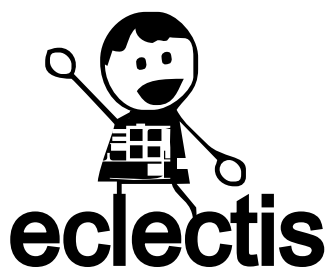




# A CONTRIBUTION FROM CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ACTORS TO CITIZENS' EMPOWERMENT



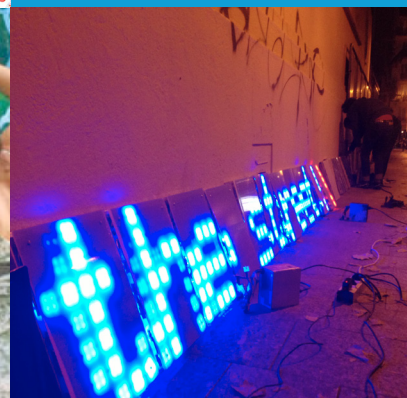
## European Citizens' Laboratory for Empowerment: CiTles Shared

A European cultural cooperation project (2013-2014)  
*Amsterdam - Barcelona - Kotor - Ljubljana - Paris - Torres Vedras*



Empower citizens to drive local change

Encourage creativity and new appropriation of urban space



Enhance European urban space diversity



Supported by the Culture programme of the European Union





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# TABLE OF CONTENT

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Editorial	2
ECLECTIS - Project presentation	5
ECLECTIS Partners	6
The scope of ECLECTIS	8
<b>Sharing experiences...</b>	<b>11</b>
Dispositius Post - Artistic practices and citizen action networks in post-crisis contexts - Idensitat (ES)	12
<i>Focus: European networks to create common goods - PACT</i>	15
Mobilising citizens durably through a participatory event: PARK(ing) DAY 2014 - Dédale (FR)	16
<i>Focus: Citizen involvement and political public spaces</i>	18
"Want to regenerate a place? Focus on the people!" The story of Park Tabor - ProstoRož (SL)	20
<i>Focus: Whose right to the city?</i>	22
Smart citizens – DIY tools and creative practices for citizen engagement and education - Waag Society (NL)	24
<i>Playful planning: citizens making the smart and social city - Michiel de Lange</i>	27
<i>Focus: New technologies, new possibilities - PACT</i>	29
Citizenship as cultural empowerment process - Transforma (PT)	30
<i>Focus: Possibility for alternatives - PACT</i>	33
From participation to empowerment - Expeditio (ME)	34
<i>Focus: Common ground in changing times - PACT</i>	37
<i>Focus: Reinventing the commons - PACT</i>	38
<b>... To highlight common views</b>	<b>39</b>
Transnational cooperation: a lever for professionals' empowerment	40
The potential of the cultural and creative sector in fostering citizens' empowerment	41
What can be some common principles when working on empowerment?	42
<b>Political recommendations</b>	<b>45</b>
Creating the conditions for citizens' empowerment through cultural and creative means	46
Recommendations	47
<b>Putting in perspectives</b>	<b>53</b>
"Do It Yourself Science: an empowering practice" - Jeffrey Warren & Cindy Regalado	54
"How Art & Cultural diversity empower citizens: two Athenian initiatives" - Maria Kaltsa	56
"Paradise Enterprise, Judenburg, 2013–2014" - Barbara Holub & Paul Rajakovics	59
"Public space, common space" - Joan Subirats	61
"From the Institutional Practices to the Tactical Media - Ways of participating in the public realm" - Rui Matoso	64
"A definition of empowerment" - Marie-Hélène Bacqué	66
"Democracy "of the commons", democracy "of the common"" - Pascal Nicolas-Le Strat	67

# EDITORIAL

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In the European and international context of growing urbanisation and digital shift, we observe an acceleration of urban, social, cultural and economic fragmentations, reinforced by the economic crisis. This is a major issue at a European level - more than 70% of European citizens live in cities - , but also, more widely, at an international level: prospective studies estimate that in 2025, more than 2/3 of the world population will live in cities.

When dealing with the reduction of urban fragmentations, the traditional top-down process is showing its limits. There is a real demand from citizens, professionals and political stakeholders for new processes to make the city bottom-up and participatory, encouraging inclusive and innovative answers, in order to face the challenges of a changing world and answer to new expectations and uses. There is a shift from a traditional approach based on the simple participation of citizens to a will for empowerment, to support European society changes.

The ECLECTIS publication wonders if processes & activities initiated and implemented by European cultural & creative actors can contribute to citizens' empowerment in city making, in particular of public spaces.

This publication is the result of the ECLECTIS project – European Citizens' Laboratories for Empowerment: CiTles Shared, a 2012-2014 European cultural cooperation project<sup>1</sup> gathering 11 European and international partners from 9 countries, working on citizens' involvement in urban development, and sharing the same interest for developing creative projects inspired by artistic and inclusive approaches.

The concept of "city making" has to be understood in a broad sense, not as a technically driven urban engineering approach, focusing on physical infrastructure and urban planning<sup>2</sup>, but as taking into account environmental, economic, social and cultural stakes as well as the sensory and experiential, putting the human at the centre to reach a common goods goal.

The concept of empowerment emerged in the USA at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It covers the process enabling people to access a wider initiative, influence and action capacity, at political, economic and cultural levels<sup>3</sup>. Citizens' empowerment falls within the context of the general trend of urbanisation on one hand, and of a form of disengagement of the state, unable to face the economic, social and cultural challenges of contemporary cities on the other.

Enhancing empowerment of European citizens is linked to the promotion of a different approach, where the citizen is not a user or a consumer, but an active collaborator for the transformation of his or her environment. This contributes to a more democratic, fair and sustainable city.

The objectives of this publication are:

- To share the experiences with all the stakeholders involved
- To reinforce the involvement of citizens & creative actors in city making
- To advocate their roles to policymakers from local to European level
- To bring narratives to the European Union, in order to contribute to the advocacy of the role of cultural and creative sectors in European policies

It targets political stakeholders; culture and urban planning professionals; citizens from all over Europe and beyond.

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1. ECLECTIS is supported by the Culture Programme of the European Union.  
2. Charles Landry, *Creativity, Culture & the City : A question of interconnection*.  
3. Cf MarieHélène Bacqué's article p. 59



This publication is organized around 4 pillars:

- Analytic feedbacks from the project partners about the main stakes of this shared experience
- A common statement on actions principles addressed to cultural & creative sectors dealing with citizens' empowerment in city making
- Recommendations for policymakers, aiming to unlock the potential of the European citizens and creative sector for participatory actions in public spaces
- A set of critical articles from researchers and artists

We – ECLECTIS partners – do hope that this first ECLECTIS network publication can be useful in this work in progress that is the European project.

We thank all the participants and supporters of the ECLECTIS project and address a special thanks to the authors of critical articles who accepted to contribute.

*Dédale, PACT, Expeditio, ProstoRož, Idensitat, Transforma, Waag Society*





Paris



Amsterdam



Torres Vedras



Barcelona



Kotor



Ljubljana



# ECLECTIS - PROJECT PRESENTATION

## European Citizens' Laboratory for empowerment: CiTles Shared

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The ECLECTIS project aims at questioning the role of cultural and creative actors<sup>4</sup> in strengthening citizens' empowerment in urban making. It is a cooperation between 11 European and international partners from 9 countries, gathering cultural and creative actors working on links between culture, creation and social innovation.

It is built on a transverse, structured and sustainable approach to:

- Empower citizens to drive local change for long-term impacts
- Encourage creativity and appropriation of urban space
- Enhance European urban space diversity

From May 2013 to December 2014, partners organised artistic residences, workshops and events, gathering artists and creative actors, citizens, local and political stakeholders to share and respond to local issues through innovative and participatory projects. An observation and analysis of the process was led, giving inputs for the writing of this publication.

This project is based on a broad sense of innovation that includes social, economical, environmental and technological aspects.

### **Experimentations**

Laboratories in 6 European cities are implemented through artistic residences and workshops based on local, participatory and crossways approach, integrating complementary fields: art, urban planning, architecture, new uses and new technologies. Multidisciplinary artists and creative actors, citizens, local and European authorities are invited to share and respond to local issues, through innovative and artistic projects, experimenting and analysing various approaches, methods and tools to encourage citizens' knowledge and action potential on urban environment.

**Open artistic participatory events and debates** are organised to mobilise citizens, local stakeholders and authorities on urban issues, raising awareness and action capacity, enabling innovative forms for consultation and encouraging a co-diagnosis and co-design for European urban development.

### **Observation & recommendations**

The partners led an observation and analysis of the processes and actions initiated, to evaluate and put them into perspective, in an integrated approach - from local to political levels - in order to draft policy recommendations and share experiences.

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4. According to the European Commission definition, it covers in particular architecture, archives and libraries, artistic crafts, audiovisual media (including film, television, video games and multimedia), cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, performing and visual arts, publishing and radio. It gathers people involved in creative practices: artists, cultural operators, mediators, agencies, SMEs...



# PARTNERS

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## Co-organisers

- **Waag Society** (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

[www.waag.org](http://www.waag.org)

*Institute for art, science and technology*, Waag develops creative technology for social innovation. The foundation researches, develops concepts, pilots and prototypes and acts as an intermediate between the arts, science and the media. Waag Society cooperates with cultural, public and private parties. Waag Society follows the method of Creative Research: experimental and interdisciplinary research. Artists, creatives and end users have a central position and a large influence on the final result: Users as Designers.



waag society

- **Expediatio** (Kotor, Montenegro)

[www.expediatio.org](http://www.expediatio.org)

EXPEDITIO, Centre for Sustainable Spatial Development is a non-governmental organization based in Kotor, Montenegro. It was founded in 1997 by six students of architecture. EXPEDITIO mission is to encourage sustainable spatial development and enhance urban and rural areas in Montenegro and the SEE region, through activity in the fields of architecture, urban planning, cultural heritage, and public advocacy. EXPEDITIO has conducted more than 100 projects and activities addressing different problems of sustainable spatial development. It was represented in the National Sustainable Development Council of Montenegro and is a member of several networks at the national, regional and European level.



- **Transforma** (Torres Vedras, Portugal)

[www.transforma.org.pt](http://www.transforma.org.pt)

Transforma is a cultural institution located in Torres Vedras that provides physical, material and relational conditions for the implementation of theoretical and practice based research and documentation processes, dealing with contemporary culture under artistic and educational contexts. The research processes that are supported and developed by Transforma focus mainly on the connection between art, creativity and location, taking into account the particularities of the context in which the institution is integrated and the global world in which we all live in. The research carried out at Transforma also analysis how all these relations exert influence upon concepts, in terms of creativity and artistic creation, as well as upon production and programming.

TRANSFORMA.

- **Idensitat** (Barcelona, Spain)

[www.idensitat.net](http://www.idensitat.net)

IDENSITAT is an arts project investigating ways of impacting upon the public sphere through creative proposals related to place and territory in their spatial, temporal and social dimensions.

Structured as a system that incorporates other projects, actions or interventions that unfold in different areas and contexts. Promotes a conglomeration of strategies to carry out activities that combine research, production, management, education and communication. A system which in turn is based on collaborative dynamics in order to build a relationship between contemporary artistic practices with other disciplines, and develop mechanisms pluggable certain orbits of the social space.

IDENSITAT collaborates with a number of artists and creators in various fields, bringing them together with individuals or collectives working in local context. Idensitat offers an itinerant production space, with dynamic travelling projects, generating visions, analyses and proposals for transformation.



prostorož\*

- **ProstoRož** (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

[www.prostoroz.org](http://www.prostoroz.org)

ProstoRož is a group dealing with issues in public space. They explore the space and its meaning for local residents and the society in general. They believe in open access of public spaces to various social groups and try to understand the ways and the variety of uses of public spaces. Their wish is to actively contribute to the co-creation of quality public spaces that provide sufficient support to individuals that use it. Such spaces are resilient and democratic, designed to enable change and spontaneity.

ProstoRož emerged in 2004 out of wish for exploring and understanding of open urban space. Today it connects architects, urbanists, sociologists, jurists and technical associates, all of whom contribute to a multi-dimensional approach to the challenges of contemporary urban space.

PACT

- **PACT** (France)

[www.pact.eu.com](http://www.pact.eu.com)

PACT is a European network advocating experimentation and action research in spatial design, creative land-use and city making processes. PACT collects and analyses advanced experiences throughout Europe, in crosscutting fields such as heritage, architecture, urban design, spatial transitions, new economies, art, or permaculture.



- **Dédale** (Paris, France)

[www.dedale.info](http://www.dedale.info)

Dedicated to culture, technologies and social innovation, Dédale works from local to international scale, with a trans-disciplinary and cross-domain approach, favouring citizens' participation, and valuing new technologies potential. Its field of activity covers artistic production, local development, events management, research, consulting for public authorities and European institutions. Dédale is particularly interested in innovation and new uses in sectors such as urban planning, new media, artistic creation, cultural heritage, environment and education.

## Associated partners



- **Sinapolis** (Beijing, China)

[www.sinapolis.net](http://www.sinapolis.net)

Agency for studies and resources in Chinese cities.

INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS

- **Institut français** (Paris, France)

[www.institutfrancais.com](http://www.institutfrancais.com)

Agency for France external cultural action, with a wide European and international coverage.



- **European Network of Living Labs** (Brussels, Belgium)

[www.openlivinglabs.eu](http://www.openlivinglabs.eu)

International federation of benchmarked Living Labs in Europe and worldwide.

academica

- **Academica** (Belgrade, Serbia)

[www.academica.rs](http://www.academica.rs)

Independent and non-profit organizations for research and development in the nonprofit (civil, educational, academic) and the creative sector (arts, cultural and creative industries) and the transfer of modern skills and knowledge through lifelong learning.

# THE SCOPE OF ECLECTIS

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The European project ECLECTIS is about citizens' involvement in the city fabric through cultural, local, artistic, participatory actions, which take place in public space. It aims to reflect on how the outcomes of such initiatives, which respond to a variety of urban contexts across Europe, in places such as Barcelona, Amsterdam, Paris, Ljubljana, Torres Vedras or Kotor, could be translated into recommendations to be addressed to public authorities, and reach from local to European level.

Artistic interventions in the city are not a novelty. But what is new is the growing interest shown for them by the authorities in the last two decades, and especially for artistic and cultural initiatives that are outside the planning process and institutionalized participation, seeking for innovation and alternatives to the dominant urban approach. In parallel, direct urban cultural initiatives and spontaneous interventions, led by citizens, artists, NGOs, or politicians, are committed to interpreting new means for responding to the urgent needs and aspirations of people feeling out of the grid, willing to be self sustainable. This shift happens outside the official frameworks and policies, in a time when crises demand new ideas and approaches.

## **A bottom-up approach**

The very existence of the ECLECTIS cooperation project, in the framework of the European Culture Programme (2007-2013), shows the importance in Europe of such a double phenomenon, where bottom-up approaches and aspirations can meet the top-down. It is crucial to question the success of such initiatives because they are more than the symptom of crisis. The studies and the important media attention that they have been attracting reflect a will to search for new ideas and sources of inspiration through the novelty that springs forth from public space.

The overall reading of this phenomenon bears witness to the existence of a practice that is currently being constructed in spite of the different scales, goals, contexts, and concerns involved. This diversity embodies a collective action for social and political change. Who is in charge? Who is the initiator? How repeatable are these processes? How is it possible to capitalize on their novelty?

## **A new European network for diversity**

The projects that have been carried on in the framework of ECLECTIS reflect the diversity of their concerns (in terms of needs and context) as well as objectives (in terms of aspirations) that come across in the discourse on the role of artistic/cultural initiatives in public space, and their potential for facilitating citizens' empowerment. The role that citizens' empowerment can play to actually benefit citizens, artists, professionals, NGOs, or public authorities, varies within the diversity of European urban contexts. Indeed, ECLECTIS shows that the possibility of designing an operational and repeatable toolbox for citizens' empowerment that would lead to measurable positive outcomes is rather illusionary in the context of such complexity. However, this doesn't mean that such diversity should not be taken into consideration as a whole. If needs, aspirations, and mechanisms differ throughout Europe, their steps towards implementation and their questioning belong precisely to a shared diversity, which forms the common ground that is emblematic of Europe itself.

One of the outcomes of ECLECTIS is precisely that it shows the need to draw the contours of this common ground, which can help the reading of diverse realities through the common referents that are European culture. In this respect, ECLECTIS shows that citizens' empowerment, although generated for different reasons and mobilized towards different objectives, is seen by most urban actors as necessary for imagining other possible futures through more inclusive democratic mechanisms, in a time when the outcomes of common practice and top down solutions are proving to be increasingly uncertain. Although citizens' empowerment is still rarely part of the agendas, its



increase throughout Europe is a reality, and the acknowledgement of its potential for innovation is widely gaining ground. Situations are certainly not comparable, however the questions that arise in such processes do reoccur. It is the questions that constitute a common ground which need to be addressed. How to create the conditions for empowerment? How to recognise novelty? How to benefit from it? What are the roles of public authorities in such processes, in terms of facilitation, regulation and capitalization?

### **Action research through citizen involvement**

The Amsterdam, Barcelona, Kotor, Torres Vedras, Paris and Ljubljana debates that arose from ECLECTIS, showed that artistic processes involving citizens in public space respond to specific, local needs and aspirations. Therefore, if their autonomous nature sometimes requires the financial support of public authorities, their claim, which is one of independence, values the necessity for action above pre-defined expectations and objectives. Another common aspect is that when the experiments bring positive outcomes, public authorities tend to capitalise on them, without having the capacity for integrating the processes that were responsible for their success. This creates a form of distortion between those who initiated the processes and those who participated in them, and often results in a reduction of real benefits to the profit of their communication. Therefore, the question for public authorities is not what tools obtain positive outcomes, or which objectives should be expressed to orient the processes, but to what extent do they possess the tools to monitor and identify positive outcomes from the unexpected processes that they facilitate, which are often unpredicted. The challenge of citizens' empowerment processes for public authorities is to create the conditions for supporting its development without orienting its actions by preconceptions, to be able to identify novelty, and to develop the capacity to decide how its conditions could be facilitated in the future. This form of facilitation is not a distortion, but an active participation in the process and a form of collaboration in designing possible futures in alternative ways, through mutual empowerment.

