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POLITICAL SPACE MATTERS:

On the importance of urban spaces for the political engagement
of ordinary citizens

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Predrag Milić

gemeinsam mit / in collaboration with

Viktor Hildebrandt

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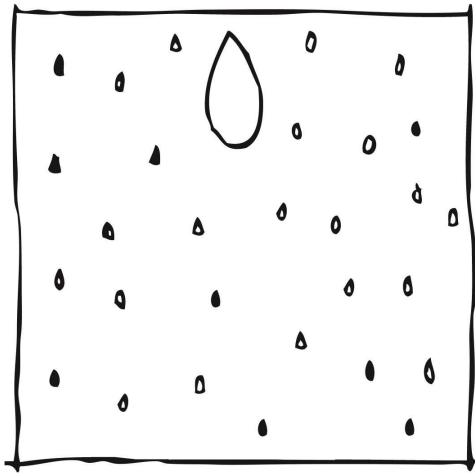
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Hildebrandt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Viktor Hildebrandt

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Predrag Milić', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Predrag Milić

ABSTRACT



This book addresses everybody with a serious interest in politics, especially those who are concerned with the role of ordinary citizens in the government of public affairs. It investigates the relation between political action and space. The central question is: How do the spaces where citizens are supposed to / would like to participate in politics influence their engagement? How does the immediate surrounding affect if citizens act, what they do, and what results from their engagement? The fundamental assumption is that there are better and worse spaces for acting politically, just as there are better and worse spaces for learning, playing football or drinking coffee. This book wants to find out what it actually is that makes a space better or worse from the perspective of political actors. Based on the writings of Hannah Arendt, it first carves out the meaning of political action and then derives from this conceptualisation a set of principles of good political space. The more a particular space embodies these principles, the better it will be for political actors. The principles can be applied not only to evaluate existing political spaces but also to improve them and to design new political spaces. The book closes with a series of case studies that may be understood as exercises in analysing urban political spaces designed by or for ordinary citizens. Each essay reveals the importance of space for political action from a different angle. By and large, the point that this book wants to drive home is the following: If in the future more citizens should / will become engaged in politics more directly, then we need to pay close attention to the spaces they use!

Erasmus Mundus Master Course in Urban Studies [4Cities]
academic year 2016

Master Thesis



POLITICAL SPACE MATTERS:

On the importance of urban spaces for the
political engagement of ordinary citizens

by
VIKTOR HILDEBRANDT & PREDRAG MILIĆ

supervised by
ROSA MARIA DE LA FUENTE FERNANDEZ

September 1, 2016



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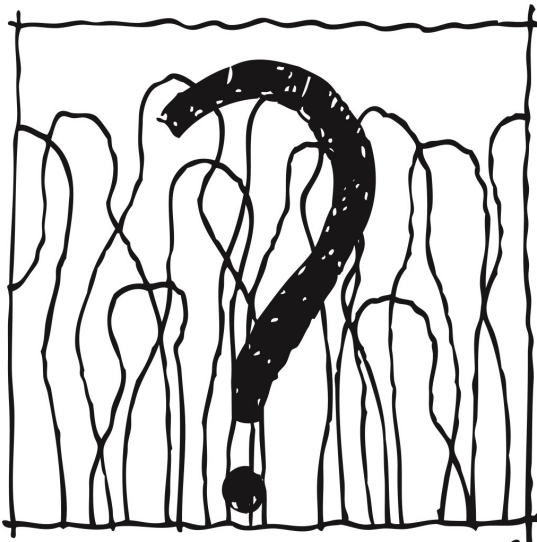
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Dear Reader,

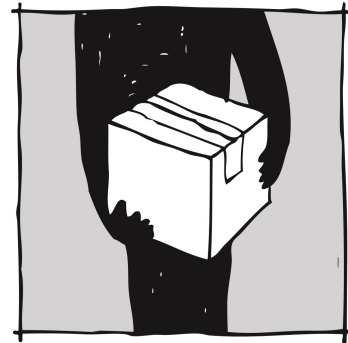
When students complete their education they have to demonstrate that they mastered their field. We studied *European Urban Studies* and this is our Master Thesis. It is supposed to be an “original piece of research” which, being “built upon a balanced mix of theoretical and empirical developments”, contributes to an “ongoing debate within and/or beyond academia” (4Cities, 2014).



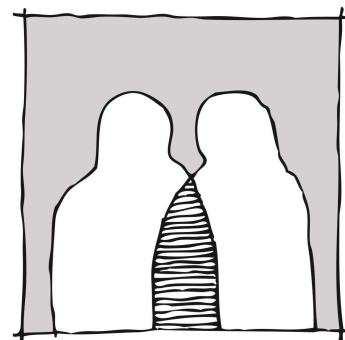
The debate we that would like to contribute to is very old, never runs dry and reaches far beyond the borders of the academic realm. It concerns democracy, that is, the question which role ordinary citizens should play in the government of public affairs. After more than two millennia of discussion, what is left to say? How could we possibly contribute? Our central contribution consists in spotlighting and exploring the often neglected relation between political action and urban space. More specifically, we analyse how the design of particular urban spaces reflects and affects political engagement and participation of ordinary citizens.



Secondly, we have tried to show that the thought of Hannah Arendt - whose *oeuvre* is full of metaphors, side notes and entire passages that indicate great spatial awareness - can become the root of fruitful research in the field of Urban Studies.



Last but not least, we hope that our investigation of six ongoing processes of space production and space utilisation in six European capital cities may stimulate discussion and enhance mutual understanding between different actors in situ.



The diagnosis that cities, especially metropolises are incredibly complex phenomena is commonplace. Consequently, no single discipline can provide a complete analysis of the

urban realm; and *interdisciplinarity* is so to speak part of the DNA of Urban Studies. The entire 4Cities master program builds on this premise and we are very grateful that we were given the opportunity to study and work between disciplinary borders for two years. This book lies at the intersection of urban studies, political theory and architecture; it has been written by a trained philosopher and a trained architect.

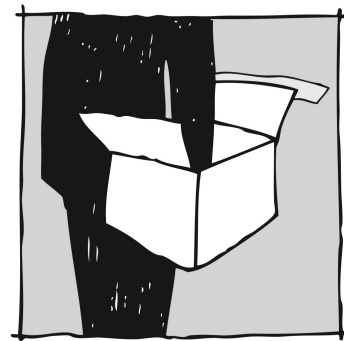


Despite ubiquitous praise, interdisciplinarity is a double-edged sword. While its great potential rests in building bridges between disciplines, in developing a common language and looking at the same topic from different perspectives; interdisciplinary work always runs the risk that in the end nobody is really satisfied with the results. Each discipline has different standards, specificities and interests. Moving between them may in the worst case lead to misunderstandings and discontent on all sides.



Hence we would like to highlight the limitations of this work from the very beginning: Our analysis of Arendt's ideas could be more detailed, especially in the eyes of philosophers. Political scientists will probably be interested in further exploration of the similarities and differences between Arendt's position and other

contemporary writers. Our case study analyses of urban political spaces for ordinary citizens could be more extensive from the perspective of urbanists. Finally, an investigation of the qualities of existing political spaces, which are usually reserved for elected representatives, would surely warrant new insights for architects. Yes, there is indeed much more to say about political space and we hope that the limitations of our work will not cause annoyance but, to the contrary, stimulate the exploratory urge of researchers from different fields.



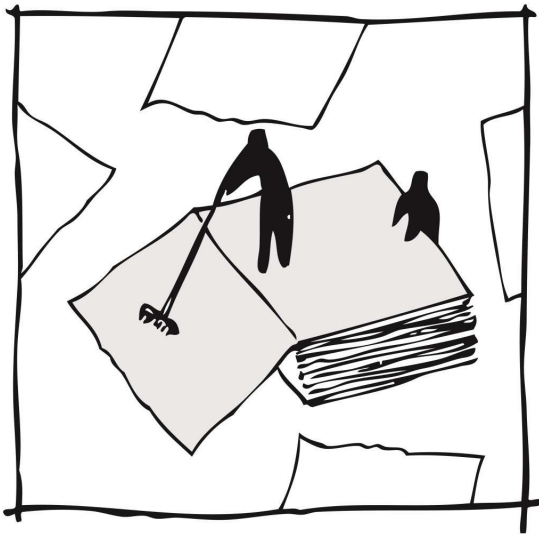
Our aim, in fact, was never to answer all questions about political space, but to offer a new perspective onto questions of democracy and to provide the foundation for future investigations into political space matters.



While these limitations result primarily from a lack of time, energy, knowledge and willingness to work more or to do better, there are also formal limitations that we had to comply with, most notably the maximum length of this thesis. All in all, we could use no more than 216.000 characters (including spaces, footnotes and references) to say what we had to say. From the very beginning, these formal limitations were secondary to us; we did not allow them to limit

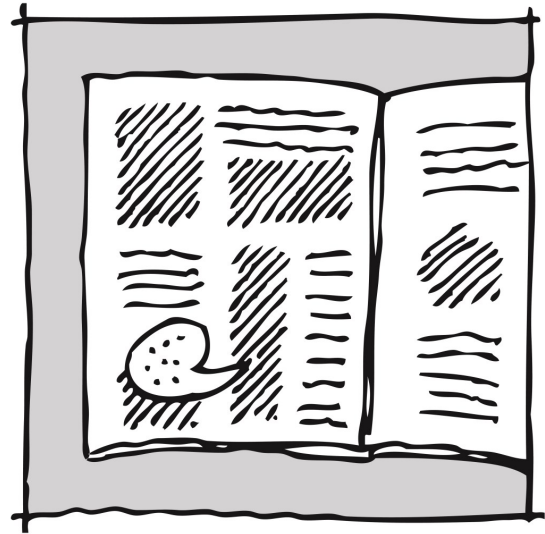
neither our theoretical reflections, nor our studies of the real world.

But of course, in the end we could not ignore them either. The result, basically, is a thesis cut in half. Three out of six case studies and ten out of 26 excursions into political action ended up in the annex just so we would not exceed the number of 216.000 characters. Obviously we hope that you, dear Reader, will find enough time and leisure to read the entire text.

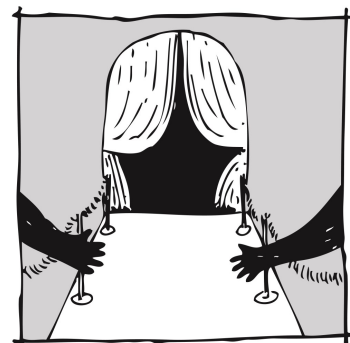


What is more, you will notice that we work with relatively few references to the ongoing discourse in academia. This has several reasons: First of all, few people have written about the relation between space and political action. Since Arendt's work is not part of the usual repertoire of urbanists, it was more important to portray her approach to politics than to connect thoughts with those of others. Most importantly, we were *two* to write this thesis. Authors who write and think alone usually remain in close touch with the texts of other authors since they are their only interlocutors. But since we studied, worked and even lived together, our conversations dealt with but also lead us away from the texts we studied. It was not always easy to find the way back, and often it seemed more advisable to go continue and to develop our own thoughts further. The result - and we are convinced that this is the greatest strength of our work - is a thesis that does not

only repeat and rehash what others have written, but instead offers something *original*.



Finally, dear Reader, you will perhaps be surprised by the great number of illustrations that accompany the text. This is not typical for academic texts, which - for good reasons - focus on precision, clarity and accuracy. Nonetheless, we decided to design, rather than “just” to write a thesis because we believe that, on the one hand, the illustrations increase rather than decrease the comprehensibility of the text they accompany; and because, on the other hand, we hope that a thesis which not only has a point to drive home but also pleases the eyes of its beholders, is less likely to end up as a dust collector in some university library.

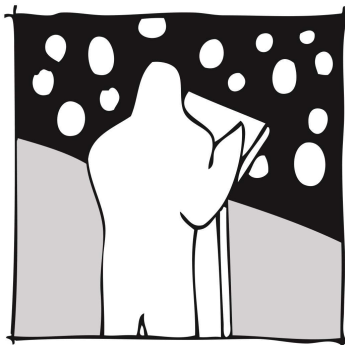


We wish you a nice journey into political space matters.

**WE INVESTIGATE
POLITICAL SPACE
MATTERS BECAUSE
WE ARE
CONVINCED THAT
POLITICAL SPACE
MATTERS!**



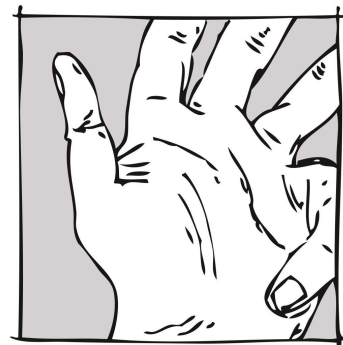
Research Question



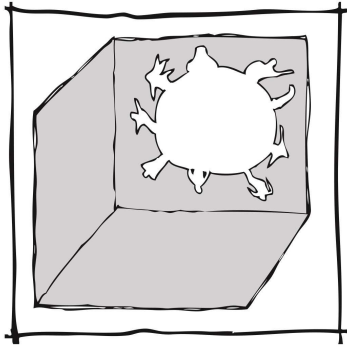
In February 2016 Yanis Varoufakis took the stage of the Berliner Volksbühne and launched *DiEM25*, the Democracy in Europe Movement that aims to "democratise" Europe until 2025. His speech, which he delivered not as a professional politician but as a regular citizen, quite literally marked the appearance of a new actor on Europe's political stage.



