

TRANSIT

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INTRODUCTION IN TRANSIT URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PLACE MAKING

Leona Lynen

The countries of Northwest Europe are urbanising and depopulating simultaneously, at great speed. These changes to both the urban and rural fabric bring about challenges that range from housing shortages to strategic vacancy, from displacement to commercialised public spaces, from social polarisation in inner cities to declining rural communities. This coincides with a demise of the welfare state, which results in spending cuts and the abolition of public services.

In many places, groups of people have stepped in to occupy empty spaces, to engage with unexplored potential and unaddressed need. They operate at the interface between civil society and urban development, appearing where planning and reality diverge. People are beginning to reclaim direct influence over the organisation and use of their environment.

Over the last year, the IN TRANSIT project has been connecting civil society initiatives which promote a co-productive, user-led form of development in their neighbourhoods, towns and villages. The long-term strategies of these initiatives aim to contribute to improvements in local living conditions. Their economic models do not prioritise financial return, but rather the realisation of their vision for more habitable towns and communities. They collectively purchase and renovate housing in depopulated villages; organise festivals and strengthen local economies in disadvantaged suburbs; launch communal meal events and actions to reclaim public spaces threatened with privatisation; create self-organised alternative living spaces to combat displacement in inner cities; initiate local urban food networks; facilitate access to under-used spaces; and create places for meetings and exchange through their community-centred activities.



Taking matters into our own hands – Röstånga Tillsammans © Elin Dagerbo

IN TRANSIT promotes mutual learning and exchange across national borders in order to disseminate innovative ideas and constellations of actors in a changing environment. The project creates a strong network for exchange and future collaborations across Northwest Europe. It brings together best-practice models for today's urban

and rural challenges. By connecting, for example, the initiators of a community shareholding company from rural Sweden with an alternative housing group from Oslo, a neighbourhood-initiated public reading room in Rotterdam with a youth movement from outside Stockholm, IN TRANSIT offers these initiatives a platform for international exchange and mutual learning. The project creates synergies and strengthens unusual partnerships across borders, boundaries and disciplines.

From May 2015 to March 2016, 18 initiatives went in different combinations on eight different group study visits throughout Northwest Europe to exchange best-practice, strategies and their experiences. Each initiative went on two study visits and hosted one trip in collaboration with the local Goethe-Institut. The trip each focused on a locally-relevant theme:

Glasgow: Sharing Spaces
Dublin: Access to Space
Röstånga/ Malmö: Social Infrastructure
Rotterdam: The Learning City
Helsinki: Alternative Living/Housing
London: Civic Ecosystems
Oslo/Kirkenes: Centre/Periphery
Copenhagen: The Willing City

This publication brings together results that were compiled from each of the study visits and places them in a global context.

IN TRANSIT highlights the role of the participating initiatives as intermediaries between civil society and public authorities. The initiatives are self-organised and self-empowered and have developed a new culture of spatial participation highlighting locally-specific questions about the future: how will we live together in a heterogeneous society? What can neighbourhoods achieve in times of social transformation?

CO-PRO DUCTIVE URBAN DEVELOP MENT

Leona Lynen

Alternative modes of producing the urban have been attributed many names: bottom-up/ temporary/ informal/ incremental/ tactical/ hands-on/ DIY/ user-led/ co-productive urbanism spans across a wide spectrum of people and initiatives and has been covered in numerous publications over the last years¹. IN TRANSIT – Urban Development and Placemaking builds on this research by broadening the discourse to include the perspective of Northwest Europe.

The shift to co-productive, user-led urban development reflects people's urge to actively shape their own surroundings through their own engagement and in a self-determined way. Another driving force is the dissatisfaction with the status quo of how a specific space is being used – or not used. Consequently, initiators of user-led urban development start to feel a certain responsibility for the future of this space and want to develop alternatives. Passion and the will to bring about local change are central to their commitment.

Co-productive urban development also hints at pressing challenges in current urban development processes and highlights the changing role of civil society. People demand participation beyond party democracy. In light of these developments, people start tangible projects as an answer. Self-empowered and self-organised, they develop a new spatial culture of participation and address locally embedded questions of how we want to live together in the future.

WHO ARE THEY?

It is hard to grasp and categorise who these actors are. They most often do not originate from a planning or architecture background

¹ Lisa Buttenberg/ Klaus Overmeyer/ Guido Spars (eds.): Raumunternehmen. Wie Nutzer selbst Räume entwickeln. Berlin, 2014
Philipp Oswalt/ Klaus Overmeyer/ Philipp Misselwitz (eds.): Urban Catalyst. Berlin, 2013
Berlin Senate for Urban Development (eds.): Urban Pioneers. Berlin, 2007
Michael Ziehl/ Sarah Obwald/ Oliver Hasemann/ Daniel Schnier (eds.): Second Hand Spaces. Berlin, 2012
Kristien Ring, AA Projects/ Berlin Senate for Urban Development (eds.): Self Made City. Berlin, 2013
Laura Bruns: Stadt Selber Machen. Ein Handbuch. Berlin, 2014
Markus Bader/ Jan Liesegang (eds.): Building the City Together. Berlin, 2015
Francesca Ferguson/ Urban Drift Projects (eds.): Make_Shift City – Renegotiating the Urban Commons. Berlin, 2014

but compensate this lack of expertise by making use of existing local resources. The knowledge needed is being gained as the project evolves: people learn professions as they go, become experts and make use of immaterial resources like time and involvement of volunteers. The initiators are equipped with a high degree of social and cultural capital and characterised by strong networks through which they can access resources, get publicity and gain skills. They have an intrinsic socio-political motivation and are locally embedded. Through their work, they succeed in linking societal questions to local action.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

The initiatives pursue a pragmatic realisation of their ideas that is flexible in adapting to local needs. User-led urban development projects are based on spatial experiments: they prototype, ideate, adapt, find out what works, what doesn't and what is being needed locally. Over time, the project transforms, adapts, evolves. The projects are never "done" as the ideas and concepts will spread to other spaces and people: it's a cellular, organic development that pays attention to existing dynamics of a space. The initiators grant themselves more time for the development as their aim is not the realisation of quick turnovers but rather the sustainable long-term development that meets the needs of those using the space.

"USER-LED URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ARE BASED ON SPATIAL EXPERIMENTS: THEY PROTOTYPE, IDEATE, ADAPT, FIND OUT WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T AND WHAT IS BEING NEEDED LOCALLY."

As most people involved in these projects are willing to take high risks (that most often are not balanced with high returns), there's a danger of self-exploitation for the success of the project. Similarly, there is no clear exit option as the organisers' professional future is often closely connected with the continuation of the project.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

The projects seek connections and debate with the surrounding neighbourhood and other stakeholders. They generate social impact by decreasing societal problems and creating multiple social assets such as social capital, a sense of community and new uses for spaces. The projects do, however, also act as developers in economic terms. They spur local economic development, create local circular economies, and shape new modes of collaboration and work.

User-led urban development is an alternative to both modernist-statist and neoliberal paradigms of urban intervention as it is grounded upon participatory democracy, aims to promote social cohesion and is not formally pre-programmed in advance or from the top down.² Co-creation challenges the status quo and goes beyond mere participation. It marks a shift from participation to appropriation: people demand influence, land, new rules, and ultimately power. User-led urban development processes are placed at the intersection of civil society and urban planning officials. By employing arbitrary forms of engagement and participation, the initiators often act as intermediaries between the two. They mark the shift from a consumer society towards production of space by the many. The initiators of user-led urban development processes don't wait for an invitation to participate but start their own projects via a self-determined way of co-producing space. They interrupt the basic logics of growth-first, market-oriented urban governance and point toward alternative urban futures based on grassroots democracy and social justice. By exploring different forms of social organisation, people understand in practice the power of collaboration, what it means to work together.

IS THERE COOPERATION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY?

How can these new urban practices be combined with top-down planning procedures that dominate the development of our cities? How can we build the city together? The discourse on co-creative urban development is often characterised by a dialectic between

² Neil Brenner: Is "Tactical Urbanism" an Alternative to Neoliberal Urbanism?
URL: <http://mo.ma/1D0lvoP>



Production of space by the many © The Children's Wood

top-down and bottom-up. The interdependence between bottom-up and top-down is not a recent or even new phenomenon. The historic interdependence only transformed in modernistic dualism: bottom-up, often closely linked to informal urban developments, was negatively connoted whereas top-down dominated the political discourse. This decisive turn was reached in the 1960s with Jane Jacobs³ who symbolises the rebellion of the bottom-up against the top-down. In this period, the endogenous, regenerative potential of cities was highlighted and “the myth of development from below” became manifested in the urban discourse.⁴

³ Jane Jacobs was an urban activist and author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, one of the most influential books in the history of American city planning

⁴ Philipp Misselwitz: “Between Bottom-Up and Top-Down” lecture at the Nospolis Symposium. Wuppertal, 2014. URL: <http://bit.ly/1Sa62sG>, p. 17

⁵ c.f. UK Prime Minister David Cameron’s vision of the “Big Society” (<http://econ.st/1Vme5Gi>) and Dutch King Willem-Alexander’s speech “The classical welfare state is slowly but surely evolving into a ‘participatory society’” URL: <http://on.ft.com/1T-4tdEW>

⁶ Philipp Oswalt/ Klaus Overmeyer/ Philipp Misselwitz (eds.): *Urban Catalyst*. Berlin, 2013

In recent years, where European cities were shaped by asynchronicity, uncertainty as well as austerity measures following the 2008 financial crisis, the myth of bottom-up got revitalised. Particularly in Northwest Europe, localism promised to give power to the everyday people, yet at the same time it coincided with spending cuts and the passing on of responsibilities from a declining welfare state.⁵ Bottom-up is often seen as a panacea for challenges in today’s cities, villages and neighbourhoods that state institutions and formal urban planning procedures, in particular, have failed to address adequately. But where do the borders lie between neoliberalism and self-organisation?

Co-creative urban development demands municipalities that are open towards alternative practices and recognise the potential in user-led urban development processes. As the initiatives function outside market norms, determination and know-how is needed in public administration in order to find exceptions from existing regulations. Trust – on both sides – is central to successful co-creation. There is a need for redistributing resources to create more leeway for a reformulation of the commons between market, state and civil society. Crucial is a changing of the mentalities of all parties involved: shifting from a culture of control to a culture of enablement that recognised the local as resource and catalyser.⁶

PROJECTS



Photos: © Mark Loudon, © Mitt127

a AFRIKAAND ERWIJK CO OPERATIVE ROTTERDAM

Annet van Otterloo and Jeanne van Heeswijk

The *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative's* mission is to develop Rotterdam South as a stronger and more sustainable area, socially, economically, and culturally. The Cooperative provides an organisational structure in which revenues and benefits can go directly to its members, local stores, organisations and inhabitants. Through strategic organisation the skills and resources present in the area are used collectively.

www.wijkcooperatie.org

Afrikaanderwijk is a neighbourhood in the south of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. It is traditionally working class and home to a majority of residents with an international, multi-ethnic background. In the 1990s, the city government started to redevelop the former harbour area via housing for the creative and middle class. The vigorous transition from a worker's to a so-called 'creative city' has ignored the socio-cultural infrastructure of the city. In order for the adjoining *Afrikaander* district not to become victim to the expansion of the creative city but rather thrive from it, the art and research association *Freehouse* was started in 1998 to explore the assets and challenges of the local area.



Neighbourhood Cooperative presentation © Janneke Absil

Freehouse observed several barriers to skills development and exchange within the city. These barriers stemmed from a lack of infrastructure that would support collective rather than individual activities; other challenges included regressive governmental policies and regulations that hindered small business opportunities and skill development.

A main focus of *Freehouse*, then, was to create space for encounter, both literally as well as metaphorically. Over the years, it stimulated local inhabitants and shopkeepers, youngsters, artists, and designers to exchange knowledge, experience and work on collaborative productions. The connection of cultural with economic capital resulted in co-productions that benefitted participants socially and economically.

In 2008, *Freehouse* transitioned from a research association to a practical lab focused on testing strategies in the *Afrikaanderwijk*. *Freehouse* focused its efforts around the *Afrikaanderwijk* market that had been in decline for several years. Many of the small-scale producers in the neighbourhood could not sell or display their products at the market due to restrictive regulations and onerous permitting rules. *Freehouse* organised 450 small-scale interventions that actively challenged these restrictions. *Freehouse* also set up 5 communal workshops where people could combine their skills and resources. As a result, the neighbourhood and its market are becoming a vibrant community again and the area was put on the map as a lively spot for cultural production, both nationally and internationally.

Freehouse believes that inclusive urban development is achieved through community participation and self-organisation. Moreover, that economic growth is brought about through cooperative cultural production. As the neighbourhoods surrounding the *Afrikaanderwijk* were being redeveloped via the addition of middle class dwellings, *Freehouse* worked towards ensuring the existing inhabitants would share in the economic benefits of the redevelopment.

Freehouse re-negotiated various urgencies in the area and created urban unions. New forms of commonality came into being through setting up chains of collective production. A process of social, economical, and cultural activities that moved on several scales and made the different informal practices of the everyday emergent, while re-rooting them into stronger networks. It was called Radicalising the Local. By creating conditions for collaborative production, it allowed individual makers to pool resources and legitimise their informal businesses through the network *Freehouse* created. The work on knitting stronger networks into urban unions and its cultural capabilities necessitated a new organisational (and economical) form on the scale of a neighbourhood rather than that of interest groups. Despite diminishing public funds for the *Afrikaanderwijk*, *Freehouse* has been able to intensify its activities and to grow its organisation.

In 2014 *Freehouse* decided to hand over the task of collective production to a custom-made organisational form: a Cooperative on the scale of a neighbourhood. An umbrella organisation that brings together workspaces with shopkeepers, local makers, social foundations, and the market organisation. The *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* creates opportunities through the provision of skill-based labour, training, services, and products to enhance self-organising ability while trying not to waste talent and human capital. It stimulates sustainable local production, cultural development, knowledge exchange, and entrepreneurship, combined with shared responsibility and participation. The result is a self-organised and self-run body that continues to create local, self-produced economic opportunities, leverage political power to shift policy, and negotiate economic advantages. To draw financial flows inwards by the extraction of financial capital for social and intellectual values. It also develops local skills and self-certifications, strengthens resilient intercultural networks, and tries to create a radical form for self-governance of an area, reinvesting profits directly into the local community.



The Neighbourhood Kitchen team © Linda Malherbe/Joop Reijngoud

The *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* applies a self-organised approach in order to make use of all the currently untapped talents and resources that are present in the neighbourhood. Since the start in 2014 it set up several services and activities to generate work, space, and stipulate cost-effective deals for its members. The various activities can be categorised into space, services, and collaborations.

So far, the Cooperative's work comprises:

- An energy collective that realises substantial savings for businesses in the neighbourhood.
- A cleaning service *SCHOON* that ensures cleaning work normally outsourced to companies elsewhere is 'insourced' and carried out by members of the workers Cooperative.
- A neighbourhood common, *Het Gemaal*, that had been an old pumping station and was transformed into a restaurant and a public place for the neighbourhood. A place for meetings, where presentations and production come together.
- *Home Cooks Feijenoord*, a collaboration between Cooperative members, the *Neighbourhood Kitchen* and *DOCK Feijenoord* who set up a meal service for elderly, sick, and disabled people. In *Home Cooks Feijenoord*, professionals and volunteers prepare meals in people's homes.
- In the upcoming years a local building with elderly homes will transform from a location solely for the elderly, to a place where different groups live together on a reciprocal basis. Called *Samen & Anders*, it will also house small-scale shopkeepers that serve both, in-house residents, neighbours, and passers-by. The Cooperative develops the details and tests partnerships for this new care concept.

The *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* creates conditions for collaborative production that allow people to pool their resources; thereby, a new form of neighbourhood organisation evolves that has the capacity to benefit from, and reinvest in, the local economy. Becoming a member for the Cooperative involves signing an exchange agreement that encourages local supportive service infrastructure. For example, storekeepers must agree to preferentially buy their products from other local shops or to hire local contract workers. Any profit made by the Cooperative is divided among the members: 25% goes towards education (such as certification programs); 25% goes

towards social and cultural programs; and 50% is divided amongst the members in the ratio they contributed. To be self-sustaining and to provide valuable opportunities to its members, the Cooperative must generate its own income and provide educational and social programs of sufficient importance to compensate for potential losses.

In some way, the *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* stepped in to compensate for the failures of the regulatory political system. However, it never overtly sought to be a political adversary of the city government. Rather, the *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* makes visible the present skills of the residents and provides the organisational infrastructure to support those skills locally. It is a body designed to redistribute scarcity (in jobs, housing, and economic opportunity) through collective advocacy and organisation. The efforts of the Cooperative hinge on the emergence of trusting relationships within the neighborhood, and these networks produce sustainable mutual support structures in the form of physical spaces, services, and economic funds. Trust within the Cooperative is crucial; trust that the membership in the Cooperative will benefit the members in the long-term, that individual needs will be met, and their voices heard. Trust building requires long-term, repetitive collaboration within the neighbourhood.

The Cooperative's model as an umbrella organisation encompassing and coordinating the efforts and interrelationships of many smaller stakeholder cooperatives can seem overly complex. It must be complex, though, so that its infrastructure can facilitate all the possibilities that might arise in the future. Whereas businesses are typically focused on short-term profits, the Cooperative is thinking forward fifty years and rebuilding itself continuously to accommodate unknown futures.

b CONNECT THE DOTS DUBLIN

Marisa Denker and Naomi Murphy

Connect the Dots is an initiative that reimagines how people across communities, sectors, and cities can come together to develop meaningful connections, collaborate, and build a lasting, engaged community. Unlike convention conferences and workshops, we co-create our events in partnership with our participants, working to create a facilitative space for diverse perspectives to collide and spark innovation.

www.connectthedots.ie

For the last year and a half, we (Marisa Denker and Naomi Murphy) focused on bringing people together around the issue of vacant space in Dublin. We gathered a large cross section of Dublin together in one room, to facilitate joined up thinking and innovation. From artists, arts initiatives, collectives, squatters, charities for homelessness, researchers, graduate students, council members, architects, city planners, and developers – all sat around a communal table, sharing food and knowledge as they figured out ways to connect the dots. We are now expanding to bring people together and build connected, more resilient communities around other issues, challenges, and topics beyond vacant space.



Discussing alternative use concepts for vacant spaces
© Connect the Dots

The crash of 2008, left Dublin a shadow of its former self – it emptied storefronts, office buildings, lots, and homes. Yet despite a lack of resources, funding, and support, so many people were coming together to transform the dead spaces of the city in innovative, multifunctional ways. There were arts-based collectives, urban gardeners, community groups, architects, students, crafters, non-profits, do-it-yourself initiatives and more opening up the locked spaces of Dublin and creating a city where people wanted to live. Yet two years later, Dublin was a different city: many of the bottom up initiatives the social, community, and cultural spaces were struggling or closing, with few popping up in their stead despite the

persisting high concentration of vacant spaces. With the economy picking up again, it seemed that the priorities of local authorities were more focused on foreign investment than investing, supporting, or listening to local bottom-up initiatives or the average citizen. Despite demonstrated need for the social reuse of space (cultural, housing, community, etc), systemic barriers to accessing space were preventing the potential of vacant spaces to be leveraged as opportunity assets for the communities of Dublin.

