

We-Traders. Swapping crisis for city

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THE PROJECT WELTSTADT – WHO CREATES THE CITY? IS A JOINT INITIATIVE OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT AND THE GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, NATURE CONSERVATION, BUILDING AND NUCLEAR SAFETY (BMUB)

# WELTSTADT

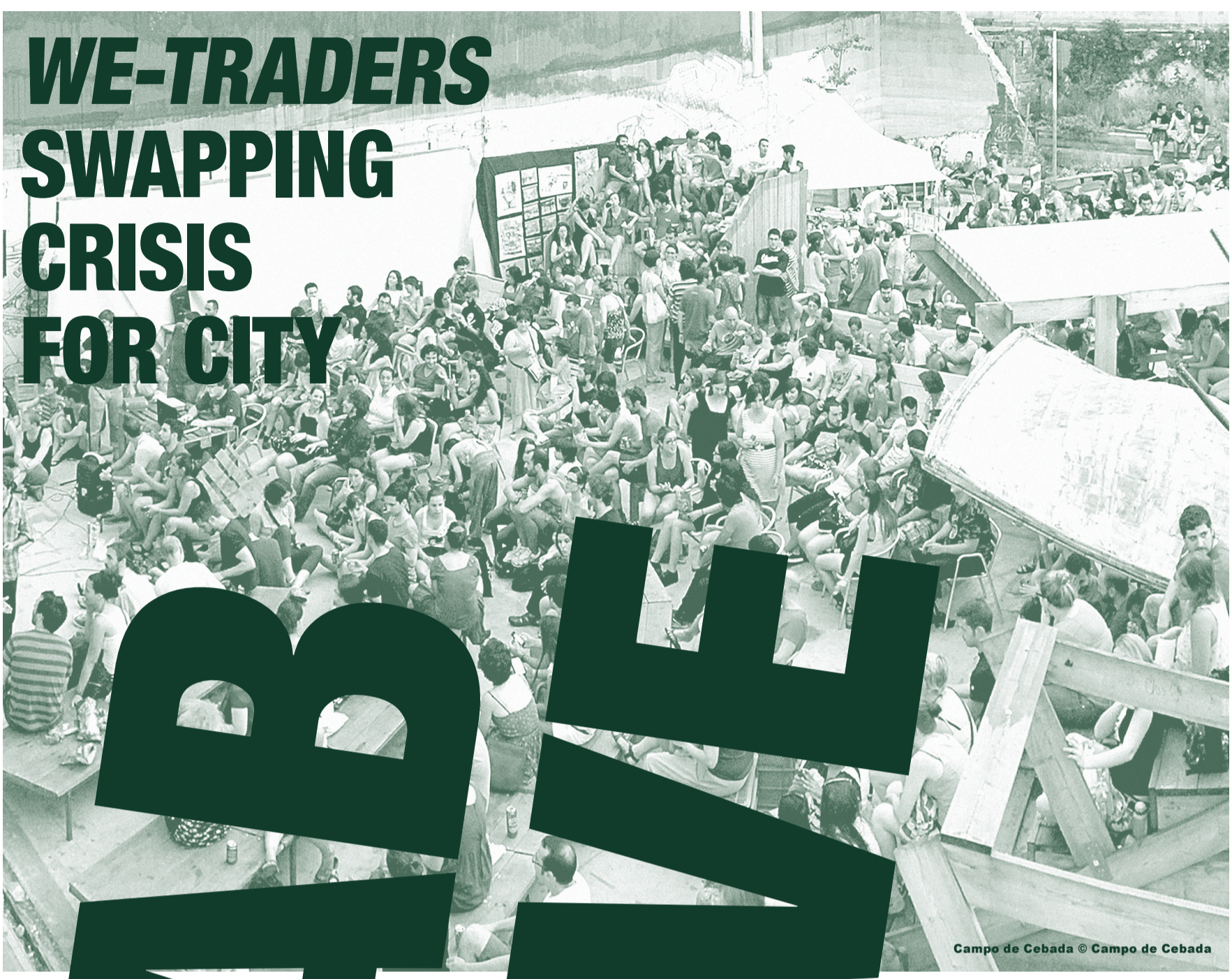
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WELTSTADT EDITORS:  
MATTHIAS BÖTTGER,  
ANGELIKA FITZ

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# GOLLA CORRA CITY

## WE-TRADERS SWAPPING CRISIS FOR CITY



Campo de Cebada © Campo de Cebada

WER MACHT DIE STADT? WHO CREATES THE CITY? KUY DÉFAR DÉKK BI? QUI CRÉE LA VILLE? 누가 도시를 만드는가 CHI CREA LA CITTÀ? QUIEN HACE LA CIUDAD? ನಗರವನ್ನು ಯಾರು ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠಿ ಮಾಡುವರು QUEM CRIA A CIDADE? KURŞ VEİDO PILSĒTU? ŠTA SE DEŠAVA U GRADU?

# WE-TRADING FOR A COLLABORATIVE CITY

Editorial by Angelika Fitz and Rose Epple

A group of neighbours transforms wasteland into public space. Garden plot owners open their grounds to unemployed youths to test their small-scale business ideas. Communities are becoming patrons where they were once supplicants. Citizens across Europe are taking the initiative to re-appropriate urban space, and they do it collaboratively. We call them “We-Traders” in the sense that they redefine the relation between value, profit and public good and are able to motivate fellow citizens to follow suit. *We-Traders* respond to crisis in several arenas of urban life, be it economic, social or ecological. What these *We-Trades* all have in common is that they diffuse the boundaries between buyers and sellers: consumers become co-producers. The production of space evolves in a collaborative undertaking.

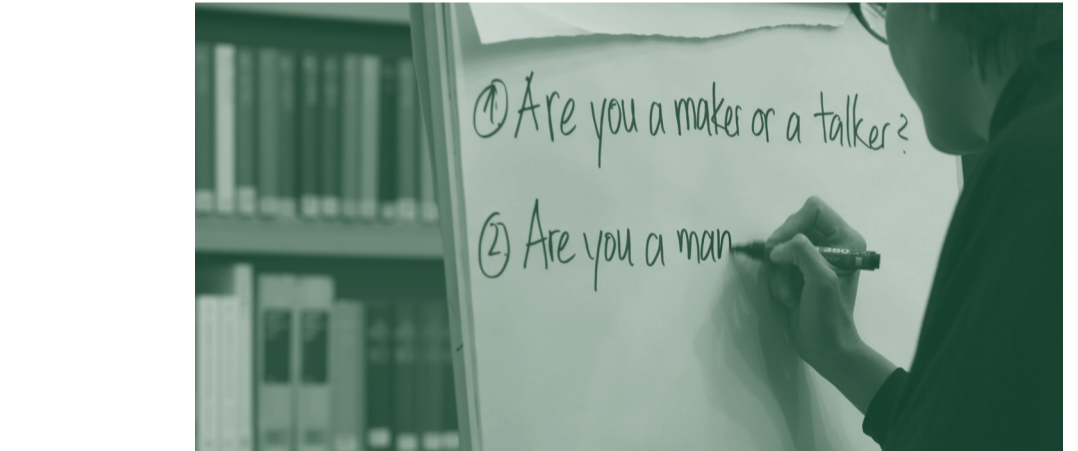
For several years the effects of the financial crisis have been apparent in many southwestern European countries, but also in Germany. Real estate speculation has resulted in both vacancies and housing shortages and is pushing lower income people to the periphery. Social polarization is on the rise and individual sections of the population, such as young adults, are being cut off from viable developments. Socially compatible, ecological measures are becoming ever more urgent as is the search for solutions to demographic extremes such as fast growth and strong declines in the population.

Appreciation for self-initiative in urban development increases in times of crisis. In many places, urban planning becomes open to participatory and cooperative methods. The reasons for such paradigm shifts are quite different and range from empty public coffers that demand low-cost projects to social vacuity left behind by excessively rapid growth – and thus a lack of civic sense. The digital media also strengthen demands for transparency and co-creation. In this context *We-Trading* is particularly interesting because co-determination becomes co-authoring. *We-Trade* increases ecological, economic and social sustainability. Any citizen who is actively involved in development, production

and exchange assumes responsibility for the outcome.

The Goethe project *We-Traders. Swapping Crisis for City* connects initiatives by artists, designers, activists and many other citizens from five distinct European contexts in Lisbon, Madrid, Toulouse, Turin and Berlin. It creates a knowledge and production platform for current and future *We-Traders*. Which practices worked well? Can certain elements be replicated elsewhere? How does the collaboration between private initiative and public bodies work out? *We-Traders* invites interested citizens and groups to participate, becoming in this way a working and growing exhibition. It conveys not only knowledge, but also continually generates new results and transports local contributions to the next stations. The projects are presented in video, object and workshop formats. Statements by urbanists, sociologists, philosophers, political scientists and economists offer diagnoses on the themes of the city and the crisis. Manifestos by *We-Traders* formulate expectations and demands on their city. Visitors also contribute actively to the exhibition: through their contributions to the “Open Calls,” through their participation in “Do-it-Yourself Statistics” and in workshops. The website [www.goethe.de/wetraders](http://www.goethe.de/wetraders) offers continuing up-to-date information on all projects, events, dates and activities.

This *Weltstadt* newspaper offers insight into the practices and running debates within the *We-Traders* Community. “The problem isn’t a capitalist economy, but a capitalist society,” is the diagnosis of sociologist Claus Leggewie at the *We-Traders* Forum in Lisbon in autumn 2013. Maria João Guardão and Maria Tengarrinha from *O Espelho* see a political and a media crisis. They launched their wall newspaper “the day that Angela Merkel came to Portugal.” Our co-curators in Turin, Lisa Parola and Luisa Perlo, identify not just the financial plight, but an acute identity crisis. Together with the urban geographer Carlo Salone they are warning about a “disneyfication” of culture in the light of the inflationary festival culture that post-industrial Turin is using to try and reinvent itself. And at



“...and they do it collaboratively” © Yukai Ebisuno, Raffaella Mantegazza

the Madrid *We-Traders* Forum, Santiago Eraso, one of those responsible for the 2016 San Sebastian capital of culture, calls for “anti-monumental activities”. It is certainly not about interpreting *We-Trades* one-dimensionally as a reaction to the crisis. “We are tired of the crisis being presented to us as an opportunity; it would be better if there were no crisis,” says Lisbon geographer Jorge da Silva Macaista Malheiros on behalf of many *We-Traders*. If at all, it was a missed opportunity says Davide Ziveri from Turin’s *Buenavista Social Housing*. “I thought now everything will be different with the banks.”

“Are *We-Trades* reformist projects or do they want a change in the system?” asks Joël Lecussan from *Mix’Art Myrys* in Toulouse, while his colleagues from *Bois & Cie* quite pragmatically trust in their makers qualities. “Notre réaction, c’est l’action!” Frauke Hehl from the Berlin *workstation* initiative advocates continuing to hold the city responsible so that temporary solutions do not become permanent ones. This is exactly why the project *We-Traders* does not praise the simplistic substitution of public amenities by private initiatives. An important focus lies in facilitating dialogue and co-operation of initiatives with municipalities.

“We want work that we enjoy and that makes us better,” is how the Spanish *Walkinn Coop* describes its motivation to found a *We-Trade*. Non-hierarchic alliances and fluid identities play pivotal roles – “We don’t ask who we are, but with whom we can enter a relationship” [VIC] – and collective authorship – “The author of Campo de Cebada is Campo de Cebada.” Such collaborative practices put meaning before profits. “AMAP gave me back my pride in being a farmer. Now, we are feeding people, not markets,” says Alain Gatti of *Le Potager de Camille in Toulouse*.

A crisis is the saddle point that decides the fate of a city, according to urban planner Sonja Beeck at the *We-Traders* Forum in Madrid. We are certain that the collaborative practices of *We-Trading* decisively contribute to the success of a city.

ANGELIKA FITZ is a curator and author in the fields of architecture, art and urbanism, running her own office in Vienna since 1998. As artistic director she developed the *We-Traders* project together with Rose Epple.

ROSE EPPLE is an experimental designer and scenographer in Berlin. As artistic director she developed the *We-Traders* project together with Angelika Fitz.

# DIAGNOSES

EVERYBODY IS TALKING ABOUT THE CRISIS. HAVE CITIES CHANGED? AND HOW COULD COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES TRANSFORM THE FUTURE CITY? FIVE VOICES FROM THE *WE-TRADERS* FORA IN MADRID AND TURIN SHARE THEIR DIAGNOSES.

EXCERPTS FROM VIDEO INTERVIEWS, OCTOBER 2013

## PAUL BLANQUART

philosopher, sociologist, Paris

“Swapping crisis for city. It’s the crisis that has brought people together. It’s true, we’re in the middle of a crisis. How did we get into this deep crisis? What has led us here is the way we create society, the way we create our space. And that started with the modern day western world.

There was the city as constructed by the state, as constructed by industry, and as it is now, constructed by finance. No, I think if the city is to be an alternative, it is the city as a city. I mean, the city where everyone participates, where everyone plays his or her part. Instead of being run by a technocracy instead of our lives being determined by industry, consumption, finance and so on, everyone does their share, so we have a shared space.

And at that point the city as a place of production, as somewhere decentralised, producing democracy and producing life, in fact. So it is we who are the market, we are the space. It is us! And it’s about acting for our city, so we are not captured by powers that escape us and which kill us.”

## CLAUS LEGGEWIE

sociologist, Essen

“*We-Traders* is a political experiment, that follows the lovely old motto of the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin: ‘Where danger is, there the saving powers will grow as well’. That means that in the crisis, the city does not simply go into ruin, but rather starts an impulse for productive ways out of the crisis, in which our social structure can also be somewhat changed.

For many, this reference to the collective, the ‘we’ in *We-Traders*, looks like some nostalgic reference to the communitarian movement of the 1970s, which, here in Portugal where we currently are, gave rise to a very noteworthy Carnation Revolution that brought in many of these participatory instruments into the regeneration of cities. It might look like nostalgia, which is why the project must always ask what is new in the 21st century.

Yet I believe that the historical context of this effort in the wave of movements that occurred in the 1970s, not just in Portugal, but worldwide, is not without relevance. We can learn from it. We can learn where things might fail, but we can also garner energy from it. We can learn that uniting against these seemingly superior opponents has a tradition, and that progress has been made. So much is built upon the achievements of the ‘60s and ‘70s, so today, nurtured through the tent cities in the Mediterranean countries or through the occurrences in Tahrir Square, the process can find new fodder.”