### **The importance of bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up approaches**

The gap between the inevitable top-down approach of public authorities, and the structural bottom-up local and spontaneous interventions is also a major concern to stakeholders. It is seen from both sides as an obstacle for dialogue to a possible collaboration, because of diverging interests that struggle to find a common ground, and to feel free to experiment, crawling under norms and restrictions. In this respect, ECLECTIS has revealed that the independent role and the approach of cultural and creative actors, platforms, NGOs and observatories can bridge that gap, by creating independent networks, identifying novelty, providing and broadcasting information, and creating the conditions of dialogue among parts of comparable scale and authority. The commitment and the implementation of such networks are as urgent as imagining new ways to adapt to the changes of our environments. These artistic, cultural, and urban actions divert the practices, and sometimes alter the rules of the establishment in their quest for renewal and new civic ambitions. They are experimental and show unexpected possible solutions to inhabitants, to professionals, to NGOs, and to authorities. ECLECTIS amplifies the commitment of those who are carriers of such a revival, and has the ambition to serve as source of inspiration and information for future decision-making.

**PACT**



## SHARING EXPERIENCES...

*In this section, ECLECTIS partners share their experience on the activities implemented during the project, which could be transmitted to others. How experiences led at local level, depending on specific context can be passed on to other actors in other countries and contexts? How did they contribute to empower citizens? Responding to the feedbacks, focuses on main topics highlighted during the project enable to go further and deepen the reflection.*



# DISPOSITIUS POST- ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND CITIZEN ACTION NETWORKS IN POST-CRISIS CONTEXTS

Idensitat, Barcelona, Spain



*This is a text in two parts, elaborated by Idensitat in collaboration with Recreant Cruilles, to reflect about our work together in Germanetes empty space during 2013 and 2014. The main goal was to explore deeper the relationship between artistic practices and citizen action networks when thinking about post-crisis local contexts.*

Dispositius Post- is a project developed in Barcelona by Idensitat as part of ECLECTIS, with the cooperation of citizens' group Recreant Cruilles and Fundació Antoni Tàpies. Dispositius Post - *Artistic practices and citizen action networks in post-crisis contexts*, aims to explore the relationship between arts and citizen action in order to generate ideas and processes of transformation applicable to the construction of public space in physical, social and political dimensions. The idea is to raise a series of questions from which to analyse the current situation, and to create the framework for collectively imagining future options.

Dispositius Post- as a whole comprised a seminar, a project workshop, a set of artistic interventions in public space and, latterly, a field of cross-disciplinary analysis, including lecturers and students attached to research groups and specialised postgraduate studies.

This final part, called "Expanded Seminar", has been formulated as an on going project, a continuation of the issues Dispositius Post- brought up. These issues arise within a particular local context, marked by a social, ideological and cultural paradigm shift, in which citizens find themselves involved in profound processes of emancipation to restore cities and institutions to common benefit. Emerging in 2011 with the 15M movement in the main streets and squares of our cities, got subsequently decentralized of neighbourhoods.

The Recreant Cruilles collective arose from this conjunction, and has driven the recovery of the Espai Germanetes, an empty plot in the heart of the Left Eixample district of Barcelona, which, since November 2013, has been managed by this citizens group in a collective fashion, open to the entire city. Dispositius Post- was elaborated between 2013 and 2014, developing artistic interventions in the area adjacent to Germanetes, although the collaboration between Idensitat and Recreant Cruilles began in 2011, when groups from different cultural and ideological backgrounds and profiles organized to demand the opening

and use of these 5000m<sup>2</sup> of abandoned plot for the neighbourhood.

**Thus, in this new framework, we wonder: is the logic of art as a catalyst for the revitalization of public and social space still valid? Which roles should institutions and cultural practices play in a new environment led by a mobilized citizenry?**

With Dispositius Post- the idea has been to open a process by which to test various approaches to these issues, to consider, imagine, discuss and propose interventions and collaborations which bring social space and artistic practices closer together. The relationship between citizens in a collective experimenting with new self-management techniques which influence social policy, and another group experimenting with artistic practices which influence socio-political context, has proven to be both valuable and productive. In this way, mechanisms have been implemented within the project for collectively generating spaces and/or moments of convergence together, out of which, gradually, an intense process of negotiation and joint work has been woven, subject to the rhythms and timetables of the involved agencies themselves.



The constituent elements for the formation of hybrid workspaces were the weekly site meetings at Germanetes, the international call for projects, setting up the selection panel, the artists' residencies, the work-sessions with the Antoni Tàpies Foundation, and finally the conferences, workshops and presentation of artistic interventions, as well as subsequent self-evaluations. These spaces became *contact zones* where citizens, artists and other cultural agents and institutions worked together, horizontally and continuously, to reconsider the future of "the city", with the intention to influence, not only the specific context of the site, but also the very practices and organisational and working methods themselves.

Dispositius Post-, along with Recreant Cruilles, the Antoni Tàpies Foundation, the artists, and a great many citizens, turned into a locus for collective being, a process of convergence through which various actors and agencies have experienced mutual empowerment through shared practice and the transfer of knowledge. Art with a "socially engaged" methodological process, founded upon participation, reciprocity between artists, organizers and community; and combining intervention within a particular site with elements bound to the local reality. Throughout this project, Idensitat acted as a potentially hybrid system of ambiguous identity within various contexts of action, taking upon itself as a priority working processes and processes of reclamation upon the Germanetes site. Idensitat also intends to consolidate, through debates, discourses and concerns expressed on a cultural level, its practice as a procedure which acquires depth through the expression "to experiment with a location to transform artistic practices, and to experiment with artistic practices to transform a location".

## LOCAL CONTEXT AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES: A NEIGHBOURHOOD VISION

Barnaby Noone, Recreant Cruilles (Barcelona, Spain)

The project 'Dispositius Post-' has given Recreant Cruilles the opportunity to work on three main objectives at the same time: drawing full attention to the Germanetes site and to the deficiencies in the surrounding neighbourhood; continuing to learn how best to accommodate people at the five hundred square metres of the site which we temporarily have; and finally, to encourage and help people organise themselves within

the site to create content which will enhance the neighbourhood.

On the one hand, it was a great help that we already knew Idensitat from a previous experience, organising a small workshop with only one group of participants and a single artistic construction, in which we participated in July 2013, and which certainly was helpful for Idensitat as a kind of 'dry run' for the ECLECTIS



project. So, luckily for us, when they took the 'Dispositifs Post-' project to the Germanetes site, Idensitat members had already taken part in the evolution of the space, and, more importantly, had already participated in dialogues regarding concerns of the collective and the problems attached to the space. Perhaps as a consequence of this, in this phase of implementation, the creators of artistic projects also demonstrated sensitivity to our challenges. For example, in the Germaqueta by the collective Raons Públiques, two constructed models of the district have been used in workshops with local residents to consider our surroundings, and in Floor Drawings by Gianluca Cresciano, surfaces have been made ready in the interior and on the exterior of the space as an invitation to interventions by graffiti artists.

There were also projects which were more ephemeral but which were very close to our collective, in the sense that they reproduced the peculiar relationship which Recreant Cruilles has had with the site over the past two years. With Chromakeying, Laia Solé imagined the creation of windows in the wall, just like ourselves, spending almost a year meeting outside, imagining ourselves inside but unable to enter. Meanwhile, Arabian Nights, or The Home by Catie de Balmann, brought the interior of a building to the exterior, clothing the façade in a multicolored tide of curtains which would normally remain on the inside and in perfect stillness, just as we have now begun to open out the interior space of the lot, also wishing to bring to it color and movement.

But in the end, all the projects, and the invitation to Idensitat and to the artistic director of the Tàpies Foundation to participate in the presentation and evaluation of the project, made Recreant Cruilles feel integrated within an initiative which was quite complex, and which involved work and responsibility. We did not participate as professionals, but at some point Idensitat and the Tàpies Foundation decided, as a vote of confidence in those people unassociated with or unsupported by government, that Recreant Cruilles should serve as a flexible component, among those possible entities organisations and individuals eligible to participate. Ultimately, we believe that it was a very wise decision, and for us, perhaps one of the most valuable things of the whole experience.

**Session evaluation:** On 25th March 2014, an evaluation meeting was held at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, attended by Laurence Rassel,



director of FAT; Ramon Parramon, Idensitat director; Laia Solé, visual artist; Barnaby Noone, Roger Pujol and Guillermo Rojo, members of Recreant Cruilles and the Germanetes Committee; Yvette Masson, member of PACT; Irati Irulegi and Laia Ramos from Idensitat. The objective of the session was to formulate a common statement on the specific topics, what can cultural institutions do to facilitate and improve urban citizen empowerment processes? What role can European cultural networks play in the sustainability of the outcomes of such processes, and for giving them relevance beyond their local context? During the meeting, several interesting issues were noted, as follows: The need to work within a perspective of long-term projects, because there is time to learn the dynamics of a specific space, to build confidence among all participants, to be able to collectively imagine what is feasible. How to generate mechanisms to ensure a project's continuity, albeit with a different intensity. The Importance of working in a specific local context, but always establishing national and international connections with different experiences. Institutions, artists, cultural agents, etc. are actors in an emancipatory process to reconsider, collectively and non-hierarchically, new forms and uses of public space, and to broaden democratic radicalism in conjunction along with other agents which have specific knowledge and skills that make up this diverse movement.

*Artists involved in Dispositius Post-:* **Catie de Balmann** - Arabian nights or at home, **Gian Luca Cresciani** - Floor Drawings, **Maria Anwander** - Public dancefloor, **Laia Solé** - Chromakeying, **Álvaro Muñoz Ledo** - Video Grafitti, **Olaia Sendón** - Small surfaces, **Dixpositivos** - Play and recover, **Atlas Col-lective**, Atlas project, **Raons Públiques**, Germaqueta

*Other agents involved in seminar and workshop:* **Paul Ardenne**, **Jan Van Heeswijk**, **Joan Subirats**, **Ana Méndez de Andés**, **Peter Westenberg**, **Tania Ragasol**, **Marco Stathopoulos**

## FOCUS: EUROPEAN NETWORKS TO CREATE COMMON GOODS

### PACT

Europe is the relevant and necessary scale at which to think our future. The claim for commons and the new ideas carried by citizen involvement in cultural and artistic experiments must be considered in order to imagine what living conditions are adapted to contemporary needs and aspirations. Faced with the inadequacy of usual top down solutions, local initiatives across Europe have been inventive. They have questioned old processes, diverted paths and bypassed obstacles, meanwhile empowering citizens to imagine new possibilities and lifestyles. The "Hack the City" initiative<sup>5</sup>, in Dublin, willing to illustrate visionary thinking, and to create possibilities by bending, and tweaking city systems, is an other example of such a phenomenon.

The local dimension of most of these initiatives might suggest that their relevant scale and the scope of their outcomes limit them to their specific area. Indeed, these initiatives are often isolated. However, once networked, they show the emergence of a real movement that faces common needs and aspirations. They provide evidence of the existence of a transnational process working towards the construction of a common good, in which projects such as ECLECTIS can contribute. They should be considered in this manner for two reasons.

First, because their experimental mechanisms, once discussed at a European level, are a valuable source of information for a public debate informed by common denominators.

And then, in order to be visible and effective, to make one's voice heard, citizen involvement must reach a certain scale that is possible only by structuring a network. Inhabitants' increasing claims on public space through art, culture, and activism is particularly revealing of the links and the types of "commons" that are being redesigned throughout Europe. Thus, it is at the European level that this phenomenon

needs to be read and theorised. Its proposals not only reflect the questioning of the political, social, economic and ecological representation of societies, cities and territories, but also the desire to reclaim the dimension in them that is public space in its broadest sense. The process is a rediscovery of the common good as a place of political debate that should include new readings and new accounts as well as the possibility for political and civic collaborations. It has become urgent to position these experiences on a European scale simply because contemporary issues require new visions on a level that knows no borders.

They can inspire beyond their local context, which would also be the highest form of empowerment for citizens who are a part of them. There must therefore be room for experimentation in the design of living environments, to build on what Bourdieu has called "cultural capital", in other words the sum of all non-financial social assets of societies (Bourdieu 1979)<sup>6</sup> as a lever for innovative urban and political design in local, national and transnational policy and governance frameworks.

Where common top-down trends aim at optimizing practices that have been considered effective, experimentation thinks of radically new practice. Indeed, our living environment demands that we develop our capacities in order to adapt to unpredictable circumstances. While the current approach advocates innovation by insisting on constant renewal of practices that are doomed to obsolescence, ECLECTIS connects actors across Europe who undertake a form of bottom-up action-research that responds to local concerns, inventing new means of action; thus it creates a possibility for mutual inspiration. Networked, those experiences can reveal a common ground on a European scale that can be a testing ground for possible futures.

5. <http://community.studiolabproject.eu/group/hack-city>

6. BOURDIEU Pierre, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, coll. « Le Sens commun », 1979, 670 p.

>>> SEE RECOMMENDATIONS: I, II, IV, V, VII



# MOBILISING CITIZENS DURABLY THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY EVENT: PARK(ING) DAY 2014

Dédale, Paris, France



During ECLECTIS, Dédale experimented with different processes to mobilise citizens and raise awareness about the challenges of the city, and to engage them in city making thanks to artistic and participatory actions. It also experimented on how to put them in a European perspective. In this respect, the Park(ing) Day event organised in Paris by Dédale and simultaneously in ECLECTIS partner countries is a particularly interesting experimentation.

Park(ing) Day is a worldwide event, launched in 2005 in San Francisco by the American collective Rebar. Artists, citizens, activists are invited to temporarily transform a parking spot into artistic and friendly spaces, with the aim of reflecting on the share of public space, imagining new urban uses and formulating proposals for the city of tomorrow. The objective is to identify social, cultural or ecologic deficiencies of public spaces and to propose an installation responding to those issues, showing new potentials to raise citizens' and local authorities' awareness on new ways of making the city, at local and global levels.

Since 2010, Dédale has been the French relay for the mobilisation of Park(ing) Day, and directly participates in the event. The 2014 edition was organised in the context of work carried out by Dédale and the City Hall of the 14<sup>th</sup> district of Paris, aiming at reinforcing and renewing citizens' participation in the democratic life of the district. It was designed as one of the first steps of a long-term strategy for developing a common culture of participation in the district, connected with a one-year set of actions and initiatives to come. Therefore it was designed as a participatory event on public space revitalisation, a visible moment to launch citizens' mobilisation, with the idea that even if the on-site action is temporary, the dynamics created thanks to it can have a long-term impact. The choice of the area was done in consultation with the City Hall of the 14<sup>th</sup> district, following the rehabilitation of a residential area, place Moro-Giafferi: the aim was the dynamisation of this public space. The participation of local authorities, supporting the context for citizens' empowerment thanks to creative intervention, is particularly interesting.



### On-site local mobilisation

A key issue was to involve local associations and inhabitants to participate in the Park(ing) Day event, with a long-term perspective, as a first action for citizens' participation in local democratic life. One of the specificities of the district is the high number of very active associations in social, environmental and cultural sectors. To achieve that goal, strong on-site work was carried out beforehand, to raise awareness and interest, through regular meetings with locals, shopkeepers, associations; the dissemination of communication documents and of a call for participation; the organisation of a mobilisation meeting to present the project, and the participation in the forum of the associations of the district. Specific work was carried out towards the schools of the area, which then participated in Park(ing) Day.

This work also allowed for the identification of local relays for the mobilisation, which played an important role in passing on the mobilisation to citizens and other associations.

### Creating a direct link between citizens and political stakeholders

Dédale set up a park on Place Moro-Giafferi, together with local inhabitants and the City Hall elected officials. Throughout the day, several activities were organised: screening of movies from the ECLECTIS partners, conception of slogans by the local schools, creation of a green urban space. Another important action was the collection of

proposals from inhabitants regarding their district thanks to a "wall of proposals" and around 5 topics (re-enchanting city, living together, nature, mobility, technology). The main needs expressed by citizens are to cheer up the city, to regain spaces for creative or social uses and to have spaces with no predetermined purpose.

The process was that the collected proposals would be directly reported to the Mayor of the 14<sup>th</sup> district and to the elected officials at the end of the day, during an open debate. This allowed for the creation of a direct channel of exchange between the inhabitants and their political representatives, when there is often a gap between them, and to create a more direct relationship. The participation of schools in the event also created a direct dialogue between young people and elected officials which usually does not exist.

The proposals made on the local level were put into dialogue at the European level, through a common virtual wall of proposals, shared with the Eclectis partners participating in Park(ing) Day: Expeditio in Montenegro, Torres Vedras in Portugal, Idensitat in Spain. This created a common European virtual space for citizens' expression, revealing common issues: the revitalisation of public space in Paris and Torres Vedras, or the issues of living together and nature in the city in Spain.

### What's next?

The Park(ing) Day event allowed for stronger communication between inhabitants and associations, and collaborations between associations that had not worked together yet. Thus, it reinforced the interactions between local structures, creating a new ground for the development of future collaborative initiatives.

The work engaged with inhabitants and associations thanks to Park(ing) Day is expected to continue during the following months, as part of a wider strategy for democratic life renewal: regular contacts with local actors / artistic participatory actions, in particular on the topics of street art and nature in the city. Thus, the in-depth work on citizens' needs, together with visibility and mobilising events will continue as part of the strategy to renew citizens' participation to the democratic life.



## FOCUS: CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT AND POLITICAL PUBLIC SPACES

### PACT

ECLECTIS, by reflecting on citizens' empowerment in public space, addresses the issue of bringing politics back to their original place: the city and its public space. The Romans used the terms *urbs* and *civitas* to denote respectively the material city, with its walls and buildings, and a cultural-political dimension, the citizens who populate it, those living in communities, with the same habits and under the same law (Cacciari 2004)<sup>7</sup> administrating its common good through forms of public space. The city embodies this duality. These century-old concepts have contributed to shaping our contemporary cultures. However, with the hypertrophy experienced by modernity since the Second World War, the cultural-political dimension of cities has become corollary to productiveness and economic planning of their material dimension.