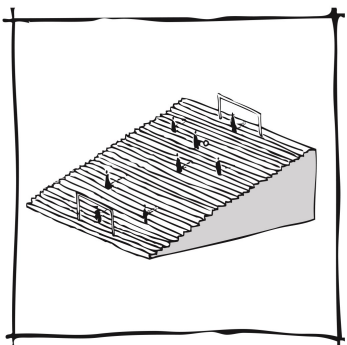
The movement's goals are very noble and thousands of members who joined overnight prove that many Europeans are indeed longing for a more democratic continent. What really caught our attention about that evening, however, was not what Varoufakis said but *where* he chose to say it: Why a theatre stage? Why *this* stage? Was it a good or a bad choice? Obviously we have to assume that Varoufakis could have spoken in many other places and, moreover, that he consciously decided to speak not anywhere but in the Volksbühne. Why?



The reasons are quite evident: Berlin, to begin with, is one of Europe's political hotspots. Here, in the vicinity of Reichstag and Kanzleramt, the media would surely be attentive to what Varoufakis had to say. Further, the Volksbühne is an established institution and associated with certain political messages. Its name suggests that this particular stage is not only one for the people but also one that belongs to the people. Due to the physical setup of the theatre all eyes rested on Varoufakis when he spoke. The acoustics were excellent, many people could attend the event, the atmosphere the space creates fit the character of the event and so on.

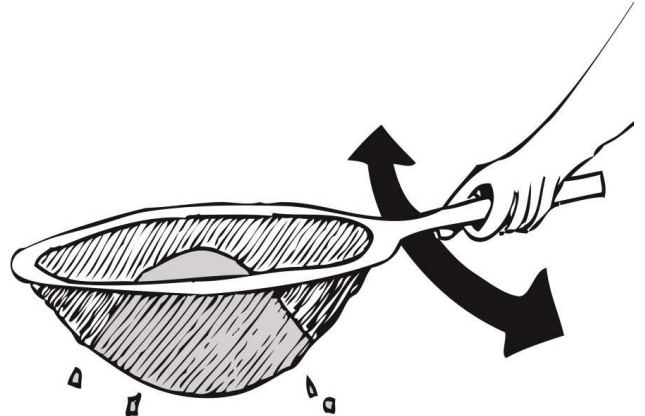


By and large, it seems that the environment in which he appeared was absolutely relevant to Varoufakis. Space mattered. This, of course, is no big surprise since, after all, we are surrounded by spaces that are specifically designed for, and dedicated to all kinds of different activities. In our cities we find spaces to eat, relax, pray, party, work, shop, study, read, swim, play, mingle ... and in all these cases space matters quite a lot. The same seems to be true for politics. In fact, political spaces are so important that we can barely imagine mayors without town halls, parliamentarians without parliaments or ambassadors without embassies. Politics and space are related. More precisely, we have reason to assume that the immediate environment of political actors affects their ability to act, their actions and the results of their actions.

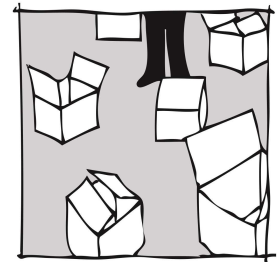


Just as some football fields, cafés, theatres, cultural centres, parks, schools, hospitals etc. are better than others, we also have to assume that some political spaces are better than others. The question then is:

WHAT CHARACTERISES GOOD POLITICAL SPACES?

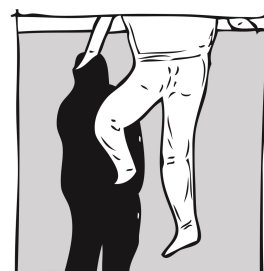


Why is it, in other words, that some spaces offer a better environment for acting politically than others? How can we tell the difference



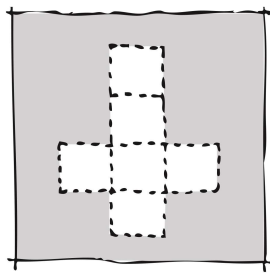
between the good and the bad ones, the more and the less appropriate? What does it take to set up a good political space and what may be its actual influence? If our political initiative, engagement and participation depend, at least to some extent, on the surrounding in which we act, then these questions are relevant for literally everybody who is or would like to become politically active.

This book aims to lay out the theoretical



foundations for the analysis and the design of political space. It is addressed not only to those who participate politically within the existing institutional and spatial framework but

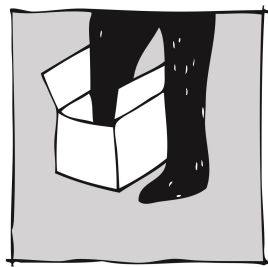
also to those who, like the members of *DiEM25*, are struggling to turn the Europe's political system inside out.



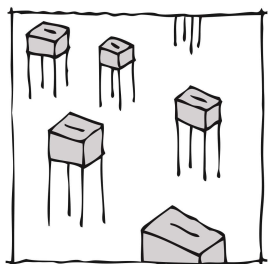
Now it may be objected that the answer to our question is only too obvious, just as (in retrospect) it seems almost self-evident that Varoufakis launched *DiEM25* in

the Volksbühne. By and large, it may be claimed, the prime examples of political spaces, especially town halls and parliaments, are so similar to one another all around the world and have changed so little over the years that their similarity and continuity cannot possibly be accidental. *These* must be good political spaces. Consequently, it may be argued, any evaluation should be guided, and any new design should be inspired by the existing icons of political space. Hence there would be no need for further investigation.

To some extent, this objection is justified. We agree that many - though by no means all - of the existing political spaces are suitable environments for political actors. But this fact does not render a systematic analysis of *why* they are good superfluous.



On the contrary, the current developments in the discussion about democracy make such an analysis practically unavoidable: "Democracy" belongs to the class of words that should be

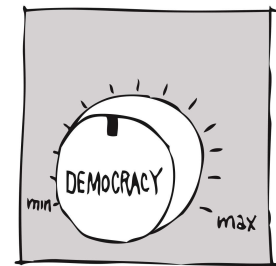


used very carefully. But it seems safe to say that government based on the *rule by the people* must rest on the political engagement and participation of ordinary citizens like you and me or, for that matter, Yanis

Varoufakis. Until recently it seemed that "participation" is a synonym for "voting" and that "engagement" always refers to involvement with protest-movements, lobby-groups or political parties. Today however there is a

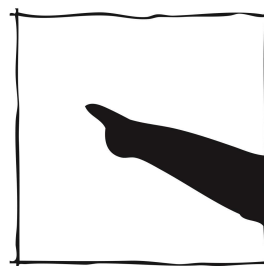
widespread demand for "more" or "real" or "better" democracy. It is uttered not only by the members of *DiEM25* but also can also be heard in parliaments and town halls, at universities and dinner tables; we read about it in scientific journals and daily newspapers alike. On the other hand, even those who, for whatever reasons, are sceptical towards systematic political changes forecast a redefinition of the relation between citizens and the state as a consequence of a significant decline in voter participation and party-memberships which is visible, at least as a tendency, all over Europe.

Consequently, the members of countless civic initiatives, politicians, scholars, journalists and others are discussing how the political institutions, processes and mechanisms in



Europe could be improved in favour of democracy. Obviously, there is no consensus about what should be done. Some claim that we should abolish professional politicians, political parties and most if not all societal institutions entirely. Others suggest a reform of representative democracy from the inside. Many or even most of us are simply not sure; perplexed by the incredible theoretical and practical complexity of the question at hand. In this situation, the only thing that almost everybody can agree on, it seems, is that more citizens should (or at least will soon) be engaged in political affairs more directly.

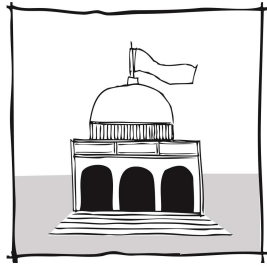
If political space matters - an assumption that



everybody who has been politically active will probably confirm - than this can only mean two things: Either we have to adapt the existing political spaces significantly or we have to create new environments, specifically designed for the engagement and participation of ordinary citizens in public affairs. And insofar as citizens already become more engaged in political affairs, which, at the moment, is

primarily happening on the urban scale, we have to be able to evaluate the spaces they are using.

We cannot - and that is the crux - simply refer to town halls and parliaments as the right political spaces because, conceptually speaking, they are designed to *exclude*



rather than include ordinary citizens. In fact, it is their most fundamental characteristic that only elected representatives can use them as political actors, at least in the (narrower) sense of participating in the government of public affairs. Hence if we agree that “real” democracy demands that also ordinary citizens can participate in political affairs, then the environment in which they act cannot be the same environment that currently excludes them. To be sure, this does not mean that a good political space for regular citizens will have nothing in common with a good political space for full-time politicians. On the contrary, we have good reason to believe that many aspects will be similar. It just means that these two environments cannot be exactly the same because in a certain sense they are opposites.



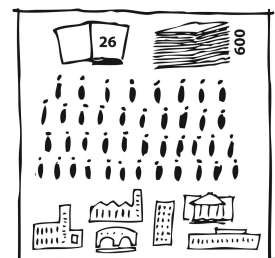
Thus we have to think about what it actually is that characterises good political space in order to design appropriate environments where the “general rearrangement of the way in which we think about the relationship between citizens and politics” (Moro, 2015: 499) that currently so many Europeans hope for and anticipate, can become reality.

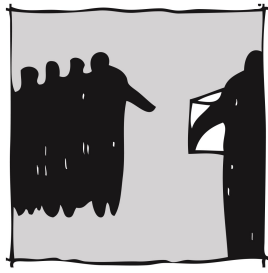
Literature Review



Under these circumstances it is quite surprising that almost nobody in the academic realm seems to be interested in political space matters. While it has been recognised that the goal of political participation is the creation of “new spaces for deliberation” (Nanz and Fritsche, 2012: 10), it has not yet been investigated what characterises suitable spaces for deliberation. A little pointedly we may say that everybody talks about political change, but nobody talks about political space.

The study *Political and civic engagement - Multidisciplinary Perspectives* is the most telling case in point we could possibly find: The volume claims to “provide a comprehensive overview of current understandings of the factors and processes that influence citizens' patterns of political and civic engagement” (Barrett and Zani, 2015: 1). But in 26 academic papers which together fill roughly 600 pages and which were written by 40 contributors from different European universities, we could not find even a single reference to *space* as a factor regarding the political participation of citizens.

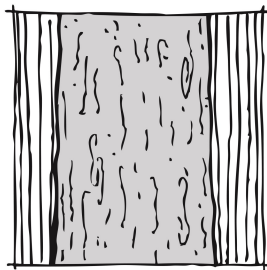




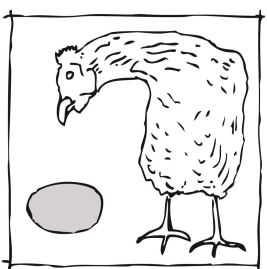
To be sure, some authors have made it very clear that political space matters. But only very few of them actually follow up on this idea. In *The*

Down-Deep Delight of Democracy, for instance, Mark Purcell highlights that “we need ways to create physical space for democracy” (Purcell, 2013: 151). But since he is focused on the “interior struggle” (Purcell, 2013: 154) of becoming democratic and not on political interactions of citizens, and since he is more interested in overcoming political representation than in creating new political institutions, Purcell does not distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate political spaces and he does not say anything about what makes them what they are. Instead, he repeats the mantra “Give them space as if any just any space would do.

Why is the importance of political space so commonly overlooked, forgotten or ignored? It seems that prejudices, disciplinary boundaries and even a very reliable practical intuition are in the way of a systematic discussion of the issue:



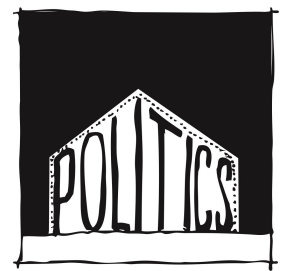
We tend to believe that space is always political because questions about the borders, ownership and utilisation of space are so evidently political in nature.



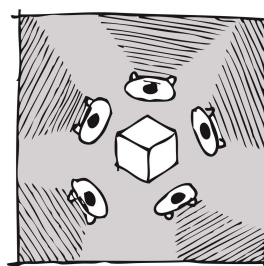
But to discuss space as a political concern is not the same as to discuss space as a locus of politics.

Even if we agree that space is not political per se, we are still inclined to believe that any space *can* be political. Whether we think of parliaments and city halls, the public squares and boulevards

of our cities, coffee houses and universities, lamp posts during electoral campaigns, Rosa Parks who remained seated in a bus or Willy Brandt who knelt down in Warsaw, the battlefields of history or even the meeting rooms of companies - every space seems to be at least potentially a space for political actors. Yet we have to distinguish between spaces that attained to political relevance because something happened to happen there that was politically relevant, and spaces where people act politically. A battlefield for example is not a political space. In fact, it only becomes relevant in political terms when all genuinely political forms of action are exhausted. If we would seriously claim that battlefields are political spaces, then we should not be surprised in case politicians suddenly decide that arm wrestling is a proper way to settle their disagreements. And even if every space was potentially political, this would not imply that every space has the *same* potential for politics to be at home.



Those who most appreciate and depend on suitable spaces for political action often seem to find them intuitively, just like Yanis Varoufakis. But since they are politically active, there is little time for theoretical reflections about the spaces they are using.

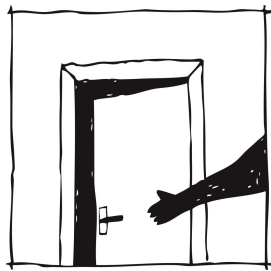


Questions of political space lie between academic disciplines. Political scientists, it seems, often do not concern themselves with political space because the topic is

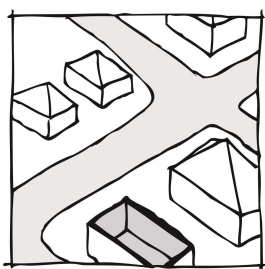
too closely related to the field of architecture. Architects, on the other hand, are seldom confronted with political spaces simply because

such spaces are often very durable; and if they are, their work is related to spaces for full-time politicians. Urbanists - this is at least our impression after a two year master programme in the field - seem to be too busy thinking about the political struggle over space to really pay attention to the spaces of political action.

