

ACTORS OF URBAN CHANGE URBAN COMMONS

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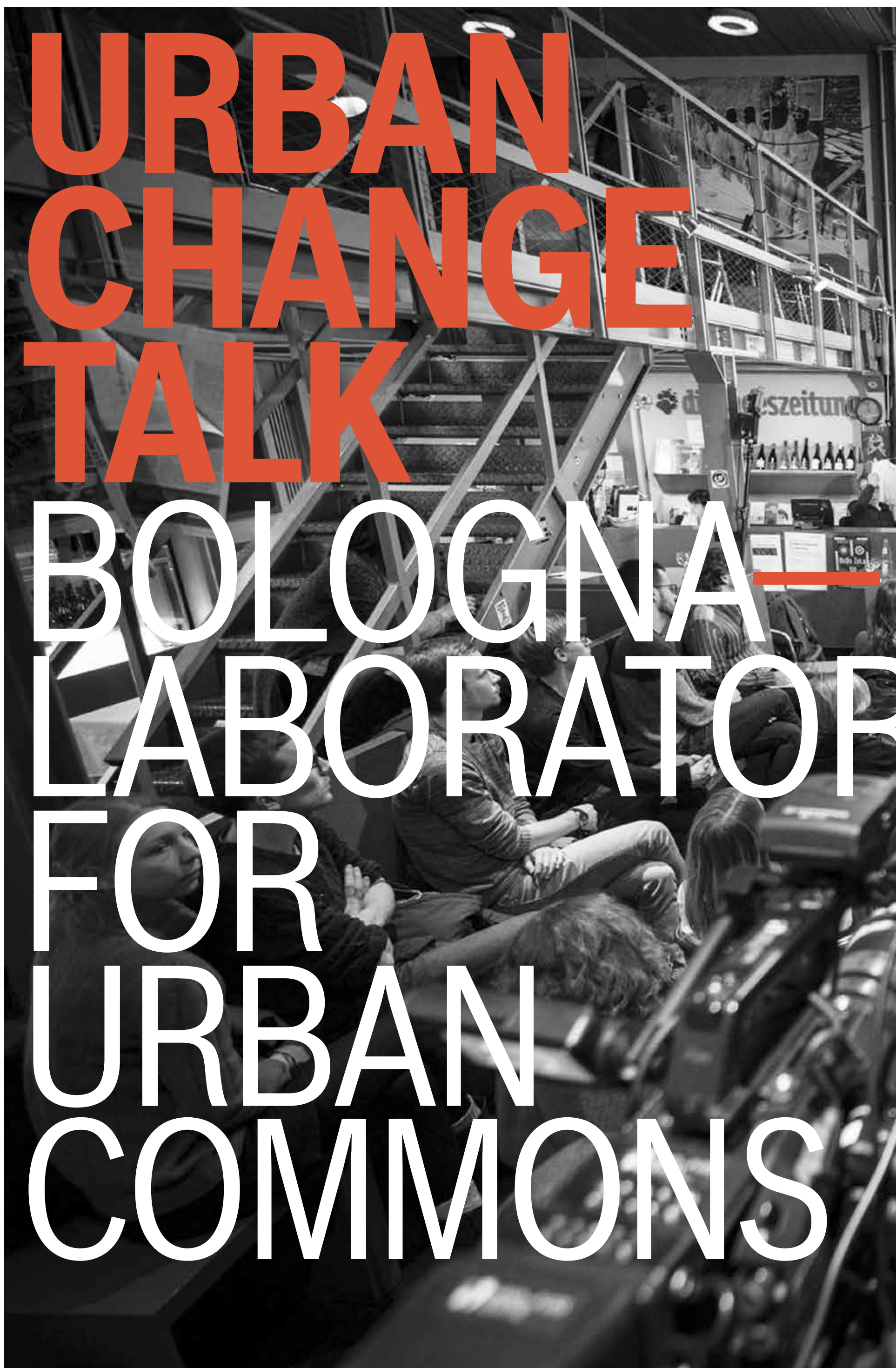
Our third newspaper focuses on urban commons, specifically in Bologna. The idea is to extend the focus of Actors of Urban Change also onto good practices in sustainable development in Europe within the respective wider contexts of our local teams.

On January 27, 2017 the second Urban Change Talk in cooperation with the Urban Research Group - Urban Commons of the Georg Center for Metropolitan Studies at the TAZ café in Berlin brought together Italian, German and international scholars and practitioners working on the development of models for citizen driven development in cities in Europe.

Urban Commons is a relevant contemporary concept, which allows us to further analyze and look more closely at what sustainable urban development in Europe could look like. The city of Bologna proves to be a laboratory of the concrete implementation of commons directed interventions. The specific fascination stems from the fact, that in Bologna the city administration is a main driving force behind the dynamic and is providing a comprehensive legal framework complemented with a whole set of actions. At the same time it becomes clear that there is a long-standing tradition of civil society engagement in place, without which the Bologna case is not thinkable. With this newspaper we want to provide a deeper understanding about the underlying dynamics, potentials and limits of the case of Bologna and beyond.

In this context, Prof. Christian Iaione, professor for public law in Rome, provides us with a deeper inside of his personal motivations, the history as well as the underlying ideas of the Bologna Regulation on Urban Commons and the co-city policy framework, Collaborare è Bologna. He is together with the NGO LabGov the mastermind behind the Bologna Regulation on „Collaboration between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons“ (p.7–9). In a compressed info box we explain both, the regulation on urban commons as well as the policy framework „Collaborare è Bologna“ and its different components (p.6). Director of the Urban Center of Bologna, Giovanni Ginocchini, gives us an idea about how the co-city elements explained earlier are actually put into practice and explains why they are revolutionary and also where the limits are (p.10).

Urban Pioneer and co-founder of Prinzessinnengärten Marco Clausen shares his view on the potential of urban commons especially in Berlin and explains why he does not see any real urban commons existing yet, but also how he could imagine the urban commons idea infect existing structures beyond state and market in a good way (p.11). A reportage on the reality of the Actors of Urban Change team in Bologna gives insight into their work with theater and refugees within a former super market (p.12–14). The article of Dr. Mary Dellenbaugh and Dr. Martin Schwegmann provides a definition of what commons are and consist of. It also looks at two Actors of Urban Change projects, Bologna and Bratislava, from an urban commons perspective (p.15–17). On the following pages you can get more insight into what Actors of Urban Change is all about (p.22).





Commons in Bologna

INFO-BOX

“Collaborare è Bologna” (Collaborate is Bologna) is a policy framework that aims to foster civic collaboration through tangible and intangible tools such as commons projects, a digital platform, a traveling exhibition and a citizen’s festival. Using these tools, the city administration in Bologna is aiming to renew the identity of the city and its citizens by creating a new model for citizen engagement that builds on the local tradition of subsidiarity and decentralization of administrative action; this model has been adopted by more than 70 cities in Italy so far. An important initial step in the implementation of this policy framework was the approval by the Municipality of the “Regulation on Collaboration between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons”¹ on 19 May 2014, which allows citizens to participate in co-design processes in the city. With this regulation, the Municipality of Bologna is aiming to promote the involvement of all citizens (i.e. social innovators, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, knowledge institutions, and also single persons) and administrative bodies in caring for and managing commons resources (**tangible, intangible and digital**). At the same time, the Municipality is putting in place a framework for easier collaboration between citizens and the city administration in Bologna. The objective is to facilitate the participation of associations or single citizens that want to make their own contribution.

With Collaborare è Bologna, a new collaborative paradigm is being tested. The project has been promoted by the Bologna Municipality and managed by Urban Center Bologna. “Collaborare è Bologna” can be described as a tank containing “collaboration agreements” and the main rules to be followed for collaborative dialogue between communities, public and private partners, and stakeholders. The main goal was to boost the already existing “collaboration culture” among Bologna citizens and to facilitate the easy sharing of information, technologies, resources, spaces, knowledge and competences.