The dominant urban and territorial models, which originated at the time of the industrial revolution, and continue to shape contemporary living environments, thus public space, are those of planning and modernity, based on the model of economic development (Mumford 1968)<sup>8</sup>. Exacerbated in the post-war period with the advent of neo-capitalism, they carry an ideology that is structured around confidence in exponential growth, the collateral effects of which are to invariably ensure so-called wellbeing and social progress. The cultural-political dimension of cities has been sent to the background, often reduced to its market value, and with it the space for art, citizen participation, and empowerment.

The relevance of contemporary models of urban and territorial governance is now contested, or at least questioned, precisely

because of the fickleness of economic development and of the distribution of its wealth. The top-down responses they generate by means of marketing strategies and blueprint master plans are proving incapable of ensuring the social, cultural, and political intensity, for which European cities are known. In parallel, the galloping commodification of public space, and the palimpsest of regulations that facilitate it, leave less and less space for imagining alternatives. However, artistic, cultural, activist interventions in public space, such as the ones shown by ECLECTIS, are examples of citizens taking advantage of loopholes in order to privilege the cultural-political dimension in the shaping of our living environments, thereby augmenting their political empowerment.

These events are a unique opportunity to restore a necessary dialogue between citizens and authorities to obtain coherent governance through a dialogue that is both political and takes place in public space. According to many contemporary thinkers, including Alberto Magnaghi, and the Territorialists, a new approach should be founded on cultural, economic, and citizen resources, revealing the potential of territories approached as action-design sites (Magnaghi 2010)<sup>9</sup>. Artistic and cultural interventions in public space, and the involvement of both citizens and public authorities that is needed to activate them and to capitalise on them, may not be a new phenomenon. However, in light of recent crises, it is a testimony of the emergence of this new approach throughout Europe, based on a form of empowerment on which we should be able to rely in order to design our future.

7. CACCIARI Massimo, *La città, Villa Verucchio*, [Verucchio], P. G. Pazzini, 2004.

8. MUMFORD Lewis, *The City in History*, San Diego, Harvest Books, 1968.

9. MAGNAGHI Alberto, *Il progetto locale*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, coll. « Temi », 2010, 256 p.

>>> SEE RECOMMENDATIONS: I, II, III, IV, VII







# “WANT TO REGENERATE A PLACE? FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE!” THE STORY OF PARK TABOR

ProstoRož, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Written by Aidan Cerar and Zala Velkavrh



## How it all began . . .

The story of Park Tabor began in 2010. That was the first year that prostoRož, by invitation from Zavod Bunker, collaborated with residents of the city quarter Tabor, and got acquainted with their attitude towards the quarter as well as with the troubles and challenges they are facing. At the same time IPoP, Institute for Spatial Policies, carried out a sociological study among the residents. The results showed that Park Tabor used to be an important meeting place for the local community. In the study, the residents noted that the park lacked green spaces and places to socialize. They felt fear and discomfort caused by prejudices about the place. It was surprising that the residents of the neighbourhood did not feel the connection with the neighbourhood anymore.

The regeneration of Park Tabor was started as a long-term project that would restore the park position as a meeting place for the neighbourhood, a place where the residents like to spend their time, and where new stories about the park and community are created.

## Regeneration on two levels: small physical corrections and attractive programme

First step of the regeneration was the physical renovation of the park and its equipment. That was not especially demanding and took just a couple of small interventions, for example new benches, new children's playground, hammocks, and lights.

The second step was about breaking prejudices. To change people's perception of the place, diminish their fears and the negative image of the park, prostoRož started organizing different events in collaboration with local institutions, and individuals. They are free of charge and are covering different areas: culture, sports, workshops for children, culinary events and more. Every year the program is adapted according to the wishes of residents, visitors and organizers.

## The active non-locals and the benefit for the local community

The main impact of prostoRož's initiative in Park Tabor is the development of the park into a vibrant, creative and diverse urban place since the process of regeneration started.

Even though the regeneration process has been based on the bottom-up planning manner, the majority of active users of the Park Tabor do not reside in the Tabor area. This shows that not only local communities but also non-local communities have the ability to participate in the bottom-up planning process. Quite some capacity could be found in the communities that identify with particular urban place but reside elsewhere. Even though the antagonism between local communities and communities transforming the area is not unusual, no such antagonism has been noted in the case of Park Tabor. The interviews with the local inhabitants show that the inhabitants are fond of the initiative.

### Link between the communities and city authorities

Various (creative) communities that contribute to regeneration of particular urban places usually need a coordinator who provides some kind of link between them and the city authorities. ProstoRož has provided this link which served as a tool for the empowerment of the communities involved in the Park revitalization. As these communities are based on the contribution and creativity, they can dissolve easily if they are not able to find the institution or partner that has the capacity to simplify the implementation of their initiative. prostoRož provided this kind of service or partnership to various communities which consequently got involved in the Park revitalization process.

## MORE THAN LOGISTIC SUPPORT: THE CASE OF CROPS2SWAP AND SHARING DAY



Two movements or project could be exposed here. Park Tabor with its name and support served as a springboard for them.

When crops2swap (Zelemenjava – vegetable and seeds exchange) was first invited to Park Tabor, it was still a more or less private, spontaneous, and experimental initiative. The initiator **Darja Fišer** claimed: “We had no institutional backup, no budget, no equipment, no media coverage, no channels for the dissemination of information, and above all, no members. This is true for most civil initiatives when they spring into existence and most of them are never realized because of these initial obstacles. But because of the support we were able to focus on the content and on the people who took part. For us logistical support was important, we could rely on prostoRož to solve any problem and the fact that they had no expectation to get something in return. We felt welcome and relaxed.”

Within a single year, the crops2swap movement has spread to 30 different towns in the whole

country. The most successful locations enjoy very similar support as the one in Ljubljana. In the towns where they need to rent stalls or private venues, the movement has been much less successful because the organizers are volunteers and cannot afford complicated and expensive logistics.

The second positive example is a project initiated by Slovenia Coworking. The group is promoting and researching sharing activities. **Eva Perčič** claimed: “We always seek the ways how to introduce the concept to different publics in Slovenia, especially those who have never heard about this concept and park Tabor is the perfect place for it because random people were walking by, stopping, discussing and practicing different aspects of it. From the organizational point of view the support from the prostoRož/Park Tabor was especially valuable because we didn’t need to worry how to get the infrastructure for the event – everything was there: electricity, tables, chairs, and even kitchen. They also promoted the event through their communication channels and designed cute name tags for every initiative which co-created the event. We hope we can make the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Sharing Day event with their support next year again in Park Tabor.”

### How to continue and step forward? Systemic innovation, systemic support.

Even though the case of Tabor is one of the most interesting and successful local cases of bottom-up revitalization practice in Slovenia, a step forward is needed. Particularly in terms



of providing administrative environment that would enable support to different NGOs and local communities for developing a bottom-up revitalization initiative. This calls for a systemic innovation through which bottom-up

space-making would be significantly simplified. That would present a step forward in empowering various communities and other organisations interested in bottom-up place-making with their practices.

## FOCUS: WHOSE RIGHT TO THE CITY?

### PACT

ECLECTIS underscores the activities of committed actors, NGOs, professionals, artists, putting question marks on places and showing possibilities for reclaiming and using public space, and imagining possible future societies. As emphasised by David Harvey, the right to the city is not an individual right, but a common right. The one to change ourselves by changing the city is for him one of the most precious human rights (Harvey 2008)<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, consumer habits and cultural forms produced by the market economy create an economical mediation in the freedom of choice on public space, often reduced to a form of commodity. In such a context, citizens' empowerment through initiatives which are outside the market is an opening to new urban politics, which Mark Purcell calls "urban politics of the inhabitant" (Purcell 2002)<sup>11</sup>. As stressed by Anna Plyushteva, the concept of the Right to the City, developed by Henry Lefebvre (Lefebvre et al. 2009)<sup>12</sup> embodies in fact two rights: "the right to have full access to, to make full use of, and the right to directly participate, in contentious and collective ways" (Plyushteva 2009)<sup>13</sup>. As she explains, those rights have various interfaces, but one of the most important is the one of expressing political proposals.

By giving visibility to the means of shaping the city, the initiatives such as the ones promoted by ECLECTIS contribute to raising awareness on the possibility of expressing those proposals through action. Reactions to interventions in public space are various. Sometimes, the inhabitants, who see their access to public space restricted, sense artists and NGOs initiating a project in a certain neighbourhood as invasive. The duration of

the initiatives also plays an important role on the difference between something that is a temporary and experimental expression of what is possible in public space, and a use which is undemocratically imposed by a group on the whole community. As shown by the debates around ECLECTIS, artistic and cultural initiatives in public space empower NGOs as much as they empower citizens.

The success that citizen initiatives are experiencing and their increasing number oblige public authorities to question their own role, which is also a request of citizens and NGOs concerned with the legitimacy of their actions. What is at stake is the guarantee that public space remains public, and that the positive outcomes of such initiatives participate in a debate that is political and democratic. This is a unique opportunity to reflect on the role of each actor of the city in the political agenda, to allow the responsibility of public authorities to go beyond regulation, and to set a dialogue between parts with distinct potentials. As highlighted by the debate in ECLECTIS, empowerment is a mutual experience. Thus, artistic interventions in public space such as the ones shown by ECLECTIS are a powerful tool for citizen empowerment and for public authorities. They bring the political agenda closer to every citizen, as an appropriation and practice of urban citizenship, in a time when this process is crucial. They also benefit public authorities by providing them with the opportunity to empower their role as representatives and guarantors of a democratic debate, in a time when their practices and legitimacy are widely questioned.

10. HARVEY David, « The Right to the City », *New Left Review*, no 53, Octobre 2008.

11. PURCELL Mark, « Excavating Lefebvre: The right to the city and its urban politics of the inhabitant », *GeoJournal*, vol. 58, no 2/3, 2002, pp. 99-108.

12. LEFEBVRE Henri, HESS Remi, DEULCEUX Sandrine et WEIGAND Gabriele, *Le droit à la ville*, Paris, Economica-Anthropos, 2009.

13. PLYUSHTEVA Anna, « The Right to the City, and the Struggles over Public Citizenships: exploring the links », *The Urban Reinventors Online Journal*, Mars 2009.

>>> SEE RECOMMENDATIONS: II, III, IV, VI, VII





PIVO 2€ ... JASMIN TONIĆ 2€  
BEZGOVINA 2€ SPRICER 2€ VODA 1€

SCUFANA SVINJA  
svinjak s SVINJOM SKROVIŠ KAKO IMATI  
+ AKUMULIRANO ZELJE

KROMPUTILJA 2€  
Zavitek: krompirjelo  
krompirjelo



# SMART CITIZENS – DIY TOOLS AND CREATIVE PRACTICES FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Stichting Waag Society, Amsterdam, Netherlands



All over the world, citizens take action, individually or collectively. They self-organize, form co-operations, share resources and take responsibility for the care of children and elderly, environmental health, the preservation of buildings, renewable energy, the origin of products and ownership over public space. The cultural and creative sector can support them through the development of new, innovative practices and tools, mobilizing people's creative potential. Combining approaches from arts, science and the DIY and maker movement<sup>14</sup>, curiosity-driven research and (public) experiments encourage and assist citizens to cooperate, learn from each other, engage with and act in their living environments in new ways. And most importantly, take matters into their own hands.

Governments and municipalities try to build 'smart cities' and focus on infrastructure, transport, communication networks and efficiency, but sometimes lose sight of perhaps the most valuable resource they can tap into: the 'smart citizen'<sup>15</sup>. What if we as citizens don't understand our technologically enriched environments anymore? What happens if we can't influence or fix things ourselves? We become subjects rather than actors, consumers rather than producers. The cultural and creative sector aims to create formal and informal places for dialogue and interaction, mixing virtual and physical means, in order to bridge this gap between authorities, technology and citizens, striving towards a society that is sustainable and socially conscious in every way. The sector fosters participatory structures and can be leveraged in reinforcing citizens' involvement

14. The maker movement represents a technology-based extension of DIY culture. Typical interests enjoyed by the maker culture include engineering-oriented pursuits such as electronics, robotics, 3-D printing, and the use of CNC tools, as well as more traditional activities such as metalworking, wood-working, and traditional arts and crafts. Makers stress new and unique applications of technologies, and encourages invention and prototyping. There is a strong focus on using and experiential learning, learning by doing and practical skills and applying them creatively.
15. A manifesto for Smart Citizens, Frank Kresin Waag Society, <http://waag.org/nl/blog/manifesto-smart-citizens>

in decision making processes, using the principles underlying the Internet: social, open and distributed.

Currently, several low costs technological tools are being developed within the DIY and maker movement to enable citizens to perform 'citizen science'. An example is the Smart Citizen Kit<sup>16</sup>, a low cost open source sensor kit, developed at FabLab Barcelona, that measures toxic gases in the air (CO and NO<sub>2</sub>), temperature and humidity, light intensity and noise levels. Another example is Public Lab's<sup>17</sup> Balloon and Kite mapping kit that enables users aerial photography and mapping of the environment. These types of tools embody not only people's curiosity and desire to understand certain processes but symbolize a drive to tackle abuses, make things better and create a more responsible and participatory society.



Many citizen science projects facilitate observatories for monitoring environmental data, such as migration patterns and noise and air pollution that contribute to data collections used by scientists. Technology facilitates the online exchange of gathering of data and community building among researchers and participants. Waag Society approaches citizen science from a 'bottom-up perspective', focussing on empowering the citizen to find answers to his own queries or opening him up to look at things from new perspectives, rather than crowd-sourced assistance on questions posed by

scientists. Your own measurements are often experienced as much stronger evidence - and trigger for concern and action - than data collected and algorithmic assumptions by, for instance, municipalities. In the aggregation of the individual measurements new meaning might be found that connects to or strengthens personal observations.

Underlying citizen science action is a basic -intrinsic or extrinsic- curiosity and motivation to understand certain processes and issues, and to take matters into our own hands. Engaging in citizen science experiments or projects stimulates formal or informal experiential and collaborative learning. Actively constructing your own knowledge in a multidisciplinary setting creates a different relationship to a topic, in the ECLECTIS case the environment and public space, and between peers.

The major strength of the ECLECTIS approach was that the artists involved offered participants a new and fresh look on their daily living environment. Starting with triggering curiosity: the curiosity to research, observe, test, fail and improve, measure and visualize. And to actually discover and question the environment, objects, people and stories that one would normally take for granted. This new perspective in combination with hands-on experiential exploration and learning by doing and making, resulted in new and open dialogue and helped to create empathy and new connections to topics at hand. A process instead of result-oriented attitude was required and skills to actually listen to one another and to create equal reciprocal relations were put to the test. Ownership and empowerment came with ideas, solutions and action-perspective and many times only after struggle, friction and debate and the experience of being able to collaboratively overcome problems and differences. According to chaos theory, at the edge of chaos, where order meets chaos, that is where and when things become interesting, when emergence happens.

These principles and insights are of great value and offer opportunities for education. Anthony Morrow<sup>18</sup> states that 'citizen science activities provide more than simply

16. Smart Citizen Kit: [www.smartcitizen.me](http://www.smartcitizen.me) and [www.waag.org/nl/project/smart-citizen-kit](http://www.waag.org/nl/project/smart-citizen-kit)

17. Public Lab: [www.publiclab.org](http://www.publiclab.org)

18. Anthony Morrow, "The impact of citizen science activities on participant behaviour and attitude: review of existing studies" - <http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/media/80417/phase-1-report-the-impact-of-citizen-science-on-participant-behaviour-and-attitude-literature-review.pdf>



knowledge and can have a prominent effect upon the subsequent behaviours and attitudes of participants. The complex relationships between motivation, group dynamics and experience and understanding are integral to affecting the long-term behaviour of participants, something that future citizen science projects should take into consideration during development to ensure they fulfil their purpose.' In the book *Citizen Science: Public Participation in Environmental Research*<sup>19</sup>, the authors state that 'anecdotal evidence suggests that

young volunteers have learned about social, process and content aspects of science. Many mention the importance of collaboration.' The experiences within the citizen science programme and ECLECTIS confirm these statements. The most significant impact of the activities within these programmes in particular, and we strongly believe in citizen science and in DIY activities in general, is on the behaviour and attitude of the people participating, whether they be youngsters, artists, policy makers, any other and ourselves.

## THE SMART CITIZEN PROGRAM

In its smart citizens programme, medialab Waag Society brings together the worlds of artistic and creative practice, formal education, institutions and policy makers in a hands-on or learning by doing setting. Through artist residencies and workshops, the programme aims at empowering citizens, artists, scientists, teachers and policy makers to tackle local issues, such as soil contamination and air and noise pollution. Thus providing access to

innovative and creative tools and practices, creating collaborative structures to explore those tools and practices together; whether they are DIY research toolkits, design research methods or public performances. The foundation operates at the intersection of art, science and technology and hosts the first FabLab<sup>6</sup> in Europe. It is part of and a driving force in the DIY and maker movement.

[www.waag.org](http://www.waag.org)

19. Citizen Science: Public Participation in Environmental Research. Janis L. Dickinson and Rick Bonney, 2012
20. FabLab - Fabrication Laboratory – is developed by professor Neil Gershenfeld of MIT (Boston, USA). A FabLab is a cooperative workshop where inventors and developers can use a collective infrastructure. This includes computers, 3D printers, laser cutters and milling machines. The first FabLab was established in 2003. In the Netherlands there are over 15 accredited FabLabs and 7 Fablab initiatives. See [www.fablab.nl](http://www.fablab.nl) and [www.fab.cba.mit.edu](http://www.fab.cba.mit.edu).





## PLAYFUL PLANNING: CITIZENS MAKING THE SMART AND SOCIAL CITY

Dr. Michiel de Lange

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### A changing “science of planning”

In the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century urban planning became a professional discipline in reaction to industrialization and the squalid living circumstances of a pauperized class. Urban design has since been concerned with realizing visions of ‘a better urban future’. However, in practice planning processes and outcomes often have been driven by fears and anxieties like overcrowding, congestion, sprawl, pollution, and - in current smart city policies - the suboptimal use of resources (see Andraos et al, 2009)<sup>21</sup>. As a result, planning has been accused of being undemocratic, reactionary and paternalistic. Urban theorist Peter Hall highlighted this fundamental tension between planners who want to impose a top-down totalitarian logic onto the populace, convinced that a better society is not designed by committee, and those departing from an on-the-ground perspective of people’s actual needs and desires (Hall, 1988)<sup>22</sup>.

