Undisciplined expertise
Reflections on an emerging profession within Tactical Urbanism

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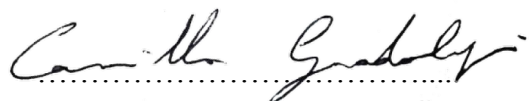Prof. Paolo Giaccaria

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Camilla Guadalupi

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Summary

In 2012, at the 13th edition of the Venice Architecture Biennale, one of the most prestigious architecture events in the world, the U.S. Pavilion "Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good" got a "Special Mention" from the jury. The pavilion presented a collection of pictures of a variegated range of unsolicited, temporary and improvised initiatives. Among the images, you could see wood benches popping out in unconventional spaces, artistic interventions in abandoned areas or groups of people cultivating vegetables on a public flowerbed. "Is that architecture?" someone could argue.

In 2015 a London-based collective of architects, Assemble, got awarded with the prestigious visual art prize known as "Turner Prize". The awarded project revolved around the requalification of the abandoned buildings of a street in Liverpool in collaboration with its residents. "Is that art?" could be argued.

These examples have the function of highlighting two premises of this study: the porosity and instability of disciplinary domains and the growing popularity and visibility that a certain way to approach the urban is getting in the last decade.

This "certain way to approach the urban" is throughout this dissertation referred to as *Tactical Urbanism*, despite acknowledging how it remains a poorly defined term in the scientific literature (Mould, 2014).

Displaying a strong interdisciplinary character, this study aims at providing new insights into the encounter between urban practitioners and urban tactics. More specifically, the attention is drawn on the process of assemblage of a new expert authority. Indeed, all around Europe a growing body of new professional realities started to deal with unplanned and spontaneous interventions and saw in this way of acting a new potential entrepreneurial path.

This investigation aims to explore how this emerging trend in planning theory and practice helps in questioning sharp analytical dichotomies and how it relates to broader geographical debates. The analysis is supported by an interview-based approach, which allowed to draw out the voices and the reflexive reasoning of the key players of such *practicing architectures* (Jane M. Jacobs & Merriman, 2011).

Keeping the focus on this emerging expertise, the main issues addressed in this study are: (I) the construction of a blurred collective identity, (II) the complex relationship between relationality and territoriality within the mobilities of urban ideas and practices and (III) the paradoxes and ambiguities of what I have called "entrepreneurial urban activism", an in-between status among self-precarization and emancipation. Briefly, the first issue (I) implies a constructivist understanding of expertise and the focus is put on the demarcation strategies applied by the practitioners themselves. The dissertation will then go on investigating (II) the mobility channels of urban tactics, framing these professionals as transfer agents. This unveils a geography of informal links and self-managed events, that resonates with what Doreen Massey called "the local production of the global" (2011, p. 9). Finally, (III) the controversial political potential of this emerging category is explored in light of the claims for "a more STS-informed politics" (Farías & Blok, 2016, p. 540), questioning and softening the paradigm of neoliberal co-optation of subversive micro-spatial practices.

In conclusion, this research results into a non-romanticized overview of this embryonic profession and on the contradictions, ambitions and strategies characterizing such a profile.

Although the phenomenon could be considered marginal in relation to its size and the scale of its impacts, this research argues that these new urban actors are especially emblematic of some contemporary trends in urban transformation and urban studies and they are therefore worthy of being further scrutinized.

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Introduction

> << *Freespace* can be a space for opportunity, a democratic space, un-programmed and free for uses not yet conceived. There is an exchange between people and buildings that happens, even if not intended or designed, so buildings themselves find ways of sharing and engaging with people over time, long after the architect has left the scene. >>[1]

It is common sense to relate the discipline of architecture to *occupying* space. Instead, *Freespace* is the theme chosen for the last edition of the Architecture Biennale in Venice[2]. Basically, the focus has shifted from the designer's ambitions to the user's experience and agency.

Likewise, in the field of urban planning, a sweetened version of informality, associated with an air of authenticity, is more and more framed as a positive resource. Temporary uses (Chase Leighton, Crawford, & Kaliski, 2008; Inti, Cantaluppi, & Persichino, 2015), place-making practices (Palermo & Ponzini, 2018) and cultural policies (Florida, 2003) are some of the tools used by a new generation of urban practitioners, not concerned with plans and blueprints, but instead engaged in fostering "urbanity" (J. Jacobs, 1961).

From the building to the plan and far beyond, flexibility seems to be the value of our times.

The paradoxical idea of taking the creation of *freespace* as a duty well represents the starting point for this research. *Can you provoke spontaneity? Can you learn and become an expert of something so undefined?*

Activities such as self-managed community hubs, guerrilla gardening, park(ing) days, temporary and colorful urban furniture are more and more often used by civil society and institutions as devices to foster "urban sociality"(Citroni, 2015). They do not question just the objective of planning, but also who is entitled to intervene

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[1] Excerpt of the "Manifesto Biennale 2018" written by the two curators of the 26th edition Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara. The entire text is available at https://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2018/16th-international-architecture-exhibition [last access 03/04/2019]

[2] The Biennale di Venezia Architecture is one of the most prestigious architecture events in the world. More info on the history of this cultural institution at: https://www.labiennale.org/en/history [last access 03/04/2019]

on space. *Who has the right to manage urban spaces? On what basis is this entitlement grounded?*

More than normatively attempting to answer these questions, this thesis takes them as starting points in order to explore the contradictions and ambiguities of the timeless desire of planning the unplanned. It is not a thesis on the crisis of traditional architecture or either urban planning, but rather on the emergence of a new field of study and action. A field to which in the dissertation I refer as Tactical Urbanism and whose key players are what I have called "professionals of the unplanned" (Guadalupi, 2018). Indeed, while this trend of widespread micro-spatial practices seems to downsize the role of the designers, all around Europe a growing body of new professional realities started to deal with unplanned and spontaneous interventions and saw in this way of acting a new potential entrepreneurial path. This dissertation aims at drawing the attention on these practitioners, who are overcoming disciplinary borders and routines, dealing with different tools, methods, and fields, from community engagement to self-built urban furniture, passing through performative art. An *undisciplined* series of practices at the intersection between the construction of a social project and the search for new working possibilities.

This a very fluid phenomenon, *undisciplined* also because hardly ascribable to one single disciplinary domains of research. It regards urban planning, since, following Friedmann (2005), spatial planning can be "best viewed as a set of interdependent processes *involving multiple actors that seek to create more livable, life-enhancing cities and regions*" (Friedmann, 2005, p. 213, *italic added*). As well, it regards urban geography: these experimentations, dealing with the social and relational dimensions of space, could be framed as bridges between theory and practice, helping in exploring "where contemporary architectural practice converges and diverges from broader geographic research" (Lorne 2017, p. 277).

After all, both these two fields themselves have been already defined as *undisciplined spaces* (for urban planning see Pinson, 2004; for geography see Schoenberger, 2007). Thus there are no better disciplines for welcoming a study on such a blurred category.

As stated before, there is no normativity in this work, I am not asking how to improve their initiatives, neither testing their impact. Rather, the thesis has a reflective and interpretative attitude: it is an exploration through the potentials and contradictions of this emerging profession. It is argued here that looking at the struggles of these practitioners is a privileged perspective to question recent trends towards do-it-yourself within planning.

In more abstract terms, this study draws the attention on the process of assemblage of a new expert authority, which is traditionally a matter of concern of another discipline, namely Sociology of Science, lately incorporated in the so-called broader category of Science and Technology Studies (STS).

The most original aspect of the thesis is then the idea of using analytical tools belonging to STS to frame planning theories and practices. This gives the opportunity to frame the trend of Tactical Urbanism as an emergent subdiscipline and to fruitfully problematize the notion of "expertise", unveiling how it is

constructed, *mobile* and *political*. Aspects that correspond with the core tasks of the three empirical chapters and that can give insights respectively on the artificial divide between lay and expert knowledge in urban governance networks, on the diffusion mechanisms of planning practices and ideas, and on the ambiguities of the contemporary so-called creative activism, which is nowadays so diffused within urban contexts. Although the phenomenon could be considered marginal in relation to its size and the scale of its impacts, this research argues that these new urban actors are especially emblematic of some contemporary trends in urban transformation and urban studies and they are therefore worthy of being scrutinized.

This work is not a linear path towards some discoveries, but rather a collection of reflections on a complex phenomenon, assuming a different perspective in each chapter. Indeed, even if this thesis is a monograph, every chapter, besides the first and the third ones concerning respectively epistemology and methodology, is developed with a degree of autonomy and independence. They all face the same central issue, the professionalization of urban tactics, but they draw attention on different aspects of this process, arising different questions.
More specifically, the work is composed of six themed chapters, and it has been organized in the following way.

The **first chapter** deals with epistemology, and it has the overall objective of unveiling the post-structuralist sensitivity that informs the dissertation. First, it reports the process of construction of such sensitivity and its impact on the definition of the research question. In other words, more than presenting a spotless epistemological framework, it engages with the author's struggles and attempts of constructing one and of narrowing the topic of interest.

Beyond showing the case-specific bind between theories, initial research interests and experiences on the field, it could be read as an account, a partial one though, of the links between co-design practices and post-structuralist insights and of the possible cross-fertilization ground between Planning Theory and STS.

The **second chapter** has the function of framing and questioning the paradigm of Tactical Urbanism. The chapter sets the stage for introducing the emergent profession under analysis in the thesis and, at the same time, could be considered an independent contribution about the rise of this trend.

The widespread of small-scale and short-term initiatives are faced assuming a range of points of view. First, the action of clustering and naming them is put into question. Besides acknowledging how ill-defined it is, the nomenclature Tactical Urbanism is the one assumed in the text. Then, there is a reflection on the historical roots of such creative practices, connecting them to the radical movements of the '60s and downplaying their connection with the participation mantra. There is also an attempt of framing such a widespread of the trend within the epistemological shift towards post-modernism. Finally, there are some thoughts on the ambiguities of these practices in the framework of neoliberalism and on whether it is possible to recognize a political vision starting from them.

The chapter is basically a literature review of many perspectives on Tactical Urbanism with the ambition of covering as many points of view as possible on this ambiguous trend.

The **third chapter** is concerned with the methodology used for this study. The primary objective here is the transparency of the research process: it is explained *why* I have chosen the methods I used, namely face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and *how* I conducted step-by-step the work on the field(s). The chapter then goes on with a rough description of the groups interviewed in order to give a more concrete idea of the subjects being investigated. Anyway, additional information on the groups and a partial transcription of the interviews are available in the Appendix. Besides being mostly a descriptive chapter, it ends with some reflections on the methodological challenges I faced, also highlighting the unresolved ones.

The next three chapters constitute the empirical section of the work. They all share a similar structure: each chapter is organized around a question, which represents each time the starting point for the resulting reflections.

Following this logic, the **fourth chapter** deals with categories and boundaries, and it asks whether is possible and useful to trace boundaries around such a blurred phenomenon as a variety of collectives of young practitioners experimenting and expressing themselves on public space, with different premises, ideologies, and aims. In this chapter, the theoretical reflections and the literature review on this expertise are mixed with the efforts of definition made by the practitioners during the interviews. Following Latour (2005), group definition is framed as a collective enterprise between the social actors, the researcher, and the literature. The conceptions of the notion of boundaries developed within STS, namely boundary-work (Gieryn, 1983) and boundary objects (Star & Griesemer, 1989), are the main conceptual tools used in the chapter. The basic idea at the basis of the chapter is that researchers can not presume the idea of a community, but rather it is what should be investigated.

The **fifth chapter** focuses on the geographical distribution of the groups: urban tactics are emerging in different and incommensurate contexts at the same time and questioning this dynamic is the objective of this chapter. The professionals at the core of this dissertation are considered key players of this process because they are here framed as channels of mobility of the practices. Keeping the iterative relationship between theories and empirical data assumed in the first chapter, this chapter aims at testing how and if this case study of the professionals of the unplanned can contribute to the theoretical debate on "urban practices mobilities" (McCann & Ward, 2011). On the other side, there is an attempt of assessing whether and in which ways these theories on mobilities could help in understanding the case study. Once again, the quotations of the interviews are the way for showing the intentionality and the agency that the practitioners have in this process.

Finally, the **sixth chapter** is concerned with the controversial political potential of these experiences. More specifically, the starting question asks whether these practitioners are depriving urban tactics of all their emancipatory and provocative stances, that by the way had been already questioned in Chapter 2, engaging them in a professional practice. It questions the existence of an eventual *entrepreneurial urban activism*, a paradoxical term which gives the title to the chapter. The overall argument of the chapter is the need to soften the interpretative paradigm of

neoliberal co-optation, avoiding the oversimplified categories of complicity and resistance to frame the politics of such practices. Assuming Foucault's relational conception of power and reframing the role of critique following Boltanski and Chiapello (2007), it is proposed that the investigation of this ambivalent figures could contribute to overcoming what Rose calls "the romantic quest for an anti-establishment politics" (2002, 397). Moreover, it is explored the possibility to conceive as a political act the construction of expertise, especially in times of technical democracy (Farías & Blok, 2016).

As it should be now clear, the exploration of this *undisciplined expertise* is going to be a reading trip full of obstacles, few certainties and hopefully many doubts arising. After all, a study on a category of people who made of unpredictable outcomes a profession could not be anything, but full of counterintuitive steps. Unsettling presumptions is the objective.

Chapter 1

1 Grounds: epistemology, scope, and question

1.1 Introduction: pillars of the research

It is common sense to start a doctoral thesis with an epistemological chapter. A chapter in which the theoretical and conceptual premises sustaining the entire thesis should be clarified. It is not an easy task, especially for early career researchers who are always struggling to find out the right *sources* and *theories*. Often the risk is to run into too much simplification or to mix contradictory epistemologies.

Furthermore, in this chapter, the very specific interest that inspired the work should emerge, sustained by a narrow and defined *research question*.

"You have to narrow the scope" is probably one of the most pronounced sentences by supervisors. And it represents another common struggle for beginners.

More than clearly satisfy these requirements, this chapter tries to report these struggles. Indeed, besides being the epistemological one allegedly the most theoretical chapter of the work, this one ends up being pretty much personal, reporting my personal journey through theories, authors and sources and my efforts to narrow the scope of the research.

As explicit in the title, there are three aspects faced here and this triad gives the structure to the chapter.

The first section deals with the process of construction of the theoretical framework on which the thesis is built on. From this first section, a kind of fascination for post-structuralism emerges. It is argued that a certain post-structuralist sensitivity could help in diving such a blurred phenomenon as the one studied here.

The second section focuses on the issue of the scope of the research. The idea here is to identify which are the broader debates touched by the topic of interest, placing it at their intersection. Indeed, the process of professionalization of micro-spatial practices is framed as a connecting tissue between the debate on

institutionalization, proper of the planning theory, and the debate on the construction of expert authority, belonging traditionally to the sociology of science.

Finally, all the reasoning developed should help in defining the research question, which is explored and detailed in the last section.

1.2 Assembling a theoretical framework: back and forth

My intention in this paragraph is to offer an account of the construction of my theoretical approach and to show how this process shaped my research interests and the developments of this work. The choice of unveiling this process is a hint of the post-structuralist sensitivity I developed during this work.

Indeed, I got fascinated by assemblage thinking, which had been identified as one of the three[3] most influential and dynamic contemporary perspectives in urban studies (Storper & Scott, 2016). As a premise, it should be noted that relationality and assemblages have recently become very popular terms in social sciences, establishing themselves as a new *mantra* in geography (J. M. Jacobs, 2012; Jones, 2009; Kamalipour & Peimani, 2015) and I do not deny the role of the seductive power of the success that this thread of literature is gaining. There is the risk, from which this text is not exempt, that, while one of their pillar it is the refusal of grand narrative, post-structuralism and assemblage theory could actually look like a grand narrative, as provocatively suggested by Tonkiss (2011).

Assemblage theories on space are a declination of the work of continental post-structuralist philosophers, particularly Deleuze and Guattari, whose complex thinking won't be object of this thesis. Referring to assemblage thinking, within the scope of this work, basically means to focus on the making and unmaking processes of any entity, given that assemblage "is not a static term, it is not the arrangement or organization but the process of arranging, organizing, fitting together." (Wise 2008, 77). It seems the right approach when dealing with indeterminacy, emergence and processuality (McFarlane, 2011a). Thus, inspired by these concepts, it seemed consistent to me to conceive not just the object of my study, but even the theoretical lenses, with which I study it, as an assemblage, as a *becoming entity*. If it is true that, as Law warns, "we need to understand that our methods are always more or less unruly assemblages" (2006, 14), then we should also accept that also our theoretical framework is constantly shaped by and actively shapes the changing research questions, the unstable interests of the researcher, the exchanges on the fieldwork and finally the outcome of the research.

Considering this premise, the following subsections constitute the attempt of drawing the process, subdivided into steps, by which I got in touch with some post-structuralist literature and how this changed the way I looked at the phenomenon. Basically, instead of explaining *why* I developed such epistemological position, the attempt is to show *how* it got into being, because, as Bruno Latour - father of Actor-

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[3] The other two perspectives identified as influential in contemporary urban studies by Storper and Scott are post-colonial theory and planetary urbanization.

Network Theory which is one variant of assemblage theory - states, "if your description needs an explanation, it's not a good description" (2005, p. 147).

The section is organized as follows. First, starting from my initial research interests, I try to describe how they pushed me towards some kind of literature. Secondly, back to front, it is shown how assemblage thinking and relational theory influenced the way in which I look at the phenomenon. Finally, and again in another direction, the focus is drawn on how the experiences on the field impacted the construction of the theoretical framework.

Obviously, it is an artificial reconstruction of the process, which in reality does not have the linearity needed to describe it. Indeed, claiming to deal with an assemblage, a tangle, and describing it through a linear step-by-step scheme is a paradox, a failed attempt by definition. Clearly, it should be read in the awareness that the steps are not as consequential as they are presented here, but rather interwoven and mostly simultaneous.

First steps. From the object of interest to theory

As a starting point for this research, there was a general interest in collaborative and participatory design practices and in unconventional and creative uses of marginal urban spaces.

I got fascinated seeing pictures of a temporary cinema built under a motorway flyover[4], or seeing a giant mobile plastic bubble with a kitchen inside which could be settled everywhere around[5], or again feeling a kind of disorientation in front of some fixed benches in the middle of a street creating new and unexpected public spaces[6]. It is not easy to define what these examples have in common. I note at least two similarities: they are all attempts of generating unexpected encounters, and they are all objects designed and planned by professionals in the field of architecture or urban regeneration.

I will try to show here the ways in which such trivial fascination for these practices pushed me towards some authors, more than others.

First, keeping the examples mentioned above as emblematic, these practices could be framed as subversive in the sense that they literally subvert and appropriate spaces in the face of hegemonic and conventional trends. Basically, this reminds of the concept of multiplicity and of the contingent and ever-unstable settings which make the space relational. Such "sensitivity to the openness of space and the importance of new ways of being in space" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 14) is recognized as one of the contributions of post-structuralist thinking to the notion of space, especially in the context of developments in studies of geography of resistance. I do see a connection here with this kind of practices which are essentially suggesting

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[4] Project "Folly for a Flyover" by Assemble, London.
More info at https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/folly-for-a-flyover [accessed 12/07/2018]
[5] Project "Das Kuchenmonument" by Raumlabor, Berlin.
More info at http://raumlabor.net/kuchenmonument/ [last access 25/03/2019]
[6] Project "street interrupted" by Muf, London.
More info at http://muf.co.uk/portfolio/street-interrupted-2010/ [last access 25/03/2019]

new and different possibilities of living spaces. The analysis of the connections between post-structuralism and these practices will be object of a dedicated section in Chapter 2, dealing with Tactical Urbanism.

The post-structuralist insights on the literature of resistance are way more radical and complex than just referring to the multiplicity of space and the issue of the controversial political potential of these practices will be questioned in chapter 6.

Reasoning around the political contradictions of these phenomena highlights the fact that this is a topic with many potential dichotomies, these practices don't fit traditional categories.

Are they resisting to or strengthening the system? Are they activists of professionals? Are the practices bottom-up or top-down?

I felt since the beginning a strong discomfort towards dichotomic concepts and this is another push I got towards assemblage thinking. Indeed, I found in it a way to avoid these binaries, having assemblage theory "the capacity to explore in-between conditions where the boundaries between the two ends of a twofold conception are blurry"(Kamalipour & Peimani, 2015, p. 407).

Going on, I felt that if it is assessed that "post-structuralism has affected not just *what* geographers study but *how* they study" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 1), it is legitimate to ask whether it had changed also how geographers or other profiles dealing with space *act*.

Once again, there is here another connection between post-structuralist insights and co-design practices. The undefined character, the space given to uncertainty and the openness of the process that characterize these practices mobilize concepts developed by post-structuralist thinkers and, therefore, these practices could be useful in exploring "where contemporary architectural practice converges and diverges from broader geographic research" (Lorne, 2017, p. 277).

Many times, this link between theory and practice is explicit when dealing with the professional groups under analysis in this thesis. For instance, the promoters of the collective Atelier Architecture Autogérée (aaa) explicitly refer to the writings of Deleuze and Guattari to inform their practice. They, who are both practitioners and academicians, propose a "schizoanalytical approach to participation" (Blundell-Jones, Petrescu, & Till, 2009, p. 44) based on *desire*, on the ability of *imagination* and on *autonomy*. In their understanding, their micro-projects, which are often mobile and temporary, are constituting *lines of flight*[7] and they are initiatives that could be *rhizomatically* extended across boundaries and limitations and avoiding imitation, but always reinventing themselves in a process of never-ending becoming.

In the same vein, there are also attempts of engaging Actor-Network Theory (ANT) with design practices, and specifically with collaborative and participatory

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[7] Lines of flight (ligne de fuite) are a metaphoric figure conceived by Deleuze and Guattari. For the interest of this dissertation, they can be briefly defined as "the very force of a tangle of lines flung out, transgressing threesolds of established norms and conventions, towards unexpected manifestations, both in terms of socio-political phenomena and in individual destinies" (Blundell-Jones, Petrescu, & Till, 2009, p. 44)

practices (Storni, Binder, Linde, & Stuedahl, 2015). In particular, Storni (2015) draws on three principles coming from ANT to suggest their potential influence on co-design. Namely, he refers to irreduction, symmetry, and agnosticism. Respectively and briefly, the first one suggests the idea that actor-networks could be the object of co-design, the second one is used to introduce the technics of mapping controversies as an additional methodological tool and the last one could be used to obtain a plural and open-ended collection of viewpoints. More reflections on the

As stated at the beginning, the objective of this subsection had been to illustrate how an interest in co-design and practices of resistance pushed me towards concepts of relationality, assemblage, and ANT.

The ambition of the text is just to account for a link between these objects, without any ambition to fully deploy the various way in which such objects are intertwined.

New lenses. From theory to the field

Simultaneously, further reading on assemblage thinking and relationality influenced my way of conceiving the object of study. There are, of course, various and untraceable ways by which our way of looking at the world is influenced by our readings and reasoning. However, I will highlight here two aspects in which such influence is particularly evident.

The first point derives from the basic assumption that assemblages are "effective theoretical lens for understanding generativity, emergence (…) That is indeed a focus on the processes rather than the products" (Kamalipour & Peimani, 2015, p. 407). Following this logic, I started to ask myself how those practices came into being and how they are becoming a trend. As stated before, my initial interest regarded not random spontaneous creative uses of space, but projects which aimed at generating spontaneous encounters. I was fascinated by the paradoxical attempt of planning the unplanned and I got interested in the groups proposing such projects. Could you generate spontaneity by profession?

Thinking of the assembling mechanisms of such practices, I ended up looking at the people activating them, and the focus shifted then on the generative processes of emergence of these bunch of professionals. Instead of taking them as a matter of fact, I decided to observe and question how these people emerged as professionals. The groups I reached are at different stages of this process of professionalization and they are all somehow contributing to defining the characteristics of this emerging profession.

Again this fits with the affirmation of a post-structuralist thinker, Bruno Latour, who suggests that there are "no group, only group formation" (Latour, 2005). What he is suggesting is to not take for granted social groups or category, but instead to focus on mapping the controversies around group formation, aware that "groups are not silent things, but rather the provisional product of a constant uproar made by the millions of contradictory voices about what is a group and who pertains to what"

(Latour, 2005, p. 31). Essentially, this made the focus shift from the professionals to the professionalization.

Another way in which post-structuralism, and specifically relational theory, influenced the way I looked at my topic of interest refers to the reframing the relationship between micro-practices and macro trends.

Indeed, one of the traditional dichotomies dismantled by a sincere relational approach is the one opposing the "local" and the "global". In the process of updating the theoretical toolkit of urban studies, many authors (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Latour, 2005; D. B. Massey, 2005; McCann & Ward, 2011; Murdoch, 2006) are reflecting upon the inappropriateness of such binary opposition and looking for different ways of understanding the complex relationship between *relationality* and *territoriality* (McCann & Ward, 2011). To be refused is a nested scalar hierarchy, which risks being just an "*exteriority*, a concept that is imposed on events before any empirical investigation has even started" (Smith in Farías & Bender, 2011, p. 75).

This relational conception of the notion of scales particularly impacted the policy transfer literature (J. M. Jacobs, 2012), introducing new perspectives on the mobility mechanisms of ideas and practices. This awareness inspired me and pushed me to deal with the ways in which the practices that I will call in this dissertation urban tactics[8] are spreading around. Indeed, urban tactics appear to be an eloquent example of something both relational and territorial, being local responses, tailored on the strictly local circumstances and the available resources, and simultaneously being part of a global phenomenon, characterizing many cities in the world and affirming itself as an emergent paradigm in the planning theory.

Reflecting on relationality and territoriality gives new insights on how "multiple bits-and-pieces accrete and align over time to enable particular forms of urbanism over others" (McFarlane, 2011c, p. 652). These insights coming from the literature on urban policy and practices mobilities (McCann & Ward, 2011) made me add another layer on analysis of the professionals: they could be framed as infrastructure that channels the mobilities of the practices, as it will be developed in a following chapter[9].,

Furthermore, the becoming ontology characterizing such an approach pushed me to look at Tactical Urbanism not as something to be taken for granted, but as the result of a process of affirmation and, more specifically, as the output of disciplinary boundary work, as I deeper explore in the next chapter.

All the mentioned reflections will be deeper explored in the dissertation, they have been briefly recalled here just because they constitute a clear example of how relational thinking suggested me new directions of inquiry.

Adjustments. Backward from the field to theory

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[8] The range of labels that can be applied to this kind of practices will be further discussed in Chapter 2 "The rise of Tactical Urbanism".

[9] Chapter 5 "The travel of urban tactics" is concerned with the mobility channels and geographical unevenness of urban tactics.

This last subsection deals with another kind of influence: how the fieldwork shaped my theoretical framework. Once again, while a detailed account of the fieldwork will be given in the designed chapter on Methodology, here few aspects are mentioned just to highlight links between the challenges encountered during the fieldwork and the construction of the theoretical framework.

At the very beginning of my research, I was envisioning a rather structuralist critique of the role of the groups object of this study in the context of the so-called urban neoliberalism. I started my research loaded with prejudices on how much those practices constituted just a dangerous palliative in the context of unequal urban transformations. Moreover, I was moved and outraged by the precarious working conditions of this category of professionals, convinced that such a level of self-exploitation was unacceptable and overlooked in the literature. However, since the first exploratory interviews with the professional groups, I felt very uncomfortable with the implications of a power/knowledge/ideology-based critique and I started looking for alternatives. Indeed, while issues of self-precarization are still faced later in this dissertation[10], here it is important to note how the interaction with the informants forced me to deal as well with parallel processes of emancipation.

During the interviews, they all appeared very aware of the dynamics of urban neoliberalism and of the co-optation risks and I found myself in the exact situation described by Latour (2005) in which the social scientist discovers that the social actors don't fit in the role of the 'naïve', 'uncritical' and 'un-reflexive' actors met by the 'critical', 'reflexive' and 'distanced' enquirer. They are all aware of the urban dynamics and they are trying, as they can, to make an impact.

Furthermore, dealing with informants that I recognized as experts made me realize that my fieldwork can be framed as a technocratic milieu. This awareness took me to get interested in Science and Technology Studies (STS), an interdisciplinary field that strongly influenced the construction of my research question.

1.3 Tangential debates into focus

In a nutshell, the process under analysis in this study is the professionalization of urban tactics. As usual, there could be various debates touched by the study of a singular process and the intersection with other bigger debates in social sciences is exactly what makes a single process interesting. The operation of searching for the intersection point is twice useful: on one side it aims at better defining the scope of the research and on the other side it helps with sustaining the relevance of the topic.

I am now going to briefly face two broader debates that are related and that share similar concerns with the topic, while not being the core of the work.

The first debate introduced is the one on the institutionalization of unsanctioned creative small-scale spatial practices. This is an issue of primary interest in planning

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[10] For reflections on the controversial political potential of these groups of professionals see Chapter 6 "Entrepreneurial urban activism".

theory and urban geography, and it got *momentum* in the last decades with the spreading of the creative city mantra. In the case of planning theory, often it assumes a normative attitude, relating it to the innovation of urban policies; while urban geographers are usually more speculative and critical, analyzing the impact of legalization on the practices and on social movements.

The other larger debate mobilized is the one regarding the role of experts in society and, more broadly, the relationship between scientists and citizens. This is traditionally at the core of studies in the field of Philosophy of Science and Science and Technology Studies. The emergence of a new profession is related to debates on the evolving relationship and blurring boundaries between expert and lay knowledge.

1.3.1 Institutionalization and professionalization as parallel processes

As it will become clearer when further explaining the meaning of the label urban tactics, by the legal point of the micro-practices ascribable to Tactical Urbanism swing among a range which goes from being completely unsanctioned, through being tolerated, to representing part of the official city strategy. However, to become part of a professional activity the practices need to be legally acknowledged, thus dealing with professionalization means indirectly dealing also with institutionalization.

It is argued here that the processes of institutionalization and professionalization refer to the same larger mechanism, the integration of unsanctioned micro-spatial practices within the urban policy system, but they approach it from opposite starting points. Institutionalization is a top-down process where the active actor is the authority when it favors legalization over repression (Pruijt, 2003), while professionalization is a bottom-up process whose activators don't have institutional roles. Both processes aim at creating some patterns for the practices: institutionalization in the framework of rules and laws and professionalization as professionally recognizable style. These two agendas sometimes overlap, and the two processes proceed in parallel.

Institutionalization is a well-studied phenomenon in the field of urban planning. There are different studies on the integrative mechanisms it implies, especially literature on a specific kind of practices and on the ways in which that kind had been incorporated into official policies with the related ambivalences. For instance, there are studies on the attempts of regulating community gardening (Certomà, 2016; Celata & Coletti, 2017), on sanctioned forms of squatting (Pruijt, 2003), on the complex relationship between subcultures and tourism (Owens, 2008) or on the link between culture-led urban regeneration and critical artistic practices (Slater & Iles, 2010).

Studying institutionalization means on one side dealing with policy innovation, and on the other side with the consequences of the legalization on the practices and on the social movements originally pursuing them. In the branch of critical urban studies, the focus is mostly put on the negative effects of this process, observing

that a market-oriented regime encourages the co-optation of oppositional groups as service providers, cleaning up all the subversive stances (Mayer, 2013; Pruijt, 2003).

Keeping this literature on the background, this work is not focussing on the policies and their transformation, and neither on how much the practices are impacted by the current socio-economic regime, but rather on the drivers and the imaginaries underlying the process of professionalization of such practices. While professionalization intuitively reminds to the chain of steps which bring to the establishment of a new profession with its own professional association, as it was in the '60s when the concept got popular in sociology (Abbott, 1988), in the case under analysis such circumstance is very far away, being the considered emerging profession at a very embryonal stage. At stake here is mostly the "representational component of the professionalization process" (Chaib, Danermark, Selander, & Jodelet, 2013, p. 66), that is the system of representations on which a process of professionalization depends.

In other words, the focus is put on the actors who deliberately engage themselves in a process of formalization of such practices, refusing to frame such actors just as passive audience of a supposed neoliberalizing city.

This means to focus on the cultural concepts surrounding professionalization, on the construction of a kind of *professional ideology* (F. Douglas, 2014; Larson, 1979) and this is not that connected to the legal configuration of the practices.

The output is then a set of reflections on different aspects of this emerging category of actors willing to become part of the urban governance networks.

Much space is given through the interviews on the representations they give of themselves and of their approach, in order to see whether there is a common discourse underlying these experiences in different locations and which are the drivers that push them to do what they do.

It is not a public policy analysis, which, among other things, would have required a site-specific case study. The various policies mentioned in the interviews contributing to the different institutionalization processes happening in the different locations will be acknowledged, but they are not at the core of the reasoning.

1.3.2 Glimpses on the role of experts in participatory societies

Participatory modes of governance are in the last decades getting more and more interest in Western democracies (Fischer, 2009) and this is challenging the role of scientists and professionals in society.

At the same time, expert knowledge is facing an increasing public distrust, being the neutrality and the *super partes* status of scientists often put into doubts.

Nowadays this debate had become very salient, especially because of the contemporary populist challenges (Newman & Clarke, 2017).

The question of the role of experts in society is a long-standing issue since the '70s when technocratic decision-making processes started to be heavily questioned and the debate got a *momentum* in the '90s with the decline of the so-called "Deficit Model of Public Understanding of Science" (Bucchi & Neresini, 2007). In this

model the *Science* was strictly connected with the idea of *Truth* and scientists were supposed to have a role of neutral mediator between this complex *Truth* and the people that miss information and abilities to understand it.

With the emergence of a constructivist conceptualization of expertise (see (Mitchell, 2002) and more in general with the arrival of post-positivism, such model got questioned and lost its explanatory and normative stances on the role of experts in society. Thereafter, lay knowledge acquired increasing credibility and started to be considered complementary to the scientific one.

The expert-citizen relationship constitutes a huge and hard-to-face debate in the background of this work and the aim of this paragraph is just to sketch some developments in this context, in order to better frame this research. This is not a thesis on the role of experts in society, but somehow it touches this debate.

The concerns on the relations between expert and lay knowledge had interested also the field of urban planning. Indeed, planning, as well as many other fields, experienced a strong participatory wave, already since the '60s with the so-called insurgent and advocacy urbanism (Friedmann, 2011) and then especially since the '90s on with the establishment of the communicative paradigm (Blundell-Jones et al., 2009; Fainstein, 2015; P. Healey, 1993; Patsy Healey, 2016). The role of the planner continued to shift, and it is constantly questioned and re-adjusted. Fischer (2009) even refers to the figure of the public policy mediator developed by urban planners "as a model for developing a broader professional practice of public democratic deliberation" (Fischer, 2009, p. 46). However, this refers to the role of the facilitator during participatory processes and it still reminds to a kind of paternalistic role of the experts.

The most divergent insights from this paradigm of scientists explaining or helping nonexperts come from recent developments in the field of Science and Technology Studies. The most striking point is to recognize as blurred the demarcation between experts and nonexperts. This is the assumption behind the idea of "hybrid forums" developed by Callon (Callon, Lascoumes, Barthe, & Burchell, 2011). The basic idea is that in an era of uncertainty, we need a model of co-production of knowledge, in which contributors are experts, nonexperts, nonhumans, things.

By now, the field in which experiments in co-production had been more successful is the medical one and one typical example is the contribution given by patients to the research on AIDS (Bucchi & Neresini, 2007; Sismondo, 2010; Callon et al., 2011).

The idea of co-production of knowledge is relevant for this research, being it one of the objectives of the group of professionals considered here, as it will become clearer later. Indeed, dealing with spaces of uncertainty (Cupers & Miessen, 2002), such groups seek to co-create and co-invent ways of living them.

1.4 Framing the research question

This last section of the chapter is dedicated to the research question. There could be several different angles to look at the phenomena analyzed and the overall objective of this chapter is to define which is the perspective assumed in this thesis.

As outlined before, initially I was interested in the paradox of formalizing the informal and the first formulation of the research question had been: *how do professionals meet urban tactics?*

However, going on with the development of the research this first question got a provisional answer, which entails the process of professionalization of these practices. I interrogated myself then on what it means to professionalize a practice and I decided, as mentioned before, to focus on the representational component of the process. It came out quite soon the link between a profession and the construction of specific expertise. The question then became a little more specific, as it follows: *how does a new expert authority is being constructed in the field of urban regeneration?*

This question assumes as a matter of fact that there is a new actor emerging and it questions as a matter of concern the ways in which such actor, namely the collectives of architects, are claiming for legitimacy.

In order to fully understand this question, a premise on the concept of expertise is needed and it is the object of the next section, which recalls some conceptualizations of the notion of expertise. This first section is very abstract, and it refers to insights on the nature of expertise coming mostly from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), without specifically dealing with matters related to planning, space or urban regeneration. Thus, being this first part apparently far away from the topics touched in this work, in the next section some examples of cross-fertilization between STS and planning theory are used to contextualize the use of such theories in the domain of planning. The cross-fertilization between these two disciplines is multiple. However, I selected just studies related to my research, avoiding, for example, the issues of non-humans' agency, which, despite being one of the most striking post-structuralist contributions on planning theory, is not relevant in the context of this dissertation.

1.4.1 Re-setting the vocabulary: expertise

Expert /ˈɛkspəːt/

Noun. a person with a high level of knowledge or skill relating to a particular subject or activity.

Following this definition from the dictionary[11], we could easily affirm that everybody can be classified as an expert in some activity. Besides the stimulating intellectual and practical insights that such position – everybody is an expert of

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[11] Online Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/expert [last access 24/07/2018]

something - could suggest, the attention is drawn here on the ways in which some kinds of expertise manage to be considered legitimate techno-scientific knowledge and therefore gain authority. This concerns with what in Sociology of Science is referred at as *boundary work*: the process of drawing "the distinction between valid and relevant expertise and other beliefs, be they anecdotes, opinions or religion" (Evans, 2008, p. 283). Indeed, shifting the focus on legitimacy allows unveiling expertise not just as related to a particular set of knowledge and skills, but "as a condensate in which particular formations of knowledge and power are configured" (Newman & Clarke, 2017, p. 2).