Jorge da Silva Macaísta Malheiros © Julia Albani, Nuno Cera (produced for Goethe-Institut)

## JORGE DA SILVA MACAÍSTA MALHEIROS

doctor of urban geography, Lisbon

“Participation is essential, but it has to be serious. Being serious means ensuring that those involved are heard, that actors are respected in their transformation process, and that everyone is involved from beginning to end. Otherwise, the word ‘participation’ is used in vain, all across the political spectrum in Europe – right and left. And in some cases like the ‘Big Society’ of David Cameron it ends up being made responsible in place of the State, and a distinction is being made between larger issues to be handled by the State and ‘smaller’ or social issues to be handled by communities.

What does it mean to us to get out of the crisis? What does it represent in terms of improvement? And how can capital accumulation be used in future? Today, from another viewpoint, the trading concept of *We-Traders*, the concept of practical exchange, is what’s key. Experiences. Because the context counts. Madrid, Toulouse, Lisbon or Berlin, to mention just four, have different contexts. In the crisis – both in its intensity and in its manifestations – there are similarities and differences just as there are various responses from the institutional, public, and third – or voluntary – sectors, and differences among people themselves. And out of these practices we can generate collective intelligence and a sharing of experiences, so we can fertilise Berlin projects with what’s happening in Lisbon and bring to Lisbon some of what’s going on in Berlin as well as in Toulouse, Turin or Madrid.”

## ROLF NOVY-HUY

managing director of Trias Foundation, banker, Hattingen

“Who owns the city? In the last ten years, large American and British pension funds and hedge funds divided large parts of the German housing stock between them. That’s about 10,000 to 30,000 homes. What has happened since then has confirmed the worst concerns. To call it ‘Manchester capitalism’ would actually be putting it mildly. We are now faced with housing stock being exploited, rents are being pushed up, and the effect is basically to extract money from humble tenants on low incomes and pay it to the well-off who are betting on hedge funds. It is therefore time that we remember who the city really belongs to and find new ways of dealing with property and land ownership.

Many of our projects have done this. Our so-called ‘ground rent’ is put towards initiatives benefitting the communities and remains within a social context. What we still have to learn is to apply this on a larger scale. We need to learn to transfer it back to the communities, who are selling their family silver, meaning their plots of land, and by doing so exclude themselves from actively contributing to urban design or social policy.

However, we also have to bear in mind that our projects don’t just create retreats, mere playthings, but that these projects can only demonstrate what is possible and provide practicable examples. We can then build on these practicable examples and use them as verification for a different economic model, for alternative ways of operating economically and by doing so return to the political sphere in order to confront large capital owners with a different model.

This requires professionalism. Goodwill and social awareness are not enough. We need to recruit people from the established sector who are saying, ‘Yes, I’m changing sides, I’m willing to use my professionalism, but also with a degree of modesty and humility on my part, to build a different economic system.’ If we can win these people over then we’ll also succeed in moving on from our projects being single projects, towards reaching a different level of managing the economy and how we interact with each other. This is exactly what we at the Trias Foundation are striving for and what I am fighting for.”

“It’s about taking possession of your own city again.”

— Leonie Baumann

## LEONIE BAUMANN

president of art academy berlin weißensee, Berlin

“We can safely say that Berlin is a poor city. Berlin has the lowest level of owner-occupied flats in the entire country, out of all the state capitals. Our social standard is comparatively low. The income levels are getting worse and worse, whereas it becomes more and more complicated, to manage one’s life and secure a standard of living.

I’m from an art school background and have been working with artists for a long time, and what I’m noticing is that what made this city so attractive over the last 20 years, which is artists having access to open spaces in which to present and produce their works, and in which to live. We are witnessing a lot of change, and it will become rather complicated for artists to continue to live and work in the city centre.

This means that what has made the city attractive and brought about an upturn over the last few years, namely, the cultural attraction, by saying that this is the economic upturn, is being diminished and being pushed out to the periphery, and some artists will be leaving the city.

There are currently no plans, in terms of perspective, as to what the city as a whole should do, looking forward, in order to support and maintain the city’s cultural standard. The city needs to reflect upon how spaces can actually be designed for citizens even in 20, 30 or 50 years’ time. The form these activities take, by all kinds of arts groups, citizens’ initiatives – from tree pit maintenance to the Allmende-Kontor allotment cooperative and urban gardening etc. –, is about taking possession of your own city again.”



Leonie Baumann © Rudi Schroeder (produced for Goethe-Institut)

# WE-TRADERS MADRID

## MADRID – ON THE GROUND

Javier Duero, co-curator *We-Traders*

The City of Madrid presently offers a highly stimulating challenge to its inhabitants. It is experiencing a time of deep economic and identity crisis, thus a unique opportunity in which to reflect on their future with leaders within society, specialists in architecture and urbanism, with creative groups and citizens' initiatives with horizontal structures. Madrid is a creative incubator in which institutional and private, individual and collective initiatives have worked for years on a new vision of urban life and the introduction of changes designed to make the city more liveable, with a more sustainable management and greater public spirit. This set of cultural and social agents constitute a very vulnerable ecosystem, which, however, creates high added value in social innovation. All are responsible for protecting their work as an essential city heritage. These processes involve active agents such as the public "laboratories" for social innovation and citizen participation *Medialab-Prado* and *Intermediae*, the departments

of culture, solidarity, environment and education of the *Casa Encendida*, outreach and citizen encounter programmes such as *Piensa Madrid*, networking platforms like *Zoohaus* and *Arquitecturas Colectivas*, initiatives like *Hackitectura*, *Ecomovilidad* and *BiciCrítica*, organizations like *Observatorio Metropolitano*, projects such as *Fresh Madrid*, *Kulturometer* and *Mapear Madrid*, young architects like Andrés Jaque, Uriel Fogué, María Langarita and Victor Navarro, collectives such as *Zuloark* and *Basurama*, cultural associations and visual artists, etc..

Several initiatives of this network are involved in the project *We-Traders*. The Madrid *We-Trades* are *Campo de Cebada*, *Todo por La Praxis*, *Teamlabs/Walkinn Coop*, *Elii/Gabinete de Crisis de Ficciones Políticas* and *Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas*, all of them stakeholders that respond to crisis by proposing new urban models using social, economic and ecological resources.

In February 2014 they will present a set of proposals intended to contribute to the process of collective action and citizen participation at *Matadero Madrid*. All of this will occur shortly after learning of the decision taken on Madrid's bid to host the Olympic Games. Regardless of the outcome, they will think about what the city we live in will be like in the year 2020, this being the task and responsibility of us all.

Javier Duero is a cultural producer. He is co-curator for *We-Traders* in Madrid.



Javier Duero at the *We-Traders* Forum Madrid © Gema Seguro



"The district belongs to us" © *Todo por la Praxis*



An open community of active citizenship © *Campo de Cebada*

### CAMPO DE CEBADA

**TRADE** Co-productions in public space, promoting neighbourhood spirit, cultural exchange, social exchange, participative strategies, recycling, co-creation, open source design, urban gardening, diverse communities, self-organization, self-empowerment, skill enhancement opportunities for all, sport and leisure

**WE** Neighbours, merchants, architects, municipal employees, civil servants, creative communities, cultural associations, artists, students, families, pensioners

**CRISIS** Lack of citizen participation, weakness of neighbourhood associations in the face of construction projects accelerated by authorities, lack of communication between citizens, associations and institutions, privatization of public space

*Campo de Cebada* (The Barley Field) is an open community of active citizenship that emerged from a conflict situation: the rehabilitation of disused public spaces by citizens. It aims to generate the inclusion of more stakeholders in decision-making to create an open infrastructure to serve the public. It is a space for dialogue between the citizens and the city administration that facilitates comprehensive participation in urban planning. The process by which the neighbours recovered the site is an example of peaceful coexistence, transparency and open data. The residents themselves participate in decisions about what activities are implemented and what projects are initiated, whereby they share responsibility in the usage of the space. The project includes a digital platform where the different "fields" of action – cultural, social, artistic, and athletic – are compiled and documented.

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

### TODO POR LA PRAXIS (TXP)

**TRADE** Self-management of empty urban plots, community facilities, urban movable infrastructure, intervention in public space, DIY strategies, unregulated educational system, co-creation, networking

**WE** Architects, artists, lawyers, designers, anthropologists, students, cultural mediators, researchers

**CRISIS** Lack of participatory urban spaces, lack of social sensitization for community resources, too few incentives for cooperation, privatization of public space, gentrification, consumerism

*Todo por la Praxis* (Everything for Praxis) or TXP is a multidisciplinary team that sees itself as a laboratory for aesthetic projects of cultural resistance. The initiative develops intervention strategies for public spaces with the ultimate goal of creating a catalogue of socially effective tools. They encourage "do-it-yourself" as a methodology that involves direct responsibility for all project phases. Thus users identify with the projects and become aware of what they can bring about themselves. TXP is part of a large network of people and groups interested in creating a participatory urban environment. This network presents an alternative approach to conventional architectural practice by introducing collaborative work, a database of knowledge and the use of common resources.

[www.todoporlapraxis.es](http://www.todoporlapraxis.es)

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

**"Here almost anything can happen – without the 'almost', it would be utopia."**

— *Campo de Cebada*

**“Since fiction belongs to no one, it circulates and encourages this very strong situation of exchange.”**

—Elii/GCFP



Jane Fonda Kit House by Elii © Elii

## TEAMLABS / WALKINN COOP

**TRADE** Social entrepreneurship, learning by doing, low-level initiatives, spaces for co-working, branding, self-organization, market research, micro-patronage models, education and innovation

**WE** Entrepreneurs, economists, biologists, students, young creative professionals, start-ups, programmers, designers, lawyers, non-governmental organizations, small businesses, investors

**CRISIS** Lack of corporate culture, youth unemployment, job insecurity, social discrimination of freelancers, low employee mobility, delayed emancipation

**Teamlabs** is a cooperative dedicated to designing and implementing business ecosystems. This includes educational, innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives in a start-up environment in which large companies open to innovation projects can become involved. These ecosystems are themselves educational tools in the sense of “Learning by Doing”, allowing personal and professional development of the skills that are needed in the new society. Along with **Mondragon Team Academy (MTA)** the cooperative coordinates the **LEINN**, a course in entrepreneurial leadership and innovation that is based on three pillars: teamwork, experiential learning and global vision. The first graduates of this course in Madrid founded the **Walkinn cooperative project** consisting of 20 young entrepreneurs with a focus on social innovation projects.

[www.teamlabs.es](http://www.teamlabs.es)

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



Learning by Doing © Teamlabs Walkinn

## ELII/GCFP

**TRADE** Sustainable architecture, socially aligned street and park furniture, urban planning, renewable energies, temporary architecture, office and work-centre design, industrial construction, exhibition design, cooperation with artists, prototypes for the coexistence of all species, fictional crisis scenarios, conflict mediation

**WE** Architects, teachers, political activists, artists, economists, researchers, philosophers, journalists

**CRISIS** Privatization of public space, social polarization, gentrification, neoliberal urban development, lack of political ecology, economic disparity, bank and financial crisis, the need of a new constitution for coexistence between different species on earth

**Elii/Gabinete de Crisis de Ficciones Políticas** (Crisis Cabinet of Political Fictions) is an office that designs and executes architectural projects in the public and private sectors. At present, in addition to this practical work we teach at Spanish and international universities and are active in publishing (**UHF architectural magazine**). The Cabinet arose from the working group **[Inter]sección**; a standalone project that produces prototypes for possible forms of coexistence that respond to radical crisis conditions. The aim is to design a possible future by means of a fictional scenario to articulate the framework for a new political ecology. Both initiatives operate in frameworks of very different scales while maintaining feedback and synergy channels between them.

[www.elii.es](http://www.elii.es)

[gabinetecrisisficciones.blogspot.com.es](http://gabinetecrisisficciones.blogspot.com.es)

## [VIC]

**TRADE** Entrepreneurship, self-organization, alternative economy, knowledge transfer, collaborative networks, citizen empowerment, use of social innovation in the public space

**WE** Architects, urban planners, sociologists, social anthropologists, social workers, teachers, political activists

**CRISIS** Lack of spirit of citizenship, neoliberal urban development, privatization of public space, consumerism, lack of structures for true participation of all in the use of common resources

**[VIC] Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas** (Incubator of Citizens' Initiatives) is an open and collaborative platform designed to constructively promote, analyze and support critical processes, with special emphasis on transfers to the region, the city and public space. **[VIC]** listens to and examines concrete situations and proposes routes that unite theory and practice. The platform is structured as a web database incorporating all initiatives that, by nature of their social innovation, may serve as models for transferring knowledge to other groups, companies and/or authorities.

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



[VIC] - Incubator of Citizens' Initiatives © Lukasz Michalak

# OUR MADRID

— DIAGNOSES BY WELTSTADT  
CORRESPONDENT SONJA BEECK

HOW CAN DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS, ABOVE ALL THE YOUNGER GENERATION, BRING ABOUT CHANGES THAT HERALD A COMPREHENSIVE SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE SPANISH CAPITAL?

In the Spanish capital, young people feel disconnected from the political landscape. They want to participate, have a voice in decision-making, and create a socially just, economically stable and CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral city. Pioneering urban development goals and obvious roadmaps leading out of the crisis have not appeared. For decades, an elite conducted political affairs in such a way that they conjured up one of Europe's worst real-estate crises. Everybody was to become a real-estate owner. Many Spaniards gratefully took up this offer and for some of them today, their mortgage is their ruin. But damage control is not all that is at stake here. The true conflicts must be made visible, a debate must finally be held. Many young people are ablaze for their city, they want to do something; they have a voice but do not know how to circumvent the programs and blockades of local politicians with a political bypass.

Immense spaces and surfaces have been left vacant in the Spanish capital, or are not being used, although many could truly make good use of them. Some are simply vacant or are lying idle because they are simply too expensive. It's paradoxical: the real-estate market has collapsed, but prices aren't sinking. Speculation is still one of the causes of the current crisis. But corruption and nepotism are also part of the picture and have long been customary in the city. The crucial question is: how may the city's resources that have been accumulated in the last 15 years (buildings, people, knowledge, expensive infrastructure) be activated in such a way that they represent a genuine added value to society? How is sustainable management possible when taking into account all costs?