It was a complex problem. But who was trying to address it? And how? We found that there were many people trying to tackle the issue but working in silos. The local government did not seem to be engaging deeply with the people on the ground, and even within the government, and amongst the initiatives, there seemed to be a lack of communication and a lack of cohesion. We searched for a platform that would serve to facilitate communication, collaboration, and co creation. As part of our field research, we went to many conferences, workshops and the like but found they were all once off events, too short to develop real solutions, and with little follow through afterwards. Moreover, with little facilitation of networking, the events were not suited for those voices with less social and cultural capital to engage in these discussions and encounters. On top of this, it seemed to be the same groups of people coming together within their closed-off siloed sectors, rather than being more inclusive. The lack of a useful, productive, and open platform to bring people together, seemed to be preventing the development of a connected and co-created city, shaped to fit the people who live in it.

To make change, we wanted to deconstruct the dominant narrative. So we decided to prototype a new one – *Connect the Dots* aimed at addressing the deficits on the policy maker side and community side by creating a bridge between them – an informal, safe egalitarian space, a middle ground. Where all voices on an issue could be heard, where solutions could develop, capacity could be built and a collaborative network could develop over time to help each other and move solutions forward. We believed that by designing a facilitative space where diverse perspectives could collide, we could create be a breeding ground for social innovation.

Thus at the start, the mission of *Connect the Dots* was to bring diverse stakeholders together to breed innovative solutions and to facilitate the creation of a resilient community of practice – pooling knowledge, sharing solutions, and supporting each other.

To further develop the form this vehicle would take, we continued engaging in field research – and continue to this day – always looking for new best practices and feedback from stakeholders to incorporate. We met with and developed countless relationships with potential participants, building trust and working together with the participants to ensure that the vehicle of *Connect the Dots* would be something Dubliners wanted and needed.



Careful attention is given to the set-up of the workshop spaces © Connect the Dots

Therefore, *Connect the Dots* takes the form of an iterative, series of creative events – that are designed with and for the participants. Constantly adapt and tailor their collaborative approach to best fit the people coming and the changing context.

There have been six interventions so far over the course of a year. *Connect the Dots* has grown a critical mass, with over 400 people involved in the collaborative network, locally and internationally.

The outcomes so far include: new collaborations, supportive partnerships and connections between diverse stakeholders and initiatives; the building of community capacity via resource sharing and support; access and creation of a larger network via expanded connectivity locally and internationally (via *INTRANSIT*, *EU Urban Agenda City Makers*, *EU Transitioning towards Urban Resilience and Sustainability*, and the *ECTP-CEU Biennial of Towns and Town Planners*); the creation, development and now - steps towards following through on innovative solutions to the problem. These potential solutions, crafted and iterated over the course of the events include:

Advisory Board – gather and create online and in person mechanism for mentors, experts, professionals to advise on accessing, reusing, and maintaining a space.

Resource Toolkit – online interactive publication to help better access and reuse space; resources, tips, tricks, key findings of CTD, key contacts, map of reused and underutilised spaces.

Consultation / Liaison Role on Projects – formalise services providing support to groups working to reuse space. Connect people on social / cultural / community projects.

Reuse a Space for CTD Members – collaborate with stakeholders in order to secure and manage a venue for a diverse range of uses.

Vacant Space Matchmaking Mechanism – directly connect vacant spaces to projects and groups.

Overall, we learned that *Connect the Dots* could be a platform not just suited to vacant space – it is a model, ultimately, to bring people together, help people to meaningfully engage, collaborate and develop a long lasting, connected community around a common challenge or topic of interest. Our model has been noted for its unique ability to bring together such a diverse range of stakeholders due to our extensive work on developing relationships across all interested sectors and communities and co-creating the event with them to ensure a personalised experience. Unlike other similar projects, we operate as a third space – creating an informal safe space outside of any individual interests.

Thus *Connect the Dots* is in the midst of taking a new turn that was never expected – to become a social enterprise. We want to help more people meaningfully connect and engage with each other, from all different sectors. We have realised how important relationships between people are – and how important and valuable co-creation and co-production can be between them. We don't want to have to continue relying on ad hoc grants, and funding. Instead we are now working to develop into a social enterprise – in which our for profit side can help to fund our nonprofit side – thus making us more sustainable and have greater capacity to make a difference.

C

EXROTA PRINT BERLIN

Daniela Brahm, Les Schliesser

ExRotaprint is the former site of the *Rotaprint* printing press manufacturing plant in Berlin. A handful of renters started *ExRotaprint* as an initiative in 2005 with the objective of taking over the former *Rotaprint* site. They founded a non-profit *GmbH* that disrupts the speculation-spiral of the real estate market and owns the buildings through a heritable building right. *ExRotaprint* represents a unique form of ownership and self-organisation. It is a model for an inclusive and non-profit approach to urban development.

www.exrotaprint.de

Following the insolvency of *Rotaprint* in 1989, the 10,000 square meter premises fell into a state of neglect while lingering in the redevelopment line. After bankruptcy the district managed the buildings and rented them for temporary uses. Plans to sell the site were not pushed through until the *Liegenschaftsfonds* (real estate funds) Berlin took over the property in 2002, who then put it on the market. The property was to go to the highest bidder. But for *Rotaprint* – a historically listed site with restrictions as to what could be torn down or added, buildings that were badly in need of upgrading, its location in a low-income district lacking hip bars and galleries – buyers were scarce.

In 2004, artists Daniela Brahm and Les Schliesser formulated a concept for taking over the property by tenants already on site. The goal was to develop the location to facilitate a heterogeneous mix of *Arbeit, Kunst, Soziales* (work, art, and community). After two years of negotiations and as a result of our active media campaign and the political pressure we generated, we were able to purchase the property.



The ExRotaprint site © ExRotaprint

Purchasing a 10,000 square meter site without personal capital is a complex undertaking. At the beginning the outcome of the project was completely open, success improbable. *ExRotaprint* faced the challenge of developing an ownership model that responds to the economic and social situation of a production-oriented site. In the concept stage everything hinges on voluntary work and the involvement of individuals who are motivated into action by challenging circumstances. Within a heterogeneous group of artists, social organisations, and businesses there are differing visions that must be discussed and moderated. Fantasies of profits, investment returns, or retirement safeguards quickly come to the fore and obscure the view of a common interest. During this phase we recognised that unless we developed an overarching solution for managing the backlog of renovation work the internal development of the project might simply disintegrate into individualised parts. The decision to become a non-profit organisation developed out of intense discussions. It was not simply a matter of securing our own interests. *ExRotaprint* was intended to be a space for new strategies of social urban development, free from the exclusionary consequences of speculation.



There is no profit to be made here © ExRotaprint

Local protagonists are experts; they know the potential of their surroundings. Our concept is based on engaging with the existing surroundings. Initiated by artists, *ExRotaprint* is not intended as a location for artists alone. From the very outset we viewed it as an opportunity to create a common space for people with different occupations, and different backgrounds and histories. We are constantly confronted by the challenge of finding the right balance between interests. At the same time the spatial coexistence of manufacturing, creativity, and job services provides a mix that creates mutual exchange, critique, and spawns future growth.

Two contracts with interlinking and complementary aims, form the basis of *ExRotaprint's* legal structure. The contracts ensure the project's long-term development as a non-profit organisation and its concept of usage; it also precludes real estate speculation at this location.

The ninety-nine year heritable building rights contract was signed with the trias and *Edith-Maryon* foundations on September 3, 2007. *ExRotaprint* decided not to purchase the property with a bank loan, instead we opted for heritable building rights in order to make reselling the property impossible. The heritable building rights contract places *ExRotaprint gGmbH* (non-profit limited liability company) in an ownership-like position where it is responsible for all aspects of the project's development and financing. Solely the selling of the property is ruled out. As a legal means, heritable building rights separate the land and the building: the foundations retain ownership of the land, while the buildings are the property of *ExRotaprint gGmbH*.

Founded by tenants, the non-profit partnership agreement of *ExRotaprint gGmbH* was concluded on July 17, 2007. Non-profit status dispels the conflict over partial ownership and allows for planning unencumbered by individual interests. *ExRotaprint gGmbH* partners do not profit from the income generated by the property and cannot realise any increase in value from a sale of their stake in the partnership. Thus a long-term and stable location is created that can be developed on its own terms. This is the profit of *ExRotaprint*.

The first objective of the *ExRotaprint* gGmbH partnership agreement is to preserve the historical site. The second stated aim is to support art and culture.

ExRotaprint is an ownership model without private ownership. Rents are the economic basis. Rent income finances the renovation, building modifications, the annual interest payment on the heritable building right, and operational costs. Work is paid.



© ExRotaprint

To finance the renovation *ExRotaprint* took out a building loan with a Swiss pension fund. The pension fund requires investors to invest their pension payments not in the stock market but in sustainable, social-oriented, ecological, or cultural projects. The investors prefer stable interest returns and are protected from the rollercoaster ride of the stock markets. Here the interest paid by *ExRotaprint* also flows into another “self-aware” money cycle. Money is tied to goals. It is a means to an end. The purchase price we negotiated might one day lead to expectations of profit making, thereby inspiring a desire to capitalise on this.

By bringing in the foundations we were able to avoid the dependency and risks connected to market structures. The annual interest payments *ExRotaprint* makes to the foundations refines the purchase of the site and enables the foundations to push through similarly-oriented new projects. A cash flow is created that goes beyond *ExRotaprint* and our own interests.



© Philipp Messner

d GÄNGE VIERTEL HAMBURG

Dagmar Rauwald, Claudia Pigors, Ulrike Sitte

In 2009 two hundred people active in arts, politics, and social activities have entered the central Hamburg *Gängeviertel* in order to save the remaining 12 old buildings from decay and demolition, and to create a centrally-located area with the aim to promote arts, culture, and talks, both in studios, in apartments, or in social projects. The initiative has founded the cooperative *Gängeviertel eG* for the conservation of this historic quarter, in order to secure the future of this area independently from political changes. Ultimately, they want to create an open, self-administered *Gängeviertel*.

www.das-gaengeviertel.info

The *Gängeviertel* (literally translated as “quarter of lanes”) consists of twelve historic buildings in Hamburg’s city centre, comprising the better half of an entire city block. The buildings are as diverse as their inhabitants, providing affordable, non-commercial space for collectively-run galleries, ateliers, audio/visual spaces, bars, cafés, bike workshops, theatre space for performance groups, concert venues, community kitchens, and conference/seminar rooms. Outside of the buildings are public spaces and courtyards, offering residents and visitors alike the chance to spend time and be creative.

The Hamburg inner city consists primarily of businesses, agencies, offices and institutions. Very few people actually live here. This has changed with the coming of the *Gängeviertel* project, where the vibrant mixture of life and work, enriched through art and culture, has transformed and nourished the neighbourhood, restoring its earlier qualities. The contrast between the creative, not-for-profit activities of the *Gängeviertel* and the surrounding corporate, commercial spaces could not be more clear.

The operational structure of the *Gängeviertel* is divided between the *Genossenschaft* (cooperative) and the *Verein* (association). In addition, there are numerous working groups and collectives, which tackle independent issues and report regularly back to the weekly general assembly for further discussion. The *Gängeviertel* is not-for-profit, in that all funds are returned to the quarter itself to ensure the responsible and preservation-based refurbishing of the heritage buildings. Additionally, a few groups located within the *Gängeviertel* use their space in the already renovated buildings for semi-commercial purposes, in order to overcome the corresponding financial pressures and costs that new construction and renovation entails. In order to produce the desired outcome, it might become necessary to employ some people in the quarter on a steady basis. These establishments, however, promote a compatible vision about mixed-use urban space and how to re-imagine the landscape of the inner city.

The economic viability of the *Gängeviertel* depends upon the voluntary work of creative and political citizens coming together to create



The Gängeviertel is a community-driven, non-commercial social hub © Franziska Holz

alternative spaces for themselves and others. Their time and effort is what makes the quarter a hive of activity, enables the sharing and exchange of both ideas and things, and serves as the foundation for on-going interest in the project. Furthermore, the purchase of cooperative shares, not only from the people who seek to use the space in *Gängeviertel*, but also the general public, is a way in which the quarter acquires additional funds. The creation of venues for consumption and nightlife allows us to finance our public spaces (bars, cafés, studios) largely on the basis of “pay-what-it’s-worth-to-you.” In this way, practical costs and expenses – such as rent – are covered. Moreover, many artists and groups in the quarter receive grant money for their individual projects. This funding operates on a case-by-case basis and is integral to our on-going creative output. Obtaining such financial support requires constant attention, bureaucratic know-how, and can be quite time-consuming – even if everything is done correctly and on time, funding is never guaranteed.

Beginning with the initial occupation of the buildings in 2009, the people involved in the *Gängeviertel* have actively sought alliances with the general public, many of whom understand the growing concerns facing artists, musicians and others who live in precarious financial situations, as well as the value of old and historic buildings in the functioning of a diverse, creative city. From the beginning, many prominent individuals declared their solidarity with the *Gängeviertel* and lent their support to our cause. This solidarity continues to grow and develop - the slogan “Komm in die Gänge” articulates this inclusive approach. The well-received creative activities in the quarter have resulted in growing public pressure to preserve the space, leading the city of Hamburg to repurchase the buildings from the potential developer. Since then, the *Gängeviertel* has negotiated with the city and its various ministries in order to ensure that the development in the quarter proceeds in a way that retains its unique public, historical, and economic character. For the past four years, two of our galleries have received grants from the Ministry of Culture, while various foundations have sponsored workshops, meetings and conferences in our space. Schools, museums, theatres, galleries, and many other institutions and organisations have worked closely with us. We are committed to retaining

this diversity of players, and it is our hope that support will continue to grow and diversify in the future. It would be extremely helpful in the long run if we could work more closely with certain foundations in the city to develop common programs that provide benefits for all parties involved. For example, we envision a residency program, which would enable us to invite artists from other countries and provide them with living and working space, and perhaps financial support. While we do have the space for this, we currently do not have the funds available.

As a space, the *Gängeviertel* is in constant transition. Along with many of those who founded the project, a steady stream of newcomers who see value in the quarter's existence are actively involved on a voluntary basis in defending its existence in a harsh economic landscape, where "market forces", gentrification, and corporate interests threaten the political participation of citizens to determine the policies that affect their lived urban experiences. Our short to medium-term strategy involves the further pursuit of the self-determined preservation and maintenance of the heritage buildings and the activities they enable. In order to do so, we will continue to seek partnerships and secure funding to ensure low rents for future inhabitants and co-users. The political climate could change and become less receptive or favourable to our demands, so the safest route is to remove the houses from the market in order to avoid speculation. To that end, some of us would like to become the actual owners of the quarter, as this is one of the surest ways to secure our long-term, non-commercial perspective. Still others in the quarter take the position that outright ownership is not necessarily the way forward, and that ensuring our position at the bargaining table is key. One way to do this is to be given rights that are similar to owners, so that our authority and autonomy in the renovation and construction process of the remaining houses is guaranteed through legal decision-making power. As a long-term political goal, the *Gängeviertel* seeks to normalise community-led development and strengthen our network to other projects, so that the availability of affordable, non-commercial creative space becomes the norm in cities everywhere.



The Gängeviertel © Franziska Holz

e GIVRUM COPEN HAGEN

Jesper Koefoed-Melson and Carol Hayes

GivRum is a non-profit organisation that works to promote democratic development of our cities. We activate empty buildings and public spaces by engaging with local stakeholders and mediating between the community, public sector, local authorities, and businesses in neighbourhood development.

www.givrum.nu

By opening the doors to empty buildings, we help cultural projects and creative businesses thrive. We work to create added value for landowners through the temporary use of empty buildings, to create better communities by involving users and stakeholders using the space day to day, and to develop concepts that showcase new forward thinking initiatives in urban development and give life, community, synergy, and economy to an area.



GivRum also hosts conferences © GivRum

With roots in Copenhagen's activist soil, we create new directions for citizen-led urban development. The founders Christian Fumz and Jesper Koefoed-Melson met each other in a former candy factory in Copenhagen's Northwest district where Christian had been working to transform the factory into a space for temporary cultural and entrepreneurial activities. A few years later in 2010 *GivRum* was founded to set new standards for the city's development.

Since then we have been engaged in the development processes of the country, working with challenges in the social housing, the development of the outer Regions of Denmark, and the activation of unused urban spaces and empty buildings. The starting point has always been local involvement and by anchoring our work in this we can create a solid foundation for sustainable urban development.

In the summer of 2010 *GivRum* began their first project – the transformation of a 2000m² abandoned lacquer factory in Copenhagen

into a creative working hub. Two years later, the former factory, inhabited by a self-organised and self-funded organisation of over 100 creatives who maintained the buildings, had become an asset to the local community and was used as a precedent project in the city's strategy for a creative and diverse city.

The challenges were threefold: to demonstrate to the owners they could bring value to the site and alleviate the responsibility of managing and maintaining the building; to build an active group of users, which over time could take over the organisation, financing, and operation of buildings; and to anchor the project as a social and cultural meeting place for the local area.

GivRum signed a two-year contract with *Akzo Nobel* to activate the buildings. Artists and creatives were invited to engage and take up space in the project. In doing this, a social-economic model was established that gave security to the owner. Rent paid by users covered maintenance and other such expenses. Any profit was reinvested in the buildings, public activities, and events.



Byensrum, co-creative development with the local municipality
© GivRum

The activities were based on cultural and social purposes, to create life in the space and surrounding area, and focused on the activation of the group over individuals to create life quickly. Instead of lacquer, the building was creating everything from motorcycles to skis and furniture, circus performances and growing vegetables — all as a tribute to art, knowledge and ideas, which would benefit the local

area and the city as a whole. This resulted in a user-driven community – working continuously over a two-year period – that was entrusted with responsibility for the operation of the site. By the end of 2012 *GivRum* formally handed over the site to users, after negotiating a new three-year contract with the owners.

After a five-year programme of activities, *Prags Boulevard 43* cemented itself as a key player in Copenhagen's cultural scene. The building was recently sold to an American investment firm to be used as storage, however the existing cultural community established there have since moved to a new site in the north of Copenhagen where they remain a resilient community.

Since 2010, the concept of collaborative urban development has been a consistent focus in our work. Today, *GivRum* is a non-profit organisation that works as consultants and advisors for cities and private developers in transforming empty buildings and public spaces with means of community building. We have established ourselves as an organisation that champions the perspective of civil society in city development. What is great to experience is that the engaging method we are working with is more and more legitimate at a political level. That said we are still facing great challenges in terms of rigid regulations and governance that has a hard time handling the complexity of inviting a diverse group in on the decision-making.

Our body of work has grown to include workshops, research, and consultancy as well as conferences and festivals locally and internationally, such as *Think Space* and *City Link*. Through these conferences and festivals, we aim at spreading the word about the wonders of co-creation in the city so that more people are aware of the values being created when you join forces in developing cities.