Retracing the academic and interdisciplinary debate on the nature of expertise clearly goes beyond the scope of this work, I will just recall some of the implications of the constructivist approach on expertise, which is the one assumed here and which is functional to frame the research question leading this dissertation.

The insights reported mostly derive from a stream of literature broadly referred as Science and Technology Studies (STS), which, in a nutshell, was born as "a philosophically radical project of understanding science and technology as discursive, social, and material activities" (Sismondo, 2010, p. xiii).

A relevant assumption of this work is the relational understanding of expertise, which means to frame expertise as a relational attribution depending more on mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion, than on technical competences (Evans, 2008; Grundmann, 2017). This is not to say that technical competences are irrelevant, but that they are not enough. In a world of uncertainty, scientific authority is not an asset to be taken for granted, rather it must be gained and maintained.

Basically, the point is that every scientific theory gets affirmed and established competing with other theories, but "the categories used in the theory are human impositions, rather than natural kinds, and the reasons for the success of the theory are not evidential reasons" (Sismondo, 2010, pp. 57–58). Following this reasoning, some authors affirmed that scientific knowledge is not a step forward towards *truth*, but "the result of the mobilization of resources to produce agreement among key researchers" (Sismondo, 2010, p. 186). This is the premise at the basis of the understanding of expertise as *social fluency* (Evans, 2008), by which expertise is considered to be gained mostly through a process of socialization in the right community and which is at the basis of what had been called the third wave of science studies (H. M. Collins & Evans, 2002; H. Collins, Weinel, & Evans, 2010; Evans, 2008).

These studies provide important insights into the relevance of networks, agreements, and conflicts in the definition of what is a scientific fact.

These were the intuitions that pushed the first studies ascribable to STS in the '70s, the so-called laboratory studies. This nomenclature refers to the moment in which ethnographers and social scientists entered in the laboratories where scientific facts take shape and they gave an account of the everyday life in the labs.

It became evident then, among other things, how scientific facts are socially constructed and that scientific paradigms and prestige matter.

One of the implications of such findings and of the account of the everyday routine of the people involved in the creation of science is the de-mythification of scientists and experts in general. Experts had been thus framed not as actors with specific and peculiar rationality, but "just as ordinary people (…) [they] rely on experiential and hand-on, practical knowledge in their everyday doings" (Tironi, 2015, p. 75).

Furthermore, the attention to science and scientists *in the making* clarifies the *conjunctural* nature of expertise (Newman & Clarke, 2017), highlighting that some formations assume the form of expertise in particular spatial and temporal contingencies. This implies that these formations have a degree of instability, alternatively emerging and sinking.

The power-knowledge nexus, masterfully unveiled by the work of Foucault, makes expertise intrinsically intertwined with power issues. It is this nexus between expertise and power that pushed the interest of social sciences in the study of science.

One seminal source to understand the role of experts in modernity is the one of Mitchell (2002), who analyzed the role of technocratic expertise in the context of Egypt in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. He affirmed and demonstrated how expertise, such as the engineers who built the Aswan Dam, is not an instance of "some neutral march towards progress, but rather bound up with Western domination" (Kohlbry, 2013, p. 477).

Furthermore, what makes the definition of expertise politically relevant is the role it has in decision-making processes. It not unusual in policy arenas to invoke scientific knowledge to legitimate decisions.

Within the debate on science and democracy, STS had been originally characterized in the '60s by a commitment towards the democratization of science, in the context of the critiques of technocracy typical of the period (Farías & Blok, 2016; Sismondo, 2010). This stream of literature evolved recently in a theoretical tool to analyze and face sociotechnical controversies, which are the core of what some authors define "technical democracy" (Callon et al., 2011; Farías & Blok, 2016).

Starting from topics such as the public participation in science and the relationship between knowledge and political accountability, STS arrived then to face controversies in which heterogeneous stakes and dimensions are assembled together and "technical and non-technical elements cannot be purified and separated" (Tironi, 2015, p. 75).

In the interest of this dissertation, this brief excursus on the concept of expertise has the role of framing expertise as a relational, unstable, potentially contested configuration, with a prominent political relevance. This constitutes an unavoidable premise in a work on the formation of emerging new expertise in the management of public spaces, or, more broadly, in urban regeneration processes.

1.4.2 Taking inspirations: STS and planning theory

Since a kind of STS sensitivity had been brought up in the construction of the research question, it seems pertinent to briefly explore some examples of engagement of this strand of literature with the field of urban planning.

Indeed, the idea of associating conceptualizations and insights coming from STS to the study of urban planning is not yet common, but neither brand new.

The 2016 Conference of the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST)[12] there was even a panel entirely dedicated to the ways in which planning could be explored through the STS toolkit. However, more than being an attempt to account for the various and successful impacts of STS on the understanding of the city and its construction (for a review see Farías & Blok, 2017), this section represents the pragmatic and less ambitious opportunity of framing and getting inspirations from some selected studies which used similar theoretical tools on issues pertinent to this work.

The first example presented is pertinent for two reasons: firstly, it deals exactly with the issue of expert knowledge and secondly it uses these lenses to look at radical planning, a paradigm whose emancipatory ambitions have much in common with the trend of urban tactics, object of this study.

That is the work of Tironi (2015) who explicitly mobilizes STS insights to question the *radicalness* of radical planning. Specifically, he questions one of its very pillars, namely the relevance given to the recognition and enhancement of the everyday knowledge of lay people. His argument is that radical planner, even if with the intention of valorizing lay knowledge, by insisting on the differences between different kinds of knowledges, end up deepening the divide between experts and lay people, potentially facilitating the creation of knowledge hierarchies.

There are some similarities with the process under analysis in this work: while the professionals under analysis dealing with urban tactics claim to downsize their role, they nevertheless aim at remaining an unavoidable actor of the process, lobbying for the relevance of their specific kind of knowledge.

Coming back to the study of Tironi (2015), he focuses then on what he called *modes of technification*, referring to the strategies enacted by some citizen organizations not to be recognized as holders of a supposed lay knowledge, but rather as technical entities mobilizing expert knowledge.

On the contrary, this research, instead of questioning the nature of lay knowledge, is focussing on the other side, questioning professional knowledge.

If STS has the merit of "rendering problematic the naturalisation of the expert/non-expert distinction" (Tironi, 2015, p. 75), such naturalisation should be tested also in regards to the claims of the professionals, naturally associated with expert knowledge.

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[12] The association EASST was born in 1981. It represents academics in the fields of science and technology studies, the social analysis of innovation and related areas of research. Since its establishment, it organizes a biennial international conference. More info at https://easst.net/ [last access 25/03/2019]

Furthermore, symmetrically and paradoxically, while the citizens' organizations studied by Tironi (2015) are claiming an expert knowledge, the professionals considered here are often claiming lay knowledge, relying on their double identity as citizens and experts.

A different configuration of expert and lay knowledge is given by Jiménez (2014), another relevant study for this research, in the context of the so-called *open-source urbanism*. In this case, the border between the two is so blurred that it becomes undefined. Indeed, through the use of the prototypes "the autoconstructive creativity" (Jiménez, 2014, p. 349) of the people could be rendered technical and, at the same time, spread around, keeping its *beta* character. Prototypes can then always be modified, tailored or improved by anyone.

Besides showing in the open-source urbanism a more radical way to deal with expertise, the work of Jiménez (2014) is relevant to this work for two reasons.

First, it deals with what he refers to as "self-described open-source architectural collectives" (Jiménez, 2014, p. 343), a category which could be potentially assimilated to the one of the "professionals of the unplanned" (Guadalupi, 2018) proposed here. However, in the case of Jiménez (2014), the role of such collectives is overlooked.

Secondly, affirming the notion of the *right to infrastructure*[13], it implicitly creates a relationship with the concept of technical democracy (such link had been clarified in Farías & Blok, 2016). All this makes clear the political relevance of the notion of expertise and it links this notion to possible spatial transformations.

The second cluster of references worth to be mentioned as a reference regards the one dealing with the impact of non-human entities. Indeed, broadening the focus including non-human entities is one of the most typical ways in which STS, and in particular Actor-Network Theory (ANT), had been used to approach planning theory. The so-called symmetrical perspective is generally recognized as one of the most striking insights suggested by this strand of literature (Sayes, 2014).

Informed by these studies, Beauregard (2013) invites to consider the often neglected "places where planning practice actually occurs and the influence these places have on how planning decisions are made"(Beauregard, 2013, p. 8). In his opinion, the materiality of the settings of the planning practices, by influencing what is said and who participates, could make the researcher understand more about the planning's ability to be democratic. Paulos (his chapter in Kurath, Marskamp, Paulos, & Ruegg, 2018) answered to this invitation and conducted an ethnography in a planning office. In this case, the focus is on the concept of urbanity and the fieldwork inside the office is used to inquire "how the sites, operations, formats, and framings allow for urbanity to be deployed as a matter of concern" (Kurath et al., 2018, p. 251). The materiality considered regarded in this case not just the setting, but all the objects, such as maps, statistics, 3D models and so on, mobilized with their performative impacts.

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[13] The idea of "right to infrastructure proposed" by Jimenez (2014) refers to the right of *infrastructuring*, meaning the right for people of creating their own infrastructures.

The reason because these studies are pertinent to this research anyway does not concern the attention given to the materiality since this is an aspect guiltily overlooked in this work. Indeed, it would have required an ethnography, and this is not the case[14].

Maybe trivially, what this work is catching from these studies is the invitation to look *behind the scenes* of planning practices.

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[14] This is an interview-based study. For the exploration of the methodology of the research see Chapter 3.

Chapter 2

2 The Rise of Tactical Urbanism[15]

2.1 Introduction: boundary work in the planning theory

In 2012, at the 13th edition of the Venice Architecture Biennale, one of the most prestigious architecture events in the world, the U.S. Pavilion "Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good" got a "Special Mention" from the jury. The pavilion presented a collection of pictures of a variegated range of unsolicited, temporary and improvised initiatives. Among the images, you could see wood benches popping out in unconventional spaces, artistic interventions in abandoned areas or groups of people cultivating vegetables on a public flowerbed. "Is that architecture?" someone could argue.

In 2015 a London-based collective of architects, Assemble, got awarded with the prestigious visual art prize known as "Turner Prize". The awarded project revolved around the requalification of the abandoned buildings of a street in Liverpool in collaboration with its residents. "Is that art?" could be argued.

Besides highlighting the controversies surrounding disciplinary belonging, these examples suggest the idea that a certain way to approach the urban is getting in the last decade growing popularity, by means of diverse and even very established channels. In this contribution, I will call this "certain way to approach the urban" *Tactical Urbanism*. This chapter, then, aims at contextualizing it theoretically and historically.

According to the line of reasoning of this thesis, Tactical Urbanism is framed as the becoming discipline within which a new class of experts is emerging.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the birth of new disciplines is traditionally a matter of concern of the Sociology of Science and the notion used to

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[15] Some passages of this chapter have been quoted verbatim from a previous publication of the author: Guadalupi, C. (2016), Questioning urban tactics. In: Talia, M., ed. (2016), Un nuovo ciclo della pianificazione urbanistica tra tattica e strategia / A new cycle of Urban Planning between Tactic and Strategy, Roma-Milano: Planum Publisher, pp. 319 - 322 ISBN: 9788899237059

describe the process of demarcating a set of practices and/or theories from other sets is the one of *boundary-work* (Gieryn, 1983). Studies referring to boundary-work are usually concerned with the ways by which a specific form of knowledge gets to be recognized as scientific, contextualizing and questioning the consequent authority it got. Indeed, the term boundary-work was originally coined to refer to the demarcation strategies between science and no science. However, Gieryn, inventor of the term, specified that "the same rhetorical style is no doubt useful for ideological demarcations of disciplines, specialties or theoretical orientations within science" (Gieryn, 1983, p. 792). Gieryn's main intuition was the recognition that scientists have an interest in creating social boundaries around their specific scientific activities in order to demarcate them from others so that they can acquire intellectual authority, career opportunities and the protection of the autonomy of scientific research from external influence. This, of course, doesn't mean that professional interests are the only drivers, but neither are just the resolutions of strains.

It is not hard to translate this reasoning to the field of interest in this research.

Let's take the example of pop-up wood benches exposed in the US pavilion: while occupying public space with an unauthorized wood object could be seen as vandalism, the fact of being framed as an action that improves the likeability of the area and being exposed in an internationally ranked architectural exhibition chages the perception of the same action. This could be conceptualized as the result of rhetorical strategies of boundary work.

Many factors affect the results of this process, among which the demarcation strategies of the practitioners themselves, larger macrosocial dynamics and other less intuitive variables. For instance, Small L. (1999) took as a variable in the process the early departments in which disciplines emerged.

Given the blurred disciplinary categories involved, a proper investigation of the complex and ongoing boundary work is beyond the scope of this research. Indeed, Tactical Urbanism is not yet a (sub)discipline or neither a coherent set of theoretical approaches, practices, and methods. Even the supposedly more established field of planning theory is not that defined since it unavoidably overlaps with other social and design disciplines and there is no unanimous agreement on what exactly planning theory is (Fainstein & Campbell, 2016).

While chapter 4 investigates some demarcation strategies emerging from interviews with practitioners, the main objective of this chapter is to define Tactical Urbanism and to contextualize it in a broader historical and theoretical context.

More specifically, this chapter addresses three main issues: the abundance and vagueness of terms surrounding the Tactical Urbanism trend, how it is rooted in the history of planning and its political ambiguity in the context of urban neoliberalism.

Regarding the first point, in the first section, Tactical Urbanism is presented as just one possible, but not unique, label to refer to a growing do-it-yourself attitude within spatial transformation. After mentioning a few other nomenclatures, the attention is drawn on the ways in which the name Tactical Urbanism had been pushed by some actors. This is functional to explain and problematize the choice of this label in this work. Then, the term is analyzed focussing on the epithet 'tactical',

searching its roots in the work of Michel De Certeau and trying to infer some distinctive features. This a way to challenge the vagueness of the label and highlight which are the theoretical stances it implies.

The following two sections, *the never-ending planning theory's flirt with the unplanned* and *Poststructuralist planning attitudes: a suitable framework?* are meant to show the rootedness of the phenomenon, respectively in the history of planning and within the post-structuralist epistemological shift that affected all social sciences in the last decades.

In the first one, Tactical Urbanism is presented as a manifestation of a fascination for the unplanned, which had always been present in the history of planning. After a more generical account of examples in which this fascination became visible, the focus shifts more specifically on drawing a *fil rouge* for urban tactics. Keeping in mind the defining features deduced before by the epithet *tactical*, it had been made the exercise to retrace disruptions, for instance with the participatory planning, and connections, referring to the artistic experimentations of the late '60s.

The second section presents some reflections on the theoretical milieu in which Tactical Urbanism could be located. It is argued that the shift towards post-structuralism could have had a role in the legitimation and spread of urban tactics. Assuming this perspective, some common points between post-structuralism and the philosophy of urban tactics are explored.

Finally, the last section deals with the political ambiguity of urban tactics. The ambivalent relationship with some neoliberal instances is for some authors (Mould, 2014; Tonkiss, 2013) at the core of the reasons for the success that the trend of Tactical Urbanism is gaining. Indeed, the double-essence of these practices makes them meet the different, and sometimes opposite, agendas of very different actors.

2.2 A trend in quest of a name

In the last decade, many authors - among others: highlighted a growing do-it-yourself attitude within spatial transformation and urban welfare. In the so-called Global South informality traditionally had a prominent role in the dynamics of urbanization, while in Global North the role of informality has been often neglected, but it is recently being revalued[16] in context of urban shrinkage and cuts of public investments.

Furthermore, in the last years, in the Global North, which is the reference geographical environment of this work, the mantra of the creative cities and the hype for social innovation strengthened the idea that the encouragement of active citizenship could trigger a virtuous cycle of urban regeneration. As a result, local and self-managed practices with the explicit will of shaping urban spaces are more and more common and visible. However, while these small-scale and short-term initiatives are spreading around on a global scale, scientific literature had not yet

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[16] For a (incomplete) list of workshops, symposia and events which promoted DIY urbanism and related practices in the last decade in North America see Finn (2014)

managed to find out an appropriate and comprehensive label to cluster such practices (Finn, 2014; Iveson, 2013; VanHoose & Savini, 2017).

One umbrella-term which got a certain fortune at least in North America is "Everyday Urbanism", which Kelbaugh (2000) identified as one of the three contemporary self-conscious schools of urbanism[17]. Everyday Urbanism implies an incremental and small-scale approach and a special attention towards what one of the founders of this movement, Margaret Crawford, called *everyday space*, "the connective tissue that binds daily lives together, amorphous and so persuasive that it is difficult even to perceive" (Crawford in Oswalt et al., 2013, p. 151). everyday urbanism is a way to refer to a widespread, but not defined attitude towards urban design more than a proper paradigm. As its promoters admit, everyday Urbanism is more: "an attitude or a sensibility about the city" (Chase Leighton et al., 2008, p. 14).

Besides everyday urbanism, many other efforts have been made in the literature: from 'insurgent' or 'guerrilla' urbanism, which are terms that suggest the antagonistic character of some of these practices, to 'do-it-yourself' or 'grassroots' urbanism, which reminds directly to their anti-professional nature. However, none of these terms is accepted as a comprehensive descriptor of this emerging trend, whose boundaries are very blurred.

As Iveson (2013) notes, struggling to find a name is not just an academic whim, but serves to understand and test if and what connects such micro and diffused practices across their diversity. In his opinion, finding connections is crucial in order to express shared politics towards political subversion.

It is a very slippery field: the same practices could be interpreted in very different ways depending on the available information, the approach and the sensibilities of the observer. Many times, the same intervention could be conceived as a radical political expression, as vandalism or as artistic self-expression. Furthermore, it is very hard, if not impossible, to find unique and fully distinct categories, because there is often "considerable overlap in types of informal urbanism, in some cases almost co-extensiveness depending on other terms of definition" (G. C. C. Douglas, 2018, p. 21). In other words, the selection of clusters of practices is shaped by the aspects that the author would like to focus on, picking among practices that are variously located along vectors such as "temporary to permanent, periphery to center, public to private, authored to anonymous, collective to individual, legal to illegal, old to new, unmediated to mediated" (Iveson, 2013, p. 943). One of the most used is *do-it-yourself urbanism*, but the possibilities are countless.

The perspective I am interested in regard to the ability of these interventions to blur the lines between professional and amateur practice. Given this premise, it is clear that that the nomenclature *do-it-yourself urbanism*, loosely defined as "locally driven renovation, revamping and revivification of urban areas considered 'wasted', 'dead', or 'empty' by non-professional actors" (Deslandes, 2013, pp. 216–217), does not serve this purpose, being evident the non-professional nature of the actors

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[17] The other paradigms identified by Kelbaugh (2000) are "New Urbanism" and "Post Urbanism".

involved. On the contrary, the label Tactical Urbanism, despite being just one banner among others, seems to be comprehensive for my purpose. Furthermore, the dynamics of its rise as a label are particularly pertinent with the reading of the phenomenon suggested in this work. Indeed, the nomenclature "Tactical Urbanism" was born recently, in 2010 (Silva, 2016), in the context of North American through public salons[18], open seminars, and workshops[19] and the publications of a series of handbooks[20] for practitioners developed by two design agencies, CoDesign Studio[21], and Street Plans Collective[22]. The authors declared that in a few months the first handbook had been downloaded 10.000 times (Finn, 2014, p. 389). Following the reasoning expressed in the introduction of this chapter, the fact that the professionals themselves are pushing for such an approach makes it is easy to frame it as an example of ongoing boundary work.

In other words, the Tactical Urbanism handbooks and seminars are exemplary of a process of "packaging of a variety of activities (…) into a narrative that is pushed forward into urban policy" (Mould, 2014, p. 532). The banner, despite being very young, is gaining growing popularity as assessed, for example, by its employment by the Museum of Modern Art of New York, which promoted in 2015 the exhibition "Uneven Growth. Tactical Urbanism for Expanding Megacities". Such exhibition had a global relevance and the banner had been then also commented by Neil Brenner (2015), a prominent scholar in the field of urban studies.

But what does *tactical urbanism* mean? Besides its increasing popularity, the current scientific literature on the topic denounces a significant inaccuracy in its meaning.

The aim of the next section is to investigate and question the meaning of the epithet "tactical", helping to highlight the defining features of the interventions referred as *urban tactics* and to better understand the implications of the choice of such a label.

2.2.1 Label 'urban tactics' into question

As mentioned above, vagueness and flexibility are features of the banner "urban tactics". On one side they are one of the reasons for the popularity of the term, but also for the harsh criticisms it is receiving.

To give the idea of the variety of practices collected in the public discourse under this banner, it is worth to have a look at the online handbooks which started to disseminate the banner tactical urbanism as if it was a brand. The main author is

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[18] The Salons are public meetings organized by Street Plans Collective. The first one was held in Queens, New York and in 2012 other three similar events had been organized: in Philadelphia (US), in Memphis (US) and in Santiago (Chile).
[19] A complete list of the huge number of workshops and seminars on Tactical Urbanism held by the staff of the studio "Street Plans Collaborative" is available here: https://www.street-plans.com/trainings-workshops/completed-lectures-workshops/ [last access 31/08/2018]
[20] The free download of the "Tactical Urbanism" guides, included an Italian and a Spanish version, is available at http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/guides/ [last access 31/08/2018]
[21] More info at https://codesignstudio.com.au/
[22] More info at https://www.street-plans.com/

Mark Lydon, chief of Street Collaborative who mentions under the same classification of urban tactics a wide range of initiatives: from pop-up town halls, as the one proposed by the Guggenheim Lab Foundation, to the temporary camps placed by the Occupy Movement. His thesis is that the short-term and low-cost interventions collected in the handbook are all "demonstrably leading to long-term change" (Lydon, 2012: v), even if he does not specify how to demonstrate this impact. In Lydon's work, the term seems just to refer to "a suite of rather disparate and, in some cases, ideologically opposed practices that are seen to improve the 'liveability' (however ill-defined) of the city"(Mould, 2014, p. 533). It could be said that such an attempt of boundary work, besides having some effects in the public discourse, ended up just to be a blatant example of the unclearness of the concept of Tactical Urbanism.

Besides the example of Mark Lydon, the generally recognized common features of the interventions recognizable as *urban tactics* are a relatively short time horizon, a relatively circumscribed spatial scale, the mobilization of local resources to face a specific problem and a kind of open-endedness (Brenner, 2015). On the contrary, the nature of the tacticians and the legal condition of the interventions are not relevant. On one side, this vagueness gives the possibility to go beyond traditional dichotomies such as top-down/bottom-up or formal/informal, which result sometimes too rigid. On the other side, this terminology, being too generic, risks losing any relevance.

In order to unveil the distinctive features of tactical interventions, if any, it is fruitful to start simply focusing on the epithet *tactical*. The term makes an explicit reference to Michel De Certeau's (1984) definition of tactics as isolated and improvised actions, *micro-dispositifs*, by which hegemonic discourses are resisted in everyday life. De Certau (1984) explored the differences between tactics and strategies, stating that "strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the establishment of a place offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power"(Certeau, 1984, pp. 38–39). An urban tactic is a marginal practice: usually at the margins of the urban areas, where the regulatory constraints are easier to overcome, at the margins of legality, in an area of tolerance and at the margins of the disciplines, mobilizing tools and concepts from different backgrounds.

Incrementality and sensibility to the contingencies of the context are other important features. Following the De Certeau's tradition, tactics have "an innate power to react, to resist and to reclaim" (Mould, 2014, p. 532) and their strength consist in "the absence of own space" (Petrescu & Petcou, 2013, p. 60). Therefore, tactics are based on time, they represent a response to the contingent circumstances in a pragmatic and opportunistic way and they are supposed to have a subversive nature. They are "anti-utopian projects" (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 321) not visioning a coherent radical change, rather promoting adaptation through parasitic dependence.

Still, what is an urban tactic? To be less abstract, it is possible to mention a few examples of projects which are exemplary of a tactical practice. One is the mobile

garden ECObox[23] (Figure 1), promoted by the platform atelier d'architecture autogérée[24], a French non-profit organization dealing explicitly with urban tactics. The structure ECObox had been realized with zero budget: the material had been collected in the neighborhood and it had been built by its direct users (Petrescu & Petcou, 2013). Mobility is a tactic to overcome the precariousness of temporary uses. When the sites are not available anymore, ECObox is moved. Every new location mobilizes different actors and the strength of the ECObox is in its flexibility. In different locations, different networks are created. After all, it is just "a matter of the transformation of ordinary urban spaces into new meeting places (...) They [urban tactics] want to put unused spaces into the public consciousness and establish local contacts, indeed entire networks" (Oswalt et al., 2013, p. 177). A similar logic is followed by other projects involving mobile structure, for instance the Mobile Porch (Figure 2), proposed in London by the studio public works and indicated by Oswalt et al. (2013) to exemplify tactical urbanism, or the Kitchen Monument (Figure 3), a portable inflatable structure by Raumlabor, an experimental architectural office based in Berlin.

To characterize the first case, the Mobile Porch, is the flexibility of the structure, able to assume different shapes and accommodate different needs.

In the case of the Kitchen Monument, the basic idea is to appropriate public space through everyday activities, such as cooking and eating together.

In both cases, the mobility makes them somehow *aspatial*, hard to be appropriated or exploited within strategies of urban regeneration or gentrification.

Besides mobility, temporariness is another trick to create a crack in the system without being co-opted, this is the case of the project "Folly for a Flyover" (Picture 4), a temporary cinema under a highway overpass, by the already mentioned collective Assemble. Once again, an unused space transformed into a public space.

The examples are countless, and every case should be analyzed by itself to be fully understood. However, this list had the only ambition to give an idea of concrete projects identifiable as urban tactics.

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[23] For more information on the project: https://www.urbantactics.org/projets/ecobox/ [accessed 06/09/2018]

[24] "atelier d'architecture autogérée / studio for self-managed architecture (aaa) is a collective platform which conducts explorations, actions and research concerning urban mutations and cultural, social and political emerging practices in the contemporary city. aaa acts through 'urban tactics', encouraging the participation of inhabitants at the self-management of disused urban spaces, overpassing contradictions and stereotypes by proposing nomad and reversible projects, initiating interstitial practices which explore the potential of contemporary city" Source: https://www.urbantactics.org/about/ [accessed 06/09/2018]. Moreover, aaa is among the teams selected by the curators of the already mentioned exhibition "Uneven Growth. Tactical Urbanism for Expanding Megacities" at the MoMa of New York.

Figure 1. ECObox
Source: www.ryerson.ca/carrotcity/board_pages/community/ecobox.html

Figure 2. Mobile Porch
Source: www.publicworksgroup.net/projects/mobile.porch/

Figure 3. Das Küchenmonument
Source: raumlabor.net/kuchenmonument/

Figure 4. Folly for a Flyover
Source: assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/folly-for-a-flyover

2.3 The never-ending planning theory's flirt with the unplanned

All the examples mentioned before are very recent and one of their common denominators is the ambition to foster new encounters and create unexpected opportunities for exchange. Indeed, in the last decade, especially with the growing role assigned to culture as a beneficial catalyst of urban transformation and with the success registered by the creative city mantra, one of the recognized objectives of urban planning had become paradoxically to foster unplanned and spontaneous practices (Krivý, 2013; VanHoose & Savini, 2017). In a recent publication with the aim of promoting experiences of temporary urbanism, Oswalt explicitly asks "How can planning open itself up to the unplanned? And, conversely, can the unplanned be planned, the informal formalized?" (Oswalt et al., 2013, p. 8). The aim of this paragraph is to highlight that the trend of tactical urbanism is not just a reaction to the cuts of public expenses of the contemporary urban neoliberalism, even if this is a factor contributing to its spreading. Rather it is contextualized here as a manifestation of the fascination for the unplanned which had always been present in the planning theory. Undoubtedly, such fascination for the unplanned is anything but new.

At the very beginning of the discipline, a trigger towards self-organization already emerges in the work of those Peter Hall (2014) calls the anarchist pioneers of the planning movement, referring to personalities such as Ebenezer Howard, the father of the garden city, and Patrick Geddes, the pioneer of the city-region bound. Indeed, such ideas were not just ways of organizing space, but rather ways of organizing society in small self-governing commonwealths. Even Le Corbusier, usually associated with the large-scale and authoritarian master planning of modernist urbanism, experimented with the idea of losing control as a designer: his Domino House's idea developed in 1924 is an example of an open framework design, a skeleton which can be adapted and filled by its users.

There are countless examples of projects dealing with the undefined, the flexibility and the informal in the history of urban design and planning. Oswalt (2013) tries to organize a collection of these example into ten categories, including "growing structures", "do-it-yourself planning" or "acupuncture". Most of the examples he cites were realized in the second half of the twentieth century, but there are also authors (es. Talen 2014) who are posing the roots of do-it-yourself urbanism much before. For example, Talen is trying to retrace a line which would connect the New York City's municipal arts movement and the American improvement societies of the late nineteenth century to the contemporary do-it-yourself movement. Indeed, depending on the features chosen to be more representative to cluster the practices, there could be drawn different lines of tradition. The focus could be put on the self-organization mode and be reconnected then with the anarchist roots of planning (Hall, 2014), or on the playful and provocative flavour of the interventions, being then more related to the radical and artistic movements of the '60s (Pinder, 2008; Schrijver, 2011) or again on the will

and ability of the inhabitants of shaping their own environment (Hughes & Sadler, 2007; Talen, 2015).

However, it is commonly accepted, not surprisingly, that the late '60s and the early '70s are the years in which the DIY triggers got a momentum. In '60s, Jane Jacobs, considered by some "the godmother of American urban design"(Chase Leighton et al., 2008, p. 94),wrote: "the main responsibility of planning and design should be to develop (…) cities that are congenial places for this great range of unofficial plans, ideas and opportunities to flourish, along with the flourishing of the public enterprises"(J. Jacobs, 1961, p. 241). Meanwhile, in Europe, this was the period of the experimentations of various architecture and artistic collectives. Hughes and Sadler (2007) recently curated a collection of essays specifically on freedom and planning and decided with the title, "Non-Plan", to pay homage to a provocative initiative of those years. The refer and dedicate a lot of space in the book to the Manifesto "Non-Plan: an experiment in freedom", published in the UK in 1969 on the journal New Society. In the text, the authors, Reyner Banham, Paul Barker, Peter Hall, and Cedric Price, hypothesized what might happen if a non-plan philosophy, meaning the absence of positive planning, would be applied in some segments of the English countryside.

Those were years in which self-determination, the quest for authenticity, independence and freedom to self-express, what Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) called *artistic critique*, were at the core of the mobilization in many fields, and of course also in architecture and planning.

While these examples do not always have a direct connection with urban tactics, they highlight the fascination that drew professional planners and architects towards the unplanned. The next section, on the other hand, explores the historical roots of urban tactics more deeply.

2.3.1 Tracing a *fil rouge*: urban tactics' connections and disruptions

Both participatory processes and urban tactics focus on everyday life and imply some kind of involvement of the inhabitants. Nevertheless, this section aims to demonstrate that urban tactics are not that much coherent with the participatory discourse and practice, while they have much more in common with the situationists and the radical movements of the '60s.

Urban tactics could be arguably framed as a response to the disillusionment on the participatory approaches, which deceived their original ambition to represent a form of "progressive, power-challenging planning" (P. Healey, 1993, p. 239). The subversive practices referred to as urban tactics and the participatory processes start from similar premises but arrive at very different results. The main differences regard the conception of 'conflict' and 'power', two conceptual categories which have been used to harshly criticize the communicative turn in planning theory (Fainstein, 2015; Richardson & Connelly, 2009).

The common premise is represented by the crisis of the entire modernist epistemology, challenged by the reflexive turn, promoted by feminist,

postmodernist and postpositivist scholars (Fainstein, 2015; Yiftachel & Huxley, 2000). The existence of an identifiable objective reality was questioned, the postpositivist thesis affirmed the possibility of no more than interpretations of reality.

It is in this context that the communicative model established itself "as the normative standard" (Fainstein, 2015, p. 24) in the '90s. It became clear that decisional procedures are not technical and neutral, rather they involve "a mix of value statements, empirical evidence, and subjective perceptions" (Fainstein, 2015, p. 25), in which communication and argumentation play a key role.

Very briefly, the core of the communicative or collaborative turn is the conception of planning as the way to address common concerns "collectively and intersubjectively" (P. Healey, 1993, p. 248). This conceptualization, informed by the Habermasian communicative rationality, implies a process of learning, listening and respectful argumentation among different voices, most of which had long remained excluded from the policy-making process. The basic elements of the collaborative planning theory, beyond the differences among the theorists, are the practice of deliberation, the continuous transformation of interests and the "consensus as a possible and, in principle, desirable outcome" (Richardson & Connelly, 2009, p. 93). Basically, the idea is that participatory procedures could ensure unforced reasoning, which will naturally result in the achievement of consensus.

Following Habermas and the communicative model, conflict has a negative connotation and should be avoided in the name of social cohesion. The result of a functioning open participation is expected to be consensus. This does not mean to refuse a pluralistic vision of society: Patsy Haeley (1993) recognizes that it would be just a temporary consensus, resulting from the "merely temporary accommodations of different, and differently adapting, perceptions" (1993, 239). Suppressing the conflict, even if temporary, seems to be the way to progress, according to the view of Habermas, by whom conflict is "dangerous, corrosive and potentially destructive of social order" (Habermas in Richardson and Connelly 2009, 95).

This is not in line with the philosophy of urban tactics, which promote do-it-yourself appropriation, with consequent unresolved issues of self-entitlement and legitimacy. Indeed, when these interventions occupy public spaces, this opens up spaces for contestation, which can give rise to conflict, but "in a sense, it is exactly that contestation which creates a public sphere" (Crawford in (Oswalt et al., 2013, p. 158).

The relevance of conflict and contestation is directly connected to the conceptualization of power. In the communicative approach, power is seen as negative and oppressive and it has to be kept outside of the deliberative arenas. Urban tacticians, instead, do not think they act beyond power, rather within its interstices, convinced that power is omnipresent and ineradicable, following Foucault's conception instead of Habermas one.

Instead, focusing on the provocative and playful character of most of the practices referred as urban tactics, some authors (Finn, 2014; Pinder, 2002;

Schrijver, 2011; Stickells, 2011) noted a revival of the work of the Situationist International (SI), a political and artistic collective based in Paris and alive from the 1957 to the 1972. I am going to recall some of the key elements of the Situationist thought in order to highlight the similarities with the tactical turn I tried to outline in the previous section.

The SI took place in the context of the crises of the functional city and of the widespread critiques towards the modernist movement. The modernist city was based on rationality, mechanical functionality and on an abstract idea of the user's needs. The human, the subjective, the individuality (with its own differentiated desires, feelings, emotions) were totally missing. The claims for different representations of the city and the society, more specifically of the individuals, have been at the basis of the Situationist ideas. Therefore, SI was born against, any acts were of protest and resistance, the stance they took have always been oppositional. They wanted to oppose the functionalist/modernist urbanism because the modernist city was conceived as repressive, being a rigid representation of dominant power structures.

Their action was explicitly political. Against the pre-determined and oppressive use of space, they praised the unexpected, claiming for individual freedom and emancipation. Consequently, producing different representations of the city by remapping it and appropriating the space while walking through it are political acts because they are a way of contesting powerful interests. These actions cannot be other than individual because it is the subjectivity to be central. The creative and active individual following his/her desires and needs for pleasure is the main and unique character of these actions. Pleasure and adventures are the other defining features of the situationist thought, that opposed them to the modernist values of rationality and efficiency. Enthusiasm and playfulness were essential to make urban space more liberating, open and liveable. The enjoyment of inefficiency and the focus on the free time were very provocative and resulted in small-scale and ephemeral and often individual interventions, nevertheless part of a larger socio-political project, deliberately left undefined.

There are clear similarities with the ideas behind urban tactics, which result often into soft interventions aimed at transforming the space primarily symbolically. The playfulness and the provocative stance are other common features, which are at the basis of the occasional overlapping between urban tactics and public art. Urban tacticians want to challenge normativity and to lose control, creating the conditions for experimentation without the ambition to direct or foresee the future.

By noticing similarities and disruptions with other movements, this section was functional to unveil some features of urban tactics, in the never-ending attempt to define practices that refuse definitions.

2.4 Poststructuralist planning attitudes: a suitable framework?

As mentioned above, the crisis of the modernist epistemology had been a premise of the trend of Tactical Urbanism. Indeed, another way of contextualizing the rise of Tactical Urbanism is to connect it with some broader epistemological shifts which affected the field of social sciences in the last decades of the twentieth century. This is not to say that the trend of Tactical Urbanism is directly connected to such epistemologies, rather I suggest here that some developments, such as post-structuralism and post-colonial theory, with their re-evaluation of informality, could represent a fertile intellectual milieu facilitating the conceptualization and the spread of this kind of practices. Without the ambition of fully exploring the impacts of post-structuralism on planning theory (for this see Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2004; Gunder, 2003; Hillier, 2011), it will be showed here how some of the identified features of urban tactics seem to respond to some post-structuralist insights.

Throughout most of its history, urban planning had been associated with control and order devoted to defined and constructed ends; such instrumental rationality typical of modernity is hardly compatible with urban tactics. Instead, post-structuralism with its refusal of holistic views seems a more suitable framework for placing an urban paradigm made of small-scale and uncoordinated practices. By embracing uncertainty and difference and "[expanding] our ways of perceiving the world" (Gunder, 2003, p. 311), post-structuralism paved the way to what Leonie Sandercock called epistemology of multiplicity (Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003), legitimizing other ways of knowing space, such as contemplation, dialogue and so on. The map, the tool *par excellence* to visualize, analyze and represent topographical space (Murdoch, 2006) and resulting traditionally in a plan, became then just one way among others to deal with space, whose topological conception requires more creative tools and experimentations. In other words, if it is true that post-structuralism affected how to conceive and to study space, it is legitimate to ask whether and how this impacted the ways in which who deals with space *acts*.