Tools: By means of “Collaboration Agreements”, citizens and the city administration can agree on intervention measures to care for an urban commons and on the methods to be used. Urban commons are primarily public spaces, urban green spaces or abandoned buildings or areas. All collaboration agreements (or pacts of collaboration) are periodically inserted into an interactive map² where all interventions by the city to support the regeneration of public spaces, community welfare and urban economic development are also included. It is possible to submit project ideas at any time (i.e. there are no deadlines), and these are posted for up to two weeks on a dedicated online platform.³

Decision Process: Anybody (citizens, associations etc.) can propose a Collaboration Agreement by creating an online profile on the web platform and describing their proposal in the online form provided. This proposal is then accessible for up to two weeks and anyone can add a comment or their own observations. If the proposal corresponds to the parameters set out by the Regulation and is judged to be admissible by the Municipality, the co-creation phase officially starts 15 days after online publication. The main subjects that may be covered by Collaboration Agreements are Urban Commons, both digital and physical. These must be considered as priorities for action by the Municipality and the citizens in order to guarantee individual and collective welfare (physical Urban Commons refer to streets, squares, public gardens etc.; immaterial Urban Commons refer to social cohesion, culture, education, environmental sustainability etc.; digital Urban Commons refer to web platforms, social instruments, digital education etc.). In addition to the “Collaborare è Bologna” policy framework, several other public communication formats are being used, such as a festival and a traveling exhibition⁴. Another measure involves active consultations in neighborhoods that aim to map priorities in a collaborative manner with citizens and communities⁵.

¹ <http://www.comune.bologna.it/media/files/bolognaregulation.pdf>

² <http://www.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=b2ec1339f77548fd-96be5f65c2125bc3>

³ <http://comunita.comune.bologna.it/>

⁴ In May 2015, to celebrate Bolognese citizenship, the first festival of civic collaboration took place, which honored citizens and communities that had signed collaboration agreements. At the same time, a traveling exhibition was

inaugurated, accompanied by a booklet that presented urban and community measures implemented through collaboration between government, citizens, businesses and associations.

⁵ From October 22 to December 3, six meetings were held that presented the results of these policies in six new districts and outlined the requests and proposals related to local needs that had been expressed by individuals and groups. Online consultation using the community platform was held up until January 2016.

“It’s not from behind the desk, it happens out there”

INTERVIEW BY CARSTEN JANKE & DR. MARTIN SCHWEGMANN

¹ The concept at the core of this issue. See also p. 18-19 for further explanation.

Christian Iaione is one of the leading experts on urban commons¹. While studying in the US, he discovered the field of sharing economy. He worked as an advisor on urban governance and sharing economy for various Italian cities, the EU Committee of the Regions and also for the Metropolitan Government of Seoul. He is one of the founders of LabGov, the “Laboratory for the Governance of the Commons,” a scientific partnership between LUISS International Center for Democracy and Democratization (ICEDD) and Fordham Urban Law Center. We interviewed him shortly before his contribution to the Urban Change Talk Urban Commons this January in Berlin.

ACTORS OF URBAN CHANGE: You have been researching urban commons for more than ten years. What is so fascinating about this topic?

CHRISTIAN IAIONE: My interest in urban commons started early. When I was a child, my parents were both involved in politics in two small southern Italian cities. They were deputy mayors and spent part of their lives and careers serving the public interest. In 1980, when I was five years old, there was a big earthquake in my hometown, Avellino. Many houses were destroyed and most of the schools had to shut down. My family had to move abroad for some time. Growing up, I followed my father’s political career closely and I soon learned what a bitter and excruciating experience politics can be. Today, I think I am following in my parents’ footsteps. I am serving the general interest in a different way, using my knowledge and skills as a professor and lawyer for the benefit of local communities.

TODAY YOU TEACH GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMONS AND URBAN LAW AND POLICY AT LUISS UNIVERSITY AND UNIMARCONI IN ROME. WHY DID YOU START THE “CO-CITY” PROJECT IN BOLOGNA?

In many ways, Bologna is the ideal city in which to experiment with new forms of collaboration between the public, the private, and the community. The city has a longstanding tradition of civic and political participation and economic cooperation, which can be considered the predecessors of civic collaboration. The city administration is doing its job but, more than five years ago, the inhabitants decided that they wanted to contribute more and started to ask for the co-management of urban resources of various sizes. An experimentation process led to the current regulation about civic collaboration for urban commons. It was the first prototype



which proved to be effective for small scale resources like gardens, sidewalks, arcades and the like. The second prototype which we realized is the Pilastro Local Agency for Development, which is aimed at a larger scale commons-based process to co-develop an entire neighborhood. Of course there are still many things that need to be improved and new things that could be experimented with at an even larger scale, like transforming local utilities companies into commons.

HOW DID IT START? WAS THERE A KEY MOMENT?

Some years ago, three ladies regularly went to a park in Bologna, the Piazza Carducci; they felt it was also their park. And they felt that it was lacking some benches. So they decided to put a bench in Carducci Park at their own cost. In 2011, they went to the city and said: “We really want a bench in that park. And we are not going to leave until you allow us to put it there.” This triggered “Kafkaesque moments” in the city offices, because it was a distortion of normal practice. Three active citizens had shown up and wanted to take action in the general interest, not just for themselves. The ladies were referred from one department to another. It highlighted a loophole in the city’s regulatory system. There was no way for them to contribute to the improvement of their city. If they did it by themselves it would have actually been illegal.

HOW DID THEY GET SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

A short-term bureaucratic fix for Piazza Carducci was found, but the situation led the Del Monte Foundation and the City of Bologna to start a legal participatory action research project. My research group, LabGov, was asked to build a long-term solution to streamline procedures for civic collaboration and collective action together with other research groups. Before drafting the regulation, we looked at commons-based practices in three different areas of Bologna. We wanted to know and experience what this process looks like from below instead of rushing into law-making or law-drafting like every other lawyer would do.

HOW DID IT GO?

In 2014, the City of Bologna approved the new regulation based on the lessons we had learned. From that moment on, single inhabitants or groups could sign “pacts of collaboration” with their city administration to maintain or regenerate streets, squares, parks, gardens, or abandoned buildings. And now there is only one office in the city administration that they need to contact to do so. They can also ask that office for support in order to become active in their own small scale projects. At this scale, the regulation works quite well. To date, there have been almost 300 “pacts of collaboration.”

AND WHAT IS STILL MISSING?

Until now, the main focus was on public space, green spaces and abandoned buildings; this worked quite well. The bureaucratic structure was quite successful in engaging civic maintenance of public space, like cleaning graffiti off walls, caring for green areas, etc. I would argue that the regulation has a greater innovative potential which has not been fully leveraged so far. The regulation has been used to regenerate large spaces, or to test a commons-based peer-to-peer (p2p) digital or cultural production system as it was intended to be, in only few cases. In very few cases, it has been the result of a neighborhood-wide or district-wide co-design process to foster community economic development and social innovation. Nevertheless, it was a very good start and it has created a new spirit in the city. Also, thanks to the Co-Bologna project (www.co-bologna.it), the city is working on fixing what has not worked thus far.



WHAT IS THE ADVANTAGE OF SUCH COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS?

First of all, it contributes to civic energy and imagination. City administrations are not able to bring solutions by themselves anymore. Cities are becoming complex, diverse, and constantly changing systems that need continuous adaptation. City administration was designed according to the nation-state administration. But nowadays, cities need the time, skills, ideas, and imagination of their inhabitants to re-invent how the city works.

And such projects have other benefits as well: more security, new jobs, less conflicts. This collective action has to be rewarded somehow. It needs to be rewarded with the recognition of management and property rights to the local communities.

WHEN CITIZENS CLEAN UP GRAFFITI DOESN'T THAT MEAN THAT THE CITY IS NOT DOING ITS JOB?

The City of Bologna is really trying to change its relationship to the commons. But, in the wrong hands, this regulation can definitely lead to misuse. The true essence of it though is bringing together five different urban actors: the public, the private, single inhabitants or groups, civil society organizations, and knowledge institutions. They all need to collaborate to co-generate the city with its material and immaterial resources. This is the new idea we wanted to experiment on by applying the governance of the commons to the city.