In order to take the next steps we, as the grassroots movement that works with democratic city development, need to be better at showing the results we are creating. We need to gather and learn from each other and organise ourselves so that we become more visible for the establishment. The big question is how we do so without distancing ourselves from the people we are working for?

f HAUS KVARTALET OSLO

Arild Eriksen

The former squatters at *Hauskvartalet* in Oslo, users of the *Hausmania* culture house and *Eriksen Skajaa Architects* have together designed an urban ecological residential project with non-commercial rental housing for young artists and culture workers. The project is a discussion on what the sustainable minimum dwelling is today and an examination of how to develop housing projects with a high degree of participation.

www.eriksenskajaa.no www.hausmania.org

The first squat in the *Hauskvartalet* city block was established in 1999 and several buildings followed. In 2000, the squatters made a deal with the municipality and established the *Hausmania* culture house. In 2004, the squatters and the architecture office *Gaia Architects* started a participatory process with workshops that resulted in an innovative zoning plan which declared the city block a *byøkologisk kulturkvartal* ("city ecological culture quarter"). The zoning plan said the area should be developed as a whole with a large degree of participation, with a focus on high sustainability goals as well as affordable housing.

The neighbourhood of the *Hauskvartalet* city block is part of a major redevelopment along the *Aker* river in Oslo. Old factory buildings have been transformed into culture institutions and schools and the surrounding areas of the *Hauskvartalet* site are slowly being transformed as new or refurbished housing developments.



The Hauskvartalet city block © Per Oscar Skjellnan

In 2010, the squatters of *Hausmannsgate 42* were evicted and it became clear that the municipality was planning to sell several of the buildings on the open market. *Eriksen Skajaa Architects* had published the interview-based magazine *Pollen* on what role the squatters played in city planning, both as bottom-up real estate developers but also as innovators of re-use concepts for listed, protected buildings and building environments. The former inhabit-

ants and users of the culture house *Hausmania* had read the publication and got in touch with us at *Eriksen Skajaa Architects*. Soon after, we agreed to start a collaboration to come up with an alternative development plan for *Hauskvartalet*.

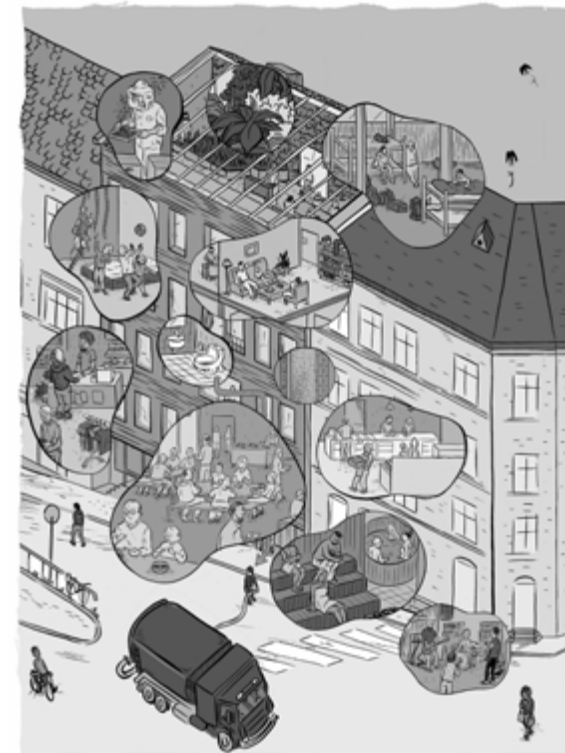
Initially, we had to apply for funding for the development plan. When the project received funding from *Husbanken*¹, we initiated a series of workshops to establish concepts for how the community would live in the house, co-housing models, construction and refurbishment methods, energy goals, financing, organisation model, etc. For us this was the most interesting part of the process because the participants proved to come up with innovative and interesting suggestions that we also learnt a lot from. The project also began to collaborate with a state run initiative that promotes wooden building in the city called *Tre og By*, as well as a developer who wanted to establish a theatre school on an empty plot of land next to the culture house. Upon completion, we spent several months drawing a proposal based on the workshops before we got back together to discuss the final version of the project. After this we finished the work and the documentation, the people from *Hauskvartalet* needed to go into dialogue with the municipality.

2015, however, marked a major shift in the project: first, the ruling conservative city government declared the properties for sale and our group was one of the bidders. Later that year elections were held and the majority in Oslo's city council changed from 18 years of conservative majority to a social democratic/green party coalition. The new government put the sale on hold and for a while we thought they would reconsider it after all. We were then very surprised when they decided to continue the sale. At the moment still no decision has been made and the residents and the users of the culture house are working hard politically to have the sale of the housing squat annulled so the whole sale process would have to

¹ Husbanken is the government institution responsible for implementing housing policy. The bank was created in 1946 and has funded more than half of all homes in Norway. Husbanken provides home loans, housing grants for the provision of rental housing and housing support to households with low incomes and high housing expenses.

start again. In order for this to happen we need a majority of votes in the city council to vote "no" to the sale. At the moment we have massive support but it's difficult to know how it will end.

Still the interest from the municipality for these kinds of initiatives has increased and I am sure we will see some projects initiated because of this shift. The *Hauskvartalet* project is one of very few bottom-up housing initiative in Oslo and also the first of its kind in Norway. I think because it was such a thorough process and was well-documented, bottom-up housing development suddenly seems like a possibility to more people. We see huge interest from people eager to look for similar possibilities. I think most of all the fact that we shared information through seminars and open workshops was crucial to the success as well as the fact that we have used this knowledge in our teaching at both the Oslo and the Bergen schools of architecture.



Reimagining Hauskvartalet © Eriksen Skajaa Architects

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HOME BAKED LIVERPOOL

Britt Jurgensen and Samantha Jones

The *Homebaked Bakery Co-operative* was incorporated in June 2012 by a group of local residents passionate about the possibilities of re-opening an old bakery in community ownership, and creating a successful enterprise with social as well as financial value. *Homebaked* aims to support the local Liverpool community to “take matters into their own hands” regarding the future of their neighbourhood. They also founded the *Homebaked Community Land Trust*, a membership organisation that allows local people to collectively buy, develop and manage land and buildings.

www.homebaked.org.uk

The *Homebaked* bakery is situated just opposite the famous *Anfield Stadium*, home of the *Liverpool Football Club* and on the border of *Everton* and *Anfield*, two classic Northern English working class neighbourhoods. It is in a part of Liverpool visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year.

‘THE LOCAL COMMUNITY HAS HAD THEIR HOPES REPEATEDLY RAISED AND THEN DASHED BY PROMISES OF ‘NEIGHBOURHOOD REGENERATION’, WHICH HAS BEEN SLOW TO MATERIALISE. AFTER 15 YEARS OF LIVING UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, MANY PEOPLE HAVE LOST TRUST IN ANY GOVERNMENT SCHEMES. WE ARE SICK OF WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO BE DELIVERED. IT’S THE NUMBER OF TIMES WE’VE BEEN MADE PROMISES AND BEEN LIED TO. TO ME, HMRI MEANS DEVASTATION, PROMISES BROKEN, NO CONSULTATION.’

Angela McKay, local resident and co-founder of *Homebaked CLT*

Our area was designated for demolition under the former *Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI)*, a regeneration scheme designed to reverse the historic decline of low-demand areas in the UK and get money flowing through them. These areas, identified as ‘market failures,’ were unlike anywhere else in Britain; house prices had stagnated and *HMRI* was tasked with demolishing surplus stock and replacing them with new, but fewer, houses. Our neighbourhood was scheduled for the largest clearance programme of the scheme, with plans to demolish 1,800 residential and commercial properties.

From the start, the programme was very unpopular with some residents who felt that it was pulling apart the community. Others welcomed the possibility of new houses and social amenities. For those who owned their homes, it was often the case that the compensation given to them by the city was insufficient to buy one of the new houses. The *HMRI* programme was slowed by the housing crisis that followed the 2008 financial crash until it was pulled completely by the Coalition government in 2010, leaving the area in a state of limbo. The disappointment of the failure of another major regeneration scheme, coupled with years of lingering uncertainty about the future of *Liverpool FC's* ground and the wider societal picture of recession and spending cuts all combined to leave a legacy of frustration with many residents.



The neighbourhood was marked for demolition © Mark Loudon

Mitchell's, the neighbourhood bakery founded in 1903 and known as '*The Pie Shop*' by football fans from all over the world, was among the buildings earmarked for demolition. The owners, then in their seventies and considering retirement, were losing customers as the surrounding streets were emptied. When the renewal programme was frozen but the demarcation for demolition wasn't lifted, they had little choice but to close the bakery and retire without compensation.

In 2010 *Liverpool Biennial* commissioned Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk to work in *Anfield*. Core to her philosophy is that art can create 'fields of interaction' that build the relationships and trigger the debates, which can enable people to shape their surroundings. In line with this approach, Jeanne's original proposal for a project named *2Up2Down* focused on using an empty house to engage local people and support them to develop their own ideas for what to do with the space. She also proposed getting local young people to act as the design team.



After 85 years in business the family-run bakery *Mitchell's* had to close. Unknown photographer

2Up2Down offered to rent the bakery from *Mitchell's* and make it their project base. The building became the site for public discussion and planning sessions focusing on its transformation. Over the first year, a group of around twenty young people worked with *URBED architects* on a participatory design process, developing a plan to retrofit the bakery and the flats above it.

Slowly other people became involved and together we started to develop what has now become *Homebaked*: a community-led housing and enterprise scheme and a way of collectively confronting the issues facing the stagnated development of our neighbourhood. *Homebaked* has established itself as two organisations: in April 2012 we formed a *Community Land Trust (CLT)*¹, whilst *Homebaked Bakery Co-operative* was incorporated two months later, in June 2012.

“IT WAS THE FIRST TIME SINCE WE LOST OUR HOUSE THAT I FELT IT WOULD BE NICE TO ACTUALLY STOP BEING ANGRY. THAT IT WOULD BE NICE TO DO SOMETHING POSITIVE AND TO PUT YOUR ENERGY INTO SOMETHING THAT IS NOT A FIGHT.”

Jayne Lawless, local resident and artist

The bakery has great symbolic importance locally as a place where people's paths cross, but also resonates at a more universal level. Bricks and bread, providing sustenance and shelter, are two of the most basic things a community needs. People would regularly drop in to our meetings to ask about buying bread. As an alternative to the original idea of renting out the space for business, a group formed who wanted to run the bakery as a social enterprise based in community ownership. While the closure of the bakery seemed to reflect *Anfield's* decline, the prospect of re-opening suggested the possibility of a future. This also meant that our success as a business became paramount in the success of the whole project.

Alongside the design and refurbishment process, we developed and trialled the bakery as a business and actively began to tell the

¹ Community Land Trusts are local organisations set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets important to that community, like community enterprises, food growing or workspaces. The CLT's main task is to make sure homes are genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier. (CLT Network UK)

narrative of the neighbourhood. The story of the bakery as a place of resistance started spreading nationally and internationally, while meanwhile we were negotiating with the council to lift the demarcation over the bakery which kept us in the former demolition zone and made it impossible to find investment in order to buy the building.

“WE TRIED TO STICK IT OUT, BUT WE CAN'T. GOD BLESS YOU FOR YOUR CUSTOM.”

Sign on the bakery door when Mitchell's closed down

In the summer of 2013 we were all set to open the bakery with start-up funding from a successful *Kickstarter* Campaign while the *CLT* had received a grant from the *Social Investment Bank* of £100,000 to refurbish the bakery. Then with the announcement of the new masterplan for the area, the council's decision was to demolish our stretch of the high street after all. We were distraught. In a community meeting we decided collectively to take the risk and manifest our proposal anyway. We invested a small amount of non-restricted funding and did a very basic refurbishment, just enough to have a place to work with. And we opened the bakery as a business. This affirmative action together with long negotiations finally led to an agreement with the City Council that excludes the bakery from demolition.



Telling the story © Mark Loudon

The business is now in its third year of trading. It was a steep learning curve for everyone involved and there were many times when we thought we wouldn't make it. Since the beginning of this year the numbers are looking better, the demand for our goods are higher than what we can currently produce and we just received a large grant for community-led business, which will allow us to extend production. We employ and train people locally, paying them the living wage as a minimum. The Café has become a real hub and a meeting point for the different communities in our area, as well as visitors. Next to the day-to-day business we offer training courses for local people and put on events in the evenings. We are positive that one day soon these activities can be completely self-funded from our profits.



Brick by brick, loaf by loaf they build themselves © Mark Loudon

Growing from the model of the bakery we now propose a larger scheme of community-led development and regeneration of the land adjacent to our building, providing workspace for social enterprise, long-term affordable housing, and communal outdoor space. The City Council have agreed to pass the freehold on the bakery and adjacent land to *Homebaked CLT* if the community offers a 'scheme of significant merit.'

In March 2015 we started on a process of designing, planning and learning together which we named 'Build your own High Street.' This work is led by a group of local people who form the core design team. Together we appointed the Liverpool based architect office *Architectural Emporium* who are working with us to develop the design for the new scheme.

"ONE OF THE BEAUTIES OF THIS PROJECT IS THE PEOPLE, AND THE RICHNESS THE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES GIVE TO UNDERSTANDING HOW TO REACH THE GOALS OF THE MAIN IDEA. THE PERSPECTIVES MAY VARY AND MAY WELL BE OPPOSED TO YOUR OWN, BUT THEY ALL RELATE TO ACHIEVING THE SAME, AND SHAPE THE WHOLE."

Fred Brown, co-founder of the Homebaked CLT

The next step will be to find development partners and put together a package of grant funding and social investment, as well as finding the right rent and ownership models for our plans, so that when one day our neighbourhood becomes 'a desirable place to live' our homes can stay affordable for generations to come.

h LEESZAAL ROTTERDAM

Maurice Specht and Joke van der Zwaard

Almost 100 volunteers, originating from 19 different countries, ranging from 11 to 84 years of age; open 5 days a week; facilitating over 15 language classes each week; organising or hosting over 100 events each year revolving around language, literature, and imagination; maintaining an ever-changing collection of 25.000 books which you can just take away; no paid staff; around 20.000 visitors each year. We are the *Leeszaal* Rotterdam West.

www.leeszaalrotterdamwest.nl

The Leeszaal (Reading Room) started in 2012 when the public library in Rotterdam decided to close 18 out of 24 libraries. After vehement protest in our area – in which around 1000 people signed a petition – came to nothing, we (Joke van der Zwaard and Maurice Specht) decided it was time to formulate a tangible, positive, and imaginative answer. For we believe – both as humans and as researchers – very much in the necessity and importance of public meeting spaces for the well-being of neighbourhoods, individuals, and cities.



Leeszaal is an answer to the closing of public libraries in Rotterdam ©Tineke de Lange

We decided not to write a plan and present it to people, but rather to organise a few brainstorming sessions and visit all kinds of social and cultural groups in the neighbourhood: the Chinese cultural group, the Somali walk-in hours, the garden club, the resident organisation, two women's groups, and many more. Every time we went, we asked two questions: "What does your ideal Reading Room look like?" and "What are you willing to do yourself (as a person) to contribute to a new Reading Room?" The first question was meant to figure out what people thought was lost with the

closing of yet another public, non-commercial space. The second was specifically targeted at individuals. We were looking for people to build something new with, not organisations with which we would have to cooperate. We also did not want to create a wish list, but rather involve people from the very beginning and make clear, that it would not be us alone turning these wishes and dreams for our common Reading Room into reality.



A truly mixed public during Poetry International Festival at the Reading Room © Tineke de Lange

Based on all the input, we, together with 50 other people from the neighbourhood, decided to organise a 5-day festival to test out the ideas that were developed for a new Reading Room. The reason behind this was threefold: Would people who said they were willing to volunteer come? Would visitors come and like the idea? And would people believe all of us could manage to do this 5 days a week, every week, throughout the year? The answer was: yes, yes, and yes. Everyone that came to help was punctual, organised, and highly motivated. We had around 1000 visitors who all asked us anxiously whether this new Reading Room would only be there for a week. Based on the success of the test and the positive feedback we got, we officially opened on the 31st of January, 2013 and have been open ever since.

One of the defining characteristics of the *Leeszaal* is that it is a public meeting space in the very meaning of the word: a place where you can meet anybody, and which is not owned by one particular

group. This was a clear ambition from the start. It is neither another space for highly educated freelancers and creatives, nor for immigrant mothers, young people, or 40-somethings into mindfulness; we want all of them, together, next to each other, or one after the other. By starting with a very socially and ethnically diverse group with very different educational backgrounds, we have been able to fulfil this ambition. Both in our volunteers, and in the visitors: a breakfast for mothers uses the spaces at the same time as a language-class; literary meals draw a mainly 55+ autochtone crowd of people who work or used to work in the social domain, but the next day a poetry slam night for youngsters might be on the programme.



Inside the Reading Room © Tineke de Lange

The value this kind of public space provides is that it enlarges people's imagination. Based on us being there, our programmes, and the encounters, other groups started projects (both in the neighbourhood, across Rotterdam, and the Netherlands), children got into arts who normally wouldn't, and visitors run into people, books, and programmes that they wouldn't have otherwise. This is not a forced we-should-all-meet-each-other type of place; but through creating an environment in which you can consciously or unconsciously come into contact with people and worlds you are not (yet) a part of, new things might emerge. Additionally, we have added new programmes to the cultural and social domain; given new life to the square that we are situated on; improved the perceived safety of the neighbourhood as well as the image to outsiders; have showed policy makers that much more is possible (especially with and by people they normally think can't do anything) and much more.

Financially we are independent from the local council. It was a conscious decision at the beginning, as we wanted to figure out – without too many preconditions from the outside – what the *Leeszaal* could be. After the festival we approached *Stichting Doen* (a big social and cultural fund) and based on a 3-page proposal we received € 50.000 for the first year.

Running the *Leeszaal* has up until now been financially possible due to the fact that we are good at keeping our costs low (our accountant didn't know one could buy coffee that cheap), scraping money from donations, renting out the space (for € 154,41/day, an amount based on the costs of the first year divided by the days we were open), selling coffee and tea (for 50 cents/cup) and funding for particular cultural programs we have developed. Through this we make around 50% of our own money. But it also means we are not, nor will we ever be financially self-sufficient - something policy-makers in the Netherlands now almost expect or demand from self-organising residents. Public spaces and public good offered in such a new way will never be able to fund themselves completely. Unless they 'sell out,' wrecking the particular public character spaces like *Leeszaal* have. Of course we could go commercial and make more money, but we would lose a large part of the public. And we could of course apply for basic funding from the government, but that would mean we are again dependent on them and their ever-changing policy goals. So we maintain autonomous – scraping by is a price you pay for being independent. That doesn't mean we want to do everything on our own, just that we want to think about the conditions under which we start a relation. It is all about relational autonomy.

After three years, we are no longer an initiative. The pioneering phase is done, and now it is about continuation. This leads to such questions as: how to finance *Leeszaal* in the long term? How to organise it long-term in such a way that we maintain the quality we have now, but stay open to new people, groups and ideas? And how to separate the role we play as initiators from us a person: how to divide coordination? These are questions we are currently exploring.



Leeszaal is totally volunteer-run © Tineke de Lange

i MITT 127 STOCKHOLM

Alexandra Tecle, Aseffa Hailu, Krister Eyjolfsson

Mitt127 is an initiative by young people for young people from *Skärholmen*, an outer Stockholm district with 90% of the residents having a foreign background. *Mitt127* organises festivals, runs educational programs and raises awareness of political issues amongst young people from the area. Through their initiatives, *Mitt127* creates a local community where everyone is welcome.

www.Mitt127.se

Skärholmen is a suburban district in southwestern Stockholm, primarily consisting of *Million Programme*¹ style concrete apartment buildings. *Skärholmen* has a high concentration of immigrants from all over the world. About 90% of the children living in the area have parents that were born outside of Sweden. Both unemployment and criminal levels are very high with only few children making it to high school. In Swedish media, *Skärholmen* is often portrayed as an area with a very negative image, focusing on gang violence and unsafe public spaces.