Following this reasoning, urban explorations, performances in the public space, storytelling could be framed as legitimate investigation tools. This gives the opportunity to escape the strictly normative stance of planning practices and to privilege the *doing* over the *instrumental making* (Gunder, 2003). Doing is understood here "qua particular practice and specific needs" (Gunder, 2003, p. 285) in opposition to "the 'thinking and knowing' qua universal (and dominant) theory" (*ibidem*) typical of the instrumental approach. Post-structuralism is a lens to look at the world and cannot offer solutions, as urban tactics are ways of questioning the space more than defining an order for it. Given the impossibility and the futility of seeking universal truth and certainty, what could and should be done is to acknowledge and accept to act under uncertainty. More than on theory, the importance is on praxis.

This way of acting incorporates "the very presupposition of the failure of grand narratives"(Schrijver, 2011, p. 247), which is the very premise of post-modernism. Once again, this is highly compatible with the pragmatic and open-ended features of urban tactics. However, this does not mean to lose any transformative power or to renounce to aspire to a better world, but just to reconceptualize the objectives in a more open and process-oriented manner. This resonates with Sandercock's concept of "utopia in the becoming" and to the reconceptualization of utopian urbanism as an optimistic and pragmatic way to face urban challenges given by Pinder (2002). The focus is shifted on the process, more than on the output (Petrescu & Petcou, 2013; Storni, 2015) and this perfectly mirrors the philosophy of urban tactics.

2.5 Political ambiguity. A critical perspective

It is usual to see the Lefebvrian "right to the city" notion associated with the do-it-yourself urban movements (Finn, 2014; Stickells, 2011). In these cases, such right to the city is loosely defined as "the right to participate in the perpetual creative transformation of the city" (Stickells, 2011, p. 215) and it became a kind of a slogan for a wide range of initiatives.

The skepticism on the emancipatory potential of urban tactics is fuelled by a variety of factors, and the aim of this section is to recall the main ones.

Indeed, when it comes to do-it-yourself interventions too often the revolutionary and deeply anti-capitalistic dimension of the Lefebvrian conception of the right to the city is overlooked, as demonstrated empirically by Douglas (2014) with his study on the motivations and drivers of *do-it-yourselfers* in North America.

The architectural establishment has always been ambiguous towards local self-managed practices, swinging from encouragement to annihilation and vice versa. Nowadays, the enthusiasm with which local self-managed practices has recently welcomed and endorsed by the architectural establishment[25] aroused suspicion among many scholars, mostly with a background in critical urban studies (among others: Brenner, 2015; Finn, 2014; Iveson, 2013; Mayer, 2013; Mould, 2014), who started to question whether these movements are really challenging contemporary urban neoliberalism. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that just in a period of economic restructuring and deregulatory policy, urban tactics are getting high levels of diffusion (Tonkiss, 2013).

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[25] In addition to the already mentioned North american Pavillion at the Venice Biennale in 2012 and the Turner Prize to the collective Assemble in 2015, it could be included in such trend of endorsement the choice of assigning the Golden Lion of the Biennale di Architettura 2012 to the mere documentation and broadcast of the squatter community of Torre David, in the city of Caracasa, Venezuela and the recognition given in 2016 with the Pritzker Prize to the housing project Elemental in Iquique, Chile, by Aravena, which envisaged the informal and unsanctioned improvements of the houses by the community. For more information on Torre David: http://u-tt.com/project/torre-david/ [accessed 05/09/2018] and on Elemental:
https://www.archdaily.com/797779/half-a-house-builds-a-whole-community-elementals-controversial-social-housing [accessed 05/09/2018]

For instance, the abundance of empty buildings in urban areas resulting from the flight of local capital and the 2008 financial crises are crucial to spatial experimentations such as urban tactics (Deslandes, 2013; Tonkiss, 2013). In other words, these interventions "can be seen as both a reaction to and a product of the structures and processes that define the contemporary city - trends such as state disinvestment, commodification, gentrification, and a general intensification of uneven development" (G. C. C. Douglas, 2014, p. 10). As Cupers provocatively says: "does PARK(ing) Day – an annual event whereby designers and citizens temporarily transform metered parking spots into public miniparks – constitute a fundamental shift in the sociality of the contemporary street, or it is a mere sign of spatial conquest by the cappuccino-sipping middle class?" (2014, p. 6). Are these practices emancipatory and subtly subversive or are they just a bourgeois diversion?

A first factor fuelling skepticism on the political potential of urban tactics concerns the *efficacy* of these small-scale interventions, meant as the ability of really challenging or even just scratching neoliberal urbanism. Unquestionably, the significant gap between the modest spatial scale and extremely local concern of tactical interventions and the translocal and multi-layered dimension of the challenges caused by the economic crisis on an urbanized world is undeniable. One scenario then is the coexistence between neoliberalism as the rule and urban tactics at its margins without any disruption (Brenner, 2015).

There are also other less neutral scenarios that can be envisioned: urban tactics could be not only ineffective but counter-productive in the fight for a just city. These initiatives indeed risk being just a palliative "that makes the insupportable a little more liveable" (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 318). They could be frame as well as a distraction, especially given their creative and playful character, while "rather than spectacular critique, we need sustained attention and committed experimentation" (Cupers, 2014, p. 7). In simple words, what these authors are suggesting is that reactivating a square could be nice, but focussing on challenges such as the trash collection system or the housing question might be less cool, but more critical.

Urban tactics could then be just apparently political. Without dismissing everything. Cupers (2014) suggests refining the evaluation tools, considering the agency, and not just the intentionality, of the contemporary participatory and activist practices. This would mean to focus on who is involved and who is not, in which phases, at which conditions, and so on. The scenario in which Tactical Urbanism is not just ineffective, but detrimental had been called by Brenner (2015) 'reinforcement' and it is somehow similar to the one defined as 'entrenchment'. This latter one refers to the risk that tactical urbanism could have internalized a neoliberal agenda. Indeed, tactical urbanism is "(…) inherently agile, temporary, amateur, precarious, creative and crucially inexpensive" (Mould, 2014, p. 536), all features which make it a seductive brand to be appropriated by neoliberal structures.

Moreover, the distrust in and the diminished role for the public institutions is a common premise both for tactical urbanism and neoliberalism. Indeed, the legitimate acknowledgment of the shortages of state actions is in both cases directed towards a help-yourself philosophy, without resulting in a collective demand and fight for more equal and public support. That is why some authors suggest that it

would be more progressive to engage more organically with issues of institutional innovation (Brenner, 2015; Cupers, 2014; Fainstein, 2015). However, it could be also the case within some specific contingencies that urban tactics constitute a catalyst to foster regulatory experimentations (Tonkiss, 2013).

Another potential common point between tactical urbanism and neoliberalism is less intuitive and regards the question of urban decency. Urban tactics indeed unveil the border between accepted informality and criminalized one, such as squatting, graffiti, and vandalism. Ann Deslandes (2013) sustains that what DIY urbanists are offering to property owners is exactly the protection from other forms of marginality and this directly undermines the link between do-it-yourself urbanism and spatial justice.

Furthermore, "unchecked DIY interventions in currently low-income neighborhoods could provide needed amenities or improvements but may simultaneously hasten gentrification and displacement"(Finn, 2014, p. 392). However, every case is different and should be contextually examined.

There seem to be no possible win-win outputs from the relationship between urban tactics and public policies. I would frame the dilemmas and paradoxes resulting from this relationship as *the tragedy of urban tactics*.

On one side, it is true that getting inspiration and energies from self-organized associations operating on urban issues could give a new impulse to the concepts and the practices of urban governance. At the same time, the inclusion of these practices into the planning system could undermine the subversive power of the interventions, reducing them to inoffensive practices within the institutional power. In this context, they can even become low-cost tools of urban regeneration and active tools of gentrification, perfectly fitting within the neoliberal urban policies. That is the fear expressed by Oli Mould (2014), who is worried that tactical urbanism could become "the 'quick fix' that contemporary urban policy so craves" (Mould, 2014, p. 530), repeating the trajectory of the creative cities theory, entirely absorbed into the neoliberal agenda or the path of the participatory approaches through endorsement and de-politicization.

It is still an open question if such local experiments could strive to be the seeds of a new way of inhabiting the city or if their purer tactical nature forces them to be a-spatial, a-strategical and not systemic. Indeed, if these micro-practices cannot manage to overcome their differences and connect with each other to become the expression of a "shared politics" (Iveson, 2013, p. 942), they will never be able to represent a coherent alternative.

The impression is that at the moment in which these practices reach a certain degree of stability, being unavoidably engaged in a broader movement, "they cease to be tactical and become part of the city's strategy" (Mould, 2014, p. 533). That is the reason why Oli Mould (2014) sustains that the nomenclature 'tactical urbanism' is a paradox and it is preferable to use 'urban tactics', underlining their fragmented essence. After all, coherent is the opposite of tactical.

However, maintaining a purely tactical approach means resisting and rejecting any movement toward institutionalization and could recall a kind of situationist approach to the city. This guarantees a non-complicit relationship with urban

neoliberalism, but it implies also to renounce to the upscaling of the impacts. De Certeau had already effectively synthesized dilemma when he predicted "what it wins, it cannot keep" (1984, 37).

2.6 Conclusion: a multi-layered perspective

After all, what is Tactical Urbanism? The answer cannot be, but multiple. This chapter offers an overview on the loose features of this emerging trend, without the ambition of drawing unnecessary sharp boundaries. Indeed, using the STS toolkit, Tactical Urbanism is presented here as the unstable output of an ongoing process of *boundary work* within the planning theory, that is the attempt of clustering some practices and connotating them as instances of a movement. I argue with this research that the professionals involved in these practices are key players of such a process of boundary work and, therefore, a chapter introducing this trend is a needed premise for this dissertation.

However, framing Tactical Urbanism just as the result of the agency of a bunch of practitioners pushing for professional recognition would mean to overestimate their power. This chapter aims thus at contextualizing this effort of clustering and branding practices as urban tactics within a broader picture that includes a series of factors that could have impacted the rise of Tactical Urbanism.

In summary, it focuses on three lines of investigation: the rootedness of urban tactics in the history of planning; the compatibility of these practices with the epistemological shift towards poststructuralism, and the ambiguous relationship with the current socio-political regime of neoliberalism.

The choice of assuming this multi-layered perspective derives from the awareness that none of these factors alone could fully explain the phenomenon, which is the output of the overlapping of a mix of contextual contingencies.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology: *Grand Tour* of contemporary practices

3.1 Introduction: an exploratory attitude

The etymology of the word "methodology" refers to the path to be followed to reach an objective[26]. And this is basically what I am doing in this chapter: to present the path I have been taken, what I have done. Specifically, I will focus on *why* and *how* I did that.

I kept the metaphor of the travel also in the title with the reference both to the idea of "exploration" as well as to the one of the Grand Tour. Indeed, this research had been quite literally a journey: it is a face-to-face interview-based study with subjects based in eleven different locations.

The main objective of this chapter is the transparency of the research process. As a beginner, I might have done many mistakes and the main effort here is not to cover them, but rather to be clear and honest in exposing what I have done.

At the basis of the entire study, there is an exploratory attitude in its literal meaning as discovery intention. My initial ambition going to the field was to discover who is dealing with urban tactics and what this commitment implied.

As mentioned above, this chapter is mainly concerned with two methodological questions: why and how. The chapter is organized as follows.

The "why issue" refers to the philosophical approach that supports the choice of the methods, in this case, interviews. Any methodological stance implies a certain epistemological position and this link is exactly what I will try to show in the first section of the chapter. Such philosophical approach relates once again to the encounter between STS and planning theory and the reader may bump into some

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[26] The word "method" comes from the greek μέϑοδος, which is a composite of the prefix μετα- (through) and ὁδός (way, path). Thus, literally it reminds to the way to go through.

overlapping with the reflections on the construction of the theoretical framework exposed in the first chapter.

The second issue refers to the practical operations I have been carrying on and it is the object of the following section. This chapter is the most descriptive one of the theses: step by step it is presented how I decided the questions to pose, the people to interview, and how I reached them.

Moreover, there is also a concise information box with some basic further information on the cases I selected.

The chapter then ends with some reflections on the methodological limitations of the study.

3.2 Para-ethnography for para-architecture

In recent years, Science and Technology Studies (STS) strongly influenced the debate on the city and the urban (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Farías & Bender, 2011; McFarlane, 2011a). In very general terms, this implied the re-framing of any objects of investigation, whose definition depends on flows, networks and ongoing transformation. One consequence of this ontology in urban studies, as well as in other sciences, is the endorsement of qualitative methods since they are more suitable to show the ways in which specific urban assemblages are made, stabilized and unmade (Latour, 2005).

In this section, I will focus on two methodological implications on my field of interest of such STS epistemological stance.

The first one is that this ontological and methodological move opens a new analytical perspective in the field of architecture, the discipline mostly associated with the practices I analyze in this research. Indeed, I got inspired by recent studies (Farias & Wilkie, 2016; Yaneva, 2009) that conceive architecture as an assemblage of human and non-human mediators and architectural practice as a *black box* to be open. This assumption inspired an ethnographic wave of studies on architecture, pushing social scientist into architectural offices and inviting to look *behind the scenes*. This conception revitalized the geography of architecture[27], a subfield of cultural geography, and gave the possibility to open up new perspectives on architectural production (Kraftl, 2010). It renovated the way of looking at individual buildings and allowed to conceive architecture as a complex process, pushing for qualitative studies on how space is produced. One of the implications of such a change is the significant downsizing of the role of architects, which is only one of the variables upon which *architecture depends* (Till, 2013).

One discrepancy I noted is that, besides the attention to complex spatial processes, most of these studies in geography of architecture imply a very

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[27] The field of geography of architecture traditionally deals with the analysis of the built environment and its relationships with individuals and society. It encompasses a variety of approaches, going from cultural approaches aiming at underlining the symbolic dimension of buildings, passing through Marxist-inspired critiques of the role of architecture, to the more recent developments quoted in the text inspired by pragmatism and STS studies focusing on the socio-material dimension of architectural practice and using nonrepresentational theory as a framework (for a brief historical overview on this discipline see Lees 2001, Kraftl 2010, and Lorne 2017).

traditional idea of the discipline of architecture as the design of buildings. This is even more paradoxical given that in certain cases (such as the one of Jeremy Till) these are the same authors who push for reinventing the discipline. The risk of focussing mainly on buildings is to overlook those practices going "significantly beyond the designing of material objects" (Lorne, 2017, p. 269) and it is in this context that my research is located.

Furthermore, Lorne (2017) invites geographers to engage more with practitioners who are explicitly working on spatial projects, taking the opportunity to "work constructively with and alongside these practitioners"(Lorne, 2017, p. 283). This idea of strengthening the bond with practitioners resonates with repeated calls for geographers to listen more carefully and work more closely with architects (Jane M. Jacobs & Merriman, 2011; Kraftl, 2010; Lees, 2001). Thus, inspired by these calls, this research aims to give voice to the practitioners using in-person interviews as a source of qualitative data.

The other aspect I would like to focus on is the fact that STS pushed social scientists to explore technocratic milieus, starting from science labs with the so-called *laboratories studies* (Sismondo, 2010).

Nowadays, especially within the field of anthropology of experts, there is a high diffusion of ethnographies in technocratic environments, such as scientific laboratories, finance districts, corporations or co-working spaces where the informants are engaged in high intellectual labor (Boyer, 2008; R. H. Douglas & Marcus, 2008; Ong & Collier, 2005).

With reference to the specific case of this research, I felt sympathetic with anthropologists of experts. Indeed, most of my informants have a larger cultural capital than mine and, furthermore, they are specialized in my field of studies, having a background mostly in urban studies, urban planning, architecture or related fields. This makes them most of the times very conscious of the working mechanisms of contemporary urban transformations. Moreover, they are themselves explicitly engaging in processes of self-reflection, even with scientific publications and conferences.

The consequent discomfort I felt took me to repeatedly ask myself the question Boyer provocatively put as: "with such informed informants (…) who needs analysts?" (Boyer, 2008, p. 43).

Such a situation challenges and questions the traditional image of the social scientist acting as the "'critical', 'reflexive', and 'distanced' enquirer meeting a 'naïve', 'uncritical' and 'un-reflexive' actor" (Latour, 2005, p. 57).

One possible way to deal with this situation is to reframe the research objects, the informants, as *reflexive subjects*. This resonates with the Latour's famous slogan "follow the actors themselves", which, among other things, envisions the possibility to learn from the field, instead of disciplining it. Furthermore, this attitude completely fits with my discomfort in the role of the (wannabe) social scientist capable of unveiling the hidden forces that are making the actors act.

Accepting such a change in the role of the social scientist, some theorists (such as Doug Holmes and George Marcus) introduced the concept of para-ethnography, a methodological stance which implies to treat the informants "as epistemic partners

(…) who participate in shaping its [of the research] theoretical agendas and its methodological exigencies" (R. H. Douglas & Marcus, 2008, p. 595). I got inspired by these principles, aware that my informants are active agents in the assembling process of emergent social realms.

Thus, determined to *follow* them and their inquiries, face-to-face interviews appeared as a proper way to establish a contact and foster an equal and mutual interaction.

In conclusion, this section tries to offer some epistemological justifications for the choice of working with in-depth interviews. However, as probably stated in every methodological handbook, what is justifying the methods is the research question. In other words, the nature of what you are looking for should be consistent with the methods chosen to find it. As already stated, in a nutshell, and in abstract terms I am mostly interested in the "representational component of the professionalization process" (Chaib, Danermark, Selander, & Jodelet, 2013, p. 66): namely the meaning given to the phenomenon by the actors themselves. Interviews are the privileged tools to understand and detect how people understand and make meaning of experiences of their lives and they are therefore the most suitable methods for this research. Indeed, if it is true that expertise is a collectively constructed notion, the direct interaction with the actors is the only way to make this collective process of signification emerge.

3.3 On the field: modes of operation

Interviewing could happen in a range of ways: in this section, I am going to offer some details on how I conducted the interviews. Basically, how I have done what I did for data collection. Two points are going to be explored with special attention in the next subsections: the type of interviews and the sampling process.

However, before going into details, a premise is needed.

The contents of the interviews represent the main source of empirical data I have been using to develop the thesis, but not exclusively. Indeed, they had been combined with situational observations and informal chats, which are not going to be quoted in the dissertation but still contributing to creating my understanding of the phenomenon.

In particular, these participant observations have been:

- First two organizational meetings of the "Festival Bellastock Brussels 2017". The meetings (dates: January 29th, 2017 and February 22nd, 2017) were led by the group Collectif Baya, open to the public and hosted in the workshop of the collective.

- Two internal meetings of the group Toastand on the management of Place Marie Moskou in Brussels. Plus, I participated to two open-air activities: one day (on February 22nd, 2017) of collective and public "fixing session" on a square and another day (on February 25th, 2017) of public cooking in the square.

- Participation to the three-day festival "Incontri del Terzo Luogo" (December from 1st to 3th, 2017) gathering groups and promoters of what they had been calling

"spaces of indecision"[28]. It was hosted by the community hub "Manifatture Knos"[29] in Lecce, Italy and coordinated jointly by the founders of the place and the group Labuat.

Especially on these occasions, it happened to interact with people relevant to my research without having the opportunity to set a proper interview or neither to record. Thus, there are some groups which are not included in what I will later call "the sample", even if my interaction with them contributed to this thesis. These informal chats/mail exchanges or phone calls had been with the following groups: Izmo (Turin), Labuat (Taranto), Uffa (Trani), Studio Miessen (Berlin), Maison à Bruxelles (Brussels), Fabrik Fabrik (Brussels), Publyk (Brussels), Parasite 2.0 (Milan), About (Venice), Stalker/ON (Rome).

Furthermore, to get some extra information, when possible, I conducted the recorded interviews in the offices of the groups. Therefore, I have visited the workshops of: Architetti di Strada and Baumhaus (Bologna), Ateliermob (Lisbon), Collectif Baya and Toastand (Brussels), Cooperativa EST (Padua), Esterni (Milan), LiveOutsideVenice (Venice), Orizzontale (Rome), Plinto (Turin), Praxis and Rivularia (Piacenza). This way I got a concrete idea of the material and spatial working conditions of the groups.

The interviews used as direct empirical material had been all recorded and entirely transcribed. The coded had then been manual, following three main categories corresponding to the three empirical chapters, namely the process of tracing symbolic boundaries, the mobility channels of practices and ideas, and the controversial political potential mobilized by these practices.

Just the recorded and transcribed interview to Adriano Cancellieri, the founder of the Master U-Rise (Iuav, Venice) is not included the list offered below in the section "a snapshot of the cases" for uniformity reasons since all the others are groups of practitioners.

3.3.1 Interviewing (wannabe) experts

As mentioned before, I sympathize with the image of the social scientist approaching a technocratic environment. This implies a peculiar form of interviews: the interviews with experts. This type had been often included in the literature on *interviewing elites* and just recently gained its own status as a different kind (Bogner, Littig, & Menz, 2009; Boyer, 2008).

This differentiation particularly fits my case, since it would be problematic to define "elite" the groups I got in contact with, given their common condition of precarious workers.

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[28] More info (only in italian) on the initiative and on the detailed program at http://www.manifattureknos.org/knos/media/images/events/5incontridelterzoluogoprogramma.pdf [last access 12/11/2018]

[29] Manifatture Knos is an innovative experiment of collective management of a building, active in Lecce, Italy, since 2007. Started as a spontaneous process of appropriation of an abandoned space, it is now recognized as one of the most important cultural and community centre of the region. More info at http://www.manifattureknos.org/knos/index.php [last access 12/11/2018]

It is important to note that interviewing experts do not refer to the idea of gaining precise information on a topic on which the person is recognized as an expert. That could have been accomplished with a questionnaire. My objective has not been to *extract* knowledge, but rather to reconstruct the process of assemblage of the expert knowledge, aware of its "constructiveness and contingency" (Bogner et al., 2009, p. 29). Thus, a semi-structured interview seemed to be the most suitable instrument.

The process of assemblage of an expert authority could assume various shapes and it is quite abstract as an object of investigation. Thus, I set up a thematic guideline (see table at the end of the section) that helped me in keeping some standpoints in the different interviews. As a result, besides the variety of types of conversations, I was able to trace and to code quotations dealing with similar topics.

I am now going to briefly recall some advice I got from the literature on the interviews with experts.

First, dealing with experts, it is not suggested to approach the field naïvely, but it is important to be informed in advance about rules, principles. Thus, I had a look at the past projects of the groups I was going to interview.

Another advice has been to foster the narration of stories in a narrative style, in order to get clues on general criteria or principles. Indeed, "narratives provide insight into the tacit aspects of expert knowledge, which she or he is not fully aware" (Bogner et al., 2009, p. 32). This is the reason why some questions invite the interviewee to narrate, for instance, the project they recognize as the most representative or how the group was born.

Finally, Boyer invites to "humanize the expert" (Boyer, 2008, p. 44), meaning that 'private' circumstances could help to unveil the contingency of the expert status. The face-to-face interaction has been, then, an important factor in order to foster the empathy and confidentiality needed to explore private aspects of the lives of the informants.

What follows is the reproduction of the thematic guideline I have been using for the interviews[30]. Not all the questions had been addressed to everyone, or neither the order has always been the same, but the topics (grey lines) have been discussed with all the interviewees.

GUIDELINE FOR THE INTERVIEWS
The beginning
How and when did this experience start?
Had the group changed over time? (more/fewer people, collaborations, interns, employees)

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[30] It has to be noted that I owe the publication "public works: works we like to show and questions we ask ourselves" published by the group public works, by which I took inspiration for some questions. More info on the book at: www.publicworksgroup.net/publications/worksweliketoshow [last access 19/11/2018]

Mechanisms
Commissions/ call for projects/ self-initiating…which form? Which one is prevalent, and which one is your favorite…. advantages and disadvantages for each? Basically, how do you finance yourself?   *Is there a project which you consider representative of your approach and why?*
Organization / structure
Organization of the group / is there a hierarchy, is it a collective   *Which legal configuration (cultural association/cooperative/firm) – and which roles (who is responsible for what)*   *Is it a full-time job? Or is it a network activating just for some event? is there an office?*   *How does your collaborative and organic structure impact on the way you run projects?*
Networks
Relationship with official authorities (collaboration/dissent/) …? Have you ever worked with the public institutions?   *What is your perspective on participation?*   *Are you a member of a kind of network? have you participated in any festival?*   *How do you promote your work?*
Self-representation
How do you describe our work as art, as architecture, as social activation...?   *What does this mean for you? What do you take from one discipline and what from the other?*   *Is it (your work) political?*
Location
Why are you based in "x"?   *Do you think is there something peculiar of this location?*
Conclusion
Do you know any other reality which I could interview?   *Is there anything you want to add, which you think is important and it did not come out during the interview?*

3.3.2 Categorizing the uncategorized: sampling

In the introduction of a publication curated by one of the interviewed collective of architects (Collectif Etc, 2015), Thierry Paquot found interesting to reflect on the name of their collective: "etc". The choice of such a name reveals their unwillingness to be put on a list, to be categorized, defined.

Another interviewed collective named itself "ATIsuffix", that more than a name is a suffix, a declination to be attached to different verbs, in order to allow the group to change the name on a project base[31].

The vagueness of the names[32] reflects the vagueness of the category of such expertise if any, and the explicit intention to refuse categorization.

The issue of refusing categories is presented in this chapter as a practical matter, ignoring the discomfort I feel as a researcher to avoid categories, whose definition is most of the time what researchers are asked to do.

In short, even if I theoretically accept to avoid categories, how should I select the subjects to be interviewed?

This question regards what is usually and wrongly (Small, 2009) called the *sampling process* and is the object of this section.

The word "sampling", indeed, reminds to principles of selection suitable for quantitative methods, but not pertinent with qualitative ones (Cardano, 2011). It is a mistake to keep taking the representative random probability samples "as the norm to which it [selecting in qualitative research] should be compared" (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 5). Following this logic, Small (2009) claims the need for a more appropriate lexicon for qualitative research. For instance, he proposes to frame in-depth interview-based studies, such this research, not as small-sample studies, but rather as *multiple case-studies*, in which, following the case study logic of Yin (2014), "each case provides an increasingly accurate understanding of the question at hand" (Small, 2009, p. 24).

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[31] Explanation of the use of the suffix -ati in the Italian grammar and in the collective's understanding:
"In Italian a reflexive verb [to X] expresses an action in which the subject is also the object:
Mi X   <I X myself>
Reflexive verbs are conjugated with reflexive pronouns, which normally precede the finite verb form but are attached to infinitive:
Mi X <I X myself>
X si   <to X oneself>
X andoci <X ing ourselves>
When the reflexive verb is conjugated in the imperative the suffix **-ATI** is used:
X ati   <X yourself!>
This same suffix **-ATI** also stands for the past participle in the plural.
Past participle: reflexive imperative = to be subjected : to induce
The person who is doing the action is therefore also the person who is receiving the action. In that sense reflexive verbs can also express RECIPROCAL actions. Grammatically not all verbs can be reflexive, only the ones that the subject can do himself. The –**ATI** suffix is now ready to erase this grammar weakness and conjugate in reciprocal/reflexive any verb."
Source: https://www.atisuffix.net/copia-di-home [last access 25/03/2019]
[32] The reflection on the choices of the names of the collectives will be recalled in Chapter 4, section 4.2 "Diving among definitions". Furthermore, in the appendix, the stories of the names' choices are reported, when expressed in the interviews.

Gaining this awareness allows overcoming the doubts and paranoias on the representativeness and the number of interviews, which are recurrent obsessions of beginner scholars dealing with interview-based studies (Barker & Edwards, 2012; Edwards & Holland, 2013; Small, 2009).

However, even unveiled the inconsistent issue related to the statistical significance, I still had to face the challenge to choose and reach the subjects to be interviewed.

My starting points were the awareness of how blurred the category at stake in this research is and the standpoints against narrow definitions from the collectives themselves, as recalled above. All this helped me realizing and accepting that "groups are not silent things (…) Group delineation is not only one of the occupations of social scientists, but also the very constant task of the actor themselves" (Latour, 2005, pp. 32–33).

Thus, I got interested in the ways in which the members of the different groups defined themselves, giving credit to their reflections, as claimed by the principles of the para-ethnography expressed in a previous section. *Professionals of the unplanned* (Guadalupi, 2018), which is the label I coined and use to refer to such experiences, is conceived then as an empirical category: I am interested in the performativity of such a notion, not in its abstract definition itself.

I am going now to briefly recall the practical steps I have done. The initial criteria to select the informants have been very vague and porous, starting from a loose search for people who approach urban development with an "original, less exclusive, more open-minded attitude, more in touch with the reality of society" (Collectif Etc, 2015, p. 28). It is impossible to deny that I figured out by myself quite an abstract idea of the *undisciplined* urban practitioners I was looking for. Namely, practitioners which operated beyond sharp disciplinary boundaries mixing architecture, design, performing art and so on and which claimed to offer an alternative to the traditional dynamics of urban development. I had in mind a couple of realities I would associate to such emerging expertise. These hints were coming from personal connections, past experiences and my background in urban planning. Furthermore, some other projects and practices got popular, being published in magazines and shown at architectural exhibitions. Thus, there were traces to be followed. I tried anyway to stay open and ready to include in the research practices I had not foreseen, assuming that "surprise and curiosity should inspire their [of the researchers] notions and protocols more than the other way around"(Venturini, 2010, p. 260).

It appeared then consistent to use a *snowball sampling technique*, meaning to follow the suggestions and the contacts of the groups interviewed. It is a method usually used in social sciences when the subjects are hidden or hard to get in touch with, and, despite not being exactly my case, I find it coherent with the intention to follow the connections and the inclusive or exclusive criteria of the informants themselves.

Being the selection not based on sharp criteria, it is relevant to highlight each step of the process in order to make transparent how each group had been reached. The scheme sketched above (figure 1) has been developed to visualize the process

and the passages. Furthermore, beyond the exigencies of clarity and transparency, a visualization of the network resulting from the snowball sampling could offer some additional information. First of all, I included also the first steps which took me at the first interviews, what I have called in the image "channels of connection", assuming that even the channels through which these groups are making themselves visible are part of the assembling process. The connections between groups derive from the interviews, they refer to the suggestions of the groups, but also to anecdotes and private connections which came out in the conversations. For clarity reasons, I decided to not trace all the connections between the groups, but just the ones that took me to groups I hadn't found by myself.
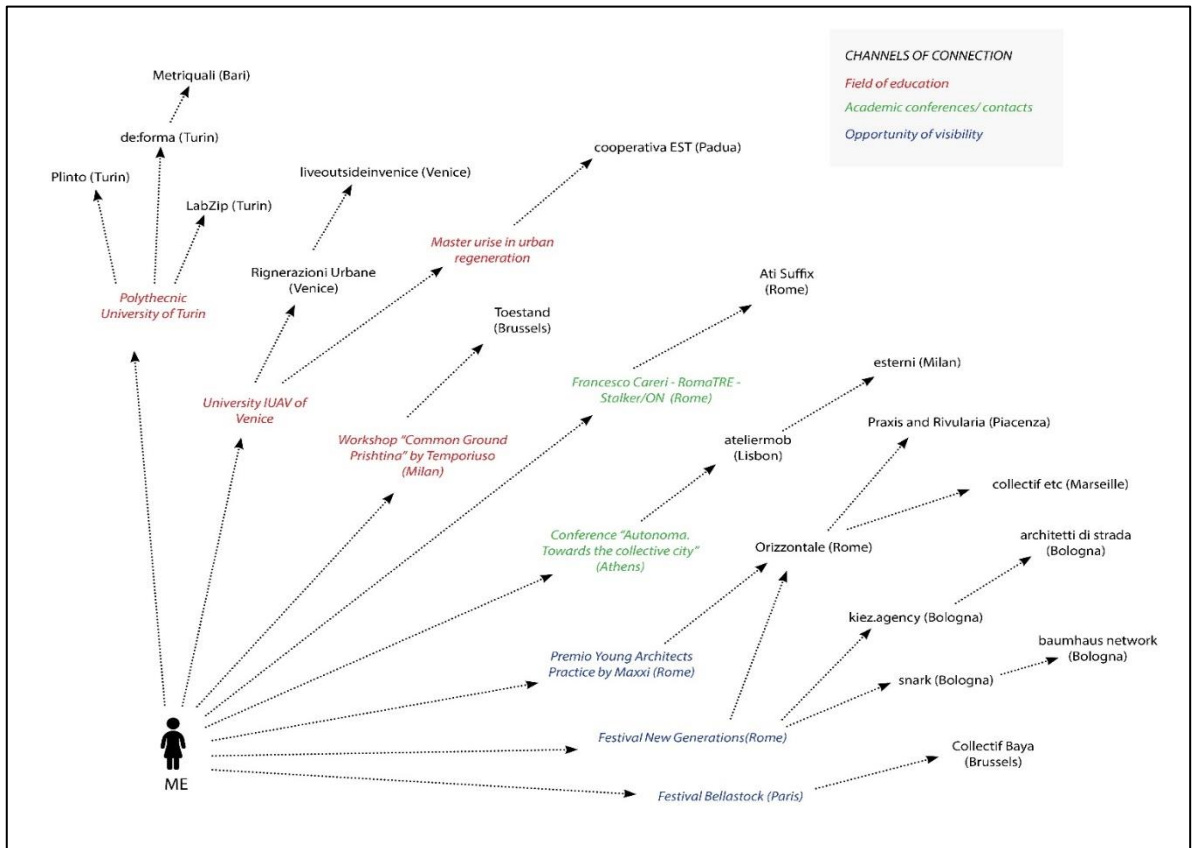

Figure 1: how I reached the cases

3.4 A snapshot of the cases

The sampling process described above resulted in a variegated group of subjects with different backgrounds, ambitions, and modes of action. Whether they could be related to the same broader category or not is one of the open questions raised in this research and it will be the object of further discussion in the next chapter.

The aim here is solely to deliver some basic information on the interviewees with a descriptive attitude, to be added to the further and more detailed information on each group available in the Appendix of this work.

In this section, I am referring just to those interviews I have recorded and coded because they represent the rough material, I based the reflections of the next chapters on.

They are all reasonably young groups (figure 2), the great majority born in the last 10 years. The age range of the people I met is quite narrow: they were mostly between 25 and 35 years old (founders of Esterni, Ateliermob, Architetti di Strada and Angolazioni Urbane were exceptions to this, being in their 40s).
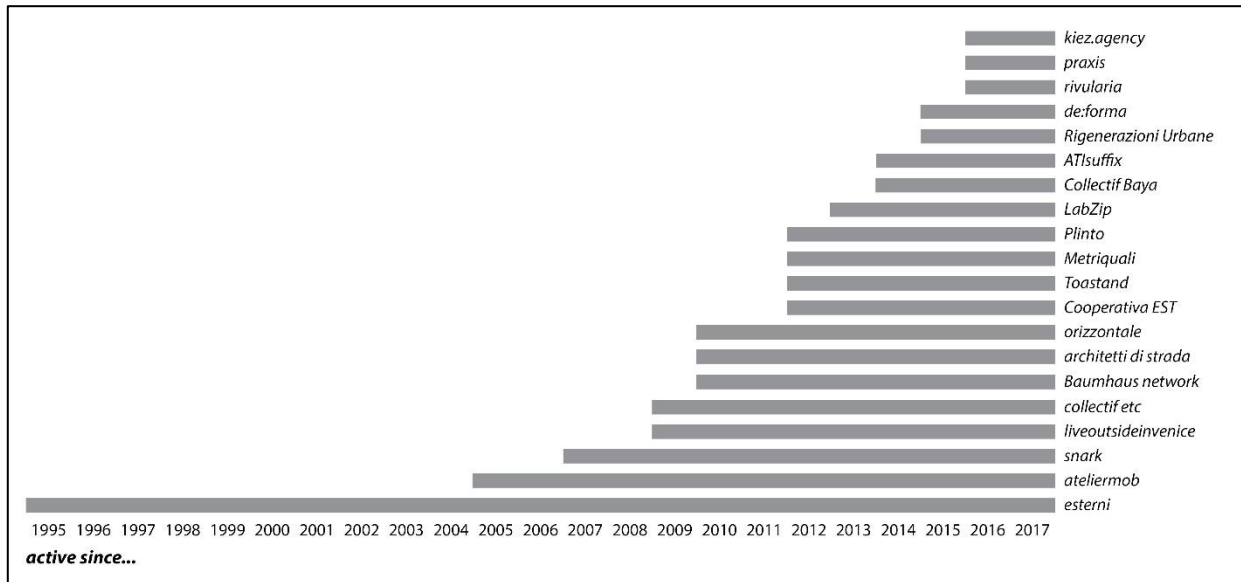
Figure 2: years of activity of the groups

On the contrary, the geographical distribution of the groups is variegated (figure 3), even if I conducted my interviews mostly in Italy. This kind of groups are active in very different contexts: I met groups from the south of Italy (Bari) to north Europe (Brussels).

Neither the size of the cities where the groups are active is a distinctive feature: I interviewed groups in Piacenza (around 100.000 inhabitants) and Rome (more than 2,5 million of inhabitants).

Some reflections on the issue of this geographical unevenness will be elaborated in chapter 5, where I face the topic of *mobilities* of these practices.