Until now, the commons have been studied especially in rural areas. Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom studied the governance of the commons mainly around natural resources and in close-knit communities, for example lobster fishermen in the US, farmers of the Spanish huertas, or herdsmen in Swiss pastures. But if you go to a bigger city you have a lot of different people who want to participate and the strong presence of private companies and the public sector. You have got to consider the amount of money, politics, and interests that are involved in the redevelopment of urban land on the outskirts of cities and the regeneration of historic buildings in the city center. Bringing the commons to the city and bridging them with public and private interests is much more complex than one might imagine. But some Italian cities like Bologna, Turin, Naples, or Milan have shown that this is feasible. And so could other global cities like Seoul, Barcelona, Madrid, New York, Amsterdam...

CHANGING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IS IMPORTANT FOR URBAN COMMONS. WHAT ELSE?

There has to be a cultural change in the collaboration between the city government (both at the political and the bureaucratic levels) and commons.

There is generally a lot of social and institutional capital in Bologna and its surrounding region. There are non-governmental actors, like the local cooperative and social movements, as well as local entrepreneurs. There was no system to systematically “pool” these actors and their social and institutional capital. To change this, one needs more than a simple rule change. One needs to create, revitalize and constantly nurture a collaborative spirit in the city. Rules by themselves, like the Bologna regulation, cannot make a city collaborative.

HOW CAN A CITY CREATE THIS CULTURAL CHANGE?

It's not good if the city starts projects and then retreats. It has to see its new mission behind all this. The city has to remain an important actor in a multi-stakeholder partnership. The city of Bologna, for example, created a policy framework called “Collaborare è Bologna” (Collaborating is Bologna). They started with a lot of public events at the national

and international level to promote their new approach and to attract the attention of people and convince them to take part in the building process of this vision. Then they started an interactive map of communities in the city and surrounding area. The aim was to get to know what their needs are. The next step was to experiment with the creation of new pacts of collaboration and commons-based institutions or ventures. Within Collaborare è Bologna, I kept experimenting with these new solutions through my Co-Bologna project.

The main aim was to synthesize what we now call “The Bologna Algorithm – The Co-City protocol,” a set of design principles, a best-practice and a menu of legal, digital, financial, institutional and learning tools. This is a model that every city can apply and develop.

We are going to release it at the Civic Collaboration Fest in May to celebrate the third year of the approval of the regulation.

WHAT ELSE DID BOLOGNA DO TO SUPPORT THIS?

There was another policy called “INCREDIBOL,” which means “Innovative and Creative Bologna.” It gave young start-ups the opportunity to commonly use public buildings as their spaces. You can see this for example at “Kilowatt,” a project in Bologna which combines co-working with urban gardening. It takes place in a former greenhouse in the charming scenario of a public park called Giardini Margherita. This shows also that, even if cities don’t call it “commons,” sometimes they have policies or projects that are one step away from becoming commons.

The idea and principles of commons are spreading more and more to the cities. And even if they do not replace the state or the market there, they can complement them for sure and, maybe in the long run, create a transition towards a commons-based economy.

That is why we are producing an open book on Urban Commons Transitions and building a platform called “Collaborative city.”

COULD YOU GIVE ANOTHER EXAMPLE?

The “Dynamo Bike Station.” It’s a space in the basement of a big historic staircase in Bologna, where you can park, hire, or repair your bicycle. It was started by a group of young bike fanatics who wanted to promote bike-sharing and bike culture in the city. The city has given them a big space in the city center and they combined bike parking with a co-working space and a location for events.

IS BOLOGNA ALREADY A “COLLABORATIVE CITY?”

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE?

Bologna is on a good path. There is still a risk that the city uses the regulation to just retreat. But cities have to understand that it’s more than just a new way to deliver public services. It’s a new way of interacting on a peer-to-peer basis with the city as a commons. City administrations need to add a third mission to the command-and-control strategies or the usual service provision tasks: the enabling of the commons. You create a process which happens out



there. And you have to see your mission in moderating this multi-stakeholder partnership. The aim is to include all the partners in the public environment: the public sector, the private sector, NGOs, universities or schools, and individuals.

Another challenge is to come up with new financing schemes for more complex projects. Until now, there have been pacts of collaboration mainly on street-level, like graffiti removal or green space maintenance – what can be called the “shared governance” of the city. To scale up in the commons-based co-governance of the city, you should involve the private sector and create more open communities in the city which not only share, but also collaborate or pool their resources through coordination.

HOW CAN YOU INTEGRATE THE PRIVATE SECTOR?

In Mantova, for example, 100 km north of Bologna, the local cooperative of the Chamber of Commerce, the local producers, were the ones who initiated the Co-City Protocol. They have been looking for new products and services for local cooperative enterprises. And so they asked to support them. They started a commons-based collaborative economy plan, with collaborative spaces like FabLabs, co-working spaces, and cultural spaces where people can go and easily use tools of digital manufacturing or just agglomerate their skills to co-produce and co-own new sharing and collaborative businesses. Something similar is happening in Reggio Emilia but with a stronger accent on the creation of social start-ups and the solidarity economy. (www.co-reggioemilia.it)

YOU LIVE AND WORK AS A PROFESSOR AND PRACTICE LAW IN ROME. IS THERE ALSO A CO-CITY PROJECT THERE?

I started Co-Roma last year with some colleagues, expert lawyers, architects, community organizers, and my new students. I have always involved them in all my projects, from Bologna to Reggio Emilia. We are now concentrating on the

south of Italy. In Rome, we are working on commons-based participatory governance of cultural heritage. We decided to skip the historic center and look for communities in the outskirts of Rome to build the first community-based collective institution willing to improve the realization of cultural heritage in underserved neighborhoods. In this undertaking, we wanted to manage or create an economic ecosystem. In 2015, we started the Co-Roma process (www.co-roma.it). The result was the embryonic entity of a collective institution and “Collaboratory,” a project which we are going to fund through a complex commons-based investing scheme.

WHAT IS THE “COLLABORATORY?”

We want to set up a Community Land Trust on a piece of land owned today by a private owner. It is 12,000 square meters in size and there is a former gas station on it. It is close to an archaeological site, an old nymphaeum later used as a restoration point, and a historic tunnel, which is part of the first attempt to build a subway in Rome in the forties. It’s located at an archaeological park. Also two Roma families have informally settled there.

Together with these families and some other associations, we want to transform it into a Heritage Collaboratory, a place where a digital community could co-work on solutions to maintain and regenerate the archaeological park of Centocelle. And you could adapt it to other cultural heritage in Rome, too, or other cultural and creative commons. The trust will own the land and the real estate. The Heritage CollLaboratory will be managed by a private operator which will use the real estate to produce projects and ventures to create new jobs in the community. He is supposed to bring new and open technologies to people and communities that are usually excluded from their use, like the Roma Families, NEETs (young people that are not in education, employment, or training), or elderly people. The digital and income inequalities in the outskirts of Rome are unacceptable for a city with the history and heritage like Rome. In this way, we hope to work towards a collaborative betterment of this situation through a new form of commoning’.

Interview with Giovanni Ginocchini

CARSTEN JANKE & DR. MARTIN SCHWEGMANN

ACTORS OF URBAN CHANGE: You are working for the city of Bologna. What is your job?

GIOVANNI GINOCCHINI: I am Director of the “Urban Center Bologna,” a place where citizens, politicians, businessmen, artists and others can meet to discuss urban development projects in Bologna. You could say our center is a two-way communication channel between the citizens and the city government.

WHY DOES BOLOGNA NEED SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

My city has a lot of social capital. There are more than 1,200 citizen associations for a population of about 400,000 inhabitants. Collaborative economy in Italy first started here. And we are the first city which decentralized its administration and gave more power to the districts. Also we have a long tradition of urban commons in our city. One good example for this is the “portici.” There are 40 kilometers of these colonnade-covered sidewalks in our city, which are owned by private house owners and are used daily by thousands of people. So the city has some experience in managing these common goods.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE “URBAN CENTER?”

