main function of our communities is to create a safe space where we do not deal with alienation, racism, discrimination. Too often, racism is underestimated in terms of what it is, and what its effects are. For me, it can be compared to cancer that eats you from the inside.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Mondher, with your project, your aim is to create a 'safe space': Can you reflect on that notion?

MONDHER TOUNSI: The communities that I am working with created for themselves the sense of detachment from home. They do feel they don't belong so they created this identity of hatred and alienation against anything. Moreover, 'safe' here would be passively defined as the lack of instability as the region is hostile and the streets are not ideal for passionate, hard-working youngsters with innovative ideas. That's why I want to create a safe space, to involve them, make them feel that they can overcome this alienation and advocate for acceptance and tolerance and for the rejection of violence and prejudice.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: I would like to go back to something that Natasha was mentioning earlier. She said, "wherever I feel welcome." This relates to the issue of pre-existing communities and their 'right' in occupancy. Paris, you are working in a neighbourhood where some people have been living already for a while: How do you tackle issues related to the coming together of newcomers and pre-existing communities?

PARIS LEGAKIS: The research that I am currently doing seeks to understand the problems from both sides. I have the feeling that, at least in my context, some people blame the refugees for what pre-existed in the neighbourhood, but also in the government. The communication between newcomers and local residents is very difficult. What we are doing at the moment is discussing individually or with groups of people about the problematics. For example, in Exarcheia, there is a big problem related to trash and dirtiness. It was interesting to hear that several local people were blaming the newcomers for the situation. I don't know yet where our research will lead but ideally it would be to bring these groups together, and instead of expressing their opinions to us, to have them discuss together. I would like to say that our concept of the imaginary helps us to problematise as a research group. What imaginary vision of the neighbourhood do longer-term residents have? And what is the imaginary vision of people who live there temporarily? This idea of how you want to live – the imaginary that you 'carry' with you – will be a guiding line that will open conversations between people.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Mondher, I know that you just started as well but how do you intend to tackle these issues?

MONDHER TOUNSI: As a matter of fact, this is the reason why I decided to partner with local NGOs, which are more accustomed to this region. I want to tailor the project to

them, so I am going to build the space with them and not impose a pre-established space that they would feel detached from. I want to involve them in the process itself. Every two months, we will have a community meeting with them. At the end of the year, when the space is established, they would hopefully see it as a beneficial thing for their communities as well.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Elke, I would like to ask you as well what was your point of departure: did you start from the problem or from somewhere else?

ELKE UITENTUIS: 'We Are Here' started itself: it's a protest movement of a refugee collective. I started to support them later on, when they squatted their first building. As an artist, I was wondering what I could do. Can I do something with my organisational and artistic skills? I felt it was very problematic that they were not recognised in my country. In the case of refugees in limbo, I feel that there is a greater urgency. It is not only that there is a lack of belonging, but there are also no facilities. There are only the streets. Surviving becomes very hard. So I stepped in. And what I understood is that people, especially when they form a community, can do a lot together, there is a lot of power. And they already did a lot together in the last few years. Of the 200 refugees who started the protest, 100 of them now have a more permanent status. They change laws, new shelters have been set up especially for the group. And this was all being done through creating meetings between people who don't have access to society and those who do – and creating access for them to society. But the difficulty in this process is the fundamental inequality that is there. It is very challenging to set up collaborations. But so far it's the only way.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: I would like to pass this to you, Natasha – looking at the question of fundamental inequality also in relationship to the majority narrative.

NATASHA A. KELLY: First of all, I would like to say something about newcomers, because this is also a huge issue for Black communities. We might on the one hand be deprivileged concerning race, but we do have a legal status, and this is a big issue. I remember when protests took place three years ago in Berlin, refugees also squatted a school. I was also involved in this. It was very difficult to explain that, on the one hand, we have differences since we have a legal status, but on the other hand, we have a lot of similarities. For example, I am considered as a migrant – as a person with a migration background – although I stopped migrating 40 years ago. A refugee strives to get legal status, and will then be pushed in the category of a person with a migration background, and not be recognised as a full citizen. You might have gained certain rights but you will never have the same position within society. And this is something that we were trying to explain to newcomers. It's really important to understand from a Black perspective how society also functions. And this was an added value that our community could bring to refugees. Supporters do not have this perspective, and they also don't have this experience. This really led to huge arguments between all sides. It was negotiating realities that are all there, and are all valid. But this is an issue that our community also had to learn to deal with. As a Black community, we don't have a country in common – we don't have a language in common, we even don't have a religion in common. The main point that brings us together is that we stand in opposition to the majority of the society.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: But did you feel that this fed both movements, or was it rather a conflictual comparison?

NATASHA A. KELLY: Eventually it did: it fed both sides. For us, it shifted the focus away from the pain onto the privileges and the similarities that we have, and what we can do. Before the refugee movement, we never really considered 'moving' or 'movement' as a privilege because we were constantly on the move . You only consider it a privilege when you see that somebody doesn't have the freedom of movement. Then this becomes an issue. So there were different things like this that became relevant to us as a community too, because new people with new stories and new perspectives are coming in. Black Germany has its own history, which is very diverse. But when it comes to talking about concepts of blackness or racism, Germany denies its own history. Racism is always located in the United States, so US Americans are solely considered as experts on the topic. African Americans then think that they can come in and write our history for us and newcomers also start to believe that racism doesn't exist here. But Black Germans and African Americans have two completely different histories. There might be intersections but it is a different narrative. And this is something that we are trying to analyse in the three countries on which our project is focused.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Mondher, how do you plan to counter the narrative of the province?

MONDHER TOUNSI: We want to build a structure for the entire community that they should uphold. Again, the point is to challenge that feeling of alienation that people have, as if we had nothing going on in this place. By convincing them of the contrary, they can build on and counter the governmental narrative itself. I do not think that it would be difficult to bring in supporters because I am tailoring my narrative according to their needs. Moreover, the province itself would actually be willing to cooperate if it means improving satisfaction rates among its citizens and the way people approach authority.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: You are touching here on the question of institutional responsibility. Paris, in your opinion, what is the responsibility of institutions in your context?

PARIS LEGAKIS: What is happening is that the majority of the money that comes from the EU goes more or less directly to the NGOs that cannot be controlled by anyone easily. The NGOs are kind of a new government, which implies that the government itself could not deal with the existing condition. This has engendered many problems and misunderstandings. The money is not being used in the right way: there were a lot of scandals around big NGOs that are taking the EU money but don't use it well. That's why a lot of people, including a lot of local initiatives, are taking the situation into their own hands, squatting empty spaces and opening them up to refugees. So to come back to the question of responsibility, I would say that the problems begin with the government itself which doesn't have the power to control or the necessary foundations to deal with the situation. The responsibility is shown not by the institutions or the government but is transformed into the population's ability to respond.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: But is it not a problem to bypass the institution? Is that not in a way counterproductive?