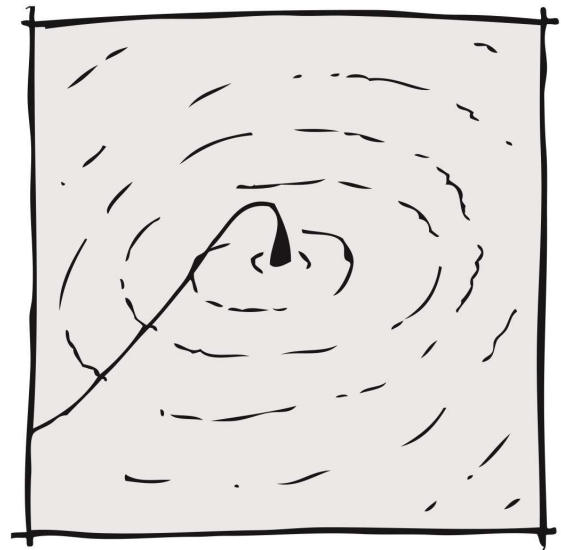
Since political participation is typically initiated from above and often lasts only for a couple of days or weeks, we tend to understand citizens as *guests* in the political arena. Citizens always seem to follow an invitation. As they never appear as hosts, it does not even occur to us that they might need or benefit from spaces that are not just provisional, but instead prepared with some measure of diligence, not to mention permanent political spaces that would actually be dedicated to ordinary citizens only.



Though it has been claimed repeatedly that the nation state is losing political importance, it is still the standard unit of political thinking. Hence when they hear the words “political” and “space” in the same sentence, most people immediately think of national borders. We may of course look at an entire country as a political space, but we should not overlook the influence of the *immediate* environments of the actors. The



standard units for thinking about political space - considering also our focus on the participation of ordinary citizens - will be rather the room, the building or perhaps the neighbourhood. To think of space in such terms makes our whole endeavour much more concrete.



Nonetheless, there are some authors who concern themselves with the relation between politics and space. Unfortunately, their analyses are either relatively shallow (we will not give examples here) or they focus on different - which, to be sure, does not mean less relevant - aspects of the topic. In the following we shall give a brief overview of those few publications that we found inspiring and which we shall refer to in order to carve out the specificities of our own approach towards political space matters:

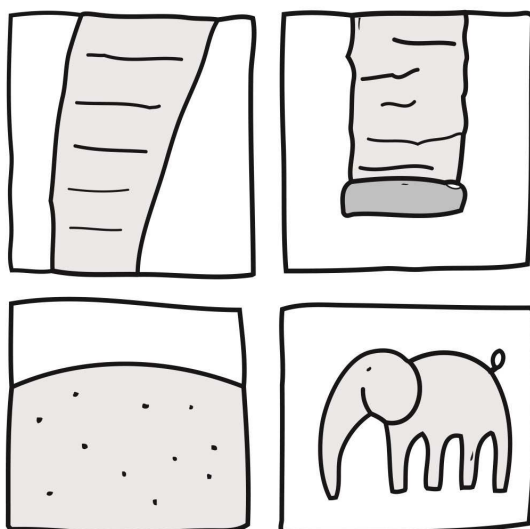


In *The Politics of Public Space in Republican Rome* Amy Russell dedicates much work to the analysis of political space. Interestingly, she claims that the “public and the political, both in studies of the ancient world and in contemporary life, are often too casually equated with each other”, and that to consider “the spatial context of political action is one way to incorporate a larger range of actors in our calculations, even if the result is only to be aware that certain people are excluded from

political space” (Russell, 2016: ix). But as the title of her book indicates, Russell only focuses on ancient Rome without really building bridges to the world in which we have come to live.



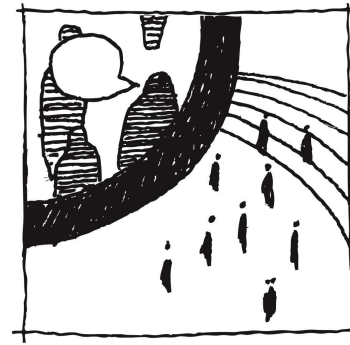
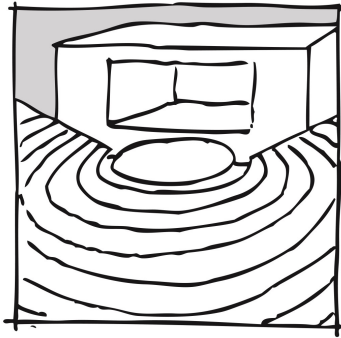
The study *Designing Democracy: How designers are changing democratic spaces and processes* (Design Commission, 2015) illustrates that the environment of political actors is not natural but always designed, prepared and arranged by somebody. The first chapter of the study is dedicated to the analysis of different parliament buildings but unfortunately, the editors have considered only spaces for elected governments and they regard citizens not as political agents but rather as visitors of political space. Moreover, the entire analysis of political space is based on quite a few strong claims and assumptions about politics and democracy which, though they may contain some truth, are not supported by solid argumentation.



Warren Magnusson is the author of *Local Self-Government and the Right to the City* and one of the few writers who actually use the term political space” which, as he points out himself, is “not a common one” (Magnusson, 2015: 20). But Magnusson understands political space not as the immediate environment of political actors, but as the unique and intangible context of any form of political activity. This context, he argues, is “created on the basis of understandings that generate particular historical and geographical limits, points of origins, and modes of integration, transformation, and struggle.” (Magnusson, 2015: 153) Hence for Magnusson political space is something that can change, but it is not something that can be changed and therefore we are, from a theoretical standpoint, not in a position to criticise political space for not being adequate, or to plan and adapt the spaces where people act politically.



The book *(IN)formal L.A.: The Space of Politics* reflects what contemporary architects think about the relation between space and politics. Interesting thoughts about appropriate spatial design for political actors flash up here and there, but they are largely overshadowed by the editors’ concern for space as “a function of politics.” (Jones, 2013: 11) What the authors are really interested in, it seems, is the political message of a particular space and the democratisation of the process of space production. This is understandable enough keeping in mind that “ninety-nine per cent of architectural work [...] does not have an agenda that goes beyond an idea of construction” (Jones, 2013: 118), but it is still not particularly helpful for answering our main question.



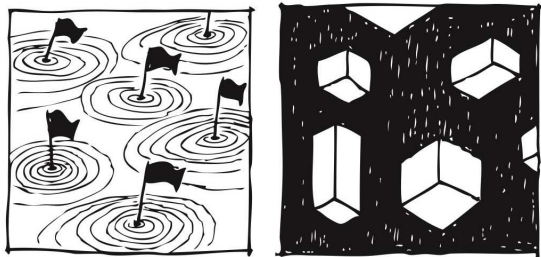
In his Raoul Wallenberg lecture titled *The Spaces of Democracy*, Richard Sennett analyses the two central political spaces of ancient Athens. He first distinguishes the *agora*, the open public space designed for all kinds of loose encounters between citizens, from the *pnnyx*, a space of concerted and disciplined deliberation and decision-making. Subsequently, Sennett points out that while the *agora* is still alive, as it were, in contemporary urban public squares, the *pnnyx* has become practically extinct in modern societies. Today, Sennett argues, ordinary citizens lack spaces where they can gather in order to deliberate about public affairs. Those who aspire to (re)create such spaces, he says, will find important clues in the architecture of theatres. In turn, Sennett also points out that theatres are good spaces for public deliberation and could more often be used as such. Just like the *pnnyx*, theatres offer an environment suitable to focus over longer periods of time as well as good acoustics and visibility. He concludes, therefore, that “designers need to pay attention to the architecture of theatres as possible political spaces.” (Sennett, 1998: 27) In 2006 Sennett restated the same point in a slightly different manner in another lecture titled *The Open City*. His analysis is precise, insightful and concrete. We fully agree with Sennett's argument and in the course of this book we will come back to the great potential of theatres as political spaces more than once. Sennett makes interesting points about theatres as political spaces, but his analysis does not allow us to *systematically* analyse any given space with respect to its politicalness.

“Participation is an issue that has everything to do with the physical city and its design. For example, in the ancient polis, the Athenians put the semi-circular theatre to political use; this architectural form provided good acoustics and a clear view and of speakers in debates; moreover, it made the perception of other people's responses during debates possible. In modern times, we have no similar model of democratic space – certainly no clear imagination of an urban democratic space.” (Sennett, 2006: 4)

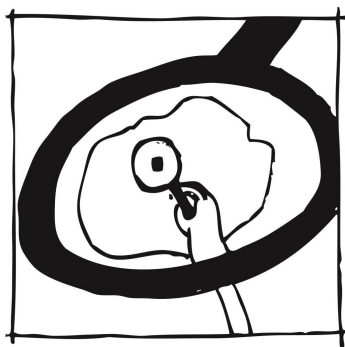


Finally, there is John Parkinson. As far as we know, Parkinson is the only author who approached the relation between politics and space in a systematic way. Further, he offers just about everything that we were missing so far: solid arguments, an analysis of political spaces not only for representatives but also for regular citizens, a strong focus on specific locations and on the world in which we live today. If we

would have come across his intriguing study called *Democracy & Public Space - The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance* earlier in the process, it would probably have guided our entire research. But, after all, we are happy to have found Parkinson's book only towards the end of our own journey. This way we developed a distinct approach towards political space. Even though the differences between his enterprise and our work may appear to be marginal at first glance, we believe that they are quite significant.

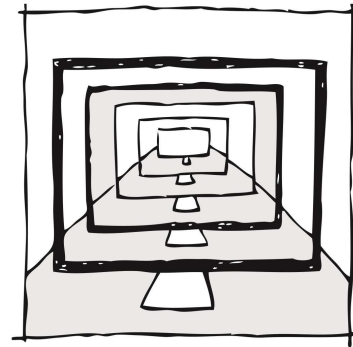


Parkinson is interested in the physical sites of democracy whereas we are focused on political space, understood as the direct environment of political actors or, to put in another way, as the type of space where people act politically. Three major distinctions result from this initial difference:



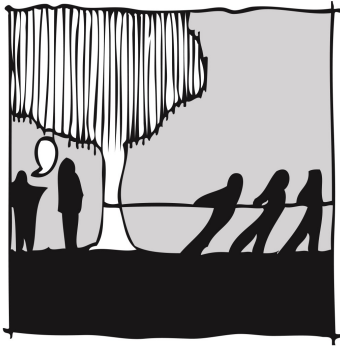
Parkinson wants to answer two questions: “what space does liberal, deliberative democracy require for its performance, and how well is that space provided in a selection of cities?” (Parkinson, 2012: 199) He is not primarily interested in evaluating or designing particular spaces but in judging the *system* of which these spaces are a *physical* part. In contrast, we do not try to assess whether or not and to which extent a system of spaces, taken together, provides the

conditions for performing democracy. Rather, our goal is to assess the quality of particular spaces for acting politically and to lay down the theoretical foundation for designing new appropriate political spaces, especially for ordinary citizens. Hence our central conceptual notions are different from Parkinson's.



Parkinson's conception of space is limited to the analogue world. His vantage point is the current euphoria about transposing democracy from the actual into the virtual world and shows that and in which exact sense democracy will always depend on physical spaces and therefore can never become a completely virtual phenomenon. Parkinson concludes that “democracy depends to a surprising extent on the availability of physical, public space, even in our allegedly digital world.” (Parkinson, 2012: 2) Our point of origin, on the other hand, is the assumption that the space where people act politically is relevant for their actions and thus for politics as a whole. We understand space not primarily as a physical location but rather as the *environment* of political actors, which, quite literally, is that which is around (*environ*) the actors. This environment, though it is never under total control, is created and its qualities differ from space to space. (We use the term “space” rather than “environment” because the latter evokes images of nature and of being untouched while the former insinuates human interference and conscious design.) Understood as an environment, space can be both analogue and virtual and, moreover, it is not solely a matter of physical objects and the meanings that are attached to them, but also of laws, conventions, guidelines and institutionalised social practices, which are all non-physical

elements but which nonetheless apply to the respective space just as material elements belong to it.



Parkinson is interested in *democracy* as a form of government and how it is enacted or, as he says, “performed”. What we would like to analyse is not a political system but a type of human activity, namely political action. We would like to describe what we do when we act politically and also highlight the inherent meaning of political action in the context of human life. In other words, we would like to ask not only *What is going on?* but also *Why we should care?* Here we paint a very different picture than Parkinson who describes democracy – just as most other scholars would do too - as “a set of principles and decision procedures for resolving conflicts” (Parkinson, 2012: 15). Drawing on the writings of Hannah Arendt, we see in political action much more than merely an activity that we *need* to engage in because otherwise we could not resolve conflicts without bloodshed.



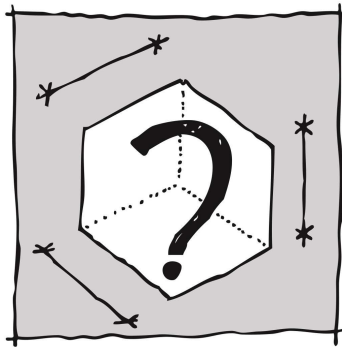
To sum up: Varoufakis did not launch *DiEM25* in the Berliner Volksbühne by accident but instead he selected the space because of its particular qualities. Varoufakis and all other political actors depend on suitable spaces. We have set out to investigate what actually renders a particular space more or less appropriate for acting politically. We would like to find out what characterises good political spaces. A simple reference to the existing political spaces, though they may be pretty good, does not answer this question which, due to current political developments, becomes more and more pressing. We hope that our research can contribute to the discussion about the relation between politics and space; and that it can enable us to judge and improve existing, as well as to design new political spaces.