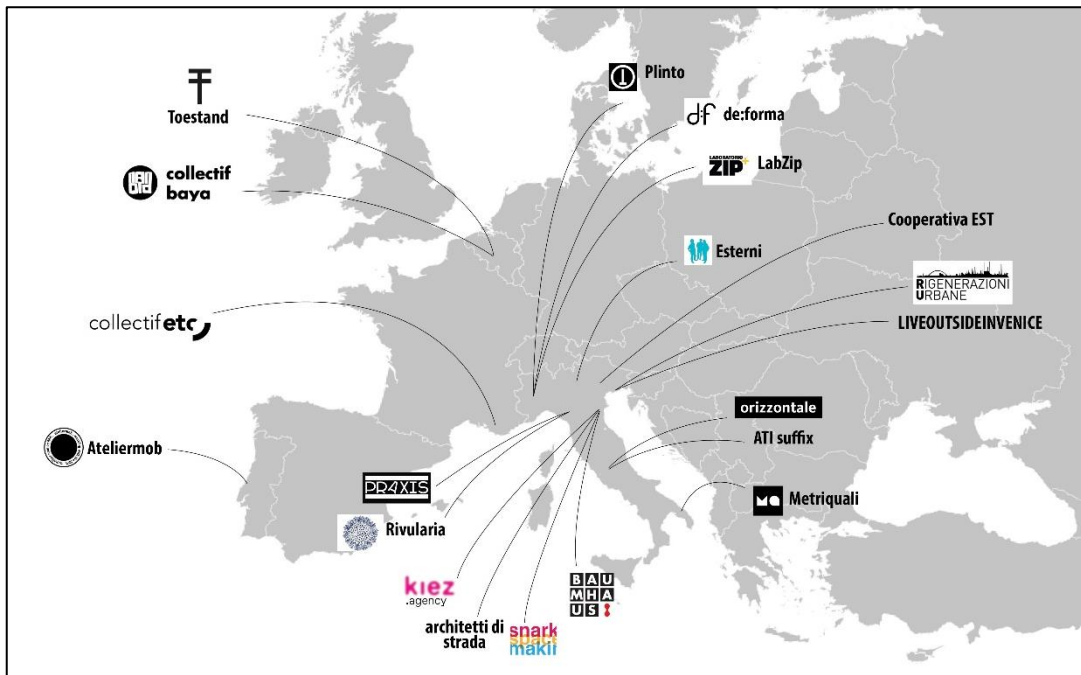*Figure 3: Spatial distribution of the cases*

Regarding the types of activities carried out, they are also very variegated, but there are some macro areas that can be detected. It has to be considered that one single group could and often did operate in different areas.

The logic of the following list is just to work as bearings to get a more concrete idea of the type of projects that these groups are promoting, these are just some common threads I inferred.

- **Self-building practices**: the practice of self-building refers basically to the idea that the user could build his own environment. The general principle of directly building the objects used to occupy spaces is a relatively common practice among the groups I had met, and wood is the most used material.

However, this single practice can take different declinations and assume different meanings. For example, the opening up of building sites is considered "one of the fundamentals of [our] work" (Collectif Etc, 2015, p. 184) by Collectif Etc, a French collective I interviewed, for whom building sites have a unique social, democratic, educational and creative potential and they could work as *forums*. Following the same rationale, self-building has a prominent role for many of the groups I met, other examples are Plinto, Collectif Baya and DeForma. Other groups instead, such as Praxis or Toestand, don't focus that much on self-building, but still recognize and use the practice of building together as an opportunity to build up and reinforce a community. Or again, Metriquali associated self-building to the sustainability of the projects, both on the side of the process both on the one of the materials. In some cases, such as the ones of Esterni and Orizzontale, the self-building skills and style became even a kind of *brand*, a resource to get private commissions (mostly furniture assignments).

In summary, collective self-building allows everyone to actively participate in shaping the space, it helps to strengthen social ties, it is cheap, and it could be

relatively fast in delivering the output. All these features make this practice definitely the most common activity among the groups I got in contact with.

- **Artistic interventions:** many of the projects in which these groups are involved could be considered by an external observer as artistic interventions. Indeed, sometimes the interventions are thought to be a provocation, which often is the case, for examples, of ATIsuffix or LabZip+.

To be framed in this way gives more flexibility and freedom to the groups, who can then experiment unconventional processes. It is also sometimes a practical strategy to avoid bureaucratic complications (an art piece has fewer standards to respect than an object of street furniture). In other cases, the groups even are involved in performative art and thus their work does not result in a material object.

- **Participatory efforts:** the desire to promote the active involvement of the inhabitants is another prominent common thread of this category of professionals. This could be achieved in different ways, among which the already mentioned self-building practices and artistic interventions could be listed. Indeed, more than a macro area of activity, this is a common objective and value to be pursued. This could happen in very different ways: Toestand set up a weekly *neighborhood radio broadcast*[33], kiez.agency is contributing to creating a Creative Community Hub in a peripherical area[34], Baumhaus Network organizes, among other things, recreative courses for teenagers, DeForma is collaborating to the creation of a diffused eco-museum in a marginal area, and these are just some examples. However, the issue of participation will be further scrutinized[35], and in a nutshell, what it seems to be a shared idea is to aim at active participation which involves materially doing something together more than discussing around a table.

- **Educational activities:** many of the groups are also concerned with organizing workshops and seminars. Indeed, promoting discussion and questioning urban issues is another of the shared objectives I noticed. Once again, this could assume different shapes, some examples: Jarfällä publishes an independent magazine at a faculty of architecture, snark decided that one sure output of every project should be an article and LabZip+ and Plinto regularly organize workshops for students. It should also be noted that the great majority of the groups has some kind of relationship with the university. Many groups, as it will be further explored in chapter 5, had born in the context of the University, some of them are collaborating with it to improve the curricula or finally, some are regularly taking students as interns. This kind of activities has usually also the function of financing other projects.

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[33] They started the participative and public radio show "Radio Moskou", more info at https://www.facebook.com/RadioMoskou/ [last access 08/11/2018]. The podcasts of the show are available at http://www.radiopanik.org/emissions/radio-moskou/ [last access 08/11/2018]
[34] More info on https://www.instabileportazza.it/ [last access 08/11/2018]
[35] Some reflections on how these groups are reframing the discourse and practice of participation in architecture and urban planning are carried out in section 6.3 "Traces of a new discourse on participation" of this thesis.

More details and peculiarities on each group could be found in the appendix, what follows is a list of the groups interviewed with some basic information, following alphabetical order.

Name	Self-description (from the website[36])	Main activities
1. **Architetti di Strada**	It aims at answering to social and housing issues with economically and socially sustainable projects. It offers services and consultancy at low prices, experimenting new ways of inhabiting, taking care of everybody's needs	urban gardening, design for all (accessibility in public spaces), neighbourhood festivals
2. **Ateliermob**	a multidisciplinary platform which develops projects, ideas and research within architecture, design, and urbanism. This is the way it usually starts. From this point, everything is worked out. The impossible is to work on the unexciting, on the uncreative, on what diverges from people needs.	architectural competitions, participation, co-design, self-building
3. **ATIsuffix**	a multidisciplinary collective whose name change on a project base in order to deny closed identities. The adoption of the Italian grammar suffix -ATI is methodologically devised to allow each project to be conceived and understood as reciprocal, imperative to the public and self-transformative for the project members	workshops, artistic performances, urban explorations, seminars
4. **Baumhaus network** *Open culture in the city*	Baumhaus is a network of projects that frame culture as a means to open spaces of autonomy in marginal areas, for the development of critical thinking and as a basis to envision new opportunities	Organization of a neighbourhood festival, educational activities, recreational workshops

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[36] All the links of the websites by which these excerpts of the self-descriptions had been retrieved are available in the Appendix A

5. **Collectif Baya**	non-profit association dealing with do-it-yourself architecture. (...) each project is an opportunity to test experiments, to exchange know-how and to create new networks of actors	focus on self-building, workshop, organization of the festival Bellastock Brussels
6. **Collectif etc**	it aims to gather desires toward civic dynamics of public space's issues. Using different resources and skills, the "Collectif" wish to offer various supports for experimentation. (...) Our projects desire to be optimistic, open-minded and directed toward the spontaneous cities' audience. Most of them deal with public spaces and try to include local citizens into the creative process.	urban furniture, scenography, light, and removable set-up. meetings, debates, conferences, and pedagogical workshops
7. **Cooperativa EST (Educazione, Società, Territori)**	It offers consultancy on the management and the re-thinking of urban vacancies, complex areas, underused buildings. We promote urban regeneration and social innovation, keeping in mind the social and environmental sustainability of the interventions	Focus on a specific square in Padua (management of a co-working, urban gardening, public art)
8. **De:forma**	a multidisciplinary team of young professionals dealing with architecture, urban planning, landscape, design, and art. The aim of the group is the co-regeneration of places for the collective and the promotion of active citizenship and urban commons	management of an open-air neighborhood eco-museum, urban gardening
9. **Esterni**	a cultural enterprise that designs public spaces and services for small and large communities, promotes and produces events of aggregation, develops collective communication campaigns. It works with public and private	street furniture, events, a cinema festival, participatory processes

	institutions in Italy and abroad, sharing competences, projects, and resources.	
10. Kiez.agency *fostering urban opportunities*	Kiez explores the boundaries of architecture and urbanism activating process-based and socially sustainable transformations. (...) we turn building and open space into places of opportunities.	architectural competitions, support to citizen initiatives
11. LabZip+	an interdisciplinary research group based on practice: it aims at the interaction with people in order to promote a collective and shared transformation of the built environment	workshops, urban walks, artistic installations
12. LIVEOUTSIDE INVENICE	Cultural association dealing with public art and open-source culture	mainly the project "angolazioni urbane": public art in peripherical areas and in urban interstices
13. Metriquali	Born with the aim of facing the emerging housing question with alternative strategies (i.e. self-restoration)	self-construction, workshops, consultancy (legal and on materials and design), organic architecture
14. Orizzontale *do-it-yourself architecture for common spaces*	an architect's collective (...) whose work crosses the field of architecture, urbanism, public art, and DIY practice. (...) The projects have represented the ground for experimenting with new kinds of collaborative interactions between city dwellers and urban commons as well as occasion to test the boundaries of the architectural creation process.	temporary structures on public spaces, wood creation (also furniture), workshops. Architectural competitions

15. Plinto	a group of architects that works on DIY, design, communication and urban regeneration. In connection with institutional and informal facts, with method and approach consistency	street furniture, public art, workshop, conferences
16. Praxis	We share the vision of a more inclusive city, though the construction of urban dispositifs based on participation and collaboration	temporary structures, urban gardening, public art, conferences
17. Rigenerazioni Urbane	It focuses on public spaces, as places of confrontation and encounter, places in which to enact sociality.	workshop on self-building, public art, independent publications
18. Rivularia	It is a cultural association. It aims at making dwellers and institutions aware of the values of protection, management, and planning of the landscape, through conferences, workshops and practices of co-design. (...)Open and public spaces as a means of construction of a shared urban identity.	temporary structures, urban gardening, public art, conferences
19. Snark *space making*	a cultural association dealing with practices of co-creation and research. Nowadays they are working on relations between urban spaces and music.	co-design workshops, public art, public engagement processes, research
20. Toestand	Reactivation of forgotten or abandoned buildings, terrains and (public) spaces by means of temporary and autonomous socio-cultural centers. Dialogue, creation, autonomy, and action are crucial to us.	public spaces activations, temporary use of empty buildings

3.5 Methodological doubts and obsessions

I am aware that there is a wide range of methodological issues which could be raised against this study. The questions of the interviews could have been written differently and more pertinently to the research objectives, the research question changed over time making me shift the focus of the interviews from time to time, the sampling process could have been more rigorous, the analysis of the transcripts could have been improved by using proper software, and many other things.

Being said that, the research on the field is a learning process and if I were now at the beginning, I am confident that I would improve my field experience.

Especially, there are two issues on which I would like to draw the attention: two doubts that accompanied me during all the field research. The following two recurrent and obsessive thoughts: "I don't know enough of each case" and "the cases are not *enough* or at least not the *right* ones".

In this section, I will speculation these points, showing the answers I gave myself over time.

As for the first one, the issue is that I found myself reluctant to calling the interviewees "cases", as suggested for small-n interview studies by Small (2009). Such discomfort derives from the feeling of not knowing enough on every single *case*. Indeed, most of the recent STS-informed studies imply an ethnography, a method able to assess the socio-material assemblages characterizing every phenomenon.

The choice of undertaking a series of interviews to different groups instead of setting ethnographic research on one single group derived from a few considerations.

First of all, the access to the field resulted quite hard, since the members, as socially privileged members of a culture of expertise, tended to restrict ethnographic access. This is not surprising: resistances to ethnographers are a usual scenario in the field of anthropology of experts (Boyer, 2008). Some authors justify this resistance with the concern by experts and professionals of maintaining "an appropriate level of 'mysteriousness' and esotericism" (Fournier, 2000, p. 75) within their own professional systems of knowledge. When, for example, I tried at the beginning of the study to approach a couple of groups asking to be hosted in their offices, the not-that-welcoming answers I got has been: "What would you be doing? Would you just be there watching us working on the laptops?".

The difficulties in gaining access were not the only practical consideration to be made. The groups of professionals I got in contact with are usually very restricted and based on very personal relationships of friendship. In such an environment, even if I would have managed to gain the access, my presence would have been very lumbering, risking of contaminating too much the field. In many cases, groups did not have an office and they usually met at home in their free time, overlapping their social life with the activities of the collective. In these circumstances, my presence could undermine the simplicity of the interactions and, therefore, ethnography did not seem the most appropriate method.

Finally, beyond these practical constraints, the choice of meeting a variety of collectives reflects the will to offer a multi-sited and complex overview on this emerging expertise, in order not to lose "sight of the contexts and constraints within which these practices are located and by which they are channeled" (Ong & Collier, 2005, p. 4).

However, I am convinced that an ethnographic study could have a lot to say on how this emerging expertise is stabilizing itself, exploring and unveiling the everyday mechanisms behind the label *Tactical Urbanism*.

The second point regards the sampling process. As already shown, there are serious epistemological reasons to overcome the worries about the representativeness of the sample in qualitative studies.

Nevertheless, there is a further issue: among the suggestions of eventual informants that the groups gave me during the interviews, I have chosen the ones that I was able to reach logistically. Thus, the sample is in between a snow-ball sample and a convenience one. Indeed, being convinced that the face-to-face interaction was fundamental, there have been some practical constraints which influenced my choices.

Meeting the groups had been expensive and time-consuming and I had to adapt my sample to my time constraints and financial resources. Such trivial criteria are seldom acknowledged. They had a role both in choosing the interviewee and in deciding when to stop. I have frequently read that I would have reached a so-called and ill-defined *saturation point*. I am not sure I got saturated, meaning that the new interviews were not adding new information. Honestly, I just stopped when I finished the time for data collection.

As trivial as it would seem, this means actually following the advice of a very recognized scholar, Bruno Latour. In one of his books, he is pretending to transcribe a dialogue with a student, who is asking him exactly *when to stop*. He answers apparently naïvely: "You stop when you have written your 50,000 words or whatever is the format" (Latour, 2005, p. 148).

As disappointing as it is practical.

Chapter 4

4 Professionals of the unplanned[37]

4.1 Introduction: from a practice to a community

In the methodological Chapter, the lack of sharp definitions for this kind of practices had been presented mostly as a *practical* problem related to the sampling operations. Instead, the same issue is here framed in a more speculative and theoretical way.

What does it imply to trace boundaries around such a blurred phenomenon? How does this process work? How to name these practitioners? These are the questions addressed in this chapter.

The attempt here is to refuse the notion of community as pre-existing its practices, but rather as the output of them (the proposal of reversing the notion of "community of practice" came from Gherardi, 2009). The assumption behind this questioning is that "theorizing should not presume the existence of (…) macro-actors on that stage, rather their existence is what analysis should seek to explain by reference to nests of practice"(Fox, 2000, p. 858).

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the processes by which these practitioners are (or are not) emerging as a collective category.

First, as a matter of fact, a category needs *boundaries*, a notion which thus assumes here primary relevance. After all, in a study on a professionalization process this is anything but surprising, since "the professions are in fact formed to establish boundaries around a body of knowledge" (Gherardi, 2009, p. 524).

Secondly, a category has a *name* and this chapter also deals with the attempt of naming this emerging expertise, both in the literature both throughout the interviews. Language is not neutral and a study on the words used to describe this phenomenon could unveil some of its perceived features.

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[37] Some passages of this chapter have been quoted verbatim from a previous publication of the author: Guadalupi, C. (2018). Professionals of the unplanned. In M. Koch, R. Tribble, Y. Siegmund, A. Rost, & Y. Werner (Eds.), *Changing perspectives in metropolitan research: new urban professions: a journey through practice and theory* (pp. 157–163). Berlin: Jovis.

The chapter has been organized in the following way. It begins by offering a rough portrait of the interviewees. The function of this first brief section is to give some basic information before discussing the eventual lines around the phenomenon. The dissertation will then go on mobilizing the notion of boundaries. Keeping the STS-informed theoretical approach of the entire thesis, among the variety of definitions and conceptualization of the term boundaries which have been suggested in social sciences, the main theorizations born within the field of STS, namely *boundary-work* (Gieryn, 1983) and *boundary objects* (Star & Griesemer, 1989), are the ones operated here. Then, it deals with the issue of definitions. It explores the definition which has been given in the literature to this specific phenomenon, trying to extrapolate the key concepts they imply. An additional personal attempt of definition is then offered.

4.2 A sketched portrait

Before facing the reflections on the boundaries and definitions for the emerging expertise analyzed in this work, it is worth reporting briefly what could be read as a *sketched portrait*. This is the preliminary and rough result of the first analysis of the interviews, and it could be useful to better understand the further development of the chapter. It is important to remember that the snowball sampling methodology used to collect the interviews is a non-probability sampling technique, thus such portrait cannot be considered representative of the entire population, but merely of the groups interviewed.

The most eye-catching feature is that the great majority of the interviewees have a background in architecture. However, as it will be clearer in the next section, there is no sense of belonging to a specific discipline emerging from the interviews. As one interviewee put it:

> "It could be a bit pretentious to say it is architecture; we build little things […] maybe a sort of activation […] we don't really know if we have a definition for what we do" (member of Collectif Baya, 28/01/2017, Brussels).

Other responses included:

> "In the square, I see myself as something between a social worker and an urbanist utopian thinker, something like this" (member of Toestand, 26/01/2017, Brussels)

"Every member could answer a different thing […] basically we do things we like […]" (member of Orizzontale, 26/10/2016, Rome).

When the participants were asked to give a definition of what they are doing, the majority could not define unproblematically their own work. Indeed, the lack of a standardized output is another distinctive feature of these groups. One could argue that these practitioners shifted their objective from designing *objects*, fixed entities, or black boxes, to designing *things*, assemblages of heterogeneous entities (Storni, 2015).

On one side, some felt that a new vocabulary or a redefinition of architecture would be needed to gain more credibility:

> "That would be a relief: to not feel delegitimized because you are not building a wall, but making an action (…) You say, this is architecture for me, I am shaping the space" (member of ATISuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

On the other side, others perceived the process of finding a definition as threatening, somehow closing new possibilities and forms of experimentation. For example, one interviewee said:

> "Then you can call it architecture, art, design, carpentry, product […] we are not interested in being put into boxes" (member of Orizzontale, 26/10/2016, Rome).

Despite it is possible to identify some clusters of activities as done in the previous chapter[38], all the groups interviewed found it very hard to choose one of their projects as particularly representative of their approach since every project is case-based:

> "We do everything, from self-building to performances, and so we don't manage to have, we cannot have a unique output […] an installation, a performance, a graphic product, a video … it changes time by time depending on what we think could be the best means" (member of ATISuffix, Rome, October 2016).

Another trace of common ground could be found in the fact that they are all concerned with spaces of sociality, their design, the study of their features and the consideration of mundane uses and practices characterizing them. In other words, there is a special focus on *public space*. It is important to note that I do not mean public space as owned by the public actor. Indeed, the publicness, assuming a relational conception, could be conceived "not as an attached attribute or a label, rather as a varying and relational way of being 'space'"(Tornaghi, 2015, p. 25).

The assumption, aware or not, of the relational conception of space and the acknowledgment of the shared dimension of its production are factors of another common feature: the downsizing of the designers' role. Indeed, there cannot be a fixed and always-winning receipt to intervene in a becoming space and the practitioner is just one of the players in spatial transformations. In this context, the reversibility of the projects matters, and this usually results in the temporal and local aspect of the interventions. On one side, these aspects are sometimes claimed, as reported by one informant: "for us, temporariness is a political choice" (member of Orizzontale, Rome, October 2017). On the other side, temporariness and localism also unmask some issues of efficacy and relevance of these practices, as it will be further developed in chapter 6.

This brief recap has just the function to show how hard is to find traces of common ground around which drawing boundaries, which is the task of the next section.

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[38] See section 3.4 "A snapshot of the cases". The clusters identified were self-building practices, artistic interventions, participatory efforts, and educational activities. However, in each of these categories one could envision a wide range of different output.

4.3 The impossible task of tracing boundaries

In the literature[39] on this emerging expertise, the topic of *crossing disciplinary borders* is recurring (Awan, Schneider, & Till, 2011; Koch, Tribble, Siegmund, Rost, & Werner, 2018; Petrescu & Petcou, 2013). However, it is less noted that "while interdisciplinary practice crosses boundaries, it simultaneously creates new ones" (Friman, 2010, p. 6). This paragraph proposes to use the notion of *boundary work* (Gieryn, 1983) to explore whereas and how these groups are drawing *boundaries* and therefore building a *collective identity* (the link between these two concepts had been established by Riesch, 2010).

Boundary work, as briefly introduced in Chapter 2, is a notion borrowed by the Sociology of Science and it had been often used in the academic debate to discuss disciplinary identities and dynamics of establishment and reproduction of professions (Fournier, 2000; Friman, 2010; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Riesch, 2010). Boundary work, as originally defined by Gieryn (1983), refers to the rhetorical strategies of demarcation carried out by scientists to distinguish their knowledge and work from non-scientific activities. Despite being born in relation to the dichotomy science-non science, the notion had been applied afterward to a variety of different cases and it serves nowadays "as a general rubric to conceive one of the most significant ways practitioners define an emerging intellectual enterprise" (Small L., 1999, p. 694). Assessed that disciplinary boundaries are contingent, flexible and unstable, the intuition of Gieryn (1983) had been to acknowledge the leading role of scientists or practitioners in the definition of such boundaries. The reasons for such demarcation strategies are not hard to imagine: the emergence of a new discipline or profession is directly connected to material advantages and opportunities.

However, the objective of this paragraph is not to unveil hidden agendas, but rather to detect traces of a collective identity. As mentioned above, following Riesch (2010), the discursive and rhetorical strategies typical of boundary work could be conceived as part of the process of building a social identity. Indeed, he theoretically bridged boundary work with the social psychology approaches to boundaries, namely the theories of s*ocial representations* and *social identity*. Following this reasoning, boundary work is part of processes of self-categorization and, besides demarcating, it contributes to create collective social representations and to define the category's norms, aims, and values.

The first step to start a boundary work is to identify a rival group with an interest in the same epistemic field. As can be easily understood, this could help in identifying what the group thinks it is its own epistemic field. In the case under analysis, the demarcation strategies towards architects are the less surprising and the more common in the interviews. However, before looking more deeply at such specific demarcation, it is worthy to note that architects are not the only group to be addressed. For instance, commenting on eventual definitions, one of the interviewees said:

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[39] For a brief literature review see section 4.3 "Diving among definitions" in this chapter.

> "there is a macro-area of practitioners refereed as *cultural workers*, but I don't identify with them, because we are actually specialized, some of us are taking also postgraduate courses, we are dealing with space" and continued, "and since you are specialized in that, could you be still called just *cultural worker*? I don't think so" (member of labzip+, 23/10/2017, Turin).

It is implicit here that the use of culture to regenerate spaces is conceived as the jurisdiction they would like to monopolize, while the *focus on space* is used as a marker to be distinguished by other social sciences.

In other words, the logic of this reasoning is to analyze the rhetorical demarcation strategies to find out which is the identified common ground on one side and the distinguishing markers on the other.

To make another example, another interviewee, joking, said:

> "I think we are at war with the various trust of therapists, psychologists, spa houses (…) we offer something else, which is still not institutionalized, for the wellbeing of people" (member of ati suffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

Besides being just a joke, in this case, the focus is put on the idea that the essence is triggering sociality and fun, beneficial effects that these practices are supposed to foster.

When it comes to architecture, the issue of boundaries became more indefinite. On one side, a distance is underlined, based on a variety of criteria. For instance, one interviewee marked the difference on the scale of the interventions,

> "it could be a bit pretentious to say it is architecture, we build little things" (member of collectif baya, 28/01/2017, Brussels).

Another interviewee saying:

> "the agent is the one in action, we did not want to be a studio, in the office, we are trying not to be architects" (member of kiez.agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna)

In this last quotation, the group distinguished itself from the ideal type of the architect because they work mostly on the field and not from an office.

While in these cases the fact of building something is at least a connecting point to the traditional idea we have of architecture, another interviewee challenged also this anchor:

> "It would be a relief to not feel delegitimized because you are not building a wall, rather you are doing a performance, but you can say 'that's architecture for me, I am shaping the space'" (member of atisuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

In this case, neither the small scale neither the deep involvement on the field are the supposed *norm*, but rather the point is to shape space, materially or socially.

This last quotation highlights two relevant matters: first, instead of an attempt of demarcating from architecture, there is here a claim for inclusion in the discipline; second, a concern about *legitimation* emerge.

Showing the same logic, an interviewee explicitly said:

"most of the times we say we are architects, but it is like a strategy (…) by saying we are architects we are showing: 'we [architects] can also work in a different way'. Moreover, it could be comfortable for the commissioner to work with architects, it sounds more serious, more than artists" (member of collectif etc, 22/10/2016, Marseille).

These two quotations draw the attention on the permeability of these symbolic disciplinary boundaries, these groups are alternatively standing in- and outside the boundaries of architecture. After all, this should not be surprising: such an attitude is pretty much *tactical*. This introduces the possibility of considering the notion of *porosity* associated with the one of boundaries.

The other point, the one on legitimation, raises a complex question: *could boundary work empower and legitimize these groups?* In some interviews, mostly with groups still at an embryonal stage, the desire of relating to a label came out. One interviewee tried to explain:

"it is not the need to have a label per se, but the need to identify a current to which your practice belongs (…) in order to better set a direction for your personal research, a label to go on steering your practice" (member of labzip+, 23/10/2017, Turin).

Or again, another one remembered that:

"at the very beginning we needed to draw the attention on us, to gain attention, to do things which could be spectacular, in order to say that we are here, there is also us" (member of praxis, 25/10/2017, Piacenza).

Indeed, getting visibility is a first step to be recognized and acknowledge by potential commissioners, which is a primary concern for some of the groups.

By another perspective, on an abstract level, refusing categories could remind to an inclusive concern:

"if you start a network, it means you have people inside and outside, while our work is trying to blur the line between the practice and the rest" (member of collectif etc, 22/10/2016, Marseille)

Moreover, a definition, a boundary, could be perceived as a limitation, as referred by other interviewees:

"we are not interested in being put into boxes (…) you can call it whatever, architecture, interior design, carpentry, we don't care how you call it" (member of orizzontale, 26/10/2016, Rome)

"we never defined what we do, [the collective] for us is a way to explore, we want to be free from definitions and categories to be free of doing whatever, a category would be a cage" (member of rigenerazioni urbane, 23/11/2017, Venice).

In conclusion, *is it possible to trace boundaries around such a fluid phenomenon?* It had been argued in this section that analyzing the demarcation strategies could be a way to make some typifying features emerge, but the result is not a sharply defined set of values and norms. Instead, another question arises: *is there a need to define boundaries?* Once again, the notion of boundary work could

help in framing the problem. As said before, the strategies of boundary work are intrinsically bounded with power issues, advantages, and opportunities related to the monopolization of a certain jurisdiction or field of expertise. Thus, boundaries are entangled with power.

It is suggested here and posed as an open question more than as an answer, that boundaries are not necessary, but they could be empowering. A more bounded category could lobby more successfully, and this would particularly benefit the groups that are still struggling to get visibility. Of course, power and lobbying actions come with risks and responsibilities and they would imply a more shared set of values, norms, and standards.

4.4 Boundary objects as a missing bridge

In the previous subsection, disciplinary boundaries had been conceptualized, following Gieryn (1983), as something unstable and socially constructed to establish epistemic authority. Instead, this subsection is informed by an apparently opposite conception of boundaries: not as markers of difference, but rather as interfaces facilitating knowledge production and exchange.

Boundaries do not serve just to divide, but also to foster cooperation. These two functions are not exclusive, they just highlight two different aspects of the notion of boundaries. We had seen how boundaries are the object of contention between rival groups fighting for their own jurisdiction, but, once the borders had been established, these boundaries become elements of connection and they need to be bridged to make cooperation possible.

This latter aspect of cooperation and communication with other social groups and how it is applied by the emerging professional category studied in this research is the object of this section.

Keeping the creation of a new scientific field as the general object of the thesis, this subsection focuses basically on communication, which is not less important in this matter of demarcating knowledge than new findings. To avoid misunderstandings, I am not referring here to marketing or self-branding strategies, but rather on the chances of cooperation with other actors, namely on the importance of finding *a common language*.

One notion that could be particularly useful to this aim is *boundary objects*, introduced in the late '80s by Star and Griesemer (1989) in a work that had been defined a "groundbreaking study" (Balducci & Mäntysalo, 2013, p. 58) on this dynamic of cooperation. In the words of the authors, *boundary objects* are "an analytic concept of those scientific objects which both inhabit several intersecting social worlds (…) *and* satisfy the informational requirements of each of them" (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393).

Which boundary objects are the groups analyzed here using to communicate with other social worlds? This question is not just theoretical speculation, but rather it reflects a pragmatic concern of the interviewees. Indeed, the difficulties and the challenges of finding a common language with other realities, and especially with

the municipalities which are identified as the main eventual funders of these practices, have emerged often in the interviews as a primary concern.

> "The commissioner [a local public administration] called me and asked which would have been the steps of our participatory process" told an interviewee "and I did not how to answer, because we don't work that way, it is not that we arrive on the site and we say what we are going to do now is this or that; no, the process is the output of the local interaction, we first go there and then decide what to do" (member of ateliermob, 14/07/2017, Lisbon).

Or again, another interviewee, in the case of a collaboration with a museum:

> "the museum really wanted something (…) for the call of ideas we sent a proposal, but it was just theoretical (…) they really wanted then the size of the space we would need, how many centimetres, what kind of materials…and we did not know how to explain, we did not really know, we would have chosen and found the materials on the site" (member of ati suffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

The unforeseen nature of the outcomes is, of course, the primary obstacle of the communication, but also the difficulties of representation of the process are part of the issue. In this matter, a *boundary object* would be needed: a material (or also virtual) object able to be understood by both the actors.

An explicative example could be the anecdote of another interviewee:

> "we took part in the MIBACT call for project[40] with the idea of focussing mostly on the management of the process (…) and so we started to shift our approach: from drawing mostly planimetric plans to attempting drawing a process (..) thus we used an entire panel for a scheme, there was nothing of architecture there, we had this big scheme in which we put the public actor, the designers, the resources and how to use them, how to deal with unexpected events and so on" (member of kiez.agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna).

In this case, the table with the scheme could be framed as a boundary object: it is "plastic enough" (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393) to be used for one's group needs, the representation of a process, and "robust enough" (ibidem) to be readable and classifiable by another actor, it is a drawn table, part of the required material of an architectural competition.

Another example in which I see an attempt at creating a boundary object is the case of another group in Bologna:

> "we felt the need to elaborate what we were doing, not just right after with pictures and live info (…) we prefer now to wait, even few months, and take the time to reflect on what we have done and learned, and just then we share the results, we say what worked well and what not, it is a choice we really feel at the moment, we really want to give back, to share" (member of snark, 22/10/2017, Bologna).

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[40] He was referring to the Call for Project "Bando Periferie 2016" edited by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities for activities of urban regeneration in specified marginal areas of some italian cities. It has to be noted that this is a competition explicitly targeting architects.

This is a different case because it is about the restitution and not the presentation, but again it concerns the way in which a complex spatial process could be fixed on an interface.

However, it is important not to misunderstand boundary objects just as material artifacts of attempts of representation. For instance, the legal configuration of the groups could be framed as a boundary object: the fact of being an association is already a way to configure a group of people and make their working together understandable.

> "The fact of being an association is a kind of filter between us and the administration," said one interviewee (member of *orizzontale*, 26/10/2016, Rome).

There are two reflections emerging from this brief use of the notion of boundary objects in regard to this emerging category of actors.

First, this category misses well-defined boundary objects to communicate with other actors, and this could be seen as a weakness. A practical suggestion would then be to focus on developing objects that could have this function.

Reasoning on this kind of objects, a second reflection could emerge. A more theoretical one, related to the kind of space these groups are mobilizing. Indeed, more than on the topographical space made of measures and traditionally associated to the tool of the map, they are dealing with relations and social connections "that lie 'underneath' spatial forms" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 12). As already mentioned in the first chapter, this latter conceptualization could be associated to topological conceptions of space. Thus, if the map is the instrument of the topographical space (Murdoch, 2006), *which are the instruments of the topological space?* This could serve as a starting point for further research.

4.5 Diving among definitions

As shown until now, by dealing with different tools, methods, and fields, from community engagement to self-built urban furniture, these urban practitioners are challenging disciplinary borders and rules.

Is it legitimate to call you architect if you never designed a building? Could you be a planner if you never signed a plan?

If new approaches are arising in the field of urban regeneration, we may need a new vocabulary to deal with them.

Not surprisingly, in the interviews, many of the groups admitted having spent quite a lot of time deciding the name[41]. Indeed, without clear-cut definitions, you need a meaningful name to identify yourself. The Italian group *kiez.agency* , for example, is using the German word "kiez", a hardly translatable word in English or Italian. It refers to a kind of territorial community, even if not officially recognized. Basically, it primarily reminds to the community of a territory and less to its physical borders or configuration. They explained that they got fascinated by this

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[41] See the Appendix A for more examples of choices of names.

word because in their opinion it could recap their will to work with people in the space, and not on empty spaces. Another example is the group *Rivularia*, which is the name of a seaweed. It is a parasitic seaweed, as these urban practices have a parasitic attitude towards the city. The seaweed finds its home in the interstices and allows the main organism to live. The basic idea of this metaphor recalls pretty much the reasonings done in chapter 2 on the parasitic and opportunistic dimension of tactics derived by the work of De Certeau. Or again, the group *snark,* who took the word from a novel by Lewis Carroll[42] in which the snark is something unexplainable, undefinable and searched.

However, more than in individual efforts, the interest here lies on a potential collective nomenclature. The aim of this section is to recall some of the attempts in the scientific literature to codify the kind of emerging expertise considered in this thesis. *How to name this young generation who is trying to build up a new professional identity, that intersects design skills, social and political commitment, and civic engagement?*

A particularly successful effort in the codification of this growing body of professional realities had been the notion of Spatial Agency, coined by Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till (2011). The project originally started as an online database[43], counting now 186 examples, and evolved, then, in a publication[44]. Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till (2009) affirm to conceive as a spatial agent "who effects change through the empowerment of others" (2009, p. 99). The central point for them is to uncover the potential for architecture and urban planning "to be engaged with and thus critical of the existing" (Doucet & Cupers, 2009, p. 1). The authors explicitly decided to avoid the use of the word architecture, preferring a more complex and general term: spatial. The term "agency" reminds directly to the projective attitude, indeed the creators of the database spatial agency "understand criticality primarily as a matter of practice, yet inevitably guided by theory" (Doucet & Cupers, 2009, p. 4). In this logic, the database could be briefly defined as a collection of experiences of *criticality in practice.*

However, the term 'spatial agency' remains pretty vague, as quite open are the criteria to be included in the database. It appears as a huge and variegated collection of practices that do not seem to have so much in common.

Another collection with a similar dynamic, from an online database to a publication, had been the result of the European-funded project "European Platform for Alternative Practice and Research on the City (PEPRAV)", led by a group of practitioners, the atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa), between 2006 and 2007. It resulted in a collection of interviews and reflections on the transformation of (not only) architectural practice in Europe. The label chosen to refer to such practices had been "Alternative Practice and Research on the City" and it is intentionally very generic in order to maintain a certain degree of openness. In the introduction of the

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[42] The reference is to the Lewis Carroll's non-sense poem "The Hunting of the Snark", written between 1874 and 1876.

[43] The database is available at http://www.spatialagency.net/

[44] Awan, N., Schneider, T., & Till, J. (2013). Spatial agency: other ways of doing architecture. London: Routledge.

first publication, it is even specified that the selection criteria have been affinity and friendship, a mechanism that should not be surprising since the theme is properly about informality, collaboration, and DIY spirit.

The group aaa, and specifically Doina Petrescu who is the co-founder and as well an academic, worked a lot on reasoning on the features of this emerging way of working. They had chosen specifically the label urban tactics to refer to the interventions of their "transgressive practice" (Petrescu & Petcou, 2013). In their reflections, the focus is often put on the concept of *transgression*, the practice has "broken the rules of the 'commissioned project'" (Petrescu & Petcou, 2013, p. 61) starting spontaneously the projects and "transgressed the professional regulations" (*ibidem)* opening up to the users the access to the design process. Related to the idea of transgression*, conflict,* and *responsibility* are other two recurring and key concepts to understand the philosophy of such a movement of professionals, in Petrescu's understanding.

The focus on conflict is central in the work of another scholar and practitioner, Markus Miessen, who is one of the detractors of the mantra of participation (see Miessen, 2011) in the field of architecture and who developed, in conversation with Chantal Mouffe, the idea of an "agonistic mode of participation" (Miessen, 2011). He worked a lot on the possible and transforming role of the architect and edited a series of books[45] with Nikolaus Hirsch, all regarding critical spatial practices and engaging with their political dimension. The label proposed by Miessen is "crossbench practitioner" (2011; 2016), using the metaphor of the crossbench politician in the British House of Lords as a reference. The metaphor is based on the idea of *autonomy*: as the crossbencher does not belong to a specific party and could swing its alliances. Similarly, the crossbench practitioner is defined by its practice and not through discipline or profession.