PARIS LEGAKIS: Here in Athens, and maybe in Greece in general, self-organising is very important. Perhaps it is one of the strongest growing movements. Part of this, of course, has a lot to do with the 2015 referendum, which caused the distrust of the people towards the government. As a result, people decided to mobilise and take their lives into their own hands.

ELKE UITENTUIS: I think that self-organisations can also be more radical. Although I don't think it is a good idea not to include institutions at all, but it is very complex for them to be disobedient. They're relying on governmental money. There are a lot of agendas behind the funding system and this makes it hard for institutions to be radically disobedient. By self-organising, you can be more radical. I often hear the critique in the Netherlands that you are actually solving problems that the government should solve. And the risk would be that the government then steps back from its responsibility.

MONDHER TOUNSI: I find very interesting what Elke says about institutions' disobedience. That also resonates a lot with me. In my project, there is a need for a balance. Where do you draw the line between inciting the government to act, and how to involve them as well?

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Natasha, you are an independent scholar and work for different universities throughout Germany and Austria. How do you see the relationship between the institutions that you are working with, and those that you try to affect?

NATASHA A. KELLY: I consider myself an academic activist. Whenever I am in academia, I am always in the oppositional position: I never have the mainstream voice. And when I am doing street work or activist work, I always include theory. Sometimes things can get very emotional and that's when theory can really help. But to go back to the project that we are working on, institutional racism is actually relevant. And this is the reason why we are doing it. We all individually came to a point in our life when we were constantly fighting with the institutional structures that we have to work in every day. We're not looking to create new institutions or organisations with our project, but to create a European network of organisations that already exist. But as Mondher mentioned, it is not easy to get organisations to work with us. Some are also very sceptical. Maybe this is due to a fear of losing their own institutional status. But I also think, for some we have a quite radical position, although we are perceived in very different ways according to the cultural context of the three countries we are researching. There are different concepts of blackness according to each context. And these are discussions that we have to lead.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: How are you merging the different notions of blackness? Where do you meet?

NATASHA A. KELLY: I think we meet on the social level, more in sharing the experiences with racism. One of the challenges is that the laws are all different. Although they all go back to European discrimination laws, they are operating differently in each country.

This of course affects the setup of each organisation, and the different spaces in which they can operate. On the one hand, we are looking at shared experience, on the other hand, we are also looking at shared histories, or 'shared historicity'. These are what we can combine to find a common ground to speak on.

PARIS LEGAKIS: Hearing Natasha stressing the importance of sharing, I would add that this also refers to something related to the past, to memory. And memory is a core concept in my project as well. From etymological research that I have done, I found that the word 'phantasm' has a common root with 'fantasia'. The interesting part is that phantasm refers to the past, and fantasia refers to the future and thus to the concept of the imaginary that we research. How the past reflects the future and vice versa? I think that these two concept of phantasm and fantasia meet in the present. As Natasha said, sharing is indeed very important but it is not only about sharing the past, but also about sharing the common vision for the future. Looking at the past, reflecting to the future, in order to see what to do here and now.

NATASHA A. KELLY: I totally agree with you: we have to share visions, where we want to go.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Elke, did you see a vision, a notion of future, developing in the collective 'We Are Here'?

ELKE UITENTUIS: Of course, and that's why change has happened. It is because there was a vision about what to achieve. In the Netherlands, when refugees get their application rejected, they have 48 hours to return to their home country at their own expense. If they don't do so, they are considered illegal. Most of the time they are not able to return. There should not be groups of people who have barely no rights. The horizon is to create equal rights, but at the time, when the group started, there was no shelter for them. This was a priority. Because of the struggle of 'We Are Here' there are now some shelters specifically for this group. It is a step forward, but the future is still very far away. There are still a lot of rights to fight for.

NATASHA A. KELLY: I think that you are making an important point. I can say that I am the vision of my ancestors who were enslaved, who dreamed of reading, writing, going to school – this was their vision, which for them seemed so far away but has become true today. We owe it to our ancestors but also to our children and our children's children to create new visions of the future that maybe we cannot imagine these things to come true today. But we need this vision to move forward out of this pain in which we are stuck sometimes, in all groups. It's difficult, but at the end of the fight, we need the vision: the vision needs to rise into the future.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: Mondher, you were talking yourself about a loss of future after the revolution, even a spiritual decay in your region. What would you substitute the current vision of the future in your local community by? What notion would you like to introduce?

MONDHER TOUNSI: My vision of the future would be 'youth', as broad as it is. Young people launched the revolution and were alienated by older generations deciding their visions

of the future for them. So my vision is putting youngsters in decision-making positions. They will know how to reach the various regions they live in and depend on the technological development for it. A revolution cannot truly be fruitful if older generations are carrying decisions that do not personally affect them. I want to make people realise that they shouldn't be afraid to put themselves in leadership positions because they do not feel 'ready' or 'competent' enough vis-à-vis the established, older elite in the country.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: What about you, Paris: How would you negotiate the vision that you bring forth to the existing community?

PARIS LEGAKIS: To answer this question I would like to quote a saying heard in demonstrations: "We do not forget, we do not forgive." The first part refers to memory; the second one, to emotion. If we take this project as laying the groundwork for a future idea, maybe this saying would be a guiding line for further consideration. And I would think about what we do not want to forget, and what we do not want to forgive. Memory is something important that we need to bear in mind. For example, the older Greek generations that lived through the dictatorship don't speak of their experience to the younger generations. I think that in order to not repeat history, it is important to remember. The feelings should also be reconsidered in light of what we experienced and how we want to live.

LUDVIG DUREGÅRD: I would like to conclude our conversation with a question that relates to the notion of threshold. We're talking about community, about home as a safe space: but who are you guarding your community from? In the word 'community', as we discussed, there is a sense of exclusion. I would thus ask: How do we avoid a form of tribalism – creating a niche? How do we converse, create a discussion?

PARIS LEGAKIS: I would like to stress that, in my case, I do not focus only on refugee groups, but also on the local residents. In a way, I am trying to figure out the elements that are important to both groups in order to dilate the thresholds that lie between them, open up a 'new space' and allow discussions to take place. Through such processes – I believe – people can reconsider their limits. These thresholds are built by the people themselves but also socially and politically. What I suggest is that each individual reconsiders them through common experiences. Maybe it sounds difficult, but that's what I would like to achieve. And you know, these thresholds should not be eliminated. If someone is threatening you, of course you need a threshold. If someone is humiliating you, of course you need to set your limits. It is a matter of putting or re-creating your own limits rather than following the social pre-existing one.