The same tension reappears today as digital media technologies profoundly alter urban life and culture. The technology-driven approach of many ‘smart city’ policies stands in stark contrast to citizen-centric and frequently playful ‘social city’ developments (de Lange & de Waal, 2012, 2013)<sup>23</sup>. This again affects urban design practices. Architects and planners like other disciplines are facing a declining legitimacy of expert knowledge, networked collective action fueled by media technologies, and shifts in the relationship between professional and amateur. Surely one can doubt that new media fuel a more egalitarian participatory society, the end of the expert, and the blossoming of high quality user content. There is little disagreement however that digital media profoundly alter professional practices that have long stayed

aloof from them. In this contribution I look at how digital play and games affect the science of urban planning to become a ‘citizen science’ endeavor. First we see how play and games on different levels engage citizens. Then we see how play and games offer a fruitful perspective on citizen-driven urban design.

### Urban play and citizen engagement

First, simulation games are used to engage people in planning processes. An early example is *Baas op Zuid* (2002)<sup>24</sup> made by BBVH architects in collaboration with housing corporations. The online game was used for the redevelopment of two old Rotterdam districts. Players made design decisions for their neighbourhood: with a limited budget do I opt for more green, more parking spots or more playgrounds? Players immediately saw the consequences of their choices. Outcomes were aggregated and sent to the planners. Inhabitants thus acquired an understanding of stakeholder deliberations in complex trajectories. People who normally do not attend a town hall meeting now had a chance to speak up. Nonetheless in this case the professional remained the initiator and there was no profound shift in the relationship between expert and amateur.

Second, games are used to give people the potential to act on urban issues. An example is *Community PlanIt* (2011)<sup>25</sup>, where players answer questions and complete missions to earn virtual coins that they can pledge to real-world urban planning causes. Players also earn awards including bonus coins by participating in in-game deliberations. Through this game citizens, municipality and other stakeholders take up different yet equivalent roles and collectively try to solve problems. Through team cooperation these games build trust,

21. Andraos, Amale, et al. 2009. 49 cities. *Storefront for Art and Architecture*, [www.storefrontnews.org](http://www.storefrontnews.org).

22. Hall, Peter. 1988. *Cities of tomorrow: An intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

23. de Lange, Michiel, and Martijn de Waal. 2012. Ownership in the hybrid city. Amsterdam. <http://virtueel-platform.nl/g/content/download/virtueel-platform-ownership-in-the-hybrid-city-2012.pdf>

de Lange, Michiel, and Martijn de Waal. 2013. Owing the city: New media and citizen engagement in urban design. *First Monday, special issue “Media & the city”* 18 (11).

24. [www.baasopzuid.nl](http://www.baasopzuid.nl)

25. <http://engagementgamelab.org/projects/community-planit>

which helps to overcome the tension between short and long term interests. Citizens now have become actual agenda-setters and problem-solvers.

Third, games are used to stimulate playful encounters with other people and places like in *Koppelkiek* (2009)<sup>26</sup> by social game maker Kars Alfrink. Players in a neighborhood in Utrecht had to execute simple missions by taking a snapshot of oneself, for example together with someone else and a randomly found number. These pictures were publicly shown in the window of a neighbourhood center and acted as a conversation piece between neighbours. This game was explicitly created to promote playful interactions and serendipity. Players were invited to drop their usual defense mechanism and open themselves up. The game thus helped to cement social cohesion and trust.

Fourth, games are used to foster a 'sense of place', a feeling of belonging and care for the city. An example is the 'subtle mob' project *As If It Were The Last Time* (2009)<sup>27</sup> by artist Duncan Speakman in which participants underwent a cinematographic experience in the streets of London. Participants downloaded an mp3 track and received a secret location and time to start the track on a portable audio player. They were divided into two teams. One team received instructions to perform a minimal scene, while the other group listened to a soundtrack and voice-over and became the audience of a filmic scene out performed out on the streets. This hardly qualifies as a game, yet it creates a shared playful experience and induces a sense of connectedness. Through a minimal

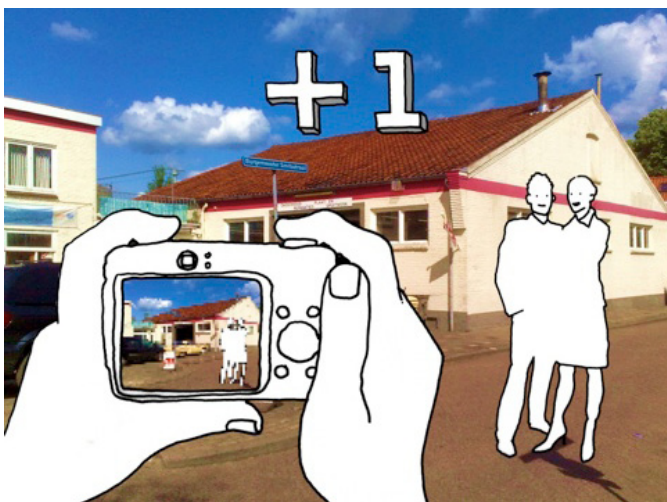
intervention participants themselves turn the everyday into a magical situation. Playfulness here stimulates affective responses and emotional ties.

### Playful citizen-centric urban design

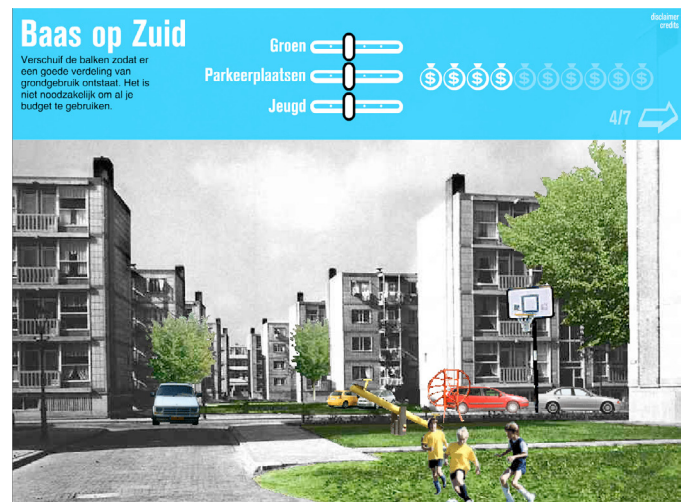
In these examples we see that urban design is no longer the exclusive domain of architects and planners. Game makers, media artists, and app developers too are designers of today's cities from the physical, to the social and the mental levels. Cities face ever more complex issues. This requires smart strategies to tap into the pool of citizen wisdom and participation. Games and play seem great ways to do so. However this requires planners to relinquish control, accept uncertain and ambiguous outcomes, and to allow possible failure. Games are composed of a set of constitutive rules, a material setting, and are actualized through the embodied activities of the players. This is comparable to what architects will recognize as program, design and use, but with a twist. Game designers create rules and settings yet the game is actualized by people actually playing. Players are not merely end users, they are active participants. They often engage in meta-play when they subvert the original rules, hack, cheat, exchange game tips, create derivatives, and tell stories about their own play. If we accept the idea of Dutch historian Johan Huizinga that play is not merely part of culture but that culture arises from play, then the variety of urban play and games experiments will eventually give rise to a new planning culture of the media city with a central role for citizens.

26. [www.koppelkiek.nl](http://www.koppelkiek.nl)

27. <http://wearecircumstance.com/as-if-it-were-the-last-time.html>



Koppelkiek (2009)



Baas op Zuid (2002)

## FOCUS: NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW POSSIBILITIES

### PACT

Nowadays technology is present in initiatives involving art and culture in public space as often as its democratic use is questioned. But something is changing. Indeed, as pointed out by American author Hakim Bey, if “all experience is mediated — by the mechanisms of sense perception [...] and certainly all art consists of some further mediation of experience” (Bey 1994)<sup>28</sup>, mediation takes place by degrees, and some experiences, especially live performances such as dance, theatre or music, are less mediated than others, such as video, virtual reality, or interactive arts, for they involve technology. According to Bey, increasing mediation leads to alienation, instead of creating a common ground.

But with the emergence of citizens reclaiming public space and the de-commodification of the streets, with major movements such as Indignados, the ones in Omonia, or Taksim, but also local citizen cultural and artistic initiatives in public space, a change has occurred and a new “mainstream” has appeared. When woven completely into the fabric of their everyday lives, the widespread involvement of inhabitants in public space, otherwise known as public life, through the arts and via activities with no commercial connotation, though valuable beyond price, has transformed the role and potential of technology.

This movement is perhaps not considered avant-garde in artistic terms, however, it takes place outside the mediation of the market and brings people together in the pursuit of a common goal. In the alternative, thus informal structure of this movement, technology, computers, data, Internet, are no more an in-between that creates a distance between people. Used for participatory purposes, they become a source of information, of data that can help to understand and recognise common environment or views, and an opportunity to broadcast and compare them. They constitute a common ground, a possibility for communicating outside the official networks, of confronting views with others, disseminating ideas, and reaching other people, augmenting the possibilities of gathering information outside the mechanisms of the market or the establishment. They multiply both the capacities of perception of the social, economical, political and ecological environments, and augment the range of citizens’ information, claims, and highlight a DIY trend. They empower them in the confrontation with the establishment that has traditionally put forth the basis for political dialogue. In this respect, improving access to technology helps to empower citizens, for it indexes the conditions for their involvement in political life to the creation of a more participatory democracy.

28. Bey Hakim, *Immediatism, Essays by Hakim Bey*, San Francisco, AK Press, 1994.

### >>> SEE RECOMMENDATIONS: III, IV, VI, VII





# CITIZENSHIP AS CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT PROCESS

## Transforma, Torres Vedras, Portugal



In a time when a desperate need for change and sustainability underlines all major efforts in the creation of alternative systems to generate and balance development, it is crucial to perceive citizenship as a learning process occurring at a cultural level within European society that is able to cause a developmental and transformative impact.

We believe that citizenship has a major effect on the cultural processes of society, and also that a strong cultural identity cannot emerge unless it is tied more closely to practices and discourses of belonging, self-esteem, respect and responsibility between the individual and others in the community. Art can play a distinct role in these processes and can help in the construction of new perspectives and new chains of meanings for a much needed personal (individuals as citizens) and collective (community-level) renewal. This in turn will produce an improved collective efficacy. In order to achieve all this there is a need for empowerment, which implies change, that is, boosting people's ability to influence decisions that affect their lives in their locality.

At present, Transforma is pursuing this objective. Our goal is to implement cultural citizen empowerment processes by working

with contemporary art processes that emphasise collaborative, relational and participatory practices. The artist is a co-producer of situations and dialogical art practices. The individual is no longer part of a passive audience/spectatorship but an active and engaged participant/citizen. People need to experience their actions and voices as part of the act, not just attend or expect something. They need to understand that they are seen and heard and may affect decision-making processes.

The artists and the individuals that took part in the art projects and research promoted by ECLECTIS have developed frameworks within this context and explored significant situations that have allowed to enable active citizenship. Some of these projects have included collaborative working processes and concepts such as creative place-appropriation, participatory planning, collective creation and community production, as well as artist led workshops and seminars, mobilization and activist interventions in the public space.

In an attempt to bring back the many voices that were part of the ECLECTIS experience in Transforma, we have decided to invite the Danish art collective, hello!earth, which

presented their project “re-everything”<sup>29</sup>, and visual artist Diana Coelho, participant of “Acting Day”<sup>30</sup>, to share with us the present

text as another form of public space. Both have used the ECLECTIS experience in Torres Vedras to perform, react and reflect.

## BY HELLO!EARTH (DENMARK)



We initiated the project “re-everything” in Torres Vedras in 2013. One of our main concerns was to create a strategy that could catalyse a process, which would then become fully shaped and could later be used by the local community. We became the initiators of something that could only be revealed, in particular its content and form, after a certain period of time. At a moment in which Europe and the world order in general seems to be at a turning point, and ecological and economical equilibriums are re-defined and questioned, we feel that our role as artists lies often in facilitating processes, where local communities articulate needs and take a renewed ownership of their immediate surroundings, actions,

resources and the potential of social fabric and connections. This allows to reflect upon the development and influence of larger political structures and landscape, and also recognize that politics is something we invent right here, something that belongs to us, and might happen in multiple and unpredicted ways.

Our main work premise is the instigation of catalysts for dialogue, maintaining this strategy all the way through the process while monitoring the dialogue that emerges throughout the development of the project.

Under the umbrella “re-everything” we have generated several different projects, namely: “The Election to the Local Ministry of Happiness”: a project that ran in parallel with local elections, “The Living Library of Present Knowledge”: a library that collected skills, ideas and knowledge, “Re-street”: an exact copy of a street sign with a different name. Meant to instigate conversations, among other things. A celebration marked the end and beginning of the 3 months project period. Communities were given the choice to continue the initiatives.

## BY DIANA COELHO (PORTUGAL)

*We all pay for what we use  
The system is old and spares no one  
We are all slaves of what we need  
Reduce what you need if you want to have a better life<sup>31</sup>*

Accepting the invitation to be part of “Acting Day” meant that it would be a new opportunity to leave the house and promote

changes and reflection in order to generate a more conscious, civic-minded, involved and creative social well-being. All this under the

29. The “re-everything” project was developed in 2013 during a 3 months residency of hello!earth at Transforma. The main focus of the project was to engage with the latent potential of human capital and community resources and values through interaction. The project gave rise to several interventions in the public space, including activities with different groups within the community. The initiative highlighted the abundance of the community, opening space for dialogue, becoming simultaneously a platform for an active research about what really makes us happy, questioning and reconfiguring our perception of prosperity and scarcity.
30. “Acting Day” consisted of an intervention in a public space with the participation of the community. Through artistic guidance, participants wrote sentences on several walls of Torres Vedras city centre. This was an attempt to provoke a transformative action in society. During one day, public spaces became hosting sites for the voices of citizens. This artistic intervention was the starting point for a debate about the necessity for collective and individual change, and also about the creation of actions that could implement these transformations.
31. Part of the song “A gente vai continuar” from Jorge Palma.



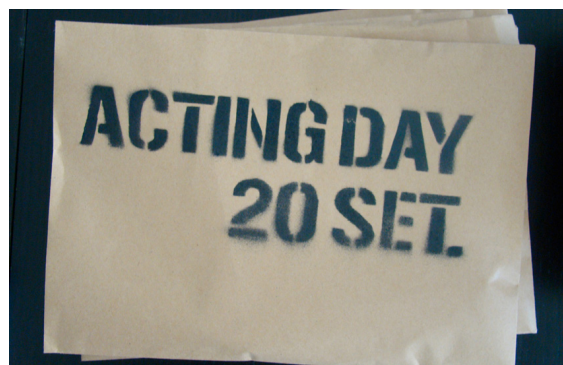
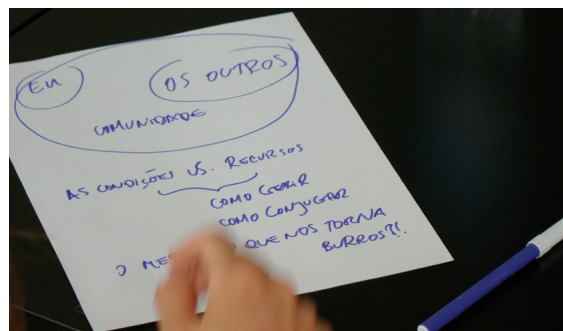
premise that in order to make things happen it is necessary to break the ice between participants and raise questions that affect each one of them and as well as the collective.

I rushed into the project. I was willing to raise “humanely essential” questions – nourishment (the blessing of food, awareness of transgenic food, etc.), balanced consumption (reduction/adjustment of needs, transport management, etc.), energetic relationships between people and the rest of the planet, a stronger holistic awareness of life. What is humanely necessary for a dignified life? What is excessive and is sold to us as being fundamental? What possibilities of transformation are at our reach? And so on.

However, being part of “Acting Day” was by itself a great lesson. Mostly due to my adolescent enthusiasm, I was forced to

recognize that the notion of collective ethic and the notion of “better” are not certain. I also realized that no matter how much good will my discourse contains, those “motivations” do not stop being solely mine.

If we want to create a more positive, sustainable and happy society, we must promote critical mass and help each citizen to find their role in this complex web, not assuming immediately that we have the solution for the all the problems in the world, nor be the voice of reason that must be followed. Change may reside in the acceptance of individual responsibility within the collective. Either by changing habits of spoiled brats that complain about a paternalist system, and also by assuming that our future depends much more on what happens within each one of us and not so much about the exterior world. We are all co-creators of “Acting Days” chains.



## FOCUS: POSSIBILITY FOR ALTERNATIVES

### PACT

Contemporary crises question the dominant trend of the establishment and stress the need for alternatives. In an urban environment dominated by planning, artistic and cultural citizens' initiatives, which by definition cannot arise from within the establishment, automatically appear as possibilities for alternative movements. French philosopher Thierry Paquot points out that ever since the appearance of the expression "alternative movement" in 17<sup>th</sup> century engineering science, it has evolved to describe those "groups trying to live, produce, consume, educate or love differently. They represent a rupture with conformism, a challenge to an order considered "normal", a move away from what is imposed and standardized, from that which is normative and sets standards" (Paquot 2012)<sup>32</sup>. In "alternative movements" we can find a "critical" dimension that is non conformist and experimental.

The city that is produced by economic development, even in its "sustainable" form, promotes standards, performance, features, and trades. Even if accompanied by an aesthetic that evokes a symbiosis with nature, playful and sporty street furniture, it often represents a spatial expression of the recent variants of the neo-capitalist economy in search of new markets, which is now largely being questioned. Founded on the models of economic development, sustainable development sometimes produces physically new urban forms, but without offering "alternatives", notably in what concerns the commodification of the city that erodes public space.

Alternative experiments, such as the ones shown by the artists participating in ECLECTIS claim their autonomy on this process by being able to propose new, radical solutions that question common practice and are in conflict with its single worldview. As shown by Saul

Alinsky, conflict plays an important role as a first ingredient for empowerment, and as a driver for change (Alinsky 1971)<sup>33</sup>. The ECLECTIS project shows that most citizen cultural initiatives are led by actors, who, despite the difficulties of trying to implement actions outside of regular practice, don't necessarily consider themselves as revolutionaries –and often not even as activists. However, they engage in a power struggle with the established order by questioning its practices through the manifestation of political, constructive resistance.