Structure

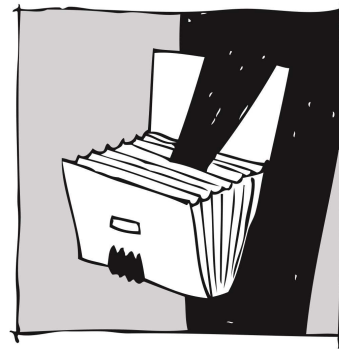


This book is based on the assumption that the space around political actors influences their actions. Consequently, we have to distinguish between better and worse spaces for political action. In order to assess whether or not and in which exact sense a particular space is good *for* acting politically, we first have to analyse what it really means to act politically. Without a clear

concept of political action, to put it differently, no good political space could ever be designed; just like we could not design good schools, parks or hospitals without making up our minds about what it means to learn, to relax or to heal. The first part of this book is thus dedicated, so to speak, to the word “political” in political space. We consider not only what is going on when people act politically, but we also highlight what this means for our lives.



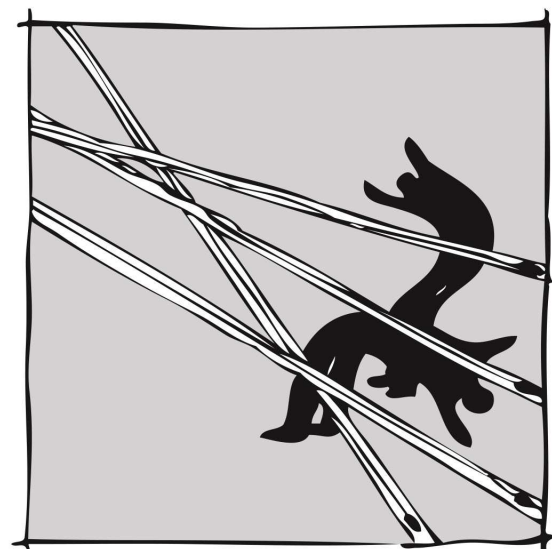
The second part, in turn, is dedicated to the word “space” in political space. We shall characterise political space as a type or category of space with the help of a set of principles which we derive from the different aspects of political action. The more of these principles a particular space *embodies* and the more evident this embodiment, the better it will usually be for political actors. Subsequently, we outline how these principles can be recognised and put into practice in particular spaces. We emphasise that political spaces, since they are the worldliest spaces we know, can only be judged in and designed for a specific context. *The good political space, in other words, does not exist.* Further, we elaborate on the means and the potential influence that the designers of political space have on political actors, their actions and thus on politics as a whole.



Taken together, parts one and two form the theoretical foundations of political space matters. The third part, finally, is a collection of six essays which will take us to different political spaces in Vienna, Belgrade, Berlin, Brussels, Madrid and Copenhagen. Each case has its own specificities and each essay stands for itself. Together they are a colourful illustration of possible applications of the conceptual framework presented in parts one and two.

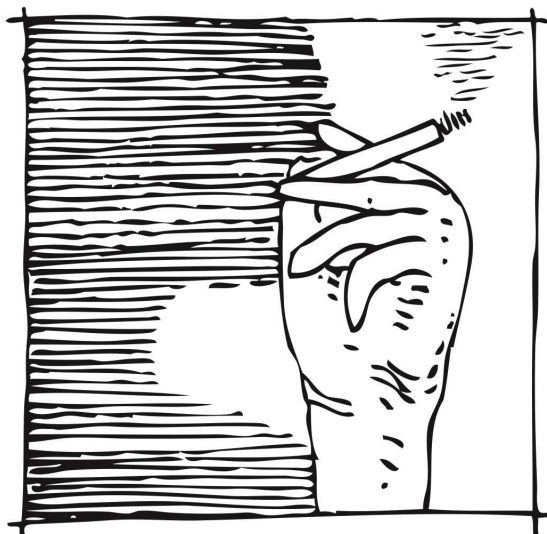
*Due to formal restrictions around half of our analysis of political action as well as three of the six case studies had to be annexed.

Methodology



A few more words should be said about our approach towards the topic of political space. First of all, even though this book was written in the context of and though aims to contribute to

the ongoing debate about democracy (in Europe) it is not directly concerned with questions of democracy. Since we are interested in the spaces where people act politically, democracy as a political system concerns us only marginally. Political systems certainly influence which opportunities we have in reality to take political initiative; and the character of political action, in turn, influences how politics can be organised. But conceptually speaking it is not only possible but downright necessary to draw a clear line between system and activity. The system in which we act politically changes neither what we are doing when we act politically, nor what it means for our lives that we act politically. Hence for now we consciously avoid any link to the discussion about representative versus radical democracy, the pros and cons of *autogestion* or topics like the *Right to the City*. Still, these and other keywords will immediately become central as soon as we go, so to speak, only one step further.



At this point, in any case, the challenge was to find authors who seriously concern themselves with political action rather than with political systems. In this respect *Hannah Arendt* is one of the few authoritative sources and her thoughts are, as far as we can see, unmatched in depth, detail and clarity. In contrast to most other authors who touch upon the concept of political action, Arendt does not arrive at the topic via a discussion of democracy or “the political”; but

through an analysis of the fundamental human capacities in what has probably become her most influential work, namely *The Human Condition*. Moreover, she goes far beyond the typical listings of different forms of political action. Instead, Arendt is concerned with the very essence of this activity. Therefore, her thought contains, as Jerome Kohn once pointed out, “the seeds - not by any means of another political philosophy, of which there has been a long sequence since Plato - of what may be the first philosophy of political *experience* ever conceived” (Arendt, 2006: xx).

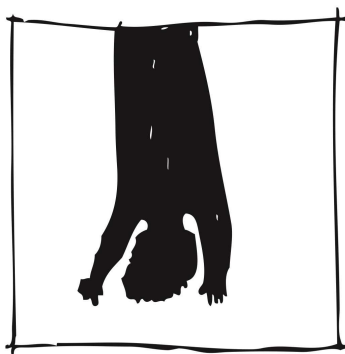


What is more, in contrast to the vast majority of political theorists, Arendt shows great spatial awareness. Her writings are peppered with metaphors and side remarks that emphasise the importance of space for politics. (Unfortunately this has never been identified as an aspect of her work that deserves attention on its own.)



Additionally, the current debate about democracy in academia and beyond appears to be impeded by well-established prejudices which

either under- or overestimate the general capacity and willingness of people to participate in the government of public affairs. These prejudices are rooted in two simple mistakes: On the one side, those who see in themselves the advocates of “real” democracy rightly emphasise that everybody should have the possibility to participate because we are all political equals; but too hastily they assert that in a “real” democracy everybody should actually participate, even though this is by no means implied. On the other side, those who see themselves as the advocates of “realism” react to the false implication and not to the original assumption. They argue that of course it would be wonderful if everybody was willing and capable to participate in politics, but unfortunately this will never happen, and if only because many or even most people simply do not care about the common world. All too often they wrongly conclude that therefore a government of elected professionals is the most democratic form of government we can realise. The former overlook that just because everybody should have the chance to participate, not everybody should actually participate. The latter ignore that just because it is unrealistic that everybody will be capable or willing to participate, representative democracy as we know it is not the only option. (Roberts (2004) offers a condensed summary of all the recurring arguments in the debate.) As a result, the political participation of regular citizens is all too often discussed in terms of all-or-nothing or, more precisely, everybody-or-oligarchs. The rule by the people, in other words, is understood as rule by the *masses*.

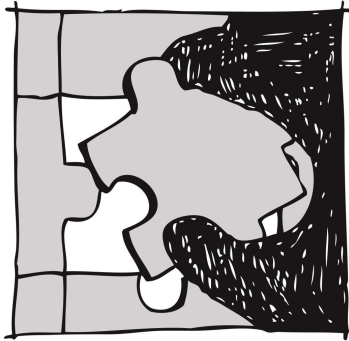


Under these circumstances it seems advisable to turn towards a political theorist who is most famous for “thinking without a banister”. Margaret Canovan once pointed out that Arendt's “books are tales of the unexpected [...] opening her readers’ eyes to new ways of looking at the world and at human affairs.” (Arendt, 1998: vii) Our impression that Arendt, despite being praised by many as one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century, is oftentimes disregarded because of unqualified prejudice makes this turn all the more justified. (Most remarkable in this respect are her alleged nostalgia for Greek antiquity, the claim that her conception of politics makes it impossible to consider poverty and other social problems in political terms, or finally the accusation that she would be an elitist thinker.) At any event, we chose Arendt as our guide in all matters political.



“To use the word ‘political’ in the sense of the Greek polis is neither arbitrary nor far-fetched. Not only etymologically and not only for the learned does the very word, which in all European languages still derives from the historically unique organization of the Greek city-state, echo the experiences of the community which first discovered the essence and the realm of the political. It is indeed difficult and even misleading to talk about politics and its innermost principles without drawing to some extent upon the experiences of

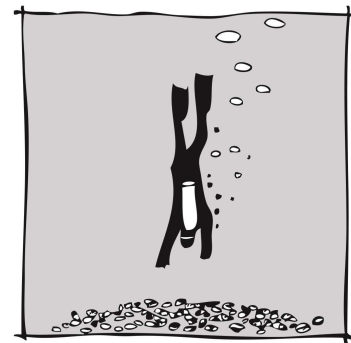
Greek and Roman antiquity, and this for no other reason than that men have never, either before or after, thought so highly of political activity and bestowed so much dignity upon its realm.” (Arendt, 2006: 153)



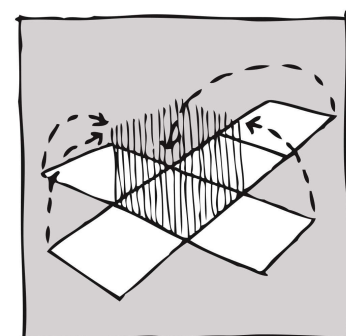
The next problem, however, was that Arendt herself does not offer a full-blown, coherent account of political action in any of her works. Rather, she spotlights different aspects of this activity as soon as they become relevant for whatever she is actually concerned with. Arendt's countless commentators, on the other hand, surely have highlighted, rephrased and explained in detail everything that could possibly be said about her work. But their investigations into the concept of political action are either not detailed enough or too detailed for our purposes; either they do not provide much more than an outline or they deal with only one or several but never all different aspects of political action. What we needed was something in between, an analysis that would touch upon everything that evaluators and designers of political space should consider, but would not follow every single idea into the depth of thought. Hence we had to do quite some puzzling.



Furthermore, since this book addresses not only audiences from different academic disciplines but literally *everybody* with a serious interest in politics, we could not presume that all readers will be familiar with the main lines of Arendt's thought, political theory in general or even conceptual analysis as a working method. Therefore we thought it wise to present the theoretical framework bit by bit and with the help of many analogies, metaphors and examples.

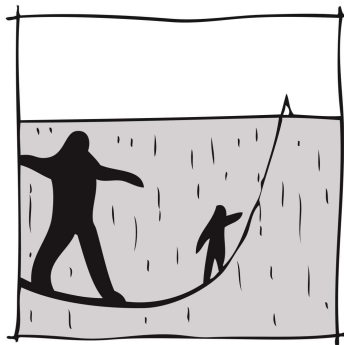


As a result, we decided to use *debate* as a red thread for our analysis. It is not only the emblematic form of political action - politicians basically get paid to debate - but also a phenomenon that everybody can relate to because all of us have personally attended or at least watched a debate on TV at one point. Debate thus suggests itself as a prime example and as a recurring checkpoint for our investigation. Metaphorically speaking, it is the anchor point from which our 26 short, exploratory dives into the topic of political action depart and to which we shall return every now and then to catch a breath.



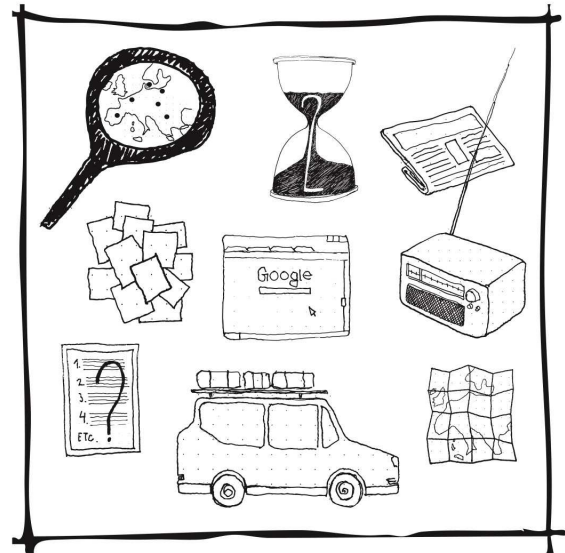
In the second part of the book we try to understand the relation between space and

political action. Our goal was threefold: First of all, we tried to characterise - not to define unequivocally - good political space as a category or type of space. This, we hope, is achieved by a conceptualisation of *space* combined with a set of principles of political space which are derived from the different aspects of political action. These principles, in contrast to norms, standards or specifications, are meant to inspire rather than to determine the work of space evaluators and designers. Secondly, we attempted to outline which instruments space designers - whether by profession they are architects, craftsmen, curators or legislators - have at their disposal. Here our emphasis lies on the distinction between *architectural* and *institutional* elements and the assertion that both dimensions of design have to be thought through and employed together in order to establish suitable political spaces. Thirdly, our aim was to clarify the actual influence of space on political actors. We stress that political action can happen practically everywhere and that therefore political space can be established with relative ease; but that good political space matters because it promotes and protects political action.