## PERFORMATIVE ANALYSES

The right solutions only result from the right questions. The right questions, obviously, can emerge from discussions. But sometimes they crystallize more easily in play and fiction. There, extreme positions can be formulated or simply tried out. Questions can be intensified in harmless ways. Far-fetched answers and solutions are more permissible in the try-out phase than in real situations. That, in brief, is the idea behind *GCFP – Gabinete de Crisis de Ficciones Políticas*, which every couple of months pitches its political tents in the halls of the Matadero, a former slaughterhouse rebuilt into an impressive art quarter. The discussion partners are disguised, as is right and proper for them to be. Suitable prominent experts with no lack of hands-on experience are invited for each topic. But the element of fiction is given space as well. Every so often, aliens from outer space are quite naturally invited, who for the most part make extortionate demands but also leave some wiggle room for their victims, the discussion partners. The arrangement is as impressive as it is strange. The viewer feels

reminded of Novalis' celebrated dictum: "They constitute a world in itself – their play is self-sufficient, they express nothing but their own marvellous nature, and this is the very reason why they are so expressive, why they are the mirror to the strange play of relationships among things."

Another time, the group seeks to depict the structures behind visible reality through highly narrative installations and arrangements in public space. CO<sub>2</sub> consumption as a constructed diagram. It was in this connection that they also built the humorous "Jane Fonda House". It illustrates the contrast between laborious generation of energy by muscle-power and high energy consumption in the household. These narrative installations with pedagogical intentions are not stingy with vividness. They show what is generally taken for granted and goes unquestioned. The group calls itself *Elii* when it constructs this performative architecture. Behind the scene is a trio that loves debate, three architects, one woman and two men who inject intelligent answers in the round of *We-Trader* discussion partners without descending into slogans and who dare to design both games and buildings. Games, whose parallel worlds permit viewers and visitors to learn quite a lot about things as they really are.

## NETWORK AND PROCESS ARCHITECTURE

Apart from imposing projects such as *MediaLab Prado*, which despite outstanding design by the architect duo Langarita-Navarro lacks both a program and vitality, there are other attempts at enlivening architecture and urban development and turning citizens into developers of their own city, such as the *[VIC]*, the Vivarium of Citizens' Initiatives. *[VIC]*'s founders seek to create networks, to develop a wide range of proposals for a sustainable urban development. For instance, they developed alternative bicycle maps for Madrid with the aid of a widely disseminated appeal to the public. The network and process architects are directly discussing with the district's business people the question as to whether the market for the vicinity of the Antón Martín district should be a local, neighborhood market for vendors and residents, or a glossy tourist market such as what the city administration has in mind. In Germany, a similar independent initiative is under discussion as a *Business Improvement District*, but here in Madrid there is more at issue. The social and planning aspects of the normal district management are to be consolidated with the economic network management of a *BID*.

## HANDS-ON

In Spain, citizens' working together on co-operative work platforms, in district initiatives and citizens' parliaments has been established practice since the 1970's. This means not just speaking, debating and planning, but also to lend a hand themselves in the shaping of urban

"Perhaps this old square and its new conquest is the best example of a living sketch of city planning, a concrete image of how many young people envisage the future of Madrid and social action as such."

—Sonja Beeck



Picture of a late-medieval engraving of Campo de Cebada © Jürgen Willinghöfer

space. "They call me, I'll fix it", is the mantra of Diego Peris, who is part of the "hands on urbanism" initiative *Todo por la Praxis*. Likewise established in the 1970's, a citizens' initiative in the Carabanchel district far away in Madrid's south-west, is at work on improving living conditions in their settlement. Their engagement began already in the planning phase, as the residents, with an eye to the construction plan, decided assign more storeys to a number of blocks, for the purpose of gaining more green surface area between the buildings. They realized right from the beginning that high-quality intermediate space is one of the decisive conditions for the success of a modern residential settlement. They thus not only developed the intermediary space together, but also invited artists to submit designs for surfaces and pathways, and to implement them together with the district's children. Scarcely anyone would imagine that art plays an important role in improving living quality in this difficult social environment. The slogan "EL BARRIO ES NUESTRO" (i.e. the district belongs to us), built on one of the public squares gives an impression of considerable self-assurance, but evidently not all identify with it. It is primarily active, involved older ladies and less so the young men with their attack dogs who are likewise to be seen at the square.

## DO IT YOURSELF!

The point is to master the crisis, administer intelligently and above all to do things differently than in the past. The initiative created by a couple of Basque students offers no less than a concept for the future of Spain. The name of their initiative is an anagram. Two letters were reversed, and not only a new word resulted, but a new idea as well: a privately sponsored course of study entitled *LEINN* ("Learning entrepreneurship

and innovation"). Previously, companies were forced to pay a kind of revolutionary tax to the ETA, today they are investing in the new university to which *LEINN* belongs. Learning is by doing. During their studies, all students must also earn money in projects, and can then travel to San Francisco to get to know Silicon Valley. They must be able to see beyond the borders of Spain.

Spaces in the city center are of course required for start-up businesses, and therefore the *LEINN* students have organized themselves in *Hub Madrid*, a co-working space in a prime location. Each student has his or her own working space for 200 Euros a month. The Hub is a broker and leases out surfaces that are then rented out on a temporary basis and with the necessary infrastructure to flexible and creative young people and enterprises. Each month, the Hub must pay the rent demanded by the landlord, and is therefore ultimately uninterested in who these flexible co-workers actually are. The young students, whose university is given a group ticket by Hub for 3000 Euros, are equally uninterested in the question of who the landlord actually is. The empty office building, which was formerly used by an advertising agency, now serves joint practical learning on two storeys. "Joint", however, can also mean that one doesn't inquire too deeply about what the other fellow is doing. The agreement runs: we're setting something up together, and you can participate with your projects in one way or the other. It is a wonderful opportunity for individuals, but also for non-individuals.

The Hub is a suitable accommodation for representatives of larger communities that are still unsure about where and how long they will stay. How do they make their money? Even they don't know and why should they? "Social" means first and foremost "together." The market is a



Demonstration in Madrid © Jürgen Willinghöfer

place where interests are exchanged. – And who is the owner of this building in a prime city-center location, who evidently rents it out cheaply? A man who also has other buildings. Strictly speaking, the entire street belongs to him, an old family property.

The program “Learning by doing” is decidedly ambitious, but as a social structure it is quite simple, a school, perhaps even the better school of life. We want work that we enjoy and that makes us better people, is the way they explain their We-Trader approach. Is that still too complicated? What does it look like close-up, right around the corner? Might space be there for simple, public ideas?

## LIVING MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The *Campo de Cebada* is an ancient square, to be found on late-medieval engravings. It is in the immediate vicinity of the Plaza Mayor, at the metro exit La Latina. In the 20th century, a market hall and public swimming pool were built on it. The market hall still exists, but the swimming pool was closed and torn down. Now there’s a gaping hole in the middle of Madrid, surrounded by a construction fence, but a group of neighbors and activists have turned it into a lively place. Here, locals meet and renegotiate the usage of the place anew, over and over again. They plant flowers or dance the Merengue, play soccer or basketball, or they just sit around and chat. At night, the *Campo de Cebada* pulsates, no drinks can be served then, or any business conducted. This is unusual for a market whose social purpose mostly consists in exactly this. But here, by contrast, the citizens have appropriated a vacant space and turned it back into a plaza that for now is being kept free of commercial interests, but whose future is uncertain. Even now, at this late hour, young Pakistanis and Bengalis are wandering about with inviting smiles and plastic bags filled with cold beer and Coca-Cola cans that they surely have no intention of handing out for free.

Each piece of furniture was made in workshops with students or were designed and made of Euro pallets by architects and designers. The furniture has become famous, and copies of these prototypes are also to be seen in *MediaLab Prado* or at the architecture biennale in Lisbon. The *Campo de Cebada* is like a manifesto in building form. It is open and cooperative. Decisions are always made in the community and are therefore transparent. With its consistent recycling design and its vitality, the *Campo de Cebada* demonstrates how easily a functioning public space can arise if there is only a common concept and the rules for negotiating differences are clear. Unfortunately, what is not clear is how long the place can remain in this condition. When will the bulldozers for a new building start rolling? When will a proper design for the square replace the colorful improvisation? We don’t know, but we have learned that the city and its public space need more than good design, they need *joie de vivre*, energy,

activity. Contrasts relieve boredom and generate hope that the crisis can also be mastered.

Who owns the square? This question arises once more, since new times will come to the La Latina district as well, if they are not there already. The memory of the great protests of 2012 is not enough, as no one can make a living from a monument. And the people who today are the bearers of the project won’t all stay on here. What will happen to the *Campo* then? What is to become of it if it is to remain as it is, a meeting place of daily life in the neighborhood? An institution? But how? When will the energy for averting construction and not resorting to some sort of conventional usage for public squares dissipate? Will the operator mentality prevail once again? Will the *campo* once again have to offer something? Will everything cost money once again on a conventional public square?

Perhaps this old square and its new conquest is the best example of a living sketch of city planning, a concrete image of how many young people envisage the future of Madrid and social action as such. They are sick and tired of chanting no more mafia in front of Rajoy’s official residence. But as long as the situation does not change at least a little and note is not taken of the fact that here, simple and convincing examples of a different kind of community life are arising, they will have to keep on holding their banners high and spreading the ideas of the *Campo de Cebada*.

Perhaps, in times of crisis, it is precisely complicated and time-consuming ideas that lead to the discovery of future-oriented patterns. They often do not work in one-on-one terms, they have to be tried out, deciphered, adapted and perhaps at some point be transported into planning and administrative action again. But without patience and persistence, there is no change.

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DR. SONJA BEECK is an architect, urban planner and scenographer based in Berlin. She is WELTSTADT correspondent for *We-Traders* in Lisbon and Madrid.

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# DEMONSTRATION / MANIFESTACIÓN

Jürgen Willinghöfer

Mostly young people are standing on the street at Plaza Colon, facing the normal traffic, which came to a halt an hour ago, chanting slogans and holding many clearly legible banners. Units of the Guardia Civil, in heavy armour and not exactly looking like Mr. Nice Guy, are lined up on the Calle Génova, in front of the building with the number 24, headquarters of the Partido Popular Rajoy. Again and again, impressively loud chants erupt. It’s been like this every week since the PP’s swamp of corruption was made public by Luis Bárcenas, explains a young journalism student while photographing the demonstrators from the direction of the police. The banners proclaim among other things, slogans containing the word “Mafia” – they are declaimed rhythmically – clearly and forcefully.

A few streets further, in the Calle San Mateo 13, in one of the many elegant chambers, one catches a glimpse of a picture of a stately equestrienne on an enormous horse, Isabel de Borbón y Borbón-Dos Sicilias, the full name of the Spanish queen Isabella II. Her star sank swiftly in the course of her ill-fated reign. From on high on horse-back in the National Museum of Romanticism, the archive of the 19th century in Spain, in which the country lost everything and gained itself, one looks into a well of the past.

Next day: spring-like sunshine, a huge bicycle column on the Paseo de la Castellán. Entire families, associations, neighbourhood communities and clubs cycle down the street. The surrounding streets are also wide, and cordoned off for bicycle helmets, wind-breakers and reflective vests.



Vacant home © Jürgen Willinghöfer

# VACANT SPACES / VACANTE

Jürgen Willinghöfer

Only recently has the large roof been greeting visitors from afar to Madrid. The semi-educated might think “Calatravismus” and immediately learns of his error, since what we have here is another of Richard Rogers’ elegant functional building structures. A generously curved roof and below it many a vacant space, with some construction-site fences still in the building’s interior, behind them not much else besides building waste. The British embassy once occupied the snappily modern round building in the Calle Monte Esquinza. Stray building utensils are lying scattered about, perhaps they were forgotten, and apart from that emptiness reigns in the building.

Two streets further, an understatedly elegant four-storey building from the turn of the 20th century, the window shutters are closed, no, nailed shut. No names by the doorbells, but there are hardly any in the entire street. We are in the embassy district. Time and again, beyond the centrally-located quarter, near the Atocha train station, we find buildings that reveal their vacancy only upon closer examination.

In the stairwell, the concierge’s touch in changing hall lights or seeing to it that the lift is in working order once again is missing, a house in standby mode.

Not far off, the *MediaLab-Prado*, a late-industrial era building splendidly renovated by the firm Langarita-Navarro, strikes us. The expansive emptiness in the interior, in part deliberate, in part the fault of the hung-over real estate market.

What is to be done with such an ambitious building in a premium location, what is to be done with all the other vacancies in central locations: Occupy? For what? Better wait till the boom picks up again. It will.

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JÜRGEN WILLINGHÖFER is an author based in Berlin and WELTSTADT correspondent for *We-Traders* in Lisbon and Madrid.

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# TURIN WE-TRADERS

## TURIN – ON THE GROUND

Lisa Parola and Luisa Perlo,  
co-curators *We-Traders*

Over the past decade, Turin has experienced profound changes to its urban structure. By transforming itself from an industrial city into a place of culture, it gained a significant position on the Italian and European scene and the result of this extensive transformation is a new urban model. Turin is nonetheless in the throes of a dual crisis. Following the disappearance of the automobile industry, which dominated the city in the last century, the cultural sector is now also in a state of distress.

The debts inherited from the Winter Olympics and the global economic crisis raised the question of what role creativity and new skills that connect knowledge, innovation and experimentation play in the city's future development. One might say a strategic one,

but only if Turin recognizes the importance of the many projects aimed at new methods and practices of participation that arose here thanks to a fertile environment and the encouragement of institutional policies. *We-Traders* is the attempt to bring together five independent realities, which, as open models, are alternative forms of social, professional and cultural dialogue.

*Miraorti* in the Mirafiori district, historically linked to Fiat, is a current map of urban gardens. At the other end of town, not far from the motorway to Milan, *Il Piccolo Cinema* is actively experimenting with different models of cultural production. In the city centre, the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of San Salvario gathers in the *Casa del Quartiere*, not far from the shared workspace

and creative hub of *Toolbox Coworking*. Finally, in the former Olympic Village, *Buena Vista Social Housing* offers innovative living models in one of the fastest-changing urban areas. All are examples of how Turin is today recreating itself not only as a city of "entertainment", but also as a place that reflects the idea of cultural responsibility while experimenting with models and practices for social integration that also stimulate economic development. We believe these are all essential elements for the years to come.

LISA PAROLA and LUISA PERLO are part of *a.titolo*, a collective of curators founded in Turin in 1997 to investigate the relationships between art, society, cities and public space. They are co-curators for *We-Traders* in Turin.