There are at least two considerations arising from the literature review on the phenomenon.

First, as mentioned in the methodological chapter, it is a field in which there is no sharp distinction between theorists and practitioners, often practice and theory are developing together. Indeed, most of the available literature on the phenomenon comes from the practitioners themselves. This could be also framed, once again, as an instance of boundary work.

Second, the main attempts to define these kinds of realities in the scientific literature come from scholars in the field of architecture. This explains why the debate is mainly framed as a reflection on the changing role of the architect, even affirming that "as a contemporary architect, one confronts the dilemma of a profession that no longer really exists"(Miessen, 2011, p. 245). Architecture, among the other disciplines concerning space such as geography or urban planning, is the one with the strongest practical objective of *directly* intervening in space and this could partially explain why the great majority of the interviewees have a

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[45] Markus Miessen and Nikolaus Hirsch curated 7 editions of the Critical Spatial Practice Series between 2012 and 2015

background in architecture[46]. Furthermore, the economic crises following 2008 had a huge impact on the building industry, pushing many architects to look for alternative professional niches.

4.5.1 An additional (and not requested) attempt

In this dissertation, 'professionals of the unplanned' is the term that will be used to describe this bunch of practitioners. That is an additional attempt of definition of this variegated phenomenon. The selection of the terms had been influenced both by the literature and the interviews, even if, as mentioned before, the need for a definition never came out as a priority for the practitioners. Indeed, in every interview, there had been a focus on the lack of definitions, and the range of answers I got passed from indifference to even annoyance:

> "more than coining a new vocabulary, the priority is to recognize that there are new social and spatial needs; then, we want to call us architects and understand that the architect should do something different, or not and choose another name, well, I am fine with that and I don't care" (member of kiez.agency, Bologna, date)

> "I don't think there is a classification issue (…) we are freelancers and you can name us whatever" (member of Rivularia, 25/10/2017, Piacenza)

> "I think 'designer' is already fine (…) I really don't think we need new anglophone words to define what we do" (member of praxis, 25/10/2017, Piacenza).

The aim of this subsection is to explain the definition 'professionals of the unplanned', and, more specifically, to highlight on what this dissertation wants to draw attention with the choice of these words. Indeed, as it should be clear from the last section, it would be unnecessary to coin another label per se, but rather every nomenclature is functional to underline some aspects of the phenomenon.

Following this logic, the choice of the term "professionals" is explained by the will to characterize them as a group of people pushing for recognition.

Building up a professional status had been traditionally framed in the sociology of professions as an intentional and collective enterprise (Abbott, 1988; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Furthermore, putting the focus on the process of coming into being properly fits with the STS-informed premises of this thesis. In other words, the term 'professional' reminds to the process itself of creating a profession, since "the field of professional knowledge is always in motion, always self-producing and self-expanding; the object that it claims to know about is not independent of the professional gaze, but is constituted by professional practice" (Fournier, 2000, p. 72). This is what the sociologist Larson called the "professionalization project" (1979). Of course, the contemporary professionalization project has very different features compared to the ones in which the modern professionalization movements

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[46] The backgrounds of all the groups interviewed are indicated in the Appendix A

flourished in the 18th and early 19th centuries, as described by Larson (1979). Professions in modernity referred mostly to an effort towards monopoly of a field with the related advantages, through a standardized training, a certain degree of autonomy at work, and adherence to clear codes of ethics. Instead, more recently, professions are associated with an ideology (Douglas, 2014; Larson, 1979). Some insights on what had been called new professionalism (Douglas, 2014) are: the valorization of practical knowledge over theoretical knowledge and formal education paths and putting the focus on values more than on practices, basically "focusing on the professional subject rather than the profession" (Douglas, 2014, p. 563).

The first point is mirrored in the discourses and experiences of the groups I interviewed: they do claim the value of intuition and of trial-and-error mechanisms more than formal education. Even because there is no specific formal education for this kind of profession, or, at least, it is just at its beginning stage. However, universities still play a role that should not be undervalued, particularly in reference to internal and external legitimation, as explained by one interviewee:

> "I've always had an interdisciplinary approach [in architecture], but I did not know if this approach would be feasible for the professional life…it seemed to me more like a freak/hippy thing, but the master[47] made me realize that it could be a real profession" (member of kiez.agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna).

It is possible to find traces in the interviews also of the second point highlighted before as a component of the so-called new-professionalism phase. The practitioners interviewed gave a lot of importance to the values implied in every project, the values in which they personally believe in. One interviewed explicitly said:

> "we get a lot of requests now (…) if we don't share the values of the project and we think that approach is not interesting or if we don't like the people proposing it, we refuse the job" (member of collectif etc, 22/10/2016, Marseille).

Such ethical and value-driven commitment could even cross the legal boundaries if necessary:

> "it is a very thorny topic (…) we did both things [in and outside the legality], let's say that we mostly ask ourselves if the intervention is legitimate, more than legal" (member of orizzontale, 17/10/ 2016, Rome).

Thus, while the term 'professionals' implies to focus on the dynamic process of professionalization, the term "unplanned" serves to indicate a distinctive feature of their practices. Paradoxically, the undefined status which makes it so difficult to find a name could be framed as their peculiarity. What is unplanned is not predictable neither classifiable in advance, and this is what makes these practices so blurred, but at the same time, this is what is typifying these practices.

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[47] She was referring to the Master "Polis Maker" offered by Politecnico di Milano. More info (only Italian) at www.master.polismaker.org [last access 19/02/2019]

In the great majority of the interviews, there had been a kind of raise of improvisation. Here 'improvisation' is not meant in its negative sense of unpreparedness, but as a positive attitude towards flexibility and open-endedness instead. What is recognized as a great ability, it is not the ability to reach a defined output, rather the sensibility and creativity to follow and foster a tailored and ever-changing process involving the interested people. For example, one interviewee told an anecdote:

> "for our last project we had an idea, but then, by interacting with the local community, we realized that the priorities were others than the ones we identified as scholars. We had contact with local actors also before, but then when we were working on the field we changed our plans, we decided then to work on a different square, because we followed the people" (member of labzip+, 23/10/2017, Turin)

Another interviewee, explaining the creative process of her group, said:

> "when we identify an issue, we usually think about a hyperbole with the intuition we got at the beginning, and then we try to put it into practice and see what this brings (…) we are interested in the interaction with the audience, which is not audience anymore then (…) the output, functional to express this hyperbole, could be many things, a video, a performance, a structure in the space" (member of atisuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

This is not what architects or planners are usually asked to do. It implies a desire for provoking, which is another common feature of these practices. The basic idea is to provoke a reaction and to attract interest in some issues, without the ambition to solve problems in a definitive way. Rather, the objective seems to do it *in unplanned ways*.

4.6 Conclusion: blurred lines around blurred phenomena

Is it possible to trace boundaries around these practices and, therefore, to name them? And, more pragmatically, could it be useful? All the Chapter is a reflection around these questions.

As usual, there are no sharp answers.

Putting conceptual boundaries is rather arbitrary, every author or practitioner could decide where to put them, what to leave inside and outside. The same reasoning works for the names: you choose the words, you decide what to highlight.

The issue on the usefulness is another tricky one, *useful to whom? what for?* This is something worth to reflect upon in these conclusive notes: let's imagine who could enjoy these reflections and which shades they could assume in each case.

In the chapter, some notions from the toolkit of STS had been applied to the case under analysis and thus it could be framed a case-study for scholars in the STS field and sociologists of professions. On one side this could be an invitation to focus on the birth of a new profession, more than on the fate of an existing one, since in the last decades "it has become commonplace to question the future of the professions in the context of current trends of economic, technological and

organizational change" (Fournier, 2000, p. 67). On the other side, it invites to explore how porous could be the contemporary process of boundary work: for instance, the practitioners presented here are going in and out the boundaries they set against architecture, having multiple identities and using one or another depending on self-convenience.

It should be clear that reasoning on boundaries and categories could be fruitful also for the practitioners themselves. As concluded in the dedicated section, an effective boundary-work could benefit the groups, allowing them to lobby more for their recognition and access to a legitimate income. On the other side, the argument on boundary objects unveiled a need for clearer channels of communication and collaboration, suggesting a fruitful line of action and research. Furthermore, thinking about definitions could help in visualizing the state of the art of the emerging common discourse, highlighting its weaknesses and strong points.

Finally, all this could help researchers and practitioners in architecture and planning to dive into the deep transformations that the profession is undergoing.

In conclusion, tracing boundaries could be an impossible task, but it is surely a fruitful and never-ending exercise in order to better understand social phenomena.

Chapter 5

5 The travel of urban tactics

5.1 Introduction: a "multi-local" project

"Multi-local" is a neologism coined by one interviewee (member of esterni, Milan, 26/10/2017) to describe his practice: despite starting projects in different locations, the objective is always to feel and act as local. While all the groups interviewed would affirm that their activities are local and case-specific, this research argues that there is also a supralocal dimension, even if not necessarily conscious: the spreading of the discourse of Tactical Urbanism and the creation of a translocal urban expertise.

Such a supralocal dimension is the object debated in this chapter: urban tactics are emerging in different and incommensurate contexts in the same time frame, and this chapter aims at questioning this dynamic. *How and why are these ideas/practices replicating themselves/popping out in different locations?* The chapter will suggest some lines of investigation in order to answer this question.

This is related to the debate on the circulation and the transfer of (not-just-urban) policies, practices, and ideas. The literature on *policy transfer* has a tradition in political science studies (see Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000) , but a variety of disciplines, including international relations, psychology, economics, planning, and geography faced this issue.

The relational turn which recently interested the social sciences had a substantial impact on this debate within the fields of urban studies (J. M. Jacobs, 2012), suggesting many new insights on the dialectic between fixity and mobility (McCann & Ward, 2011) and pushing the birth of a stream of literature around the still loose notion of *mobilities* (McCann, 2011).

As it will be clearer later, the main critiques advanced to the traditional studies on policy transfer by this new stream are: a too narrow typology of transfer agents (González, 2011; McCann, 2011; Stone, 2004), an overvaluation of the national scale disregarding the micro mundane practices involved in the process (Cook & Ward, 2012; Larner & Le Heron, 2002) and the overlooking of the modifications

and transformations of the policies during the transfer process (Peck & Theodore, 2010).

In order to dive throughout this mix of tensions and inputs, the structure of the chapter owes especially two articles, which both summarize and systematize the debate on policy mobilities: the editorial on the related symposium edited by Andrew Harris and Susan Moore (2013) and the research agenda on the topic set up by Eugene McCann (2011).

Both articles display open questions and tensions in the debate, and I attempt to explore some of them through my case. The iterative relationship between the theories and the empirical data is the leading idea here. On one side, this chapter aims at testing how and if this case study of the professionals of the unplanned can contribute to the theoretical debate on the urban practices mobilities. On the other side, backward, there is an attempt of assessing whether and in which ways the theories could help me understand more of my case study.

The first two sections take the clue from two tensions put into focus by Harris and Moore (2013). The first one regards the contrast between a comparative approach based on planning cultures and a relational conception of the circulation of policies. The latter option is the one fitting more the case of urban tactics and In propose then to frame the professionals of unplanned as transfer agents.

The second section focuses on the contrast between a diffusionist model and other conceptualizations based on mutations and assemblages. It questions the framework by which an idea is born somewhere and then diffused, and it argues instead that ideas and practices are unstable and contingent assemblages synthesizing a variety of internal and external inputs.

Finally, the third section faces two open questions that in McCann's opinion (2011) deserve more attention: the reasons why some ideas/policies/practices are moving and some others not and the unpredictable distribution of the results of these transfers.

5.2 Planning cultures VS relational geographies

As mentioned above, the debate on the transnational dynamics of planning policies and practices had been faced by a diverse range of disciplines. The tension explored in this section regards the juxtaposition between the so-called planning cultures approach (Friedmann, 2005; Sanyal, 2005), belonging to the urban planning tradition, and the urban policies mobilities perspective (for a review see McCann & Ward, 2011) which was fostered by the recent relational turn (Jacobs, 2012) primarily within the fields of human and economic geography.

This section aims to dive into this tension and test what this discussion could add to the empirical understanding of the spreading of urban tactics, and vice versa. I will recall the main features of both approaches and, in each case, draw the attention on how the insights developed in the literature could be applied to these practices.

The first approach, which I call here planning cultures approach, is based on territorially bounded units and it focuses on their impacts upon the convergence or

divergence of urban policies. It implies a significantly sharp division between local factors which are locally embedded and historically grounded and increasingly prominent global trajectories that are metaphorically "in the air" (Friedmann, 2005, p. 184). Informed by the orthodox studies of policy transfer (Peck & Theodore, 2010), the idea is that different contexts are facing similar challenges and that successful policies and practices answering global issues are and should be diffused and facilitated by the planning cultures of the places (Stead, 2013).

The term *planning cultures* refers to the system of local peculiarities characterizing a context, be it a multi-national region, a country or a city. Following Friedmann, they refer to "the ways, both formal and informal, that spatial planning (…) is conceived, institutionalized, and enacted" (Friedmann, 2005, p. 184). However, even if in the definition of Friedmann there is an explicit reference to the informal ways in which such regional factors are created and performed, the literature on planning cultures rely mostly on a comparative study of legal systems (Hamedinger, 2014).

Taking this perspective in this study could potentially show if and how the legal framework has an impact on the spreading of these groups, even if it had been already assessed that their practices are usually performed at the interstices of the legal systems. However, I have interviewed groups in Italy, France, Belgium, Portugal, Germany, and UK and it is beyond the scope of this research to compare all these systems. Still, some insights are emerging from the interviews that could represent a preliminary step towards the construction of a study comparing legal systems on these practices. For example, bureaucracy emerged as a problematic issue almost in each interview, and there are at least two generally shared problematic issues that could be interesting to compare in different countries.

One primary unresolved issue is related to the norms for using public space:

> "we argued a lot with the public administration, it was full of rules for the public space, for example, we could not tie a wheel to a branch of a tree, in their opinion, it was too dangerous" (member of Plinto, 17/10/2016, Turin).

Being the rules too strict, sometimes the interventions are just tolerated:

> "even if you can do almost nothing on public space, we did a lot, but they were all project with a strong social impact, and the public actor avoided to report us" (member of Architetti di Strada, 19/10/2017, Bologna).

Other times, they are not. The following had been a recurrent story in the interviews:

> "we wanted to do some very light interventions, but the municipality denied us even the access to the area because they said it was not safe" (member of Rigenerazioni Urbane, 23/11/2017, Venice).

In the end, as an interviewee summarized:

"the feeling is to be in a constant process of negotiation" (member of Toestand, 26/01/2017, Brussels).

The regulation on the use of public space should be one of the first variables to compare in different nations in order to assess the impact of regulations on the activities of such groups.

The other main bureaucratic issue that emerged regards the possible legal configuration of the groups.

Most of the groups wanted to start with something formally loosed, such as a cultural or a non-profit association but ended up then unable to balance economic sustainability.

Being freelancers is another possibility, but, at least in Italy, this depends fiscally on professional categories: are you a freelance architect? Graphic designer? The professional category one belongs to changes the kind of invoice one can produce and the price range one can offer. Furthermore, freelance work fits individual and not collective work.

Some of the most established groups I interviewed (esterni in Milan, ateliermob in Lisbon, Angolazioni Urbane in Mestre) use the trick of having multiple identities. In the case of esterni, for example, "esterni" is just a brand, then there is a cultural association named "aprile", which has some fiscal advantages and enables the group to participate to calls for projects directed uniquely to associations and a company ltd named "posti" for the for-profit initiatives, which ensure the overall economic sustainability.

Thus, also the fiscal regulation on associations, start-ups, and companies is a significant factor, and it should be an object of comparison.

However, more than new regulations and laws, often in the interviews it was claimed the need for a new attitude.

Coming back to Friedman's definition of planning cultures, this approach also refers to the values, perceptions, and interpretations informing planning practices in the different planning cultures. The potential of flexibility, the focus on the process more than on the output, the value of the ephemeral are all principles that must be introduced first culturally. Tolerance, calculated risk, and delegation of responsibility are the ingredients needed for this kind of unpredictable practices. Thus, the planning culture approach, besides unveiling the legal factors facilitating or inhibiting these practices, could help to highlight the cultural aspects determining a more or a less suitable environment for these initiatives.

For example, even if the reasoning in terms of national scales is often dismissed in the literature on policy transfer as ineffective, or at least unsatisfactory (Peck & Theodore, 2010), many interviewees used nations as a reference scale. For instance, concerning Spain as a good example, one interviewee said:

> "Over there [in Spain] the average cultural awareness on these themes [urban tactics] is stronger, by the community, the people around I mean, there is more acknowledgment, and more knowledge (…) also the public administrations are more keen to this kind of initiative, in Madrid it is plenty of opportunities" (praxis, Piacenza, 25/10/2017).

Or again, another one referring to Belgium:

"I think our way of working could be welcomed everywhere, but maybe here [in Belgium] it is even more welcome, because everything is a bit precarious and there is money, they [public institutions] give a lot of responsibility to groups like we are to make interventions" (member of Toestand, 26/01/2017, Brussels).

These glimpses suggest that a more nuanced study of the local cultural specificities could help in understanding some differences between the trajectories of the groups and, possibly, also the reasons behind the intensity of the spreading of these groups in the same context.

Explored in which ways the planning cultures approach could be useful in understanding some features of the diffusion of these practices, I will now go on with what I have called the relational approach, the second perspective presented here. There is a fundamental ontological difference at the basis of the two approaches; the latter one takes inevitably to the dismission of the traditional dichotomy local/global, which is instead central in the planning cultures understanding.

In the process of updating the theoretical toolkit of urban studies, many authors (among others Amin & Thrift, 2002; Latour, 2005; Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006) are reflecting upon the inappropriateness of the binary opposition local/global and they are looking for different ways of understanding the complex relationship between relationality and territoriality (McCann and Ward 2011). To be criticized is the conception of nested scalar hierarchies, by which influence is conceived as one-way directed from the global to the local. One very effective image useful to visualize this conception is the flat ontology proposed by Latour (2005), in which no jumps are allowed between a supposed micro and macro scale, but any connection need to be traced, following the connections "wherever they might lead" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 98).

Assuming this perspective, there are no local or global dimensions, but slightly shorter or longer connections.

Besides the differences of the various sub-approaches assuming this perspective, a common denominator is the attention drawn on the material channels of circulation of ideas, policies or practices, in the awareness that, as Latour provocatively argues "globalization circulates along minuscule rails resulting in some glorified form of provincialism" (Latour, 2005, p. 190). These rails had been conceptualized in different ways: for example, as "trans-urban policy pipelines" (Cook & Ward, 2012), "actionable ideas" (E. McCann, 2011a) or "coordination tools" (McFarlane, 2011). To make a concrete example, in the case analyzed here, architectural exhibitions showing urban tactics could be conceptualized as channels of diffusion, such as the already mentioned and influential American Pavillion "Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good" at the Biennale of Architecture in Venice in 2012 or the exhibition "Uneven Growth. Tactical Urbanism for Expanding Megacities" promoted in 2015 by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) of New York. Especially this last example is explicit in

showing the direct connection between the discourse on tactical urbanism and the changing role of the architects: six selected teams were explicitly asked to develop temporary and bottom-up interventions, making clear that promoting this kind of practices means promoting different ways of working for the professionals involved in urban transformation.

These two examples are emblematic for the relevance of the institutions promoting them, but the events promoting this kind of initiatives around the globe are countless.

Another example of a channel of mobility, even more explicit in defining how discourses and practices shape reciprocally themselves, is the unfolding of masters and postgraduate courses focusing on creating new expertise. As for the exhibitions, also in this case a list could never be complete. I will just report here the postgraduate courses which had been quoted during the interviews because the people from the groups had attended them or were planning to do it: the postgraduate program "Temporary reuse. Strategies and tools for temporary reuse of vacant spaces" and the master "Polis Maker" both offered by the Polytechnic University of Milan; the master "Arti Civiche" at University La Sapienza in Rome; the master U-Rise at IUAV in Venice, "Inclusive Urbanism" at ETH in Zurich and a number of short-term workshops and courses organized by a variety of actors (universities, other collectives, urban agencies).

However, these examples risk overlooking another finding of this stream of literature on mobilities: the relevance of micro and mundane practices and actors in the transfer process (Cook & Ward, 2012; González, 2011; Larner & Laurie, 2010; McCann & Ward, 2011). The attention on such mundane practices results in a network of soft connections made of random meetings at conferences, newsletters, friendships, and serendipity, very hard to identify and to assess.

These few lines on mobility channels are functional to argue that orientating inside the contemporary complex "informational infrastructure" (Cook & Ward, 2012), which informs policy and practices mobilities, opens various methodological and conceptual issues. McCann and Ward euphemistically affirm that "tracing the circuits, the networks, and the webs in and through which policies move from one site to another is not easy" (2011, p. 168).

Given the variety of possible starting point for this perspective, one line of investigation especially pertinent to this thesis could be focusing on the role of experts themselves as transfer agents (Cook & Ward, 2012; González, 2011; E. J. McCann, 2008; Stone, 2004), as further analysed in the next subsection.

5.2.1 Professionals of the unplanned as transfer agents

The idea of tracing the rails through which ideas are traveling and following their path is fascinating but managing to identify these rails is anything but easy. *How to decide what to follow?*

For instance, McCann and Ward (2012) suggested the possibility to follow Richard Florida to understand the mechanism behind the pervasiveness of the creative city strategy. However, in the case of urban tactics, there is not such a

strong personality divulgating the term. Furthermore, as chapter 2 had shown, there is even a variegated and overlapping terminology for the same practices. Thus, neither following a label, as Crivello (2015) suggests for the case of Smart Urbanism, seems pertinent.

One way could be to attempt to follow ideas "'backwards' from where it [the policy/idea/practice] has arrived" (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 46), thus starting from the groups interviewed.

In other words, this subsection suggests that, in order to better understand the spreading of urban tactics in many incommensurate contexts, a fruitful line of investigation could be the framing of the groups analyzed here as *transfer agents*. Transfer agents are no more than "those involved in the practices that move a policy from one place to another" (Cook & Ward, 2012, p. 140). Stone (2004) took this notion at the center of the debate on policy transfer, and he argued for broadening the range of actors to be considered in the processes of policies and practices mobility. He pointed out that too much emphasis in the literature on policy transfer had been drawn on "official agencies" (Stone, 2004, p. 550), such as politicians and bureaucrats, while there is a much broader number of actors directly or indirectly involved in the process. More specifically, he referred then mostly to non-state actors, such as international foundations, multinational consultants and transnational think-tanks.

Following the intuition of Stone (2004), it is proposed here to consider as transfer agents much less structured actors and networks, such as the practitioners which I had called professionals of the unplanned. Indeed, as sketched above, the recent literature on policy and practices mobilities unveiled the role of mundane practices and micro-spaces of globalization (Cook & Ward, 2012), and thus endorsed the role of ordinary people in such mobility processes.

Following a pure relational logic, there is not from-above-actors influencing ordinary people as they were a passive receiver of external trends, but rather ordinary people are "socially and spatially situated subjects" (Smith, 2005, p. 236), actively creating translocal connections. Developing this line of argument, Smith (2005) proposes to assume a "middling transnationalism" perspective and draws the focus precisely on the practices, struggles and mobile lifestyles of middle-class social actors, such as the skilled workers object of this work. This generation of young skilled workers is indeed characterized by having a high degree of mobility, they are themselves infrastructures in which ideas, models and practices travel.

The examples among the interviewees are countless. The collective Orizzontale in Rome referred to the collectif etc based in Marseille as "our cousins beyond the Alps" (member of Orizzontale, 26/10/2016, Rome). One of the founders of the collective praxis in Piacenza told me about his Spanish friends by whom he got much inspiration. The group de:forma in Turin and Metriquali in Bari were founded by two girls that I found out to be close friends because of shared interests that took them to participate to the same workshops around Italy and Europe.

Friendships and soft connections could have significant explanatory potential in this matter.

Another common dynamic is the *incubation*: many groups were born after other ones. For example, the members of the collective ATIsuffix in Rome are for the most part former students of Francesco Careri, one of the founders of the collective Stalker/ ON. They got to know each other collaborating with Stalker/ON, and then they decided to emancipate themselves. Another example of this trajectory is kiez.agency, based in Bologna, which had been incubated by the association Architetti di Strada, where the three members experienced for the first time working autonomously together. Plinto, another group, based in Turin and born as a student organization, is another case: they inherited the brand from a former group of students who graduated and left the university. These are all cases in which other people acted as infrastructures and nourished the birth of new groups.

A study on the evolutionary trajectories of these groups combined with the life stories of their members could help in visualizing the complexity and the diversity of the connections involved in their processes of professionalization, drawing a nuanced and unexpected geography of soft links and friendship.

Starting from one group and investigating the individual life stories of its members could be then a way to unveil unexpected connections.

Another potential way to face this issue is to map the opportunities of face-to-face exchange in which such connections could arise. Indeed, face-to-face meetings remain a crucial factor of exchange (Cook & Ward, 2012; E. J. McCann, 2008), given the flow of tacit understanding which they imply. In the case under analysis, more than conferences (Cook & Ward, 2012) or urban policy tourism tours (González, 2011), important occasions seem to be, from the interviews, self-managed festivals and seminars, organized by the groups themselves. One prominent example is the Festival Bellastock, a festival of experimental architecture organized by the collective with the same name in France. This festival managed to become a reference event in the country, offering the French groups the opportunity to have a yearly update appointment. The collectif Baya I interviewed in Brussels, for example, was born because of the Festival Bellastock, their intention and objective were to create the same kind of platform in Belgium. In the same vein, a member of the group kiez.agency in Bologna told me that organizing a festival "as Bellastock" would be his dream (interview, kiez.agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna). However, it is exactly the softness of these connections to pose some methodological challenges: *how to investigate friendship networks? Is it possible to follow the connections and build a "global ethnography" as suggested by McCann (2011b)?*

In conclusion, in this subsection, following these professionals as transfer agents is suggested as a potentially fruitful line of investigation within the field of relational geographies.

5.3 Learning as an interpretative key

The other tension in the debate introduced by Harris & Moore (2013) is the one between diffusionist models (Marsh & Sharman, 2009; Ward, 1999) and interpretations using the metaphors of mutations and assemblages (McFarlane,

2011b; Peck & Theodore, 2010). Studies on policy diffusion "tends to emphasize *structure*" (Marsh & Sharman, 2009, p. 270. *Emphasis added*), while the policy transfer literature, updated then with images of translations and mutations, has a focus on *agency*, pinpointing "decision-making dynamics internal to political systems" (Stone, 2004, p. 547). This study is overall more focussed on the agency of these subjects so far, and this subsection will follow this general direction. However, as usual in the social sciences, it is not fruitful to take that as a sharp division. There are even scholars arguing that policy transfer is just a type of diffusion (Marsh & Sharman, 2009). It is not a black or white conceptualization, but rather a dialectical relationship: the interaction of the two dimensions produces the outcomes.

In very basic terms, the diffusion model refers to the "process through which policy choices in one country affect those made in a second country" (Marsh & Sharman, 2009, p. 270) and traditionally it is functional for studies on public policy in the political science realm. Indeed, this kind of conceptualization was initially developed to explain the convergence of policies in the context of the federal system of the United States (Stone, 2004). Within the field of planning, this way of reasoning had been adopted mostly by planning historians (Ward, 1999), who studied how key planning ideas and practices landed in different contexts.

In abstract terms, the diffusionist model implies that ideas and practices spread "from a common source or point of origin" (Stone, 2004, p. 546). This could happen through a variety of channels of diffusion, such as the promotion of best practices, as often in urban governance processes (for a critical review on the best practices tool, respectively in North America and within the European urban policy see Moore, 2013; Vettoretto, 2009) and by means of a range of causations of diffusion, which goes from the authoritarian imposition to the synthetic innovation (Ward, 1999).

This model presents many critical aspects. First, most of the times it is tough to identify a common source, if there is any. Indeed, points of origin are usually multiple (McCann & Ward, 2012).

In the case under analysis, the architectural exhibitions and the masters could be framed as starting points, but this would arbitrarily give them influence, before actually verifying it and risking to uncritically reinforce the mainstream rhetoric, meeting just the most visible channels of diffusion. Furthermore, the conceptualization of a policy (or an idea, a practice) as a *bounded object*, "complete packages" (Peck & Theodore, 2010, p. 170), just moving from point A to point B, is pretty simplistic (McCann & Ward, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010; Robinson, 2015).

Most of the times, ideas and discourses are assimilated "in bits and pieces" (Peck & Theodore, 2010, p. 170), rapidly and often unconsciously and then reinvented locally. It could be that local actors "'invent' policy ideas which are very widely known, or which might emerge in different places at the same time" (Robinson, 2015, p. 832). Thus ideas did not *arrive*; they are somehow born locally. Keeping this logic, the metaphor of the journey used in the previous section appears misleading: ideas do not travel, which reminds to a bounded and defined thing

moving around, rather ideas pop up in different places, adapted and translated in the specific circumstances. Assumed this, the image of assemblage, a contingent twine of a diverse range of internal and external inputs, seems to be more pertinent. Indeed, as shown in the previous chapter, what the groups share is an attitude, not a specific set of skills and neither a kind of organizational structure.

Thus, this section aims at drawing the attention not on the supposed *journey*, but rather on the phase of *translation* or *mutation*. Once again, the starting point for this suggested line of investigation are the groups interviewed, and in this case the focus is on the *learning processes* they experienced.

Learning is a notion that had been already used in the context of policy transfer, especially by economic geographers focussing on the transfer of knowledge and innovation (Bathelt, Malmberg, & Maskell, 2004; Boschma, 2005).

There is no agreed definition on what constitutes learning, but more than a linear process, it is fruitful to conceive it "as a process (…) distributed through relations between people-materials-environment" (McFarlane, 2011b, p. 3). Following McFarlane (2011), the term *learning* refers broadly to the ways by which a specific knowledge had been assembled, even through contestation, and made recognizable and transferable. Framing learning as the process to create, stabilize and reproduce knowledge loads this notion of a particular political relevance, which derives from a Foucauldian conception of knowledge as always entangled with power, thus never neutral. This political relevance assumes for McFarlane (2011) the shape of an emancipatory potential of learning, and it is the reason why he is firmly and effectively calling for critical geography of urban learning assemblages. Despite recognizing that the urban learning to which McFarlane (2011) is referring to are the processes by which various urban actors (inhabitants, policymakers, visitors, activists among others) incrementally dwell and perceive the city, it is proposed here to assume the same attitude to study how a specific category of actors, this new generation of professionals, reproduces its community and identity. Following this logic, it is relevant to investigate how these actors, being them emancipatory or not, learn.

Despite the unfolding of post-graduate courses mentioned in the previous section, such traditional learning environments seem from the interviews to have had a limited explanatory potential regarding the spreading of these practices. They undoubtedly contribute to the construction of legitimacy for such a profession, but, at the current embryonal state, they are more an effect than a cause of this spreading.

The question then is: *how and where did they learn what they know?*

It is a tricky question. When asking directly whether the group took inspiration elsewhere, an interviewee said:

> "Surely yes, because nothing has ever born without [a reference], anyway we never managed to conceptualize ourselves, nor the future, nor the past, we are not intellectuals or scholars, and since we are spending a lot of time on the streets building things and relations with people and so on, we had no time and no interest to theorize ourselves" (member of esterni, 26/10/2017, Milan).

Another interviewee referring to the experience of the practice of a friend stated:

> "he did everything as he was following a handbook, but he did not know anything about the subject" (member of Metriquali, 3/12/2017, Lecce).

This reminds to the Robinson's (2015) insights on how unconscious the process of generating ideas is. Other groups were able to acknowledge some theoretical references, but what had been identified as drivers are, most of the times, personal feelings and insights, not the reference to some mobile ideas. Another interviewee, referring to her attendance to a post-graduate course on temporary use, claimed:

> "at the very beginning, we had just an instinctive desire to experiment. (…) It has been the first time to me [to attend such a specialized course], but I realized I could relate to the projects made with my group (…) sometimes you don't learn just from books and theories, actually maybe most of what I learned, I did it through the practice with Zip morethan on books" (member of LabZip+, 23/10/2017, Torino).

Other responses to this question included:

> "maybe ours was also a reaction to a kind of urbanism and architecture that they [universities] taught us and then out of the university we found out it was useless; it is also a way of pouring out anger" (member of Kiez.Agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna).

More than giving answers, this subsection aims at stimulating some reflections on how intricate and fruitful could be to question learning processes in relation to how ideas travel or pop up around. It is a methodological challenge, but it could suggest many insights on how similar knowledge claims appear around.

Another fruitful line of investigation about learning would be to focus not on how these groups learned, but rather on how to teach these practices successfully. Indeed, how to transfer knowledge is a matter of concern for the groups, and it is not unusual that they are directly experimenting with alternative pedagogical adventures.

5.4 Drivers of mobility and geographical unevenness of urban tactics

There are several perspectives and question marks in the debate on mobilities. The reasoning of this section is highly informed by the research agenda on the mobilities debate set up by McCann (2011), in which he raises some further open questions on the dynamics of mobility of ideas, practices, and policies. I refer here to two issues that he considers too often neglected in the literature.

The first issue concerns the *drivers* that make policies and ideas move. In the previous sections, it had been drawn the attention on *how*, through which circuits, ideas and policies travel and *what* is traveling, a bounded model or an ever-changing object, while here I meet the challenge to question *why* some ideas are getting somewhere, and others do not.

In simple word, McCann invites to ask *"why do some ideas and models travel whereas others do not?"* (2011, p. 121).

The second issue regards the geographical unevenness of the outcomes of the mobilities: here the focus is not on the departure's points, but on the trajectories and the distribution of the arrivals. Basically, *why here and not somewhere else*?

These are not simple questions, and no answer could be fully explanatory of such a complicated process as the emergence and distribution of ideas. Furthermore, the answers cannot be but case-specific.

I will try here to use these questions to interrogate the empirical data I have on the phenomenon of urban tactics.

Regarding the first concern, there is an additional question arising: how to assess if a practice is traveling around or not? Urban tactics and the expertise introduced in this work have a marginal impact on the overall urban governance schemes; therefore it is not unquestionable to affirm that it is an idea that successfully manages to travel. However, regardless the intensity and the level of pervasiveness of the spreading of these practices, even by the small number of interviews used in this study, it is possible to affirm that similar groups are active in different places and it is then legitimate to ask why it is happening.

In my understanding, to be at the core of the issue is what pushes the movement, namely how or what is making ideas/practices/policies move. I would call these factors *drivers of mobility*.

In the case investigated, the practitioners have a keen interest by themselves in promoting the practices. Most of the groups need legitimation, and a broader diffusion is a means to obtain it. Cook and Ward (2012) affirm that in their opinion one factor of success of mobility is the construction of an infrastructure, made of what they called *pipelines*, as mentioned in the previous sections. This is properly what the practitioners are doing organizing self-managed festivals and post-graduate courses. Indeed, most of the courses and the workshops are organized by practitioners. Building an infrastructure of mobility is not, however, the only reason. On one side, these courses require practical knowledge, and the practitioners are the primary holders of such knowledge. On the other side, more pragmatically, many groups are integrating their incomes promoting formative occasions, which are indeed "profitable transfer mechanism" (González, 2011),.

It is thus argued here that at the basis of the mobility of these practices there is a strong interest and many efforts by the practitioners, in order to build professional reputation and credibility.

In this context, however, mostly positive information is traveling, while controversial aspects are kept less mobile. For instance, information on the precarious and unstable financial condition of the groups are less broadly available. The information on the legal configuration I mentioned in the previous section is not accessible online, and I collected it through the direct interaction with the founders of the groups. Indeed, from what emerged in the interviews, there is not so much flow of information on this organizational aspect. One interviewee even said:

> "If you find out which is the best legal configuration to assume, then let us know" (member of ATIsuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

Coming back to the point of the drivers of mobility, there are then of course structural reasons why some ideas are traveling more than others: urban tactics are low-cost initiatives, and it is assessed how nowadays cuts in public budgets, and the increased competitiveness among cities make "off-the-shelf policies from private consultants" (McCann, 2011, p. 121) more and more attractive. However, here the impact of public policies on the spread of these practices had not been covered, and it would require further research. The focus is put here instead on the parallel process by which policy consultants and emerging professionals are exploiting these historical contingencies to gain space and give shape to a professional career.

To be highlighted as a structural factor there is also the awareness of dealing with privileged actors, skilled middle-class workers with the competence to build an informational infrastructure, made of newsletters, blog, websites and so on, and with the cultural and economic possibility to travel and build a network of personal connections.

Likewise, for the second issue, the uneven distribution of similar practices, there could be a wide range of explanations.

For instance, the vast majority of the interviewees was originally from the city where the group is active. An emblematic answer when I was asking why they are located there had been:

> "you know, Brussels for me is local" (member of Toestand, 26/01/2017, Brussels).

On one side there is the romantic idea of coming back to the roots and the wish to help the place you feel you belong to, as claimed by one interviewee:

> "This project [the group itself] is born in Bologna for Bologna" (member of Architetti di Strada, 19/10/2017, Bologna).

On the other side, there are also here some more mundane and pragmatic reasons. As the next chapter will highlight, precariousness is one of the most common denominators of this kind of experiences and coming back home for these precarious young workers also means to get the support from families and a bigger network of social connections. The power of this kind of initiatives is indeed the versatility: as mentioned before, the pragmatism at the basis of these experiences calls for action in any condition.

> "What we do maybe it is not that innovative, but it is innovative here in Piacenza, there has never been something like this here" (member of Rivularia, 25/10/2017, Piacenza).

5.5 Conclusion: the mystery of invention

Through the focus on urban practices mobilities, this chapter faced a tricky task: to combine the desire of an inquiry close to practices, and the need to give an account of a bigger picture in which these practices are located.

It assessed the growing interest in the literature on the flows of urban policy and practices, trying to report some of the possible perspectives on the topic.