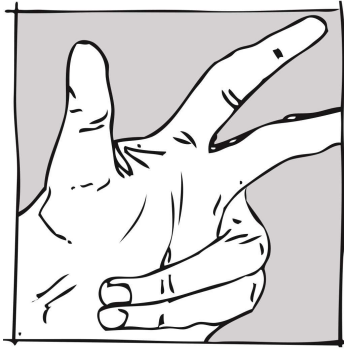


While the first part of the book was based entirely on the writings of Hannah Arendt, the second part, with a few exceptions, does not rely on the work of other authors at all. This did not happen by accident and it is not the result of laziness. We drew so extensively on the Arendt's thought because she offers a truly unique interpretation of political action; and because it is not typically part of the theoretical repertoire of urbanists, architects, ordinary citizens or even of political scientists. We tried

to keep the second part free from longer excursions into the writings of other authors from *Vitruvius* to *Henri Lefebvre* in order to present a concise analysis.



The third part, finally, is a collection of six pretty condensed case-study analyses; our attempt to evaluate six particular political spaces in six European capital cities. It lies in the nature of our topic that these analyses are *qualitative*, not quantitative; and since the context in which a particular political space becomes relevant is extremely important, we took an “individualising approach” (Robinson, 2011: 5) towards each particular case. Our analyses are based on fieldwork, a set of semi-structured interviews with interesting personalities related to the respective case, a study of the urban environment as a whole and of all the actors involved, a detailed timeline covering a period of roughly two years as well as a review of available informational materials (articles, radio-shows, info material, facebook posts etc.) and academic literature. Perhaps most importantly, our work is based on experiences we gathered while actually *living* in each city for at least one semester. Still, we decided to boil the presentations down to only the most central insights we gained from each analysis because “brevity is the soul of wit.” Since they are our first attempts to analyse political space, we thought it best to present them in the form of *essays*.

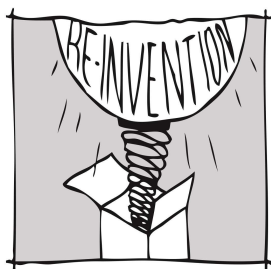
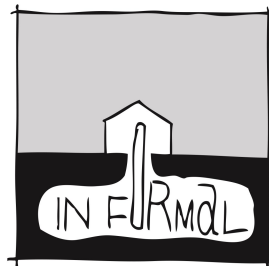


We chose our cases primarily on the basis of three criteria: First, each case should be about *urban* political affairs in a European city and involve primarily ordinary citizens. Second, each case should be *representative* in important respects of its worldly context. Third, each case should be a prime *example* of one typical political constellation in contemporary Europe.



at the same time all-embracing Viennese municipal administration.

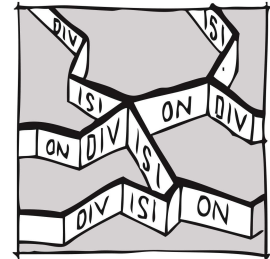
The group Ne da(vi)mo Beograd is the protagonist in a protest-movement against a large-scale waterfront development project called Belgrade on Water and a prime example of *urban civic resistance* in contemporary Europe. It illustrates the informal ways of dealing with public affairs that are so typical for the Serbian capital.



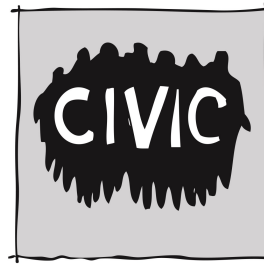
The participatory process around the development of the so called Tempelhofer Feld Gesetz, a new law determining the

future program and maintenance of what used to be one of Europe's most famous airfields, is a prime example of *online participation* in contemporary Europe and it demonstrates Berlin's aptitude to adapt and reinvent urban space.

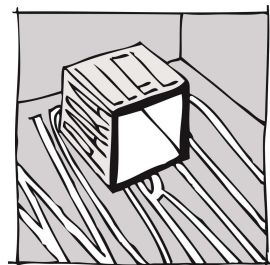
The Zinneke parade in Brussels is a prime example of truly *urban festivities* in contemporary Europe and illustrative of the divided character of the city that is not only Belgium's but also Europe's capital.



The project called EVA (Espacio Vecinal de Arganzuela) is a prime example for the efforts, networks and difficulties of *urban grassroots initiatives* in contemporary Europe. It illustrates not only the struggle and in some ways the inability of the new municipal government, which is full of former activists, to change the political course of a city like Madrid within one legislative period but also the vibrant civic life in the Spanish capital.



Finally, the Freetown of Christiania is a prime example of *alternative urban life-worlds* in contemporary Europe. It is exceptional in so many ways that it almost looks like a parallel world. In any case, Christiania is not representative of the surrounding Copenhagen but, on the contrary, the Freetown even seems to outshine the Danish capital.

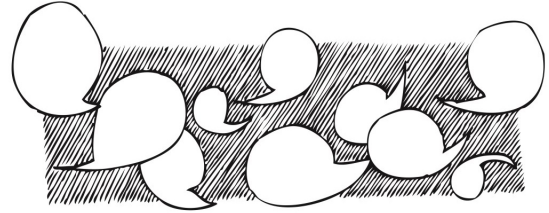




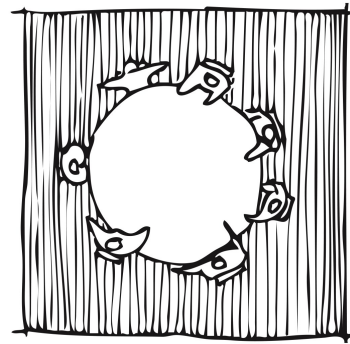
By and large, what are the expected results of this book? Above all, we would like to establish the notion of political space, the space where people come together in order to act politically, as a concept that should be considered when thinking about the future of democracy in general and about the political participation of ordinary citizens in particular. Secondly, we would like to investigate whether the Europeans have access to good urban political spaces. Thirdly, we would like to propose what may be called a blueprint of analysis on the basis of which it is possible to judge particular spaces in terms of their politicalness. Ultimately, we hope to animate architects, legislators, curators, directors, activists and whoever is practically involved in the processes of space production, design and utilisation to strengthen existing and to create new political spaces for ordinary citizens.

PART I

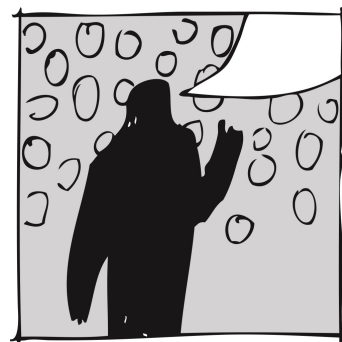
POLITICAL ACTION



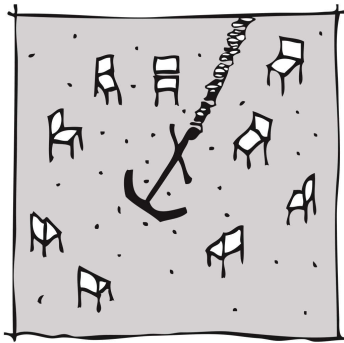
Before turning towards political space, we first have to understand the type of human action that turns any space into a political space, namely political action. What does it mean to act politically?



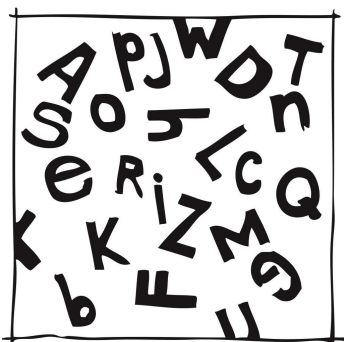
When trying to understand a particular form of activity, it is helpful to imagine those people who are most closely connected to this activity. Teachers embody teaching, actors embody acting, soldiers embody warfare ... and politicians embody political action. So how do we imagine politicians? The first image that comes to mind when thinking of politicians is a group of people engaged in a debate.



Other images of press conferences, state visits, electoral campaigns etc. may follow, but they are not as essential to our image of politicians as the countless debates in councils, parliaments or senates. Similarly, teachers are not only explaining the foundations of language, natural sciences or music to their students but also correcting exams, preparing lessons or talking to parents. Still, the image we have in mind when thinking of a teacher is, above all, an adult explaining something to a group of adolescents.

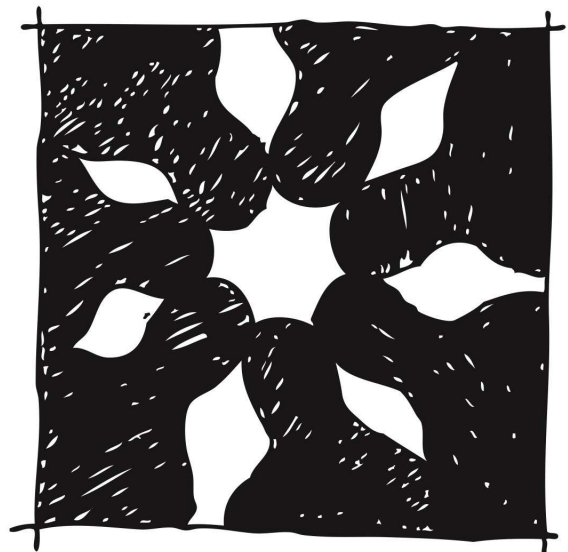


At any rate, the image of debate shall serve as an anchor point for our analysis of political action. What follows is a series of paragraphs which will, taken *together*, illuminate the concept of political action from the perspective of Hannah Arendt. As a result, we hope to clarify what it means to act politically, both in the sense of describing what is going on when people act politically and in the sense of illustrating the meaning of political action for human life. While the designers of political space will be primarily interested in political action in terms of “what is going on”, those who decide about whether or not to create political space, especially for ordinary citizens, are perhaps more focused on its significance in the context of our lives.



Each paragraph begins with a reference to a common-sense characteristic of debate. Some of them are defining aspects of every debate, others are typical, but may sometimes be absent. Subsequently, the respective characteristic will be related to one aspect of Hannah Arendt's understanding of political action. Since all the paragraphs illustrate different angles of one and the same phenomenon, their order could easily be changed and each paragraph gains clarity and plausibility when it is related to and read against the background of all the others. Every paragraph ends with a short note about the relevance of the respective aspect of political action for political space, which we will turn to in the second part. Some of these notes emphasise the role of political space in human life while others are more closely related to its design.

PLURALITY



Debates always involve different people. While individuals can survive and even build their own little world of things in total isolation from others, nobody can be all alone and still have a debate. Debates, so to speak, always require the plural.

The paradoxical characteristic of “human plurality”, as Arendt calls it, is that we are all humans and in that sense equal, but still each of us is a unique individual, different from anybody who has ever lived before us, lives together with

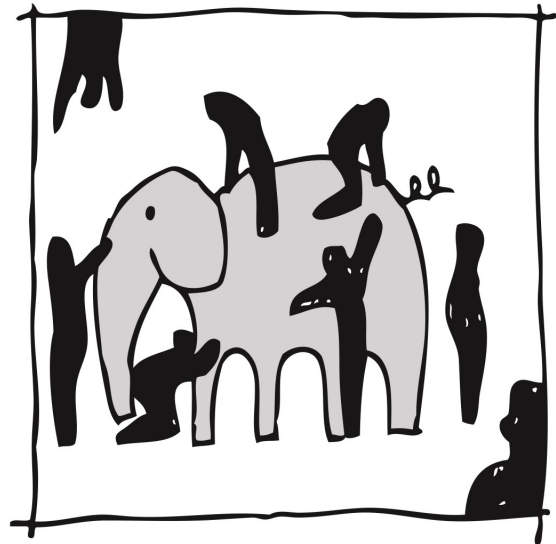
us or will come after us. This uniqueness is specifically human; it distinguishes us from all other species. Human beings are unique, because they do not only physically exist as distinct individuals but because they express their distinctness in front of others through words and deeds. This articulation is what makes each of us a “*somebody*”. In terms of being somebody, it does not matter so much what we are - strong or weak, courageous or cowardly, intelligent or stupid -, as these are characteristics that we always have in common with others. Rather, it matters *who* we irreplaceably are.

Since a debate, just like any other form of political action, always brings together different people who get to know each other and automatically begin to establish personal relations, it can never be entirely reduced to a material outcome. For a debate, in contrast to many other situations, it is well-nigh essential who participates. When attending a debate we are not only interested in what is being said but also in who says it. Moreover, the outcome of a debate is strongly influenced by how the participants relate to and get along with each other. Turned the other way, a debate can be interpreted as an opportunity for the participants to publically “disclose” who they are. This is not only how we get to know others, but also a way to get to know ourselves. The individual disclosure should not be mistaken for the demonstration of a trained skill that can be released at any time, let alone the presentation of a product that is already finished. Rather, it just happens. In a sense, disclosing who I am even makes me who I am. Thus only if I have the chance to show who I am can I actually *be* who I am. Through debates and similar opportunities people can “attain their full humanity, their full reality as men, not only because they are (as in the privacy of the household), but also because they appear” (Arendt, 2005: 21).

To act politically is an opportunity to form our personality, to show who we individually are, to get to know and to be with others instead of just existing, as it were, one next

to the other. In political space it matters not only what we are, what we know and what we can do, but also who we individually are.

STANDPOINTS



Different opinions make debates interesting. If all participants share the same views and hold the same opinions, a debate becomes pointless. Those who agree, in other words, have nothing left to discuss.

Our opinions, even though not determined by them, are rooted in our personal standpoints. Every standpoint is first of all quite literally a physical location from which we look at the world itself and at everything that goes on inside it. By birth we are given a certain perspective onto the world. Later we can learn to put ourselves in the position of others and we can broaden our horizon, for instance through travelling, but only in exceptional cases will people either rid themselves entirely from their original standpoint, or never have the chance to strike roots, as it were, in the first place. What is more, we usually occupy different standpoints simultaneously when we grow up: We are not only the natural member of a family but also chose to become members in clubs and societies, we work for companies etc. Henceforth we look at the world from different positions, which may even lead into inner discrepancies.