ELKE UITENTUIS: I think it depends very much on what you want to do with these conversations. Do you want to show the differences? Do you mediate them? Or do you simply let them happen? What is the responsibility? Myself, I would rather take the position of making conversations possible between groups that have something in common but cannot find each other so easily. And then, from that commonality, try to find a way to work together. I see myself more as someone facilitating these conversations, rather than leading them.

The Four Biscuits: Integration and Acceptance of Differences

by **Nada Ahmed**

NADA AHMED was initially a human rights researcher but she began to realise that creative solutions to social problems are the ideas that create change. That is how The Four Biscuits was born. Nada participated in the Idea Camp in Madrid in 2017. Her idea 'The Four Biscuits' was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.

The message of The Four Biscuits is simple: young people with Down's Syndrome have the right, just like anyone else, to work, to be productive, and to have a social life. Even if this idea seems simple and obvious, in a society like Egypt's, accepting differences on any level is a major problem that started to slightly change after the 2011 uprising. In order for society to accept people with Down's Syndrome, it is important to see them as human beings with the potential to be an active member of society. This concept can be indirectly channelled by seeing these talented young people produce something tangible that can be sold to customers, that can generate profit and be sustainable.

The idea behind The Four Biscuits is to empower four young people with Down's Syndrome by training them how to bake. We work one day per week, and receive orders from all over Cairo. We deliver the biscuit jar to their doorsteps, and manage to make suf-ficient profit to stay sustainable in the long run. Each time, the girls become more and more independent, self-confident in their skills and abilities and they appreciate the value of teamwork.

The Four Biscuits have been acclaimed and encouraged in the media: we have been invited to a live talk show, articles were published in major newspapers, and that was very encouraging. However, in the process, a major challenge emerged; the parents of one of the girls did not accept what her daughter said during one of the video interviews with an online newspaper that she was actually working to earn money. The mother considered that we manipulated these poor children to make profit and that we used their 'handicap' to gain compassion. As a consequence, she withdrew her daughter from a project that can have been life-changing for her. This event was disturbing as it was sad to see that parents themselves have miscon-

ceptions about the right of their children to work and live like anyone else, and how they perceive them as 'poor little things' who can be used and not integrated in society. The benefits of such a project and its objective is that the girls became self-aware of their abilities, of their worth and the important role they can play in their communities.

Egyptian novelist and first Arab Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz once said: "Home is not where you are born; home is where all your attempts to escape cease." The notion of home is not a place, or a person: it is a consciousness, a state of being. It is where you have no fear of being your true self. With The Four Biscuits, our objective was to create such state of being for the girls, a home where they can be their true self and therefore be their best potential, the best version of themselves. This state of being includes each other as friends and our respective families. We are part of this home and we create this home together.

↗
Hard at work baking biscuits
→
(from left to right): Heidi Adel, Sherihan Hamdy, Seba Ahmed: participant in the Four Biscuits project.
Photo: Nada Ahmed

Confronting the Other

by **Alex Sakalis**

ALEX SAKALIS is a journalist and Europe editor of openDemocracy.net. He participated in the Idea Camp held in Madrid in 2017. His idea 'Confronting the other' discussed in more detail below, was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.

Home is a place of belonging. As someone who was born in Greece, but moved to the UK at a young age, I've always felt slightly foreign in both countries – never quite assimilating into British culture, yet feeling out of touch whenever I've visited my friends and family in Greece.

Yet I've always felt London as my home. The city adopted me. Its openness, complexity and worldliness has attracted many people who have all made it their home. It was that rare place where you could feel a sense of belonging without having been born and raised there.

I noticed that began to change around the time of the Brexit referendum. Ideas of 'blood and soil' began to percolate into people's minds. There was a sense of fear of the other, a perceived loss of identity and disgust with the political *status quo* that had people reaching for memories of those mythical 'good old days' where everything was better.

The repercussions were felt, oddly, not by the visible 'other', but by white immigrants, our recent friends from the formerly communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In Norwich, a Romanian shop was firebombed. In Harlow, a man was killed for speaking Polish while on his mobile. Earlier this year, a Polish girl in Cornwall was bullied to suicide.

Even London, that bastion of tolerance and openness, is beginning to buckle. My Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian friends have also been subject to verbal abuse in the past year.

Around the same time, I was working with some organisations in the UK who were trying to fight back against this fomenting of enemy images and promotion of an 'us and them' mentality. Their strategy for confronting the other was simply to get these people to meet each other. To learn that the other person was not what they had thought they were. Their success rates are impressive, and many former far-right or Islamist individuals even volunteered to be 'the other' for the next round of cross-communal encounters.

My idea was to film these encounters, not just in the UK, but across Europe, where similar divisions are cementing themselves, and where enterprising individuals are also trying to fight back against the demonisation of the other. I decided on the medium of film because I felt if we could capture some of these encounters, we could raise awareness of the possibilities of restorative justice as a form of uniting communities and healing wounds. Many 'inspirational' and 'political' films go viral on social media, getting millions of views in a matter of days. Why not one of ours?

For many young people, home is increasingly becoming a choice rather than an accident of birth. The old ideas of blood and soil seem distant and incomprehensible. It is about belonging to a place that celebrates openness, diversity and freedom. Home is belonging, but it is also somewhere you increasingly have to fight for.