As pointed out by American architect and author Lebbeus Woods, "resist" is a rather ambiguous word that should not be misunderstood, or underestimated. According to his reading, to resist does not mean to "dismiss" or to "reject". "Instead, it implies a measured struggle that is more tactical than strategic" (Woods 2009)<sup>34</sup>, and thus deeply political. Resistance involves engaging in a permanent political dialogue that takes the form of a negotiation between two equivalent parts to imagine alternatives: the establishment, on the one hand, and citizens, on the other. To resist implies the need to define what it is that one wants to resist. It is the equivalent of structuring principles and organizing; it is the act of creating new referents. It is no coincidence that over the last decade, manifestos have made a comeback not only in public discourse, but among artists and designers (Noever et Meyer 2010)<sup>35</sup>.

By facilitating cultural and artistic experimentation in public space, projects such as ECLECTIS empower citizens. This form of empowerment is precious to the public discourse because its cultural bottom-up dimension contributes to imagining new narratives and alternative practices that can inspire new means of governance.

32. PAQUOT Thierry, « Peu + peu = beaucoup », in , Gollion, Eterotopia / Infolio, 2012.

33. ALINSKY Saul D., Rules for Radicals, A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals, New York, Random House, 1971.

34. WOODS Lebbeus : <http://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2009/05/09/architecture-and-resistance/>

35. NOEVER Peter et MEYER Kimberli, Urban future manifestos, Ostfildern; Hollywood, Hatje/Cantz; MAK Center, 2010.

>>> SEE RECOMMENDATIONS: I, II, III, IV, VI, VII



# FROM PARTICIPATION TO EMPOWERMENT

## Expeditio, Kotor, Montenegro



Through the ECLECTIS project, NGO Expeditio focused on three types of activities, trying, through artistic interventions in public spaces, to empower citizens to become more active concerning the issues of importance for the community:

### 1. Small creative actions in public spaces of Boka Kotorska

These actions were primarily intended for children and youth. They were implemented in cooperation with local artists and associations. They include: The Future I Want – children gathered to paint murals; Puppets in a park – making of rug dolls and placing a small puppet theatre in a park, with the participation of local people; Encouraging activism of youth in Herceg Novi - through mapping their cultural needs; Vjeverica and us children – encouraging youth and children to spend more time in nature.

### 2. Park(ing) Day Montenegro 2013 – 2014

Park(ing) Day was organized for the first time in Montenegro in 2013 and repeated in 2014. During the event, the Riva parking lot situated in the town centre was temporarily transformed into a public space in order to remind the people that public spaces belong to them and that it takes little action to turn these into lively places of civic activism and creativity. The Park(ing) Days in Kotor gathered around 60 groups and individuals from the public, private and NGO sectors, with their lot display ideas ranging from knowledge sharing (fire fighters, local hiking club...), public awareness raising (finding homes for deserted animals, planting plants...), expressing creativity and solidarity or stating political opinions.

**Patricija Pobrić**, Executive Director of the NGO "Nasa akcija" /"Our action", who took part in organizing the Park(ing) Day



Kotor, describes the action of citizens' empowerment in the following way:

"Park(ing) Day Kotor 2013, an event organized with the goal of using public space and transforming it into space for creative public use, was a great success in our town. NGO "Nasa akcija" (Our Action) was honored to be a part of the organization, especially since we are an NGO that is focused on increasing volunteerism and citizen activism here in Montenegro. Many various organizations were present and participated, and even more citizens showed up to enjoy the event. There was something to be learned, and enjoyed by everyone, and for a short time it united the community in a central location.

Besides the obvious goal of creative and better use of public spaces, Park(ing) Day had other effects in our community: effect of strengthening the community and empowering citizens. Number one, and to me the most important, the community and its citizens learned from participation that it is possible to work together for the community on a positive event. The event linked and developed partnerships between individual participants, some from the same community who did not even know each other. Talking to each other and enjoying each other's parking spot with its unique content, fostered discussion of common issues and barriers in the community, discussion of human rights and tolerance, citizen wishes for our town, as well as diversity. Young and old, deaf and mute, dancers, firefighters, activists, business, various NGOs and clubs all in one place. The parking spots fostered diversity;

everyone had their own ideas, presentation, set-up and atmosphere.

Park(ing) Day, a first of this kind of event, was truly a first for Kotor and a first for Montenegro. What happened that day in our town was a model for other communities, many of whom have asked to do the same. With events of this kind, us participants are living locally, but have participated globally, and have learned much through this civic action, and have shown to others in the community that it can be done. We understand that change comes slowly, but the event of Park(ing) Day was followed with actions such as humanitarian Christmas bazaar, local fundraisers in benefit of a sick child in the community, donation collection for flooded areas in Serbia and Bosnia, and we have seen a change in the trend that many NGO's together are much stronger than one on its own, and have so moved forward and grown, and strengthened the success of their actions by joining together."

### 3. Artistic project "The Non-existing History"

This action was aimed at empowering women and men regarding gender issues through activities in public spaces. It was preceded by a research entitled "Women's Map of Boka Kotorska" that was carried out by the NGO Anima from Kotor. The idea of the research was to identify different layers of women's history in Boka Kotorska and subsequently present them to the public in a creative way, through an artistic intervention in a public space. The research included the analysis of material found in libraries and archives (documents, books, newspapers and magazines), and also a number of individual interviews. The research showed that the data on women in libraries and archives are scarce, that they are scattered in different sources and difficult to find.

Such situation confirms the existence of a clear division of our society into:

- a public sphere, which belongs to men, and is, therefore, recorded, remembered and glorified
- and a private sphere, which belongs to women (space of everyday life and reproduction) and, consequently, remains unremembered, taken for granted and, in historical sense, ignored

This lack of information has inspired the launching of the action entitled THE NON-





EXISTING HISTORY. Believing that personal memories of women and men provide an interesting and valuable testimony of numerous stories of women (mostly hidden, but nonetheless beautiful, warm, heroic, and even terrifying) we thought it very important to save the stories from oblivion, in an attempt to re-evaluate the private sphere, in which these stories have been silently, from generation to generation, deposited one above the other and turned into a long, continuous silence.

On the International Women's Day, March 8, 2014, NGO Expeditio announced the action inviting the citizens to send scanned photographs of their mother, grannies, female neighbours, friends, teachers, and other women who left a mark in their lives (and are not with them any more). Together with photographs, they were asked to send a short story explaining why those women were special for them. All were welcome to take part in the event, regardless of their age and gender. During one month people contributed more than 60 personal stories and lots of photographs, some of which were exhibited in a public space in Kotor, in the form of fabric panels prepared by the designer Tanja Radež, from Ljubljana.

Asked if artistic project such as "The Non-existing History" can empower women and men on gender issues, **Ervina Dabižinović**, a psychologist from the NGO Anima – Centre for Women and Peace Education, says:

"Artistic projects can bring people to the understanding of certain problems, in this case a complete lack of information on women's contribution to the development of our community and society. Such projects can motivate people not only to support but also to initiate actions themselves. If the project "The Non-existing History" has managed to inspire people to think about women's history; if they, upon returning home, felt motivated to write down their own life story, record important events or at least sort out the photographs; if they understood how important it is that women's contribution and energy is



presented in public spaces; if they realized that women's history is unjustly neglected and that information on it must be documented and saved from the oblivion and exclusion – then we can speak about empowerment. This is a process that gives results and makes us change in a long run. These results cannot be measured in centimeters, seconds or weight. The process by which we became aware of the importance of something makes us change our experience and behaviour."

The designer **Tanja Radež**, who, together with Expeditio and Anima, contributed to the realization of "The Non-existing History", says the following about the participation and empowerment the action brought about:

"For each project in which you seek or expect cooperation and assistance from the people you do not know in person, there is a fear of failure. It is very important that the announcement inviting people to take part in an event gives a clear idea and emits huge enthusiasm. When people, based on a universal idea, try to recognize something in their own life, an emotion of awakened memories is created. The most beautiful feeling is that at the end of the project people realize they are a part of the community and that is the beginning of many new ideas, information and initiatives. That is the moment when the project can spread and further develop.



The project "The Non-existing History" was a surprise. We received photographs of great aesthetic value and deep, true stories accompanying them. Messages of beautiful profoundness were expressed in pictures and words. At the exhibition, all the people received their share of emotions, no matter if they took

part at it directly or indirectly. I think it's a very important experience for small communities. It's beautiful when an invisible, secret part of history becomes alive again. The question of local women's history, which we named The Non-existing History, became open in a way full of respect and rendered acceptable to all people."

## FOCUS: COMMON GROUND IN CHANGING TIMES

### PACT

Artistic interventions in the city such as those reclaiming public space necessarily tackle common, established, sets of referents. In doing so, they address subjects that belong to the sphere of common culture, which is an opportunity to reflect on a common ground in a time when differences are stressed more than that which is common.

The definitions of "culture" vary according to the fields that are concerned. However, they share the fact that they refer to models around which societies are built. An international organization such as UNESCO defines "culture" as follows: "in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also lifestyles, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO 1982)<sup>36</sup>. This definition is an example among others, but if it reflects the difficulty of determining the extent of the semantic meaning of the word "culture", it also shows its vocation to embrace what represents and what structures a coherent set of referents. The dominant trend assigns the stability of this structure to the beneficial effects of constant economic development.

Contemporary crises show us that what is harmed is precisely the building of common referents, and therefore cultural practices. If we live in a time where reference points are blurred, we can consider that the possibility of renewal can be found in the intermingling and the forming of new connections and interactions, in redesigning common referents.

As shown in the work of the ECLECTIS project, increasing research and concrete cultural and artistic initiatives globally seek to question and innovate upon existing frameworks, and influence practices at the urban and territorial scales by addressing a cultural common ground. They produce innovation through the forging of new links and the establishment of new alliances. The French research laboratory, Gerphau<sup>37</sup>, examines how the regeneration of inhabited environments establishes efficiently new connections and hybridizations, notably in questioning culture, which involves the analysis of various representations, methodologies, politics, or even the cultural relationship to nature.

The debate set by ECLECTIS shows that this regeneration is about citizens as a community, thus cultures, as much as it is about public space as place of expression that is political. Citizen and NGOs in ECLECTIS are becoming initiators of experiences that take into account the qualitative, cultural, and symbolic dimensions of the environments they shape in a time where the trend is about measurable outcomes. Michel de Certeau wrote that, "if in discourse the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urban project excluded." (Certeau 1990)<sup>38</sup>.

The work of ECLECTIS, combining qualitative and participatory initiatives, is paving the way of the importance of showing the potential of citizens' empowerment for promoting culture as common ground and a counter-balancing power necessary to a constructive political debate in the City making.

36. UNESCO : [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/12762/11295421661mexico\\_en.pdf/mexico\\_en.pdf](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/12762/11295421661mexico_en.pdf/mexico_en.pdf)
37. Groupe d'études et de recherche en philosophie de l'architecture et de l'urbain LOUEST UMR CNRS 7145
38. CERTEAU Michel de, Giard, Luce, L'invention du quotidien. 1, 1, [Paris], Gallimard, 1990.

>>> SEE RECOMMENDATIONS: I, III, IV, V



## FOCUS: REINVENTING THE COMMONS PACT

The importance of ECLECTIS is not in its novelty, but in the fact that it echoes various recent efforts announcing a *Zeitgeist*. In other words, it adds a new wrinkle of understanding to a broad movement. In recent years, much attention from the establishment has been given to art, culture, and activism in public space; the conditions of citizen involvement that they require; and the empowerment of citizens and NGOs that they facilitate. The commodification in all realms of social life, the latest trend of which has been its application to public space in the last decades, has resulted in the erosion of the political dimension of such spaces. It is in this context that recent artistic and cultural interventions have claimed public space, and in opposition to this trend that the empowerment of their initiators constitutes a counter-power.

Experiments such as the ones conducted by ECLECTIS are a valuable source of knowledge. They present ideas for the public discourse on how to deal with a space that has been depoliticised. If we begin to embrace culture as not only an outcome, but also as a process by which cultural designers (residents, NGOs, social entrepreneurs, citizens or other participants) can engage and build political capacity through public space, then we might use this work to reconfigure economic processes in a larger sense and reimagining a new public space. We all know the statistics that show the exponential growth of the urban population. In a future that will be increasingly urban, it is crucial to reimagining

a public space as the political place to reflect on common good, or as advocated by Peter Linebaugh, to reimagining the commons (Linebaugh 2008). Hijacking or borrowing urban spaces for unintended uses, or substituting use value for exchange value, can temporarily remove public space from its market context and question its status as a commodity. A new politics of collaboration underlies many of these efforts, and it is not based on pre-constituted subjects or roles. Citizen empowerment through cultural and artistic initiatives is an opportunity to bring those politics of collaboration into the public discourse, so that it can contribute to imagining possible urban futures that will not depend on the health of the market.

Thus, offering alternative concepts that can accommodate and encourage these initiatives without prematurely judging them, can help shape the creative potential of these activities to go forward. Public policy makers must seriously examine what can be learned from the trend of interventions and the people and organizations that produce them. An open-ended approach acknowledges the political advantage of including multiple visions, representations, and interventions in public space. It can empower artists, architects, cultural activists, and ordinary citizens to become key players by inventing new practices, and tactics to claim their rights to their city and to freely project alternative possibilities for urban life as the expression of common good.

39. LINEBAUGH Peter, *The Magna Carta manifesto: liberties and commons for all*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008.

>>> SEE RECOMMENDATIONS: II, IV, VI

## ...TO HIGHLIGHT COMMON VIEWS

*With this publication, partners don't claim to have an "exhaustive" approach on what is the role of art and culture in citizens' empowerment in city making, nor to "teach" European stakeholders how to work on this field; but just to share what they have learned as well as their questions, to participate in a narrative on the crucial role and values of culture in the European project and to advocate for the reinforcement of its support from local to European level as a key pillar for facing challenges and invent the future.*



# TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION: A LEVER FOR PROFESSIONALS' EMPOWERMENT

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Because it enables experimentations on the ground with work in common, exchange of perspectives and critical approach, transnational cooperation is a strong way to reinforce the skills of professionals.

The ECLECTIS project is one example: working together allows for mutual inspiration. Partners work on the issues of public space and citizens' involvement through creative projects inspired by artistic and inclusive approaches. Seeing that others have the same approach can strengthen their position: it gives them more power and confidence and shows them that it is the right way to act.

European projects can give credit to national and local institutions, and allow for the development of new dialogue with local structures. Together, partners can reinforce their political influence towards decision makers.

However, mediation is always crucial, towards citizens who might criticise this funding, and towards local authorities, who might think that if there is European funding, there is no need for other ones.

In the ECLECTIS project, empowerment was achieved at 3 levels:

- Partners and the organisations they are working with
- Artists involved in the project
- People participating in the project



# THE POTENTIAL OF THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTOR IN FOSTERING CITIZEN'S EMPOWERMENT

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The **cultural and creative sector** is increasingly dealing with empowerment issues, working with and for citizens, even if there are disparities across Europe. By proposing different approaches, they play a specific role in citizens' empowerment.

From the ECLECTIS project perspective, 6 main axes of contribution have been identified:

## **1. Creating mental and physical spaces for dialogue**

- To facilitate the emergence of places where horizontal knowledge transfer can take place by creating spaces for encounters and dialogue, bringing together different people, with different approaches, aims, experiences
- To encourage experimentations through laboratories for social innovation
- To put people in relation by supporting the development of citizens' communities, and the dialogue between those communities, urban planners and politicians
- Networking between sectors and stakeholders empowers: this creates the context to encourage people's openness, creative potential and new practices

## **2. Artistic approach as a lever to free expression**

- Working on an artistic purpose puts people in a specific state of mind, liberating the expression by providing the possibility for less standardised words
- Working with artists is a good way to develop curiosity, enter a process and develop potentials. It's a lever to make people aware that they are more creative than they think

## **3. Questioning the society and research alternative solutions**

- To show that it is possible to act: when people are aware of that, then they act more
- To make connections with the field of education, to propose alternative ways of learning

## **4. Contribution to a long-term involvement / sustainability**

- To articulate the continuity for this kind of experiences
- To give visibility to grass-root movements and participate in a community of interest
- To focus more on the processes of empowerment than on the outcomes: the most important impact is the individual change, and not the result of the activities

## **5. Experience and knowledge transfer to citizens about non-cultural issues**

- To share examples, good practices, to educate and inform: part of the creative sector acting on public spaces has gathered experiences and knowledge (laws, specific communities...) through artistic project to deal with situations and stakeholders that can help citizens' initiatives and be transferred to them
- To create new means of evaluation on the processes and impacts, putting the human and well-being at the centre

## **6. Empowering the professionals working on citizens' empowerment**

There is a need to empower the professionals working on citizens' empowerment, because it requires specific attitude and skills. Learning in this field is by doing, experimenting.



# WHAT CAN BE SOME COMMON PRINCIPLES WHEN WORKING ON EMPOWERMENT?

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There are as many different ways of working on empowerment as local contexts, people and issues: there are no tool kits or recipes; it is more a matter of practices and experiences. However, some common principles can be set as the basis for this work, and can be adapted and repeated in other contexts.

It is also about the requirement for a professional position change that naturally takes time.