I have tried to combine different approaches in order to show how complex and controversial could be the answer to the apparently banal question: "how it comes that similar practices are emerging in incommensurate locations?".

First, the chapter showed how structural and internal factors, the so-called *planning cultures*, matters. Afterward, I questioned the meaning of the term "internal", reporting approaches by which the notion of "territorially bounded unit" do not make sense: they are just the unstable and constantly changing outputs of relations and flows. It had been suggested how relations constitute rails by which ideas can travel, drawing a complex geography of friendship, random meetings, and moving objects. In this case, an infrastructure made of people, being these professionals themselves the primary transfer agents. Secondly, it has been put into question what is traveling, whether a bounded model or something looser, which is on a case-by-case basis translated and assembled. Or, better said, learned. The insights by McFarlane (2011) suggest then how political is this learning process, being potentially involved in what Massey framed as a possible counterhegemonic globalization (Massey in Sharp, 2000). Regardless, the political potential of these practices and these subjects is anything, but definite and it will be intensely questioned in chapter 6. Finally, there are some reflections on why these practices are made mobile, which are then the drivers of this mobility, and where the outcomes are visible and how uneven is their resulting distribution.

However, there are many more unresolved issues in the debate which had not been mentioned. For instance, many scholars (Harris & Moore, 2013; J. M. Jacobs, 2012; McFarlane, 2011b) complain about a too narrow focus on contemporaneity in the studies on mobilities, which would prevent to highlight what is new and distinctive about these processes. Unfortunately, this study does not face this issue, dealing precisely with contemporary practices, without a historical overview of the diffusion of practices of this kind. Indeed, it is still to be assessed if and how policy transfer changed or if to be changed is just the theoretical toolkit through which scholars look at the phenomenon. Indeed, personal connections, educational trips and the exchange of materials had always mattered.

Moreover, following Robinson (2015), it stays as an open question to which extent you can trace how an idea was born, given the unconscious and incremental process it involves.

I want to conclude the chapter with a reflection on something I found counterintuitive of this chapter. While studying abstract and not-on-the-ground topics such as the transnational dimension of the phenomenon, the output is instead a humanized and micro-scaled image of these professionals: young workers who build friendship networks and who, in some cases, just go back home to save money.

Chapter 6

6 Entrepreneurial urban activism

6.1 Introduction: a controversial political potential

This chapter deals with the exploration of the politics of the group of people referred to in this work as professionals of the unplanned. What makes fruitful and fascinating reasoning on the politics of these subjects is that they constitute a paradoxical mix of entrepreneurship and dissent (Cupers, 2014). Indeed, these wannabe-professional realities are performing at the intersection between the construction of a social project and the quest for new working possibilities. The entrepreneurial attitude is evident in the significant amount of time spent by the groups searching for funding and networking and self-branding in order to ensure themselves an income. The dissent dimension derives by the fact that they are engaging with interventions traditionally associated with activism such as guerrilla gardening, temporary appropriation of public space or self-building practices. Regarding the political potential of this category of actors, the first question which spontaneously emerges is: *are these practitioners depriving the practices of urban tactics of all their emancipatory and provocative stances while engaging them in a professional practice?*

At least two interconnected problematic aspects are resulting from the overlap of professionalization instances and political action.

One is the welcomed endorsement of this kind of practices by the planning and architectural establishment, which undermines the alleged subversive character of the practices. The other disturbing matter refers to the profit-based logic behind the professionalization process pushed by the practitioners.

The first issue recalls the risk of neoliberal co-optation of practices of resistance. This relates to the role of what Margit Mayer (2013) called *first world activism*, referring to the trajectories of social movements in the advanced capitalist countries of the Global North. Indeed, principles of self-management, do-it-yourself ideas and insurgent creativity "have lost the radical edge they used to entail in the context of the overbearing Keynesian welfare state" (Mayer, 2013, p. 11).

The urban practices inspired by those principles, referred in this work as *urban tactics*, have been often co-opted as components of official neighborhood regeneration processes and became part of gentrification strategies. Furthermore, the professionals of the unplanned themselves could be framed as emblematic of processes of *self-precarization* (Lorey, 2015), meant as a governmental and oppressive instrument of governing.

However, from a different perspective, the visibility of the practices under analysis through powerful channels and the collaboration of these subjects with institutional bodies could be used to question the resistant/complicit couplet and the metaphor of the margins that is usually associated to activist practices. Indeed, such diffusion forces these actors not "to evade the *responsibilities* of power" (Massey in Sharp, 2000, p. 285, emphasis in the text) and makes them represent a heckler within the resistance narrative.

Following this reasoning, the investigation of these ambivalent figures of entrepreneurialized urban activism could contribute to overcoming what Rose calls "the romantic quest for an anti-establishment politics" (2002, p. 397).

Moreover, the contemporary mode of production needs an exploration of the spaces in between subjection and self-empowerment. Indeed, it could also be said that the paradigmatic shift towards post-Fordism suggests the need of envisioning new configurations of the relations between work, creativity, and activism, implying "a process of hybridization between spheres of labor, political action, and intellectual reflection" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 65). Following this logic, studying what could mean to do activism in the context of neoliberalism demands "a more complex, less cynical, less dismissive approach" (Mukherjee, 2012, p. x).

The challenge of this chapter is thus to assume such an approach and to explore the political potential of these actors trying to avoid the temptation to frame them as mere examples of depowered precarious workers functional to the *business-as-usual*. This means to refuse to frame them as passive servants of the capitalist system, and instead to recognize them as conscious actors diving in a complicated political time full of perceived contradictions.

These statements unveil a post-structuralist sensitivity in the study of politics. First, this perspective assumes a Foucauldian relational conception of power in order to conceptualize power as a productive force, and not just a dominating one. Secondly, the awareness of "how futile is to pose political issues in terms of either conservation or innovation, of budgetary procedure or revolution" (Finlayson & Valentine, 2002, p. 14) is recognized as a poststructuralist contribution to political thinking.

In broader terms, the chapter touches the issue of the meaning and potentialities of activism in the context of the contemporary mode of capitalism usually referred to as neoliberalism.

The chapter supports here that the analysis of the ambivalent profile of the professional of the unplanned could suggest fruitful perspectives for the exploration of the contradictions of the contemporary political action.

In the chapter, there are three proposed perspectives on the ambivalent political potential of the profile under analysis, corresponding to the three following

sections. The choice of the theoretical frameworks used had also depended on the empirical material to test them, namely the self-narratives offered by the interviews. Particular attention is thus dedicated to the discursive dimension.

The first section, "in between emancipation and self-precarization", deals with the subjectivation processes typical of the biopolitical phase of capitalism. After assessing the precariousness of these actors, it speculates on how much they could be framed as the embodiment of the third spirit of capitalism sketched by Boltanski and Chiapello (2007). The model they used to exemplify the *great man* of the current spirit of capitalism is employed here to test the disrupting potential, if any, of these actors.

The second perspective proposed, "traces of a new discourse on participation", besides being still heavily based on the work of the two French sociologists, refers mainly to the work of Chantal Mouffe. Particularly it uses her concept of *discursive re-articulation* to question if and how they are re-articulating the discourse on participation. This should make part of their political principles emerge and it could represent a first step towards the definition of the political project implied by these practices.

Finally, the third perspective assumes a different theoretical framework. It starts from the need, identified by Farìas and Blok, of a shift "from a post-Marxist to a more STS-informed politics" (2016, p. 540) and explores the eventuality of framing the process of construction of an expert authority as a political act. This last perspective challenges the hypothesis of the contradiction between professionalization and political action, and rather frame professionalization as a strategy towards gaining power through legitimation.

6.2 In between emancipation and self-precarization

If there is one aspect which is undoubtedly shared by all the experiences considered in this thesis, it is their precariousness. When asking if the collective was their full-time employment one interviewee said:

> "A full-time job in the sense that it is a work that keeps your brain busy 24/24h, but if you meant in economic terms, no, absolutely, we earn almost nothing at the moment, you cannot live out of this" (member of ATIsuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

The overlapping between the activities of the collective and other jobs is not an exception among the groups I interviewed.

> "Meanwhile, to pay the rent we had to do other things, such as the waiter, there was also someone working in a design studio, but making and internship or a low-paid part-time" (member of Plinto, 17/10/2016, Turin).

The precarious conditions of labor in the creative sector, and particularly in the artistic and design-related professions, had been already debated by various authors (among others Lange, 2011) and unveiling such circumstance constitutes just the premise of this section.

Instead, the relevance of the precarious conditions of such workers in a chapter on their political potential lays in the fact that precariousness had been framed as a "governmental instrument of governing (…) a mode of subjectivation" (Lorey, 2015, p. 35). What makes the precariousness a relevant aspect in the Foucauldian framework of biopolitical governmentality is the "internalization of insecure conditions and its associated ideas of freedom and autonomy as a mode of 'self-precarization'" (Ferreri & Dawson, 2017, p. 4). In a governmental perspective, "we are governed and keep ourselves governable specifically through precarization" (Lorey, 2015, p. 2). In other words, in this perspective, it is politically relevant the fact that these actors had 'freely' chosen to be precarious, in a "continuous negotiation of self-exploitation and self-realization" (Valli, 2017, p. 85). Indeed, while it would be possible to interpret such a trend as a response to the high rate of unemployment among young architects, none of the interviewees started such activity after trying without success to find a job in a traditional studio; the vast majority started the activities while still students at the university. Some cases, such as among the members of the collective etc and the studio ateliermob, even quitted a stable job to start this new business. The well-known difficulties in finding employment for architects and planners inevitably affect the life choices of the subjects involved, but in the interviews, the collective was never presented as a fallback.

The purpose of this section is to highlight the inherent ambivalence of the parallel process of self-precarization and self-empowerment.

One theoretical framework which could help in contextualizing such ambivalence had been offered by Boltanski and Chiapello in the book "The New Spirit of Capitalism" (2007). It offers a convincing account on the transition to post-Fordism in the twentieth century, underlining how "biopolitical subjectivations increasingly intertwined with ideas of liberal bourgeois freedom and democratic self-determination" (Lorey, 2015, p. 13). The book focuses on the legacy of the events in May 1968 in France, speculating on how demands for autonomy and authenticity, which they called *artistic critique*, ended up in the post-Fordist networked economy. In their understanding, every paradigmatic shift entails a form of emancipation, which could then become a new form of oppression. This recalls a lot the Gramscian concept of 'hegemony through neutralization', even if they never make this reference explicit in their work, as had been noted by Mouffe (2013). At the same time, their neutral conceptualization of ideology as a way "to constantly mobilize people's desires and shape their identities" and its pervasive discursive dimension owes also to the Foucauldian idea of governmentality, which refers to the "broad justifications for governing certain spatial domains in certain ways (…) and the precise means by which rationalities can be implemented in practice" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 44).

It is assumed here that the Boltanski and Chiapello's framework could be fruitful to assess the subjectivation processes undergone by the professionals of the unplanned and to test their political potential.

Before exploring this perspective, it is necessary to explain further the mechanisms behind the central thesis of the authors and the vocabulary they

introduced. This brief account of their work does not have any ambition to be a *resumé* of the book; rather it aims just at explaining the vocabulary that will be used below. Moreover, it is functional to propose a softened understanding of the capitalist co-optation paradigm.

First, what the authors mean with the term "spirit of the capitalism" is the apparatus of justification, the system of values, or *ideology*, characterizing a certain era, that persuades the people to engage in the accumulation of capital. The assumption at the basis of this framework is that the never-ending process of reproduction of capital, which is different from the market economy, is a-moral and it needs moral justifications to be pursued. In simple words, it needs to be attractive. One of the most striking counterintuitive statement made by the authors is that his apparatus of justification comes from the critiques to the system since it must be found from external sources. Paradoxically, the critical claims born to fight against capitalism become the source of its survival, the source by which capitalism is assuming its moral justifications. This point introduces a relevant issue faced by the book and pertinent to this research: the ambivalent role of critique. In other words, in the understanding of the authors, critique cyclically nourishes and constraints capitalism. This is how the authors explain this process of co-optation and liberation:

> "the dynamic of the spirit of capitalism seems to rest on "cycle of recuperation". (…) Capitalism attracts actors, who realize that they have hitherto been oppressed, by offering them a certain form of liberation that masks new types of oppression. It may then be said that capitalism 'recuperates' the autonomy it extends, by implementing new modes of control. However, these new forms of oppression are gradually unmasked and become the target of critique" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. 425)

This does not mean that any form of critique is inevitably going to be co-opted losing any emancipatory power, as it would seem. On the contrary, capitalism absorbing its critiques gets adjusted and constrained by those *winning* critiques, becoming a new form of capitalism, with some instances of justice in it. This new shape will be then questioned and criticized again on the basis of other conceptions of justice, which will be then possibly accepted and so on.

Thus, critique is not ineffective, rather it has the power to change the system actively. The cycles are continuous "confrontations between different orders of value" (Turner, 2007, p. 411). The set of values constituting ideology, or the current spirit of capitalism, are not fixed, but continuously questioned by the critique and possibly changed.

Starting from this perspective, it is proposed here to deal with the processes of subjectivation using the exemplification of the third spirit of capitalism offered by the two authors. The idea is to try to assess how much these professionals of the unplanned embody the third spirit of capitalism described by the authors, intending to highlight overlaps and dissonances, if any.

The provocative question which could be asked starting from this point of view is: *is the spreading of these practitioners nothing new neither revolutionary, but just the result of the strengthening of the trends already envisioned in the late nineties by two French sociologists? Are these practitioners nothing more than the embodiment of what had been called the third spirit of capitalism?*

6.2.1 Embodying the third spirit of capitalism?

In order to exemplify the set of values of an era, Boltanski and Chiapello use a potent representational tool, which directly reminds to processes of subjectification: the portrait of the *great man* of the spirit considered. A set of values typifies a certain spirit and identify the legitimized criteria to measure the *greatness* of the people. The *great man* represents then the goal to be reached, the reason to engage in the capitalistic process. It defines what you are supposed to desire to be.

With this basic understanding of the general mechanism, it is possible now to leave the abstract level and to introduce some of the contents.

In the book, there are two transitions taken into consideration. One happened in the late '30s when it ended the era of the so-called "family capitalism", whose great man/hero was the bourgeois capitalist proprietor. Without going into details of this first transition, let us just say that the main driver of the changeover had been the call for the possibility for the individual to choose or change his social affiliation. It was not accepted anymore that the status of a person depended on the belonging to a specific family. Thus, the new spirit emerged as a form of *liberation*. At this point another kind of hero emerged: it was the era of the manager. Free from the family ties, the value got measured by the level of education, the curriculum vitae, the devotion to the company. The hierarchy was mostly based on merits, and for example years of work in the same company.

This model, simplifying what is argued by the authors, started to be questioned in the name of calls for authenticity, autonomy, and self-fulfillment. The crisis of this second spirit of capitalism corresponded to the stabilization of the post-Fordist era, delegitimizing hierarchies, formal authority, and Taylorism as an organizational mode. At this point, the authors describe the emergent third spirit of capitalism, which is characterized by a connexionist word and finds its logic of justification in what they call "the projective city."[48] Flexibility and adaptability are the new keywords. The great man of this new and third spirit is an enthusiastic, involved, flexible and adaptable person who jumps from one project to another, inspiring trust and being a leader through charisma, soft skills, and tolerance.

It is suggested here that this archetype of the great man of the third spirit recalls quite a lot the profile of the young urban practitioner object of this study.

In order to explore this provocative statement, I am going to recall here some of the main characteristics of the *great man* of the third spirit of capitalism and extracting from the interviews the similarities and the disconnections.

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[48] The term *city* is used to refer to the logic of justification, the normative fulcrum of the spirits of capitalism. This refers to the sense given to the term in "De la justification", a previous work of Boltanski.

It is not possible to condensate in few lines all the structure of the projective city; I am going just to list a few points that I recognized as the main ones.

First, the criteria used to measure the value of an individual is his *activity*. The idea of activity is peculiar of this spirit because it "surmounts the oppositions between work and non-work, the stable and the unstable, wage-earning class and non-wage-earning class, paid work and voluntary work" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. 109). Life is framed as a succession of projects, and the great man is always involved in a project, he is always *active*. This fits very well with the idea of constructing a portfolio, traditionally used by architects and, not surprisingly, by the urban practitioners I called the professionals of the unplanned (Guadalupi, 2018). In the websites of all the groups, I interviewed is possible to view a portfolio in which different projects are shown and it doesn't matter if it was a paid commission, voluntary self-initiated work or something else: everything is presented in the same catalogue. The number and the variety of projects is a measure of the value of the group.

Paid or non-paid, the great man is able of *enthusiasm*. This attitude is another peculiar feature identified by the authors: the ability to engage with enthusiasm. Moreover, passion and enthusiasm are surely not missing in the self-narratives emerging from the interviews. Such feelings are often presented as the primary driver. All the groups claimed to *believe* in what they are doing and to have fun in doing it. Speaking about the variety of the conducted projects, one interviewee said:

> "The only thing we can ensure is the fun (…) even for ourselves, we are not looking for fame, the point is to enjoy what you do" (member of ati suffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

Enjoyment is a keyword. Another interviewee, when asked about the kind of projects the group started, said:

> "To summarize, basically we do things that we enjoy" (member of orizzontale, 26/10/2016, Rome).

Furthermore, the variety of the projects testify another essential characteristic of the groups and of the great man envisioned by the authors: its *adaptability* and *versatility*. Among other things, this means to be able to adapt to the contingencies:

> "Partners are always changing, it is essential that you are ready to change. For example if at a certain point you have people able to follow the graphic design and the communication, then you direct your project more there (…) when your resources are changing, you have to be able to change also the project" (member of kiez.agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna).

Variety is also a value by itself, as proposed by another interviewee from a very embryonal group:

> "Potentially we would like to differentiate what we do; the objective would be that the different people of the collective brings different projects in different fields, going beyond architecture and placemaking (…), for example, a journal or a newsletter" (member of praxis, 25/10/2017, Piacenza).

Mass production and standardization are obsolete; people and companies are not anymore asked to deliver always the same output. In the context of this shift in the production mode, the prominent process is not standardization anymore, but *codification.* The process of codification allows to "introduce variations in such a way as to obtain products that are relatively different, but of the same style"(Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. 445). In the logic of the book, this shift represents a moment of co-optation of the claims for authenticity, enabling the commodification of differences. Once again, these urban practitioners are typifying their outputs, avoiding to standardizing them. The challenge is to find out, though the codification, which is the element that gave value and to keep it. This element could be immaterial, such as an approach, as an interviewee said:

> "What we have is a certain mode, attitude towards the projects, a certain way to approach issues, then the output itself could be completely different every time (…) an installation, a performance, a graphic product, a video…it changes time by time depending on what we think could be the best means" (member of ati suffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

Another group, while also claiming to have a specific approach, found in a material element the permanent feature of its work:

> "Maybe what is constant in our projects is our relationship with wood, which is the material we are better at dealing with" (member of orizzontale, 26/10/2016, Rome).

Connected to this, the *expert* of the projective city establishes his knowledge and competence not on a standardised knowledge, but on "personal, integrated knowledge" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. 116), which is most of all the fruit of past experiences. The more projects you have been involved in, the more you have been *active*, the more knowledge you have accumulated. The connections you have made are your biggest treasure. Indeed, the main keyword of the third spirit of capitalism is the *network*. In such a connexionist world, the network is a value *by itself*. The authors arrive to define the network as an emblematic metaphor of the third spirit of capitalism through the exploration both of the literature of new-management, both of the developments in the field of microeconomics and sociology. Reminding to the book for the in-depth analysis of the proliferation of the network as an imaginary in different fields[49], the prominence of the network as a value is assumed here as a characterizing feature of the third spirit.

Coming back to the field of analysis, the importance of the network had been declared in all the interviews. Being part of a network ensures the participation and activation of new projects, it was not a mystery neither a shame in the interviews to assess that many projects had been initiated by personal connections. The network is an asset and that valuable knowledge, as sketched before, is a sum of connections. This awareness was particularly clear speaking with one of the founders of a master conceived to train this kind of urban practitioners. The coordinator of the master claimed to repeat often to his students that

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[49] Particularly, chapter 2, paragraph 3: "The generalization of the network form of representation" pp. 138-151

> "We, professors and coordinators, are a resource, but the real resource are the connections between you [the students] (…) the most precious thing we can offer is the possibility to create a network among the students" (Cancellieri, founder of Urise[50], 23/11/2017, Venice).

While it is not surprising that a post-graduate and professionalizing master aspires to put into contact students and companies, what is peculiar here is the value given to the peer-to-peer contacts, the emphasis on the creation of your own network, that is what the master has to offer.

The nightmare is to be excluded. Social exclusion, instead of social classes, had become the principle of social differentiation and division (Turner, 2007).

In this context, being visible is an asset, and the groups understood this.

> "At the beginning we needed to do something which could draw attention, we needed to get to be known, to say *we are here*, *we exist too*" (member of praxis, 25/10/2017, Piacenza).

In the connexionist world which the authors sketched as a background of the third spirit of capitalism, the world is a network of potential connections and there are no differences between separate spheres, for example, the private and the professional. Using your personal connections, which used to be considered a shame in the second spirit of capitalism, is now allowed and valued. Your colleagues are supposed to be your friends and the *trust* you can inspire is more important than hierarchies. This fits perfectly with the organizational mode taken by most of the groups: the collective. Being an informal group or an association, all the groups I interviewed refused to recognize an internal hierarchy. The individuals could be responsible for different tasks, but nobody is the boss. On one side, this reflects another feature of the great man of the third spirit which is the need for autonomy. Both on the level of the individuals both of the group as an agent, autonomy is a value. Autonomy as an ideal condition, also at the expenses of financial security. On the other side, the lack of a clear hierarchy resonates with the overlapping between personal and professional life, as an interviewee suggested:

> "In short, we are a group of friends" (member of orizzontale, 26/10/2016, Rome).

At this point, I would like to introduce the first incongruency between these groups and the ideal type of the great man of the third spirit. Indeed, the long-lasting feature of the friendship does not fit with the profile of the great man described by the authors in the book. The great man of the third spirit is yes hyperconnected, but not limited by the connections. His autonomy and his employability in new projects are never threatened by a sense of belonging. As fast as he is able to engage in a project, he can also disengage, "even at the peak of engagement, enthusiasm, involvement in a project, people at ease in a network word remain adaptable, physically and intellectually mobile" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. 110). I find that the high mobility requested to the great man is one of the first value of the third

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[50] Urise is a Postgraduate Master in Urban Regeneration and Social Innovation started in 2016 at the IUAV University in Venice. More info, just in Italian, at https://urisemaster.org/ [last access 28/05/2018]

spirit of capitalism put into question by these practitioners. From what emerged from the interviews, the groups are quite stable, or at least stability is seen as a desirable outcome. Mobility more than an attractive value is lived as something you could be subjected to, due to the contingencies. The great majority of the groups I got in contact with are active in the city where they were born or where they decided to establish themselves and the will to create their own group was often born from the will to settle down. Sometimes it just happened because people started the activities while studying and stayed there. Another possibility is that the group had chosen a common destination, as in the case told by one interviewee:

> "We felt the need to stop somewhere (…) the best project maybe would be to collect what we did and put all together in the same territory. Projects were too short, we were fed up with just popping out, doing some things and then disappearing" (member of collectif etc, 22/10/2016, Marseille).

Or again, the practitioners came back to their origins, as Mariangela from Metriquali:

> "After studying far from home, I wanted to come back to my hometown and to do things here" (member of Metriquali, 03/12/2017, Lecce)

Alternatively, again:

> "We love our city and we wanted to be part of its improvement" (member of Architetti di Strada, 19/10/2017, Bologna)

Be it the hometown or not, one shared feature seems to be the long-term commitment to an area and this attachment to a place is the most significant discrepancy with the third spirit.

This section argues that more than the embodiment of the third spirit of capitalism, these groups had been tricked by such spirit. They may have trusted the premises of the projective city, but they are not the successful great man that should potentially be a model for the society. They got not awarded enough to follow the principles of the projective city, and they are then questioning some of the principles. It is fine to be adaptable and flexible, but the composition of the group is not that flexible, friendship is a real value. Being temporarily mobile for some projects is fine, but they are not willing to forget their roots. The will and the fights to settle down, besides the "erratic career path"(Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. 117) requested by the contemporary labor market, are maybe the first traces of their own political and social new project.

In conclusion, these professionals seem to be a sign of the failure of the third spirit of capitalism rather than its perfect embodiment. They are matching most of the features of the supposed great man of the epoch, but it is from the mismatches that their political project could result innovative. What can be said considering the perspective assumed in this section, it is that the greater novelty of their political approach is the long-term engagement with some places, the rediscovery of the value of stability and roots. In other words, the idea to take care of your own territory, which is also the message they are trying to promote, the essence of the do-it-yourself ideology. Take care and give shape to your own space.

6.3 Traces of a new discourse on participation

The starting point of this section is once again the work of Boltanski and Chiapello and particularly the hegemonic dimension given to the idea of the spirit of capitalism. Starting from this premise, the section owes especially the work of the political scientist Chantal Mouffe. The discursive and changing nature of hegemonies, assessed by the study of Boltanski and Chiapello, offers spaces to the productive re-articulation of discourses, a core dynamic in Mouffe's thinking. In other words, following the logic of the previous section, it is proposed here to get inspired by the reasoning of another social scientist, Chantal Mouffe, in order to interrogate the politics of these subjects. While the framework of the spirit of capitalism has been used to question the instances of self-precarization, in this section to be faced is the ambiguous engagement in the system of these practitioners. Mouffe supports the idea of "politics as engagement with" (2013), and this could be an opportunity to deal productively with the ambiguity of the subjects under analysis.

Once again, it is not within the scope of this section to give a significant or exhaustive account of Mouffe's theories; rather it is explored how some of her insights can suggest another perspective on the political potential of the professionals of the unplanned. The discourse theory she developed together with Ernesto Laclau[51] could constitute a starting point to elaborate on the narratives emerging from the interviews.

Following such a perspective, this section focuses on the process of discursive re-articulation and tries to investigate if these subjects are proposing an alternative discourse. Notably, it deals with the discourse on participation, which is a buzz word always associated with the new trends in urbanism to which these collectives are linked. *Assumed that the discursive re-articulation is a necessary step to enact social change, are these groups re-elaborating the mainstream discourse of participation? If yes as supposed here, which is the new discourse emerging?* These are the questions proposed and faced by this section.

This reasoning implies the assumption of the idea that any social order needs to be discursively re-elaborated to be changed, framing social change as a continuous confrontation between alternative world-views. This had been theorized by Mouffe as the idea of *competing hegemonies*. Her work is heavily based on the Gramsci's formulation of hegemony and discourse, even if cleansed by the structuralist focus on class struggles, and recalls the Foucaultian idea of 'regimes of truths', even if infused with the concepts of ideology and hegemony (Dittmer, 2010; Sutherland, 2005). Furthermore, such conception of the shifting of ideologies as an agonistic struggle is very sympathetic to the never-ending repetition of the

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[51] The milestone for the understanding of Mouffe and Laclau's thought is their book "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics", published in 1985. However, the paragraph is mostly based on the book "Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically" (2013) in which Chantal Mouffe alone offers an updated and synthetic overview on the development of her thoughts. This is the reason why in the text she is indicated as the main reference.

cycles of recuperation theorized by Boltanski and Chiapello, authors which are explicitly quoted as a reference by Mouffe (2013).

An agonistic struggle is in her words "a struggle between different interpretations of shared principles, a conflictual consensus – consensus on the principles, disagreement about their interpretation" (Mouffe in Miessen, 2011, p. 109). What is supported by this theory is that it is not enough (neither possible) to get rid of an ideology, but it is necessary to counterpose another ideology in order to go beyond the status quo. This point represents the crucial difference with the approaches based on the Marxist idea of false consciousness and with what she called "politics as withdrawal from" (Mouffe, 2013), a form of critique based on desertion informed by the ideas of, among others, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. In her opinion, it is not enough "to lift the weight of ideology in order to bring about a new order free from oppression and power" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 57) since "we will be faced with a chaotic situation of pure dissemination, leaving the door open for attempts at re-articulation by non-progressive forces" (*ibidem*).

Following this logic, the engagement of these professionals with institutions and mainstream channels could be conceived not as a dismissal of the subversive power of their practices, but rather as a potentially productive phase of dis-articulation from within.

This reasoning will be explicitly tested on the discourse on participation. Indeed, coherently with the idea of *critique as engagement with*, these groups are asking themselves how to engage with the umbrella term of participation productively, instead of refusing to work under it. In the interviews, some traces of a new discourse on participation are emerging. It is not a coherent alternative conceptualization of participation, but there are some recurring features which could constitute a first step of a discursive re-articulation.

The first significant discursive rupture emerging from the interviews is the shifting of the focus of participatory practices from the shared *decision* to the shared *action*. Very frankly, an interviewee said:

> "You come here, we decide together what to do, and if we don't manage to decide together, someone decides, we try to do it and then we see" (member of kiez.agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna).

Deciding together is not anymore the *conditio sine qua non* of participation:

> "Surely it is not a consultation, let's say it is a shared enterprise" (member of Labzip+, 23/10/2017, Turin).

The point is not on how much shared the solution proposed is but on how active you could be in that transformation. Self-building practices are then often just a tool to make people work together, to get to know each other in a de-contextualized environment.

> "The people who meet at the construction site get to know each other beyond schemes. On the construction site there are not the lawyer, the housekeeper, the student, rather there are Valentina, Giulio, Michele (…) making things together is much more effective than speaking to build some social ties" (member of kiez.agency, 20/10/2017).

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This attention to the kind of involvement is of course allowed by the spatial small-scale of the interventions usually proposed by these groups, and it is hard to imagine to upscale them. Indeed, both the spatial scale both the number of people involved should be restrained. Paradoxically, while in the context of traditional participation it is desirable to involve the biggest number of people, this does not seem to be the case in this sort of "active participation". More than the *number* of people involved, it is relevant the *quality* of the participation promoted. Such a parameter is much harder to assess. The objective seems to be to build some relations, to help in strengthening the ties of the group of people taking part to the initiative, as explicitly said by an interviewee:

> "We try to encourage emancipation, to help people in self-organizing" (member of ateliermob, 14/07/2017, Lisbon).

The mission seems to be the push towards self-organization, more than facilitating the sharing of the decision-making process on a specific issue.

This, to be effective, implies the involvement of small groups of people and preferably for the most prolonged period possible. Indeed, many groups complained about the usual short time horizon of the interventions, insisting on the need of engaging in long-term processes. This is, for example, the case of collectif etc, one of the few groups interviewed who could boast almost ten years of experience and full economic sustainability. When interrogated on the projects for the future, the spokesperson referred to the plan of developing a new local project to be started with the opening of the new office in one neighborhood of Marseille. The idea is to develop a series of small projects in the same neighborhood, being fed up with the short timeframe of the previous projects. The need for a long-term involvement, however, is not a desire shared by all the interviewees. Another group, orizzontale, based in Rome, but very comparable to the collectif etc in terms of background, has, for example, a very different opinion. For them, "temporariness is a political choice" (Roberto, member of Orizzontale, Rome, October 2017). Indeed, accepting and promoting the temporariness, in their opinion, is a way to acknowledge the ever-becoming feature of space and the shared dimension of its production, downsizing their own role.

Another recurrent term is *spontaneity*, which seems to be a new myth for this kind of experiences. In response to the structured configuration of the participatory processes, it is opposed an idea of spontaneous involvement and spontaneous direction to be taken. An interviewee told me:

> "Once the Municipality called us for a participatory project, they wanted to know which techniques we would have used, but we don't know, we don't use a specific methodology, we arrive on the field and we see and every time could be different" (member of ateliermob, 14/07/2017, Lisbon).

The idea is to keep vast the range of possibilities. Another interviewee explained:

"The idea is to follow what happens (…) you see an input and you decide to follow that intuition, even if it was not what you had planned, that's the attitude" (member of ATIsuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

This is associated with the notion of *risk* since the output is most of the times unpredictable. The relation between the group and the participants is stated in terms of *reciprocity*, which implies an equal power division and a shared responsibility on the output. The output assumes then a meaning during the process, it is co-created by the participants and the proponents together.

Explaining their approach, the group ati suffix described:

"Every project envisages an equal and opposite reaction by the ones that originally constituted the target" and then went on clarifying "when we approach a topic, we start with an assumption that we use to provoke the audience and then we hope to challenge that intuition through the interaction with the people (…) the idea is to question both our intuition both the request of the commissioner" (member of ATIsuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

While this approach is peculiar to this group, what is shared with the other experiences is the will to share the responsibility of the outcome. The basic idea is that everybody is an agent with the power to impact the direction of the process; everybody is consequently responsible.

This reasoning has the aim of sketching what the idea of participation that these groups are promoting is, the ideal or desirable situation they imagine. For example, all the participatory techniques were born in order to ensure a certain degree of transparency and inclusion. In the processes promoted by these groups, the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion appear opaque, but such mechanisms do not constitute the primary concern. In other words, at stake here are *legitimization criteria*, to use Boltanski and Chiapello terminology, that they would use to assess the practices. In the case of these practitioners, not the number of people involved neither the degree of consensus on the decision, rather the strength of the social ties built during the process and how active had been the engagement. These ne criteria are not necessarily progressive, but they denote the emergence of different values and, in the logic assumed here, this process is thus intrinsically political.

6.4 Claiming an expert authority as a political act

At the beginning of this chapter, the professionalization process concerning the political potential of these subjects had been mostly associated to their precarious conditions, with the consequent contradictions of the profit-driven logic and the framing of self-precarization as an oppressive governmental instrument.

In this section, an additional potential interpretation key of the professionalization process is going to be explored. Becoming a professional indeed, in addition to the ambition of being paid for the service offered, means also to be recognized as a legitimate voice in a given process. The two aspects are also correlated, since being identifiable means also to be reachable by potential commissioners.

Legitimation is a shared concern by the groups interviewed, and it is related to identity issues. For example, one collective which recently stopped its activities indicated the lack of a clear identity as the main reason for its failure:

> "We were not recognizable when they asked us what we were doing, we were not able to answer. Once at a conference one of us said that we did a bit of everything, even bricolage and everybody laughed... you see, it cannot work like this" (member of Plinto, 17/10/2016, Turin).

Another group reported:

> "It is hard that someone calls us for a commission foreseeing a certain output, us there is always something unspecified about the output, this makes things hard, but sometimes it makes us appreciated" (member of ATIsuffix, 25/10/2016, Rome).

There are different strategies to deal with this issue; one could be to push the disciplinary borders to be included, as had been told by collectif ect:

> "Most of the time we say we are architects (…) it can be comfortable for the commissioner to work with architects...it sounds serious…more than an artist" (member of collectif etc, 22/10/2016, Marseille).

Another strategy could be to make people aware through seminars:

> "The first step of our project had been the organization of conferences with some experts in the field of participation and regeneration, we needed to show to our target what the hell we were going to do" (member of Rivularia, 25/10/2017, Piacenza).

Another interviewee expressed the initial need of legitimation even by herself:

> "I started to think this could be a profession after a master, before I was thinking it was just something for freaks, not a real profession" (member of kiez.agency, 20/10/2017, Bologna).

Particularly this last quotation opens the eventuality of reasoning on the legitimation issue in relation to the creation of an expert authority, in this case, legitimized by the existence of dedicated post-graduate courses.

This is the interpretative line proposed in this section: the professionalization of these practices could be framed simultaneously in a two-way process as one driver and one output of the creation of a new expert authority and this is intrinsically political, conceiving expertise as a mix of knowledge and power (Newman & Clarke, 2017), as assessed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Indeed, the definition of the borders of legitimate expert knowledge could constitute a perspective on the study of the politics of this emerging profession. The recognition as an expert is a political process, if it is assumed that expertise is not "a free-floating cluster of knowledge, capacities and skills" (Newman & Clarke, 2017, p. 2), but the unstable and contingent result of a contentious process. This process becomes particularly relevant in contemporary times, which some authors called the era of *technical democracy*. With this term, it is indicated a context in which "the major current political challenges involve attempts to democratize expertise" (Farías & Blok, 2016, p. 540). While the major concerns of the theorists

of technical democracy are related to the need of framing as political issues presented as technical, the same interpretative lenses could be used to frame as political an apparently technical issue as the formation of an expert authority. Farìas and Blok (2016) directly connect matters of the technical democracy with urban studies and urban activism and they arrive to affirm that "revolutionary praxis (…) should no longer target the institutional framework of society, but its infrastructural configuration. And this obviously requires revolutionaries to acquire technical knowledge and expertise, skills necessary to hack existing infrastructures, to block their operation, but also, and most importantly, to design and configure alternative infrastructures" (Farías & Blok, 2016, p. 540). The professionals of the unplanned could potentially fit this profile of the *hacker*, sneaking in the system and disrupting it from the inside.

However, questioning the borders between amateurism and professionalism has an ambiguous side. Indeed, expertise could be framed as "one form of domination" (Häikiö, 2007, p. 2153) and this process takes the risk of being just "a neutral terrain in which different groups compete to occupy the positions of power (…) a competition among elites" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 16).

Who has the right to occupy marginal areas? And in the name of what?

The risk is that these actors are gaining power through their professionalization, but without impacting the power relations. Or worst, confirming them: "a question remains about the border between the amateurism, marginality and informality of DIY urbanists and their constituents, and that of other marginal and informal users of derelict or abandoned urban space, like graffitists, vandals and rough sleepers. This border is implied in the protection that DIY urbanism offers to property owners" (Deslandes, 2013, p. 221).

6.5 Final remarks on politics

This chapter faced a very complex issue: the political ambivalence of an emerging professional category of actors, who is self-representing itself as resistant, but at the same time it is engaging itself with the system it is criticizing. Furthermore, this question had been faced just on a discursive level, elaborating on the empirical material derived from the interviews with the practitioners themselves.