→

Image from Kholoud Al Ajarma's photo exhibition 'From the Inside looking Out' taken from the window of a house in Aida camp at the 'Apartheid Wall' just a few meters away.
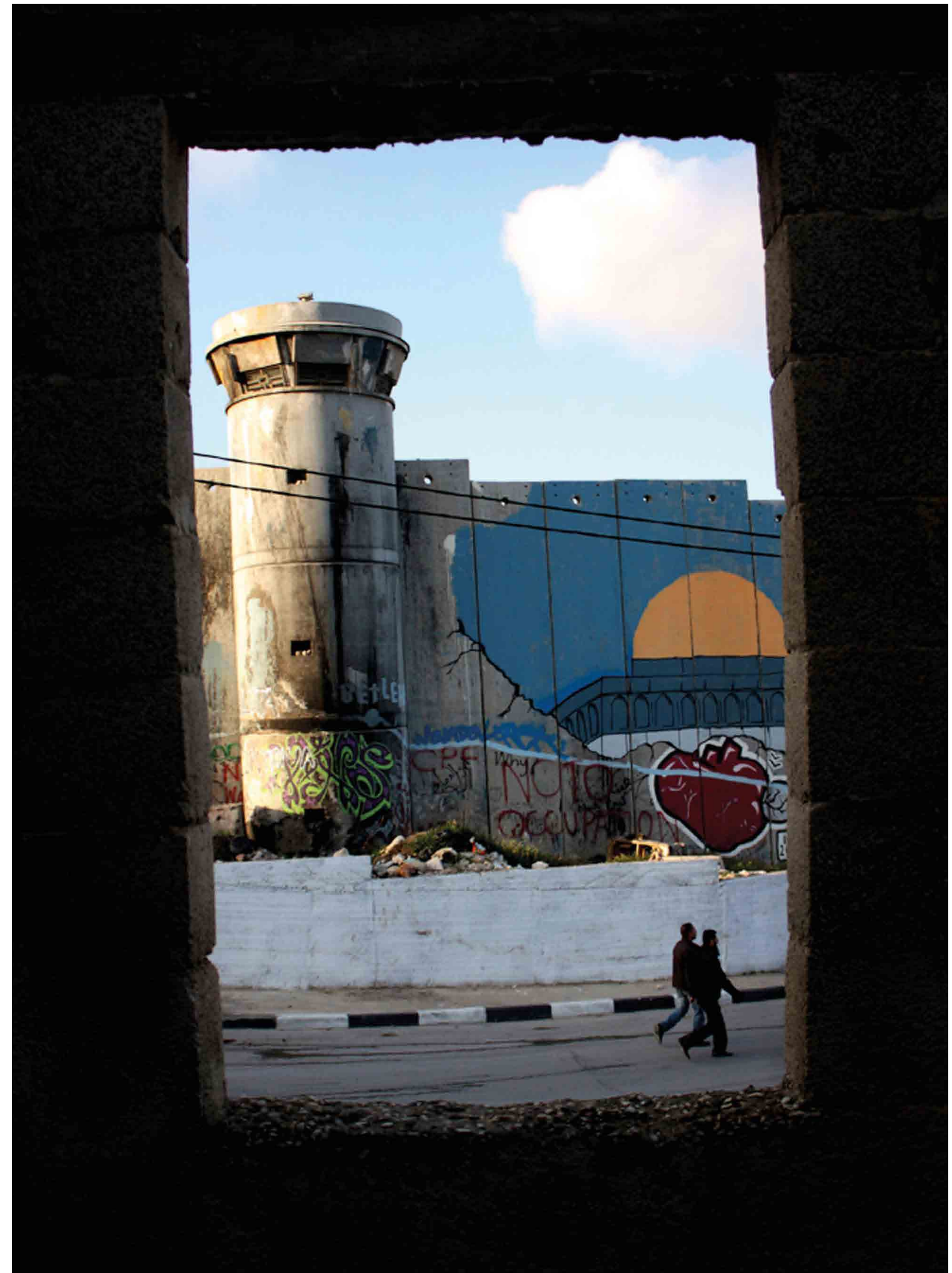
'Seeding Hope': Grassroots Initiatives From and For Local Communities

by **Kholoud Al Ajarma**

KHOLOUD AL AJARMA is a graduate of International Studies, Peace Studies (MA) and Anthropology and Development Studies (Mphil). She has worked in the field of refugee studies, international migration, visual culture, knowledge production and immigration in the MENA region, Europe and Latin America, working for a number of NGOs on local and international projects. She is also an award-winning photographer and film-maker and has experience of developing and leading programmes and projects mainly for Palestinian refugee communities. Kholoud participated in the Idea Camp held in Madrid in 2017. Her idea 'Seeding Hope' was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.

Growing up in Aida Refugee Camp in Palestine, I saw how – often – the narratives of Palestinians, including young people, were being produced by outsiders who lived far away from tragedy and conflict. Media production about Palestine rarely showed our daily lives, struggle and steadfastness. At a young age, I realised that no one can tell our narratives and reflect our stories as well as we can. I realised the importance of grassroots work to establish platforms where everyone, including young people, can contribute to greater social change as social agents.

That was why, since the age of 14, I have worked together with Lajee Center (www.lajee.org) to create a platform for children and young people whose fingerprints, words, photographs, dreams and feelings can form the picture of a free Palestine. Lajee Center itself was created by a group of young people who believed in the unlimited creative power of youth who individually and collectively can bring about social change and a greater understanding of our lives and communities. Its programmes were designed in response to the particular needs of the community and the skills and abilities of its members, whilst always remaining in full support and defence of all Palestinian rights.

Responding to the needs of the communities I work with, particularly refugee communities, I worked on developing 'Seeding Hope' – a platform that provides refugee youth with cultural, educational, social and developmental opportunities and brings together refugee youth from different backgrounds.

'Seeding Hope' is a platform where refugees can share knowledge, experience, success stories, and produce their own films, photography and written materials in order to strengthen bonds among refugee youth,

raise awareness of refugee struggles and advocate actively for human rights. The dream is for refugee youth to become active peace builders and community activists who seed hope and radical positive possibilities across borders, creating dialogue and exchange.

Through my work with refugee communities in Palestine I learned to embrace difference and show the strength and beauty of culture. Through cultural production and the arts, we continue to transfer our stories to the outer world and be part of a greater change. In a similar manner, 'Seeding Hope' will develop refugee youth's creative techniques and skills of independent media and arts to enhance their political and social participation. They will produce tools that they will subsequently use for wider based civil society activism, advocacy and campaigning in the full defence of rights, specifically focusing on refugee rights.

Today, as ever, young people need platforms to raise their voices and narrate their stories. As we continue to witness the rising tide of reactionary, conservative and extremist powers all over the world, we need to work towards a more socially inclusive world, and build mutual respect among peoples of different cultures and embrace diversity. As cultural and social agents of change, I believe in the power of local people, including youth, to build solidarity to counter some of the misunderstandings about communities and cultures that are different. Drawing people together around a shared cultural interest, advancing an understanding of refugee rights and promoting greater unity between diverse communities will ensure a positive change in the lives of communities. Promoting cultural diversity, understanding, solidarity and the 'seeds of hope' start from every one of us; 'seeding hope' starts from us.

Memorial in children's playground in Aida Camp, honouring the lives of Abd al-Rahman Ubeidallah (12) and Tamir Rice (African-American child) who were both shot and killed by armed authorities – one in the occupied West Bank and the other in the US city of Cleveland, Ohio. The memorial is a reminder of children's right to life, dignity and education.

Photo: Kholoud Al Ajarma

5 EPILOGUE

Philanthropy Needs Imagination

by **Vivian Paulissen**

It is exciting and it is needed. Why not consider philanthropy as a lab in which we can learn from our mistakes and advance our work by working together on a profound level with partners and grantees? One *community of practice* in which we share a concern and learn how to do it better as we interact regularly.[1] A true civic-philanthropic collaboration… Is it that difficult to imagine?