During the Mitt127 festival © Mitt127

It is against this backdrop that *Mitt127* was started in 2010. *Mitt127* is Swedish for my127, with the number 127 being the area code of *Skärholmen*. Our aim was to create an arena with, for, and by young people. This arena would provide opportunities for the children and young people of *Skärholmen* to get involved in local matters. The two initiators, Krister Eyjolfsson and Aseffa Hailu, a social worker and a local basketball coach respectively, observed that attention was always given to those few that were misbehaving, whereas the other young people were never given an opportunity to shine or

¹ The Million Programme is the common name for an ambitious public housing programme implemented in Sweden between 1965 and 1974 to make sure everyone could have a home at a reasonable price. The aim was to construct a million new homes (in a nation with a population of eight million) during the programme's ten-year period. At the same time, a large proportion of the older unmodernised housing stock was demolished.

to publicly act as good role models for the younger generation. To Krister, who was appointed as a social worker by the municipality, Aseffa was the local door opener; everyone knew him and he was well-respected by the youth of Skärholmen. Both Krister and Aseffa felt that the municipality had the mentality of extinguishing fires – only focusing on juvenile delinquents – whereas they wanted to prevent these fires in the first place.



Building good role models in Skärholmen © Mitt127

Since the state in Sweden has such a strong tradition in the provision of services, there's usually very little active involvement of those who these services target. Often young people are excluded from decision-making that affects their whereabouts and lifestyle. This is where *Mitt127* comes in: one of its key elements is that it works with young role models as the initiators, organisers and decision-makers of *Mitt127* projects.

Mitt127 projects offer young people from *Skärholmen* an opportunity to make changes through participation and active place-making. The primary target group is children and young people between the ages 5-25. Nevertheless, at *Mitt127* events everyone is welcome regardless of age, gender, or financial circumstances.

The common thread in the different projects is the fact that the young people carry out the projects themselves; *Mitt127* is centred

on collaboration, development, and community. The overall vision of *Mitt127* is to promote participation from young people; create good role models; be available to all; put *Skärholmen* on the map as an area where everyone would want to live (increase the sense of pride and security in the residents of *Skärholmen*). Our work so far has shown that participating regularly in *Mitt127* activities prevents young people from falling into destructive patterns. Through *Mitt127* the local youth are appropriating public space and creating a sense of place. One of our primary objectives is to create a space where everyone is equal, regardless of age, gender, background or financial circumstances. We want to promote positive meetings between people in *Skärholmen*.

One of our key activities is the *127 Festival*. Its main purpose is to create a permanent public activity in *Skärholmen* during the school holidays. It was very important to us that the *127 Festival* would be something that the residents of *Skärholmen* could count on for each school holiday.

An important question in many participatory processes is: how much ownership can and should you give to the community? *Mitt127* shows us that the community, and particularly children, can inspire and take charge when it comes to neighbourhood projects and social participation. The festival is entirely organised by 20 role models between the ages of 18-25; they are supported by 120 younger children, who are paid through government-supported summer jobs. The 120 kids are chosen by their sport coaches, associations that they are part of, and from a list of juvenile delinquents that had a crime record in the past year. We provide the overall framework of *Mitt127*, but the rules of the festival as well as the programme and planning of the 6 weeks are left entirely to the 20 role models and their 120 helpers.

With our programmes, not only do we provide the youth with an environment in which they can grow, we're also creating the festival's future leaders. With the right methods and people these young people get a first hand experience of what it is like to organise, execute and evaluate a huge event. The 120 teenagers gain work

experience and references for the future and build up their self-image as they are doing something for the Stockholm residents. The police confirm that crime and vandalism go down during the festival, and that their relationship with the young people has improved as a result of their participation in the festival.

Every year, *127 Festival* is growing even more. The festival has retained its initial partners and has gained many more supporters since its inception: local associations and enterprises; police and fire brigade; public authorities; as well as many cultural institutes.



Appropriating public space through the Mitt127 festival © Mitt127

Besides the festival, we decided to create a school programme to train young people to become great role models inside and outside of their schools. Our goal is for no one to feel excluded and for everyone living in the area, regardless of age, to feel proud of where they live. Together, we work against offensive treatment, such as bullying; create positive meeting places and a sense of community. Under the umbrella of *Mitt127* we have also supported the establishment of two weekly youth groups, one exclusively for boys and one for girls; there was the necessity to create a safe environment for young girls to meet outside of their homes.

Our aim was to take the idea of *Mitt127* to other places, thereby multiplying the potential of our approach. In 2015 we succeeded as the first *Mitt424* festival was organised in Gothenburg (424 being the local area code); *Mitt424* immediately received government funding, showing that there is hope when it comes to increased acknowledgment, trust, and funding from the government.

Mitt127 is a division within *KFUM JKS Stockholm*, which is a local non-profit association within the *YMCA-YWCA Sweden*. It operates as its own unit with its own budget, board and employees. We have a budget of about €410.000 per year, which includes all our activities throughout the year. Now that the *Swedish Inheritance Fund* has granted us funding to hire more passionate young adults, the possibilities seem endless. This funding has created an arena for young people to develop and have an impact on their local environment and life situation. Due to the work on and success of the *127 Festival*, we have now entered a development phase in which we are seeing incredible opportunities to further our prevention programme by young people for young people in *Skärholmen* and beyond. We also receive funding from sponsors and from the city of Stockholm through its *Sports and Culture Department*. The borough of *Skärholmen* has provided us with social workers and the help of their finance department.

We are currently in a huge expansion phase. If everything goes well we will have 4 festivals and overall programmes during the summer of 2016.

j NORTH KEL VIN MEADOW /THE CHILD REN'S WOOD GLASGOW

Emily Cutts

The *North Kelvin Meadow* is a community group set up in October 2008 to campaign for the green space in Glasgow's *Maryhill/North Kelvinside* area to be kept as a multiuse community green space for the people of *Maryhill* and others in the *West End*. The initiative claims that through sharing open public spaces, social inequality can be reduced.

www.northkelvinmeadow.com

www.thechildrenswood.com

North Kelvin Meadow is a community group set up in October 2008 around a derelict, formerly abandoned and disused space in Glasgow's *Maryhill/North Kelvinside* area. The three-acre land has never been built on. The *Meadow* and the woodland area surrounded by traditional flats was originally a football pitch for a school, but the City Council had left it unattended since 1993. People started to sow grass seed onto the red blaze and planted some trees and shrubs. They also did litter pick-ups. Over the years, the land became a meadow and woods as nature started to grow over it. People continued to use the ground, though with no upkeep from the council it fell into an ever-greater state of disrepair. The area was covered in rubbish and was often used to inject drugs. Hence people avoided going on the land.



Turning derelict land into a public park © North Kelvin Meadow

In 2008, Glasgow City Council invited stakeholders for a consultation process. Consultation meant in this case to be presented with four different options on what should be built on the land. No consultation was provided for what the land should be used for, just what style of flats. There was no fifth option: not to build. Seeing so many people dismayed and appalled at having no alternative given to them, a local resident went and did a survey and found that over 90% of the neighbours didn't want the land built on. Soon after, some members of the community decided to take action and organised a 'clean up day.' Sixty bin bags of rubbish were collected in just one day.

The City Council went forward and chose one of the four proposals. However, the sale to the chosen developer did not go forward in 2008 due to the credit crunch.



The Children's Wood © North Kelvin Meadow

We were an informal group of people that recognised that the *Meadow* needed to be kept as a valuable space for the community. We launched a campaign by doing event after event after event to show people that they could easily get involved; we also wanted to show people what is possible with the land and to enhance their imagination. If we wanted to save the *Meadow*, we had to bring people to appreciate and love the space, to value it. We were trying to involve everybody, as it is everybody's space. As the space wasn't historically safe, we had to change people's perception which has taken about four years; having done events with children helped a lot in building up this feeling of safety: if children play on the *Meadow*, then people realise that this must be safe for everyone. Today everybody in the neighbourhood is seeing the *Meadow* as their back garden. There are people who walk their dogs, others who build tree houses and a few who put in raised beds and started to grow vegetables. Everybody coexists well 99% of the time.

In 2012, the wooded part of the *Meadow* was named as the *Children's Wood* to build more of a community around the area and to make it safer. The *Children's Wood* and the community started putting on

community events designed to connect children to nature, raise aspirations and bring people together. We think that being outside in a wild environment is a great antidote to the current materialistic and indoor childhood, which many young people now experience. The *Children's Wood* and the *Meadow* itself, make up the last wild space in the west-end of Glasgow. Some children who've been to the *Children's Wood* through local schools have said this is the first time they've been outside to play in months, or ever.



Having fun outdoors © North Kelvin Meadow

Today, the *Children's Wood* is a registered charity that is at the vanguard of outdoor education and community work, with over 200 volunteers and 1000's of people benefitting from both their work and the space. The neighbourhood uses the space as an outdoor community centre, growing fresh produce, exercising, and hosting/attending monthly community events. Most importantly, all of the events are kept free of charge so that everyone in the community can benefit from them.

The project has directly affected thousands of people in the community and around Glasgow and has managed to meet different

21st century needs such as: food poverty, child well-being, individualism, integration of asylum seekers, materialism, loneliness, inequality, mental health problems and other health issues to name a few. One third of people who visit the land come from more economically deprived areas in Glasgow such as *Lambhill*, *Possil Park* and *Maryhill*. Local asylum seekers were involved in creating new raised bed and helping to grow vegetables for the food bank. Local business owners have benefitted from the revival of the space as well and have confirmed that the community events bring more customers to the local shops. Parents have stated that they want to stay or move to the area because of the child centric atmosphere. This makes people feel safe and fills them with a sense of pride for their neighbourhood, which had formerly only be known for its bad reputation within the city. Having a wild space in the heart of a complex community can impact on the inequalities and play a part in levelling the playing field – building on the land will make the aforementioned problems worse.

So far the project has been solely led by volunteers and to date we have worked with over 200 volunteers. To get the project started, we organised fundraising events and raised money by having a coffee stall at events. Since becoming a charity, more grants are available to us. We recently secured a grant to fund a paid position to make our work more sustainable.

Glasgow City Council still owns the land and there is a renewed threat it will be sold to developers of expensive luxury flats. Not only will the proposed housing development not provide housing for poorer people but also it will take away a much-needed space that serves as a crucial resource to vulnerable local people. Some people in the community cannot afford to travel to parks and countryside, feed themselves, or play in a safe space.

This time, we didn't leave it to only protest against the development plans. With the help of a retired planner – who regularly comes to the *Meadow* with his granddaughter – we have submitted our own planning application to the Glasgow City Council to keep the land as a community outdoor space with a 50-year tenure. In January

2016 the Glasgow City Council Planning Committee accepted both applications. We have now started to petition on *Change.org* to ask Scottish ministers to call in the developers' application to view it more closely.



A treehouse in the Children's Wood © North Kelvin Meadow

k ORANSSI HELSINKI

Pyry Rechardt

Oranssi is a Finnish organisation created to renovate and repair old houses as reasonably priced rental apartments for young people. The key concept is participation of residents in planning, renovation and practical maintenance. The aim is to encourage and support young people to find their independence by providing lowcost housing and creating steady, lively and socially united housing communities.

www.oranssi.net

Oranssi provides inexpensive communal housing for young people in protected old wooden buildings, forming several communities located around Helsinki. *Oranssi* also operates a youth cultural centre. The basic principle behind *Oranssi* is to provide young people with the opportunity to independently produce their own culture and to enable them to create affordable housing.



Two of the Oranssi houses © Aini Väätti

At the end of the 1980s the housing situation for young people in Helsinki was grim. It was the peak period of the business boom in Finland's capital. The search for reasonably priced rental apartments was fruitless. At the same time the city was full of empty buildings waiting for their market values to rise. Against this background, a group of young people decided that straightforward action was necessary to improve their desperate situation – if apartments weren't otherwise available, they should be taken. Non-violence and the avoidance of private property were the main principles of the squatters. Buildings owned by the government, the municipality, as well as by large building contractor companies, who were waiting for rents to rise, were considered as fair game. The group started to call themselves *Oranssi*, which stands for the colour orange in Finnish; it was chosen because the colour is not affiliated with any political party. The squats usually didn't hold for long, but they allowed the activists to reach a position where negotiating with the local authorities was possible.

Oranssi was registered as an association in the beginning of 1990 so that it would be easier to administer any spaces acquired by the group. Further, the city of Helsinki would not have made any lease contracts with an unorganised group of people. In the summer of 1992 *Oranssi* occupied an old taxi drivers' garage that was subsequently turned into a youth house by young volunteers. *Oranssi's* focus expanded into youth activities when new people started joining in.

After long negotiations, the city council decided to allow *Oranssi* to rent old wooden houses that were planned to be demolished. The idea was to renovate the buildings independently and to live in them upon completion. The founding members decided to establish an independent housing company in order to finance and manage the "youth independent dwelling" project. In 1991 *Oranssi Apartments Ltd.* was founded by *Oranssi Association*, which still remains the company's sole owner.



Renovating a roof the *Oranssi* way © Anu Brask

After the successful renovation of these first houses, negotiations and co-operation with the Helsinki city authorities became a lot easier. Independent renovation projects were carefully carried out throughout the 1990s and new renovation projects have been

undertaken steadily since. *Oranssi Apartments* started with just three houses, but since then the number of houses has grown so that *Oranssi* now has 63 flats, located in 11 houses, with about 120 people living in them. Most of the houses have been bought by *Oranssi Apartments*. *Oranssi* was able to negotiate the prices of the houses with the city so that in the end they paid just a fraction of the market prices. *Oranssi* received some grants from the Finnish state-owned gambling monopoly *RAY* for the buying and restauration of the houses and also took bank loans to cover the costs. Money for restauration also came from the *Museum Authorities* and the *Ministry of Culture and Education*. *Oranssi Apartments*, though, gets most of its income from the rents paid by the residents, but also takes loans from the city and receives grants to cover major renovation costs. The rates of *Oranssi's* apartment rents are about 10€/m²/month, which is very affordable for Helsinki standards. Usual rents at similar sized private market apartments in the same neighbourhoods usually start from 18€/m².

The purpose of the housing operation was and still remains to renovate and repair old houses as reasonably priced rental apartments for young people. The key element is participation of residents in planning, renovation and practical maintenance. Ecological and sustainability considerations are an important part of the renovation projects; the slogan "if it isn't broken, it shouldn't be fixed but if it is broken it's most likely possible to repair it" is common *Oranssi* philosophy.

Oranssi offers housing to young people that have a low income and an acute need for an apartment. The residents take care of the buildings and participate in the renovations with the help of *Oranssi's* paid workers. The strategy of participatory renovations and deliberately choosing slightly lower housing standards than what is customary allows *Oranssi* to refurbish the flats at a much level much lower than market rates. The new residents have to be less than 25 years of age when they move in, but the time of residency is not limited, so they can stay at *Oranssi* as long as they want. Most of the flats are quite small, though, and people tend to move out after having children. This has led to a continuous generational change,

as older tenants move out and a new generation of young people move in. With the people, the communities change over time.

While the pioneer generation executed the most extensive renovations and set up the concept and structure behind *Oranssi*, people that stepped in at a later time came to a pre-existing structure and flats that were already fit to live in. These different dynamics have a big impact on the communities. Not all community members share the same experience of co-creating their living environment, which leads to differing levels of engagement and identification with the project. Over the years this has been reflected in a lack of participation among some of the residents. If some people don't take part in the common work, the motivation of formerly active ones quickly erodes as well.



Work on the houses is done by the tenants themselves © Laura Böök

Initially, there was a pursuit not to have written rules in the communities although there were lots of unwritten practices that people adhered to. A few years ago, however, to solve the above-mentioned problems, new lease contracts were signed with all the tenants, that very clearly pointed out the rights and responsibilities of the inhabitants, concerning their shared tasks, decision making and the equipment of the flats. According to the new contracts, the inhab-

itants have an obligation to participate in the communal work and in the house meetings. If someone repeatedly fails to comply with these obligations, their lease contract can be terminated.

Over the years, *Oranssi* has had several cultural spaces that were rented from the city, but which all ended up being demolished by the city. Finally in 2008, *Oranssi* got a 30-year lease for its current cultural centre, and started refurbishing the building, applying its principle of participatory renovation. Operating the cultural centre is supported by the city of Helsinki. There was a reconstruction workshop for young people that went on until the ground floor was opened to public in September 2014. Now the floor serves as a club and a rehearsal space for different groups. The upstairs remains unfinished and *Oranssi* is currently searching for funding to complete the renovations and to finally have the permission to open it to the public.

The purpose of the cultural centre is to facilitate groups and projects that would otherwise have difficulty in finding a space. *Oranssi's* cultural events have no age limits and no alcohol or other substances are permitted on the premises. Only activities that have no direct links to any political parties or religions are accepted. *Oranssi* offers the necessary technical equipment and some guidance with practical matters. However, there is no supervision and everything is based on trust and giving responsibility to the young people.

During more than 25 years, *Oranssi* has transformed from an active social movement to a well-established non-profit organisation that works in a close and mutually beneficial partnership with the city. Today *Oranssi's* focus is more in maintaining and administering the buildings, rather than in fighting publicly for its cause. But, as the cultural centre is still only partially operating, and the need for youth apartments is more pressing than ever, there is still a lot more to work to do.

I ØSTERGRO COPEN HAGEN

Kristian Skaarup

With 600m² and 110 tonnes of soil on a large rooftop of a former car auction house, *ØsterGRO* is a real urban roof farm with plenty of organic vegetables, urban bees, and chickens providing produce, eggs and honey for 40 local families. The farm is organised as community supported agriculture, a community-based economic model, which directly connects farmers and consumers.

www.oestergro.dk

ØsterGRO is Denmark's first urban farm on the roof of an old car auction house in the *Copenhagen Climate Quarter*. The *Climate Quarter* is a project run by the city of Copenhagen. It is a neighbourhood-focused effort to adapt to climate change; as the urban farm is a good way to absorb water during heavy cloud bursts and also fits into the city's wider sustainability strategy, the *Climate Quarter* financially supported *ØsterGRO* to set up their initial infrastructure. Working together with the local municipality was crucial to the success of *ØsterGRO*.



The greenhouse restaurant at *ØsterGRO* © Henning Thomsen

ØsterGRO is both a rooftop farm for the public and an association for 40 members that was established in the spring of 2014 by Kristian Skaarup, Livia Urban Swart Haaland, and Sofie Brincker. The vision behind the farm was, among other things, to create local and sustainable food production in the city, thus giving citizens an opportunity to follow an organic farm at close range.

This vision became reality during the farm's first year, when the farm through the summer and fall of 2014 supplied 16 local families with organic, locally produced vegetables, eggs and honey from the roof through a *Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)*¹ Scheme.

¹ Community Supported Agriculture is an alternative, community-based economic model for agriculture and food distribution, which directly connects farmers and consumers. The members pay for their share of the expected harvest in the form of a monthly membership fee.