As a cooperation network, ECLECTIS has designed a charter with common principles to follow:

## **Approach:**

- Going from local to global
  - Initiatives depend on the local context, which must be taken into account
  - Put in dialogue and link the initiatives at regional, national and European levels, capitalize experiences, share and co-develop innovative approaches
  - Work in European cooperation, developing new partnerships in order to encourage sustainability
- Work long-term:
  - To have more permanent and sustainable changes – select projects that can last
  - It is not the action which should be long-term but the process activated: initiating actions that are relevant and taken over by people
  - Long-term work can be articulated with temporary artistic intervention, to show the potential, to question issues, to test
- Place ourselves in the background, guide more than manage, leave the possibility to go in another direction
- Cross-sectorial cooperation, bringing together different practices, roles and people, in an inclusive perspective
- Have the network logic in mind: making links between the projects and people
- Share within your own structure to empower your organisation
- Learning by doing
- Use adapted strategies to deal with the different forms of dialogue and audiences
- Importance of communication and mediation to get people involved
- Accept the risks
- The changes are not necessarily physical, they can be social, cultural, political
- Conflict is not necessarily negative, it can be constructive: everything doesn't have to end in a consensus

## **Specific attitude and skills: the Relation**

- Humbleness: do not pretend to know or direct but create links
- Honesty: do not promise things that are not feasible, be clear since the beginning
- Listening to people, perceive the specific character of the group
- Learn about the logics of the community
- Empathy, Respect: of people, of rhythm
- Patience: it's an on-going work which can be a slow process
- Give people trust and confidence, so that they feel they can be part of it

- Management of opinion, inputs, dialogue
- Reciprocity: people learn from you and you learn from the people

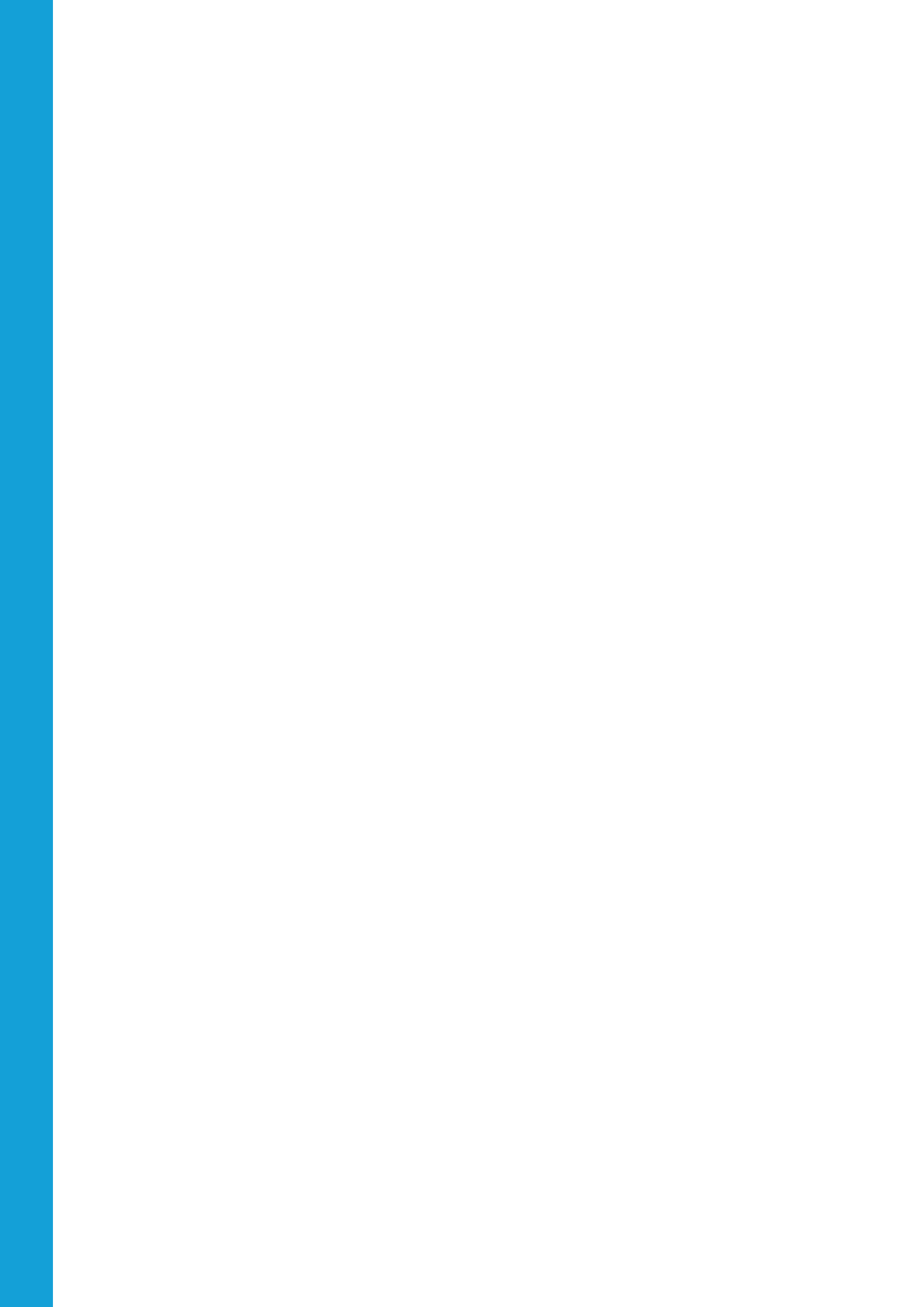
**For policy makers & funders:**

- To accept to take risks, to support experimentation
- To allow a part of experimentations where no precise results are announced: it is a process
- To encourage several small initiatives rather than a big one allows to distribute the risks, to limit them, and to leave more freedom to those who act, and thus gives more chances to obtain results
- To accept that creative proposals can come from citizens

*It is more than important to recall that these projects must provide the conditions to sharpen the different expectations of what art and artistic strategies can achieve (and must refrain from) in urban development. This is very important to highlight within the EU-context, that these practices of cultural and citizens processes emphasize the independence of art, while at the same time engage in urban-societal issues, but not serving as “problem solver”, as expected in the US-context, for instance.*







## POLITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

*This document part presents the recommendations of the ECLECTIS project partners aiming to unlock the potential of the European citizens and creative sector for participatory actions in public spaces. Drawn up by 11 European organisations representing hundreds of citizens and cultural actors from different fields, these recommendations are designed to be implemented by decision makers at EU, national and local levels. This will create the conditions in Europe to ensure empowerment of creative sector and citizens in City fabric.*

# CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR CITIZENS' EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CULTURAL AND CREATIVE MEANS

Culture and creativity surround Europe's citizens, both stimulating and inspiring them, and driving an innovative Europe.

These recommendations recall upon the Political context of the public Consultation for an Urban Agenda and the EU 2020 Strategy launched by the European Commission. For citizens wellbeing today, besides focusing on economic growth, the integration of Culture in revised Strategy and Urban Agenda, still needs active stimulation, and on equal footing with the financial objectives. In particular the Agenda 21 for culture should be acknowledged and integrated as a reference document as tool to promote the role of culture in urban policies.

Creative actors are laboratories for artistic and citizens empowerment innovation. Moreover, they allow and improve both cultural diversity and social cohesion. The future of a dynamic, creative Europe depends upon the taking into account of European citizens' concerns, among which is the renewal of public spaces at local level.

Today, citizens, artists and creative sectors are facing revolutionary changes. The evolution of consumption behaviour and access to culture has accelerated the mutation of the cultural sector. The growth of the digital tools is also an opportunity for European citizens to connect and be part of the city making challenges.

Sustainable development, well-being, social cohesion as well as innovation remain common challenging issues. There is a need for new frameworks concerning the issue of spontaneous interventions in public spaces for local actors and authorities.

These cannot find a place in the classical scheme of subsidies or tenders but require support measures and incentive mechanisms adapted to their processes, in the form of an action plan for citizens' involvement in urban fabric.

Looking beyond the EU 2020 Agenda, NGOs, artists, and cultural actors from all over Europe ask for these recommendations to be used in a new long-term coordinated strategy, and in particular in the future Urban Agenda. It is more necessary than ever as Europe continues to evolve into an empowered cultural citizens-based project. It is therefore essential to invest in cultural/urban experimentation and empowerment. Such investment would support wellbeing growth as well as create common grounds at a time of extreme social uncertainty. Securing the social European future depends heavily on making the right decisions now.

**Therefore, this inclusive strategy cannot be limited to the 3 Culture policies (EU capital for Culture, EU Heritage Label, and EU Architecture Award). Looking at numerous experiences emerging in European cities from the cultural and creative sector together with citizens, culture as a transversal dimension must be part of an Urban Agenda.**



# RECOMMENDATIONS

01

## RECOGNISE THE BROADER SENSE OF INNOVATION AND THE BROADER INNOVATIVE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURE

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**Culture and creativity are more than economic added value. They are common values and goods that are crucial for facing the challenges of our societies.**

The sector advocates in this way with studies, manifestoes and recommendations, calling for a political approach based on social and human investment that includes cultural assets and resources, and not solely based on growth. Participation in arts and culture can enhance social capital, quality of life and well-being. Creation plays a vital role in stimulating reflection and critical thinking that feeds into citizens' capacities to deal with the transition they are part of.

>>> SEE ARTICLES  
"POLITICAL PUBLIC  
SPACE", "COMMON  
GROUND" AND  
"EUROPEAN  
NETWORKS"

- Encourage a broad approach in the implementation of European and regional strategies and programmes to enable the participation of cultural and creative sectors, in particular regional policy, development and employment.
- Place the cultural and creative sector as part of the regional strategies and programmes, the Urban Agenda.

02

## RECOGNISE THE ADDED VALUE OF CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT IN CITY FABRIC

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**Direct urban cultural initiatives and spontaneous interventions, led by citizens, artists, NGOs, or local representatives are committed to exploring new means for responding to needs and aspirations, outside the official frameworks and policies.**

It has to come with a proper framework to encourage the involvement of citizens and creative actors.

>>> SEE ARTICLES  
"POLITICAL PUBLIC  
SPACE", "COMMON  
GROUND" AND  
"EUROPEAN  
NETWORKS"

- Make sure that the European Commission strengthens its position regarding artistic and creative processes in all its policies, with a particular attention to Regional and urban Policies, impacting infrastructures and territorial cohesion.
- Shape a favourable regulatory environment for creative sector and citizen participation to city fabric and public space projects, by evaluating existing successful experiences and best policies.
- Ensure dissemination of inspiring initiatives to public authorities, cultural and urban actors and citizens.

## 03

### IMPROVE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS AND CREATIVE NGOS

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Citizens' empowerment, although for different reasons and with different objectives, is seen by most actors of the city as necessary in order to imagine other possible futures, in a time when the outcomes of common practice and top down solutions prove more and more uncertain. The participation of citizens and creative NGOs must be ensured and it must be the case for all creative actors and citizens organizations regardless of their size to guarantee pluralism and diversity.

- Establish a regulatory framework ensuring that public authorities open tenders and calls for public spaces to NGOs, with open-minded references.
- Open urban competition rules to the creative sector to avoid excessive market concentration in order to guarantee cultural diversity, and citizens' participation.
- Make sure that all cultural actors have access to all city documentation, including the opportunities of online calls in order to offer real diversity.

>>> SEE ARTICLES "POLITICAL PUBLIC SPACE", "WHOSE RIGHT TO THE CITY?", "EUROPEAN NETWORKS" AND "REINVENTING THE COMMONS"

## 04

### FACILITATE CREATIVE EXPERIMENTATIONS AND PROCESSES

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Experimentations and new initiatives must be supported and made possible by local authorities **Artistic, cultural, and citizen urban actions reappropriate the practices, and sometimes the rules of the establishment, seeking for renewal and for a new civic ambition. They are experimental, and show unexpected possible solutions both to inhabitants and to authorities.**

- Encourage and support projects with a part of unknown, change the evaluation means: focus more on the processes than on the results
- Establish an open data base resource on useful legal tools existing within Europe to set up urban experimentations
- Ensure effective cooperation between administrations to facilitate operations, dealing with different regulations (Heritage, urban planning, public safety, residences..)
- Develop financial tools adapted to the needs of the creative sector by facilitating access to small grants for R&D for SMEs and associations

>>> SEE ARTICLES "POLITICAL PUBLIC SPACE", "EUROPEAN NETWORKS", "POSSIBILITY FOR ALTERNATIVES", "TECHNOLOGY" AND "COMMON GROUND IN CHANGING TIMES"

## ENHANCE LONG-TERM PROJECTS

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The duration of the initiatives plays an important role in the potential of citizen involvement and experimentations in public space to create better living environments.

- Develop multi-annual partnerships with NGOs or civil society structures to support the implementation of long term impact projects
- Acknowledge the potential of networks as social capital and as an asset for long-term investments
- Support projects with a sustainable strategy, and with proposals to be taken over by others

>>> SEE ARTICLES  
 “WHOSE RIGHT TO  
 THE CITY?” AND  
 “COMMON GROUND  
 IN CHANGING TIMES”

## MAXIMISE INVENTIVE TOOLS

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Used for a participatory purpose, Internet and social networks become a source of information and data that can help understand and recognise common environment or views, and an opportunity to broadcast and compare them. They are a possibility for communicating outside the official networks, for confronting views with others, disseminating ideas, and reaching other people, augmenting the possibilities of bringing them together.

- Facilitate access to R&D funds for creative sector of SMES. (e.g. for plug and play tools, City data, environmental data...).
- Promote open source data programmes throughout Europe.
- Facilitate partnerships with academics, research centres by incentives measures.
- Ensure visibility to European Networks.
- Experiment means to encourage a wide access and ensure an education to these tools

>>> SEE ARTICLES  
 “EUROPEAN  
 NETWORKS”,  
 “TECHNOLOGY”,  
 “REINVENTING  
 THE COMMONS”,  
 “POSSIBILITY FOR  
 ALTERNATIVES” AND  
 “COMMON GROUND  
 IN CHANGING TIMES”



## STIMULATE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Education and training related to the activities and management of participatory and cultural urban projects must be fostered among all stakeholders to adapt to the constant evolution of the sector and new business models.

- Set up training programmes among artistic and citizen NGOs to encourage the development of urban skills and intersectorial approaches
- Foster artistic and cultural education in general (primary and secondary) in order to develop “cultural expression and awareness” and creativity as key skills in lifelong learning
- Increase understanding and awareness of urban challenges, heritage, and sustainable development by public campaigns, media programmes, and educational programmes...
- Support the experimentation and development of new entrepreneurial and organizational models initiated by the actors

>>>> SEE ARTICLES  
“POLITICAL PUBLIC  
SPACE”, “WHOSE  
RIGHT TO THE  
CITY?”, “EUROPEAN  
NETWORKS”,  
“POSSIBILITY FOR  
ALTERNATIVES”,  
“REINVENTING THE  
COMMONS”, AND  
“COMMON GROUND  
IN CHANGING TIMES”

## FOR FURTHER READING:

- Urban Agenda : [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/urb\\_agenda/pdf/comm\\_act\\_urb\\_agenda\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/urb_agenda/pdf/comm_act_urb_agenda_en.pdf)
- Révision mid term of the 2020 Strategy : [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/public-consultation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/public-consultation/index_en.htm)
- Agenda 21 for culture : <http://www.agenda21culture.net/index.php>
- European Agenda for Culture : [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/culture/l29019\\_fr.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/culture/l29019_fr.htm)
- Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018): <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16094-2014-INIT/en/pdf>
- Culture Council Conclusions:  
May 2014: cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142705.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142705.pdf)
- 2011: Cultural and creative competences and their role in building social capital of Europe: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126401.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126401.pdf)
- 2010: the role of culture in combating poverty and social exclusion: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117797.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117797.pdf)
- 2009: culture as catalyst for creativity and innovation: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117797.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117797.pdf)





## PUTTING IN PERSPECTIVE

*The following articles are written by contemporary authors who reflect on issues linked to ECLECTIS, such as art, city and citizens' involvement. The first set of articles put into perspective the ECLECTIS experiments with other initiatives and movements throughout Europe, while the second set offers more theoretical reflections on these practices.*

*Gathered in this publication, they shed light on the current state of thinking and the existence of a broad movement which this project is part of.*

# DO IT YOURSELF SCIENCE: AN EMPOWERING PRACTICE

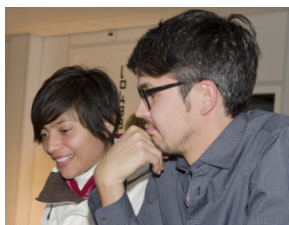
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Jeffrey Warren and Cindy Regalado (Public Lab)

We, as organizers in the Public Lab community, had the opportunity for one week in September 2013 to work with a group of 10-14 year-old students at the Hyperion Lyceum school in Amsterdam, as part of the ECLECTIS program organized by the Waag Society. With the students, we explored and prototyped DIY (Do-It-Yourself) environmental monitoring techniques and discussed emerging practices related to “civic science” which situates such monitoring as an important way that the public can participate in producing knowledge about environmental health risks, as well as in the decisionmaking which such knowledge informs.

Public Lab is a network of DIY practitioners who investigate environmental contamination and health issues using collaboratively designed, open source methods, including hardware and software tools. People across the world are engaging in DIY for a variety of reasons; interests and motivations range from conscious and politicised responses to a complex and fast-moving world, to the pride of having a job well done, to wanting/needing to save money (Wehr, 2012). At its core DIY means taking ownership over the physical and especially the technical artifacts in our lives, as well as having the confidence in our abilities to use such tools to become more self-reliant. DIY in itself is not a new phenomenon nor is DIY a generalisable culture that can be encouraged to increase citizen participation. Rather, DIY can be conceptualised as both a philosophy and a grassroots movement. As a philosophy it stands for freedom from the reliance on social institutions to discover our own motivations within (Wehr, 2012; p.2) and as a movement, DIY draws from an intellectual infrastructure that allows DIYers to reflect on what it means to do-it-yourself (Morozov, 2014). Together these make the foundation for a DIY ethos reflected in various manifestos.