At any event, the world is full of people with different standpoints and a debate is interesting for participants and spectators alike, above all, because it gathers these differences in one place with absolutely no intention to resolve them once and for all. This simple example shows that *plurality* is not merely a troublesome and unfortunately unavoidable condition of politics. While things would obviously be simpler, clearer and more straight-forward if there was only one perspective onto the world of human affairs, this situation would also be unbearably boring for us. We may thus follow Hannah Arendt and look at plurality in the field of politics primarily as a spring of delight, astonishment and wonder, as the origin of the world which, since it always lies between us, cannot exist where everybody holds the exact same views and opinions.

Those who see in plurality merely the root of all political struggle pay attention to only one side of the coin. It is like complaining that survival, the mastering of life's necessities, is a never-ending struggle - and forgetting that at the same time it is "the human way to experience the sheer bliss of being alive which we share with all living creatures" (Arendt, 1998: 106). It is like bemoaning that writing books or building houses is a very demanding and sometimes desperate endeavour - and ignoring that it is also the spring of "self-assurance and satisfaction [which] can even become a source of self-confidence throughout life" (Arendt, 1998: 140).

To act politically means to relate differences. Conflicts or agreements are possible but by no means necessary or even desirable results. Political space welcomes, embraces and protects diversity.

TOGETHERNESS

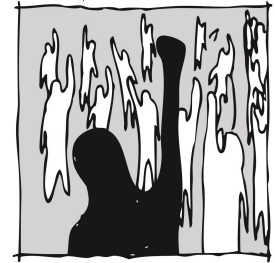


Political action is essentially a form of human togetherness that can appear only where people are active neither for nor against, but with others. Consequently,

political space by definition excludes both altruism and violence.

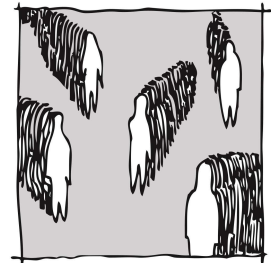
POWER

Power arises when people act in concert. Consequently, those political spaces that gather people who really act *together* will soon become the "powerhouses" of politics.

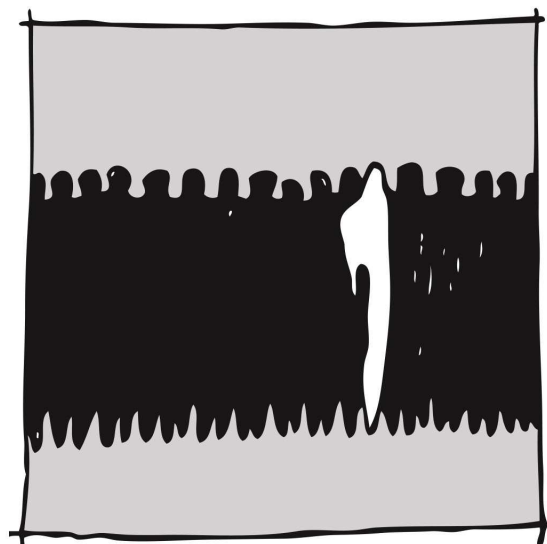


LEADERS

Discerning insight, the ability to understand multiple realities and to communicate between differences, qualifies political actors for leadership. Political space encourages and makes room for leaders.



INITIATIVE



Participation is voluntary. Nobody can be forced to actively participate in a debate, no material reward can guarantee that somebody will participate, as distinguished from just being

present, and there is no reliable measure for the sincerity of contributions. We are left behind only with the impression – which in most cases is pretty accurate – that somebody was either engaged or uninvolved or something in between.

To be politically active means to show personal initiative which means to insert oneself into the realm of human affairs. It means to appear in front of others, to affirm one's own existence, to influence the course of public affairs and to leave traces behind in the history of the common world. "This insertion", Arendt argues, "is not forced upon us by necessity, like labour, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them" (Arendt, 1998: 177).

Survival does not require political initiative, and in turn, political initiative does not - is not meant to - result in personal, material benefit since at the centre of politics lies concern for the world and not the individual. Hence we cannot expect, for instance, to stimulate political initiative with monetary rewards. Similarly, participants in political business cannot expect and should never be promised the same rewards that are so typical for architects, craftsmen or writers who are the solitary masters of their projects and who can take full pride in their achievements. Political action, since it always depends on other people, is less predictable than work; and since it always means to act in concert, success or failure can never be clearly attributed to individuals afterwards.

But this is true only under the condition that s/he who participates *sees* more in politics than just another way to "make a living." And only insofar as s/he does not believe to be the single mastermind or puppeteer behind a political project. Unfortunately, Arendt argues, this is precisely the tendency of modern labourer societies where "all serious activities, irrespective of their fruits, are called labour, and every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or for the life process of

society is subsumed under playfulness." (Arendt, 1998: 127) And in a tradition of political philosophy which, ever since Plato proposed that the *polis* should be ruled by a philosopher-king, is so much concerned with the substitution of making for acting that it "could easily be interpreted as various attempts to find theoretical foundations and practical ways for an escape from politics altogether" (Arendt, 1998: 222).

Be that as it may, what really springs from political initiative is *delight*. This delight is bound to the moment of action and it can under no circumstances be stored up. Hence what matters most for those among us who feel the urge to act is the performance itself and not material achievements or tangible results. This is why the Greeks always employed such "metaphors as flute-playing, dancing, healing, and seafaring, to distinguish political from other activities, that is, that they drew their analogies from those arts in which virtuosity of performance is decisive" (Arendt, 2006: 152). Moreover, since it cannot be stored up for longer periods of time, political initiative needs to be actualised and put into practice when it is felt, just like the poet needs to write in the moment when s/he feels inspired.

Political action rests on personal initiative. Political space encourages us to show personal initiative. It allows immediate access and it does not lure citizens with monetary rewards. Political space is not only focused on tangible results but also and especially on the performance, the moment of action as such.

RESPONSE

A debate is a series of responses. Participants mostly reflect on and respond to what others have said before them. Ideally, each response does not only refer back to the previous course of the debate but also gives it a new twist. Questions too can be understood as a form of response.



Arendt emphasised time and again that to act essentially means to begin something new; and most of her critics have focused on this aspect of action. Still, we should not overlook that Arendt also highlighted that every act falls into an existing constellation of human relations and stories that are already unfolding in the very moment when the new beginning is made. The point of the matter is not only that all our actions are influenced by whatever else is going on, but that (almost) all our actions have worldly reference points; they are related to the existing world into which they fall. We may thus characterise them as responses to what is going on in the world. This responsive character of action is, so to speak, the flipside of its inherent quality to make new beginnings.

Patchen Markell points out that “Arendt’s account of beginning [...] shows us that action, as a response to events, is, you might say, always a second step rather than a first” (Markell, 2010: 80). Markell’s discovery (which really deserves to be called a discovery since it has been overlooked by many other commentators before him) has far-reaching consequences for our understanding of political action. A response always arises from and refers back to what has been said or done before; it aims to influence the course of events or of the conversation; it anticipates further response. Hence in order to act politically, we have to understand worldly affairs as something that we can respond to. We

have to understand worldly affairs so that they can become meaningful reference points for our actions, we have to believe that our responses to them will actually make a difference and that others will, in turn, respond to us and to what we have said and done.

From “an Arendtian perspective”, Markell continues, “the most fundamental threat to democratic political activity lies in the loss of responsiveness to events: the erosion of the contexts in which action makes sense” (Markell, 2010: 79). Ronald Beiner, another one of Arendt’s commentators, supports this assumption: He argues that the “real danger in contemporary societies is that the bureaucratic, technocratic, and depoliticized structures of modern life encourage indifference and increasingly render men less discriminating, less capable of critical thinking, and less inclined to assume responsibility” (Arendt, 1982: 113). Whether or not we see in political affairs something that we can respond to depends on a number of variables; among them, according to Markell, the “contours of the built environment” (Markell, 2010: 81).

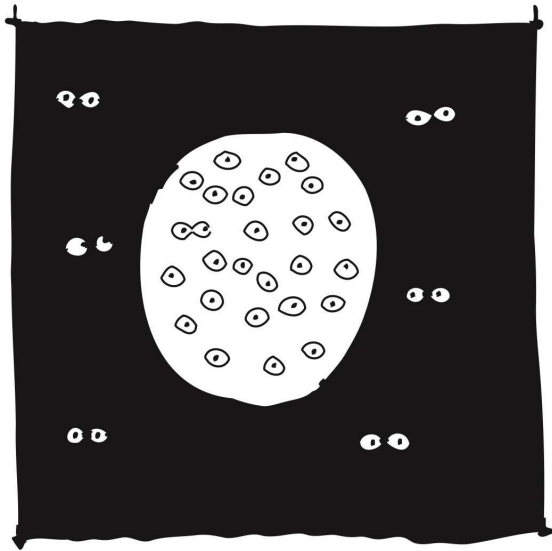
What is more, to describe political action as a form of response helps us to realise that it needs practice. It is not easy, after all, to respond, and not just to repeat; to open rather than to block the way for further conversation; or simply to ask a good question. Above all, we have to learn to listen carefully before we can even think about possible ways to respond.

Political action responds to what is going on in the world. Political space attracts, processes and emits responses. It gives us the opportunity to practice the art of responding to worldly events.

PUBLIC

Private concerns are not relevant for debates. If politicians would suddenly start to discuss their dinner-plans, their parents’ health or their children’s grades, most people would be irritated. We think that these topics simply do not fit the occasion, that they should be

discussed at home, that is, in private. In turn, if we suddenly started discussing these things publicly, the same politicians would have good reason to remind us that we must not stick our noses into their pockets.



Here we have come across the border between the public and the private realm, one of the central distinctions in Arendt's work. To Arendt, the public and the private are essentially spatial phenomena. In accordance with Greek and Roman antiquity she holds that all private affairs are bound to the household (which in her days was still more closely related to the family than it is today) while all public affairs concern the *polis*, the world which is common to all of us. In Arendt's opinion only those affairs that have public relevance can be political. She believes that this fundamental division between public and private has been "entirely blurred, because we see the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping" (Arendt, 1998: 28).

Though the borderline between public and private may be blurred and perhaps out of alignment, we are still very conscious of its existence. But when we talk about it today, we are mostly trying to protect our privacy against intruders, be it the curious neighbour, the government or big corporations. Now it is

crucial that, at the same time, we do not disregard the protection of public space and public matters against private interests and private affairs which, from the perspective of the world as a whole, are completely irrelevant. The more we allow private interest and private business to occupy the public, the more difficult it is to separate public from private, to focus on what is actually of public concern and, finally, to prevent private actors from treating public matters and goods as though they were private. We must not forget, in other words, that "this world of ours, because it existed before us and is meant to outlast our lives in it, simply cannot afford to give primary concern to individual lives and the interests connected with them" (Arendt, 2006: 155).

Dinner plans, the parents' health or the kids' grades are obviously of no public relevance whatsoever. Nonetheless, they become public concerns and political questions when they are looked at from the perspective of the shared world. For instance: Do we - as a community - allow factory farming? How do we - as a community - take care of the elderly? What do we - as a community - understand as education?

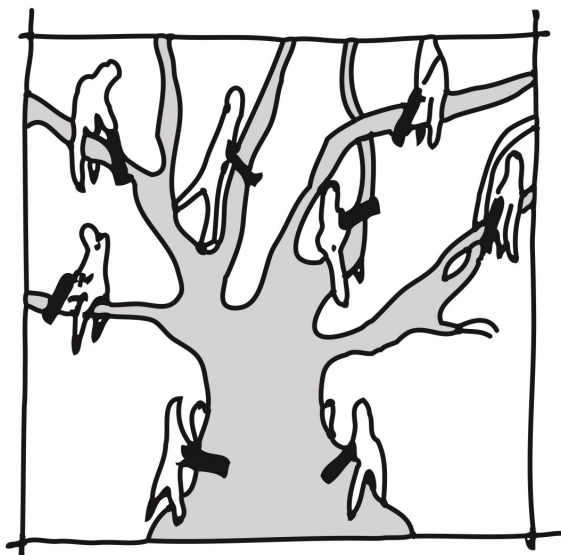
Political action is exclusively concerned with public affairs. Political space thus excludes private business and private interest. Everything that appears in political space must be either a genuinely public concern or it must appear only insofar as it is publicly relevant.

WORLD

Debates always concern the common world. We use debates to discuss how the world is, how it should be and how we want to live in it together. But what actually is this *world*? What is meant, for instance, when somebody announces that s/he wants to "change" the world?

To Arendt, the world is essentially an "in-between" (*Zwischen*). The world is common because it lies in between those who inhabit it; it does not belong to any individual or family. As such, the world is opposed to the household

which by definition belongs to one individual or one family, thereby excluding everybody else; and which draws its members so closely together that there is hardly any space left between them. The main characteristic of any in-between is that it relates and separates simultaneously. The world gathers its inhabitants while at the same time it establishes and maintains differences between them. As such it is the foundation without which we could not live *together*. When we say, for example, that two people come from “different worlds” we mean that they do not (yet) have anything in common; and without any kind of relation, there is no basis to articulate differences.



This worldly in-between has two dimensions. On the one hand, there is the physical world, a great “arsenal of things” that is produced and designed by human hands. Not only streets, houses, squares and parks are part of this physical world, but also monuments, paintings, books and even music. The materials that this world is made of are metal and stone but also words and notes. On the other hand, Arendt emphasises that this “physical, worldly in-between along with its interests is overlaid and, as it were, overgrown with an altogether different in-between which consists of deeds and words and owes its origin exclusively to men’s acting and speaking directly to one another. [...] We call this reality the ‘web’ of

human relationships, indicating by the metaphor it's somewhat intangible quality.” (Arendt, 1998: 182f) Parts of this web, from rental agreements to town twinning and contracts between nations, can be singled out easily since they are given a name and become manifest in some form, for example in the form of a document. Other parts of the web of human relations are invisible for most people, noticeable only to those who they affect.