ØsterGRO is one of the first CSAs in Denmark. Our rooftop farm is not about being self-sufficient in the city and telling the real farmers that we can do better in the city, it is about working together with the farmers. Our overall objective is to create a platform for communication about organic farming - both rural and urban - and thereby link the city and country closer together. By collaborating with two young organic farmers just outside of Copenhagen, *ØsterGRO* was able to expand their membership to 40 people.



ØsterGRO sits on the roof of a former car auction house
© Henning Thomsen

The majority of Denmark lives in cities that have no actual contact with the rural landscape, where food production takes place. In many ways, urbanisation has caused us to lose our basic and fundamental knowledge about how we grow and produce our food. We find that the connection between the city's consumption and the rural landscape where food is grown is very indistinct.

By creating an urban farm, close to the consumer, we seek to create new connections between producers and consumers, and thus create awareness of what it takes to create good healthy organic vegetables.

ØsterGRO communicates widely on ecology, food waste, sustainability and locally produced food through open house events, tours, lectures, education, workshops, dinners, farmers markets, video production, exhibitions, and more. There are about 50 volunteers who come regularly to the roof and help us grow vegetables. In 2014, we had over 2,000 visitors on the roof, many of which were from the 30 classes that visited us from both primary and secondary levels.

The *Copenhagen Climate Quarter* and the *Association for Organic Farming* financially supported us to set up the initial infrastructure. As the income that we get from the CSA scheme is not sufficient to pay our salaries and expenses, we needed to think of other things that could happen on the roof, which would provide us with some income. We started to do workshops, rent out the space for events, and we built a restaurant in a greenhouse. A chef runs the restaurant and pays us a monthly rent for using the space. As our work with the farm plays into the success of his restaurant, we were able to negotiate a higher rent with him for this year in order to get a fair share for the work that we've done with *ØsterGRO*.

What applies for the restaurant is equally true for the rest of the building. *ØsterGRO* can be seen as a space developer; before we moved to the rooftop of the old car auction house, the owner of the house was not able to rent out the offices in the building; now, since the farm is on the rooftop as a public amenity for everyone to use and enjoy, the offices have become very sought after and the last year has seen new tenants moving into the building.

We were very excited to start into a promising new season when in the very beginning of 2016 we got informed that the owner of the house needed to undertake major construction work with the roof as water was leaking into some of the offices below. The farm did not – fortunately – cause the damage, but it meant nonetheless that we had to take down 110 tonnes of soil and disassemble everything that we had built on the roof during the past 2 years.

Albeit being a very frustrating and challenging process, taking down the farm and starting all over in Spring 2016 also meant renegotiating our contract and position with the owner. Fortunately he is very supportive of our idea and us. *ØsterGRO* started with a 2-year lease but we didn't have to pay any money for using the rooftop. Not paying for the space also meant, though, that we didn't have any rights to complain about things that weren't working. We now negotiated a formal, long-term lease; now that we will be paying a rent – albeit small – for the space we will be considered proper renters with the same rights as anybody else in the building.

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OUR FARM

DUBLIN

Rian Coulter and Fabian Strunden

OurFarm is Dublin's largest inner city organic community farm. The aim of *OurFarm* is to harness the production and provision of organic food as a resource for educational, social and artistic application. It is rooted in a strong collaboration with several other community groups and aims at reconnecting people with the sources of the products they eat.

www.ourfarm.ie

Our Farm was founded in January 2014 in a disused two-acre site on the grounds of the *Irish National College of Art & Design* by Fabian Strunden and Rian Coulter in partnership with retired landscaper Tony Lowth. The space was discovered by chance while we were temporarily using an unused shop just next to the College for an art installation. Only when we stepped outside the back door, did we realise that there was a huge, unused plot of land. It is the largest greenfield site in the city centre and was completely unacknowledged by anyone.



The land belongs to the College and was left unattended for years © OurFarm

Once we had seen the space, it seemed quite obvious for us that there should be something agricultural instead of all the trash that was lying around. We got in touch with the *Community Growers' Association*, as both of us had no real skill and definitely modest interest in actually growing things. One day a man from the *Community Growers* called and said he would be interested in setting up a small garden in the courtyard. We met him, showed him around and two weeks later he was back with some soil and plants, broke the chain of the back gate and started doing things. This man was 73-year old retired landscaper Tony Lowth. Initially we were a bit reluctant to be honest but he was just so enthusiastic that we didn't want to stop him!

Together we sought to realise the extensive potential of free space in the inner city for educational, environmental and social use. Initially permission to develop the project was refused by the College due to the hazardous drug paraphilia littered across the abandoned car park space, but we proceeded anyway, making incremental and clandestine improvements to the site, until we were able to prove our sincerity.



OurFarm is Dublin's largest innercity urban farm © OurFarm

The space belongs to the College. Twenty years ago it used to be a car park. Over time, the space went through different stages where the College wanted to build student accommodation on it or sell the site altogether. But during the 2008 financial crisis the value wasn't good enough anymore so they kept it.

The site has now been transformed into the largest food-growing farm in Dublin city centre, providing the space to share skills and tools to turn recycled raw materials such as land, compost, metal and wood into the resources needed for intensive growing of fresh, seasonal foods. The city-centre surrounding is one of the most socio-economically diverse communities with huge multinationals (including the famous *Guinness* factory), many of the capitol's cultural attractions, local businesses, schools, hospitals etc. along with profound unemployment, high-density housing, and addiction problems. With an emphasis on sustainable farming and community

building, the project uses the production and provision of organic food within the art college as a resource for accessible and meaningful learning and recreation.

For the past two years, the project has engaged students and staff of the college along with local community groups who have used the site for activities such as ecology with the *City Environmental Forum*, food and nutrition classes for children with youth education programmes and apprenticeship, and work placement with the local *Community Addiction Programme*.

The success to date has largely been a result of consistent maintenance of the day-to-day work along with the participation of a wide range of people and groups who bring new skills and ideas to expand and strengthen the project. By promoting the progress to date to new audiences, it can act as a prototype to be replicated elsewhere and as a platform to invite further participation – expanding further the potential and activity of the project. To date, we've hosted talks, trips, tours, concerts, workshops, BBQs, raves and exhibitions (indoors and outdoors).

Our main activity is making organic compost; the food is a by-product, which has little retail value – so we give it away to anyone who comes in the garden. Currently we're seeking to expand our products and services. Most of the finance comes from private donors, along with a prize fund from *Social Entrepreneurs Ireland* and some City Council supports, but to make this sustainable we need to provide wages for most of our participants. We hope to develop a social-business, which will require a formal structure – as we are currently just a group of friends. The next step is becoming official; this is definitely the most difficult element of what we do; the bureaucratic obstacles are blood boiling – even opening a bank account was a drawn-out hassle. Problems we hope we can surmount together, but are totally unfair for disadvantaged groups or people to try to contend with.

As we are fair-weather gardeners, we hope to make even greater use of our College resources and develop a series of casual art &

design courses with the local police with whom we have worked in the past. The art and design focus, along with our commitment to social inclusion distinguishes us from most other community gardens in Dublin, which are more restricted by rules and scale. What we do best is to show that if you bring people in from the margins and if you do things creatively with those people there is a lot of potential to be revealed.



Growing food on formerly derelict land © OurFarm

In the neighbourhood, there are a high number of kids who are early school leavers; they were coming to the garden to have a look at what was happening there. Before the garden existed these kids would use the space for hanging out so we didn't want to keep them from accessing the space. We decided to actively involve them in the setting-up of the garden. We built some of the beds with them and hence they re-gained a feeling of ownership for the space. We also used the produce from the garden to cook together with the kids in our College canteen and have communal meals with them. That way the kids were able to get into the College, a space that was closed-off to them before.

Dublin doesn't really have a lot of public spaces that are for people; they are all overly maintained and close at night. So we feel that our space gave people a different perception of what a public space could look like and that it could be co-created.



Rian Coulter and Fabian Strunden stumbled across the site by chance © OurFarm

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PARTICIPATORY CITY LAB LONDON

Tessy Britton and Laura Billings

Participatory City Lab (previously called *Civic Systems Lab*) builds new local ecologies of participation in practical everyday life. For the last 6 years *Participatory City Lab* has been researching and prototyping new ways to support widespread practical participation, the kind of participation that works with the fabric of daily life.

www.participatorycity.org

Local people have been inventing unique and innovative projects across the globe. Taken together these projects paint a picture of a different kind of neighbourhood – where positive effects are co-created by everyone for everyone in the course of going about their daily lives.

Participatory City has worked on prototypes that have re-organised our systems of participation, establishing new platforms, networks and spaces that have created the conditions for citizens, government and other institutions to collaborate together effectively. Prototypes have included the creation of a dense network of practical peer-to-peer projects and activities such as communal cooking, urban food growing, and spaces or platforms such as shared high street shops, informal learning spaces, maker spaces and sharing libraries.



The Open Works shopfront © Civic Systems Lab

Through building projects and speaking to 1000s of people over several years, it was discovered that many people want to live in a participatory neighbourhood where they actively shape and improve the living experiences for everyone living there. So the question was asked: If people want to live this way, why isn't everyone participating, everywhere, every day?

It was discovered that the problem is not that people don't want to participate regularly or live more sustainably – because most of them do. And the problem is not a lack of exciting new project ideas – because there are 100s of brilliant ideas. The answer turned out to be simple: there simply are not enough existing opportunities to participate in practical and sociable activities to build neighbourhoods together as equals and that fit within the fabric of everyday life.

Participatory City is working to change that.



Working to create participatory systems © Civic Systems Lab

The largest prototype to date has been *The Open Works* research project aimed to test if a platform approach could scale up the new types of 'participation culture' that have emerged over the last 6-10 years. It aimed to discover if a high density of this type of micro participation activity built into the fabric of everyday life, has the potential to aggregate to achieve lasting long-term change, both for individuals and for neighbourhoods.

Lambeth in London Council and *Participatory City* formed *The Open Works* team to co-create a network of projects inspired by ideas from across the world that offered the potential to support a new

and more sustainable way to live our everyday lives. Together with residents, 20 new practical projects were designed and tested to see if the neighbourhood could be re-organised for practicality, but also be an inspiring and exciting place to live, grow ideas and projects and invent new livelihoods.

These 20 projects created new and engaging opportunities for sharing knowledge, spaces and equipment; for families to work and play together; for bulk cooking, food growing and tree planting; for trading, making and repairing; and for suppers, workshops, incubators and festivals.

The idea of developing an approach based on participatory culture started with the observation that some innovative local projects were achieving inclusive participation. What those projects had in common was that they appeared to attract many different types of people. They were social, practical, and productive, and the experience of participating looked and felt different than in existing participation processes. The pattern across these innovative projects was that it appeared that a new model of participation was emerging – with characteristics different from the conventional set of opportunities available for citizens to participate.

The Open Works challenge was to turn these features into design principles to develop a universal approach. Participatory culture projects attract a diverse range of participants, creating great opportunity for building bridging social capital - rather than just bonding social capital, which is common across other forms of participation.

The co-production design of the projects means that people contribute to and benefit from a single action. This is very different from charity and representative models where efforts are made by one group to give or direct resources to another group with needs. A mutual model creates a very equal platform that avoids labelling and stigmatisation. This model also helps to bring together resources from across a community, which is particularly helpful in places where areas of deprivation sit in close proximity to more affluent areas.

New participatory culture projects involve activities which are intrinsically appealing to more people, often with what we began to view as 'common denominator' activities such as cooking, learning, making - experiences of co-producing something tangible as a group of equal peers. *The Open Works* project started to prove the idea that a dense ecology of this type of activities, built into the fabric of everyday life, could generate many positive outcomes. The platform structure meant that residents didn't have to form constituted groups, open bank accounts, apply for grants, or make heavy long term organisational commitments. It enabled people to design and test an idea rapidly and easily.



The Open Works was a platform to collaborate and test new ideas © Civic Systems Lab

The platform approach enabled a living, breathing ecology of activity to be developed. One in which people were able to grow their level of involvement, from initial curiosity and enquiry, to first experiences of new types of participation culture, to initiation of new projects. It allowed people to step out for periods of time in keeping with their life commitments, such as work, family or illness. The research showed that openness and flexibility were key to many people taking part. It was also common sense that if we wanted participation to be accessible to everyone it needed to fit into the flow of everybody's lives. The platform also allowed for people to develop new projects with a large group of co-builders, and take breaks from leading them in order to develop further ideas.

Despite our best collective efforts and years of investing financially and trying different approaches and methods to create these types of sustainable communities, we are not succeeding on the necessary scale to transform whole places. Individually many of these approaches increase participation in small amounts, in single locations, but overall the analysis suggests that we have been approaching things without the necessary combined elements and resources to create transformation on a larger scale.

In a nutshell – the action research experiences across several projects showed that for significant change to be achieved through widespread participation, it would take more elements, more resources, and more time than we have previously imagined – and we would need these combined elements integrated through a platform approach.

The Open Works provided compelling evidence and has made a huge contribution to the proof of concept – *Participatory City Lab* now wants to take the idea much further. Its ambitions are now to transform a small city, or large urban borough through mass participation in micro everyday activities. Over 5 years, *Participatory City* intends to transform this place into a demonstration neighbourhood that will become a model for wellbeing, sustainability and equality.

Participatory City Lab is a *Community Interest Company (CIC)*. CICs are a new type of company introduced by the United Kingdom government in 2005, designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good. Previous funding came via combinations of council and foundation funding. With *Participatory City Lab*, we aim now to develop a more sophisticated collective funding mechanism that will include sizeable transformation investments from organisations and residents – as well as public funders and foundations.

O PIKENE PÅ BROEN KIRKENES

Cornelius Stiefenhofer

Pikene på Broen is an organisation established in 1996 by art curators and producers based in *Kirkenes* / Northern Norway. Through their projects, they want to create meeting places and bridging across borders and genres. Their motto is to bring the world to the Barents and the Barents out into the world. *Pikene på Broen* challenges our understanding of geopolitics, borders, centre and periphery.

www.pikene.no

Pikene på Broen is a collective of curators, cross-border cooperation (CBC)-specialists and producers. We are based in *Kirkenes*, north-east of Norway, close to the national borders of Russia and Finland.



Pikene på Broen © *Pikene på Broen*

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, border travel between inhabitants of *Kirkenes* and the Russian city *Nikel* increased drastically. This massive social and political change coincided with economic changes in *Kirkenes*, a town formally centred around an iron ore mine. When the mine shut in 1996, unemployment rose and many people left town. People thought there was nothing else to do.

Five young women from *Kirkenes* felt they needed to change something about this negative development of their town and wanted to offer an alternative identity to *Kirkenes* apart from the mine, while also tapping into the newly arising potential of cross-border cooperation. *Pikene på Broen* was established aiming at creating people to people connections with art and culture as its base. The five local women started to independently organise cultural projects for some years before they decided to fund a stock company so that people would take them more seriously.

Through two decades of realising cross-border cultural projects in the fields of fine art, theatre, and performance, *Pikene på Broen* gained a unique experience in artistic cross-border cooperation projects. We create meeting places and build bridges across borders and genres. *Pikene på Broen* challenges people's understanding of geopolitics, borders, centre and periphery. Our motto is to bring the world to the *Barents Region* and the *Barents* out into the world. We apply art as a soft, diplomatic tool with the goal to facilitate the dialogue between professional artists as well as people across the border.



Cross-border collaboration through arts and culture © *Pikene på Broen*

While our office is located in *Kirkenes* and we plan to open a permanent gallery space there in 2016, we identify the entire *Barents Region* as our working grounds. *Pikene på Broen* cooperates closely with a variety of institutions and individuals not only in Northern Norway but particularly in Northwest Russia.

Our work reflects on the rich [cross-]cultural traditions here in the north, on the aspect of borders, on what has been, what is to come, on contemporary art and culture arising out of this – occasionally snowy – arctic landscape; bursting with opportunities and future prospects.

Pikene på Broen operates a year-round residency program for artists, curators and thinkers – *BAR International*. Up to 60 residency guests per annum from all countries take part in the program, either in research-based or on more production-oriented residencies. Connected to the residency stays, we arrange so-called *BAR Outs*, artist talks, lectures, presentations, screenings along with educational programs with local schools to facilitate the engagement of the community with the international artists visiting the *Barents Region*. The residency stays are spread over large parts of the *Barents Region*; this results in cooperations by artists from both sides of the border developing art projects for our annual festival, the *Barents Spektakel*.

The *Barents Spektakel* takes place parallel to the political-economical forum *Kirkeneskonferansen*. *Barents Spektakel* includes contemporary art, performance, literature, theater, film, seminars and concerts reflecting on current issues related to the *Barents Region* and the North. *Barents Spektakel* is a winter festival, and we embrace the (sometimes hostile) arctic environment by placing some of the exhibitions, performances and events outside. Because there is little cultural infrastructure in *Kirkenes*, we build venues ourselves, in former stores, bomb shelters or other empty property as well as outside – with snow, ice or wood.



Installations as part of the *Barents Spektakel* © *Pikene på Broen*

Though initially loosely connected, the cultural workers, activists and artists forming *Pikene på Broen* were united by their curiosity around post-soviet Russia. Today, the company has a board of directors consisting of artists and local representatives, all of them women. The staff consisting of seven employees is represented by one board member; the shares of *Pikene på Broen* are held by its employees. There is a very minimal hierarchical structure.



The Barents Spektakel takes place all around town © Mikhail Slavin

Pikene på Broen is mainly project-based; the festival represents a large portion of our annual budget. The national focus on the northern areas in recent years has given artistic and cultural enterprises new opportunities. More project funding is allocated to arts and cultural activities in the north, particularly to those with a cross-border profile. In order to implement the residency program, the festival, and other activities, we seek project funding from a wide range of funders, national, *regional*, local and also private. Projects with such a huge volume as *Barents Spektakel* require the support of private sponsors. We also receive substantial support through culture grant programs initiated to promote larger border crossing culture and art projects in the Norwegian and Russian part of the *Barents Region*, as well as grant programs focused on small, low budget, people-to-people projects. We also receive annual opera-

tional support from the *Ministry of Culture* and have recently received a three-year grant from the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. Additionally, we receive smaller amounts from our local county and municipality.



Transborder Cafe © Pikene på Broen



Kirkenes is ideally placed for cross-border collaboration © Mikhail

p RÖSTÅNGA TILLSAM MANS RÖSTÅNGA

Nils Phillips

In 2009, a group of engaged locals in the village of *Röstånga* in south of Sweden decided to do something to turn around the negative development in their community. Together the villagers have since bought and developed a museum, a restaurant, a microbrewery, a community bus, and housing. The organisational setup keeps the profit in the community, creating employment, sustainable development, and contributing to the local circular economy.

www.rostangatillsammans.se

Röstånga is a small village of 900 inhabitants in the municipality of *Svalöv* (13.500 inhabitants) that lies within the Greater Region of *Skåne* where about one million people live. *Röstånga* is located about one hour from *Malmö*, the region's capital in Southern Sweden. Despite being rich in nature (it borders a national park), *Röstånga* also faces classic challenges of rural Sweden – depopulation, empty houses, social challenges, and public services that are closing down. Villages like *Röstånga* have experienced both the withdrawal of public sector services (schools, youth clubs, elderly care, public services) and the private sector (no investments due to poor revenue and low prices on estates, and no provision of services). This development urges communities in rural areas to reorganise and rethink both their role in the local community and the capacity to run services. *Röstånga Tillsammans* saw this vacuum as a potential for grassroots activity by the inhabitants themselves.