The Public Lab attitude is simple: “DIY aims to make technology something anyone



*Jeffrey Warren and Cindy Regalado are members of the Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science (Public Lab), a community -- supported by a 501(c)3 non-profit -- which develops and applies open-source tools to environmental exploration and investigation. By democratizing inexpensive and accessible Do-it-Yourself techniques, Public Lab creates a collaborative network of practitioners who actively re-imagine the human relationship with the environment.*

*Cindy Regalado is a doctoral candidate in the Extreme Citizen Science research group, ExCiteS at UCL Engineering and a researcher of the EU FP7 project “Citizen Cyberlab”. She is co-founder and community developer of Citizens without Borders.*

*Jeffrey Warren is the founder of Grassroots Mapping and co-founder and Director of Research of Public Lab. He is a fellow at MIT’s Center for Civic Media, on the board of the Open Source Hardware Association, on the advisory board of Personal Democracy Media’s WeGov, and an advocate of open source software, hardware, and data.*

can develop; Public Lab aims to make scientific research in environmental issues something anyone can do well. To make something oneself is to have a sense of ownership of it, and we extend this sense to scientific tools and data”. The means for the general public to investigate and understand environmental health issues is limited due to the cost and accessibility of monitoring technologies, and so the collaborative reinvention of such tools is a key part of ensuring that members of the public can take steps to address such issues. To this end, the approach is one of first-hand data creation and analysis through which community researchers build expertise in critical thinking and technologies with broader application to their roles as civic participants. It is organisations such as Public Lab that, through their face-to-face activities and online platform, begin to function as an organised grassroots driving force that engages in and incites DIY research for environmental health. And like a snowball effect, the open source tools and methods that are collaboratively prototyped in one place get used and repurposed for a wider

range of initiatives, adapted to the specific need/context. Stories by doers are shared, they inspire others to believe and take action, and together, and their stories tell a greater interwoven socio-political story expressive of a social imaginary that tells us about people's ideals, hopes, aspirations, motivations, about the inclusivity and exclusivity of current practices - for the individual and in terms of the larger societal structure.

The recent trends of "citizen science" and "crowdsourcing", while they share certain goals (increased civic participation, for example), take a centralized approach to knowledge production which places participants at the bottom of the pyramid. Typically, members of the public are asked to perform simple, even repetitive tasks which give them little opportunity to participate in analysis or decisionmaking. Data is collected and assessed by "experts" who frame research questions, draw conclusions, and make recommendations, while participating members of the public are rarely cited and often thought of as part of the data collection infrastructure rather than as active collaborators in knowledge production. The "smart cities" movement is even worse in that it displaces traditional modes of discursive democratic process and consensus-building by framing data collection and live sensor data as a high tech or "smart" way to assess the needs of the public and act on its behalf. By treating

the public as something that needs to be "studied" and monitored, such initiatives create one-way information flow which neglects to provide ordinary citizens with a means to participate in decisionmaking.

By contrast, the civic science which the Public Lab community seeks to embody places members of the public at the center of knowledge production in a hands-on, DIY-inspired approach. Local communities who face serious pollution risks -- such as the students at the Hyperion school, which is placed on a contaminated former Shell site, should have the means not only to frame questions, but to investigate and potentially challenge government and industry claims that the site is safe, and to better understand the risks they are taking by their proximity to the polluted site.

When DIYers and Makers and Hackers do, they express something through their doing, not just their talking - they express something about how self-reliance, self-learning, and self-satisfaction takes shape. DIY provides a voice that not only counts in the decision-making process and in the problem solving of local issues but also paves the way and shapes the discourse of "taking ownership" and "taking issues into our own hands". DIYers can thus be conceived of as redefining civic responsibility as a call to engage in a critique of the system and on technologies as well as the means to sense, interpret, and change our environment.

J.F & C.R



# HOW ART & CULTURAL DIVERSITY EMPOWER CITIZENS: TWO ATHENIAN INITIATIVES

**Maria Kaltsa**

**Athens - Greece**

Citizen empowerment made possible by artistic or cultural interventions has been attempted in Athens in the recent years of deep crisis, by both top down and bottom up initiatives at various scales. These have produced interesting results and observations. I will refer to two interventions, which I helped take place, one focusing on the role of art and the second of culture.

A top down, pilot initiative launched by the Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change (YPEKA) within its Program "Athens-Attica 2014", promoted "Visual Art Interventions in Public Urban Space by Painting on Blind Building Facades". The Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA) undertook the task to organize a young artists and student competition and submit proposals of painting compositions, while the Ministry announced an open call for expression of interest to owners who would like to offer their building facades to receive murals. Committees from both institutions evaluated both buildings and visual art interventions and 3 proposals were implemented in 3 characteristic areas of the city. Important conclusions about the intervention and its reception by the citizens were drawn and they were recorded by ASFA.

The chosen areas comprise a diverse urban typology: a deprived central region, an amorphous busy location in the heart of the emblematic historic city and an immigrants' residential neighbourhood. The aim was to explore the impact of visual interventions, their use as tools to promote social dialog, to act as a form of appropriation attempting to reclaim and reform public space, to assimilate and register artistic works that challenge the indifference of viewers, activate responses, empower the judgment of people and help redefine urban public space. The task was carefully attended by academics, citizens and the administration, and the responses that followed the implementation of the projects were overwhelming.

Public space must be a collective place without exclusions, open to all and to cohabitation. Such visual interventions pose questions and set propositions regarding



*Maria Kaltsa is an architect, graduate from Cooper Union and Yale University. She is the former General Secretary of Planning and Urban Development at the Greek Ministry of the Environment where she established a department of architecture. She shared Greece's "2005 Award" for the central archaeological promenade in Athens.*

the role, institutional norms, nature and character of art, which is tested in it, exposed and unprotected by its usual audience. In this context, art -usually regarded by people as having a socially segregated role- can reverse their indifference or mistrust, empowering them, reforming an area visually and contextually and attributing landmark qualities.

Considering the complex, fast changing nature of urban experiences, it is necessary to understand how the presence of art can impact diverse public spaces. On one side, the interventions challenge citizens to redefine their relation to their building-neighbourhood-city, and thus the urban environment en large. On the other, academics and policy maker's focus on this use of art not merely as spectacle but as a socio-aesthetic necessity, which empowers meaningful communication and invests in cultivating peoples' critical perception. The project was funded by the Ministry's "green fund", citizens' responses were recorded by the ASFA in a comprehensive volume and a joint publication with the Ministry followed, including relevant scholarly articles, written by the Dean, Th. Moutsopoulos and D. Ginosatis.

The interventions proved key for communicating, activating or confronting introversion, opening up to dialog on many levels. Moutsopoulos considers that the skin of the city is today more about reading than architecture and remarks that "In mutual relations of people in large cities we notice a clear superiority of the eye's activity over that of the ear. Maybe real contact is impossible. Maybe observation is the only alternative...In an era when belief in the public sector deteriorates with zip, art in the street reverses (at least to some degree) the

phenomenon". Art is by nature destined to be subject to participatory processes and Ginosatis suggests that "...the work of art, as invention or artifact stands, is placed and by being placed empowers place, opening up the space to whom conceives it. In other words, the artifact is what gives birth to place – a place for interaction of relations". The objective is not to represent but "... address problems, pose questions, subject to judgment accepted ways of seeing, of feeling and thinking, and suggest alternative others".

Another initiative, which involved the active participation of Athenians, is under completion: REACTIVATE ATHENS-101 IDEAS, a program financed by the Onassis Foundation. Its exploration in problem areas of the city do not reflect a bottom up or top down approach, but a middle ground one. Field experts Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner (Urban Think Tank, <http://www.u-tt.com>) applied their well-tested methodology to the case of central Athens. They collaborated with Greek experts, employed local architects in order to deal with critical issues and uncovered narratives that shaped it during the last decades. The goal was to suggest creative ideas for the development of novel, realistic low cost/high impact social projects, which will empower the local population and their region and address basic sectors such as housing, work opportunities, cultural identities, environmental upgrade, child care and other social amenities etc.

Architecture, Society, Art and Culture, as important fields of the research, were understood in their relation to today's urbanism, need for sustainability, economy, education, governance etc. User generated ideas and sourcing people's entrepreneurial ideas was the key to our approach. As the diverse cultural blend of locals and immigrants in the centre of Athens -trapped in the crisis- does not have opportunities to express itself, the program set an open dialogue with Athenians, the results of which prioritized and critically addressed the existing city and its challenges. Some 4.000 individuals responded to questionnaires and gave ideas about how the city could be improved. People presented "ways out" or approaches to problems, which escape the attention of professionals, involved with urban design in conventional ways. REACTIVATE ATHENS-101 IDEAS was in quest of wisdom based on deficits, voids, lost and new visions, exceptions and not just

rules, experimentation and acknowledged people dynamics, challenges and latent potentials in the city. RA Lab, the program center of action near Omonoia Sq., brought together groups of thinkers and people of various characteristics and occupation (from simple individuals or organized groups to enlightened romantics) who had the interest to contribute in shaping their area's destiny.

A number of activation days took place during the six-month research. These gave us valuable input, on how expressions of art and culture in public space empower people in critical ways, while the city acts as a canvas. Also, on how culture, understood as "soft infrastructure", can be used to re-imagine the city. Artists connected to problems and interesting arguments came to light. Together with architects, critics and people they discussed how to communicate idealize or expose the unknown city and its darker aspects in disturbed zones. Also, how art channels interest, opens a dialog between people of different backgrounds and reveals provocations and how local people's acceptance of an artifact is necessary. It was argued whether some radical socio-political attitudes accept art, as an agent for empowerment and assessed that cultural networking promotes the interests of micro-commons, which are activated at times of crisis. It was suggested that the creation of artistic hubs may negotiate issues of conflicting interest, as prominent artist Anna Laskari put it: "art can be produced in a political way". Others pointed that valuing culture and its diversity reflects moral attitudes, or focused on how art connects with daily life and its processes, empowering bonding.

REACTIVATE ATHENS-101 IDEAS made use of people and their places and searched for the hidden potential, the language, scale and mechanisms to empower them. In the proposed projects -from large scale interventions such as a new railway station, to medium sized assemblable kits for performance spaces to take over vacant plots, to small scale ones such as the Athens kiosk - culture was used as bonding agent. As a fruit of the initiative, some other proposals suggest the development of creative hubs to promote vanishing crafts and arts, traditionally associated with these areas' identity. Others suggest businesses based on principals of creative social economy, to generate jobs and social cohesion in the spirit of diversity and cultural heterogeneity.

Within a rough, ever changing urban environment, both above initiatives empower people right to the city while they contribute to the development of a collective conscience and point out conditions under which this can be met. Many metropolises experience conflicts in deprived areas, which can activate meaningful responses to problems. Their people need empowerment and activation;

prioritizing the quality of life and providing catalysts for their critical awakening is key to achieving sustainable improvement. Art intrudes in the urban tissue and can perform a role beyond aesthetics. Understanding its social dimension and also the wealth of cultural diversity and the positive impact of participatory ideals, leads to installing a much-needed moral content to the program of creative processes.

M.K





# PARADISE ENTERPRISE, JUDENBURG, 2013–2014<sup>40</sup>

Barbara Holub and Paul Rajakovics - *transparadiso*  
Vienna - Austria

Barbara Holub is an artist and researcher. Paul Rajakovics is an architect and urbanist. Together, they founded *transparadiso*, a transdisciplinary practice in between architecture, urban design, urbanism and urban-artistic intervention addressing urban and societal issues as durational processes for urban development. They published "Direct urbanism: *transparadiso*" in 2013. [www.transparadiso.com](http://www.transparadiso.com)



*Paradise Enterprise*<sup>41</sup> developed new perspectives for the town of Judenburg by employing the method of direct urbanism<sup>42</sup>. Judenburg (10.000 inhabitants) in Styria (Austria), is, like all of Upper Styria, affected by massive processes of shrinkage – like many other cities and regions in Europe. Direct urbanism involves artistic-urban strategies in a process orientated and long term urban planning method considering social aspects as crucial element that go beyond the usual categories of planning and counteract neo-liberal orientated decision making that governs urban planning.

Based on a detailed analysis of social and urban aspects of the town as a whole using artistic and sociological procedures, *transparadiso* selected the grounds of the former paradise garden of the old Clarisse Convent fronting the Mur river which has been used as storage by the municipality and occasionally by travelling circuses. The convent was converted into social housing, an estate whose reputation in Judenburg is stigmatized despite its high living standards and its promising resonating address, "paradise street". By activating

this undervalued site the goal was not only to realize desires of the young people of Judenburg, but to establish the new paradise garden as public space invigorating the whole town by connecting the historical, bourgeois town center and the other side of the River Mur with the steel factory<sup>43</sup> and working class neighborhood. Intervening in this context, the different project elements resulted in formulating a new format of a master concept of urban development, based on artistic urban interventions.

## Developing Tools: The Amamur

As a first step, *transparadiso* conceived strategies to connect to the people of Judenburg.

Young people showed their "secret places" during public hikes along the Mur in order to reveal hidden potentials of this underrated nature environment. In the next phase, teenagers were invited to build a raft of recycled wood. The raft was used as a tool for exploring the landscape along the Mur riverbanks, offering a new view from the center of the river and to connect to memories of the days when people still actively used the river for rafting and swimming. The raft landing was rediscovered in the summer of 2013 and became an informal beach. The Amamur is now turned over to the Youth Center, which already operates a camp located downstream.

A herbarium for Mur river vegetation was set up as educational tool and a nature trail with QR codes is planned.

40. This paper will be published in the forthcoming publication "Planning Unplanned\_Darf Kunst eine Funktion haben? Towards a New Function of Art in Society", Verlag für moderne Kunst.
41. Paradise Enterprise is funded by departure, the creative agency of the City of Vienna. Additional funding by the City of Judenburg and The Institute of Public Art Styria.
42. Direct urbanism was developed by *transparadiso* and can be considered a third layer in addition to urban design and urban planning. See also the publication by *transparadiso* "Direct Urbanism", Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2013
43. The steel plant was privatized in the 1980s and is now a consortium formed by the companies of Stahl Judenburg (GMH Gruppe), Wuppermann GmbH, and Frauenthal Automotive Judenburg GmbH. The number of plant workers dropped from 2800 to 750, yet remaining the primary employer in Judenburg.

## Creating New Situations: The Paradise Garden

The image of a contemporary “paradise” was then projected back onto Paradiesgasse, the actual site of intervention. As starting point for reactivating the paradise garden as public space we realized different public art projects together with the people of Judenburg, based on their diverse wishes<sup>44</sup>. The identification of the Paradise Garden as a “situation,” i.e., a focus for the development of future prospects for Judenburg, socially as well as geographically, is a core feature of the project.

Stefan Demming's *The Smallest Show on Earth 2* approached the theme of circus grounds. Larger circuses are becoming a rarity these days, as they have little chance of surviving financially. As a result, the area, which is fixed in the public consciousness as circus grounds, remains empty most of the time. In May 2014, *The Smallest Show on Earth 2* came to the circus ground on the Paradise Garden: the people of Judenburg produced their show themselves, performing their hidden talents and appropriating the space.

Folke Köbberling (Berlin)'s *Girls' Club* references the site's historically charged location. The artist operated like an archaeologist, conceiving the girls' club, which was requested by the local youths, as a dig from which a sunken terrace surfaces. It is equipped with vertical awnings as a colour code the girls conceived with the artist to announce e.g., when boys are allowed in. The excavation is surrounded by a garden of old sorts of tomatoes (Paradeis in Austrian language means both paradise and tomato) to be appropriated by the inhabitants of Paradiesgasse, creating a first community garden in Judenburg.

Christine and Irene Hohenbüchler were working for *...We Want BMX + Pump Track...* with teenagers to accomplish their long-held dream: a BMX track that is not

constantly threatened with demolition. The artists encouraged the creation of a hybrid BMX track as a place of desire—not only for the “Extreme Chillers,” the initiators from Judenburg, but also for youths from the surrounding area. The BMX-track has immediately transformed the abandoned dump into a vividly used meeting point for the young people.

Along with the opening of *...We Want BMX + Pump Track...* in July 2014, projects by students from the Vienna University of Technology were realized as the *World Expo of the Missing Things*. The “Extreme Knitters”, one of the projects initiated by students, was taken over by the people of Judenburg with such enthusiasm that their ambition resulted in the possibly largest urban knitting project so far: a pillar of the bridge at the paradise garden was wrapped by 140 m<sup>2</sup> of knitting.

## Direct Urbanism: Planning as an Open Process

The adaptable formats of this model project of direct urbanism provide the flexibility necessary to address urban issues that arise on short notice, or “missing things,” and thus strengthen a broader view of urban development with regard to social issues. The challenge of initiating a project that addresses the issue of shrinking by means of creating prospects for young people is not a simple task. A single project cannot resolve such complex problems, but the method of direct urbanism can nurture self-empowerment and new collaborations—of the citizens as well as of the municipality. The quality of projects like Paradise Enterprise counteracts the demand for measuring success by quantifiable criteria: the enormous engagement and pleasure experienced by all the various people involved is the best signifier of how people can take matter into their own hands thus bringing about new visions and real changes in a durational process.

**B.H & P.R**

44. The scheme was conceived by transparadiso and funded by the Institute of Public Art, Styria.

# PUBLIC SPACE, COMMON SPACE

Joan Subirats  
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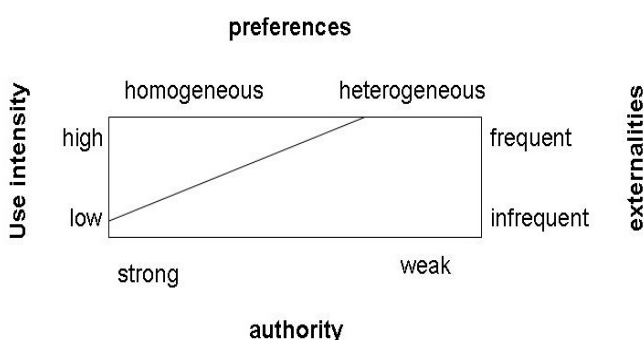
All cities, with greater or lesser intensity, collect and amplify the sudden and profound changes which have shaken everyone in the last twenty years, and which allow us to speak of “change of epoch”. Without intending to expand upon this vast subject here, we would point out that we understand all these factors of change are the stage where the complexity of uses and occupations of public spaces in cities are located. Filled with different people, with people with less stable patterns of life, with people with less predictability, but also with people from inside and outside of that environment. This public space acts as a container for a great mix of economic, social and cultural practices which do not always coexist harmoniously. In Figure 1 we have tried to reflect this set of changes, involving greater diversity of people and uses, more externalities in various activities, a greater intensity of use of space, and a reduced ability to use hierarchical mechanisms (command and control) in the management of conflicts of use which these spaces generate.