**“In the past, people wanted to talk to each other. Now, we want to work together as a team, not just exchange ideas.”**

— Buena Vista  
Social Housing



Buena Vista social co-housing in the former Olympic Village © Monica Naso



Casa del Quartiere © Anna Rowinski

### BUENA VISTA SOCIAL HOUSING

**TRADE** Co-housing, social housing, communal facilities for diverse neighbourhoods, shared spaces, social networks, solidary economy, urban renewal, conversion of urban buildings, empowerment, social capital, beauty, participation, sustainability

**WE** Social Club (network of associations and cooperatives promoting solidarity economics, mutuality and solidarity between people), social workers, architects, students, co-habitants, migrants

**CRISIS** Expensive housing market, lack of public housing, lack of communal facilities

In 2012, the social co-housing project opened in two buildings of the former Olympic Village of the 2006 Winter Games. It combines the idea of living space as a necessity, right and symbol with the unused buildings and the Social Club, a network of associations and social co-operatives seeking solutions together. The participatory project development used street art and attention to detail to create 44 dwellings for families of social workers and students as well as social services like bike sharing, book sharing, roof gardens, a small fair trade grocery, a laundry and a fibre optics network. The challenge of the housing model is to be equally open to beauty, participation and sustainability. Ten nationalities are represented in the building that may one day form a community and contribute to the creation of new lifestyles.

[www.resocialclub.it](http://www.resocialclub.it)

[www.tra.to.it](http://www.tra.to.it)

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

### CASA DEL QUARTIERE DI SAN SALVARIO

**TRADE** Regeneration of the district based on economic and social sustainability and participation, enhancement of the resources of the neighbourhood, social and cultural re-use of abandoned architectures, laboratory for social and cultural activities, networking and consulting for civil initiatives, co-working time bank, collective recreational activities such as creative workshops, repair workshops, swap events, cafeteria

**WE** Associations and other stake-holders of the neighbourhood, inhabitants and in particular migrants, students, families and children, social workers, architects, representatives of local institutions

**CRISIS** Lack of community spaces in the neighbourhood, lack of access to cultural and social activities and to low cost spaces, social isolation

*The Casa del Quartiere di San Salvario* (Neighbourhood House San Salvario) is a space for social and cultural activities that has been utilized by associations, individuals, informal groups, artists and cultural professionals since 2010. It offers culture, training and services for the residents of the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of San Salvario and the entire city. Located in the former municipal baths, it is a laboratory for the design and implementation of initiatives; an open and multicultural meeting place that fosters exchange on varied activities. It hosts a cafeteria, a bike workshop, a co-working office, a time bank, information desks, courses and seminars, listening spaces and public services open to all visitors. Workshops, conferences, events and parties can also be held here. The *Agenzia per lo sviluppo locale di San Salvario*, that comprises 23 associations and other institutions such as religious facilities, cooperatives and citizen committees, manages the jointly founded *Casa del Quartiere*.

[www.casadelquartiere.it](http://www.casadelquartiere.it)

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



Miraorti © Giuseppe Moccia



Il Piccolo Cinema © Gianluca de Serio



Toolbox Coworking and FabLab Torino © Davide Giglio

## MIRAORTI

**TRADE** Collaborative park keeping, urban transformation through spontaneous agricultural practices, shared space, ecological/sustainable urban farming, upgrading of informal structures, active citizenship, participatory urbanism, workshops in environmental education

**WE** Landscape architects, agronomists, urban farmers, inhabitants of the neighbourhood, children and families, students, artists

**CRISIS** Post-industrial wasteland, informal privatization of public land, lack of collective spirit and ecological awareness, lack of youth facilities, empty coffers – lack of public money for park keeping

*Miraorti* is a participatory project started in 2009 with the aim of promoting urban agriculture. As part of an urban and environmental realignment, it became an engine of transformation in the area between the Sangone River and the south of the Mirafiori district, historically linked to Fiat. The idea is to unite social actors and institutions and to test methods of reinvigorating the gardens through the involvement of the population and schools. The results intend to provide a scenario for the future use of the area. So far it has involved about 300 gardeners in 1,000 collective gardens, 100 of which are already registered. *Miraorti* is based in the offices of the Casa del Parco di Mirafiori Sud.

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

## IL PICCOLO CINEMA

**TRADE** Dialogue and mutual assistance via film, a place to live for all and for cultural production, education through collaborative learning (anti-school), independent filmmaking, crowdfunding, cinema, film forum

**WE** Artists and filmmakers, inhabitants of the neighbourhood and of the city, students

**CRISIS** Domination of blockbuster film industry, lack of money for independent films, art losing touch with society, “star principle” in cultural industry, search for new collaborative working models

The *Società di mutuo soccorso cinematografico* (mutual aid film society) – inspired by the nineteenth-century model of workers’ societies in the district of Barriera di Milano on the outskirts of the city – is a place of open discussion, an image laboratory and a studio of ideas that uses the cinema as an instrument to better understand the world: a new model of co-existence without hierarchies. It is also a small centre for storytelling through images and a platform for the promotion of independent production. *Il Piccolo Cinema* (The Little Cinema) is an anti-film school, with no teachers and no students. The activities consist of film discourses (on documentaries, screenplays, editing, sound, make-up, web-doc), *I Martedì del Piccolo Cinema* (Tuesday film screenings, meetings with authors, retrospectives) and presentations of crowd-funding projects. *Il Piccolo Cinema* arose from the Antilochos cultural association.

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

## TOOLBOX COWORKING/ FABLAB TORINO

**TRADE** Promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, promoting open source and open share hardware, Fab-Lab, co-working, co-production, networking, community, sharing economy, start-up hub, self-produced design, ideas in the making, digital fabrication

**WE** Digital craftsmen, knowledge workers, freelancers, innovative small businesses, start-uppers, students

**CRISIS** Precarious working conditions for creative workers, isolation of freelancers, lack of flexible and cheap workspace, high costs for tech infrastructure, lack of public funding, lack of companies recruitment.

*Toolbox* derived from the idea of new uses for former industrial buildings and offers a creative and entrepreneurial environment for new knowledge economy and creative professions. *Toolbox* organizes workshops, pitches and conferences and a festival and hosts the *FabLab Torino*, the first Italian *FabLab*. Active since 2011, *FabLab Torino* is a place for experiments and a makerspace. Its aim is to unite digital fabrication and open-source culture in a single physical place where machines, ideas, people and approaches can freely mix. In this sense, it also functions as a hub for the development of single and group projects. *FabLab Torino* is supported by *Officine Arduino*, Italian headquarters of *Arduino*. An international community has formed around *Arduino* that exchanges projects of all kinds from interactive games to robots.

[www.toolboxoffice.it](http://www.toolboxoffice.it)

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

“It’s not just about sharing a space, but about a new approach to work.”

— Toolbox Coworking

# DIAGNOSES

EVERYBODY IS TALKING ABOUT THE CRISIS. HAVE CITIES CHANGED? AND HOW COULD COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES TRANSFORM THE FUTURE CITY? FIVE VOICES FROM THE *WE-TRADERS* FORA IN MADRID AND TURIN SHARE THEIR DIAGNOSES.

EXCERPTS FROM VIDEO INTERVIEWS, OCTOBER 2013



Sonja Bееck: "A crisis is a saddle point in time." © Gema Segura (produced for Goethe-Institut)

## SONJA BEECK

professor for urban planning, Berlin

"A crisis is a saddle point in time. It's the exact point at which it is decided whether a situation gets better again or ultimately slides down towards an even worse situation. For a city, this either means that an improvement is brought about by action or it can potentially descend into lethargy. This constitutes a dangerous moment for a city.

In these situations the concept of time plays an important role. Time is one of the major resources which becomes very interesting during a crisis. In modern society time is organised due to the division of labour. We try and use our personal resources as efficiently as possible. But now, in a time of crisis, time management changes. All of a sudden, many people have more time to help, to do community work, to be active. They also spend a lot more time getting involved to benefit the city. This is a particularly good point at that moment in time, work suddenly not being abstract anymore, like it was during the division of labour, but instead work being able to provide a high degree of identification. And it's exactly this non-alienated work with its high level of identification that becomes all-embracing and can mean a lot to a lot of people.

It is therefore important for future policies to take on this point and provide a good framework for individual involvement, for getting involved in the city and contributing time. And so the system of abstract work and of division of labour could potentially be broken up in times of crisis."

## SANTIAGO ERASO BELOKI

philosopher and cultural manager, San Sebastian

"When one encounters situations such as these, here at the *We-Traders* Forum, one feels the hope in thinking that the city is being reconstructed from the energy emanating from many initiatives, from the work of local associations, social movements, businesses and collectives who have taken the reins in their hands to invent and to construct new subjectivities, to generate new social connections, and to refocus on founding the city from bone, muscle and nerves, and not just from the skin or the outward appearance.

There are cities with a brand, and cities with publicity, there are cities that insist on attracting only financial capital. Yet here, it's stimulating to find yourself amongst all this energy that is flowing thanks to the idea of social capital and the strength and energy of civil participation."

## CARLO SALONE

geographer, Turin

"The *We-Traders* rather than put forward ideological proposals for social regeneration through mass movements, work instead on the fissures within society, on its unexpressed needs, which public policies in general aren't addressing properly.

An urban space which, in the mainstream, is often used in a hegemonic and formalised way. But here, as we can see from what we've learned during the *We-Traders* Forum, it is reintroduced as differential space, as Henri Lefèbvre once said, which is the true essence, in my view, of urban democracy. The very nature of a public space is, in my opinion, put to the test as a conceptual category, and made to seem outdated here. In the sense that the public space becomes an active space for an active citizenry experimenting with forms of sharing, from public art and urban agriculture to the definition of innovative shapes and language in the field of audiovisual research.

So, all these experiences shape a space that takes on a social and collective relevance without necessarily evoking the somewhat formal idea of a public space we've inherited from the last century."

## FLORIAN SCHMIDT

urban sociologist and founding member of "Initiative Stadt Neudenken", Berlin

"I think the crisis that we speak of in general terms is a different one for each city. And being from Berlin myself, I can really only comment on the crisis in Berlin. It's obvious that here, the crisis started with the fall of the Berlin Wall, which to this day shapes and defines the city. At the time, there was a surplus of space, and everyone assumed this would be filled and built up very quickly, a massive economic boost. But this didn't happen.

In addition, there was a financial crisis on a local authority level. An over-indebtedness. The result of this economic weakness in Berlin has been this proliferation of creative projects and this emergence of exciting people. However, recently the crisis has taken a turn – from a space that was there to be filled to an ever decreasing commodity, the commodity of free space.

All these crises are interrelated, as a result of the global financial crisis the influx of finance, of capital, which is no longer being invested in the stock markets, is now looking for other investment opportunities. And these are currently primarily in the real estate sector, where Berlin is globally underrepresented. This is causing an influx of capital into the Berlin property market, making the whole situation worse, because the pressure on the few remaining open spaces is increasing and we end up with a kind of entanglement of a typical Berlin crisis and a global crisis."

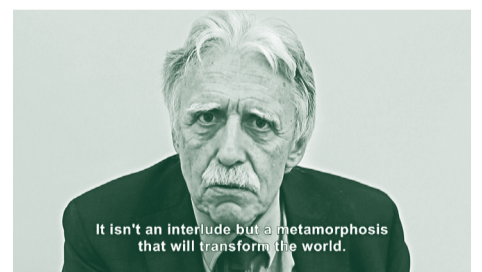
## MARCO REVELLI

political scientist, Turin

"If we allow the crisis to unfold within the system that produced it, then the crisis is destined to devour us, to destroy the social fabric. Turin is an example of this. The centre of Turin is full of empty shops, abandoned spaces. It is as if what happened in Athens is starting to happen here. And it will, unless we opt for a new paradigm. I am not saying we should move away from capitalism, make a revolution. Those things belong in the 20th century. But we must rebuild our social and economic system along radically new lines. Because the earlier system, the 20th-century financial system that has followed us into the new century, is causing social disintegration. It is happening in the poorer countries, and also in the richer areas of the poorer countries. It's happening more in Turin than in the rest of Italy, more in Athens than in the rest of Greece. It is always more obvious in city centres than in the periphery.

The good practices we've discussed during this wonderful *We-Traders* Forum, do express a new culture able to read in the signs of the city the nature of the crisis, but also the small potential portals into a new dimension, a new paradigm. It is possible to invent new ways of relating, new ways of living in the city, by organising relationships and, through them, producing not just added value, but also relationships. I think this is the key to the future. Even these tiny steps are charged with potential. We could even speak of minimalism within the crisis. They have huge potential because they show us a different way of using our spaces.

People continue to see this crisis as a kind of interlude, and that afterwards everything will carry on as before. It isn't an interlude but a metamorphosis that will transform the world. If we can perceive the signs of this mental and practical transformation then other things will come into play, other practices, other types of social relationships. It means reinventing our way of being together and working together to rebuild our lives."



Marco Revelli © Il Piccolo Cinema (produced for Goethe-Institut)

"It isn't an interlude but a metamorphosis that will transform the world."

—Marco Revelli

## DESPAIR AND HOPE – TOWARDS A COLLABORATIVE CITY IN BELGRADE

Ivan Kucina is an architect, assistant professor at the University of Belgrade and founder of the School of Urban Practices

Project postponing is more a consequence of general frustration on the part of Belgrade's citizens caused by the long lasting political and economical crises, than a disagreement about participatory process. A life shaped by everyday struggles and lost hopes for their surroundings and determined by selfish usurpations and overwhelming corruption, has left deep scars in people's minds. Since they have been treated badly by authorities who were supposed to serve them and robbed by business developers who were out to privatize any and all public resources, it is understandable that residents believe that everyone who approaches them has an ulterior motive. After so many years of sustaining a self-protective attitude, they have lost the ability to distinguish good intentions from harmful ones. They would rather believe in unrealistic conspiracy theories that may turn up in their backyard than evidence proven before their eyes. All these reasons are providing enough arguments to identify participation as a futile endeavor. However, under austerity measures, without investments and with a bankrupted state, it seems to be the only valid way left to stop disintegration and develop the city. Citizens' initiatives need to be stimulated and nurtured in order to become everyday practice.