It was founded to promote communication and public debate about urban planning issues. Some years ago, Italy had a big financial crisis – the cities needed to change their policies. At the same moment, we realized that especially young people are less and less interested in the decision-making process of the city because it usually takes too long and they were often not happy with the result. So the city decided to make it easier for them and founded the Urban Center to encourage such grassroots initiatives. Here they can meet and plan what they want to do.

WHAT ELSE DID THE CITY DO TO PROMOTE URBAN COMMONS?

In 2014, it passed a new regulation for urban commons to make it easier for individuals to participate in urban development, for example caring for a piece of green space in the city or painting a public wall. Before, you had to ask for several permits from various city departments. Now you have only one person to ask. And there is only one paper you need to sign, the so-called “pact of collaboration,” which is something like a contract between you and the city. The city takes care of your insurance during your working time. This has always been a big problem and now it’s solved. Another important change is



that you can work temporarily. You don’t need to found a new association and elect a president. You can simply start.

AND DID THIS NEW REGULATION WORK?

I think so. Today, nearly 300 pacts of collaboration have been signed. People really appreciate the idea. We are shifting from best-practice examples to a new public policy of collaboration which we call “Collaborare è Bologna” (Collaboration is Bologna). The pacts also helped to bring together citizens and the private sector. Normally, the private sector is really skeptical about working together with citizens. But if the city administration is included it creates confidence; a lot of projects could be realized.

The new policy also changed the perspective of the city government. Before, we were really focused on physical changes in the city. Today, social change has become more and more important. After long years of financial crisis, Bologna actually has a budget surplus. And the city will spend a lot of this money on collaboration and social integration projects, which is a great success for us.

ARE THERE ALSO PROBLEMS?

Of course – one example is the squatted houses. We have a really strong squatter movement in Bologna and there are some military buildings which are squatted. We have tried to reach an agreement between the state and the squatters, but it’s difficult. The new regulation still does not work so well with big privately-owned buildings. So now we are trying to build new rules for the temporary use of such buildings. But I guess Berlin is more advanced in this field than we are. In Italy, temporary use is really difficult. You have



to follow a lot of rules. I think this will be a new frontier for us.

IS BOLOGNA ALREADY BECOMING A COLLABORATIVE CITY? WHERE ARE THE LIMITS TO THIS APPROACH?

In some ways. There are a lot of urban gardens, co-working spaces and urban design projects which work really well. But there are also still conflicts within the city that you cannot solve with small collaborations. For example, last year the municipality decided to make the ring road bigger. And there have been a lot of conflicts and a lot of criticism about how the city has been communicating. People came to us and said: “You want us to participate, but when it comes to really important issues, you just decide and we can only protest.” This was quite difficult for our work at the Urban Center as well. But then the municipality decided to open a public debate about the ring road project. For nearly three months, we publicly discussed every detail of this big infrastructure project. This was something completely new. And it was only the second time that something like this has happened in Italy.

Interview with Marco Clausen

CARSTEN JANKE

“We should infect institutions with the virus of collective ownership and self-determination”

CARSTEN JANKE: A lot of people are talking about urban commons in Bologna. What do you think about it?

MARCO CLAUSEN: It is good to hear that Bologna has both regulations and the money to support practices of commoning, two things we definitely do not have in Berlin yet. Lots of bottom-up projects here start without any security and on the basis of voluntary work.

SO WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ABOUT URBAN COMMONS IN BERLIN?

What we can see in Berlin are temporary uses, interventions, or what you might call “laboratories.” They are all defined by the fact that they are vulnerable - they have no legal framework and no sustainable economy to support them. I would argue that the urban context is the most unlikely place for a common, because there is so much economic and political pressure on spaces in the city that is really hard to claim ownership. Claiming ownership would mean that the users have a collective say about what is happening.

WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THIS?

We started the “Prinzessinnengarten,” a mobile community garden in Berlin Kreuzberg, in 2009. We run the place and we also built an economy to support it. We tried to make it sustainable but also independent. We pay rent to the city and at the same time offer all kinds of services to the public like education, biodiversity, and healthy food. For the moment, it is a form of pioneer use. We mostly do it in our private time and there is no long-term perspective for the project yet.

BUT YOU GOT A LOT OF MEDIA COVERAGE ABOUT THE “PRINZESSINNENGARTEN.” DOESN’T THAT FEEL GOOD?

The “hype” about such projects is sometimes helpful. But the downside is that it distracts from the problems around us. We are living in an era in which a lot of public services are disappearing - things we take for granted, like health services, educational institutions, public transportation or green space management. There is a danger of just doing a repair-job in some niches and



thus feeding into a neoliberal model of self-responsibility.

These types of projects look great on paper, but the overall picture remains: privatization and displacements are accelerating.

IN WHICH URBAN COMMONS DO YOU TAKE PART?

I am interested in community supported agriculture. It is a good example of a solidary form of economy. People in cities form a group to support a local farm; they meet with the farmer and discuss how to share the costs, the benefits, and the risks collectively. Everybody is lucky when it is a good year, and everyone shares the burden when it is a bad year. In a city, we are normally reduced to our role as consumers. But in these types of collaborations, we can re-learn how to share resources.

SO YOU ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT URBAN COMMONS?

It’s hard for me to talk about urban commons, because in my opinion there are none. We can see practices of commoning in Berlin and maybe the possibility of urban commons. Like I said, we have a lot of “experiments” and “laboratories.” But real commons



are self-governed, and self-governance would mean taking power away from politics and the markets. There are only a few successful projects which have achieved this, for example the “Mietshäuser Syndikat,” which was founded out of the squatting movement of the 1970s. Their goal is to “liberate” houses from the market by creating legal frameworks that exclude the free-rider problem and the temptation to speculate. One should allow similar forms of self-organization and collective ownership inside existing big institutions like housing cooperatives. We should infect these institutions with the virus of collective ownership and self-determination. The ongoing crisis is also a chance to formulate new answers. In Spain, people have organized and created inspiring models like the PAH (Plataforma d’Afectats per la Hipoteca) or new forms of municipalism like Barcelona em comu.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF GREEN COMMONS LIKE URBAN GARDENS?

I would say green commons, in particular in cities, can be an important part of our survival on this planet. Cities play a central role in the degradation of the environment, but they can also act as a game changer. Besides local food, water, and energy systems, for me the biggest potential green common in Berlin is the “Schrebergarten” - allotment gardens in the city. This is where the land is and where we can reconnect to a tradition of self-sufficiency and inclusion. Of course, there are a lot of fences in them too at the moment. But maybe it needs only one generation to change this.

The City as a Stage

CLAUS HORNUNG

How do you get all the residents of a city – refugees, immigrants, and long-term residents – to talk to one another? Cantieri Meticci’s answer is: by putting them on a stage together! Their project is a unique example of what citizens, the administration, and the private sector can achieve when they work together. And it is also an example of the public spirit in the city of Bologna in northern Italy.

It’s a strange sight. 50 young people holding chairs or doorframes in their hands are walking pell-mell in a large space. Suddenly there is a loud shout: Cinque! Five! The young people scramble together to create seating groups, arranging the doorframes so that they are sitting together as if at a table. A second shout: Uno! One! The seated young people now begin to converse with one another.

“Nuova Gorki,” – a district center from the 1960s in the district of Navile on the outskirts of Bologna. For the residents who suddenly became the audience of this spectacle, there is only one other reason why they are here on this day in late January: they are grocery shopping. The tiled lobby also contains the entrance to a Co-op supermarket. The spectacle is however now drowning out the background music intended to create a pleasant shopping atmosphere. How does this fit together? Several of the passers-by were obviously asking themselves this question as well. And that’s just what the people they are watching want. Just 20 meters from the supermarket’s cash registers, a door opens up to the location of a new cultural project by an urban initiative which wants to bring together things which are often separated from one another: art and commerce, citizens and the city administration, locals and immigrants. Behind it all is the theater group Cantieri Meticci with their new project: MET.