Based on these considerations, we may see if the public spaces of the city could be imagined as a resource for its inhabitants, as much for the more or less permanent residents, as for those visiting on a temporary bases. Indeed, it seems clear that everyone needs an appropriate public space in their surroundings. But the availability of these types of spaces is different in each sector of the city, and at the same time, everyone’s need also depends on the quality and quantity of private or personal spaces. So we are talking about a resource which is necessary, and which at the same time is limited and heterogeneous. If this is so, and we define these spaces as scarce resources and potentially confrontational with regard to how they are used and enjoyed, we must address the governance of this set of spaces, of this resource available to the city. Such a scheme for governance may be subjected to varying degrees of institutionalisation, from very informal and implicit to highly defined and explicit rules. Therefore, we refer to a scheme of governance or government management situation for a space, formal or informal, which organises and allows the use of that resource. Which brings us to refer to the different actors shaping that institutional sphere, that system of government.

We can imagine these spaces from different perspectives, above all as physical spaces. That is, places which may overcome the narrow interests of homeownership, or of potential shortages of light and air. They are also areas of permanent or temporary economic activities. For example, the spaces devoted to markets, restaurant terraces or bars. These spaces are areas of social interaction, but they may also be places of political, artistic and cultural activity. Activities which may be deployed in the same places with varying doses of permanence.

Obviously, this set of uses varies throughout the year, varies with time or weather conditions at any given time, and also varies with the different times of day and night. On the other hand, these uses respond to a regimen which is subject to regulations which, in each city or even in each district

## QUESTIONING PUBLIC SPACE





within the same city, are more or less explicit, more or less concrete, and yet which have a varying capacity for being updated.

It must be remembered that many public spaces operate different types and degrees of administrative concessions, which regulate temporary uses (shorter or longer term) of these spaces (occupation of terraced restaurant and bar, occupation by street markets, occupation by specific vendors, etc.), and/or a set scheme of permissions for occasional use (a party, or political, artistic or cultural activities, etc.). At the end of the day, through these mechanisms and these kinds of regulations, a system of rights and duties of public spaces linked to a regulation of uses is being shaped.

On the other hand, public spaces are related to each other, and also incorporate various actors. Actors who are not in the same situation, nor enjoy the same status nor the same resources. There are neighbours living side by side (but how far away does the status of neighbourhood extend?). There are people who work and "exploit" this space (but what return does this generate? who benefits from it? ...). And there are users of these spaces, in some cases users of established and agreed-upon services, in other cases, simply users of the physical space (but can all users be considered as having the same rank of importance? is it the same if they are citizens of the same country, immigrants or just tourists?).

The fluxes in occupation of these spaces are, as already noted, variables throughout the day and throughout the year. A first major distinction we find, as we have already mentioned, lies in those public spaces of the city established in neighbourhoods or places where people with greater financial resources live. In those places, the existence of public spaces and their uses do not usually cause problems beyond the own safety and maintenance. Indeed, the quality and breadth of the spaces and private homes, the usual low-density of these neighbourhoods, greatly reduce the pressure of utility on public areas, as they usually have a minimum amount of users. The opposite happens in neighbourhoods where housing is very small, low-quality, and where there is a high-density population. Therefore there is a high inverse correlation between private housing quality and density of use of public spaces. Depending on the dimensions of space

and density of uses and occupiers, we find a rivalry of uses which may lead to more or less serious "gaps" in "resource-space" (and, for example, impacts upon noise levels, or upon waste generation), and therefore in situations which may lead to what we might call an unsustainable resource-space scheme, even though previously, the management protocol may have been running more or less correctly. The crisis of the "resource" may end up causing problems of "property rights", of the system of concessions, in level of use or "productivity" of the space, in the coexistence between uses and users-beneficiaries. And it may also generate tensions and social conflicts arising from the social distribution of the resource-space, since usually shortages, scarcity or tensions generate conditions of privilege for some, and of exclusion for others. In the end, there are always winners and losers in relation to the uses and availability of spaces in the city. And this requires policy, demands the capacity to govern this conflict, this space.

Based on these elements, how can this space be ruled-managed-used-experienced, etc., so as to allow an open and varied use? And how can it be avoided that the ones least likely to enjoy adequate private space or personal spaces, end up paying the costs or negative consequences?

As we have said, it seems clear that increasing competition in the use of limited public spaces in cities creates conflicts of rights, a conflict of perceptions about the legitimacy of each activity and each group relative to the same space. The most direct neighbours (voting in elections, and taxpayers, via municipal taxes) generally consider that space as their own and claim to enjoy it without restriction, or under accepted conditions. The owners or licensees of commercial activities, expressing their right to earn a living from the contracts which they have signed and, in exchange, they are forced to pay taxes or specific taxes. Many organisations, groups, artists or people with different initiatives, may have expectations about how to use those spaces. On the other hand, citizens, city residents and taxpayers and voters, who do not reside directly within the space, claim unlimited use of areas which have exactly public status and which, therefore, are open in principle to everyone at anytime. And the sporadic visitors and tourists understand that they are making

use of a space, that is, the space of the city taken as a whole, which by definition is open to everyone. In short, we are talking of a limited resource, subject, in certain places and situations, to an intense competitiveness (of access and of use). A space of conflict, which is how the city is, given the different expectations and interests converging upon it.

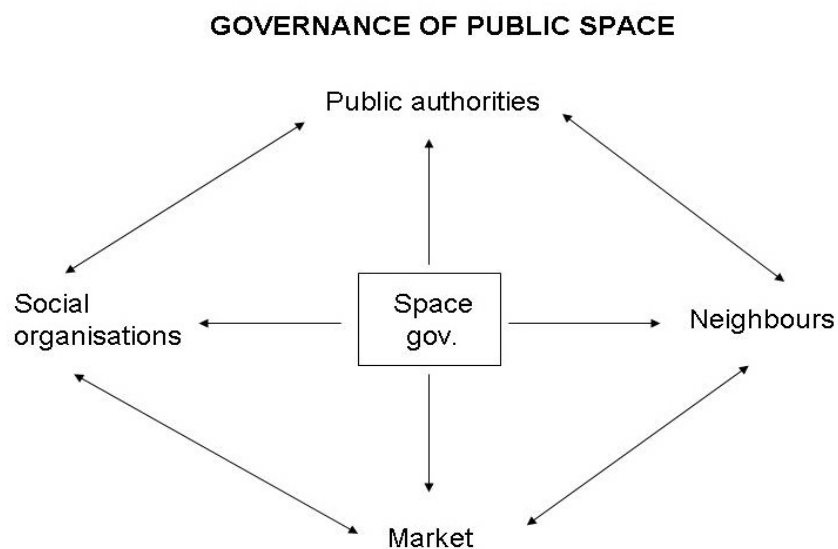
If we try to understand the more or less explicit logic of the "government" of these spaces, we might assume that their use has been regulated through the dynamic generated by the relationships among those who might be considered as the four main poles of the resource (Figure 2); public authorities, neighbours and individuals, social/cultural organisations, and entities among the business sector (merchants, restaurants...). These relationships have been converging and have been modulated primarily through the actions of public authorities (policy makers from different parts of the city, responsible for mobility, for urban environment, municipal police, cleansing, etc.), with varying degrees of

agreement and disagreement between neighbours, organisations, companies and other initiatives (cultural and artistic activities, bars, restaurants, merchants, etc.).

Can a better model of "government" of spaces be achieved, to modulate claims and rights? Are rights universal and unlimited? Could "user fees" be established, related to the variables in time and of space?

If we apply here the concept of "the commons", we may see how far a specific place within the city may be defined as a "common space", or if we are inclined to understand that any city space is, first and foremost, the common-wealth, subject to community availability (understood in this case as a community of people and individuals which, given their inter-relationships and their bonds of trust and reciprocity, decide to exercise their ability to act in a particular public space in the city, assuming that with this action they will find (and must negotiate) the externalities this action may generate with other people and groups.

J.S



# FROM THE INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES TO THE TACTICAL MEDIA - WAYS OF PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC REALM

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Rui Matoso  
Lisboa - Portugal

**«First of all we need to undo the strategies and dominant ideologies in contemporary society.»**

Henri Lefebvre [The right to the city]

We are all aware of what's happening currently in our global and local geography, and the news is not good. The dominant model of neoliberal society is in collapse, we are living in an autophagic moment, and that is the best part. What are we afraid of?



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I think we know what to do it in our cities. Firstly, we need a 'taskforce' with sufficient relational power that could create an agonistic public sphere (Chantal Mouffe<sup>45</sup>) to regain the right to the city and to make a new social contract. Why? Because our local leaders (and others) do not really care about the common people. Why? Because they have a status quo to defend, and therefore they are stuck on the same reproductive style that allows them to earn votes. Of course I am talking mostly about Portugal, which is the country I live in. But yes, current forms of public governance are obsolete! New methods for governance are welcome!

Currently participation has become a buzzword; it often does not imply any possibility of decision. Why? Because we put the emphasis on consensus (the societal equivalent to the governance's status quo) and that has undermined the capacity of political actors to articulate dissent in ways that are necessary to democratic life. And I think we all have understood the Walter Benjamin's aestheticization of politics. Did we? Boris Groys is able to provide an answer: "this means that art cannot be used as a medium of a genuine political protest—because the use of art for political action necessarily aestheticizes this action, turns this action

into a spectacle and, thus, neutralizes the practical effect of this action (...) In this sense, art sees contemporaneity not merely from the revolutionary, but rather, the post revolutionary perspective".<sup>46</sup>

We live inside a huge paradoxical situation, we are at the same time inside a militarized cyber-hybrid-public-space (remember Assange, Snowden and the NSA) and floating inside a creative ego-trip-bubble: in the pressure of our own gifts and talents, which enslaves and exhausts us by pushing us to move up the "social mobility" ladder in the most competitive and aggressive way. They tell us that we must be our own creativity entrepreneurs, a notion that is miles away from Joseph Beuys notion that we are all (social) artists. The difference is that a "creative entrepreneur" uses design to improve the aesthetic quality of status quo, and a social artist - or an art activist -, sees status quo as corpse that needs to be metamorphosed in a new kind of butterfly. Some people call this the "butterfly effect": the flapping wing of a butterfly affects the climate across the world. In this sense, we are all butterflies now.

Another useful metaphor is the one that compares urban cultured citizens to fish inside an aquarium, but the difference

45. <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/directory/mouffe-chantal>

46. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/on-art-activism/>



is that humans can change the quality of the symbolic waters, for the better, in that they are immersed. An example of doing that is to work in the re-institution of our social institutions, to make them work better in a more democratic, transparent and transductive manner. Furthermore we need new types of tactics, not strategies, as Michel de Certeau argued when he

wrote about our practices of everyday life. In this field of practices maybe we could learn more about the tactical media artist's works. For instance, the way they are showing us how semiotic-cognitive capitalism is working in the design of biopolitics and the financialization of our imagination.

R.M

# A DEFINITION OF EMPOWERMENT

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Marie-Hélène Bacqué - Laboratory Mosaïques-LAVUE  
Nanterre - France

The concept of empowerment has gained popularity over the last two decades, in numerous fields, including social work, community health, urban policies, education, management, etc., and in various local contexts, such as international literature. The concept is therefore interpreted and applied in many different ways.

The various interpretations all agree upon two dimensions: power itself in its various forms – power over, power of, and power with (which is the root of the word “empowerment”) – and the process of achieving it, which is at once individual, collective and political. However, depending on the approach, empowerment is either reduced to a process of individual emancipation or implies a project of social transformation.

The concept has travelled widely, from social movements to institutions and between countries of the North and South. The term originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but it was only in the 1970s that it began to be used widely, in particular by feminist militants in South Asia and the United States. Empowerment thus refers to a local participative process whereby women develop a “critical consciousness” which allows them to develop a personal and collective power to act for social change. Over the following decade, the concept was adopted by social and health professionals, particularly in North America, to designate interventions that



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[http://www.laboratoire-mosaiques.fr/\\_Marie-Helene-Bacque\\_.html](http://www.laboratoire-mosaiques.fr/_Marie-Helene-Bacque_.html)

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broke with practices considered to be paternalistic, hierarchical or bureaucratic. It was also used in this sense by women in India engaged in local community development. During the 1990s, it became part of the vocabulary of large multilateral institutions such as the UN and the World Bank. This benefited the emancipation of women and the fight against poverty but weakened the term’s transformative potential.

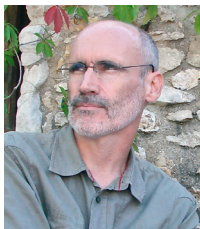
The concept of empowerment is also subject to neoliberal interpretations, in which it is used in the context of poverty management and accountability of individuals, as well as radical interpretations, in which it designates a process of emancipation leading to social change. In the latter interpretation, it aims to link up individual emancipation and social change and to help reconsider the State’s relationship with individuals and collectives. It implies that social change should be seen as a bottom-up process linking up distribution of goods and social recognition.

M-H. B

# DEMOCRACY “OF THE COMMONS”, DEMOCRACY “OF THE COMMON”

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Behind the demand for the common lie both a refusal – the refusal to allow the State or the market to deprive us of our capacities and aspirations – and a wish to reclaim the conditions of production and of the management of goods and services of collective interest. The common marks this wish to regain control of matters concerning us. It therefore constitutes a powerful democratic appeal.

The common operates a double shift. The first is a shift from a situation in which the State manages public affairs towards a “democracy of the common”, entailing an authentic public space to deliberate between the expectations and preferences that are emerging in society at both highly local and highly global levels, with the aim of formulating a common interest (in the management of water, air quality, health policy, urbanisation, cultural rights, etc.). The second is a shift from arbitrary and unequal regulation of needs by the market towards a “democracy of the commons” (common goods and services), which also requires the establishment of a public space for deliberation, a space capable of evaluating the productions and creations that develop freely in society and capable of judging their value both in terms of usefulness (regarding human rights to education, food, care, culture, housing, etc.) and in terms of emancipation (regarding political right to liberty, equality, etc.). The democracy of the common, as a political principle, gives hope that there may be a collective reclaiming of the issues that concern us all. The democracy of the commons, as a form of government, ensures that goods and services of collective interest will in fact be administered on a common, democratic basis. This ideal of

citizenship, democratically reengaged, should therefore be experienced both at the level of the overall regulation of society (a democracy of the common) and at the level of the management of the diversity and multiplicity of collective affairs (a democracy of the commons).

The common is not a middle way that would balance the relationship between public and private appropriation and limit the excesses of one or the other. It must not be reduced to a “slider” to be moved between public and private depending on political climate and social mobilisation – by adding a bit more participation here or local democracy there – or a supplement of humanity to counterbalance the bureaucratic power of the State or the excesses of the market.

Acting and thinking in terms of the common entails a break with balances of the past and implies a democracy strictly limited to its representative dimension evolving into a more substantial and collective democracy. This democratic renewal involves two dynamics: on the one hand a process that sets us on the path of a participatory democracy, in which everyone has the opportunity to speak out about their conditions of existence and anything that concerns them (i.e. people take part in the public debate based on what they experience, what they feel and what they think), and on the other hand, a process that leads us towards a contributive democracy that depends upon the ability of each person, individually and collectively, to express themselves based on what they experience, create and produce together with others within society (i.e. people take part in the public debate based on experiments that they develop, based on their contribution to communal life, whether this contribution is social, aesthetic, urban, convivial, or educational). This participatory democracy preserves the singular expression that we carry irreducibly in us, at once individually and collectively (a democracy of singularities of life and activity). This contributive democracy ensures that experiments developed within society (a democracy of projects and experiences,



communities of practices and activity, etc.) are taken into account. The democracy of the common which we outline in this short article is fed by this double need: the need to grant all its political space both to the expression of singularities (identities and preferences, both individual and collective) and to the expression of communities (collegialities, experiments, collectives, group projects, experience communities, etc.).

When this evolution is underway and this new path taken, where have we, collectively, arrived? At no perspective but those outlined by our cooperations and collaborations, and at no place but our co-creations, co-productions and desire to work together. When we arrive at this junction, there is no signpost to guide or orient our actions, no vanguard to light the way for us. This common, theorised by Toni Negri and Michael Hardt on the one hand and by Christian Laval and Pierre Dardot on the other, is fundamentally constructed from the bottom up, at the ground floor of our activities and on a level with our hopes

and demands. It does not compel us from the outside, as the numerous orders that we receive from the State or the institutions to which we belong frequently do, but obliges us, collectively in the carrying out of our activities, from the inside. It obliges us, as does a collective ambition or a shared ideal. It is a challenge that we address first of all to ourselves, to ourselves as individuals and as a collegiality; it is a challenge that we confront together and that we experience in our local life, in our work and in our activism.

The common thus translates a new ideal of citizenship, an ideal most necessary that simultaneously concerns what constitutes our common interests, within a society which is plural and pluralist and which therefore presupposes an ambitious space for deliberation (a democracy of the common), and what we have in common, in the form of goods and services, and which we must ensure is administered in a debureaucratized and repoliticized way (a democracy of the commons).

**P.N-LS**

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- 2., 3., 10., 12. Idensitat
4. Transforma
- 5., 11. CC-BY Waag Society
- 6., 9. Expeditio
7. Bruno Coutier | Dédale
- 8., 13. Dédale

*Page 4, 17, 19, 40, 43: Dédale*

*Page 12, 13, 14: Idensitat*

*Page 16 (from top left, clockwise):*

1. Idensitat
- 2., 3., 4., 5., 6. Dédale

*Page 20: (from top left, clockwise):*

- 2., 3. ProstoRož
- 1., 4. Matjaz Tancic

*Page 21: Maša Zmitek*

*Page 23: ProstoRož*

*Page 24, 25, 26, 29, 54: CC-BY Waag Society*

*Page 30, 32: Transforma*

*Page 31: helloearth*

*Page 34: (from top left, clockwise):*

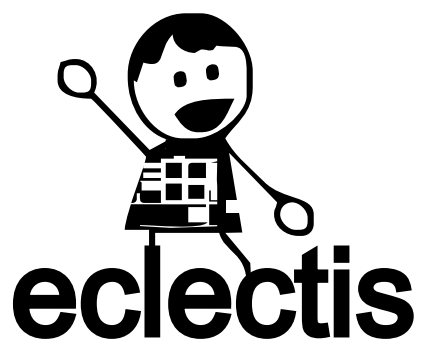
1. Tatjana Rajić
2. Aleksandar Kaluđerović
3. Laura Browne

*Page 35: Biljana Gligorić*

*Page 36:*

1. Martin Kmet
- 2., 3., 4., 5. Tanja Radež

*Page 58: Reactivate Athens*



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