Aside from the crises, the citizens' rejection has to do with the larger historical collapse of socialist ideology and rise of the new neoliberal order. Under socialism, citizens were declared equal and were united in a collective society that was prospering

and proceeding towards a bright future. In theory the citizens' role was celebrated, although in practice it was always limited by the rigid administration and reduced life opportunities. In decision-making procedures and city planning, their rights were presented in the form of public hearings at the end of the process when their chances to change the plans were minimal – they would always receive general bureaucratic responses to any comments they made. Nominally considered to be the most important but practically cut off from public resolutions, citizens' interests were increasingly shifting to the private sector, where they were investing in their own prosperity. During the couple of decades in which the socialist living standard was rising, enough commercial goods and soft loans were gradually offered to meet the dreams for a better life for the majority of citizens. In the same way, a supposedly socialist society was acquiring features of consumer society with all its accompanying characteristics – diversification, segregation, individualization, and egoism. During this period, political instruments for public engagement remained unchanged or were bureaucratized even more, creating resentment with regard to any intention of participation, as it could not bring reasonable improvement, and could even result in persecution for those too seriously involved. As a consequence, citizens found their peace inside their own homes and left the public domain to the city authorities to take care of. Authorities were doing that without a ripple, relying on administrative procedures in order to maintain the comfortable position of the ruler.

The more citizens became wealthy, the less trust they placed in both the authorities and in any other of their fellow citizens. In this way, societal integrity was destroyed long before the collapse of socialism. When socialism did finally collapse and the founding dream of brotherhood, unity and freedom was dismantled, citizens remained isolated and frightened by the uncertainty of the aggressive post socialist times confronting them. In their isolation, they were easy prey for the new business elite that turned them into

## “It is only through collaboration and sharing of competencies that citizens, architects, authorities and developers may create opportunities to transform the process of urban disintegration into an integrative impetus.”

—Ivan Kucina

eager customers. Without mutual trust, they were unable to confront the alliance between the authorities and the new business elite that finally took their city away from them and offered a tempting mirage instead. Citizens were trapped in the world of desires, generating high demands for luxurious lifestyles with never enough resources to pay the costs. Being pushed to the margins, a majority of them chose the only shortcut left in order to satisfy unfulfilled desires – no matter whether wealthy or poor, citizens started to develop their private wealth by tapping public funds. Stretched thin on different sides by many individual appropriations, Belgrade was in a permanent state of disintegration.

It is only through collaboration and sharing of competencies that citizens, architects, authorities and developers may create opportunities to transform the process of urban disintegration into an integrative impetus. Transforming the city encompasses the creative mutual consolidation of their contradictory interrelationships. It is not based on any of their fantasies of order and omnipotence, but is instead the staging

of their discussions and negotiations. It does not aim for stable configurations but for the creation of an open platform that accommodates the processes that are making it. Concentration of diverse initiatives generates instability and dynamism and inspires the creation of new opportunities.

The capacities to coordinate and synchronize diversity, to incorporate many unpredictable rhythms, to make choices within multiplicity – to groove and to improvise in real time – these are the attributes of a transforming city. It is not a mix of styles; it is an overlap of communities. It is not a fusion; it is juxtapositions, collisions, and ruptures. Such patterns of behavior are in constant flux, continually disrupted by new and improvised encounters. Therefore transforming a city involves uneven, uneasy intersections of citizens who perform their actions in the context of others, and eventually find ways to work with each other. They struggle to connect and sometimes they manage. The way to live in such city seems to be to allow this to happen as much as possible – to become, discover, and transform again.

## OUR THESSALONIKI DIFFERENTLY

Giorgos Toulas, journalist, co-founder of Parallaxi Magazin and activist with Thessaloniki Differently

Thessaloniki, my city, is a city which has been experiencing economic recession for at least 20 years, from the Serbian war and on, with de-industrialization, unemployment and the brain drain of the city. Its growth opportunities have dramatically diminished, as have the funds invested in it over the last few decades. The result of all this has been a turn towards conservatism in the city, an introversion which has been reinforced by local leaders over the past years, and the sheer robbery of the city's resources, that also led to a series of convictions, all of which have created a suffocating environment.

Over the past three years, the image of this city, which had reached its limits, has started to change. The change in municipal administration and the assumption of mayoral duties by an open-minded businessman, Giannis Boutaris, the groups and the initiatives that have been launched, have changed the overall feeling, highlighting the city's creativity and extroversion. A series of big events, festivals and outdoor activities succeed one another throughout the year, a strong graphic design and music scene has developed and the city seems at this time to be playing a leading role in the Greek landscape in a creative way.

*Parallaxi*, the free press magazine we have been publishing in Thessaloniki for the past 24 years, took an initiative in the summer of 2010 to try to change the city's everyday life with activities. During the first weekend of June 2010, an urban experiment of 48 hours with more than 64 activities, 120 organizations and groups, 1000 participants and 250 volunteers stirred up the city's everyday life, suggesting a fundamental revision of public space perception. The unprecedented reciprocation by the public, as spectators exceeded 30,000, triggered our first thoughts about continuing the experiment. Thus, the urban activism action *Thessaloniki Differently* was born, extending the presence of *Parallaxi* in the city.

From that moment on, a group of 15 people of different occupational origin and experiences was formed, who constituted the creative core of *Thessaloniki Differently*, and who, with the contribution of hundreds of volunteers, organized a series of activities of reflection and suggestions for the future of the city and caused public dialogue regarding what should happen for Thessaloniki to raise the life quality indicator of its residents.

A source of inspiration for the group, which was enriched along the way with new arrivals, were the overall cultural and urban environment of Thessaloniki, the investment in extroversion, local social needs, the cultural background, social developments and the hidden secrets of the place we live in. The group's philosophy focuses on the utilization of all factors that can impel the city's creative force to extroversion. The principal drive shafts of *Thessaloniki Differently* are public space management, culture, the promotion of the city's creative forces and social solidarity.



Urban activism by Thessaloniki Differently © Giorgos Toulas

From then until now, we have conducted a total of 28 projects in the city, big and small, with interventions that changed everyday life, gave creators the opportunity for self-expression and creation, changed spaces which are facing problems, like the School for the Blind and the State Conservatory, created two parks in degraded neighbourhoods, highlighted the sea front, the potentials of the nearby forest and of deserted historical buildings, held actions which helped social groups in need, the homeless, the Roma, released prisoners, educational programs, exhibitions in Greece and abroad with works of new creators, organizing one's day without a car, evening programs in

museums, opera performances in ghetto areas and monuments, yoga day, invitations to great urban planners and architects from abroad, and many more big and small events that changed the city's everyday life.

To us, after three and a half years, action in the city has become a way of life. Our group now works with a professional logic. More than 150 thousand people have watched our activities, nearly 500 volunteers have helped, more than 2000 creators and collaborators, and they are all held thanks to sponsorships, in cash and in kind, and with free entry – no ticket needed!

**between value,  
profit and  
public good.**

**handling  
of economic  
rules.**

**results in their  
immediate  
urban  
surroundings.**

**7**

***We-Trades*  
introduce new  
actors into the  
field of urban  
planning.**

**8**

***We-Trading*  
marks the shift  
from co-  
determination  
to co-  
authoring.**

**9**

**Everyone  
can become  
a *We-Trader!***

**1**

***We-Trades***  
**are initiatives**  
**that explore**  
**new forms of**  
**exchange.**

**2**

***We-Trades***  
**diffuse the**  
**boundaries**  
**between**  
**consumers**  
**and producers.**

**3**

***We-Trades***  
**create value**  
**beyond**  
**financial**  
**profit.**

**4**

***We-Trades***  
**redefine the**  
**relationship**

**5**

***We-Trades***  
**show a flexible**  
**and playful**

**6**

***We-Trades***  
**produce**  
**tangible**

## BERLIN – ON THE GROUND

Angelika Fitz and Rose Epple,  
curators *We-Traders*

Divided city, reunified city and new, old capital city. In Berlin, special status has become routine, as has a chronic lack of public funds. The unemployment rate lies far above the national average, there is hardly any industry, but young people continue to pour into the city. The governing mayor once described Berlin's appeal as "poor but sexy." The city's greatest resource is its unusual spatial reserves, including such spectacular ones as the 386-hectare former Tempelhof Airport in the heart of the city. On the site of the famous post-Second World War airlift, civil society collectives such as *Allmende-Kontor* are now active – temporarily for the time being. The dispute over whether the airfield ought to remain a place of urban improvisation or whether parts will be built over is well underway.

In recent years the City of Berlin has transformed much real estate into fast cash and privatized municipal housing. Project development is increasingly left to big investment groups. But there is resistance: platforms advocate granting public real estate according to social and cultural criteria; building associations are taking projects into their own hands. Hundreds of citizens have united to a cooperative in the *Initiative Möckernkiez* in order to sustainably develop their own neighbourhood.

Long known for low housing costs, the hunt for concrete gold also began in Berlin over the course of the financial crisis. Real estate prices are rising, the polarization between the quarters increases and along with it segregation in the school system. The Rütli School in Neukölln, both known as a

"problem neighbourhood" and highly affected by gentrification, gained sad notoriety. The *RÜTLI-WEAR* project is attempting to break through the vicious circle of media stigmatization through rebranding and thus profiting from the transformation of the quarter.

The city is rapidly becoming international. Booming tourism and the massive conversion of housing space into holiday flats is seen in many places as a threat to the social and economic Berlin milieu. But many young people from Spain, Greece and Italy come here to stay. In co-working projects such as the *betahaus* they find networks – in the realm between international ghetto and new world community – that are building their own piece of Berlin.



Crisis and glamour intertwined (poster Volksbühne Berlin) © Rose Epple



Allmende-Kontor at the former Tempelhof Airport © K.D. Grote

“Actually,  
out of silly  
experiments  
the most  
awesome  
projects ever  
are born.”

— Open Design City/betahaus

### ALLMENDE-KONTOR

**TRADE** Urban gardening laboratory/network/showroom, enhancement of biodiversity (traditional seeds), healthy and cheap food; promotion of the commons principle, diverse communities, self-organization, self-empowerment

**WE** Urban gardeners, political activists, a colourful mix of people from the neighbourhood (approx. 900)

**CRISIS** Privatization of public space, food industry, social isolation, lack of nature in cities

*Allmende-Kontor* is an initiative that has actively been networking Berlin communal gardens since 2010. We provide public relations and educational work, support research on urban agriculture and advocate self-organization, cooperative community building and negotiations with administrations. Our topics are practical ones: urban development, food independence and commons, as practised in the community garden *Allmende-Kontor* right on the Tempelhofer Feld, where people are made aware of and can experience urban open space as "Allmende" (common property) in cooperative use and development. At present about 900 gardeners and supporters are working on more than 300 beds in the *Allmende-Kontor* community garden.

[www.allmende-kontor.de](http://www.allmende-kontor.de)

### OPEN DESIGN CITY (ODC) / BETAHAUS

**TRADE** Co-working, co-design, open design, tools and skills, community building, start-up hub, empowerment, continuing education

**WE** Makers of all sorts, start-ups, programmers, artists, architects, designers, academics, lawyers, NGOs, journalists, crafties

**CRISIS** Precarious working conditions for creative workers, isolation of freelancers (Ich-AGs), lack of flexible and cheap workspace, high costs for high tech infrastructure, consumerism, bad design, copyright

Values are no longer created in traditional offices. Added value is created in different locations, at different times, in changing team constellations and without permanent employment. This new type of work is always seeking new real and virtual places. Since 2009 *betahaus* is dedicated to innovation, creativity, events and professional work. *Open Design City* is a creative workshop of *betahaus* and an education hub for makers. In and around the space our team runs various events, such as courses, workshops, parties, open experimentation sessions and festivals. Within the diverse sessions and the educative activities we are shaping the community of makers, doers and creators.

[www.betahaus.de](http://www.betahaus.de)

**“We fill a gap left by false policies over the last few years. We push the boundaries of what community involvement can achieve, and sometimes we go beyond them.”**

**— Initiative Möckernkiez**



Community of makers, doers and creators at betahaus © betahaus



Who builds the city? © Initiative Möckernkiez

**“We wanted to personify human resource allocation instead of constantly going on about deficiencies.”**

**— RÜTLI-WEAR**

## INITIATIVE MÖCKERNKIEZ

**TRADE** Civic initiative and housing cooperative, civic planning and construction of an integrative housing quarter, communal and cross-generational living (ecologically sustainable, barrier-free, intercultural and socially integrative)

**WE** Neighbours and future neighbours, political scientists, economists, urban geographers, architects, social institutions

**CRISIS** Neoliberal urban development, real estate policy without common welfare, privatization of public space

**Who builds the city? According to what criteria? When a former railway property at the Gleisdreieck (triangular junction) in Berlin Kreuzberg went up for sale, some of its neighbours decided not to put their confidence in an anonymous investor. They launched the Initiative Möckernkiez with the goal of creating the new urban district on their own. A cooperative was founded that purchased the 30,000 square metre property and became the supporting organization of a unique model project: a collaborative and cross-generational housing complex that is ecologically sustainable, barrier-free, intercultural and socially integrative. An ensemble of small units with 450 flats, community rooms and commercial areas was planned in a participatory process. Construction will be completed in late 2014.**

[www.moeckernkiez.de](http://www.moeckernkiez.de)

## RÜTLI-WEAR

**TRADE** Branding, fashion design, textile production and distribution, silkscreen printing, further education, training in business skills and PR, empowerment of disadvantaged youngsters

**WE** Social workers, teachers, pupils, young creative professionals

**CRISIS** Stigmatization of city quarters as no-go areas, social polarization, discrimination in the education system, youth unemployment, gentrification

**RÜTLI-WEAR** was launched in 2006 as an anti-stigmatization campaign after unprecedented media hype made the Rütli secondary school in the impoverished neighbourhood of Neukölln synonymous with misguided educational and failed integration policies. Rather than talking about and judging teenagers of non-German origins, the project gives them back the prerogative of interpreting their own lives and their own issues. In an extra-curricular open workshop under expert supervision, they try out craft projects, learn techniques of design expression and create their own fashion label, selling the hand silkscreened clothing as a pupil company. The association produces positive synergies from urban transformation processes and opens new perspectives through unusual, creative alliances.