A THEATER FOR EVERYONE: LOCALS, IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Pietro Floridaia is the man who laid the foundation for this in 2013. He is the one directing people and chairs with his instructions. It’s the dress rehearsal for a flash mob – a performance planned for the central square in Bologna, the Piazza Maggiore, with which they want to promote the opening of the new cultural space called MET, but also what MET stands for: locals and immigrants, who converse, create music, paint, dance, sculpt or work on films with each other, and – above all – who act together in theater productions. Floridaia is a trained actor and director. “The theater that I grew up with was an elite affair, which almost exclusively spoke to people from the upper and middle classes,” said the 47-year-old. “But many people in today’s society come from a different world.” There are those who were born here, but do not feel like part of a community. And there are those who moved here later, for example the people who moved to Bologna in large numbers about 20 years ago as a result of the civil war in former Yugoslavia – or the recent refugees from Africa and the Middle East. “They all have voices. They

all have stories to tell,” said Floridaia. “We can help them tell them: through art.” One of these voices belongs to Abdul.



“This is my second family,” he says. He has not seen his actual family for more than three years. At the age of just 15, he left his home country of Guinea-Bissau, which had been shaken by unrest: “There was no future there.” In nearly accent-free Italian, he tells how he struggled through Senegal, Togo, Nigeria, Benin, Morocco, and finally Libya. Many of the refugees from sub-Saharan countries who are here tonight tell of arbitrary arrests, torture, and forced labor. Abdul was shot at as he made his way to the boat which was to take him to Europe. “I dream about it every night,” he says, as he lifts his shirt to show an oblong scar. “It’s easier to deal with it now,” he says. “This here feels like a second family.”

THE GOAL: REDUCING TENSIONS – ALSO AMONG THE REFUGEES

The volunteers from Cantieri Meticci want to reach people like Abdul. They go into temporary refugee accommodations and ask: “Would you like to act, sing or dance? Would you like to get in touch with Bolognese, who have lived here for a long time?” Those who want to participate take part in a workshop. Today, 19 such workshops take place each week throughout Bologna. They are



Passers-by stop and stare. Amused, curious, puzzled. The scene is not only unusual because of the chairs, but also because the participants obviously come from very different countries: from Europe, Africa and the Middle East. And because the scene is taking place in the lobby of the Co-op supermarket at the



run by about 30 volunteers, who were taught how to prepare a piece and how to act on the stage by Pietro Floridia. Now they teach these skills to others. The MET participants perform all over the city, but above all in the outskirts where immigrants who came to Bologna long ago live. MET wants to give them a voice as well.

“Naturally, there are also some problems living together, sometimes even within the refugee groups,” says Karen Boselli. The 38-year-old joined Cantieri Meticci three years ago. Meanwhile, she has a full time job managing the MET website, taking care of their PR work, and organizing events for the company. She also offers a workshop only for women, since it became more and more noticeable that there were hardly any female workshop participants. “This idea was born of the insight that women had often been victims of human trafficking, torture, and abuse. The usual theatrical formats did not attract them as much. That’s why we developed mixed workshops. Another reason why women didn’t get involved in the activities was that they are not used to doing things with men based on their cultural or religious backgrounds,” says Boselli. So, exactly this issue is the topic of the workshop. Together with Italian women, they play act scenes from “L’Astragale” by Algerian writer Albertin Sarrazin for example, in which the central topic is a woman fighting for her freedom. MET is also active outside of Bologna, usually by invitation from other cultural initiatives, such as in summer 2016 at the Sabir festival in Lampedusa – the

place where, for the last few years, refugees arrive from the Mediterranean, and before whose coasts many of them drown. The MET participants conducted interviews with Lampedusa’s residents about their daily lives – and later acted these stories out on the stage. In addition to refugees and tourists, the audience was also made up of long-term residents. And, although the names of those interviewed were changed for the purposes of the performance, many people recognized the stories of their friends and neighbors, said Boselli: “Then you could hear people in audience say: ‘That was the priest! And that was Guiseppe, the fisherman!’” She paused and then said quietly: “The people were very moved – and we were too.”

A SUPERMARKET AS A STAGE



„Art needs the public. This is the only way that we can fill it with life,” says Floridia. And it needs support, like the supermarket operators Co-op, who have provided 200 square meters of space for MET free of charge. In some ways, the idea behind the largest Italian retail chain is similar to the one behind MET: when

a large number of people get together, they can achieve something for the whole of society. Co-op is a cooperative – members buy shares which means that Co-op can offer goods at prices that even people with low income levels can afford. In addition to supermarkets, the cooperative also runs gas stations, travel agencies and book shops – and supports social projects. Michele Petrizzo is a volunteer who helps to select such projects. He was responsible in part for this task when Co-op opened a second location in the area and the store in Nuova Gorki was downsized as a result. “It was clear that we were not going to give up the space, but rather make it available to a project.” Initiatives aimed at helping immigrants integrate already used the space once – in the 1970s, workers came from southern Italy to Bologna. Black and white photos in the building’s lobby commemorate this phase in the building’s history. Back then, the effort was successful. “The refugees are today’s immigrants,” says Petrizzo. He



admits that many things are tougher today than they were in the 1970s. Residents have organized projects in the neighborhood themselves: childcare, social meet-ups for the elderly, music groups. “But these offerings are used nearly exclusively by Italians.” The MET project in Nuova Gorki could change

that, hopes Petrizzo. “A theater where everyone can participate – that’s a totally new kind of offer,” he says. “And MET is more accessible than other existing projects. In other projects, you have to be there on a specific day at a specific time. At MET, you can just show up.” That will break down inhibitions, hopes Petrizzo. He is confident that it will work. “That’s what makes Bologna special.

BOLOGNA: THE CITY OF PUBLIC SPIRIT
Bologna. If you talk to residents here you’ll hear it again and again: there’s something special about this city. Bologna, “la dotta,” “the scholar,” where the oldest university in Europe was founded in the 11th century and in which today one fifth of the approximately 400,000 residents are students. Bologna, the confident medieval merchant town. Bologna, “la rossa,” “the red,” in which communists ruled for years. Cosmopolitan, marked by a sense of public spirit – that’s also typical for Bologna, according to Luca Virgili. He is an employee at the “Centro Interculturale Zonarelli,” an office run by the city administration for cultural initiatives by immigrants. Since its founding in 1998, 130 associations have received support and space. Cantieri Meticci is one such association. Virgili considers MET to be a showcase project. “The results are tangible,” he says: “I can see how refugees who were shy have become more confident over time. Their Italian has gotten better, they’re more active, they ask for help looking for a job.” And some of them even founded a project which cares for small green spaces in the city. They wear bright yellow jackets while working. “And for that reason, passers-by often speak to them,” says Virgili. And they are mostly positively surprised: “Refugees are taking care of our city?”



COLLABORARE: HOW NEW TRUST CAN BE FORMED BETWEEN THE CITY AND ITS RESIDENTS
The city administration provided the bright yellow jackets within the framework of the project “Collaborare è Bologna,” which was founded by the city administration in 2014 and has been adopted by more than 70 Italian cities in the meantime. When residents find something that they want to improve in their neighborhood, they now have a central point of contact,



explains “Collaborare” director Donato di Memmo. “Being the citizen of a city means more than just being able to vote,” he says. “It means that one can improve things oneself. And no one knows what needs to be done in a city better than the people who live there.” The topics range from environmental protection to integration projects to caring for public spaces and streets. Collaborare establishes contact with the responsible government agencies, helps citizens find collaborators through their Facebook page and provides materials: paint to freshen up park benches, tools to beautify parks or bright yellow jackets. Collaborare has meanwhile funded 300 applications. Di Memmo regularly visits projects and phones daily with citizens. “We have managed to re-establish a connection between the citizens and the city administration which was almost lost,” he says, “and foster one among the citizens themselves at the same time.” The MET activists were also successful in establishing a connection with the citizens. At their flash mob at the beginning of February on the Piazza Maggiore, they walked around with chairs, created tables with doorframes, and invited passers-by to have a seat. Countless people took them up on the invitation. And many of those who took part showed up a few days later to the official opening of the MET space. Nearly 500 people came to the event. Refugees, MET activists, and Bolognese who became aware of the project through the flash mob, including residents of Nuova Gorki, were there for the opening. So were a representative of the Co-op executive board, employees from the Zonarelli cultural center and the Collaborare Program, the mayor, the bishop of Bologna, and the leader of the city’s Islamic community. For Pietro Floridia, the warm reception is evidence that what he and his collaborators are setting up can be successful. “For us, it’s about art and integration,” he says, “but above all, it’s about community.”