Evidently, the clear-cut couplet resistant/complicit is not appropriate in this case. As precarious young professionals with a minimal impact on urban dynamics they are of course not part of the ruling class, but as educated and most sophisticated professionals neither are they representative of deprived or dispossessed groups.

The result is a mix of different perspectives on the same phenomenon, intending to offer a variety of points of entry. With the help of the framework of Boltanski and Chiapello (2017) the production of subjectivity, which is central in the post-Fordist mode of capitalist regulation, had been problematized and questioned. The professional of the unplanned emerged as a partial embodiment of the third spirit of capitalism, but it is suggested that this profile is questioning the extreme mobility requested. Still to sketch the political project implied by these practices it had been

exposed then the re-articulation of the discourse on participation, as inferred by the interviews. The emerging discourse, with the notion of spontaneity as central, appears fragmented and potentially problematic, particularly regarding the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. However, a qualitative analysis on a project during its development would be required to assess the implication of this changed conception of participation better. Similarly, an ethnographic account of how a single group is claiming an expert authority in a governance network could be useful to assess if it implies an oppressive process or if it could be framed just as functional in order to emerge as a legitimate voice.

In conclusion, the chapter had offered the framework for an eventual further investigation, deliberately trying to be the least dismissive as possible. Still, if the resulting analysis is a nuanced or a naïf understanding of the role of these practitioners in the urban transformation stays as an open question.

Conclusion

This dissertation deals with an emergent actor within urban regeneration processes: a hybrid profile mixing social action, public art and urban design. It is a profile who eludes categories and definitions and forcefully putting it into boxes is not the objective of this study.

It has been literally a journey through different kinds of practices, from product design to capacity building, and offering a typology cannot be the outcome. In the same vein, the practitioners performing these practices have a range of motivations, different degrees of political activism and various objectives.

The interest lies in the questions raised by this phenomenon more than on the boundaries delimitating it.

It is not a dissertation on the impact of these practices on the city, neither it is a praise of these professionals; instead this study argues that they constitute a fruitful entry point to face some contemporary trends. Indeed, starting from the rather marginal phenomenon of a bunch of practitioners experimenting with innovative urban practices, reasoning around this new actor nourished a set of reflections and allowed to mobilize different academic debates concerning urban studies. More specifically, these debates have been the artificial ways in which expert authorities got constructed, the mechanisms of the mobilities of urban policies, practices and ideas, and the contradictions of contemporary political action within urban neoliberalism.

Since every chapter has already its own conclusive remarks, these few final lines have the function of recapping and connecting all these remarks, making a *fil rouge* emerge. As stated in the introduction, every chapter has a degree of autonomy and the risk is then to lose the connections.

Thus, one first objective of this conclusion is to focus on *connections*.

First, the main common ground of the work is the underneath poststructuralist sensitivity that marks all the dissertation. It is rather explicit in the first chapter in which both the style both the epistemological position assumed unveil such a fascination. In the second chapter, the trend of Tactical Urbanism is deconstructed starting by its very name. The methodology is also soaked with poststructuralist references and insights, such as the space given to the positionality of the researcher, the transparency of the sampling process and the choice of following the suggestions of the informants. Finally, all the three empirical chapters owe a lot to poststructuralist authors and theories, from the analysis of the boundaries of legitimate scientific knowledge to framing the construction of an expert authority

as a political act, through the exploration of a geography of friendships and soft links.

A second aspect that makes a *fil rouge* emerge is that the dissertation offers a certain uniformity in the structure of the empirical chapters. Each of them faces one feature of the notion of expertise, namely its being *constructed*, *mobile* and *political*. It could be noted that their order could be different without impacting the work. As already stated in the introduction, the very division is artificial: the fact that expertise is constructed makes it political; it is mobile right because it is constructed; and the act of moving (or not moving) is political as well. Respectively for each aspect, they are all organized around a question, which offers insights and direction. Starting from the interviews, the chapters use the empirical data to test some theories that could offer a perspective on the posed question, without the ambition to properly answer that.

The process is bidirectional: it is explored what the data could add to the debate and, vice versa, how the theoretical debate could help understanding the field.

It is a duty of this conclusion also to highlight where this *fil rouge* is missing.

For example, while the empirical chapters are all connected, but they may miss a sharp connection with the theoretical chapter on Tactical Urbanism, and this a first critical issue I would like to highlight. The bridge between Tactical Urbanism and the so-called "Professionals of the Unplanned" is maybe too discretionary. The groups I interviewed rarely use the term *tactical,* and it is not to be taken for granted that they would accept to be included in such a framework. However, as it should be clear from chapter 2, Tactical Urbanism is just an arbitrary nomenclature for a trend, and the point is not whether to endorse or not this specific name.

There are at least other two weaknesses that I cannot neglect.

First, the research is very focussed on contemporary times, while a deeper investigation of the historical roots of the "collective of architects" could have enriched the understanding of present times. Indeed, there is a tradition of collectives in the realm of architecture and overlooking this legacy had been a mistake. Even if it is also true that just one group interviewed mentioned theoretical references, the situationists, while all the others seem independent by such a legacy. Another missing aspect is a proper investigation of the role of *space* on the phenomenon. Indeed, a geographical question which could arise is: which are the spatial implications, if any, of this process of professionalization? The notion of space, despite being indirectly present since these groups are dealing with urban transformation, is rarely mobilized. There are no references on how the space is influencing such process of professionalization.

There are then of course several things along the research process that could have been done differently. For example, assessed that expertise is a collective construction, it would have made sense to interview more kinds of actors. Just to name a few possibilities, it would have been pertinent to interview the organizers of the mentioned exhibitions, the professors of the post-graduate courses and the universities promoting them, the students attending these courses and so on. Alternatively, in order to involve more actors, I could have followed the connections of one group and see where this process could lead, maybe towards actors I would not imagine. This latter option, however, would have meant to focus on just one group, losing the overall view.

And offering an overall view putting these groups in a broader framework is the main result of the entire study. Indeed, this research demonstrates that there is a bigger picture than one group of friends having fun building up wood benches in a square.

In conclusion, the *fil rouge* of this work is to take the agency of these practitioners seriously. On one side, this dissertation avoids offering an edulcorated view on precarious actors, and on the other side it does not represent them just as victims of a neoliberal system.

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APPENDIX A

A *Grand Tour* of contemporary practices

Overview on the groups interviewed

LIST (alphabetical order)

- **Architetti di strada**

- **Ateliermob**

- **ATIsuffix**

- **Collectif Baya**

- **Cooperativa E.S.T.**

- **Collectif etc**

- **DeForma**

- **Esterni**

- **Järfälla**

- **Kiez.Agency**

- **Labzip+**

- **Love**

- **Metriquali**

- **Orizzontale**

- **Plinto**

- **Praxis** *(joint interview with Rivularia)*

- **Rigenerazioni Urbane**

- **Rivularia**

- **Snark**

- **Toestand**

NB: For the italian cases, the presented excerpts from the interviews have been translated to english by the author

ARCHITETTI DI STRADA

"Casa di Isabella", one of the headquarters of the association (shared with other groups) . Own picture.

ABOUT THE NAME

Literally 'street architects'. "we had chosen to put architects in the name because to regenerate you usually need material operations and you need a technician, even for small things"

BACKGROUND

mixed: architecture, sociology, communication manager, human rights lawyer

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

It is a non-profit association

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

How did all started back in 2010?

The idea was born among friends, we wanted to have the freedom of doing something for our city, without too many costraints, we were already all professionally qualified and already working. Some friends told us ' why don't you do something' and then we started. We liked the idea of being the bridge between the municipality and the people. At the beginning our focus was pretty much on the liveability of the city, and we mean also little things, you know, sometimes it is enough to take away a parking plot and then a baby carriage can go...we worked a lot on accessibility, for example we put a ramp on some steps in (...) Then we organized also seminars and conferences, it was pretty much a work of communication and divulgation, we showed projects of regeneration from below, of communities appropriating spaces, allin order to say 'something can and should be done!'

And how have you financed the projects at the beginning?

Everything was self-financed, and we wanted to do something non-profit, we are all volunteers, we had never being paid and we are proud of that (...) there have been some rembursement for the expenses, for the materials, but small things... (...)

I see, and the group had been stable in the years or it had changed?

As associates we are the same as the beginning, we are 7, the same of the beginning, then depending on the projects somebody is more active now and then (...)

However, you have often interns, right? I have spoken with some people of kiez.agency, you almost "incubated" them..

Yes, I think we can say that we are a kind of incubator. You know, we gained credibility and legitimacy over the years. And we are the same people, but we do different things, you know, we are very flexible, you have to be flexible to stay in the street, maybe sometimes you have an idea, you think to do the things in a way, and

then you have to change idea...we adjust ourselves. For example, this space where we are, it was claimed by the inhabitants of the area, not by us. Situations are very fluid, people meet, create a network (...) Then often the inhabitants need a technician, maybe you have some ideas, let's say you want to manage a public space, maybe to take away a little fencing or to put a bench, you need an expert, as a private citizen it is hard, maybe you don't know how to do it.

(...) What about future perspectives?

well, being the situation that fluid it is hard to make plans, all the projects are short-term, you can not be sure to have certainties.

(...)

(At the end of theinterview...)

A curricular intern present at the interview: well, she said it is just volunteering, but in my case I would really like to turn it into a job!

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They contribute to create community centres in peripherical areas of the city and then use them as open workshops

Intentionally everybody is a voluntary worker, many of the founders are already retired.

APPROACH

"informal participation and light commitment, for all (...) to show people that you can be an agent, you can change things, even small things, but you can do them"

EVOLUTION

A group of friends decides to do something to improve the liveability of their city

This city could be better!

"A small thing is better than nothing" is the philosophy of the group

Focus on the accessibility in the city

Interventions to improve the liveability of public spaces

A number of students join the association to help and to learn...

...and what's next?

ATELIERMOB

*Partecipatory project "Working with the 99%", Source: www.ateliermob.com

BACKGROUND

They are all archictets

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

It has multiple identities: a firm + the NGO named "Working with the 99%"

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

[I explain a bit the core of my research]

You know, I met two weeks ago another researcher from Brazil working on these topics, he was focussing on Lisbon, and he said he was struggling to understand how strong the ohenomenon is here, how the groups are working...And I said him, we are 10-12 here in this studio, but we are connected to many more people, such as artists, architects, militants and we work a bit all together, let's say we are around 50 people in this network here in lisbon. And we have references mostly from outside Portugal, mostly in Spain, but also people from Portugal working somewhere else, such as in Brazil and in Angola....furthermore, we are now part of a european network, I ampart of the direction, it was founded in the Netherlands, it is an association of city makers (...) the name is "Recreators". We are the only ones from the Southern Europe,they re all from the North..it is about cooperative movements. We are a cooperative as well, but also a firm, we are both. The cooperative is more recent, it was born with the project "Working with the 99%".

And when is the firm born?

In 2005. (....) I and Andrea are the founders...we were 4 at the beginning.

(...)

Before I had been working in Italy, in Rpme, at Fuksas office, exactly what I am doing now, right? Well, besides jokes, I liked it there, I learned a lot (...)

We are working a lot now (...) there are different situation inwhich you may need an architect..for example, you know, there had been thehuge fire and we had been called to study and to do something on the area...(...) and we work a lot also in the issue of housing, also about the laws, we had some conversation with the government...this is not so normal for an architectural firm, but we do also this.

(...)

we are also working on a big center for homeless people, the biggest of the city...and we have to make a project, but also to be creative because we cannot

close the structure, it has to stay open all the time because it is needed...thus, somehow we have to do a job of design thinking and think about a process...

(...)

we really care about the concept of autonomy, we need to be independent. We always stay by the side of the locals, of the inhabitants, and it does not matter if the administration is involved and it is paying, we define a strategy and this strategy can be against the adminsitration or be in line..

Do you define your work somehow?

Architecture "de intervenção", which is the way to refer to singer-songwriters...while I really dislike the name "social architecture" because it means that an architecture not social could exist, and I think that architecture is always social. (...) For me "de intervenção" means to stay among people and to foster the will of emancipation and self-organization...it is not just physical restoration, it is about a community...

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They have a regular office

Most of their projects are paid (private commissions and public fundings)

APPROACH

"for us it is essential to be among people, to listen to them (...) we usually start from local organizations, and if there are not, we try to foster self-organization"

EVOLUTION

Two Portuguese friends work in architectural offices in Italy...

...they decide to come back in Portugal and start their own office...

Participatory process

Self-building practices

..focys on the issue of accessibility...

..and on the right to housing...

Their project "Working with the 99%" was awarded with the Future Cities Prize during the 13th Venice Architecture Biennal in 2012...

Let's work with the 99%

...and in 2016 they create the non-profit cooperative: Trabalhar com os 99%

ATI SUFFIX

*Project "Luxurious sniffing", Istanbul 2014. Source: www.atisuffix.net/odorati

ABOUT THE NAME

*In the italian grammar, the suffix "-ati" is used both for the past participle and the imperative form.
Example: "Disturbàti" [past participle] means we are bothered [by something] and "Distùrbati" [imperative] is an invitation to be bothered yourselves as well.*

BACKGROUND

Mixed: three architects, one philosopher, and one artist

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

At the moment they were an informal group, but they were going to become a cultural association

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

(...) How is your relationship with the university here?

Maria: there are multiple and soft links...for example, we collaborated to a workshop at the master Arti Civiche... it was also a way for us to experiment with pedagogy...

Serena: yes, well, Arti Civiche and Francesco [Careri, from Stalker/ON] is a bit a starting point for all of us, we shared this kind of education...but then we feltthe need to emancipate ourselves...you know, to find out our own methodology, to be free to experiment, especially concerning the issue of participation, which is a very complicated matter (...) Somehow, in each project we work a lot on interaction, every project implies an action and a reaction from the audience...actually we would like to blurr as much as possible the border between us, initiators, and the audience, we are not interested in this line dividing us, if we can delete it, we are happy... and in order to destroy this border we do a little bit of everything, wedon't have a typical output...

Maria: yes, indeed, it is hard that somebody calls us for a project and gives us a commission...you know, if

you take a collective expertof self-building practices is easier, you call them to build something, while in our case there is always a kind of "undefinedness" on the output, and this sometimes makes things harder for us, but sometimes it is also what makes us appreciated...

Panagiotis: the only thing that we can assure is to have fun!

Serena: yes, there is a playful aspect that is very important to us

Panagiotis: Also for us...we are not looking for fame, it is about having fun and be well (...) we workedalot on matters such as the free time, also about losing time, things that are a bit the contrary of the common sense...

And in this sense it is also a political stance,I would say..

Panagiotis: yes, exactly

Serena: then the limit most of the time is that the output, even when it is nice, cannot tell everything, all the theorethical work behind it, all the process, it is hard to make it emerge...we discuss a lot on everything, we

face the topic assuming different perspectives for a long time and at the end often the output..well..it is maybe a little thing

(...)

Would you like to add something?

(...) Serena: one thing against which we go often is the inability of the institutions to be flexible...there aren't the tools, the rules and the procedures to welcome our practice. It is fine since it is aprovocation or a subversive instance, then it is tollerated, but then, it wiuld be not bad to start doing something for real, to changethe system (...) this thing of legalizing a primary concern Maria: yes, but it ialso very controversial...when you have skills which are not totally acknowledged and when you want to keep things informal...sometimes to add a rule or a law is not helping

(...)

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They have no office

Everyone has another job

APPROACH

"we start from an initial intuition, then if we get an input we change our plans...sometimes what naturally comes is more fruitful than what you planned"

EVOLUTION

They met each others and then...

...a series of very eccentric and creative projects...

Performances

Workshops

Provocations

15th Venice Architecture Biennale

Let's steal from the other pavillions

invisibility coaks

Students of Francesco Careri [Stalker/ON] and other friends

Collecting smells in Instanbul before gentrification

Exploring marginality in Rome

Introducing the notion of collective illegality in the exhibition on bottom-up urban initiatives

...and many more...

COLLECTIF BAYA

Flyer of the first edition of the Festival organized by the collective

In-person interview

28/01/2017

Spokeperson: Morgane (one of the founders)
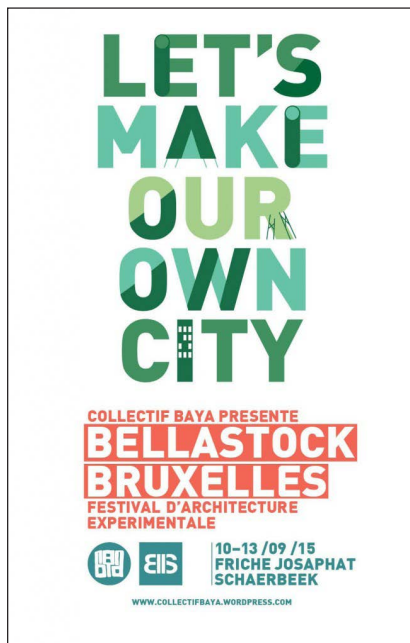
Active since: 2014

Based in: Brussels, Belgium

Main activities: organization of the Festival Bellastock Brussels, workshops and projects on self-building

Link: www.collectifbaya.com

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

The Festival [Bellastock Brussels] had quite a big role...
Yeah it is actually the reason we were brought together, so yeah, it has a major role for us

Are you doing other projects beside the Festival?
Yeah, directly after the first festival we started to have a few solicitations from other associations. We were called by..well it is not an association, not legally at least.. they collect food and prepare some lunches using leftovers at the market abattoir … this association mainly constitued by people without documents and so ..last year we had a big arrival of immigrants in brussels, there was a camp that was established in park Maximilian (...) where you have the instituition where you can demand asyle and that's why they did this camp here. It was right at the time of our first festival, we couldn't really help them out, we gave the pallets after the festival and we kept in touch with them because we knew them and in febraury or janaury they contacted us because, well, the camp was dismantled and a group of people who were cooking there, decided to go to Calais and to build a kitchen and some other facilities ... they

BACKGROUND
They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

They are a non-profit association (Association Sans But Lucratif - asbl)

got few material for free from an entreprise and they wanted us to help with the building process..and we did that and then we had a few other projects (...)

These are anyway all volunteering/activist actions, right?

Yeah, this is something we are trying to change now because most of us graduated last year or are going to graduate shortly, but it is not easy

(...)

Did it happen to work with the public sector?

The only thing we got is this place

Ah, and this had been given by?

By the municipality of Ixelles and we don't pay for it... it is phenomenon that is happening in brussels...the public insitutions are trying to use the associative milieu to make them take care of empty spaces. Few years ago we had a new regulaton regarding the problem of empty buildings belonging to the public, so they instituteted the "convention d'occupation precaire" (...) a kind of way to legalize the squats and moreover the municipalities got the obligation to make a list, to

list up all the empty buildings of theterritories, was in 2013 it barely recent so the problem here is that a lot of communes have empty building themselvel. Friction they wanna list it how they can list ... they risk they might have to pay taxes of stuff like that..so yeah and so lot of municipalities looking for associations to occupy...they want to destroy it, but the project is not launched yet, they wanted to do something in it in the meanwhile.

(...)

Do yu think your work is political?

I believe yes, yeah...it depends on the projects, but most of them were political yes. Even with the festival because of how we choose the site...the first edition was on an ancient railway in Scharbeeck, it is a huge huge empty site and it belongs to a society that was created in the '90s by the Region to acquire sites like that and they are now thinking how to develop the area (...) we did not achieve to really integrate these questions in the festival, but it was something we felt close to (...) And then when we help refugees, it gets political you know...

FUNDING STRATEGIES

The workshop/office (called Le Nid) is provided for free by the municipality of Ixelles (City of Brussels)

Despite the ambition to make an income out of it, at the moment everybody is a voluntary worker

APPROACH

"we are still trying to define a common vision (...) actually the only common point that we have is that we want to self-build things and try to help people to self-build"

EVOLUTION

Informal group of friends at the faculty of architecture

Festival Bellastock Paris

Why not in Brussels?

Creation of a formal association (asbl) for the organization of the Festival

They got new projects by word of mouth after the Festival

Building a mobile kitchen for Calais with local activists

Urban gardening in the spaces of the University

...and what's next?

COOPERATIVA E.S.T. (Educazione, Società, Territorio)

Intervention in Gasparotto square in Padua. Own picture.

BACKGROUND
mixed, experts in: political science, environmental engeneering, economics, psycology, communication

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
Workers' cooperative

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

I would like to know the steps which took you to constitute the cooperative...

The main driving force had been a group of friends which already shared the collective experience of managing a ricreational space in Padua, they organized concerts, events, shows, cultural activities, it was in the city center...some of them were also active as students and then decided to do something concrete and they opened this space when they graduated, that experience was managed completely in the free time, as a voluntary work, then someone started to question if they could live out of that, they were looking for a more entrepreneurial legal configuration and the idea of the cooperativa came out. I was often there and I knew them, we were friends, we shared friendship and a certain political vision, we shared some values (...) the core was made of 6-7 persons, with different backgrounds, the idea of urban regeneration through co-working spaces came from Elena Ostanel, who was working on these topics as a researcher, anyway we all liked it, it allowed to

combine different skills. (...) Moreover they already had experience with the co-working because they did it in the space they first managed, during the day itwas a co-working and in the venings a recreational space with concerta and cultural events, it was a way to occupy it during all the day (...).

And how do you managed to get the space?

(...) Nobody pointed this square to us, we started to be interested in this square [Gasparotto square] because initially it happened that the public administration would offer us a space at the ground floor because of the beneficial effect we could have on the square, and they own some of them..however the process took ages and it was very complicated, thus we decided to ask to the private owner of other properties on the square and we finally got a deal with him. It was not easy because he was not getting our mission, he did not see the potential of our activities on the square, you know, he could then benefit because he has other properties here and if we regenerate the space, their value raises.

(...) However, at the end we just pay the rent and we have the space. (...) We took part to some competitions and we managed to pay some works on the space, small things. We found then opportunities to start and fund other things in the square, the collective garden, the wood tandem...we work for the improvement of the square and I think it is working, there are now two new commercial activities, they came after us and I think because of us (...)

And so, it is something full-time or you just sometimes work together whan you see an open call?

There is a constant effort for the management of the co-working, we do it because we believe init, besides the available budget (...) we had been always active in the city, we have the idea that we want to put our skills into service. It depends. And then when in a tender notice there is the wayto pay someone, also a little bit, then the people which worked themost on that get also some money.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

The co-working space they manage is also used as an office for the cooperative.

They all have another income (they are mostly freelance professional consultants or employed in the university as researchers)

APPROACH

"Doing urban regeration means 'manning' the area, be there long-term. We started in the square with the co-working space, then we did other things, we live the place"

EVOLUTION

The core group was born managing a community center in Padua (ARCI CLUB)

It's nice to work together

IDEA: co-working space as a catalyst of urban regeneration

Long-term commitment to a specific place (Gasparotto square in Padua)

Active co-working

Collective garnening

Social public events

COLLECTIF ETC

*Project "L'épopée Puget:acte 1", Marseille 2015. Source: www.collectifetc.com/realisation/la-halle-pu-get/

ABOUT THE NAME

"By adding "Etc." to the word 'collective', the group acknowledges its state of perpetual reconfiguration and refuses to restrict itself to a specific number of members" Thierry Paquot. From the intro of the book Le Détour de France

BACKGROUND
They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
Association loi 1901

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

I read a bit how it was born, then I did not get if the people were working with the collective are the same as the beginning or they chaged and you got some new people...I mean, how flexible is the structure?

We are working on it, to get it more flexible, because it was really strong from the beginning, we were 10-12 working together, and now ...we are 6 from the detour and 5 new people

(...) and they started with an internship or how did the new enrollement go?

Yes, we have like a system in France, we call it civil services...so they get paid by the government to work in an association for few months and then we took some of them

Yeah, I also read you are not offering non paid internship, that's also for your political stances?

It is complicated to ask to someone to come and work for us for free...so we are not ourselves really well paid... the best amount we get it is 900 euro per month, so it is not a lot, but we cannot afford to pay someone

by ourselves, so this thing of the civic services…so everybody is paid the same, but the cost is not the same, for the structure I mean

(...)

Do you work mostly with commissions or self-initiating projects, or responding to some call for projects or?

I think now it is 4 projects out of 5 are commissioned, and 1 on 5 self-initiated.

And is there a form that you prefer…of course, they have all advantages and disadvantages, but..

It depens on the people of the group..I mean, I prefer self-initiated…I think some times is more interesting and we can explore different things, but like..I don't know.. you know, we changed structure and we opened to other people..so it is complete different job and we could do that because we had some commissioned projects on the other side…

So of course, it opens up other possibilities…

And we try to have a balance between projects we

don't get paid for it, and projects that are paid…we don't have a black side..it is just all the projets we do, it is because we want to do it and so we communicate about it…we don't have any other website with the projects to show to get commissions..

And it happens also to refuse some projects?

After the detour we never went to ask for projects because the projects are coming..we have a lot of demand so we have to refuse like 1 project on 2…half of the projects maybe..because we are not interested in that project or in the people who want to do that .. or maybe if it is an instituition that wants to work without paying, then we refuse..or maybe we just don't have the time…so we try to..when it is interesting and we don't have time we call other friends…when it is not interesting, we just don't answer..

(...)

FUNDING STRATEGIES

At the moment of the interview, they were renovating a space in Marseille that they rented. It will be both the office both an open space for the area.

Most of their projects are financed (mostly by the public actor)

APPROACH

"we usually say we are architects beause we want to show that you can do architecture also in a different way"

EVOLUTION

I am bored to work in a traditional office

DETOUR DE FRANCE

A tour around France discovering innovative urban practices

The Detour becomes a publication

The group starts many project based on the philosophy of the open construction site

They settle down in Marseille

...and the group starts to change and grow...

DE:FORMA

*Initiatives within the cycle of conferences"About a living laboratory"
source: official facebook page of de:forma

Flyer of the fifth seminar of the cycle "Road as a living laboratory". Guests: Fracesco Careri from the collective Stalker/ON (Rome), the organizers of the walking lab "Laboratorio Via Francigena" (Venice), and the group About (Venice)

BACKGROUND
They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
It is an informal group

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

(...) Have you founded an association or are you an informal group?

Giulia: by now we are just an informal group. I tell you what happened: basically while we were working at the Politecnico, we got the proposal to contribute to the exhibition "Festival dell'Architettura" last summer (...) we participated with a temporary installation called "Occupy Campidoglio", which is a neighborhood in Turin. The event was called "open" and it was a series of diffused interventions in the area, with the idea of fostering territorial marketing and self-branding and to give impulse to the micro-economy of the area.

I did not get how precisely you arrived there, in that neighborhood...

Giulia: mmh...let's say it was an open call...actually we had some connections...anyway, we got selected with twenty other artists. We did a kind of "living building" for 4 days, then walks and explorations and we built some wood furniture for a yard (...) the it happened that a local association of dwellers which were very active

got in touch with us and they started to involve us in their activities and this convinced us to participate to an open call of the municipality for the management of a space in Campidoglio, in order to start a kind of community hub (...) and we won it so we are managing it from April and the contract will expire in December.

Nice, many things are coming out one after another...

Giulia: Yes, and then the municipality had chosen that neighborhood to experiment a "smart square" and we got involved. Furthermore, we organized some open events and so on. Basically, everytime something was organized there we got involved somehow, sometimes building things or as technical support.

(...)

After all these issues, why not an association?

Giulia: well, you know, the informal group was born as a temporary activity, we were all students (...) To be a formal association would be better because then you can participate to many calls, but we had always been

very unstable. People got graduated, somebody left for the erasmus, somebody found a job (...) you know, you are young and you don't know where to invest your time. (...) It would be nice to make it a profession, but I don't know how it would be possible. Maybe once that you are an association, you can start to participate to calls, maybe the one from big institutions, such as Fondazione San Paolo, or crt, cariplo, Fitzcarraldo, these are all institutions with some money...otherwise you can try to work with the public sector, but you never know... (...) it is quite hard, since we don't have money to invest, even if you win something you usually need to pay in advance. And then if you are a non-profit association you can not make profit, you need to invest all the money in the projects, it is complicated (...). We are almost 30 years old and we have also other needs, you know, you have to afford to rent a place and so on...

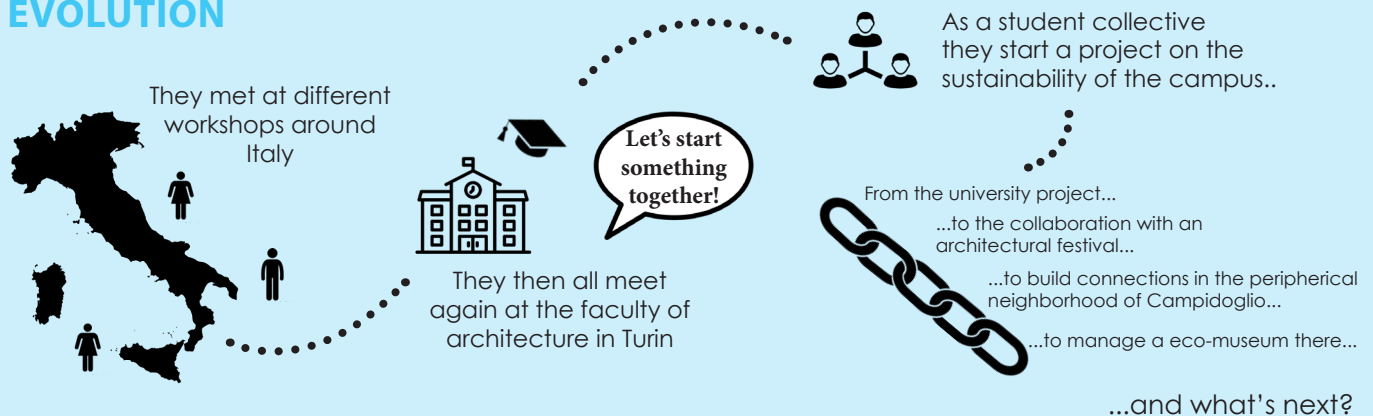## FUNDING STRATEGIES

They don't have a fixed space/office

At the moment everybody is a voluntary worker in the spare time from another job or besides the studies.

APPROACH

"we felt a responsability towards improving our environment, thus we started from the university (...) art, architecture or self-building are just tools"

EVOLUTION

They met at different workshops around Italy

They then all meet again at the faculty of architecture in Turin

Let's start something together!

As a student collective they start a project on the sustainability of the campus..

From the university project...

...to the collaboration with an architectural festival...

...to build connections in the peripherical neighborhood of Campidoglio...

...to manage a eco-museum there...

...and what's next?

ESTERNI

*Office of Esterni at Cascina Cuccagna (one of the spaces managed by them in Milan). Own picture.

Aerial view of "Cascina Cuccagna" in Milan.
Source: www.cuccagna.org/portal/IT/handle/?page=progetto

BACKGROUND

Mixed: architecture, engineering, literatute, philosophy, dramaturgy

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

They havemultiple identities, the name "esterni" is just a brand. It include a cultural association named "aprile" and a company Ltd named "posti".

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

(...) Speaking about self-definition, how is esterni describing itself today?

Mmmh, it is not easy to say. We discussed recently about updating the "mission" section on our website, we like the definition "multi-local enterprise", it is a word we invented, but our communication manager hadn't seen it yet. We are moslly concerned with local communities, our main activities now are civic design, architectural restoration, cultural production, but we also manage a bar and a restaurant and we are involved in the hospitality sector.

You mentioned local communities, but it does not seem you are very into traditional participation...

Right, not at all...at conferences around I always look as an assohole, but we had never believed a lot to the partipatory processes (...) In the '90s we received a lot of critiques because they were saying that we should have consulted more people, organize participatory procesees and so on, they were all asking us "how have you decided what to do inside". But, you know, not to be arrogant, but most of the times you see what

is needed in the area, you know it, you don't need to directly ask. (...) And also I think that who is taking the risk and putting the money should have some decision power, of course keeping a level of common sense, and respect of the place. You can do something wrong, sure, but, you know, you can do something wrong also if you ask the opinions to the neighbors.

And what if you had to find some key words?

The key words which are common now are social impact (...) which has also a political point, and actually we also entered in the politics of the city, with a civic list, it was an experimentation, I wouldn't say a provocation because we believed in it (...) we prepared 120 ideas and projects on the city, a mix, however we did not win. (...)

Do you organize workshops or are you involved in any master program?

No, but we got invited quite often, to tell our story or make a lecture, or often university classes are taken here at Cascina Cuccagna. Furthermore, we get a

lot of interns from the university, right now mostly from communication, graphics, and for the things you more concerned with from the polythecnic, the IUAV, Naba..

You are meaning for the civic design, right? Was it more present at the beginning?

Yes, because at the beginning we did more ephemeral things,we created situations, while now we have more structured projects, like here at cascina cuccagna

Do you have any references, realities you take inspiration from?

Surely yes, because it is impossible to not have, however I wouldn't know what to answer. We never managed to theorize a lot, we are not scholars, we spend a lot of time doing things, even building them and we never had time, but neither the ability to theorize. We mentioned often Ugo La Pietra, mostly froman artistic perspective...but you know if you ask someone else in the group they may have different answers...

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They have an office at Cascina Cuccagna, a space they manage.

They have around 50 employees (full and helf time; mostly in the food service) + 5 founding members (full-time job) + consultants.
The bar and the restaurant are the main sources.

APPROACH

"after 20 years we are still inventing our own profession... we find a space that we like and then we think how to make it alive"

EVOLUTION

At the beginning theywere in thier twenties and they were called "the situationistis"...

Open meeting every tuesday

Fostering the creation of a local network

Ephemeral initiatives on public space

Organizational meetings at home

in collaboration with a collective od dwellers they restore and reopen a derelict farmstead in Milan...

Cascina Cuccagna

...and then a chain of new initiatives...

They open other cultural centres "(such as Palazzi Litta, BASE, ...)

they regularly organize the "Milano Film Festival"

...and what's next?

JARFÄLLÄ

JÄRFÄLLA

*Zine Jarfalla
Source: https://www.collettivojarfalla.com

ABOUT THE NAME

"*Jarfällä is a city in Sweden. It was one of the first cities in the world that tried to get rid of cars, completely. It did not manage to do it...it is a failed utopia and that is what we liked*"

BACKGROUND

They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

It is an informal group

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

Tell me about how the collective is born..were you classmates at architecture?

Yes, we were 5 friends and classmatesand then basically we are two active members. We started focussing on editing, so we publish a zine and this is the main thing we do, but we are also trying to do some installations, still related to the activities of the zine...the magazine is just on paper and not online, first because our target is our faculty, but also because we liked the idea of producing a material object, we wanted a relationship with the object.

And was your initiative supported by the university?

Not really...and we also wanted to create a network outside it...so when we organized a party to launch the magazine we did not use a space of the university...we collaborated with the interculturl mediation center of Ferrara, it has an office in two buildings that are known as the skyscrapers of Ferrara..it is a kind of difficult area, even if in Ferraraproblems are not so big, but stiill it has a kind of stigma, it is near the trainstation and it is

considered a bad place (...) our idea was to make the event inside there because, you know, at the faculty we talk a lot about marginal areas and so on, but then we never go there for real, we don't know them fromthe inside, so we wanted to bring students there. The topic of the first volume was utopia, and these buildings are a sort of utopia in Ferrara, like an island where nobody is going, an island that actually potentially could become lived. It was nice, for one evening to have such a mix, there were both inhabitants and students... (...) the event went very well, I think also because of the promotion we did, we created a kind of mystery around the magazine because the team is anonimous and this fosters curiosity...and actually also suspicion, somebody does not like that we are not standing with our faces for the magazine...and also, I think, it is disturbing to not follow the celebration of the author that is so common in architecture...

(...)

And when you wull graduate, would you like to go on with the magazine?

well, we would like...the project will evolve..now the university is our target, and we will have to change this. I think an architectural journal lookng more at the underground and at the small studios is needed, it is in these small realities that we will probably end up working. There is a world not that explored and known of people who are architects and do other things, maybe artistic ones and it could be nice to explore that.

(...) for the next volume we would like to do something different, maybe to organizean exhibition and try to rpomote it around the city, something like a diffused exhbition (...). Then we have another project we would like to develop..an app on internships..you know, how the jobmarket goes and the unpaid internship in architecture are so common...we would like to create a kind of airbnb of the studios, so that people can leave references and maybe this would help to share information and to avoid bad places...

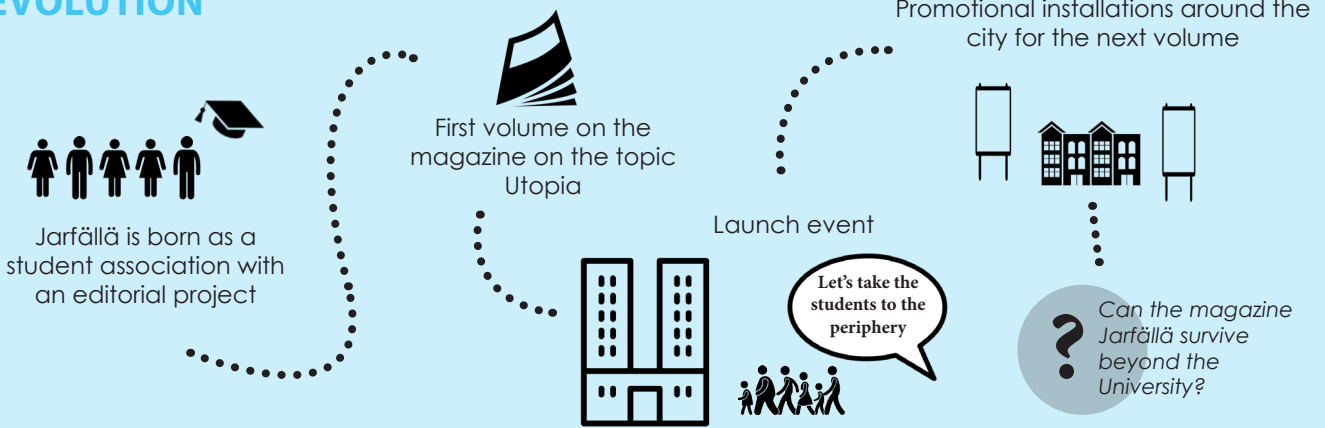## FUNDING STRATEGIES

They have no office

Till now it is all self-financed. they sell the magazine, but the prize does not cover all the costs. They are thinking to a crowd-funding for the next volume.