What is more, the world outlasts our individual lives. We are “thrown”, as Arendt says (following Heidegger), into an already existing world when we are born; and when we die we leave a world behind that will continue to exist without us. The durability of the world is the foundation of human life as we know it. It is the expression of and the condition for history.

Finally, the world is not identical with the *earth*. The earth is the planet on which we live; the natural habitat not only of humans but also of all other living beings. The world, on the contrary, is human creation. Our existence, Arendt argues, is unnatural in the sense that we are worldly beings, equipped with a natural urge to build our own artificial world in the midst of the natural environment. Consequently, the world is something that we can indeed change! And even though we usually take for granted the durability of the human world, it is by no means eternal and it does not sustain itself. Hence if we do not want to become “worldless” beings, we have to cherish, preserve and care about our world. (Obviously, this also implies that we must under all circumstances safeguard its preconditions; above all, the sustainability of the natural environment.)

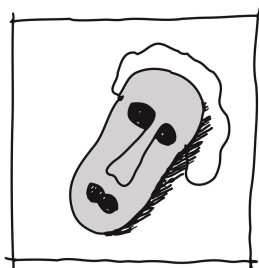
Humans, insofar as they are private individuals, focus only on their own personal lives. Their interaction with the common world is, so to speak, ego-centric. As private individuals we either take the world for granted or try to change it to our personal benefit. On an extended scale, the same is true for household communities, clubs, associations, companies and other types of organisations which we often perceive as “one big family”. They all are - and

they must be - determined to protect the wellbeing of their members and of the organisation as a whole. Sometimes we also see in an a “small world” on its own, but we must always keep in mind that each of these small worlds is built on and could not exist without the actual, the “big world” with its legal and physical infrastructure. Only insofar as act *as* inhabitants of the world are we primarily focused on its wellbeing. To act as an inhabitant of the common world means to act politically.

To avoid misunderstandings: It is true that in a “globalised” world, the world is ultimately what lies in-between all wo/men living on earth. Certain books really belong to the category of world literature, goods are shipped across the entire planet, the internet is literally the worldwide web ... and the actions of an individual can have consequences that are felt in all corners of the earth. Nonetheless, most of us are still rooted in one location and many if not most of the things that belong to our world do not concern others who live very far away. Thus the term “world” can refer to the neighbourhood or the city, to the country or the continent or even to the whole world and make sense in each case.

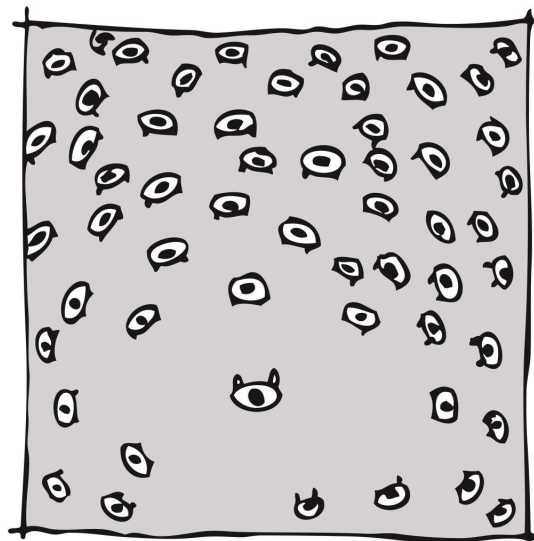
Political action is always concerned with the common world. Thus political space is worldly space both in the sense that it reflects the world around it and that it guarantees that those who use it act as inhabitants of the world in which they live together.

FORMALITY



Political action is formalised in different ways and for various reasons. Political space is concrete expression and area of application of these formalities. Above all, political space safeguards the political equality of all its users.

APPEARANCE



The speaker is always in the centre of attention. Customarily, debates allow only one speaker at a time who, for the moment, is the focus point of everybody around. The speakers are of course aware of the situation and they will usually choose their words carefully.

Arendt would say that the speakers “appear” in front of others. These appearances are not accidental but dedicated to an audience. Humans and all living beings are “possessed by an urge toward self-display which answers the fact of one’s own appearingness” (Arendt, 1971: 21). In contrast to other living beings, humans do not just appear physically but “men also present themselves in deed and word and thus indicate how they wish to appear, what in their opinion is fit to be seen and what is not” (Arendt, 1971: 34). We can influence our appearance, for example by choosing our words, our gestures and facial expressions, but also our company, the space of appearance etc. Still, nobody can fully control *who* appears on the stage of the world because humans do not make themselves; and nobody can fully control how s/he appears because we do not appear to ourselves in the same way as we appear to others.

Many people mistrust appearances in the political realm. Politicians are often accused of lying, of being pretentious and of deceiving each

other and most of all the public. It is true that, since actors can influence what appears and since whatever appears can only be perceived in the modus of it-seems-to-me, “pretence and wilful deception on the part of the performer, error and illusion on the part of the spectator are, inevitably, among the inherent potentialities” (Arendt, 1971: 36). Hence we do have reason to be sceptical towards appearances. But, on the one hand, this scepticism should test not only the honesty, integrity and truthfulness of those who appear, but also our own perception and what we make of it. On the other hand, careful examination of appearances is not the same as general mistrust which, in its most extreme version, leads to an all-encompassing unwillingness to accept any appearance as genuine. We should not forget that “[s]emblances are possible only in the midst of appearances; they presuppose appearance as error presupposes truth. Error is the price we pay for truth, and semblance is the price we pay for the wonders of appearance” (Arendt, 1971: 38). In order to avoid deception and illusion the spectators should have the chance to examine appearances closely - which, among other things, means that they must not drown in a flood of appearances -, their perception should be trained and the actors should appear regularly so that it becomes possible to identify irregularities.

Further, many of us believe that what appears is superficial; that appearances are merely distortions of an actual reality or supreme truth which (unfortunately) always remains hidden in darkness. But Arendt argues that “our habitual standards of judgment [...] according to which the essential lies beneath the surface [...] are wrong, that our common conviction that what is inside ourselves, our ‘inner life,’ is more relevant to what we ‘are’ than what appears on the outside is an illusion” (Arendt, 1971: 30). She claims that it is the outside appearance that matters because if “this inside were to appear, we would all look alike” (Arendt, 1971: 29). Not only our inner organs but also our emotions like anger, happiness, love, fear etc. (in contrast to thoughts which articulate raw emotions and

which, even when they are still inside our heads, always appear in the form of words) are very similar in most people.

To act politically means to appear. It is our appearance and not a hidden reality or an inner self that makes us who we individually are. We can influence how we appear, but we cannot fully control our appearance. Deception and misperception are possible but they are the exception rather than the rule. Political space sets the stage for the appearance of political actors. There is no room, in other words, for anonymity.

SPEECH



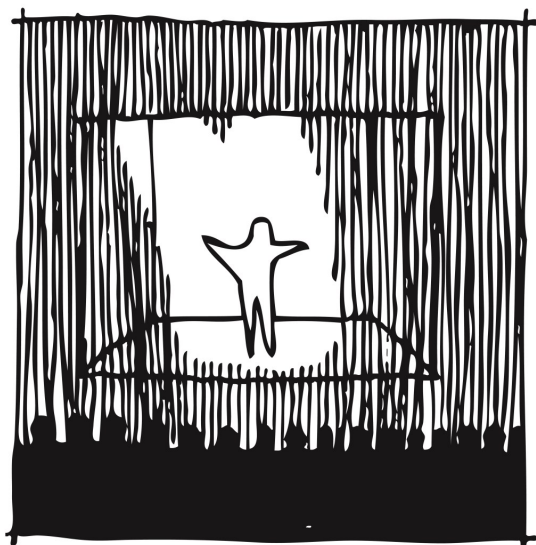
The participants only talk with each other. A debate does not tolerate any form of action other than speech; and who does not speak, does not actually participate in the debate.

We usually think of speech as a way to make ourselves understood, that is, to communicate our wants and needs, feelings, opinions, beliefs and also facts. While this is certainly true, Arendt sees more in speech than just a means of communication. She sees in it the way how unique individuals reveal their “living essence”. Through words - and also through deeds - we disclose who we individually are. Who somebody is can never be described or defined with words, but it is *actualised* in the when we speak.

Political action is not exclusively a matter of words but “many, and even most acts, are performed in the manner of speech” (Arendt, 1998: 178). Moreover, those acts which in and by themselves are silent need to be accompanied by words so that they become understandable and meaningful for humans beings. If Rosa Parks, for example, would have just remained seated in the bus and then never explained or talked about what she had done, her act would not speak for itself as readily as we might assume. Without an actor who we can recognise as a distinct somebody, any act, no matter how great, would remain meaningless from the perspective of the human world.

Political action is bound to speech. Political spaces thus have to provide a good environment for speaking with others.

THEATRE



Debates are usually staged events. The participants often stand or sit on a stage that is prepared only for them and when they speak they address not only each other but also an audience.

To speak in a debate always means to speak to others and a debate without a public would be pointless. The audience constitutes a public realm which, according to Arendt, is necessary for appearances to attain “the shining brightness we once called glory.” (Arendt, 1998: 180) She

defines glory as “the specifically human possibility of immortality.” (Arendt, 2005: 46) In that sense it is obvious that no deed can be glorious that appears only in the privacy of the household and no actor can become famous who is only seen by friends and family. To be sure, not everything that is said or done in public is glorious. Only truly exceptional deeds can become immortal and this selection is a result of human judgment, which is rendered by the spectators and not by the actors themselves. Consequently, political actors and the dignity of the public realm as such are highly dependent on the presence of judging spectators.

While it is natural that spectators judge everything they see and hear, it is also natural that the participants try to make a good impression in front of their audience. The desire to please, to appeal and to convince is natural and it can be found wherever people live together. Obviously, the pursuit of fame and glory is more distinct in some than it is in others. And just as with other personal qualities, some political actors seem to be gifted while others obviously lack talent. The point, at any rate, is that political actors try to stand out from the masses and to be better than others. But this “*agonal* spirit, the passionate drive to show one's self in measuring up against others” (Arendt, 1998: p. 194) is directed towards distinction and not, at least not primarily, an attempt to defeat or to dominate others. If victory and rule were the true goals of political actors, then their greatest success would be the end of politics altogether and thus self-defeat, because the greatest political actor would no longer be a political actor at all.

In any case, the distinction between actors and spectators reminds of theatres, concert halls and perhaps football stadiums. Arendt highlights in various instances that the “performing arts [...] have indeed a strong affinity with politics. Performing artists [...] need an audience to show their virtuosity, just as acting men need the presence of others before whom they can appear; both need a publicly organized space for their ‘work,’ and both depend upon others for

the performance itself. Such a space is not to be taken for granted wherever men live together in a community.” (Arendt, 2006: 152) Politics to us seems of course much more serious and momentous than any theatre play could ever be. Nonetheless, we should not overlook or try to do away with the obvious similarities between political action and artistic performances. To accentuate them does not diminish but increase the political character of our actions and of the spaces we use to act politically.

Political action is theatrical: actors try to make a good impression and spectators judge everything that is going on in front of their eyes. The greatest reward that spectators can offer is praise, and what the actors can hope to attain to is glory. Political space thus accommodates both actors and spectators; and in many cases it will remind us of a theatre.

COURAGE



Debates demand courage. Many of us are afraid or at least uncomfortable and insecure when speaking in public; we feel that we can speak more freely among friends and family. It takes courage to participate in a debate because we have to expose ourselves in front of an audience. If we are willing to take that risk - even if it just means to ask a question -, we will be rewarded with a feeling of pride and perhaps

the admiration of those who did not dare to speak up themselves.

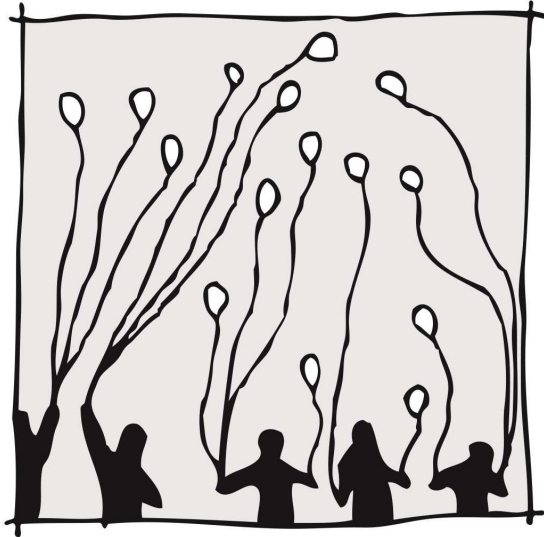
From an Arendtian perspective, the exposure in front of an audience demands courage because the actors cannot control neither who they disclose nor how their actions are perceived by the audience or how other actors will act and react. With regards to debates, the insecurity mostly lies in the question *Will others agree with me or not?* The more likely it is that my opinions will differ from or even oppose those of others, the more courage it takes to express them publicly.

It is important to note that courage is not a quality that some people possess and others do not, just like fear is not an emotion that one can overcome altogether. “The courageous man is [...] one who has decided that fear is not what he wants to show. Courage can then become second nature or a habit but not in the sense that fearlessness replaces fear, as though it, too, could become an emotion.” (Arendt, 1971: 36) This means quite literally that people can be *encouraged* to participate in a debate; that potentially everybody is fit to act politically.

In turn, it also means that those who have the opportunity to participate but cannot gather the courage to speak up and expose themselves together with their opinions simply do not act politically. They have little reason to bemoan an allegedly unfair situation or a lack of political influence because courage, so to speak, is a natural border of the political realm which we must not abandon if we do not want to destroy its specific character. When people have the chance to influence political affairs anonymously, without appearing together with their opinions, decisions or votes, then nobody will be responsible for whatever happens. Moreover, the process of checking and balancing each other's opinions will be omitted because there is nobody towards whom we could direct our objections. Finally, the fundamental fact that politics is always related to the public, the common, the shared world is more easily passed over, freeing the way for the rule of private interest.