[www.ruetli-wear.de](http://www.ruetli-wear.de)



Pupils present their fashion label © RÜTLI-WEAR

# WE-TRADERS LISBON

## LISBON – ON THE GROUND

Julia Albani, co-curator *We-Traders*

In the urban vocabulary of Lisbon, slogans like “Together we make a city”, “The town is in you” and even “You are the city” are just as obvious today as the alarmingly high number of vacant dwellings (around 50,000) and the skyrocketing unemployment rate (around 18%) that hovers above the national average. With its proclaimed appreciation of civil society initiatives in city development, the city administration has recently energetically engaged in the fight against the direct impact of the financial crisis. Rising unemployment and lack of opportunities, an empty treasury, vacancies and housing shortages and the urgent need to break down red tape make it fertile ground for co-determination and participation. **BIP/ZIP**, an exemplary *We Trader* project, is a non-bureaucratic micro- and short-term fund for micro-projects in the most affected districts. For three years it has been promoting initiatives such as the exemplary neighbourhood kitchen *Cozinha popular da Mouraria* and the project

*A Linha (The Line)*, a colour-based signage for playful movement and revitalization of the neighbourhood of Alfama. This paradigm shift is, however, not only promoted by the central city council, but can also be seen in the cityscape and numerous budding initiatives, most of which are of low-cost and voluntary nature. A sense of collectivity, participation, social justice and transparency are the hallmarks of these players who, in spite of unemployment and no public contract as urban protagonists, are looking for creative solutions, often arising from existential and social need. In the crisis-ridden everyday, projects such as the critical wall newspaper *O Espelho (The Mirror)* or the programme to identify and reduce urban vacancies *Agulha num Palheiro (Needle in a haystack)* send signals that, based on new values and exchanges, re-evaluate self-directed, self-responsible action for the city (and with the city) in urgent expertise.



Lisbon Forum with Julia Albani © Rose Epple

JULIA ALBANI is an independent curator and director of the communications agency *BUREAU N* (Berlin/Lisbon). She is co-curator for *We-Traders* in Lisbon.



Revitalizing Alfama district © A Linha

“It is an architectural workshop that intends to explore a wider field of what architects can do in the future.”

— Artéria/Agulha num palheiro

### A LINHA

**TRADE** Re-evaluating spaces, re-vitalizing misused spaces in historical Alfama, co-working, crafts, re-use and recycling, workshops, product design, urban gardening, day care

**WE** Artists, architects, social workers, local community

**CRISIS** Urgent need for social and urban micro intervention, lack of urban furniture, decadence of urban spaces, crime, drug traffic, wastefulness, lack of activities for youngsters and elderly people

The project *A Linha (The Line)* by the *Urban Nomads* studio aims to revitalize the numerous abandoned spaces in Alfama, the oldest district of Lisbon, through a strategy that overlaps four lines. Together they mark different routes through the neighbourhood, past identified and revitalized sites, creating a connection between the river and the Campo de Santa Clara. Each line has a theme: green – green spaces, red – arts, blue – commerce, yellow – games and recreation. The different lines define the type of intervention for each location. The local population was directly involved throughout the development of *A Linha*. The facilities were built by builders in the neighbourhood using only reused and adapted wood and furniture. *A Linha* is one of the projects selected for the programme *BIP/ZIP* 2012.

[www.alinhaalfama.wordpress.com](http://www.alinhaalfama.wordpress.com)

### AGULHA NUM PALHEIRO

**TRADE** Scouting and mapping of empty and abandoned buildings in the city centre; training, education and advisory on revitalization process (legal and practical consultancy), intuitive knowledge tools for citizens, development of spatial reading and abstraction capabilities

**WE** Architects, designers, cultural activists, locals who would like to live in old houses/ old city centre

**CRISIS** High vacancy, lack of affordable and quality living space, missing transparency in ownership, non-transparent administration processes and permits for revitalization, squatting, high cost of revitalization

*Agulha num palheiro (Needle in a haystack)* is a useful interface by people who love old houses developed by Artéria. It arose from the difficulties experienced by people looking for old residential houses in the city centre. The project compiles a specialized “showcase” of old houses and buildings offered on various real estate websites and seeks new owners and tenants to bring life back to these properties. It was designed as an explanatory and intuitive tool to support the citizens and to help rehabilitate Lisbon. The beta phase of the project was supported by the *BIP/ZIP* programme in 2011. Expansion of the database to include the entire centre of Lisbon with support from the “Crisis Buster” of the 2013 Architecture Triennale is presently underway.

[www.agulhanumpalheiro.pt](http://www.agulhanumpalheiro.pt)



Agulha num palheiro (Needle in a haystack) © Artéria



Urban wall newspaper © O Espelho

**“We felt a sense of responsibility – that it was time to do something.”**

— O Espelho

## BIP / ZIP

**TRADE** New models of localism, devolution of powers and responsibilities to local parish councils, participatory budgeting and funding, local development incentives, micro urban interventions and bottom-up strategies, adaptable urbanism, participation

**WE** Government, local community, lawyers, architects, urban designers, social workers, sociologists, start-ups, neighbourhood associations

**CRISIS** Lack of community partnering, fragile neighbourhoods, precarious living conditions, bureaucratic central planning, shrinking city

The programme *BIP/ZIP* (*Bairros e Zonas de Intervenção Prioritária*/Neighbourhoods and areas of priority intervention) created by the city of Lisbon in 2013 continues the two editions of *BIP/ZIP* in 2011 and 2012. Again the initiative is in the scope of the *Local Housing Programme (PLH)* as an instrument of public policy aimed at boosting municipal partnerships and small local interventions to improve the “habitat”. It is based on supporting local projects that contribute to strengthening social and territorial cohesion in the neighbourhood. This year, 108 applications were received by the *BIP/ZIP* platform. The budget for the 49 approved applications is 2 million euros. In July 2013, *BIP/ZIP* was awarded the seventh Best Practice in Citizen Participation award by the ODP (International Observatory of Participatory Democracy).

[habitacao.cm-lisboa.pt](http://habitacao.cm-lisboa.pt)



Neighbourhood area of priority intervention © BIP/ZIP

## O ESPELHO

**TRADE** Publishing, co-working, networking, crowd funding

**WE** Writers, political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, artists, journalists, architects, designers, students

**CRISIS** Austerity, unemployment, unconstitutional tax hikes, sluggish judiciary, oppressive partisanship, lack of team/co-work

*O Espelho* (The Mirror) is an urban wall newspaper, food for thought and fleeting opportunity for reflection and, above all, a mirror of society. The use of this traditional communication format as the voice and means of agitation and instrumentalization of urban space, is the result and response of a group of journalists, artists, architects, writers, photographers – many of them without work – to the precarious situation and social injustice due to the economic crisis and austerity frenzy of the troika. The first edition of *O Espelho* appeared for Angela Merkel’s visit to Portugal in November 2012 and since then is always published for important events and funded through personal initiative, crowd funding and subscribers. In critical essays, graphics, illustrations and photographs, the editors undertake collective self-reflection and call out to the people of the 21st century within the crisis vortex.

[www.facebook.com/JornaloEspelho](http://www.facebook.com/JornaloEspelho)

## COZINHA POPULAR DA MOURARIA

**TRADE** Co-cooking, community building, sustainable co-learning, multi-generation workshops, trading of recipes and cooking-techniques, urban gardening

**WE** Chefs, photographers, writers, journalists, social workers, locals

**CRISIS** Abandoned lots/houses, loss of the diversity of cultural gastronomic heritage, crime and drug traffic

The neighbourhood kitchen *Cozinha popular da Mouraria* is a social, civic and cultural project initiated by photographer Adriana Freire. Activities are free for residents; other guests pay a fee. It is not a charity project, but an incentive for entrepreneurship. Since cooking is a universal language, the project aims to engage all available resources in the Mouraria quarter. It combats situations of marginalization, unemployment and conflicts between drug traffickers, and also enables immigrant communities to intersect with the local population. The community kitchen is an engine against local unemployment, for joint experimentation, for improving the image of the neighbourhood, knowledge in producing quality food, training neighbourhood youths, countering isolation and promoting active citizenship of the elderly. Neighbourhood residents are also made familiar with innovative farming in urban gardens.

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



Neighbourhood kitchen in Mouraria © Cozinha popular da Mouraria

# LISBON'S OBSTINACY

— DIAGNOSES BY WELTSTADT CORRESPONDENT SONJA BEECK

HOW CAN LISBON'S CITIZENS PREVENT THE ARCHITECTURAL AND SOCIAL DECAY OF THEIR CITY? IS THE CREEPING DILAPIDATION OF THE CITY'S PHYSICAL SUBSTANCE ALSO A SYMPTOM OF THE DECAY OF THE POLITICAL SPHERE, OF PUBLIC SPACE IN THE BROADER SENSE? WHERE ARE SMALL-SCALE, INTELLIGENT AFFILIATIONS OF THE DISCONTENTED MANIFESTING? WHO IS MAKING LISBON TODAY, AND FOR TOMORROW?

Supposedly there hasn't been all that much movement in Portugal in recent years. The economy has been tottering along for a considerable time now. Unemployment was already high before the crisis, but has risen massively in the wake of austerity measures taken in response to the crisis. Only those people with jobs are in motion, to the extent that they commute daily from their homes to their workplaces. Those who do not wish to live in uncomfortable old buildings in the city center move to more comfortable residential buildings on the outskirts of the city or better yet, build a house in the urban fringe. The opulent revitalisation of Portugal's entire infrastructure in the past two decades was financed by EU programs. Cheap loans and the home-ownership lifestyle favored by the middle class have also been a considerable force behind urban sprawl, and at the same time left dilapidated areas in the cities. The results of this policy, promoted by EU funding, are all too evident in Lisbon's older districts such as Alfama and Mouraria as well.

The visible decay of building substance in the city centers was particularly intensive throughout Europe in the 1950's until the 1980's. We are all too familiar with the demonization of the city of the 19th century and of yet older buildings, it spans the period from euphoric modernity through to the most recent past. In many areas in the GDR, only socially marginalized people and the elderly were living in the dilapidated city centers. But a point came in both east and west, from Amsterdam to Vienna – mostly initiated by the state – when countermeasures began to be taken. As early as the late 1970's attempts were made in the German Federal Republic and in Austria to rescue building substance and to make living in the city centers attractive through large-scale urban development programs. Today, in Vienna's 1st District, top-market penthouses are being sold and experts are writing about an urban renaissance. In many major cities, displacement and gentrification are under discussion rather than decay. Things are different in Lisbon.

The discontent was vented in November 2012. The disaster came from without and had a name: Angela Merkel. If one speaks with demonstrators today, some of whom underwent an awakening back then, one feels resentment towards Berlin less and far more anger about the situation within the country. The younger generation does not have the impression that the state is mastering the situation with dedication and drive. Unlike in Germany, people here have scarcely any faith in comprehensive urban development programs, the "social city" or identifying areas for redevelopment or all the other instruments of sovereign urban and regional planning.

However, although enjoying little visibility now, in the last 10-15 years the demographic and physical decay of

Lisbon's inner city has been countered by a few initiatives. At the municipal level, renovation programs in several city districts have taken root and are gradually changing the face of these districts, in many cases in close partnership with authorities, landlords and local organizations. Limited demographic and economic dynamics can now be observed in a few areas of inner-city neighborhoods. Furthermore, the national political discourse has discovered the theme of urban revitalization and renovation as an issue for stimulating the economy and employment. Despite these interventions, Lisbon's inner city is still markedly lagging behind most other EU capitals with respect to renovation efforts and investments. But they do exist, these individual measures, which as with acupuncture, can have great effects. The small, strategic and cooperative initiatives of "we-trading" that can make the transition in Lisbon possible. And an attentive and often astonishingly open-minded administration and policy-making a partner of these initiatives; not with large-scale programs for which the funds simply do not exist. Instead, ideas of engaged citizens are given support in amazingly uncomplicated ways. The citizens draw attention to themselves, whether loudly or quietly, they have visions they try things out, they learn in the process, and they are the opposite of the universally lamented inertia. They proceed pragmatically and begin with astonishing directness. Most striking is the fact that the solutions for abuses are being developed by a dedicated team of women.

## USING NEW SYSTEMS

Take, for example, the two young architects Lucinda Correia and Ana Jara, who have set their minds on counteracting the vacancy rate in Lisbon's historic city center. A vacancy rate with a multiplicity of causes. In 2012, under pressure from the so called Troika, the conservative government eliminated one of the causes by revising the Portuguese rental law. More than 700,000 rental contracts throughout Portugal must now be renegotiated, since



Bricked-up house in the historical center © Jürgen Willinghöfer

rental contracts stemming from the days of the monarchy with accordingly favorable terms were still in existence, which failed to cover maintenance expenses by far. In line with this, there has been scarcely any investment in properties in Lisbon's city center. Well, one can either wait for outside investors or motivate the locals to take matters into their own hands. For this purpose, the two architects, together with a few other colleagues, have created the Internet platform *Agulha num palheiro* (needle in the haystack). There, houses for sale can be cataloged and offered by private persons. At the same time, they are developing a renovation handbook to allay

possible purchasers' fears of too-great investments, since the renovation of the Old City's rundown buildings, as much as 41%, will be effected by the citizens themselves. Lisbon is by no means cheap, in spite of the visible decay. Although mostly in poor condition, apartments are not offered at bargain-basement prices. It seems as if completely different market forces are already at work here. Are investors already waiting for the starting shot of the really big run? Who are the owners of all those buildings in the city-center barrios?

The platform is sensibly aiming to create a small market for the empty and decaying buildings via the Internet, but this might possibly be attracting precisely those players with whom many another city center has had bitter experiences. People with so much money that they do not know where else to park it. And if renovation takes place on a grand scale, the current residents cannot stay. The scale of investment would entail their displacement. Are the architects perhaps naive, or is their strategy the right one to get things moving? Although use is the best conservation, it too can herald an undesired development at whose end perhaps none are still living there of those who, for instance, are here and there transforming the old quarter Alfama into a truly magical place.

## STIMULATION

Many older and above all not exactly wealthy people are still living in Alfama. The historic quarter in the vicinity of the harbor features attractive squares and romantic little alleyways. Today, though, the squares are more or less deserted, since neither density nor communication in the quarter are no longer anywhere nearly as intensive as in the past, when residents still knew each other over generations. But an urban neighbourhood's life consists in its people knowing each other, speaking with each other and helping each other, we-trading, in other words. This is where Lucia Luisa Alpalhão's project *A Linha* (line) takes its point of departure. She went to London in 2002, in the midst of Portugal's upswing and long before the crisis. She returned in 2011, to apply what she had learned at The Bartlett School of Architecture University College London (Faculty of the Built Environment) in her quarter, to promote participation and engagement by means of artistic interventions and performative planning. She laid down routes to lend visibility to special and valuable features of the quarter. During one summer, joint actions and meals were held with the aim of promoting the community of children, adults, seniors, neighbours and local small business people.