To begin with, we have to get rid of the paradigm of philanthropy as a culture of 'giving' that is equal to a gesture of altruism.[2] This is a problematic stance. Selflessness is the concern for the welfare of others. To characterise philanthropic giving as the selfless return of capital to society for the welfare of others just feeds ongoing paternalism. It implies goodwill by the one who cares to give and a dependency on it for the one who needs the care; it unites them by an obligation in the sense that the one owes the other something. What it does not imply is any other reciprocity in the relationship beyond the giving and the receiving.

This donor-versus-recipient doctrine marks a strict boundary between philanthropic players on the one side and their grantees on the other side. It is an unhelpful perspective, held actually both by philanthropy as well as by the civil society actors it supports. If we continue to think along the divide between the ones with power because they have financial resources to give and the others who are merely receiving, we will not make any progress. We have to come up with a new scenario and narrative. We simply have to imagine a *We*. A daring, genuine attempt to build a mutual philanthropic-civic collaboration model (or better even, ultimately a collaboration between philanthropy, civil society and public institutions). This model will face many challenges, for sure, but through it various types of resources should be acknowledged and shared with equal value attached to them. A model in which time, talent, knowledge and money are exchanged across the involved stakeholders of foundations and civil society actors/grantees in a non-dichotomist dynamic. Such a model should be based on more peer-to-peer interaction and should also embrace a peripheral focus rather than frontal one. Sure, this is a provocation, but we should at least try to imagine it together as foundations in a shared community of practice towards social change. Philosopher Marina Garcés writes in *Un Mundo Común* (*A Common World*): "The sum of you and me is not two. It is a between where any of us may appear. A world between us has emerged."[3]

What would it take us to get there? It requires guts by the philanthropic commu-

VIVIAN PAULISSEN is Knowledge Manager at the European Cultural Foundation. She was involved in setting up the Idea Camp. Connecting different sources of knowledge and outcomes across departments and partners, she develops pilots and engages in networks that rethink philanthropy.

nity to recognise the limits of the current system of which it is a product itself. "In its quest to promote deep progressive change within society, philanthropy is often blamed for addressing the symptoms rather than the roots of problems. In other words, we seem to promote short-term and single-issue strategies, transactional reforms and techno-fixes that eventually reinforce the logic of the dominant system instead of attempting to build a new one. The current system, of course, is the ubiquitous market paradigm, which step-by-step has transformed citizens into consumers and the common good into a utopian fantasy of infinite economic growth."[4]

It is certainly true that foundations hold an inordinate amount of leverage in any grantmaker-grantee relationship. This imbalance forces many organisations that are funded, for example, to focus on projects rather than on processes, as they have more visible impact and measurement potential. Consequently, philanthropic foundations can narrate more easily stories of success that help them in their own accountability towards their boards and the public. Slow change-making processes are less 'sexy' for foundations that need to demonstrate how wisely they are spending their money. However, philanthropy could catalyse change much more effectively by shifting more resources to processes, organisational support and seeding experiments.

Building movements takes time and a lot of effort. Support for the building of strong connections between actors of different movements working on climate, social justice or culture is even more crucial for a deep structural change. If we as philanthropic foundations join forces, we can provide an overview of the various key agents and movements in the wider ecosystem and play a meaningful role in connecting them across silos and to public institutions in the policy-making arena.

There is an inspiring testing ground developing where funders and grantees are collaborating as like-minded peers sharing a similar theory of change. A growing number of progressive foundations are coming together under the global network of EDGE (Engaged Donors for Global Equity) with European and USA branches.[5] The motto of the alliance is to work *with* movements in a safe learning and collaborative space to support real progress and systemic change. In EDGE we learn about the diversity of philanthropy networks and approaches in order to understand how collectively we could take more risks and move out of our comfort zone. "Even as 'progressives', we are very far from living day-to-day what we are preaching. It's not only about funding transformative change instead of business as usual solutions. It's also changing ourselves as foundations: how we manage and invest capital, internal governance, the power dynamics with the grantees, etc."[6]

An EDGE working group on the Commons looks at how its discourse and concept can be an inspiring tool for renewal of philanthropy. Commons entail a huge cultural shift in values. Inclusive participation, cooperation and collaboration are at the forefront of its vision of humanity. ECF's grantees, such as participants in Idea Camps over the past four years, offer interesting cases studies and alternatives with a Commons lens that help us to imagine how to share and govern resources and how to work in a peer-to-peer way.

A concrete example of a Commons-inspired way of working evolves under the umbrella of EDGE Europe. In November 2016, four foundations (ECF, OSIFE, Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation and Guerrilla Foundation) engaged in a joint venture to open up their grant-making with and to change-makers from civil society. Together they convened 30 activists from key European movements to develop a participatory

grant-making pilot that became the FundAction platform. Activists have a direct say in who receives financial support and how knowledge is distributed across the movements that are addressing the multiple alarming threats we are facing in Europe. The foundations involved are renewing their operations as part of the adventure. This is manifested in the charter of values that was created by the foundations and the activists together, based on the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organising.[7] As foundations, we acknowledge that the philanthropic universe has to be held accountable for its decisions and their impact and has to adopt the same standards of participation that it is asking of institutions, communities and its own grantees. We are committed to expanding access to the resources of philanthropy, be it grants, networks or outreach. At the same time we should acknowledge that our grants, networks and outreach are enhanced by a diverse, skilled and engaged community of activists.[8]

Democracy needs imagination, as the Belgian author Peter Vermeersch claims.[9] It does have imagination: democracy is a creative act that engages people in a conversation beyond the ballot box. As a cultural foundation that supports democratic renewal in Europe fuelled by local citizen's movements, ECF also has to reinvent our own institution so we can practice what we preach. Over the past few years, ECF has been developing various programme pilots with grantees and partners that have been changing our own grant-making and operational mechanisms.[10] This was partly successful and partly not and that is exactly the point: trust doesn't come in a ready-made package. It's a long breath – it's quarrelling and fighting over small details that do matter and over big issues that need attention. Working in a very intensive and complex networked way with hubs and their communities, the Idea Camps, the participatory grant-making,

Research & Development grants instead of project grants… these all are attempts to work with grantees and other partners in a more direct and reciprocal relationship in which – apart from money – ECF is also facilitating knowledge, time, convening opportunities and networking. It is all one big learning lab: we don't have the final answers about the best way to do things. It is not as if we are simply peers and that the roles are interchangeable between our foundation and our grantees. We need to be alert at all times and be clear about our roles and our functions in this world that emerges between us, to stay with the words of Marina Garcés. It is not easy to imagine this relationship that, obviously, still holds power imbalances, in a world that is still organised largely around who holds the purse strings.