INFO—BOX

Karen Boselli, Michele Dore, Luca Virgili, and Michele Petrizzo form a cross-sectoral team which is part of Actors of Urban Change (AUC), a program by the German foundation Robert Bosch Stiftung and the NGO MitOst. AUC supports teams from throughout Europe for a period of 18 months. The teams are made up of actors from the city administration, civil society, and the private sector, who commit to sustainably develop a city or district. Since 2013, 20 teams have been awarded funding. Their topics range from environmental protection to citizen engagement, from cycling to the reactivation of public spaces. “Radio Friends Messolonghi,” for example, offered several neighboring Greek communities the opportunity to get to know one another better through a radio program, and simultaneously to voice their wants and needs to the public administration. In Slovakian Bratislava, “Bike Kitchen” set the corner stone for a bike-friendly city by creating a free, smartphone-supported bike sharing program. And in the Portuguese town of Porto, the goal was to carefully renovate run-down worker houses in the district of Bonfim with students, and simultaneously strengthen the feeling of community in the neighborhood. There are three organizations behind each cross-sectoral team. Cantieri Meticci represents the non-profit sector, the City of Bologna’s “Centro Interculturale Zonarelli” represents the public sector, and the biggest retail cooperative Co-op represents the private sector.

For more information about the program, see page 23.

> ¹ <http://bollier.org/new-to-the-commons>

> ² <http://bollier.org/commons-short-and-sweet>

Actors of Urban Change from an Urban Commons Perspective

DR. MARY DELLENBAUGH & DR. MARTIN SCHWEGMANN

INTRODUCTION

If we assume that we all have a right to our cities, that means a right to access its spaces and use resources such as facilities for education, health, recreation, cultural exchange, and democratic participation, then it is important to develop a culture and way of governing these resources collectively. In order to develop cities more sustainably and meet the enormous challenges that we will face in the coming years, all the players in this scene must undergo significant changes. State mechanisms and institutions need to be adapted to the changing landscape of socio-economic dynamics. Markets need to be carefully put in place to unfold constructive potential. At the same time, we need concepts and ideas about how people outside the state and the market, i.e. the civil society, can work collaboratively to shape their environment. How can we develop sustainable and meaningful lifestyles that provide access to immediate and transcendent human needs, and which, in the end, also allow us to maintain pluralistic and cohesive societies?

One concept has emerged as a possible answer to this question: commons. In the following article, we will look into the concept of commons, and specifically urban commons, both from a more theoretical point of view and as a recently rediscovered form of collective resource use.

Commons have become very popular in recent years, but it is often hard to get a grasp on just what commons are, since the types of resources which can be managed as commons vary so widely. In addition, “each commons has its own distinctive character because each is shaped by its particular location, history, culture, and social practices,”¹ explains commons expert David Bollier, adding another layer of complexity to this already complex issue.

So what are commons? One of the definitions that Bollier mentions in his “short and sweet” introduction to the commons is “a self-organized system by which communities manage resources (both depletable and replenishable) with minimal or no reliance on the Market or State.”² This definition has several parts. First of all, commons are not the resource itself, but rather the COMBINATION of (1) the resource, (2) the community that uses and manages it, and (3) their negotiation of the rules, values and norms surrounding their use and management of the resource. So, put very simply, all commons are made up of three parts: resources, people, and

rules. The third part of this equation is known as “commoning,” and is the central aspect of commons which makes them different from other organizations of resource use. That brings us to the second major aspect of the definition: self-organization. Commons begin with commoning, i.e. when a group of people negotiate rules among themselves about how to collectively use and manage a resource. While the structures may change over time, generally the initial rules and the idea to manage that resource are generated by the group itself. Cities present particular challenges to commoning which influence all three parts of this equation.

RESOURCES

In commons resources such as radio waves or biodiversity, the rules which can be put in place have a lot to do with the characteristics of the resource. Three specific characteristics are critical for determining which types of rules are possible (and are also responsible for the wealth of conflicts around commons resources): depletability, excludability, and rivalrous use. Depletability refers to whether the resource can be used up or not – does one user’s use of the resource reduce other users’ enjoyment of it or the overall quantity of the resource? Excludability refers to one user or group being able to exclude others from using or accessing the resource – can you put a fence around it or a password on it? Rivalrous use means that there are multiple uses for a single resource – do several users want to use the resource for different things?

Due to the land-based nature of most urban commons and the large pressure on scarce resources in cities, *urban* commons are usually excludable and have multiple rivalrous uses. Consider an urban gardening project. The decision to start an urban gardening project on an abandoned lot means that other possible uses cannot be implemented there (rivalrous use). In addition, the urban gardening community could agree among themselves to be a closed group and erect a fence (excludability). The commoners may still engage in commoning in their closed, self-organized group, however this project may raise questions about access to resources, despite the fact that it is a commons. In addition, non-land-based urban commons can be depletable. Consider the resource “quiet;” in a house or housing block, the users get together to agree on what times of night to be quiet, and how to deal with people who go against the rules. Anyone who has been kept up by a loud party will know the depletability of quiet in a big city.



“Commons are not the resource itself, but rather the COMBINATION of (1) the resource, (2) the community that uses and manages it, and (3) their negotiation of the rules, values and norms surrounding their use and management of the resource.”

To sum up: due to the nature of cities, all urban commons have multiple rivalrous uses. Land-based resources are usually excludable and non-land-based resources can be depletable. This situation has high conflict potential, often leading to questions about equal access to resources and participation.

PEOPLE

In commons such as fisheries, the internet, or outer space, the group of people who are interested in the use of or access to the resource (commoners) is usually very large, and can, as in the latter case, potentially include the entire world population. Resources like clean air affect all of us, but are not under the jurisdiction of any one country – therefore, countries must get together to agree upon rules how to manage these resources. This is a typical example of a commons resource; the commoners agree on rules by proxy through their elected officials.

In *urban* commons, user groups are usually much smaller. The group can be closed or open, depending on whether the resource is excludable or not. Another important aspect

of commons in urban settings is the fact that urban populations fluctuate frequently – commoners may move within or leave the city. New users join and may suggest changes to existing structures or rules. In this context, frameworks for generating trust and cooperation and for maintaining rules become even more important.

Thus, it can be said that urban commons have dynamic user groups, which means that commons projects in cities are also more dynamic.

RULES

In natural and technological commons, governmental agencies agree on use and maintenance rules. In other, non-urban contexts, such as cooperatively-used pasture land, the users agree on internal rules collectively. This process is known as “commoning” and forms the core of all commons.

Urban commons also undergo this internal “commoning” process, which usually involves lengthy and repeated negotiation. In the urban context, the external conditions are however also vitally important – these could include rules or rule changes from the property owner (in the case of a lease or squat) or changes in the legal conditions from any level of government (municipal, state, or federal). Urban commons are thus significantly more vulnerable than non-urban commons, since they are subject

to a large number of decisions made by persons or groups which are not part of the internal commoner group, and who may not even know about the project and its value.

In summary: urban commons, much like other commons types, undergo the internal and repeated negotiation of rules known as “commoning;” they are however also subject to (changes in) rules and regulations made by parties who may not prioritize the project or even know about it.

ACTORS OF URBAN CHANGE PROJECTS THROUGH A COMMONS LENSE

Having looked at the different components of urban commons from a more theoretical standpoint, we will now use this approach to analyze two different community-based and participatory projects from the program Actors of Urban Change (see info box p. 22). These projects serve as two examples of the resources that can potentially come into play on the way to creating a more sustainable, inclusive and just city (see page 6). The projects were carried out by cross-sectoral teams (made up of members from the public, private, and non-profit sectors) in Bratislava and Bologna, which brought different perspectives, but also different institutions, together in each project.