"Community building" – is the name of the strategy in which everyone gets involved with what is in fact theirs, making visible the functions of public space and piercing through lethargy. Furnishing the city and festivals were aimed at strengthening the sense of community through joint activities. Why did this project, which had been initiated with such enthusiasm, fail to take root and flower, as the architect self-critically reported. Because it rained? Because things were stolen? Because residents complained about the lively

discussions on the streets? Did this social animation in the spirit of The Bartlett's not fail to interest the residents? Where were the mistakes? What can be learned from this experiment? Is Alfama perhaps not so easy to revitalize – or instead with small-scale interventions only with the stoic obstinacy of those who remain? Where is the residents' obstinacy? A city is a system full of obstinacy and self-will – it has as much self-will as it has inhabitants.

## BASIC RITUALS

Self-will can also be observed in another quarter, and what is being referenced here is not the Mouraria's steep slope or noticeably dilapidated building substance. Many buildings have already been secured by the city to prevent injury to passers-by through falling stones or pieces of plaster. There are many problems in this neighbourhood, ranging from drugs and poverty to unemployment, violence and a prostitution. Real-estate developers haven't discovered Mouraria as yet, but if one wanders through the fairy-tale-like gardens and discovers the beautiful views, anybody will understand what will happen when the next economic upswing comes. What can the residents do themselves to contribute to solving the problems? Cook, maybe!?



Adriana dreams of expanding the Cozinha popular © Jürgen Willinghöfer

Adriana Freire lives here, is from here and is staying here. She in fact started cooking one day, not just for herself, but for others as well. Adriana is an institution, she is known in the Mouraria quarter, but also the readers of the magazine *Monocle* have heard about her. Two years ago, Adriana installed a kitchen and dining-room in a former garage. The place is lively, inviting, unpretentious, and at the same time modern and elegant. And the food is simply delicious. People in the know come here every Wednesday. Some help out, and others come out of curiosity. A meal costs five Euros. In this way, the project finances itself one way or another; but Adriana would like to have the City of Lisbon support her and expand the project. She dreams of the vacant property across the street, where today only cats live and a restaurant set up by the city for which she need not pay rent any longer. The burden of Adriana's 2000 Euro monthly overhead, including a paid cook, is too great and can scarcely be covered by what is earned. Visitors are disconcerted by the fact that she pays 500 Euros rent for a self-built garage. Obviously, public sponsorship is needed in addition to self-will. And time and again, small institutions of the municipal administration stand behind these persons and their ideas, providing the first impetus and in Adriana's case financed the first kitchen equipment.

## UP-CLOSE, DIRECT SUPPORT

The kitchen, the real-estate platform, and also the artistic interventions were or are all supported by *BIP/ZIP* (Bairros e Zonas de Intervenção Prioritária), a program developed by the city for priority measures in difficult city neighbourhoods. The need for action was determined following detailed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on building substance as well as of social, climatic and economic indicators. Hybrid micro-projects situated on the boundary between social work, art in public space, economic advancement and urban development. This intelligent type of support is what has made one other small but sophisticated project possible in the first place, since none of the protagonists would have been in a position to take on the financial risk of investments that will remain unprofitable for the foreseeable future, in addition to their enthusiasm, persistence and the work they have performed with endless patience. Among the initiatives of the City of Lisbon is a local program for creating and improving residential space, a program conceived as habitat. Here, city neighbourhoods are identified where there is a great deal of catching-up to do. A total of 67 such areas were identified in which many young, but also a great many elderly people live. *BIP/ZIP* is a tool for supporting on-site projects. Available capacities are organized in network format and existing neighbourhood groups and organizations energized.



Self-initiative is spreading © Rose Epple

What do these projects have in common strategically? They are the acupuncture for city districts mentioned above, that are either in a state of shock or have withdrawn into a real-life fado. They do exist, these little initiatives, each of which, taken for itself alone, appears exemplary, transferrable and relevant, and all of which symbolize the transition. It is nonetheless questionable whether some higher authority or other will exert itself to analyse the projects and construct advanced support programs, legislation and strategies on this basis. If Europe needs a stronger South, as Claus Leggewie never tired of emphasizing during the *We-Traders* Forum in Lisbon, then in countries like Portugal the young potential of people who are organizing themselves in flexible networks must be systematically supported.

We are firmly convinced that particularly these small initiatives in their totality are having an effect, that these very forms are pointing the way to the future. Today, however, they are fragile, isolated phenomena that need to be imitated en masse and require a clear-cut intermeshing and integration with larger structures.

**“The citizens draw attention to themselves, whether loudly or quietly, they have visions they try things out, they learn in the process, and they are the opposite of the universally lamented inertia.”**

—Sonja Beeck

## O ESPELHO

“Where there is danger, the rescue grows as well,” as Leggewie encouraged the lively *We-Traders* round table with Hölderlin’s words, and one might add: “near, but hard to grasp” are the simple little solutions. A solution like that of the Lisbon Mirror, *O Espelho*. It intensively criticizes public discussion and beyond this the media. *O Espelho* does not emulate television and is also no typical print magazine, but instead a message pasted on walls. A wall newspaper comes from below. Editors come together and publish their various opinions. Is it art or fact-based communication? – Who is the sender, who the receiver?

They are words that move people, words on walls that draw attention to themselves. An old medium of the Bolsheviks, agitprop to make the workers finally wake up, is being revived in the digital age. *O Espelho* recalls Friedrich Wolf’s dictum that art is a weapon, in other words a medium to bring about concrete, palpable change. A wall newspaper seeks to create a public that identifies with the spirit of the demonstrations of April 25, 1975. It is no accident that *O Espelho* arose in the wake of the demonstrations during the visit of Angela Merkel in November 2012. What all seventeen editors throughout Portugal felt and are still feeling was a lack of team spirit and cooperation in all the “co-working” and “network” projects. The financing medium of crowd-funding, born out of need, that the wall-paper’s opinion-makers set in motion anew with each edition, is a product of contemporary, diverse electronic connections. Digital networking enables analog engagement. The paper’s muted graphics deliberately eschew the sensationalistic design of mainstream media. Texts are set in neutral, clear letters and are written by a variety of authors, some well-known, others less so until now. However, the Mirror enjoys the greatest attention not on the street, but in other newspapers, on television and above all in the Internet on its Facebook page. The movement’s voice can be heard on one’s smartphone, but it is also perceptible in old, analog contexts, on the walls of the city, where urban and therefore public life cannot shut itself off from it.

What is public space? Who informs, who discusses, who or what in fact holds society together? Who is the antidote to narcotic stupor? Who will yell? Aesthetics contra anaesthetics, as alternative to the 24-hour TV programs oozing the soap operas that are putting all of Portugal to sleep every day. But will the Mirror reach the people to whom it is addressed, who are still watching TV and are expected to read close-up all of a sudden? Will a collective self-reflection take place? There is currently also a great deal of hope in the mix of factors, and a pleasant activism that aims at the micro-level, at the local neighborhood. Editor Maria Tengarrinha does not seek to publish throughout Portugal, but rather in one particular quarter, in the bairro, to give the people there the opportunity to share experiences and take positions on local issues. To speak about what they deal with every day, what annoys them or makes them happy, what is causing problems, but also what enables withdrawal. All such things must be discussed if things are to be gently and carefully changed, and gradually begin to bloom again.

# PRAÇA MORIBUNDA

Jürgen Willinghöfer

No consumer potential here. The old customers have either passed on, or go to Lidl next door, which is open from 9 AM until 9 PM. Here, in the market hall, the customary business hours are from 5 AM until 1 PM; from early in the morning when the fresh fish is delivered, until midday when the poor things get tired and only want to smoke or feed the pigeons. Even as early as ten in the morning, yawning emptiness prevails throughout the entire hall. Scarcely any stand is still displaying merchandise, but in all likelihood there weren’t all that many more, earlier in the morning. In the evening, an old woman feeds hundreds of pigeons and refuses to leave. Of Lisbon’s formerly 30 or 40 markets, fewer and fewer are still in existence. A few are managing the shift to specialized delicatessen markets, but most simply disappear. A designer trained in Amsterdam who runs a FabLab for the City of Lisbon in one of the annexes, shows us all the things that can be done with vacant spaces. Converted machines of recent date stand there in an old rabbit slaughterhouse. The sign with the rabbits arranged as a triskel is aptly

chosen, after all, the place is a market based on mutuality; where machines and infrastructure are used that would be far too expensive for individuals. From a 3-D printer to a laser cutter, CNC router and desktop miller machine and vinyl cutter; everything is available for use in the FabLab and solve unknown problems together, as the designer explains. “Do it yourself!” – the old slaughter floors were only minimally renovated: toilets, a couple of doors and the lighting were installed, everything else will develop more or less ad hoc. There’s no money for anything else, either. The fact that in the evening, the old woman isn’t feeding the pigeons, but instead wine and sandwiches are being served to the *We-Traders’* Forum from a *pátio ambulante*, a converted Mercedes truck from the Gerhardsried fire department, is perhaps a sign of change. Perhaps triple-rabbit production potential is emerging here!



A rabbit slaughterhouse transforms into a FabLab © Jürgen Willinghöfer

# BAIRRO ILEGAL

Jürgen Willinghöfer

With the train from Rossio to Sintra, it’s three stops to the Cova de Moura, the dark, illegal quarter. Outside, the light is sparse, indoors all the more glaring, in one of the restaurants of the quarter, where wonderful Cape Verde dishes are served. On this evening a few corners further, in the youth center, no cheer is to be expected. In the stale, muggy air, formed by deep basses, they sing – or better speak – about their marginal existences. Their casually demonstrated pride can no longer be taken from them – and yet they remain boys when Liz makes her way through the crowd. Liz, from Leuven, studied psychology there and once she had arrived in Lisbon, stayed on, with her husband from the Azores in a house without utilities on an undeveloped piece of real estate. And as always, she says that she has been here in this community longer than she can remember, more than thirty years now. This community would break up if one were to give her the land, someone in the

group predicts. Then they might even sell it, and in the end those very people would end up owning the land whom all here begrudge it. Here, as always in the case of real estate, who owns the land is the perennial question. In Lisbon, the Cova da Moura stands for criminality, a quarter that has not been legalized, where many residents hail from the old Portuguese colonies, from the Cape Verde Islands, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique or Angola. It all began 25 years ago with a small library. A meeting point like this had not existed here in the past. Many children and young people came every day. Today, the community runs a kindergarten that is open longer than normal ones, so that parents can drive to their jobs – mostly ill-paid and far away. The kindergarten is not free, but has different rates, adjusted to the parents’ financial and familial circumstances: “We don’t like charity, we want empowerment.”

# WE-TRADERS TOULOUSE

## TOULOUSE – ON THE GROUND

Stéphane Gruet, co-curator *We-Traders*

Capital of the counts of Toulouse in the Middle Ages, *Tolosa* was the heart of the resistance of *Languedoc* countries during the Crusades led by the barons of the north against the Cathar “heresy”. It won its independence in 1147 under the *Capitouls* government and became one of Europe’s great cities. Its location far from Paris and at the gates of Spain, its university – the second largest in France – and its radical republican tradition (it took in many refugees from Franco) determined the city’s character and a certain cultural and political originality. The *Carrefour Culturel Arnaud Bernard* initiative defends the universality of this continuing story.

Toulouse, capital of the largest rural area in the south of France, did not experience an industrial revolution, but in the twentieth century developed industries from the

two world wars (powder, cartridge and chemical factories), and the conquest of sky and space (Airbus, Ariane, CNES). The urban area of France’s fourth largest city of 1.2 million people grows by 20,000 annually. Long described as a “sleeping beauty,” its local middle class and political representation, rooted in a vast rural area, delayed the development of the *ville rose*, but its industrial and demographic growth, its increasing cosmopolitanism and lively youth – among them 100,000 students – now make Toulouse a creative and activist city. *Le potager de Camille* revives the traditional relationship between Toulouse and its territory, between rural producers and urban consumers. *Mix’Art Myrys* reflects the creativity of urban youth that rejects the dominant development model based solely on the market.

As a scientific and technological metropolis, Toulouse is also a city of immigration (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and North African). Its wealth and climate attracts the least advantaged people, who are concentrated in the post-war high-rises where urban violence has broken out repeatedly (1998, 2005 and 2007). The *AERA* social housing cooperative measures aim for the reappropriation of these neighbourhoods by their inhabitants. Similarly, *Bois & Cie* promotes their autonomy, the integration of young people and the provision of temporary housing for homeless families.

STÉPHANE GRUET is an architect, philosopher and professor at the École Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture de Toulouse. He is co-curator for *We-Traders* in Toulouse.



We-Traders Forum Toulouse  
© Rose Epple



Cooperative planning © AERA

### AERA HABITAT

**TRADE** Participative housing, low-cost housing, sustainable city development, active citizenship, community building

**WE** Architects, philosophers, sociologists, citizens interested in sharing (for social, economic and environmental reason)

**CRISIS** Housing Crisis, social, economic and environmental Crisis, lack of participation in the housing sector, top-down planning

**AERA** (Action, Studies and Research on Architecture, Living Space and City) has been working since 2003 in so-called problem neighbourhoods on social housing strategies that put people at the heart of the project. In times of economic, social and environmental crisis, families are invited to share everything worth sharing to restore a sense of their community within their living environment, as well as to strengthen the importance of architecture and the city. To ensure that families without access to mortgages have social inclusion and a roof over their heads, **AERA** has worked for ten years with the government and housing agencies on legal cooperative arrangements that benefit all. Since 2006, **AERA** has been developing and testing methods involving residents who are members in the cooperative in planning, design, management and maintenance of their habitat in order to promote the success of a project for the long term. Of twelve, two projects are nearing completion and six will be delivered in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

[www.aera-cvh.org](http://www.aera-cvh.org)

### BOIS & CIE

**TRADE** Carpentry shop and joinery, low-cost timber houses, integration of young employees, shared knowledge, co-production, recycling

**WE** Educators, carpenters, youths, citizens

**CRISIS** Consumerism, unemployment, poverty, housing shortage, throwaway society, citizens losing touch with materials and production

**Bois & Cie** (Wood & Co.) aims to share and transfer knowledge and know-how about woodworking that favours recycling and green building to fulfil ecological demands. Its commonly used workshop promotes encounters between a variety of visitors and participants. Following an introduction, the members acquire skills in collective projects to then pass on to newcomers. Young people in integration measures collect scrap wood from industry or construction that is reused for composting, garden design or mobile residential units. Against the background of the housing crisis and increasing quantities of scrap timber, **Bois & Cie** produced a lightweight, modular housing prototype. Consisting of pallets, doors, windows, crates, etc., it shows that it is possible to use scrap timber to create high quality, ecological and economical dwellings and thus avoid disposal, incineration or industrial processing of this wood and the resultant pollutant emissions.