APPROACH

"we want to foster dialogue and discussions...architects are obsessed with designing, but also doing research and think matter!"

EVOLUTION

Jarfällä is born as a student association with an editorial project

First volume on the magazine on the topic Utopia

Launch event

Let's take the students to the periphery

Promotional installations around the city for the next volume

Can the magazine Jarfällä survive beyond the University?

KIEZ.AGENCY - *fostering urban opportunities*

In-person interview

20/10/2017

Spokeperson: Luca and Anna Laura (two out of three members)

Active since: 2016

Based in: Bologna, Italy

Main activities: architectural competitions, support to citizen initiatives (such as the community-managed space "INstabile")

Link: www.kiez.agency

LABORATORIO ZIP+

The team at the Festival "New Generation" in Rome. Source: official facebook page of kiez.agency

ABOUT THE NAME

"kiez is an untranslatable [german] word because it does not refer to the physical space, but to a community of people living together (...) not a formal community, a perceived one"

"agency is a referenceto the spatial agency notion by Jeremy Till"

BACKGROUND

They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

At the moment kiez.agency is just a brand. They are planning then to be a network of freelance professionals.

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

(...) So it happened that you met within the association "Architetti di strada", right?

Luca: Yes, we met there, in different periods of our lives...I was graduated since an year and I was looking for something, I don't know exactly what, let's say for the possibility to explore territories that the professional practice don't allow you to discover...to work on space without a client that you have to satisfy, or better different types of clients, people that usually don't go to architects (...) there was the possibility to explore very precarious situations, in which people cannot afford a professional advise. And there we both understood that it could become a profession, maybe harder than others, unexplored. The people we met did not know the association most of the time, we were saying we were part of Architetti di Strada and they did not got the point, they thought we were looking for clients (...)

Anna Laura: everytime people asked me 'why are you doing this? Who is paying you?' and I have always to specify that nobody was paying.

Well, there we met and we started in being interested in other ways of working (...)

Luca: and then with Architetti di Strada we met also Leonardo. He founded the social street in an area of Bologna and he was one of the active promoter of the project Instabile Portazza [a community creative hub] and they contated Architetti di Strada to have some technical support and then we met...I was then the co-tutor of the thesis of Leonardo

(...)

Is it a formal association now?

Luca: no, it is just a brand (...) we had the need to have a name because we participated to a competition last year, the one of MIBACT (...) and with that project we started to shift our approach from maps and planimetries to try to draw a process, a scheme. Which is something we had already done with Instabile, (...) we used one of the table for a scheme and not for a map, it was a big scheme putting together the administrations,

the designers, the inhabitants, the resources and the unplanned events...that was the first step to shape our approach...and then we said, let's try to work this way (...)

Woud you say that we need a new vocabulary?

Well, I don't know...the important thing is that we aknowledge that there are new needs, then if we want to call architct and understand that the architect needs to do also other things or if we want to use another term is fine...without falling in the trap of a rush of new words, every year with a new definition...as the 'urban regenerator'.. to me it is fine that they call me architect, since they they understand thet I do architecture differently, I don't stay all the day long in my office (...)

Anna Laura: I did a master named 'polis maker' (...) then we were called 'city makers' (...) there are many possible names, could be the architect, but you can have also different backgrounds...you make projects, that's it...

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They use as an office INstabile Portazza, the Creative Community Hub they helped to create

They won a call for ideas which would be potentially a great commission - they are still waiting

APPROACH

"making things together creates ties, which are hard to develop just speaking (...) we want to materially do things together, to make people agents"

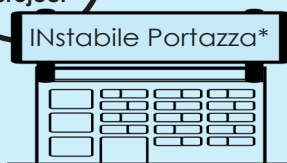## EVOLUTION

Ph.D in urban design and policy

Master in "polis making"

Master in "Social Enterprises' management"

Volunteering association "Architetti di strada"

other associations

Community Creative Hub project

Local Social Street

INstabile Portazza*

A place of active experimentation

Hey! It is nice to work together

They decided to participate to an architectural contest** on the regeneration of peripheral areas...

...and they won

What's next now?

* More info at www.instabileportazza.it
** Call for ideas "Periferie 2017" promoted by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities

LABZIP+

*Urban intervention "Salottino urbano" (urban living room) . Source: official facebook page of labzip+

ABOUT THE NAME

"zip had been decided with our gut (...) zip is the zipper, the idea is that it is a zip between territories, people, things (...) and the plus means we are open to something more, to a plus something or someone"

BACKGROUND

They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

It is a cultural association

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

(...) Now that you are an association you are open to commissions if they come, or maybe you are participating to open call..is there a formula that you prefer? Or, let's say, what do you think are the pros and cons of each formula?

Clara: it would be nice if there were calls/competitions... maybe we are notyet enough ready for competitions.. and there is also the fact that there are millions of people wanting todo things and notenough competitions, it could be complicated to win...we try when it regards something that we really care about, otherwise we propose a project..I don't know...

Chiara: it would really nice to win a competition...let's reason together on the point of the competition...on one side we like to be very independent on the way in which doing our research or choosing the topic...on the other side the competition has the huge advantag of giving you some money and that is essential, that had been oneof our biggest difficulty. We stated as a student collective, when you are a student yu don't have a structured life yet and then you can spend a lot

of time working on something you like without money because you are plenty of time and resources...but then when we graduated the dynamic had changed. we have less time because we all have another job, this is not our fist occupation, it is just volunteering. If we manage to win a big competition then we could also make some life choices, let's imagine you win a project that could last one year, then the some people could decide to modify his work schedule and dedicate more time to it...

(...)

You don't have an office or a space, right?

Chiara: No, that is in aprt because of how things went, but it had been also a choice because our will is not the one of focussing on one place, but to costantly move and discover new areas and sometimes this happens spontaneously, you star a project somewhere and there you meet someone that call you somewhere else...

Clara: it is like a chain, for instance this thing of the

"urban living rooms", we did not thought about it by ourselves, but slowly interacting with people it came out as a possibility (...) you know, that's the networking that everybody is promoting nowadays...

(...)

Is there a project you would choose as representative?

Chiara: well the work in Vallette had been the biggest one...and in Vallette we experienced thins thing of changing direction. We found very formative the diffuse interventions in the neighborhood, in the actions we found confirmation or refusal of the ideas we had on the area...to make a personal example: when I was at the Master of Temporiuso I was exposed to new methodologies and it had been great that, even if it was the first specialized course for me, I was plenty of references from my own practice...and I realized that you don't learn just studying or reading theories, but doing things, I realized that most of the things I had learnt came from my experience with zip...

FUNDING STRATEGIES
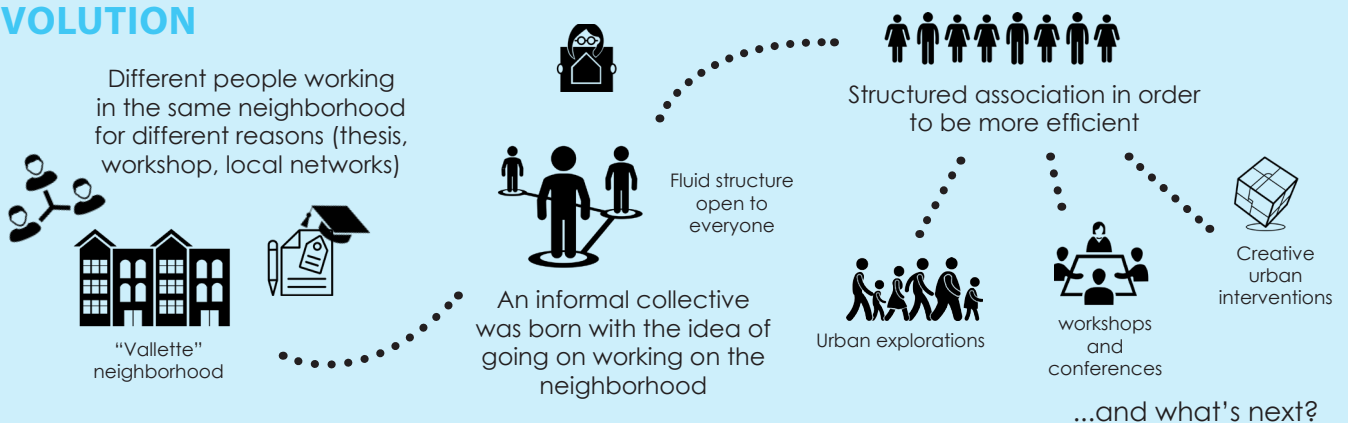
They don't have a fixed space/office

At the moment everybody is a voluntary worker in the spare time from another job.

APPROACH

"it happens that we start with an idea and we end up doing other things, but it is fine, our research is open, it could be that the focus you chose was not the right one"

EVOLUTION

Different people working in the same neighborhood for different reasons (thesis, workshop, local networks)

"Vallette" neighborhood

An informal collective was born with the idea of going on working on the neighborhood

Fluid structure open to everyone

Structured association in order to be more efficient

Urban explorations

workshops and conferences

Creative urban interventions

...and what's next?

LivingOutsideVEnice (LOVE)

B —————— G

*Inflatable installation around Venice, 2015. Source: www.facebook.com/AngolazioniUrbane

BACKGROUND
They are both architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
Multiple identities: studio B&G + cultural association LOVE

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

I reached you because of the group About, they told me about "Angolazioni Urbane"...but you have also other identities, right?

Yes, well, the association is our operative structure for this kind of things...at the beginning it had another name and other people...Angolazioni Urbane is the name of the project, we started it in 2010 nd we did three editions...

And the association was born with the first edition?

No and yes..it was already there, and I have always been part of cultural associations, mostly at San Donà di Piave..then we decided to start our own association, LOVE, because we wereinterested in the notion of open-source...there was also Sebastiano who was into the creative commons environment and he was interested in open-source softwares, while we liked the idea of this notion related to the design of public space...

(...)

we have a traditional studio, this one, and then the

association...the work we do for the association is all voluntary, not paid, but still we need something to access public fundings, you know, to print the flyers and so on...to cover the expenses, also for the artists we involve...most of the open calls were connected to the non-profit environment and we could not take part to the competitions as professional freelances, we needed an association...

(...)

With the association our interest is, and hes been from the beginning, the re-activation of urban spaces...Well, we started that we wanted to regenerate parts of the city, and now we work on a street, on a section...we scaled down a lot...maybe because at the beginning we were gettingmore money? maybe not...we started reasoning on a huge area in Marghera, and now we work on two flyovers in Mestre...AngolazioniUrbane is a means to read the territory. The idea is that we invite artists to look at the areas, they start something and then this becomes an insights fro the architects in order to develop a project.

And were the areas of the interventions chosen by you?

Yes...well, these areas in our city yes, because you need to know very well the place, you need to be a local... we are local here and we know where are the issues... last year we got an invitation in Udine, a studio involved us and wanted us to speak about our experience and it is fine, but we cannot come there and say what to do in udine, we don't know the place

(...)

In our opinion there is a lack of subjects to start different processes, to legalize things we mean, to create new rules and new routines. There are a lot of associations, but we need the public administration to start something if we want to work on the public space, but they miss competencies...we need to define skills, ok, to start something from below, but we need to make a collective and disciplinary reasoning about what we are doing, which is our role. I think beside the community taking over a space, there is the need of a project...

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They have a traditional office

They work as architects. The work for the association is voluntary, while the costs are covered through public fundings

APPROACH

"we think that if we create a critical mass of people promoting bottom-up initiatives, then we can lobby for new rules, laws and routines"

EVOLUTION

...they have an interest in the notion of open-source...

B&G is a traditional architectural office...

What could it be the impact of the open-source philosophy on the design of public spaces?

Project Angolazioni Urbane

artist

architect

marginal underpass

METRIQUALI

BACKGROUND
They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
Freelancers with a common platform

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

How is the experience of Metriquali born?

Metriquali is born more or less as a spin-off of LAN, I have to start from the beginning...with LAN I was doing things during my studies, it was a student association (...) we were mostly managing workshops and experimenting withmaterials, we were especially interested in organic architecture...we worked with bamboos and things like this. With these friends from LAN we took part to a public call by the Region, it was "principi attivi" and they would finance some projects. We proposed a project on self-building practices asa process of activation and appropriation of marginal areas. We wanted to introduce DIY in our region, to explore what it would imply, legally and pragmatically. We were 8 persons in total and the project lasted one year and half...it was a full-time job, but, you know, maybe paid one cent per day if we make the calculations...the call worked this way: they give you 25.000 euros and you decide how to use them, you have the responsability and you can do whatever you want and we invested almost everything on the project...we liked the job, we started

a conversation with the administration, we really wanted to introduce DIY buildings in our area (...) Soon after there was another call by the Region...it is a very open-minded region, it follows the approach of Buchain, something like I give you the respinsability, I don't tell you what you have to do or study, but I give you the possibility to do it yourself...this other call was named "laboratori dal basso": it workesd this way, they were not giving us money, but if you had a formative project or a series of seminars, they were financing all. We organized a festival that had been very formative for us, Festival Self-home, self-city, self-world

(...)

When we finished this projectwe started to ask ourselves what to do. As I said, we were basically volounteers and we have been working a lot...now we started to graduate and we had to think also to our future, what to do to get an income and so on...so we said "shall we go on by a professional point of view?" and then we decided, three of us, we decided to start and we

founded Metriquali. It was in 2015...we were all freelancrs and we decided that we would have always divided everything, we wereworking also alone, but everything, everymoney was shard, that was our philosophy. It worked well at the beginning, we did well, and we were putting all our time and energy in it, we even rented a space at a certainpoint because before we were meeting at my place andit was a bit too much...you know, I was in a phase in which the job is your life, the collegues are yourfriends, and there was no distinction between private life and professional one, but this thing has to end after a while...we worked all the time, also because, you know, we were not in the position of refusing anything, any work...we were interested in DIY buildings, in bio-architecture and in urban interventions, but we were also interested in getting some money so we wee also doing moe traditional projects...we needed money..

(...)

FUNDING STRATEGIES

After many meeting at home, they rented a space in Bari

They are professional freelancers.

APPROACH

"the product is not the most important thing for us, rather it is the process...the product, the building, is just easier to show, but we want to foster a different approach to the design and the construction process"

EVOLUTION

It started as a student collective called LAN

with a focus on organic architecture

Public fundings from Puglia Region

Competition "Principi attivi"

Competition "Laboratori dal basso"

What if...

Three friends decide to start the studio Metriquali as a proper job

Focus on self-building practices

Traditional architectural work

Seminars & Workshops

ORIZZONTALE -*Do it yourself architecture for common spaces*

orizzontale

*Project "Villa Fogulinas", 2016. Source: http://www. orizzontale.org/portfolio_page/villa-figulinas/#

BACKGROUND
They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
Orizzontale is a brand and they are freelancers

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

Can you tell me how the collective was born, how flexible it is and so on?

Well, for the last 5 years we have been the same people...the collective is born 6 years ago, and atthe beginnin we were more, we were ten, then in that phase, someone went away, someone new joined ...but well the core group we are 7 and we are all here...

And were you classmates at the university?

More or less, we were all at the same university, we had mutual friends and so on...two of us had a project and all the friends joined and that is how it is born

(...)

Do you usually self-initiate projects, or you take part to call for projects or..?

Well, at the beginning the projects were mostly self-initiated, now we get more commissions...anyway when we see some opportunities for a project we try to do it...

(...) and we always try to engagemore realities on the field, to work together with local associations and so on

(...)

And you don't work just on public space, right?

No no, let's say that self-building is the common ground, then we do it both on private space and public space. We like to experiment with the material and also this way we control all the process, from the design to the realization (...)

And when it is a private commision is it still the philosophy of the "open working-site" or not?

No no, in that case it is close, we are not flexible on this... we want to avoid a misunderstanding...open working site does not mean to have people working for free... thus, when the action s on public space and it is a moment for sharing, it makes sense to open it

(...)

Is there one of your projects that you find representative of your approach?

well...actually you can see it in each project ina different way...each one focusses on a difrent aspect...

on the process, on the interaction...(...) well maybe what is always there is our relationship with the wood as a material, it is the material, we use the most..but ok, then we look like carpenters...

Well, the issue of definitions is a tricky one, you mix architecture, interior design, planning, art...do you have a way to describe what you do?

well, each of us would answer in a different way I guess...maybe that is also the good point of us as a group, the variety of appraches (...) Overall, I think we do things that we like,then if you want to call it architecture, art or design, or even carpentry, I don't care..personally, I think it is architecture anyway

(...) Do you consider your work political?

when you deal with public space, everything is political...sometimes in antagonistic terms and sometimes more collaborative...we are thinking a lot lately on issues of legality and illegality, and especially on the differences beween legal and legitimate...

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They share a co-working space with another association

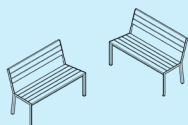It is a full-time job (technically it is freelance work)

APPROACH

"we like to exeriment with the material and with the process, from the design phase to the construction site (...) All in all, we do things that we like"

EVOLUTION

They met at the University at the Faculty of Architecture

They got some money from a Danish Artistic Foundation

They share an office space with a group of photographers

They start projects on the public spaces

Private commissions (interior design)

Winners of the Young Architects Program 2014

PROGETTIFICIO PLINTO

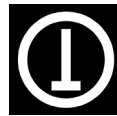*Pictures from the official FB page of the group www.facebook.com/plinto*

BACKGROUND
They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
It is a non-profit association

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

How did the collective start? You were all studying together, right?

Well, most of us, somebody was still studying architecture, bu in another faculty. Anyway, we went on doing something that already existed. There were some guys, older than us (...), they founded Plinto as a student organization and they were oorganizing workshops with the money forstudent initiatives. We met them at the university. They were going to graduate and they were concerned about plinto, as graduates they could not go on with the activities because the funding was for students, so we started to collaborate with them. Then they all graduated and left and we started to think what to do, we did seminars and workshops (...)

But then you went on also after the studies...

While we were still students we decided to create the formal association to participato to a call for project, for the artistic installation "INCUBO", a call open by the municipality. And then we realized that since we were a formal association we had access to a variety of calls

and there were many potential sources of fundings. Basically, we did the association for that, to have the access to public fundings.

And plinto as a student organization do not exist anymore?

No, unfortunately, not. We tried to do the same and to find some students, but we did not manage to do it.It would have been great if it would had evolved in the university, for example through a PhD. Some of us even tried, the idea was to create "a machine" in the university offering alternative workshops and so on. For us the focus at the beginning it was not directly on urban regeneration, but...let's say...a training ground, we wanted to create a permanent training ground! Our approach consisted to call people we admired and learn, we basically were just organizers.

(...)

At a certain point, after we graduated, there had been a turning point. We even argued a bit among us. Some

of us wanted a kind of "plinto 2.0", becoming for-profit, like an office. The idea eas to try to make a living out of it. This meant to really count the working hours, become clearer on the roles and the responsabilities. However, it was not easy. We were 5 people as a "core", then there were other 10 people participating some times, thus 15 people. Then, let's say, when we won a project we were thinking for how many paople it was sustainable, depending on how much it was paid. Le's say, it had 10 as a payment, then it is sustainable for 4 people, and how do you choose them? We tried to make some kind of internal competitions, but it did not work. We wanted to save time, but we were discussing all the time (...) It could work I think, but you should be very committed, as a war machine, just looking for calls all the time.

Anyway, it wasn't a full time job, no?

eh, thatwas also the problem...we needed money, you know, to pay the rent, somebody was working as a waiter, someone else as a designer, but we were all very precarious and in need of money.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

The office "Casa Zera" was offered by the University, within a project on energetic autonomy of buildings. It was for free in exchange of promotial activities for the project. (Then something went wrong and the group had to pay high electric bills)
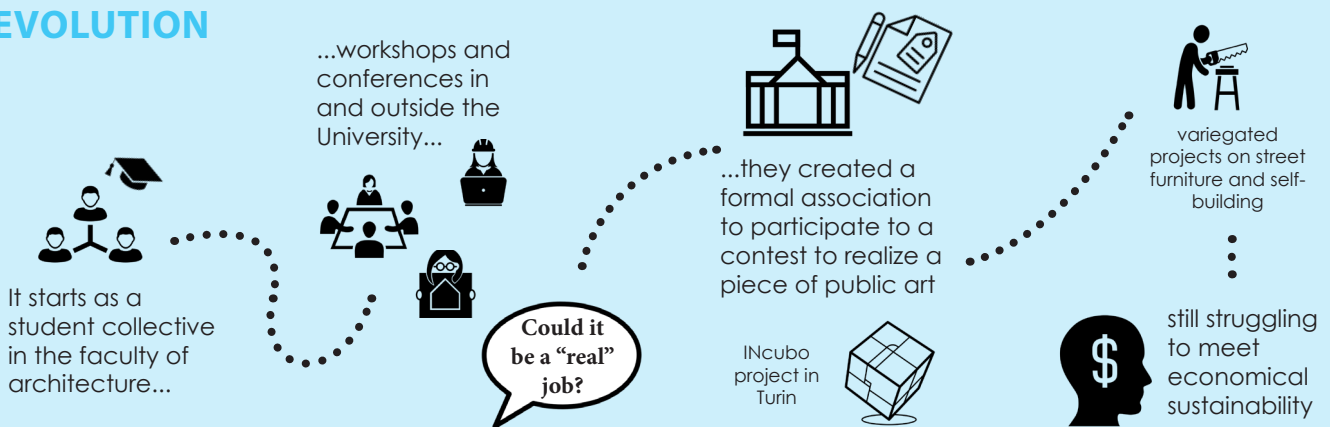
At the moment everybody is a voluntary worker in the spare time from another job.

APPROACH

"we just liked to design, from the small scale of the object to the urban policies (...) we did not have a clear direction, afterwards some of us even focussed on graphic design and communication, we werea mix"

EVOLUTION

It starts as a student collective in the faculty of architecture...

...workshops and conferences in and outside the University...

Could it be a "real" job?

...they created a formal association to participate to a contest to realize a piece of public art

INcubo project in Turin

variegated projects on street furniture and self-building

still struggling to meet economical sustainability

RIVULARIA and PRAXIS *(joint interview)*

and

*own picture // workplace of both the groups

ABOUT THE NAME

Rivularia is the name of a seaweed. It is a parasitic seaweed that finds its home in the interstices and allows the main organism to live.

Praxis is a direct invitation to action

BACKGROUND

Mixed (architects, journalists, art historian, designers, civil engineers...)

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

Rivularia is a cultural association, Praxis is an informal group

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

Could you tell me how it all started?

Praxis: we were born a little bit before Rivularia, in September 2016, but as a very loose group, we did an installation for a festival and the organizers asked us how we were called as a group, we did not have neither a name. We started to identify as a group then, we chose a name, praxis, but we did not have so much the plan to go on. (...) We are basically a group of friends, coming from different filds, engeneering, political science, journalism, architects...we started with the idea of building things, but actually we wouldbe interested also in doing other things, for example to think the format for a newsletter on city issues.

RIvularia: we started in November, just two months after them. I and another one were working together in an architectural office, the other girl of the association is an art historian. One day we met and decided that we wanted to organize something related to the urban regeneration field, let's say to work on some areas of the city and we founded the association.

Right, you are a cultural association, and have you formalized the group because of the call [Bando Giovani Progetti 2016, Municipality of Piacenza*]?

Rivularia: in any case, we wanted to have an association, maybe we would have formalized it after 6 months and not right away, but it is fine, anyway we planned to have it, it is better to have a legal configuration to participate to calls and so on, you are usually taken more seriously.

(...)

Is isn't a full time job, right?

Rivularia: it is our dilemma, we really want this to become our job, but by now we are just trying to have some long-term projects, but not yet...

Praxis: we are also trying to keep this space open, maybe sometime we are working on our own things as freelancers, but here (...) To have a space it helped a lot, even just not doing the meetings at home,in the evening,it changed a lot.

How did you get the space?

Rivularia: when we did theproject with the municipality we camehere for the workshop and basically we never went away, we made a deal with the municiplaity,they wanted someone to keep the space open and to offer services to the citizenship

Praxis: in exchange sometimes we help, for example there had been an initiative of the city and we built the stage,things like this. We were supposed then to keep the wood workshop open to everybody, but the space is not up to code, so by now we cannot.

(...)

*"Bando Giovani Progetti Piacenza 2016" was the first edition of a public open call for projects directed to under 35yo. Theme of the call was the reclamation of space. The Municipality made 35.000 euros available for the realization of 13 projects.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They can use for free a space from the municipality - in exchange for it, they have to keep it open and sometimes they are asked to make some little carpentry job
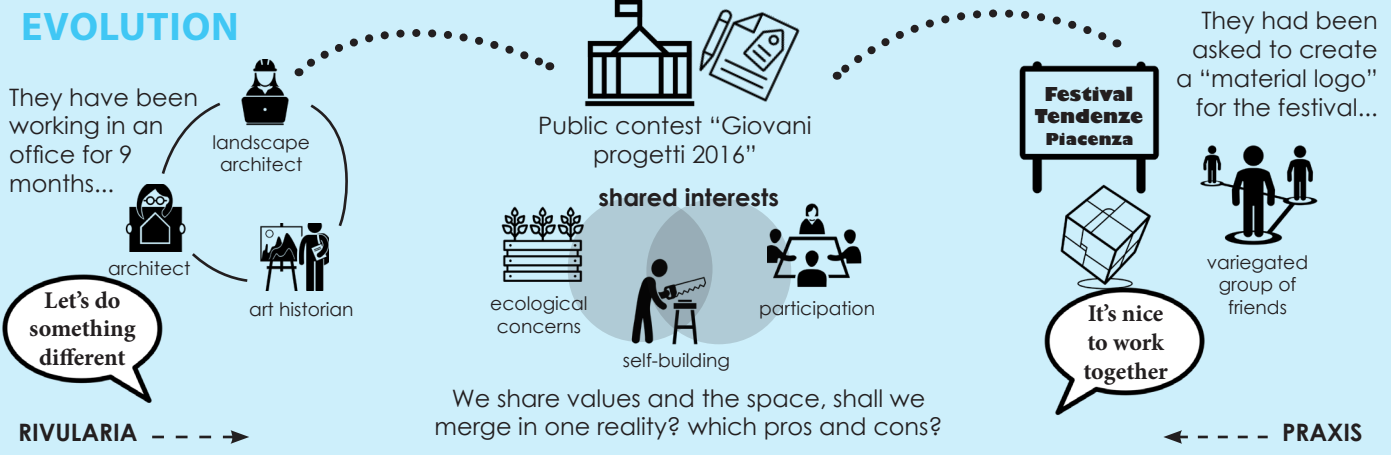
At the moment everybody is a voluntary worker in the spare time from another job.

APPROACH

Key words for both groups are: involvement of the inhabitants, unconventional use of marginal spaces, ecology and creativity

EVOLUTION

They have been working in an office for 9 months...

landscape architect

architect

art historian

Let's do something different

RIVULARIA – – – →

Public contest "Giovani progetti 2016"

shared interests

ecological concerns

self-building

participation

We share values and the space, shall we merge in one reality? which pros and cons?

They had been asked to create a "material logo" for the festival...

Festival Tendenze Piacenza

It's nice to work together

variegated group of friends

← – – – – PRAXIS

RIGENERAZIONI URBANE

In-person interview

23/11/2017

Spokeperson: Giovanna (founder of the group - out of three members)

Active since: 2015

Based in: Venice, Italy

Main activities: workshop on self-building tecniques, public art installations, self-edited publications

Link: www.facebook.com/rigenerazioniurbane/

Images from projects (above: FARE, below: RIQUA2). Source: official facebook page of the group

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

I saw that you made an internship at Angolazioni Urbane, was RIgenerazioniUrbane already born then?

Yes, Rigenerazioni Urbane was already a student collective (...) we did a project on a neighborhood, riqua (...) the first step had been the involvement of children, it seemed to usthat they were the easiest actors to get involved, we did a two-days workshop with them (...) we then published a report and then we were supposed to make something material on the area, but unfortunately we did not manage, because of bureaucratic reasons, we did not get the permissions. TThe idea was to build something for the children and to paint a wall, but nothing...however, we established a contact with some associations active on the area, we started building our network there.

And how did you financed this project?

We got some money from the Senato degli Studenti [n.b. a student agency of the university]. From the university we also got some support for the promotion of the initiative, they were promoting the things through

BACKGROUND
They are all architects

LEGAL CONFIGURATION
Informal collective of students

the official channels of the university.

(...)

Do you have some references or model you took as an inspiration?

Not really. When we started we were just fed up with staying hours in front of the pc on autocad e we said ourselves 'let's do something on our own'. Then we wanted to be supportive of realities already active in the city. Maybe models, well, I would say Gravalos di Monte, his project 'Esto no es un Solar' is a reference to me, I went there last year for an internship and it is an amazing regeneration process...well, other realities, that come to my mind, there is avanzi in Milan, kcity...(...) but, well, we discovered them when we were already active, not at the beginning..we had no models, besides Angolazioni Urbane, they were mentors for us.

(...)

What about definitions? Have you ever thought about how to define what you aim to do?

We never defined Rigenerazioni Urbane, for us it is a way to explore, we are not looking for definitions, categories (...) what especially worked well for us was to organize collective meetings with the other realities active on this area, we really feel the need to make this network stronger, there are people doing similar things and they don't even know each other, sometimes there is a waste of energies. You know, working together is an asset. (...) that would be something we are interested in: being a kind of middle-person putting into contact this variety of actors, trying to see what they have in common...

Ok, and would you say that your activities could have some kind of political impact?

If our work is political? It was not meant to be political, then of course in this field everything is political. We had never been interested in traditional politics anyway, we want to be facilators, promoters of dialogue in the city, that is our objective I would say. (...)

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They don't have a working place/office

At the moment is voluntary work. They got some fundings from the University for the materials.

APPROACH

"In the future, as an architect, I imagine myself working together with the historian, the sociologist, the urbanist..."

EVOLUTION

B —— G

The original members met because of a shared connection with the association LOVE (BGArchitects)

The group grows at the faculty of architeture...

...they start with some projects founded by the university

Independent publication "..." edited by the university

Proposed (and not allowed) small interventions on public space

Meetings with other local active realities, trying to build up a network

SNARK - *space making*

*Cover of their portfolio. Source: https://issuu.com/snarkspacemaking/docs/com_120712_prtfl_snark_bozza

ABOUT THE NAME

"the term 'snark' comes from a novel by Lewis Carroll, 'The Hunting of the Snark', (...) everything in the novel happens or not for the difficulties of using cartographies, it is a poem on the impossibility to map, or, in other words to face some issues"

BACKGROUND

Mixed: an architect, a semiologist, a journalist, an economist and a geographer

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

It is a cultural association

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

The group is born as a group of people who took part to a call for ideas and won..

Are you referring to the project of the mobile bench?

Yes, exactly, by the municipality of Modena...we were an architect, a semiologist, me (a journalist), an economist and a geographer...that was the composition of snark at the beginning. We did other things then, the core was constitued by two persons marco rampugnaro and gaspare, they did other projects and they pushed for reserch and experimentation, what you see on the portfolio is mostly their work (...)

(...)

Now snark is a kind of platform since you all have other jobs; sometimes it actives itaself..or is it a full time job form someone?

Well..that was the risk [being a full time job]. At the beginning it was a kind of start-up, I was working elesewhere, in a radio...I started to be more commited to snark in 2014, concerning commons and

participation. we were interested in civil issues and in collaborating with the municipality (...) we did a job for the city of Bologna and we got into contact with Kilowatt [another local association] and Gaspare is involved also here, so he started to work there (...) our priorities were to make snark a platform for experimentation, we wanted to write more, to d more research. We decided that each project should at least results into an article, that is the minimum that we do (...) atthe beginning we all thought it would become a consultancy firm or a cooperative, something, but then people went away..i should tell you about the people, you know, in an association people are essential (...) so they went, gaspare could go on with the projects with Kilowatt (...) Now we are 8-9 persons sometimes using snark to think about capacity building and do stuff,but it is not a job.

(...)

Have you any reference or group or association you got inspiration from?

More in terms of values than of organization. There are some realities, artists and professionals that we follow, the look at their outputs. We are a mix of paople with similar interests, the association was born for that, so we share some references, but they are not models. (...) At the beginning we were mostly focussed on architecture and ethnography, that we lost with time, for many reasons, mostly because of the people, they changed. We orient our practice depending on the people and the skills we have at a moment..and this give us.. let's say honesty more than efficacy. There are other association that are more effective because they stick to an approach, but the kind of impact we can have in a context depends also on this hinesty we feel we have, we work a lot on capacity building and it is always different, it is hard to have clear references or a specific modus operandi...

FUNDING STRATEGIES

They have a spot in a coworking (Le Serre), because one of the members is also part of the cooperative (Kilowatt) managing this co-working space.
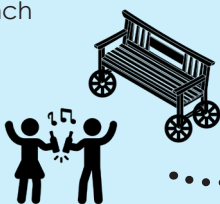
They are professional freelancers.

APPROACH

"we aim at give some means and resourses to people for their own self-determination, if we manage to unsettle some power relations, then we are happy"
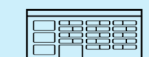
EVOLUTION

It all started winning a call for ideas with the project of a mobile bench

The group developed then other projects and created a networks with other local associations

KEY WORDS

Exporing the notion of Community Hub

Capacity building practices

Theorethical re-elaboration of each project

TOESTAND

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Next: initiative in Marie Moskou, 25/02/2017. Below: workshop space in Saint Gilles. Own pictures.
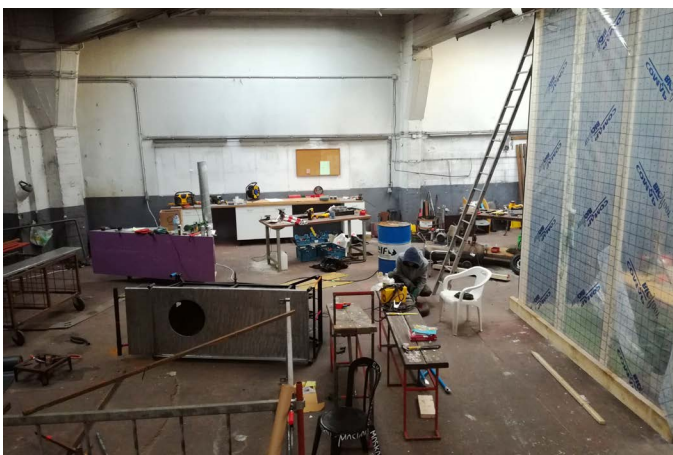
BACKGROUND

Mixed: architecture, graphic design, art

LEGAL CONFIGURATION

It is a non-profit association. However the same group use different names depending on the initiative, toestand is used just for the official ones.

EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW

How was the process here in Marie Moskou?

wehad been called by a group af architects which received a commission by the Commune of Saint Gilles. The fundings are for a contract de quartier, it last 4 years (...) we are supposed to be the bridge cetween, to fill the gap between a square which is underused and the square as it is going to be renewed. (...) mepersonally I am a bit frustrated with our position in this project, for example yesterday I had a discussion with the municipality, a woman from there asked us 10 times to do something that we don't believe it is a good idea. They want to use us like puppets (...)

How many of you are involved in this project?

Mainly two, but sometimes we ask for others to come to help, but let's say that officially in charge we are two

So you mean that the others who are coming are volunteers?Toestand has a lot of them, right?

yeah, I am a bit skeptical about voluntary work especially because I am paid. However it depends, for example now in the workshop we have here there is one guy restoring a mobile kitchen because he wants to

cook, it is voluntiring but he has some perspectives…He is Russian he cannot have a job here, he is a cook, thus he can sell food on the square, for me this is volunteering with some kind of perspective...

Ah, you have a workshop in the area?

Yeah, it is given by the municipality for this project

Ah, well not bad that they are also giving you a space...

Yes, but it is a bit a poisoned gift (...) because the terms for using it are very strict, only we are supposed to enter for insurance reasons and they are coming to check very often, saying you shouldn't do this and that..

mmh, I see, it is a bit controlled...

Yes, very controlled, but what was not controlled were the conditions in which they gave us the space, the building is completely collapsing, there are electricity problems, leaks. I had put a wood stove inside because there is no hiting system for the winter and it is a huge place. (...) It is a space we really wanted, but our idea was to make it accessible for the public, to have a kind

of help desk for the community, but the municipality did not allow the thing. Really, I am frustrated because I don't really see what they are doing for us other than using us as gap filling, letting us just making some street furnture. (...) Formally our mission is to take information and then communicate it to the architects chosen to renovate the square to make a kind of design process that starts from our experience

On the paper it seems a good idea, and quite a lot of time to do it, you have now 3 more years...

Yes, but from what the municipality said they have some agenda on the square that completely don't fit our philosophy. It is 15years that they are discussing to make an underground parking facility here, this is the contrary of whatthe city needs today in myopinion, but maybe they will arrive to it, maybe with the so-called democratic civil decision-making, then maybe they will manage to have the parking and pretend that is democratic..

FUNDING STRATEGIES

Temporary offices within the temporary projects

Public subsidies by flemish institutions. At the moment of the interview, there are 3 full-time workers and 10 part-time, plus a number of volunteers.

APPROACH

"here everything is already built, we need to renovate what is already here, and you can also renovate in a different way than materially"

EVOLUTION

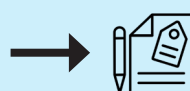It all started in the activist environment....

underused buildings

..The Municipality started to endorse some initiatives..

This energy could be good for the city!

From squatting to temporary use

They have now various projects around the city...

A sort of community hub (Allee du Kaai)

Management of a square (Marie Moskou)

A "Spotaneous Action Zone" (Biestebroek)

...and more