MORE BIKE KITCHEN (BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA)

RESOURCES:

- 1. Bike paths on public streets, 2. 100 shared bikes, 3. Bike sharing web app

PEOPLE:

Bike community made up of a relatively stable active core group and a larger group which is open to the public

RULES:

Weekly meetings (Bike Kitchen) where rules are agreed upon, bikes are repaired, and conflicts are resolved

The Slovakian capital faces considerable traffic problems due to an underdeveloped public transportation system and a fundamental lack of bicycle infrastructure. To address these problems and effect positive change, a team from Bratislava developed a project to establish and expand local cycling culture and secure a better representation of cycling in the city’s transportation policies.

Several aspects of the Bratislava team’s activities can be understood within the commons framework. If we consider that the streets are monopolized by cars (rivalrous use between automobiles and other forms of transportation), then the collective opening of these spaces for new uses, in this case cycling, can be understood as the creation of a commons resource. Bike paths represent a form of infrastructure, which can be used by everyone, since they are not excludable. Thus, the team’s fighting for these spaces represents not only an affordable and green mobility alternative for local residents and an attractive new offering for tourists, but also the creation of a collectively-used resource which is open to a variety of different potential user groups.

This resource was fought for by a motivated group of bike activists, who we can describe as the commoners. The core of the informal group is made up of about ten dedicated people; they run the weekly meeting, the Bike Kitchen, where food is served and bikes are repaired. They describe this weekly meeting as the backbone of their activities; it brings together existing users and is open to anyone who wants to participate. These meetings provide a space for commoning, a space and time to regularly discuss current and future activities and internal rules and issues.

A second aspect of the initiative “More Bike Kitchen” can also be understood within the commons framework: the group created a self-initiated bike sharing system after receiving a donation of 100 bicycles from a Dutch adventure park. The private sector representative of the team, a web developer, helped the group from the Bike Kitchen develop an open source bike sharing app, thus enabling the bike sharing system to be managed with simple number locks. One resource in this case is the bikes themselves. A second resource is the open source app, which has been adopted by other bike sharing systems in the meantime. The commoners are the people that use these bikes. The user group is restricted - one needs a recommendation to become part of the system. This rule is the result of commoning, in this case negotiation about who gets to use this excludable resource. Other forms of commoning are also present, such as participation in



the weekly Bike Kitchen meetings, and the collective maintenance of the bikes that takes place there. This collective maintenance works against the inherent depletability of the bikes by making sure all 100 are in good working order.

Conclusion: The Bratislava bike initiative fits the various criteria of an urban commons. A core group of motivated, self-organized activists have banded together to collectively manage (and create) resources such as new bike lanes, a bike sharing app and the bikes themselves. They agree on the rules by which the resources should be used and maintained as a group in straightforward commoning formats such as the weekly Bike Kitchen meeting, thus creating added value for the transport situation in the Slovakian capital.

MET – ARTISTIC TRAINING FOR A CHANGING CITY (BOLOGNA, ITALY)
RESOURCE:

Social capital
PEOPLE:

- 1. Theater workshop group members with different backgrounds,
- 2. The audience

RULES:
Sharing stories internally in the workshop group and between the workshop group and the audience - the different theater formats, which are agreed upon in advance, provide the framework for this sharing

Navile, a district in the north of Bologna, faces the challenge of bringing together migrants, refugees, and long-term residents. To address this challenge, the theater initiative Cantieri Meticci has developed cultural formats which bring new and old residents in contact with one another and encourage intercultural dialogue.

The commons resource in this team’s case can be understood as *social capital*, a term that describes “the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together.”³ Social capital is a vital intangible resource in urban areas, since it provides the basis for collective action, community, cooperation, and a great many other social benefits. Social capital consists

of a network of relationships, which come from situations in which groups have contact. The main problem, not only in Navile but all over Bologna, is that refugees and long term residents live parallel to one another, with little or no occasion or interest to interact. The Actors of Urban Change team from the theater company Cantieri Meticci provides formats that attract and provoke interaction, thereby creating a non-depletable urban commons. The group overcomes the excludability inherent in all social groups by opening the workshops to all interested parties and organizing workshops just for women (who might otherwise not participate in co-ed groups).

Commoning here takes the form of sharing stories and personal experiences. The commoners in this situation are those who get involved with the theater workshops, either as a participant or as an audience member. The commoning has two phases. The first phase takes place within the theater workshop groups themselves, in this case between actors from Italy or Europe and actors with recent displacement experiences, who are usually not from Italy or Europe. The second phase takes place between the theater workshop groups and the audience. The format of the commoning can vary, since the theatrical format determines the rules or patterns of exchange, and ranges from classical performances on stage, with a clear divide between the audience and the actors, to flash mobs in public space. In both cases, the choice of format also influences the characteristics of the audience, from more or less random in the case of the flash mob, to generally interested and/or generally supportive of interaction with refugees in the case of the formal theater piece.

Conclusion: The Bologna team’s work can also be understood as a form of commoning. A self-organized theater group has engaged Italians and non-Italians alike. After developing rules and formats for theatrical performances, an intangible commons resource, social capital, is built up through sharing stories and experiences. The theater groups engage in commoning with each other, but also with audience members, thus

breaking down barriers to interaction and working towards dismantling prejudices.

CONCLUSION
High demand for limited resources means that urban resource use has high conflict potential. The urban commons framework presents a way for urban residents to think about and potentially adapt existing actions. Existing urban commons projects can also be an inspiration for those who are not yet active. In this regard, urban commons can serve as a tool to decide and articulate the issues that they consider to be important, and then self-organize to manage them in a way that will affect the change that they want and need. Thus, urban commons present a new opportunity for civic engagement in urban planning and urban resource use from the bottom up.

The process of commoning also builds connections between people and groups that might otherwise not have had intense contact with each other. Ideally, a feeling of community and shared identity is generated through the intense negotiations which accompany commoning. Thus, it can be said that commoning also has the potential to create and increase social capital, which is critical for cooperation and participation both in the commons and in other spheres of daily life. Urban commons have the potential to allow urban residents to co-produce new rules and structures for a more just, more connected, and more engaged society in cities and beyond.

Analyzing existing, community-centered and non-profit activities in cities from the perspective of the urban commons, such as in the cases described above, allows us to understand local dynamics more fully. Current approaches to urban policy often consider the various aspects of resources such as infrastructure without considering the groups who use them, or consider urban populations divorced from the resources that they use on a daily basis. The urban commons framework provides us with a more complete picture of resource use in the city and is therefore a useful tool to help us consider resources, user groups AND the rules and negotiations that they undertake equally. In particular, a close examination of the elusive but absolutely central third aspect of commons – the negotiation and maintenance of collectively-used resources – will allow us to better understand the core elements of self-initiated and self-organized activity. After all, as we’ve seen, it’s more than just about resource use – in the end, commons build communities.