[www.bois-et-cie.asso.fr](http://www.bois-et-cie.asso.fr)



Low-cost house from scrap timber © Bois & Cie

“Being anchored in the local community and a collective drive are crucial.”

— Bois & Cie

# “We cut all ties with the markets. No more of that! Finis!”

—Le potager de Camille



Local, sustainable and socially equitable agriculture © Le potager de Camille

## CARREFOUR CULTUREL ARNAUD BERNARD

**TRADE** Creating publicness, forum for debate, neighbourhood activities, fostering local language + interregional exchange, urban renewal

**WE** Artists, musicians, political activists, all citizens with their talents and differences

**CRISIS** Lack of lively public spaces, hierarchical society, top-down planning culture, weak civil society, decline of regional cultures

In the heart of the city of Toulouse, *Carrefour Culturel Arnaud Bernard* (Arnaud Bernard Cultural Crossroads, CCAB) combines cultural programmes from neighbour to neighbour, but also for the entire city, and cultural activities with political ambition in the sense of a genuine “polis” and international significance. According to the western idea of culture, the greatest achievements of the human mind are rooted deeply within a district from which cosmopolitan values can arise. The dual objectives and effects of *Carrefour Culturel* are based on this conviction. The association also organizes the *Forum des Langues du Monde* (Forum of World Languages), *Repas de Quartier* (Neighbourhood Meals) and *Conversations Socratiques* (Socratic Conversations). It is also the origin of the “Declaration of Obligations to Languages and Language” and the proposal for a general introduction of studies of French languages and cultures to all French.

[www.arnaud-bernard.net](http://www.arnaud-bernard.net)

## MIX’ART MYRYS

**TRADE** Cultural and artistic co-production, fair knowledge exchange, low threshold spaces and shared equipment, workshops, film and concert hall, exhibitions spaces

**WE** Artists collective, citizens

**CRISIS** Precarious conditions for creative workers and “sans papiers”, isolation of freelancers, lack of flexible and cheap workspace, high costs for high tech infrastructure

By providing affordable multi- and transdisciplinary spaces for production, “monstration” and exhibitions, *Mix’Art Myrys* created a place for meetings and exchanges between artists and audiences, and between various visitor groups. Incorporated as an artists’ collective, the association is organized around the principle of self-management. Its funding is based on “free and necessary participation” (both for the public and members), as well as sharing of human, artistic and economic resources and the exchange of knowledge and expertise. *Mix’Art Myrys* strives to create a space for cultural democracy between individual and collective existence. Always questioning the space-art-society relationship, the group was recognized by the state in 2001 as belonging to the *Nouveaux Territoires de l’Art*, which include cultural and societal laboratories for artistic experimentation such as wasteland, intermediate places or factories.

[www.mixart-myrys.org](http://www.mixart-myrys.org)



Affordable spaces for cultural production © MixArts Myrys

## LE POTAGER DE CAMILLE

**TRADE** Organic food, direct sale from local farmers, participatory farming

**FINANCING** members commit to fixed purchase volume per year

**WE** Farmers, 350 families (1000 persons)

**CRISIS** Long supply chains in agricultural industry, ecological footprint, global price fight in food industry, search for healthy local food and direct contact to farmers

An *AMAP* (Association for the Preservation of Rural Agriculture) aims to preserve local farms operating sustainable, socially equitable and environmentally sound agriculture. These farms allow consumers to buy quality products at a fair price; the consumers know the origin and mode of production of these products, while also actively supporting the preservation of local farming. A number of consumers and a farmer use an *AMAP* at the beginning of the season to agree on what part of the harvest is delivered to each family periodically at constant costs. The producer undertakes to provide quality products in compliance with the *Charte de l’Agriculture Paysanne*. *Le potager de Camille* (Camille’s vegetable garden) located in the former Toulouse vegetable belt distributes its entire production (250 varieties on 4 ha) to 350 families of the town, who are also involved in the selection of crops.

[www.lepotagerdecamille.fr](http://www.lepotagerdecamille.fr)



Testing crowdsourcing  
© MOD Institute/Nextbangalore



Participants in the Nextbangalore:Space © MOD Institute/Nextbangalore

## LISTENING TO THE INDIAN CROWD

Anne-Katrin Fenk, Tile von Damm, Rohit Bhatia, MOD/Nextbangalore

“What to do... it's how it is.” An often heard phrase in Bangalore, sometimes meant as a statement, sometimes as a question. Said with a wink, Bangalore is not a static city, furthermore it is changing rapidly and its inhabitants are not accepting the given. It seems that most stories and ideas are just waiting to be shared, for starting a discussion.

The crowdsourcing platform *Nextbangalore* is host to a lot of discussions on urban development in one of the fastest growing cities in the world. The contradiction between modernity and acceptance, between people's own culture and global urban planning, is motor to most inputs. “That's India”, summarized a visitor of the *Nextbangalore:Space*, and actually perfectly described the apparent contradiction between local codices and global market conditions, particularly apparent in Bangalore. As a participative crowdsourcing platform, *Nextbangalore* can take into account and parallelly enable an active and inclusive approach. This is of course one of the most important intermediate results from the numerous discussions and conversations the project has seen so far.

But besides fruitful discussions on the future of Bangalore, participants are asking about the financing of the project. Living in a market-driven city such as Bangalore, it is somewhat new to most Bangaloreans that a crowdsourcing project is designed as non-profit and is not dependable on a corporation. Crowdfunding and crowdsourcing have become buzzwords in marketing since 2006. Now the phenomenons have reached Indian shores. Though still in a nascent stage, the fertile ground for the growth of crowdsourcing has been against a backdrop of creative lethargy and shortfall of ideas among creative agencies. In India, main forces for actively using social media are market-related interests.

In fact the number of social media users is continuously growing. At this point,

5% of the users in India are active social media users. Even though this is far below the global average (which is 23%), this also shows the opportunities of growth in the Indian social networking market. With Facebook being number one of social media in India, it is estimated that India will overtake the amount of Facebook users in the United States in 2015, as the number of Indian users is already up to 63 million at this point. Also, India is LinkedIn's second largest market, which also shows the business-related online networking.

As the largest democracy in the world ideas of participation and philanthropy are of course not new to India. Places of worship are built overnight using a large number of donations and India has seen a massive crowdfunding success story many years before the term was coined: the story of the *Reliance Industries* founder Dhirubhai Ambani. His textile business was crowdfunded by communities across the Indian state of Gujarat. And the last years also saw a growing number of interactive platforms on urban development. But usually most of them are either designed as an information tool or as an idea collection tool. The challenge is to implement a crowdsourcing platform that enables participation and an active role in implementation. The difference of that approach is best illustrated by asking two questions: How can an alternative urban development in an Indian city actually look like? And how can it be designed jointly with residents?

These two questions represent the major challenges and opportunities of a participatory urban approach in India. Therefore, *Nextbangalore* remains an experiment, a tool to meet the different situations in a rapidly growing metropolis, and at the same time to enable new approaches. As everywhere, the essential basis is primarily the understanding of culture, including political, economic and social conditions. Even if this approach should be accepted as an essential basis, de

facto many urban projects are implemented separate to existing conditions of life. From an European perspective, the image of an Indian city is often highly mystified, which impedes a sustainable urban development. For *Nextbangalore* this results in a fundamental reflection on the project approach, the methods and the instruments. First, *Nextbangalore* sees itself as a design project, which provides a technical infrastructure and operates within the urban space. A huge set of instruments and methods are provided to understand urban planning as a social momentum. Important is, that participation must first provide access. Which means, not to forget facts like the official illiteracy rate which remains at around 30% in Bangalore. Methods of visualization thus play a major role to describe complex urban processes in a comprehensive way. Also, the establishment of an urban space (*Nextbangalore:Space*) is an important starting point, because places that allow explicit discussion are rarely to be found in Bangalore. *Nextbangalore* has also been active in the urban area by interviewing and involving many residents. Particular highlights were the numerous invitations to people's homes that resulted in very personal conversations. Methods like simulation games or mapping were part of *Nextbangalore:Space*. At last, the understanding of Indian history and culture can be a major basis for future urban development. By starting an urban history forum, *Nextbangalore* was able to recover stories of a largely unknown Bangalore.

Participatory urban planning is not automatically a solution to the many social, structural and political problems of the city of Bangalore, yet it offers more than just an utopian approach, because it raises the view on the greatest potential of a city: its people – and it can gain prabhava (impact).

ANNE-KATRIN FENK, TILE VON DAMM and ROHIT BHATIA are part of the *Nextbangalore* Team

*Nextbangalore* is testing the concept of crowdsourcing urban future in India's innovation city. Started by Bangalore-based MOD Institute and Nextbangalore from Germany, *Nextbangalore* aims at collecting the people's knowledge about places, challenges and opportunities in the city.

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

**“While in the countries of Southwest Europe it’s a ‘growing crisis’ that is at the root of experimental initiatives of social cooperation, in Brazil, the most interesting results seem to be produced by a stance on ‘critical growth’.” —Filipe Serro**



Demonstration of DESOCUPA Movement in Salvador against the approval of the New Law of City Land Use  
© Carlos Américo Barros

## A NEW “WE” IN BRAZIL’S MIDDLE CLASS

Filipe Serro

In June 2013, as several Brazilian municipalities were getting ready to raise public transportation fares, citizens flocked to the streets in a movement of popular unrest that quickly grew nationwide. But what began as a unison chorus of protest for the right to the city, eventually turned into a cacophony of individual desires and aspirations of mute ideology, orchestrated by rubber bullets and riot police batons. It was the country’s middle class who took over the public space of the main cities, definitively revealing the existence of a new “we” in Brazilian society, for better or for worse.

After the control of the inflation rate in the '90s, a decade of easy access to credit and policies of income inclusion followed, resulting in a sharp decline of poverty levels and the establishment of a solid “new middle class” in Brazil. Poor families arose to a new condition of consumption and have now access to goods and services inaccessible to previous generations, a circumstance that naturally conveyed a widespread optimism. But while in southwestern Europe the renewed community spirit is fed by the adversities of the financial crisis, how to understand the new “we” in the wake of Brazil’s economic prosperity?

In order to understand the mobilizing force behind the recent wave of protests in Brazil, one should avoid seeing it as a renewed form of collectivism, but rather as the late expression of an earlier one, developed throughout the crisis that afflicted the country in the '80s when, much like today’s southwestern Europe, adversity gave rise to self-driven initiatives of civic association grounded on a strong network of community solidarity. But that mobilizing strength now faces the risk of wasting, as the new middle class, dazzled by consumerism, increasingly turns to individualization. If on the one hand the June upheaval is revealing of the latent potential for collective mobilization, its chaos and unclear aims are telling of the tendency toward fragmentation. Such

contradictions exemplify the paradoxes around the new middle class, a term that meanwhile has become something of a commonplace, widely exploited by the media and politicians in affected speeches ranging from an alienating, illusory swelled-optimism to an inoperative, uncreative and prejudice-based pessimism.

But if one can argue that income raise instilled individualistic values in society, economic development has also produced significant synergies, some of which were identified during the project *Nós Brasil! We Brazil!*, as reactions to adversities caused by the very economic prosperity. *Nós Brasil! We Brazil!*, this years German contribution to the *X Bienal de Arquitetura de São Paulo*, staged workshops on the role of the so-called “new middle class” in three different cities: Porto Alegre, Salvador and Curitiba.

In Porto Alegre, the residents’ association of Bairro Farrapos, one of the city’s poorest areas, mediates between population and public authorities in order to ensure the sustainable development of the community threatened by the land valorization that followed the completion of a nearby soccer stadium. This and several other self-driven associations refer to participatory budgeting, a municipal tool of micro-funding for local projects. In Salvador, on the other hand, processes of real estate speculation in a central neighborhood lead to the establishment of the civic movement *Nosso Bairro é Dois de Julho* (Our Neighborhood is Dois de Julho) that has been fueling a growing activism in defense of the right to the city. It seems therefore to be important to undo the installed misconception that opposes “crisis” to “growth”. Actually, if thought collectively, these two terms even enclose the potential to elucidate on the question raised before: while in the countries of southwest Europe it’s a “growing crisis” that is at the root of experimental initiatives of social cooperation, in Brazil, the most interesting results seem to be produced by a stance on “critical growth” — and “critical” here

can mean both turning point and subject to judgment.

For the adversities of its past and taking into consideration the opportunities of the circumstances of its present, Brazilian society reveals a huge potential regarding the strengthening of a sense of community, especially considering the renewed connectivity brought by online social networks, to which a better informed “new media class” also has access, allowing for mobilization on an unprecedented scale. But although the potential is there, it is not enough. Good results, as in the countries of southwest Europe, depend on several factors, both in terms of the structures of power as of the actual involvement of the population.

Facing these changes, it seems we can speculate on two possible scenarios: either the new middle class unifies, understanding the process of social mobility as something collective, hence fostering community bonds — June demonstrations can be seen as a point of inflection suggesting this path — or else people see this promotion as a personal achievement, choosing the road of a growing individualization and pursuing ideals of consumption that surpass the car and homeownership, such as the experience of gated communities instead of the aggregating potential of public space, or even access to private education and healthcare and the consequent marginalization of public services. Whatever the future holds, it is important not to deny the potential of Brazil’s new middle class under the argument that it arose from a growth without development, or mystify and oversize its importance because, as in southwest Europe, there is much work to do across the Atlantic.

FILIPPE SERRO is a Portuguese, Berlin based architect. He worked on the Weltstadt project *Nós Brasil! We Brazil!* focusing on the future of Brazilian cities, in the wake of the emergence of a new middle class in the country.



Todo por la Praxis in Bogota © Todo por la Praxis

## CREDITS

**Weltstadt Editors:** Matthias Böttger, Angelika Fitz, Tim Rieniets (until 2013)

**Editors for this issue:** Rose Epple, Angelika Fitz, Leona Lynen

**Weltstadt Project Manager:** Andrea Zell (Goethe-Institut), Michael Marten (BMUB)

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**Translation:** Edith Watts, Faith Ann Gibson

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**Project direction Goethe-Institut Brussels:** Susanne Höhn, **Project coordination:** Julia Förster

**Co-production Goethe-Institut Lisbon, Madrid, Toulouse, Turin**

**Concept and artistic direction:** Angelika Fitz, Rose Epple

**Co-curators:** Julia Albani (Lisbon), Javier Duero (Madrid), Stéphane Gruet (Toulouse), Lisa Parola & Luisa Perlo (Turin)

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