Together the villagers have turned around the negative development of their community © *Röstånga Tillsammans*

Röstånga Tillsammans (*Röstånga Together*) started in 2007 when a group of parents realised that the local school would be in danger of being closed by the municipality if the local community itself would not act to make the village more attractive for new people to live and work in. We soon realised that we had to engage the whole village in order to incorporate everyone's ideas and commitment. After all, we wanted to find a new way of working together for the common good

of the community. After some initial meetings, we decided to found the non-profit development NGO *Röstånga Tillsammans* – with free membership and a democratically elected board.

Today, the NGO *Röstånga Tillsammans* owns a grant-independent shareholding company with more than 400 shareholders. Together it has raised more than €100.000 to invest in real estate and houses within the village of *Röstånga*. *Röstånga Tillsammans* owns seven houses – both private housing and commercial buildings – including a restaurant, a museum of modern art, and a local beer brewery. Formerly run-down empty houses are now filled with new tenants or business. We have almost no houses on the market and the school's student population is increasing as young families move to the village. Local collective self-esteem has risen and people are proud to say they are from *Röstånga*!

The NGO was started as an EU-funded *LEADER*¹-project. In 2011, the NGO gained momentum as we decided to start the community shareholding company *Röstånga Utvecklings Ab – Röstånga Development Company*. This hybrid organisation combines commercial and social aims. *Röstånga Tillsammans* is based on both, a non-profit NGO and the *Community Development Company*. The NGO enables social mobilisation while the company provides the framework for financial mobilisation. Both organisations are run in a very democratic way. The majority owner of shares in the company will always remain the NGO – guaranteeing through its legal structure full transparency and openness. Consequently, this means that the members in the NGO have more power than any other shareholder.

Since the foundation of the company, we are grant-independent. Initial investments were sourced through private and bank loans; today, financing is done through selling shares of the company as well as income / profit from our own businesses, such as rent from the houses and profits from the restaurant and the brewery. We believe that a community-run social enterprise based on strong

mutual values is making better use of resources, resulting in better and more efficient business.



Besides the museum, the shareholding company bought and renovated several other buildings © Elin Dagerbo

One example of our success is the *Old Train Station Restaurant*. The community bought the former station building, which had been empty for many years, in 2012. After raising more than €45.000 of local private capital, it was renovated and sublet to a local family who have been running it as a successful restaurant since April 2013. After its first season, the rental income has brought revenue of €12.000 for the development company and the restaurant business has meant three new full-time jobs in the community.

We have been very good in telling our story and have not really apologised for being so (or too) progressive. We don't always know if there will be a happy ending to it, but we do it anyway – because we have to, and no one else does it. Storytelling has indeed been crucial to create not only our reputation externally (in the rural development movement) but also to create a strong sense of ownership internally, locally. A feeling of ownership makes a great difference – it strengthens the initiative from within.

¹ The LEADER programme is a European Union initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs.

We have also been quite resilient – through some tough times, we were still developing new ideas even if the outlook was sometimes grim. Crucial to the success has also been a great mix of people and skills within the inner crew!



Renovating houses with Röstånga newcomers © Röstånga Tillsammans

We collaborate closely with other rural development NGOs and companies, *Social Innovation Skåne*, folk high schools, as well as the local, regional and national authorities. Some local officers at the municipality have been very supportive, but in general the public sector finds it hard to categorise and thus work with us. In the Swedish welfare state, it is not normal to organise locally and from a grassroots level.

In rural areas we have to reinvent (reclaim!) the structure where the public and business sectors leaves us behind. This is not only a rural development initiative - this is about empowering, capacity building and changing the mindset for both the civil society and the public/local authority. Trying to create tools to change from a hopeless no-we-can't-do-anything-passivity to a participatory yes-we-can-create-something-common-good-together-activity.

As we try to work with small resources to renovate the empty run down houses, we found a great engagement amongst some of the

300 asylum seekers living at the asylum centres in *Röstånga*. Some of them are skilled craftsmen and women and they are bored doing nothing. Since last year we have been developing a joint initiative where local volunteers and asylum seekers together work on the houses. Some of the refugees, after getting their permanent residency, choose to stay in *Röstånga* with their family; they are now renting the flats they renovated themselves, as tenants in the development company. This is not an immigrant-integration-project—it's about local development and using the local resources of those that want to contribute, independent of where people are from.



Proud newcomer to Röstånga © Röstånga Tillsammans

q SALINE34 ERFURT

Steffen Präger and Friederike Günther

The project concerns the reanimation and conversion of a 100-year old house in Erfurt. The house stood empty for long and is now independently gradually rebuilt by young planners, artists and other active adolescents. They apply alternate construction methods of recycled materials and new funding models like crowdfunding to finance their projects. The initiators restored the house and altered the rooms into art studios, an editorial office, a recording studio, and a restoration workshop.

www.saline34.de

Erfurt is the capital of the German federal state Thuringia. With a population of about 210.000 inhabitants, it is also by far the biggest city in the region. In addition to a historical and touristic well-used city core, Erfurt includes a highly interesting quarter in its north. Alongside a high density of *Wilhelmine* style apartment buildings, the quarter is shaped by its need for rehabilitation, a comparatively high percentage of abandoned houses and stores, low rents, a young population, and a high percentage of foreigners and immigrants. All together, the quarter has been the focus of spatial planning and backing for more than ten years.



Saline34 © Florian Müller

Of course all these negative aspects might be also be understood as opportunities. Vacancy provides a chance for (not necessarily always temporary) usage by creative stakeholders, (social) entrepreneurship and certainly young people claiming their role and position in society. With process-related experiences, we decided to take part in the national research program on young people developing empty spaces. While our previous activities granted an active network and direct access to different groups of young people in the city, we initially needed to find and acquire a building that would meet the needs of our concept. Since an arrangement with a private owner of such a property brought up concerns regarding the possibilities of a professional cleansing or disposal in the future, we consequently sought a partnership with the administration of

the city. Through this course of action, we not only assured collaboration with a body that was potentially willing to pursue a draft of longer duration but also laid an important cornerstone for the local comprehension of coproductive city development.



Formerly abandoned, now filled with new life © Paul Ruben Mundthal

The project brought up an alternative approach for the utilisation of abandoned buildings in order to demonstrate that the reanimation of such houses by adolescents can be interesting and procreative for the local community. From our point of view it was a win/win-situation for nearly everybody: The administration of the city no longer had to deal with another decaying building and adolescents received affordable free space to work on their ideas. Furthermore, they also had the chance to acquire and design urban space. The silent, inanimate houses, were replaced by the turmoil of creative, young people enriching the cultural diversity of the district.

Our project concentrates on the conversion of a 100-years old building called *Saline34*. It stood empty and was threatened to decay for almost a decade. Our idea was to reanimate this abandoned house under the responsibility of its new tenants: young artists, socio cultural actors and urban planners. At first we reached out for young people to picture how they would wish to use different rooms of the *Saline*. They were asked to develop drafts to implement their ideas

for reanimation of a small part of the house and consequently the *Saline* itself. Step by step, the adolescents rebuilt the house and were challenged to find their own solutions in terms of building: a young architect in training elaborated a redevelopment plan for laymen and there were regular assignments with all tenants to make the *Saline* habitable.

Unlike a professional property developer, the participating adolescents lacked the availability of capital and materials. However, they had comparatively a lot of time, which they chose to invest into their new domicile. As a result, these young actors together developed new strategies to align the actual condition to their needs, e.g. by finding new ways to recycle materials or much cheaper solutions to meet constraints of safety or statics. Looking into these rooms, one could get the strong feeling that they are not finished yet and maybe never will. But operating in a state of work-in-progress is very attractive for young people because it provides free space for trial and error. It also allows an open point of view for their own creative work as they face the challenges of low-budget building. This requires self-determination, self-organisation, and substantial cooperation.

Today, *Saline34* houses art studios, a recording studio, a silk screening-workshop, a photographic studio, an editorial office and much more. In addition to the long-term tenants, there are groups who are using the premises temporarily. Both, tenants and temporary users, are not only reanimating the *Saline34* but the district itself: Like a lighthouse, the *Saline34* with its different events and exhibitions tries to include and attract both neighbours and people from more prosperous areas who otherwise wouldn't find their way into the north of Erfurt, a district suffering a bad reputation.

One of the main challenges of the project's approach might be the ongoing transfer of responsibility from the organising party to the group of tenants. Therefore an association was founded and a charter of commonly shared values was discussed. But, in the end, they will be challenged to find an organisational framework that ensures sustainable development of the building and advancement of its concept.

Of course in face of a long term and sustainable attitude, the question about property remains. Erfurt is rapidly growing and its administration is trying to sell each and every house in order to rehabilitate the finances. It is most unlikely that people aged between 19 and 35 years will have the capital to just buy their own free spaces. That just leaves a mode of using property of other entities like public as well as private bodies. Since these young groups tend to invest themselves in terms of time or labour but not (so much) financially this modus operandi comes with certain limitations:

- Temporary usage, believing that there will be a chance of financial return for the owner in the future.
- Renting, to gain a legal base and to cover the basic costs of the property.
- Trust, that these young actors need to gain by showing their capabilities (even if lacking capital) and trustworthiness over a specific period of time.

Finally, the further development and renovation of the building remains a challenge for all participating actors – especially since the initial financial support by the research program expired at the end of 2012. From then on construction works had to be financed alternatively, but mainly by the owner, the city of Erfurt. In this regard a point of no return in terms of ownership is foreseeable. There will be a specific point in time when the amount of invested money, labour and passion eliminates a returning of the building. Therefore we, the group of tenants as well as the administration is trying to acquire national funding to renew the damaged cellar and roof. The main objective of the funding program is to preserve the mode of usage of the building for the upcoming 15 to 25 years. This approach would guarantee a real and honest perspective for the development of *Saline34*.



Renovating together © Paul Ruben Mundthal

r YHTEI SMAA HELSINKI

Jaakko Blomberg

Yhteismaa (Common Ground) is a nonprofit organisation, specialised in new participatory citymaking, culture co-creation and social movements. All the projects share the aim of a more fun, free, sustainable, responsible and social urban life. These include an international flea market day, setting up a table for a thousand people to eat in the middle of a street, art exhibitions at home, public sauna events and many more. The idea behind all of *Yhteismaa*'s projects is to get from a consumer culture to a participatory culture. They are redefining spaces: making public spaces more social and available and also turning private spaces into public spaces. The idea is to create a new common ground.

www.yhteismaa.fi

Done is better than perfect. That's my motto when I start something new. That describes exactly how *Yhteismaa* came about. In February 2012, Pauliina Seppälä (who I did not know at that point) complained on *Facebook* that she had so much stuff she wanted to get rid of; she wondered why there wasn't a day where everyone could take their stuff outside to the streets. I liked the idea and as such a day didn't exist, we decided to start it together with a group of people. In May 2012 the first *Cleaning Day* happened. Friends who were web and graphic designers created a web page and a logo for us. We didn't have any funding for it, we didn't have any permission for it, but nonetheless we did it. It was a huge success.



Cleaning Day © Yhteismaa

Cleaning Day, as we called it, was really successful and people all around Helsinki gathered in parks and outside their houses to sell the things they no longer needed. The entire city became a flea market. There was no money to be paid to anyone, as people just set up their tables or put a blanket on the floor and spread out their no-longer-wanted belongings. Since 2012, *Cleaning Day* has happened twice a year with over 20.000 people all over Finland taking place in it.

After the first *Cleaning Day* we realised, that this was going to be something much bigger than we had thought. We decided to organise ourselves as we felt like doing more such things together. As a result,

Pauliina Seppälä, Tanja Jänicke, and I founded the non-profit organisation *Yhteismaa*. We chose to start an association, because having an official organisation and name behind the projects makes it easier to work with other organisations, as we seemed more reliable to them.

Cleaning Day was the start of a great collaboration for many different projects around public/private urban space. Each project has a different focus but they share the common idea of doing things together. The basic principle is the idea of a more fun, free, social, responsible, and sustainable urban life. We see our role as making it possible for people to participate and create new ways of living in cities. We provide the framework, but the people themselves always create the final outcome.



Dinner under the Helsinki sky © Yhteismaa

Another event that we started is called *Dinner Under the Helsinki Sky*. We proposed the city to celebrate the birthday of Helsinki by hosting a huge dinner under the Helsinki sky. They liked the idea and so we set up benches with 1000 seats in the middle of the city. They were booked within two minutes. While the event was underway, it started to rain heavily, but people were not bothered. They felt it was their event, they had ownership over what happened and thus they stayed. This event shows the principles of our work: we provide the framework for people to get active, but the people themselves are doing the actual activities. We also do home-theatre festivals, sauna-theatre festivals and many more events where we try to break up the barrier between private and public spaces.

I think we are a quite unique initiative, which has been our strength and weakness at the same time. In the beginning it was really hard to explain what we are all about and we had to invent some terms. On the other hand, we are the leading organisation in Finland that is working in our field. I think we started at the exactly right time. People started to realise how much power and potential there is in collaboration and social media, and that a different approach to urban culture and space is possible.



Breaking up the barriers between public and private space © Yhteismaa

In Helsinki, the city's attitude towards urban co-creation has started to change. I believe we've done a fair share in contributing to this changing mentality. Our events have showed that if you give freedom to people they also act more responsibly. The events have showcased that there's a new way of doing things, beyond traditional citizen participation and urban culture. Whenever I speak to people about our work in Helsinki, they say it's easy to do these kinds of projects and events in Helsinki, where the authorities are so responsive and open towards our ideas. But I can assure that even five years ago the atmosphere in Helsinki wasn't like what it is today.

I think our situation is getting better, but still it's not that stable. It's hard to make things better if you can't hire more people. And if you don't know about the funding for the next year or even months, it's hard to hire anyone. We were crazy enough to start our organisation

without knowing anything about our future or economic situation. And were ready to work really long days to create something we believed in. But most of the people are not like that. Our work is always balancing with doing what we want, making the world a better place, earning a decent living, and not burning out. But it seems that there are more and more people, who think like us. So we are heading in a good direction!



Setting a table for 1000 people to eat in the middle of the street
© Yhteismaa

Being an association makes it much easier to apply for grants. Financing remains one of the biggest problems for the people working in our field. It has been an issue for us as well, especially because we would have done it anyways, without money. During the first year, everyone involved did all our projects totally voluntarily. Our financial situation is still not stable, but today we always seek for projects to fund themselves through grants, private sponsors, crowd funding, support from cities, and competitions. We also have income from trainings, lectures, consulting, and paid projects. Basically, we're stacking money from different streams and thereby enable ourselves to continue doing what we do and love.

IN TRANSIT is a cooperation between the Goethe-Instituts in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, England, Scotland, Ireland and the Netherlands.

www.goethe.de/intransit

ROUTES



**SHARING
SPACES**



**MAY 29TH TO
30TH 2015
GLASGOW**

1

Glasgow marked the first IN TRANSIT group study visit. Participants from Rotterdam, Stockholm, Helsinki and Dublin met in Glasgow to focus on how sharing public spaces can tackle social inequality and lead to less social polarisation.

The local IN TRANSIT initiative, *North Kelvin Meadow/The Children's Wood*, is a community group set up in October 2008 to campaign for a formerly overgrown green space to be kept as a multi-use community green space for the people of *Maryhill* and others in Glasgow's *West End*. The initiative sees that the space is currently under threat – the council wants to sell the land for high-end housing. The initiative regards the space as vitally important to the community and claims that sharing open public spaces can help to reduce social inequality.

By taking over an unused plot of land, the initiators of the *North Kelvin Meadow* succeeded in changing people's perception of public space and turned the overgrown land into an outdoor community centre. Today there is a coexistence of many different people who enjoy the freedom to shape the meadow according to their needs and wishes. Recently, the initiators have handed in their own planning application and asked for 50 years of tenure for the lot in order to actively shape the future of the *North Kelvin Meadow*.

The space is of significant importance given the local context: Scotland ranks bottom in rankings of child well-being as there are hardly

any “wild” spaces for kids and everything is “planned” and “safe”. Moreover, research has shown that people in deprived areas such as *North Kelvinside*, have minimal access to green space. Access to open spaces has both direct and indirect impacts on people's physical and mental health, and can also enable people to build social capital.



The meadow used to be football pitches © Leona Lynen

During the workshop, the IN TRANSIT initiatives shared how their projects evolved and how the immediate surroundings shaped their work and approach. The discussion also touched upon how their spaces are designed in a way for heterogeneous groups and individuals to access and take part in the activities taking place. The workshop was followed by a tour through *Glasgow's Maryhill/North Kelvinside* area and a public discussion on social polarisation at the meadow.

THE VISITING INITIATIVES:

LEESZAAL/ ROTTERDAM

Leeszaal is a neighbourhood-initiated public reading room in Rotterdam. It is entirely volunteer-run, with 90 volunteers from 19 different countries and educational backgrounds that range from primary school to PhD. It is a truly public space where everyone is welcome and no single group is dominant over the space. This

feeling of ownership is based on how the *Leeszaal* evolved: by working with the existing neighbourhood associations, the two initiators found well-connected supporters that were committed, brought a range of skills, and acted as multipliers. Besides asking people what they wanted for the new reading room, the two initiators asked their neighbours what they would be willing to contribute themselves to make it happen. They avoided the risk of becoming a service provider and instead partnered with their neighbors to create the space and project.

MITT127/ STOCKHOLM

Particularly relevant to the theme Sharing Spaces is *Mitt127* festival, a youth-organised six-weeks long festival in *Skärholmen*, a deprived suburb of Stockholm. It was initiated by a social worker and a local basketball coach who functioned as a door opener to the community. *Mitt127* creates an arena for good role-models between the ages 18-25 that are fully responsible for organising the festival in *Skärholmen's* public spaces. The festival serves as a means to an end: the youth learn how to take over responsibility, learn about democratic decision-making and how to appropriate public space. All *Mitt127* activities are free of charge and open to everyone. While suffering from a bad reputation, *Skärholmen* has, through the help of the festival, improved its image and made people proud to say they come from the area *Skärholmen*.

YHTEISMAA/ HELSINKI

Yhteismaa sees itself as a new common ground between the public sector, the private sector and the people. Core to the organisation is the appropriation of (public) space through communal activities. All the projects share the aim of a more fun, free, sustainable, responsible and social urban life. *Yhteismaa* provides the framework and people do the rest. Hence the feeling of ownership is very strong. Activities include a city-wide flea market day, setting up a table for a thousand people to eat in the middle of a street, opening private saunas for a theatre festival and many more. Through their events, *Yhteismaa* tries to break up the barrier between private and public spaces and connect people through communal activities.

OURFARM/ DUBLIN

OurFarm is Dublin's largest inner city community garden, set up on previously derelict land on the grounds of the *National College of Art and Design*. The College is surrounded by one of the most socio-economically diverse communities in the capital. There are multinational companies (including the famous Guinness factory), cultural attractions, local businesses, schools, and hospitals along with profound unemployment, high-density housing, and addiction problems. With an emphasis on sustainable farming and community building, the project uses the production and provision of organic food as a resource for accessible and meaningful learning and inclusion.