³ <https://www.oecd.org/in-sights/37966934.pdf>



URBAN CHANGE TALK

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INTERVIEW



ACTORS OF URBAN CHANGE

PROJECTS 2015–2017

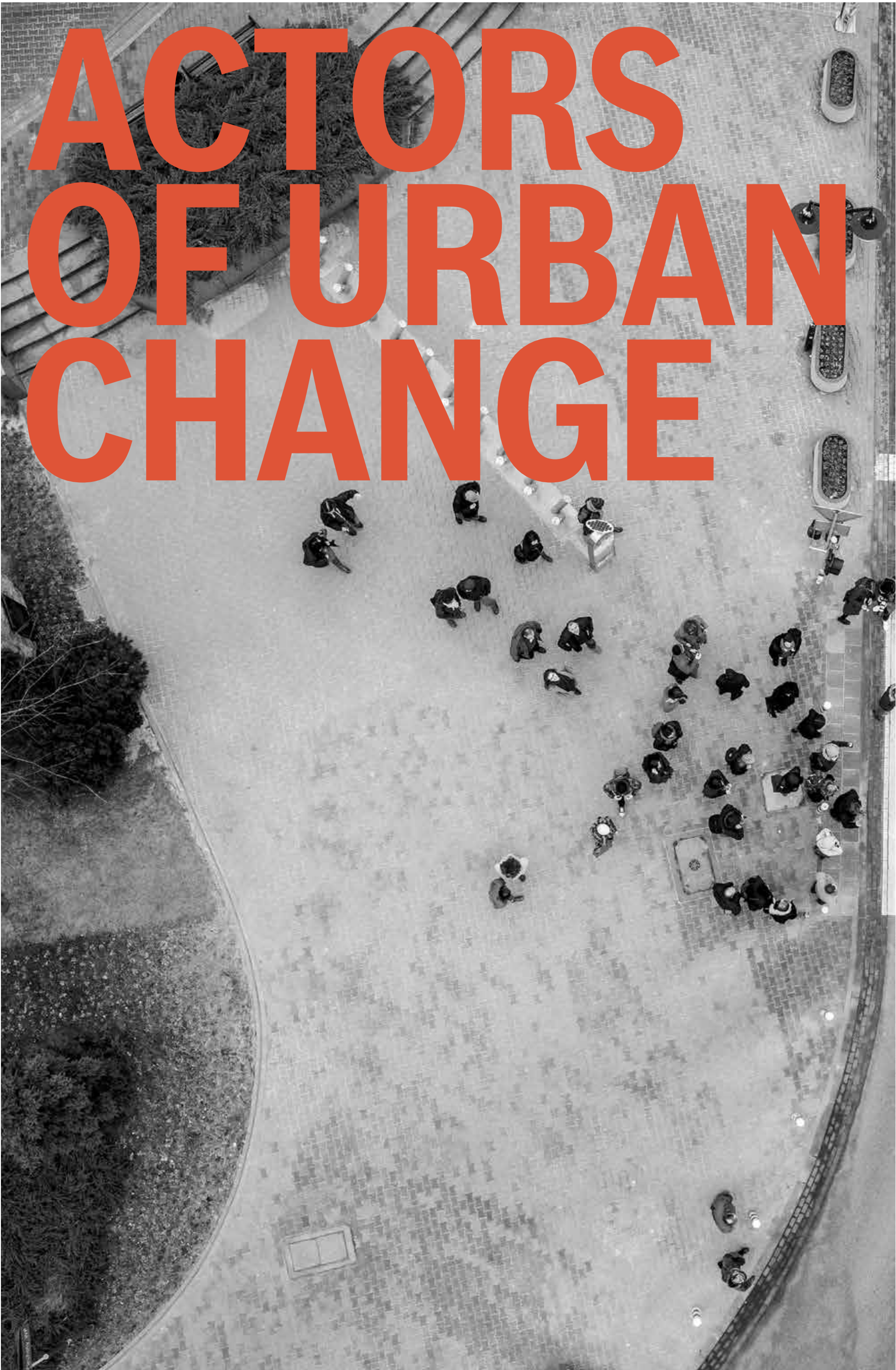
- II. 1 BOLOGNA, ITALY :: MET–
Artistic Training for a Changing City
- II. 2 BUDAPEST, HUNGARY :: UTree Greening
- II. 3 CLUJ–NAPOCA, ROMANIA :: Cinema Dacia –
Mănăştur Central
- II. 4 GERETSRIED, GERMANY :: Stories Set in Stone - Creating
Connections
- II. 5 ISTANBUL, TURKEY :: 70TK
- II. 6 KRASNOYARSK, RUSSIA :: Recycle Art Festival
- II. 7 MESSOLONGHI, GREECE :: Speak up!
- II. 8 NOVI SAD, SERBIA :: Project NN
- II. 9 PORTO, PORTUGAL :: Critical Housing Lab
- II.10 SKOPJE, MACEDONIA :: Urban Art Action

PROJECTS 2013–2015

- I. 1 ATHENS, GREECE :: PEDIO_AGORA
- I. 2 AVEIRO, PORTUGAL :: VivaCidade
- I. 3 BARCELONA, SPAIN :: Alice Archive
- I. 4 BERLIN, GERMANY :: Moabiter Mix
- I. 5 BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA :: More Bike Kitchen
- I. 6 KAUNAS, LITHUANIA :: The Šančiai Kiosk
- I. 7 LUBLIN, POLAND :: Tenants. Narrations about
Urban Utopias
- I. 8 MARIBOR, SLOVENIA :: Living City
- I. 9 ZAGREB, CROATIA :: Light in Places
- I. 10 ZUGDIDI, GEORGIA :: Open House







Urban Development through Cultural Activities and Cross-Sector Collaboration in Europe

The program Actors of Urban Change aims to achieve sustainable and participatory urban development through cultural activities implemented by teams of partners coming from the cultural sphere/civil society, public administration and the private sector. The program participants put their skills into practice through local projects. They strengthen their competencies in cross-sector collaboration and profit from peer-to-peer dialogue, professional trainings with international experts and Europe-wide exchange. The current program round runs from 2015 until May 2017. Another call for applications is planned for June/July 2017.

PROGRAM OFFERS AND ACTIVITIES

In the program, actors from the cultural sphere/civil society, public administration, and the private sector form a cross-sectoral team to implement an innovative local project. Over the course of 18 months, ten teams from various European cities receive support for the implementation of their joint local projects, obtain professional qualification, and engage in networking opportunities.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL LABORATORIES

- :: Project Grants of up to 5,000 EUR
- :: Tailored support from experts through Process-Related Consulting Grants of up to 5,000 EUR

QUALIFICATION

- :: Five international Academy Meetings in different European cities, based on a peer learning approach and featuring lectures, facilitated workshops and field trips
- :: Mobility grants for Shadowing Internships in other participants’ cities (up to ten days per person)

EUROPEAN NETWORK

- :: Exchange among participants through in-person meetings during the international Academy sessions and Shadowing Internships
- :: Virtual exchange through an online platform and community

POTENTIAL TOPICS AND SCOPE OF PROJECTS

The program does not focus on urban change through formal processes of urban planning or development, but rather on community-driven engagement for local urban development. In this context, potential topics to be addressed include affordable housing/gentrification, inclusion/integration, cultural diversity, accessibility of (formerly) public urban resources and spaces, sustainable mobility, health and physical activity, green city/climate change, etc., with citizen participation as core element of all the projects.

CULTURE AND URBAN CHANGE

Social change is intensified in the urban context, since opportunities and risks present themselves in different, and more pronounced ways in cities. From a citizen’s perspective, the boundaries between sectors become more permeable and allow for cross-sector collaboration in urban development. We consider culture to be a fundamental dimension of sustainable development. Culture has the potential to create meaning and identity, to promote participation and social inclusion and to play an important role in the positive development of cities for the common good.

THE ROBERT BOSCH STIFTUNG

The Robert Bosch Stiftung is one of Europe’s largest foundations associated with a private company. In its charitable work, it addresses social issues at an early stage and develops exemplary solutions. To this purpose, it develops and implements its own projects. Additionally, it supports third-party initiatives that have similar goals. The Robert Bosch Stiftung is active in the areas of health, science, society, education, and international relations. Moreover, in the coming years, the Foundation will increasingly direct its activities on three focus areas:

- :: Migration, Integration, and Inclusion
- :: Social Cohesion in Germany and Europe
- :: Sustainable Living Spaces

Since it was established in 1964, the Robert Bosch Stiftung has invested more than 1.4 billion euros in charitable work.

MITOST E.V.

MitOst is an international non-profit NGO based in Berlin that promotes cultural exchange and active citizenship in Europe and its neighboring regions, with a focus on Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. MitOst organizes international programs and projects and serves as a platform for new forms of social engagement to support an active civil society, regardless of cultural, linguistic, and political limitations. With 1,400 members in 40 countries and various partners, MitOst is part of a dynamic European network.