But if democracy has imagination, then the same is also true for philanthropy. Let us be learning organisations all together funders together with activists, movements, change-makers, idea-makers…. We need to know each other's strengths and weaknesses to rely on developing a qualitative collaboration. The adagio that foundations should listen more to grantees and learn from them is not enough. Moreover, it would be a mistake if philanthropy thinks this is good because it would 'help' partners to do their best work. Instead, we should claim it is good for funders as well as for grantees if we treat each other as equally important players in an ecosystem that is aware of the urgency of the need for systemic change. The essence is to really do it together and to establish a new relationship. Philanthropist Peter Buffet refers to both the system as well as philanthropy when he says that what we have is still an old story – and we really need a new one. "It's time for a new operating system. Not a 2.0 or a 3.0, but something built from the ground up. New code. What we have is a crisis of imagination. Foundation dollars should be the best 'risk capital' out there."[11]

Yes, it does require a lot of guts, trial, error, trust and imagination from the 'philanthropic side' and from the 'grantee side' too. But as one community of practice, we can challenge public discourse and policy making to become a joint advocate for a different era. We can support seeds of change and the much-needed experiments if we only dare to take risks, be open and transparent, be creative and learn how to give and receive in multiple directions. Then we can seize the opportunity in a way that expands our notions of what is possible: we can imagine and create something new! It is exciting! And it is very necessary!

REFERENCES

1   For further discussion about the concept of 'community of practice', see Charlie Tims and Shelagh Wright's text published in this book (pp. 51-54).

2   For further discussion on the relation of altruism and philanthropy, see Falco et al., 'Is philanthropy a learned behaviour?', *Fundraising Management* 29 (7), 1998; and Paul G. Schervish, 'Inclination, obligation, and association: What we know and what we need to learn about donor motivation', in Dwight F. Burlingame (ed.), *Critical Issues in Fund Raising* (New York: Wiley, 1997).

3   Marina Garcés, *Un Mundo Común* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2013).

4   Heike Löschmann, Nicolas Krausz and Vivian Paulissen, 'The Commons as a Path for Philanthropy to Catalyse System Change', first published on 28 January 2016 on the European Foundation Centre's blog: www.efc.be/socio-economic-development-poverty/commons-path-philanthropy--catalyse-system-change/

5   See https://edgefunders.org/

6   Nicolas Krausz, Programme Officer of the Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation and co-chair of EDGE in an interview with WINGS for Philanthropy in Focus (https://philanthropyinfocus.org/2017/06/29/wings-interview-with-nicolas-krausz/)

7   The Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing (www.ejnet.org/ej/) were developed during a meeting hosted by Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ), Jemez, New Mexico in December 1996. Forty people of colour and European-American representatives met in Jemez, New Mexico, for the Working Group Meeting on Globalization and Trade. The Jemez meeting was hosted by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice with the intention of hammering out common understandings between participants from different cultures, politics and organisations.

8   The value charter of FundAction can be found at https://www.fundaction.eu/#how/3

9   Peter Vermeersch quoted in 'Reclaiming Public Space: Democratic Practices Reinvented?' a debate during the ECF event *Imagining Europe* in Amsterdam, 5 October 2012.

10   At ECF, the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme was a logical step towards a shift in our philanthropic approach, which already started with ECF's Youth and Media Programme and Doc Next Network back in 2009.
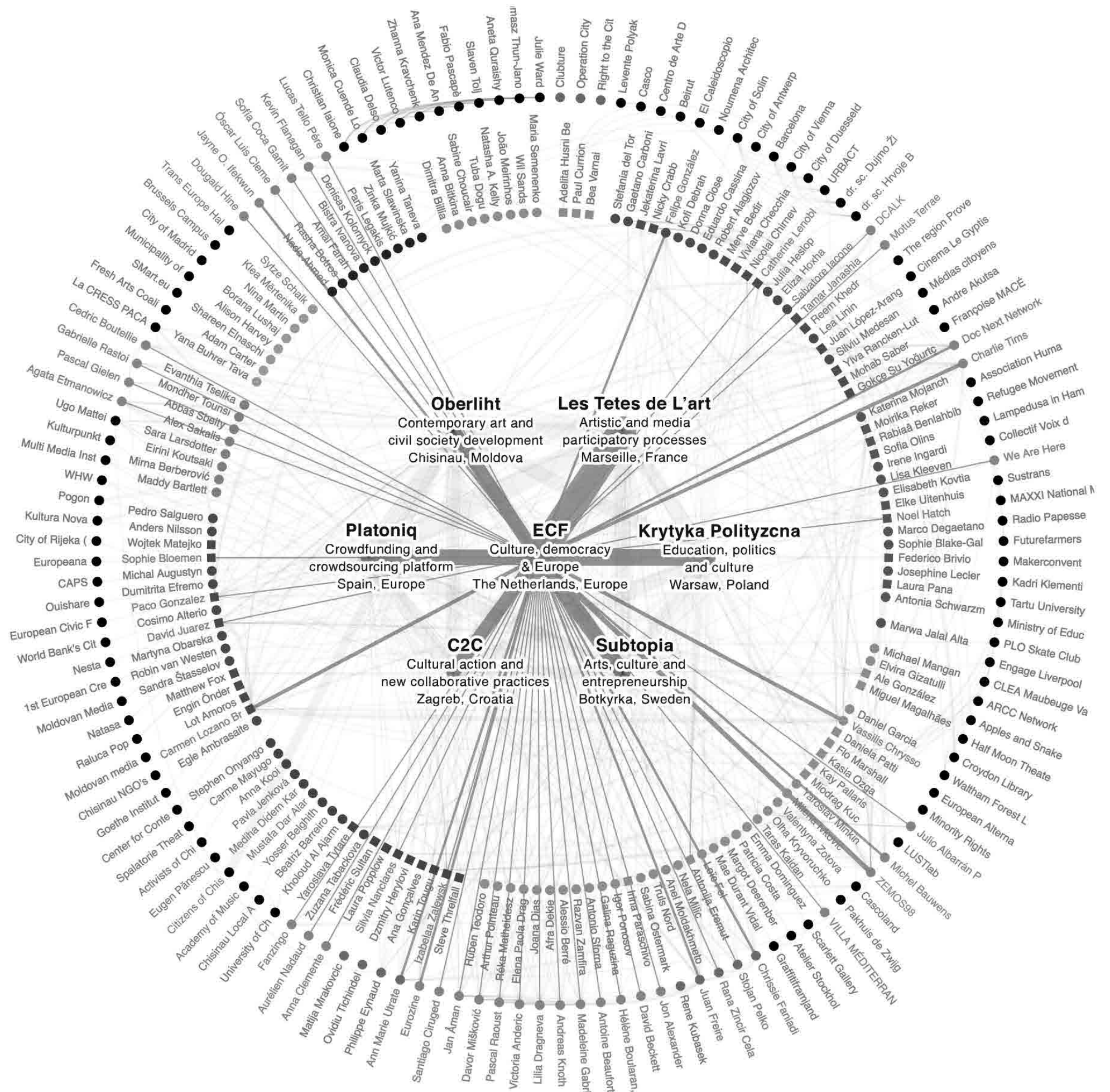
11   Peter Buffett, composer and chairman of the NoVo Foundation in 'The Charitable-Industrial Complex', *New York Times*, New York, 26 July 2013. www.nytimes.com/2013/07/27/opinion/the-charitable-industrial-complex.html

Oberliht
Contemporary art and
civil society development
Chisinau, Moldova

Les Tetes de L'art
Artistic and media
participatory processes
Marseille, France

Platoniq
Crowdfunding and
crowdsourcing platform
Spain, Europe

ECF
Culture, democracy
& Europe
The Netherlands, Europe

Krytyka Polityzcna
Education, politics
and culture
Warsaw, Poland

C2C
Cultural action and
new collaborative practices
Zagreb, Croatia

Subtopia
Arts, culture and
entrepreneurship
Botkyrka, Sweden

Connected Action for the Commons: What Next?