The Children's Wood © Leona Lynen



**ACCESS
TO SPACE
SEPTEMBER 17TH
TO 18TH 2015
DUBLIN**

2

The focus of the IN TRANSIT Dublin event was Access to Space. The issue of vacant space in Dublin is a highly politicised area of research, especially in light of the current housing and homelessness crisis. The two local IN TRANSIT initiatives *OurFarm* and *Connect the Dots* are both dealing with the issue of accessing space, albeit with different approaches and outcomes.

OurFarm is Dublin's largest inner city food-growing farm, situated on a disused site on grounds of the Irish *National College of Art and Design*. The space was discovered by chance when the two students Rian Coulter and Fabian Strunden were temporarily using an unused shop just next to the College for an art installation. It is the largest greenfield site in the city centre and was completely unacknowledged by anyone. Over time, the space went through different stages with the College considering to build student accommodation or sell the site altogether. But during the 2008 financial crisis, the value was so low that they decided to keep it. The crisis was an opportunity to build what is today the largest food-growing farm in Dublin City centre.

Through field research by the other local IN TRANSIT initiative, *Connect the Dots*, it has been observed that there are a number of groups and organisations within Dublin interested in vacant space and how it can be utilised. Yet they have noticed that such stakeholders – ranging from artists, arts initiatives, collectives, squatters,

charities for homelessness, researchers, students, council members, architects, city planners, and developers are working within disconnected silos across the city. *Connect the Dots* aims to explore, pilot, and test a series of creative/experimental interventions to help those interested in activating vacant space to learn about each other and from each other – to connect, pool knowledge, share resources, and collaborate.

Specifically, the project consists of a structured series of events to facilitate the development of a collaborative network to address the issue of prevailing vacant space in Dublin. It identifies and brings together diverse stakeholders in an iterative series of events that aims to encourage dialogue, build connections, share knowledge, and spur collaboration. Anyone who expresses an interest can get involved, particularly those who have utilised these spaces in some way, are currently living or working in a space, or wish to in the future. *Connect the Dots* co-creates the events with their participants, assessing each event and utilising feedback in order to inform and shape the next.



Fabian Strunden of *OurFarm* during the *Connect the Dots* event.
© Eugene Langan

The IN TRANSIT Dublin event was centred around a *Connect the Dots* event. *Connect the Dots* invited the IN TRANSIT partners from Northwest Europe together with about 80 local participants into the old local Goethe-Institut, a vacant Victorian townhouse currently

awaiting renovation. The participants were formed into groups and assigned to local architecture students, who guided their group to carefully prepared rooms of the otherwise totally empty house. Here, the groups were introduced to one specific empty space in Dublin – floorplan, neighbourhood, former use, status – and asked to brainstorm on new use concepts for the space. After a structured brainstorming session within the small group, the ideas were visualised. The second phase of the event consisted of so-called “expert speed-dates”; here, each group had 10 minutes to present their ideas to a rotating group of experts. During the speed-dates the ideas of the groups were discussed and tested against building regulations, fire regulations, heritage laws and other constraining factors. The event proved to be an inspiring format to bring together a diverse group of people from different backgrounds and start the discussion on what could be done with Dublin’s vacant spaces.



Getting to know about vacant spaces in Dublin © Eugene Langan

During an internal exchange, the IN TRANSIT initiatives shared their best practices and key challenges, how they had gained access to their space, how they made their ideas happen and what impact they had so far.

THE VISITING INITIATIVES:

HOMEBAKED/ LIVERPOOL

In 2010, *Liverpool Biennial* commissioned Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk to work in *Anfield*. *Anfield* is a classic Northern English working class neighbourhood. The area had been designated for demolition as it was identified as a ‘market failure’. In 2010, the plans for demolition were cancelled, leaving the area in a state of limbo and many residents frustrated with the failure of yet another regeneration scheme. Jeanne's original proposal focused on using an empty house to engage local people and support them to develop their own ideas for what to do with the space. Instead, a former bakery was chosen as project base. The building became the site for public discussion and planning sessions focusing on its transformation. Slowly other people became involved and together they developed what has now become *Homebaked*: a bakery co-operative as well as a *Community Land Trust*. The two organisations are a way of collectively confronting the issues facing the stagnated development of their neighbourhood.

SALINE34/ ERFURT

Saline34 was initiated as part of a national research program on young people developing empty spaces. While the group behind *Saline34* had an active network of young people in the city, they were lacking access to an empty building that would meet their needs. Since an arrangement with a private owner brought up concerns regarding the disposal in the future, they partnered with the administration of the city. Being part of the government-funded project made negotiations with the local administration easier and gave the young group more credibility as a reliable partner. The project brought up an alternative approach for the utilisation of abandoned buildings and showed that the reanimation of such houses by adolescents can be interesting and enriching for the local community.

GIVRUM/ COPENHAGEN

GivRum is based on the principle that adding value for landowners through the temporary use of empty buildings is a way to access spaces that the owners would otherwise not open. *GivRum* puts

smart suits on activists and acts as a reliable intermediary – the organisation slips away once the community takes over and is self-sufficient. They sign temporary contracts with owners of derelict factories or buildings to activate unused spaces. Artists and creatives are invited to engage and rent space in the projects. Rents covered maintenance and other such expenses. Any profit is reinvested in the buildings, public activities and events. While the projects are temporary in nature, the cultural communities established move on to a new site where they remain a resilient community.

HAUSKVARTALET/ OSLO

The *Hauskvartalet* project is a collaboration between architects and squatters working together to imagine new forms of communal living. The first squat in the *Haukvartalet* city block was established in 1999. In 2010, the squatters were evicted and it became clear that the municipality was planning to sell several of the buildings on the open market. The squatters collaborated with *Eriksen Skajaa Architects* to come up with an alternative development plan for the site. The architects functioned essentially as a mediator between the squatters and the municipality. At the same time, they have also learned the language of politics and negotiation through the squatters. The *Hauskvartalet* project is one of the few bottom-up housing initiatives in Oslo. Today, it is still unclear whether the site will be sold to the highest bidder or whether the alternative development plan will be realised.



SOCIAL

INFRASTRUCTURE

OCTOBER 8TH

TO 9TH 2015

RÖSTANGA



3

The third IN TRANSIT group study trip was to the village Röstånga, situated 60km north of Malmö. The theme was Social Infrastructure. Social Infrastructure can be understood as social resources that are not provided by public administration. Traditional infrastructures tend to be very stable, inert and inflexible as they are built for time: social infrastructures are more flexible and can adapt to the local and immediate needs.

The theme was of particular relevance to the local IN TRANSIT partner, *Röstånga Tillsammans* (Röstånga Together). Small villages like Röstånga (900 inhabitants) have experienced the withdrawal of both the public sector services and the private sector. This development urges communities in rural areas to reorganise and rethink both their role in the local community and the capacity to run services. A few engaged locals saw this vacuum as a potential for grassroots activity and founded a non-profit development NGO *Röstånga Tillsammans*. Through a community shareholding company, the villagers have bought and developed various houses and amenities. The organisational setup keeps the profits in the community, creating employment, sustainable development and contributing to the local economy.

Besides the physical infrastructures, *Röstånga Tillsammans* has created valuable social infrastructure that formed developing the physical infrastructures. This includes trust, local pride, a strong community, an increase in inhabitants, preventing the local school

from closing, jobs, local circular economy and much more. What becomes apparent with *Röstånga Tillsammans* holds equally true for the other IN TRANSIT participants as well: they build, directly or indirectly, new social infrastructure.



The community-owned restaurant in Röstånga © Laura Billings

THE VISITING INITIATIVES:

LEESZAAL/ ROTTERDAM

For the initiators of *Leeszaal*, the necessity and importance of public meeting spaces for the well-being of neighbourhoods, individuals and cities were key to their initial protest against the closure of most of the public libraries in Rotterdam. As the protest was of no avail, the group of neighbours decided to take matters into their own hands. Today, *Leeszaal* is a social infrastructure for an ethnically diverse group with a large variety of educational backgrounds. Through creating an environment in which you can consciously or unconsciously come into contact with people and worlds you are not (yet) a part of, new things might emerge.

PIKENE PÅ BROEN/ KIRKENES

Pikene på Broen facilitates dialogue across borders and boundaries through art. Belonging and identity are key fields of action: by recognising locals as experts and bridging the gap between the wider public and artists, *Pikene på Broen* contributes to creating a so-

cial infrastructure within Kirkenes and the rest of the Barents Sea region. *Pikene på Broen* applies art as a soft-diplomatic tool with the goal of facilitating dialogue between professional artists as well as everyday people across the borders to Finland and Russia (the border with Russia is only 13km away).

PARTICIPATORY CITY LAB / LONDON

For the last 6 years, *Participatory City Lab* has been researching and prototyping new ways to support widespread practical participation that works with the fabric of daily life. The largest prototype to date has been *The Open Works* research project. Over 12 months 1000 people took part in building a live prototype of mass participation. Together with residents, 20 new practical projects were designed and tested to see if the neighbourhood could be re-organised for practicality, but also be an inspiring and exciting place to live, grow ideas and projects and invent new livelihoods.

ORANSSI / HELSINKI

Originating from the squat movement of the 1990s, *Oranssi's* basic principle is to provide young people with the opportunity to independently produce their own culture and to enable them to create affordable housing. The key concept is participation of residents in planning, renovation and practical maintenance. To this end, they organise *talkoots* (Finnish tradition for a gathering of friends and neighbours to accomplish a communal task) to renovate the houses. The experience of co-creating one's living environment creates a strong community around the *Oranssi* apartments.

MITT127 / STOCKHOLM

The overall vision of *Mitt127* is to promote participation from young people; create good role models; be available to all; put the Stockholm suburb on the map as an area where one would want to live; and increase the sense of pride and security in the residents of the area. Their work has shown that participating regularly in *Mitt127* activities prevents young people from falling into destructive patterns. The *Mitt127* festival is one outcome, but the process is what matters most: feeling of ownership, trust, responsibility and the creation of a network of young role models for the younger generation.

AFRIKAANDERWIJK COÖPERATIE / ROTTERDAM

The *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* started working from the needs of the local people. The cooperative serves as a social infrastructure on many levels: it provides an organisational structure in which revenues and benefits can go directly to its members, local stores, organisations and inhabitants. The *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* applies a self-organised approach in order to make use of the untapped talents and resources in the neighbourhood. It develops local skills and self-certifications, strengthens resilient intercultural networks, and tries to create a radical form for self-governance of an area, reinvesting profits directly into the local community. By creating conditions for collaborative production, it allows individual makers to pool resources and legitimise their (often informal) businesses via new networks.

“OUR WORK IS MORE VISIBLE THAN IT IS MEASUREABLE. MEASURING SOMETHING DOESN'T INCREASE THE IMPACT.”

Annet van Otterloo, Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie

After having spent a day in Röstånga, the group traveled to Malmö. The workshop in Malmö brought together a range of people from the local social innovation field. It touched upon the following questions: Does an invigorated civil society result in a weakening of the social contract? Are social entrepreneurs a sign of failure / collapse of society? Are social entrepreneurs going to keep the responsibility for providing services or will the state eventually take back responsibility?

A main focus of the workshop was measuring social impact. Today, most funding requires measuring the outcome of the initiative's work. The donors want to see the social return on investment, which is often hard to grasp. While methods for measuring social impact are widespread and available, time and resources for measurement are often lacking and the initiatives often feel the provided criteria are not applicable.



THE LEARNING CITY OCTOBER 29TH TO 30TH 2015 ROTTERDAM

4

During the event in Rotterdam, IN TRANSIT was part of the annual *Stadmakerscongres*, a one day conference organised by the *Architecture Institute Rotterdam (AIR)* that brought together a large number of Rotterdam's urban initiatives, city officials, architects, planners and other so-called "city makers". The theme for the fourth IN TRANSIT trip was based on this year's *Stadmakerscongres*' theme: The Learning City.

The two local INTRANSIT initiatives are *Leeszaal* and *Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie*. To both initiatives, learning plays a crucial role in their everyday practice and development.



Leeszaal is located in a former Turkish Bathhouse © Loeske Bult

The *Leeszaal* ("Reading Room") started in 2012 when the public library in Rotterdam decided to close 19 out of 24 libraries. After vehement protest in the area came to nothing, two engaged locals,

Joke van der Zwaard and Maurice Specht, decided it was time to formulate a tangible, positive, and imaginative answer. Together with their neighbours, they started their own reading room which is totally volunteer-run. After three years, *Leeszaal* is no longer simply an initiative. The pioneering phase is done and now they focus on continuation. This leads to questions about sustainable funding, maintaining the quality of the space and allowing the initiators to slip away.

"PEOPLE AREN'T PROTESTING TO ASK POLITICIANS TO DO SOMETHING BUT RATHER DO IT THEMSELVES."

Maurice Specht, Leeszaal

The other local IN TRANSIT partner initiative is the *Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie*. The cooperative on the scale of a neighbourhood is an umbrella organisation that brings together workspaces, shopkeepers, local makers, social foundations and the large local market. The *Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative* creates opportunities through the provision of skill-based labour, training, services and products to enhance the self-organising ability while trying not to waste talent and human capital. It stimulates sustainable local production, cultural development, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship, as well as shared responsibility and participation. The result is a self-organised and self-run body that continues to create local, self-produced economic opportunities, leverage political power to shift policy and negotiate economic advantages.

During the course of the two days in Rotterdam, the initiatives shared their experiences and together gained insights into how to advance learning and thereby strengthen their initiatives.

THE VISITING INITIATIVES:

ØSTERGRO/ COPENHAGEN, SALINE34/ ERFURT,
YHTEISMAA/ HELSINKI, MITT127/ STOCKHOLM,
PIKENE PÅ BROEN/ KIRKENES

WE LEARNT...

- to challenge the youth, they always find creative and powerful solutions.
- the importance of a local door-opener.
- that it is good to ask for more when negotiating with external partners.
- that not paying rent also means that one can't demand certain things from the owner of the house. We now prefer to rent the space in order to be taken more seriously.
- that working together with the local municipality was crucial for our success.
- to identify different stakeholders within your project and be able to find the appropriate approach and potential cooperation model with each stakeholder.



Learning from the Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative's model © Loeske Bult

- to be aware of the value we create with our work: How can we benefit from it?
- to start a dialogue about ideas and involve people from an early stage.
- that you can't attach every idea to your project: it needs to fit to your identity.
- that council and civil servants are key players: make friends at the administration level!

- that founding an association serves as a reliable partner for the municipality.
- that it is difficult to disengage and to hand over responsibility to (new) users of the space.
- that there is a need for constant reflection of your own position and participation culture: transfer power in early stages.
- that people grow in the process.
- that mistakes are not bad, they are lessons and thus it is important to make the most of them.
- that it is easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission.
- that without social media, we would not exist.
- to make use of all the talent and resources existing in your networks.
- that sometimes you need to "dress" differently as an organisation depending on who you speak to: founding a cooperative meant it was easier to be involved in decision-making than if we had been a foundation.
- that while the language/outer appearance changes the project/idea has to stay the same.

KEY LESSONS:

**DON'T ASK FOR PERMISSION,
JUST DO IT/ DON'T ADAPT TO THE
HAND FEEDING YOU/ OWNERSHIP:
BY, FOR, WITH PEOPLE/ BALANCE
POWER AND INTERESTS OF ALL
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED/ SELL
YOUR STORY, GIVE VALUE TO
WHAT YOU DO.**

**ALTERNATIVE
LIVING/ HOUSING
NOVEMBER 19TH
TO 20TH 2015
HELSINKI**



5

About 20% of the Finnish population live in the metropolitan area of Helsinki due to migration into the cities and lower job possibilities in the countryside. Thus, the city suffers from a housing shortage that has resulted in high rents and house prices as well as increasing living expenses.

There are a rising number of civic initiatives in Helsinki that try to work around these outcomes, such as the two local IN TRANSIT partner initiatives, *Yhteismaa* and *Oranssi*.

Yhteismaa (Common Ground) is a non-profit organisation, specialising in new participatory city culture, co-creation and social movements. All the projects share the aim of a more fun, free, sustainable, responsible and social urban life. These include an international flea market day, a table set up for a thousand people to eat in the middle of a street, art exhibitions at home, international conferences, a social media platform and many others. *Yhteismaa* has shown the city of Helsinki and its citizens that communal activities in Helsinki's public space are possible free of charge. *Yhteismaa* challenges people's perceptions of where the boundaries between public and private spaces lie. By providing only the framework and leaving the actual activity to the people, a profound feeling of ownership and responsibility for the spaces evolves.

Oranssi is an organisation created to renovate and repair old houses as reasonably priced rental apartments for young people. The key

concept is participation of residents in planning, renovation and practical maintenance. By providing low-cost housing and creating steady, lively and socially united housing communities, they aim to encourage and support young people to find their independence. *Oranssi* provides an alternative to standard market apartments which are often difficult to finance for young people.



The Oranssi culture centre is under renovation © Kalle Kervinen

During the workshop, we examined how the IN TRANSIT initiatives provided alternatives to the status quo, what they did differently than the usual actors, whether the approaches would be applicable elsewhere and what factors were key to their successes.

THE VISITING INITIATIVES:

GÄNGEVIERTEL/ HAMBURG

The *Gängeviertel* provides affordable, non-commercial space for collectively-run galleries, ateliers, cafés, workshops and communal spaces. After collectively occupying the empty houses, they pursued an inclusive approach of integrating everyone who wanted to be part of the project. The well-received creative activities in the quarter resulted in growing public pressure to preserve the space, leading the city of Hamburg to purchase back these buildings from the potential developer. The *Gängeviertel* seeks to normalise community-led development and strengthen their network to apply to other projects, so that the availability of affordable, non-commercial creative space becomes the norm in cities everywhere.

NORTH KELVIN MEADOW/ GLASGOW

The *Meadow* is an alternative to planned and publicly maintained public spaces; it has its wild, untamed aspects which are great for inspiring people with different ways to use the space. Through taking over the unused plot of land, the group succeeded in changing people's perception of public space and turned the overgrown land into an outdoor community centre. The *Meadow* is an alternative to the planned high-end housing to which the community objects. Rather than waiting for the city to come up with a different plan to develop the space, the initiators have now handed in their own planning application to the Glasgow City Council to keep the land as a community outdoor space with a 50-year tenure.

GIVRUM/ COPENHAGEN

GivRum activates empty buildings and public spaces by engaging with local stakeholders and mediating between the community, public sector, local authorities and businesses in neighbourhood development. They work to create added value for landowners through the temporary use of empty buildings. Artists and creatives are invited to engage and take up space in the empty buildings. In doing this, a socio economic model is established that gives security to the owner. Rent paid by users covers maintenance and other expenses. Any profit is reinvested in the buildings, public activities and events.

RÖSTÅNGA TILLSAMMANS

Depopulation and withdrawal of public services urges rural communities to reorganise and rethink both their role and the capacity to run services. *Röstånga Tillsammans* saw this vacuum as a potential for grassroots activity by the villagers themselves. Today, the NGO *Röstånga Tillsammans* owns a grant-independent shareholding company with more than 400 shareholders. Together, the villagers have bought and developed a museum, a restaurant, a micro-brewery, a community bus and housing. The organisational setup keeps the profit in the community, creating employment, sustainable development and contributing to the local, circular economy.



The public discussion at Laituri © Kalle Kervinen

After the internal workshop, the IN TRANSIT group study visit featured a tour to alternative housing and culture spaces in Helsinki as well as a public discussion at *Laituri*, Helsinki City Planning Department's public information and exhibition space. Titled "*How can and do citizens participate in the building of their city?*", the discussion touched upon the means and limits of participation. Participants included the Deputy Mayor of Real Estate and City Planning, local urban initiatives and the IN TRANSIT participants.

The public discussion evolved around the questions if a high degree of social capital is a prerequisite for participation and whether the city ensures spaces of enablement or opportunities for those with less social and cultural capital. Interestingly to the participants from outside Finland, the discussion with the city officials was very cooperative and open. While discussions on participation are often loaded with conflict elsewhere, the Deputy Mayor was open towards alternative concepts and asked people to come forward with their ideas on how to improve co-creative urban development.

CIVIC

ECOSYSTEMS

NOVEMBER 26TH

TO 27TH 2015

LONDON



6

The IN TRANSIT London event focused Civic Ecosystems – designing and testing new ways to grow the civic economy. *Participatory City Lab*, the local IN TRANSIT initiative, is a laboratory that designs and test methods, strategies and systems to grow the civic economy at regional, city and local level. This economy, which is built on the ideas and models of innovative citizen-led initiatives, is creating new systems in areas ranging from energy to food and housing to play. It is changing the appearance and economies of places across the UK and around the world. *Participatory City Lab* is working in partnership with local councils, housing associations and other institutions to re-organise our local systems to create equality of opportunity for all people.

The Liverpool-based initiative *Homebaked* is the other local IN TRANSIT initiative. The *Homebaked Bakery Cooperative* was incorporated in June 2012 by a group of local residents passionate about the possibilities of re-opening an old bakery in community ownership, and creating a successful enterprise with social as well as financial value. Homebaked aims to support the local Liverpool community to “take matters into their own hands” regarding the future of their neighbourhood. They also founded the *Homebaked Community Land Trust*, a membership organisation that allows local people to collectively buy, develop and manage land and buildings.

Apart from field trips through East London, the IN TRANSIT trip to London was centred around an extensive workshop that focused on the theme of building Civic Ecosystems. The workshop asked: What in our current systems either blocks or supports innovative place-making initiatives?

BLOCKING

PEOPLE

- There is a risk of falling apart in individual interests.
- Engage and disengage when it is your time. You have to let go at a certain point.
- How do we look after ourselves? How do we not burn out?

PROCESS

- It is sometimes hard to fit the projects into existing legislation: i.e., getting insurance for a group – there was no scheme for what we needed.
- Administration work is very time-consuming.
- All the projects need a lot of time and flexibility.



Naomi Murphy from Connect the Dots
© Vayamedia

MONEY

- Money is not employed on a local level but on a global market. We need to create local circular economies!
- The more money is involved there is more driving us away from the voices we need to hear the most and it makes us a little less creative.

SUPPORTIVE

PEOPLE

- Networks of people are at the basis of what we are doing. They bring ideas, energy, resources and open doors.

PROCESS

- Keep it real, be strategic, be flexible, be open, risk open-end processes (that includes the risk of failure).
- Develop something from existing local structures.

MONEY

- Seek independent money that is not linked to the interest of those who lend the money. Money should be produced by the project to be really independent.
- Money is in many ways accessible if you organise it in a different way.
- Money is a way to connect people: if there is an opportunity to make money, cooperation might be easier for some people than if everything were voluntarily.

SPACES

- Temporarily using spaces often works in the interest of the owner. Conservation regulations can be in favour of conservation by use.
- Spaces are processes: buildings/ spaces are crucial in holding a group together.

GOVERNMENT

- Government plays a crucial role.

SPACES

- There are a lot of spaces that cannot be accessed but are sitting empty.



Civic Ecosystems workshop © Vayamedia

GOVERNMENT

- Government always look for a model, always want to scale up whereas the value of our work lies in the small-scale.
- They are stuck to the old idea of private property and investors; disbelief in alternative structures and initiatives as a result.
- Current regulations. We need exceptions from the market logic!
- Lack of political guts. Scepticism.
- Our work is often too similar of a mandate for governments.

MEASURES

- Hard to show measurable outcomes. Working itself is more important than measuring.
- Never found the right parameters to measure our work. We tried Social Return on Investment – it was horrible!

BRANDING

- Balance gains with dangers of losing your own identity. Need to keep existing identity of a space/people and do not patronise them with your own brand. Branding easily excludes people if they do not align with the story being told.
- Whose voice is it? Difficult in a community! Who is it for? Local vs. international.

MEASURES

- Measures are useful for accessing funding.

BRANDING

- Communication is key: keep it simple so that people understand what your initiative is about.



Homebaked meets ExRotaprint © Vayamedia

DIGITAL

- You have to find the right channel for each group: we don't need an app, we want to create offline people-to-people connections.
- But social media is crucial: large group of followers; financial support through kickstarter campaign.

LEARNING

- Success stories from elsewhere help a lot.
- Learning needs to be on all levels.
- Learning is key: we are learning professions as we go.

CULTURE

- Relationship-based culture is helpful and blocking at the same time
- There is an existing culture of doing things together in rural areas, revive it!
- Shift to co-creation culture is making people more aware of and open towards new ideas.



Arild Eriksen (Hauskvartalet) and Naomi Murphy (Connect the Dots) © Vayamedia

Will the projects do anything different after having attended IN TRANSIT London? What points or ideas were most significant to their work? *Answers included:*

- financing and the willingness to take over the responsibility also in financial strategies is crucial in our “movement”
- consider how to build neighbourhood business as a platform for social change
- remember to visit other projects for inspiration more often
- look at how to create closer systems that can sustain a building scheme
- learnt that scaling up needs further research and monitoring but it is not impossible
- create pocket projects to test ideas; look at how they can work with each other to create a self-sustaining system
- put more weight on skill training
- give the project a neighbourhood function
- become a developer!
- learnt some great methods and tools to use locally
- a better belief and strength in the power of and need for alternatives in the society, which has been: we make a difference – together!
- growing and learning as an initiative where a lot on my mind while listening to the others
- how to be professional, successful and experimental, flexible, fluid, adaptive?
- the visit was again very inspiring, gives even more energy to continue the work we're doing
- handing over work to experts in specific fields is one thought that I will take back home

**CENTRE/
PERIPHERY
FEBRUARY 24TH
TO 27TH 2016
OSLO/ KIRKENES**



7

Paying tribute to the geographical disposition of the country with its specific political implications, the IN TRANSIT meeting in Norway was two-fold. Whereas the first part took place in the capital Oslo, in the mild and prosperous south, the second part was held in Kirkenes, located at the rough and harsh northeastern end of the country's long, stretched coastline, struggling against an economic downturn. Norway has strong regional distinctions strengthened by comparably poor traffic connections. Furthermore, the country has been traditionally divided between the economically developed and well-off south and west coast and the barren and precarious northern areas. Hence, the connection between the political centre and the periphery has always been complex.

Taking the specific Norwegian situation as its starting point, the TRANSIT meeting compared the respective experiences and challenges for bottom-up initiatives in the centre and the periphery.

PART #1 OSLO

TOP-DOWN CAMOUFLAGING AS BOTTOM-UP

Oslo is developing even faster than other thriving Scandinavian and Nordic cities. The increased requirements for new living quarters, office spaces and industrial real estate are obvious. In recent years, decrepit port and industrial areas, once the city's main source of income, have been converted into commercial buildings, loft-living residences and shopping malls, gemmed with spectacular landmark architecture for cultural use. Open urban spaces and undeter-

mined areas are already today scarce and have disappeared almost completely in the inner city districts. The enforced urban transformation challenges alternative place-making and bottom-up planning initiatives.

The local partner project in Oslo is *Hauskvartalet*. The neighbourhood of the *Hauskvartalet* city block is part of a major redevelopment along the *Aker* river in Oslo. The project is one of the few bottom-up housing initiative in Oslo. Although its future is uncertain, the project is important for it started a debate in Oslo on how a participatory design process for communal housing can look like.



The Hauskvartalet block © Per Oscar Skjellnan

During the stay in Oslo, a public event was held in cooperation with *Oslo Pilot*, a two-year project investigating the role of art in and for the public realm in preparation for the *Oslo Triennial*. The event featured presentations by the participating IN TRANSIT initiatives *Oranssi* (Helsinki), *ØsterGRO* (Copenhagen), *Participatory City Lab* (London) and *Gängeviertel* (Hamburg) and was followed by a lively discussion of how top-down developments increasingly camouflage as bottom-up in order to make their development more attractive.

One such example is the waterfront development of *Bjørsvika*, a former central harbour area in Oslo. The development is an interesting example of the blurred lines between authentic bottom-up initiatives and top-down initiatives camouflaging as bottom-up in order

to make redevelopment schemes more attractive to a certain class. The urban development of the *Bjørsvika* area has been hotly debated. The developers have devised a public art strategy, which is supposed to contribute to diversity, local identity and civic co-ownership. In the planning of *Bjørsvika*, there has been a strong emphasis on commons. The term gives rise to associations with open spaces, available to all, and to an egalitarian mindset. In Norway, the term *allmenning* (commons) is closely connected to *allmannaretten* – the right to cross and temporarily use uncultivated land.



Bottom-up? Top-down. © Leona Lynen

In *Bjørsvika*, art has been incorporated and actively invited in by the developers and others with interests in the area. What were the desires of the commissioners when they included a programme for art and to what degree could the artists create an independent space to manoeuvre within such a commission? How would the artists relate to the risk of being instrumentalised within such a large economic and political machinery? It becomes impossible to look at art interventions in *Bjørsvika* without considering the wider political and social perspective¹.

We visited the *Bjørsvika* site, standing around a freshly-lit campfire, between allotments, a grain field and a community bakehouse, yet amidst the massive redevelopment of the former harbour area. The IN TRANSIT participants discussed how co-creation has become an attractive tool for urban policy makers and problematised the political staging of cultural practitioners.

PART #2 KIRKENES

BOTTOM-UP: STAY GROUNDED

From Oslo, IN TRANSIT made its way to Kirkenes. Kirkenes is situated at the very periphery, in the far northeastern part of Norway, 13km from the Russian border, 35km from the Finnish border and about 400km inwards from the arctic circle. The city of Kirkenes is ideally placed for cross border cooperation and cultural exchange in the Arctic. The local IN TRANSIT partner initiative *Pikene på Broen* was established in 1996 and has spent the past 20 years realising cross-border culture projects in the fields of fine arts, theater and performance.

Pikene på Broen's projects create meeting places and build bridges across borders and genres. Their motto is to bring the world to the *Barents sea* region and the *Barents* out into the world. *Pikene på Broen* challenges people's understanding of geopolitics, centre and periphery. Many of *Pikene på Broen's* projects and activities have started long term and positive exchanges across the border. It has

¹ To read the artists reflection on their engagement in the *Bjørsvika* redevelopment, access their full report here: <http://bit.ly/1Q4ccpM>

resulted in implementation of an artist in residency scheme, where artists from both sides of the border meet and develop art projects for the annual festival, the *Barents Spektakel*.

This year's festival theme was *Rethinking Location*. The theme reflected the vulnerability of place: the changing concept of place results in a constantly shifting relationship with the neighbouring countries, specifically Russia. Nothing is static in neighbourly relations and our perception of place does not exist in vacuum – when changes occur in one place, the interconnectivity of the region means that all are impacted. This became particularly relevant when, in late 2015, a new migration route sprung to life in the Arctic. By plane, train, taxi and even bicycle, refugees came across the northern Schengen border between Norway, Finland and Russia. *Pikene på Broen* has picked up the issue by organising *Transborder Cafés* to address how the communities on both sides of the border can integrate the newcomers.

Experiencing the vast differences from the mild and prosperous south to the rough and harsh northeastern end of the country's long, stretched coastline, IN TRANSIT Norway explored what role culture and bottom-up initiatives can play in central and peripheral development. While culture is often used as a catalyser for economic revitalisation in Oslo, it plays a different role in Kirkenes: can Kirkenes' unique geopolitical location be a factor in growing the town's cultural identity? Can expertise and specific knowledge of the crossborder region be the key to (peripheral) town development?



Kirkenes is ideally placed for cross-border collaboration in the Barents Sea region. © Leona Lynen



THE

WILLING CITY

MARCH 13TH

TO 14TH 2016

COPENHAGEN

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To many, Copenhagen has become a paragon of urban development and integrated urban design. The Danish architect and urban designer *Jan Gehl* spearheaded a human-centred approach to urban development, which is being sought after by Mayors all over the world, aiming to *copenhagenise* their cities. The Danish planning system has been historically qualified as holding a comprehensive integrated character, depicting a harmonised and coherent institutional and policy framework across different levels of planning administration. In recent years, most spatial planning responsibilities have been decentralised to the local level.

The final IN TRANSIT trip was themed The Willing City. Rather than discussing the barriers and challenges that come with engaging with city governments and local authorities, the two-day event in Copenhagen sought to explore the possibilities and opportunities that new cross-links between traditional administration and new actors could entail. What kind of political and legal frameworks will support participation and self-driven initiatives? What new interfaces with institutions and public administration does co-creative urban development need? What could the city administrations learn from civic initiatives?

Similarly to the other places that IN TRANSIT visited, there is an emerging movement towards citizen-led action in Copenhagen. Interestingly, the city of Copenhagen is rather open towards and supportive of bottom-up initiatives, trying to negotiate ways to collaborate.²

The two local IN TRANSIT partner initiatives are *GivRum* and *ØsterGRO*. *GivRum* activates empty buildings and public spaces by engaging with local stakeholders and mediating between the community, public sector, local authorities and businesses in neighbourhood development. With roots in Copenhagen's activist soil, they create new directions for citizen-led urban development. Today, *GivRum* works as consultants and advisors for cities and private developers in transforming empty buildings and public spaces with means of community building. They have established themselves as an organisation that champions the perspective of civil society in city development. They have experienced that the engaging method they are working with is more and more legitimate at a political level.

“MAYBE CIVIL SOCIETY HAS TO DEVELOP AS WELL AND NO LONGER SEE THEMSELVES IN THE OPPONENT'S ROLE TO THE GOVERNMENT. WHO KNOWS WHAT ALL COULD BE POSSIBLE IF WE WOULD TRULY CO-CREATE OUR CITIES.”

Jesper Koefoed-Melson, GivRum

The other IN TRANSIT partner initiative is *ØsterGRO*. *ØsterGRO* is Denmark's first urban rooftop farm and is situated in the *Copenhagen Climate Quarter*. The *Climate Quarter* is a project run by the City of Copenhagen. It is a neighbourhood-focused effort to adapt to climate change; as the urban farm is a good way to absorb water during heavy cloud bursts and also fits into the city's wider sustainability strategy, the *Climate Quarter* financially supported *ØsterGRO* to set up their initial infrastructure. Working together with the local municipality was crucial to the success of *ØsterGRO*. However, in addition to promoting sustainable farming and providing local families with seasonal vegetables, *ØsterGRO* can be seen as a space developer. Now, that the farm is on the rooftop as a public amenity for everyone to use and enjoy, the formerly empty offices below the

² Most recently, the City of Copenhagen has published their vision: Fælleskab København (Co-Create Copenhagen). Source: <http://bit.ly/1qFt0yE>

farm have become very sought after and the last year has seen new tenants moving into the building.

Similar to the discussion in Norway, voices during the Copenhagen trip also aired concerns that co-created and self-organised initiatives themselves can become a driving force in gentrification and displacement processes.



Kristian Skaarup (ØsterGRO) and Samantha Jones (Homebaked)
© Frederik Bramming

**“THERE’S NO DOUBT THAT THE
MUNICIPALITY IS AWARE THAT
WE ARE CREATING VALUE.”**

Kristian Skaarup, ØsterGROw

On a bike tour around Copenhagen, the INTRANSIT participants paid a visit to initiatives that in different ways have succeeded in activating unused spaces in co-creation with the Copenhagen municipality.

CONTAINERBY

www.detours.biz/projects/container-by

Until 2018, *Bureau Detours*³ has been given shelter on a narrow strip of land between the elevated rail tracks and office buildings. As the zoning plan prohibits any temporary buildings on the space, it stood empty and unused for years. *Bureau Detours* saw the potential for temporary use and activated the space through building *Containerby* (container city). They proposed their concept to the area renewal office and were granted temporary access to the land until 2018 and given funds to realise their idea. *Bureau Detours* wanted to provide an amenity for the neighbourhood: a fablab, music studio, bike and wood workshops, a greenhouse, a kitchen as well as spaces for workshops and a communal garden with a chicken house – all housed in containers.



Containerby © Frederik Bramming

Containerby is an interesting example of a local municipality reaching out to bottom-up initiatives in order to co-create spaces that activate the neighbourhood. The municipality trusted *Bureau Detours*

³ Bureau Detours is a creative organisation with great interest in creating social environments through free-building experimentation in public spaces. They operate on various platforms in a mix of art, design, architecture and city planning. They aim to inspire young and old to relate and bond with their city and neighbourhood.

as they had a track record of successful temporary interventions in formerly derelict spaces. *Containerby* is meant to show the neighbourhood that the formerly void space can be used. In the future the municipality wants to turn it into a public park with a walking path.

ØEN

www.oencph.com

Similar to *Containerby*, the initiators of *Øen* – a non-profit art space located in a formerly empty small house – had approached the municipality to get permission to use the derelict house. The municipality granted them access under the condition that they would renovate the house and make it publicly accessible. *Øen* perceives it as a win-win situation: they had free access to the building and support from a local area fund while the municipality found a reliable partner that would activate the neighbourhood and create a community around the space.



Marisa Denker (Connect the Dots) sharing her experience with attendees of the conference © Leona Lynen

The initiatives we visited in Copenhagen felt that, in recent years, there has been a change from a culture of “no” to one of “yes, and” in the municipality. Albeit being aware of the role they are playing in urban regeneration, they see this change as a positive development and believe that cooperation with the municipality is necessary to truly co-create the city.

The IN TRANSIT Copenhagen event coincided with the *Copenhagen Architecture Festival*. IN TRANSIT recognised a great potential for collaboration and knowledge exchange and therefore jointly organised a one-day conference. The conference aimed at stimulating various local actors to question and discuss the local approaches and the role of co-creation in the future city development. As a part of the conference the visiting IN TRANSIT initiatives OurFarm (Dublin), Connect the Dots (Dublin), North Kelvin Meadow (Glasgow), Homebaked (Liverpool) and Gängeviertel (Hamburg) shared their knowledge about self-organisation and user-led urban planning processes in their neighbourhoods.

The various discussions throughout the IN TRANSIT Copenhagen trip concluded that it is important to showcase co-created user-led initiatives in order to establish a better understanding of the value that they create. There is a need for more flexible formal structures that meet the needs of bottom-up ideas. Trust on both sides was mentioned as the key to successful co-creation with public authorities.

“POLITICIANS AND MANAGERS MUST DARE TO GIVE UP SOME CONTROL AND DEVIATE FROM FAMILIAR ROUTINES. ON THE OTHER HAND, CITIZENS MUST GET USED TO NOT ONLY BE DEMANDING CUSTOMERS IN THE WELFARE SHOP, BUT THEY ALSO NEED TO TAKE PART OF THE RESPONSIBILITY. IT TAKES TIME TO GET USED TO FOR ALL PARTIES!”

Dr. Annika Agger, Co-creation researcher at Roskilde University

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www.goethe.de/intransit



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