The work of the *Connected Action for the Commons* network continues with several concrete initiatives that are already in motion.

Subtopia (Sweden), Oberliht (Moldova) and Krytyka Polityczna (Poland) have launched RESIDE: Action for Neglected Neighbourhoods – a project supported by the Swedish Institute that aims to map challenges for urban geographies with a social and cultural deficit. RESIDE explores some of the biggest challenges and their implications for neglected neighbourhoods through three major meetings between activists, NGOs, governments and municipal officials, academic institutions, private and municipal real estate companies – all of them offering different perspectives on the development of a strong policy.

Responding to the demand for a European activist platform, and recognising the shortcomings of traditional grant-making and need for a power shift in the philanthropic sector, ECF, Fondation Léopold Mayer, Open Society Initiative for Europe and Guerilla Foundation have supported the development of FundAction (www.fundaction.eu). Co-developed with the *Connected Action for the Commons* hubs, FundAction is a participatory funding platform by and for activists in Europe. From September 2017, FundAction is run by Edge Funders Alliance and will offer three types of grants: systemic change, education and exchange, and urgent responses.

Krytyka Polityczna (Poland), ZEMOS98 (Seville) and ECF have successfully applied for a Creative

Europe grant with 'Culture for Solidarity:' an artistic investigation into the root causes of fragmentation in Europe. The aim of this project is to contribute to more solidarity, by highlighting cultural practices that bring unusual groups of people together, connecting these practices and scaling them up across the continent. The project includes Action Research in Warsaw, Seville, Zagreb, Marseille and Chisinau as well as online discussions – leading up to an Idea Camp in 2020.

ECF is also exploring ways to continue our work on peer-to-peer learning, support for idea development (e.g., Research & Development grants) and advocacy. We take our inspiration from people, organisations and initiatives we had the privilege of working within the framework of the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme: change-makers who are creating counter-narratives to the over-simplified discourse in politics and media and whose work engages people in inspiring democratic actions and presents innovative approaches to culture that has an influence on society that goes beyond its own sector.

About the Hubs in the Connected Action for the Commons

These are the six organisations that make up the *Connected Action for the Commons* hubs that were the catalysts behind the Idea Camp:

Culture 2 Commons

Culture 2 Commons comprises three organisations based in Croatia: Clubture Network (clubture.org), Alliance Operation City (operacijagrad.net) and Right to the City (pravonagrad.org). The leading principle of Culture 2 Commons is the development of intensive collaborative platforms, i.e., tactical networks, a new form of emerging socio-cultural practice with two main purposes: expanding the definition of cultural action; and developing new collaborative practices and models.

They deal with issues such as: public domain, social transition, hybrid institutional models of public-civil partnerships, changes in the cultural system. They use methods such as: civic action, advocacy, transfer of technological practices into the cultural domain, partnership and networking.

Krytyka Polityczna

Krytyka Polityczna has been operating since 2002. They are active in three main fields: education, culture and politics. They believe these three are connected by the influence and impact they have on how society is shaped. Their aim is to fight exclusion; increase civic participation and social awareness in public life; find diagnoses and solutions to the current breakdown in social bonds and social imagination. They work through a network of local

activist groups, cultural centres (in Warsaw, Cieszyn and Gdansk), a publishing house, an on-line daily opinion website (www.krytykapolityczna.pl) and the Institute for Advanced Study conducting academic research and seminar activity.

→   www.krytykapolityczna.pl

Les Têtes de l'Art

Since 1996, Les Têtes de l'Art association in Marseille has been promoting access to culture and to artistic and participatory practices. Twenty years ago, the French Ministry of Culture launched a programme on the democratisation of culture by making cultural venues or events accessible for people with lower incomes and limited cultural education. At that time the association thought that they should go further, and this statement is still valid today. They believe art and culture offer some of the most powerful tools to engage people in a creative and bridge-building process. It's making people become 'Doers' rather than maintaining the position of spectators.

They mainly work in the central districts of Marseille – marked by high unemployment rates, deficient infrastructure, cultural tensions between communities and few spaces for social interaction. Their projects are designed to engage people from various different backgrounds and origins. They believe that participatory art practices can help those who take part to overcome their fears and prejudices in order to live a positive experience focused on openness and sharing.

→   www.lestetesdelart.fr

Oberliht Young Artists Association

Oberliht Young Artists Association was established in 2000 and since then has supported young artists, contemporary art and civil society development in general – making use of public spaces, with a strong emphasis on the independent cultural scene in Moldova and in the region. They observe various processes that shape our urban environment by analysing transformations of public space. They also try to influence these processes through community building and activism.

→   www.oberliht.com

Platoniq-Goteo

Platoniq-Goteo is a team of cultural producers, social innovators and digital platform developers across different regions and autonomous communities in Spain. Since 2001, the association of ICTs, free and open culture and citizen participation has been their main driving force to create social innovation regionally, nationally and internationally. They firmly believe in the potential of open culture in opposition to the privatisation of knowledge and

as a tool for more democratic and collective access to information, to the Commons and the empowerment of diverse communities.

Through their approach, they facilitate collaboration and distributed innovation processes that are able to introduce cultural shifts in organisations from sectors such as education, culture, heritage and social and solidarity economy.

→   platoniq.net/en/goteo/

Subtopia

Subtopia is a creative cluster just south of Stockholm that is home to more than 80 organisations, companies and educational institutions and where 200 people come to work every day. Subtopia is the hub in this network of people and ideas. They serve as a platform where organisations and individuals get the chance to develop their creativity on their own terms. The hard and soft infrastructure is designed to help new ideas flourish. They facilitate innovation. Subtopia is where artists, film producers, circus companies, NGOs, bands and other creative people follow their dreams and try to make the world a little better.

→   www.subtopia.se

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Idea Camp 2017,
Madrid (Spain):
'On Urban
Frontiers' –
a walk through the
neighbourhoods
of Pacífico
and Puente de
Vallecas, facilitated
by the Madrid-
based collective
La Liminal.
Photo: César
Lucas Abreu

Bibliography

PUBLICATIONS

Here is a chronological overview of publications written by ECF and our *Connected Action for the Commons* partners from 2014-17:

- An online platform, co-developed by Krytyka Polityczna and the European Cultural Foundation, to illuminate the work of *Connected Action for the Commons.*
  → http://politicalcritique.org/connected-action/

- Eurozine Focal point 'Culture and the Commons'
Drawing on affinities between Eurozine's publishing activities and the European Cultural Foundation's *Connected Action for the Commons* programme, we launch a new focal point exploring the prospects for a commons where cultural and social activists meet with a broader public to create new ways of living together.
  → www.eurozine.com/focal-points/culture-and-the-commons/

- Charles Beckett, Lore Gablier, Vivian Paulissen, Igor Stokfiszewski and Joanna Tokarz-Haertig (eds.), *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* (Amsterdam/ Warsaw: European Cultural Foundation/Krytyka Polityczna, 2015).
Published in the frame of ECF's Idea Camp 2015, *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* rediscovers, reframes and reconsiders previously published historical, artistic, participatory and theoretical perspectives on the subject by a wide variety of authors from different geographical and professional backgrounds.
    The publication presents a range of 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.
  → http://www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/build-the-city-book

- Marjolein Cremer and Nicola Mullenger (eds.), *Build the City: How people are changing their cities* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2016).
The 26 practices highlighted in this publication are civil-public partnerships based on principles of the Commons, i.e., enabling citizens and governments to share power, co-design and co-shape legislation, management or collective action for the common good.

Evidence from these practices shows that including citizens and communities in decision-making has created wider support for implementation of legislation, providing out-of-the-box solutions and strengthening democratic legitimacy. Culture contributes to this by engaging and inspiring people, challenging stereotypes and catalysing the social revitalisation of urban commons. This is essential when it comes to building a more equitable and sustainable future and helps us live together in our increasingly diverse communities.
These practices were selected to energise urban governance in the EU Urban Agenda.
  → www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/build-the-city-magazine

- *Culture and the Commons: Statement by members of Connected Action for the Commons* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2016).
A statement by the Hubs of the *Connected Action for the Commons*, urging European decision-makers to embed culture as an important perspective and practice contributing to the commons in their policy deliberations.
  → www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/statement-culture-and-the-commons

- Anders Lindgren (ed.), *Klumpology: how a culture incubator works* (Botkyrka: Subtopia, 2016).
Klumpology: how a culture incubator works is an inspirational book about KLUMP Subtopia. In it you will find some practical guidelines, interviews with participants, a description of our method and a conversation about culture and entrepreneurship.
  → https://www.subtopia.se/klumpology/

- Sophie Bloemen and David Hammerstein, *Supporting the Commons: Opportunities in the EU policy landscape* (Berlin: Commons Network, 2017).
The paper is an appeal to the European Union to truly become an ally to commoners and commons-thinkers. With this paper, Commons Network lays out a clear unifying political vision for the future of Europe, a way for the EU to renew itself as a democratic and constructive force.
Sophie Bloemen took part in the 2015 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant. *Supporting the Commons* was published with the support of ECF.
  → commonsnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CommonsPolicyOpportunities_FINAL-1.pdf

- Ludvig Duregård, 'A glimpse of another movement', *politicalcritique.org,* 26 July 2017.
In this essay, Ludvig Duregård reflects on the practices presented in the Idea Camp. While European politicians are wantonly destroying the advances made over the past seventy years of humanist progress, something else is happening in the neighbourhoods of Europe. Something that has no leader, but possesses an unstoppable direction. Something that is happening right outside your house, but also all over the world.
  → politicalcritique.org/connected-action/2017/a-glimpse-of-another-movement/

- Nicola Mullenger (ed.), *Co-making the City: Ideas from the Innovative City Development meeting* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2017).

This report presents ideas on how to co-make cities based on the collaborative thinking of city-makers who attended the Innovative City Development meeting in Madrid in March 2017. In July 2017, this report was presented to the attendees of the International Association for the Study of the Commons conference, highlighting case studies and experiences on city-making. ECF hopes these ideas can inspire more confidence in co-city-making between institutions and citizens.

→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/co-making-the-city-report-2017

- Igor Stokfiszewski (ed.), *Culture and Development: Beyond Neoliberal Reason* (Warsaw: Institute for Advanced Study, 2017).

→ http://politicalcritique.org/editorial/2017/culture-and-development-beyond-neoliberal-reason/

FEATURED PEOPLE

Over the last two years, ECF has carried out a series of interviews with some of our Research & Development grantees. We will be featuring more interviews with our grant recipients over the coming years on the Featured People section of our website: www.culturalfoundation.eu/featured-people/

These are the inspiring people we've interviewed so far:

FEDERICO BRIVIO
He participated in the 2015 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research and Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-federico-brivio

PAUL CURRION
He participated in the 2015 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-paul-currion

ANA GONÇALVES AND LAURA PANA
They both participated in the 2015 Idea Camp and were awarded an ECF Research & Development grant. Together they also attended the residency at Subtopia.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-ana-goncalves-and-laura-pana

REEM KHEDR
She participated in the 2015 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-reem-khedr

PARIS LEGAKIS
He participated in the 2017 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research and Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/medialab-prado-hosting-rd-grantee-of-idea-camp

SILVIA NANCLARES
She participated in the 2015 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research and Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-silvia-nanclares

ENGIN ÖNDER
He participated in the 2014 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research & Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-140journos

MARTA SŁAWIŃSKA
She participated in the 2017 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research and Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/world-recipe-exchange-all-continents-bar-antarctica

BEA VARNAI
She participated in the 2015 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research and Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-bea-varnai

IZABELA ZALEWSKA-KANTEK
She participated in the 2014 Idea Camp and was awarded an ECF Research and Development grant.
→ www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/featured-people-izabela-zalewska-kantek

Between 2014 and 2017, the European Cultural Foundation – together with our partners in the *Connected Action for the Commons* programme – organised three editions of the Idea Camp. Conceived as a collaborative working platform, the Idea Camp offered a safe and open space for sharing and co-creation that addressed some of the most urgent challenges facing our continent.

This book offers an insight into the Idea Camp as a concept as well as the communities it has brought together. It also delves into the issues and strategies highlighted through the different ideas discussed and developed over the last four years. These insights are brought to life through conversations, essays and contributions with and by some of the ECF team who played a key role in developing the Idea Camp, and some of the inspirational people and organisations whose ideas have helped to shape the Idea Camp.