Political action is courageous. Political space encourages participation, but it also demands courage from those who would like to participate; and it celebrates courage as a political virtue.

OPINION



Participants exchange their opinions. A debate is, above all, an exchange of different opinions held by different people. Often people say what they think and then add that “This is just my opinion.” Others say what they think with utter conviction and then have to be made aware by their peers that “This is just your opinion.” In both cases the emphasis lies on the fact that an opinion is never absolute. It is not simply true or false, right or wrong.

Arendt, referring back once more to the commonplace assumptions of Greek antiquity, characterises opinions as the articulation of personal understandings or perceptions of the world. To have an opinion means to express with words how one sees the world or, more often, a particular aspect of the world. This implies the awareness that my opinion is not the only possible opinion, simply because I am not the only one to whom the world appears in all its complexity, and my position is not the only position from which it is possible to observe the world. This of course does not mean that all opinions are “subjective fantasy and arbitrariness” (Arendt, 2005: 14) since it is the

same world that appears to all of us and since we are all *human*.

The crux is that nobody can form an opinion alone or only in the company of others who have the same perspective onto the world. “[N]o formation of opinion is ever possible where all opinions have become the same” (Arendt, 1990: 225) says Arendt. Just like everything that appears can be defined only in contradistinction to other appearances, opinions become distinct only when formed and perceived in contradistinction to other opinions. Fewer opinions indicate not only greater dominance and less diversity but also less precision and articulateness.

In turn, “every topic has as many sides and can appear in as many perspectives as there are people to discuss it.” (Arendt, 2005: 167) Consequently, the goal of a debate is never to find the right or at least the most adequate opinion. The exchange of opinions “doesn’t need a conclusion in order to be meaningful” (Arendt, 2005: 16). Rather, debates should help us to fully understand a topic - and, ultimately, the world - by shedding light on it from as many different angles as possible. It is also worth mentioning that the exchange of opinions is an important way of sharing the world which we all inhabit; of turning a world in which we exist one next to the other, into a *common* world. Finally, without opinions we will merely be moody. Arendt underlines that “where no opportunity for the forming of opinions exists, there may be moods - moods of the masses and moods of the individuals, the latter no less fickle and unreliable than the former - but no opinion.” (Arendt, 1990: 268f)

Political action oftentimes involves an exchange of opinions. This exchange does not happen after but coincides with the process of forming opinions; hence nobody can form an opinion without the presence of others. Political space provides opportunities to form and to exchange opinions. This means to share the world instead of just existing in it at the same time.

PERSUASION



Participants try to persuade each other. Whenever we exchange opinions, we try to convince others of the sincerity, accuracy and legitimacy of our respective accounts.

Today, persuasiveness is not very reputable. Even famous public figures like Noam Chomsky – famous, mostly, because of being persuasive themselves – claim that we should actively suppress our capacity to persuade others. We might of course ask back why Mr. Chomsky is saying such things publicly if not in order to persuade us not to persuade others? The art of persuasion has such a hard stand because, on the one hand, it is often wrongly equated with a bag of rhetoric tricks or even said to be a form of coercion, as if we would be incapable to resist it; and because, on the other hand, we do not clearly separate between the realm of opinion and the realm of truth.

At universities and schools and wherever else we are primarily interested in knowledge, in finding out the truth about something (whether in the field of history or physics), persuasive speech is indeed out of place. There may be different answers to the same question, but they are not opinions but *theories* and each of them claims to be true. In the political realm, however, where we are always concerned with opinions, persuasive speech is natural and even desirable. That it is the natural way of exchanging opinions

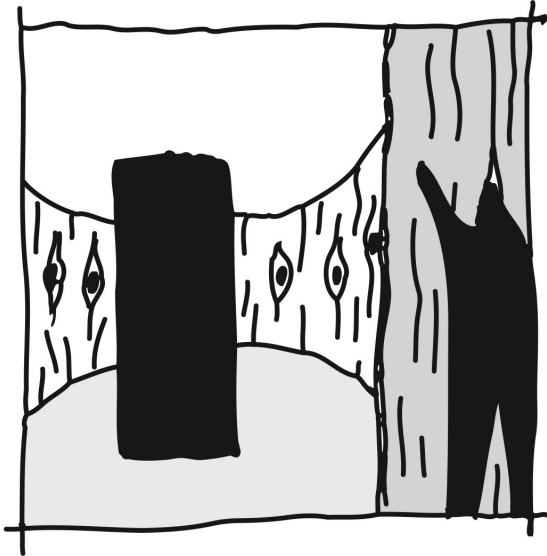
becomes obvious in the most day-to-day situations, for example when we have to decide which movie to watch. And its absence is the best reminder of how desirable persuasion actually is. Debates for instance become almost unbearably boring for most people if the participants have problems to really articulate what they are trying to say or if they are not even trying to persuade each other and the audience.

Further, rhetorical figures are no more tricks than a hammer is a trick to put nails into the wall. There is nothing malicious about them. They are simply devices of verbal expression. Of course they can be misused, just like a hammer can be misused to beat someone's brains out. But actually the art of persuasion is not a way to trick people but a way to convince them or at least to make them “see my point”. Metaphors, analogies and other such devices help us to articulate what we really mean and to convince others of our own convictions. If we use them to twist facts or to convince people of what we do not even believe ourselves, we are not persuading anymore, we have become liars and fakers. What is more, nobody can be forced to agree. All that we can do, “as Kant says quite beautifully,” is “‘woo the consent of everyone else’ in the hope of coming to an agreement” (Arendt, 2006: 219). Persuasive speech is therefore not a form of coercion but it's very opposite. (It is true however that people need to think and judge for themselves in order to be able to resist persuasion. If people are too busy or too lazy or simply not trained to judge the opinions of others and to make up their own minds, they will agree with almost anything and follow almost anybody.) Finally, in the political realm we do not only try to convince others with words but also with deeds. S/he who decides, for example, to become a vegetarian not only for personal but for political reasons, sets an example, hoping that others will follow.

Political action is persuasive. Persuasion is adequate and natural in the political realm, but only in the political realm. It is opposed to violence and should not be mistaken for

delusion. If political space discourages persuasive speech, it will seem unnatural and boring.

DELIBERATION



The participants deliberate. To deliberate means to weigh different opinions and interests against each other, that is, to look at one and the same thing from various perspectives.

Arendt characterises deliberation as the process of *liberating* ourselves from our personal standpoints. This means, above all, to form an opinion that transcends our personal interests. It is sometimes assumed that our opinions are nothing but the articulation of material interests. If this was true, we could not have opinions about things which do not concern us personally. Moreover, we would be determined by everything that increases our personal utility or secures our private interests, unable to consider other criteria such as justice, equality, peace, moderation, courtesy etc. Fortunately, this is not true: We can think beyond our own direct interests.

While my personal interests, which, politically speaking, are only relevant as the interests of a group, can be represented by somebody else, nobody can deliberate in my stead. Therefore, if we would like people to form opinions that reach beyond their direct personal advantage, we have to encourage deliberation, which is a

process that, even though everybody has to do it for themselves, depends on the presence of others. Only where I am confronted with different perspectives do I have the chance to leave my own standpoint behind. And the more present these other perspectives are, the easier it will be for me to begin the process of deliberation. (Where other perspectives are mediated or not present at all we have to *represent* them in order to deliberate.)

Further, since our opinions are not determined by our interests, group interests - measured for instance along the lines of age groups, gender, belonging to a social class, ethnicity etc. - are not actually a valid criterion for selecting people to participate in politics. Other evidence like personal initiative, courage, persuasiveness and especially the capacity to put oneself in the position of others, are much more relevant. In turn, the fact that a political decision is taken by a “representative” share of the population, though it does contribute to its credibility, does not automatically justify it.

To be sure, to deliberate does not mean that we cut ourselves loose from personal interest altogether. Interests “constitute, in the word’s most literal significance, something which *interests*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together” (Arendt, 1998: 182). Thus to break away from our interests would mean to break our relations to the world and to other people - and this is certainly not desirable.

To act politically means to liberate ourselves from our own personal standpoint without thereby forgetting or suppressing personal interest altogether. Political space is a space of deliberation. It encourages deliberation by confronting us with people who have different standpoints, hold different opinions and have different interests.

JUDGMENT



Judging is an important form of political action. It is the privilege and responsibility of all those who do not directly participate in the government of public affairs. Political space encourages judgment and it gives us the opportunity to practice critical thinking.

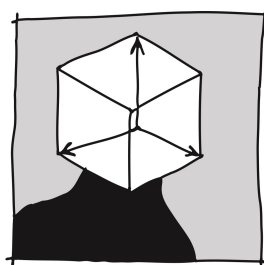
UNDERSTANDING



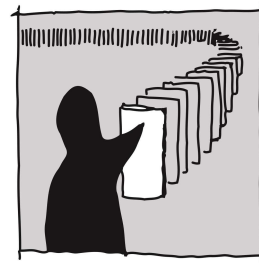
Political action is not only the government of public affairs which comes about through decision-making. It also helps us to come to terms with reality and history. Hence political space is not only a space for governing, it is also a space for understanding. We can expect from political space that it helps us to “be at home” in the world in which we live, but only under the condition that it is a space of popular language and common sense.

TRUTH

Political action, insofar as it is an exchange of opinions, is limited by factual truth. Crossing these limits threatens the integrity of the political realm. Therefore, political space depends on the clear distinction of opinions and facts.



BEGINNING



Political action means to begin something new. Hence in political space we have good reason to expect the unexpected, to never lose hope and to believe in “miracles”.

PRINCIPLES



Participation is a matter of principle. We do not only participate in debates to advance or defend our private interests but also or even primarily in order to advocate our fundamental convictions pertaining to a particular topic or concern in front of others.

Arendt writes that there are “a large number of such fundamental convictions that have played a role in the course of political actions” (Arendt, 2005: 194f). Among others, she mentions honour, virtue, fame, freedom, justice and the love of equality, but also hatred and fear. We usually call these convictions *principles*. They are fundamental because they inspire our actions. They “do not operate from within the self as motives do [...] but inspire, as it were, from without; and they are much too general to prescribe particular goals [...] In distinction from

its goal, the principle of an action can be repeated time and again.” (Arendt, 2006: 150f)

Principles are very important in the field of political action because they are “what saves the act of beginning from its own arbitrariness” (Arendt, 1990: 212). Every act, insofar as it is the beginning of something new, is not fully explicable in terms of cause and effect. Since what happened could have happened differently, it must seem random from the perspective of the world, at least to some extent. This arbitrariness, however, can be explained away with the help of the principle that inspired the actor, whose actions therefore become comprehensible.

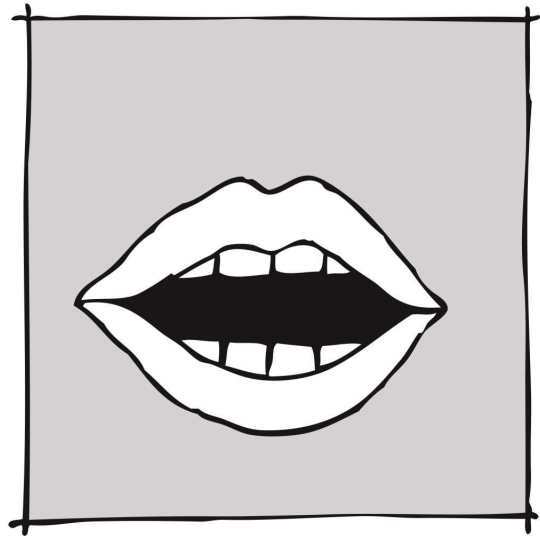
But it is not only the act which depends on its principle to avoid arbitrariness. In turn, also the principle depends on the act in order to appear at all. There would be, in other words, no general principles if it was not for the concrete actions which express them. Hence as long as we still believe in justice, equality, honour, virtue and the like, we must give these principles opportunities to become manifest in the world in the form of concrete actions since otherwise they will just disappear. To be sure, we are free to act on principle in many different situations; but only few of these are *predestined*, as it were, for principles to appear in the world. A debate is one such occasion.

To act politically also means to act on principle. Hence it is political space where our principles, our fundamental convictions become manifest.

FREEDOM

Political agreements are rarely unanimous. When debates lead to political decisions, which happens often but not always and not even usually, these decisions are rarely based on absolute consensus. In most cases one part of the participants goes home disappointed. More importantly, everybody who took part in the process is aware that the decision could have been different; and nobody, not even the most

enthusiastic advocate of the final decision really knows where it will lead eventually.



The verb “to decide” is derived from the Latin word “*decider*”, which literally means “to cut off.” That we arrive at a decision by cutting off all alternatives except for one indicates that decisions are more about excluding possibilities than about identifying the one *right* way. Our decisions should of course be based on solid deliberation, argumentation and reasoning, they should consider different interests and scenarios; but, in the end, we have to make a choice. Encapsulated in this irreducible momentum of choice, we can see clearly what human freedom means to Hannah Arendt.

To begin with, freedom is not the same as liberty. Liberty is a precondition “but by no means the actual content of freedom” (Arendt, 1990: 32). Liberation means to be free from different kinds of restraints and limitations. In order to be free, we first have to liberate ourselves from the necessities of life which for the individual are much more pressing than worldly affairs, as well as from political limitations such as assembly bans or censorship. Freedom itself, however, is a matter of *action*. It becomes manifest only where, and only for as long as people act together.

Secondly, action is free only insofar as it is not determined by our inner motives and worldly goals, but inspired by principles. Evidently,

political decisions are heavily influenced by what individuals and groups want to achieve. Arendt recognises this. She highlights, however, that neither our motives, which “operate from within the self” (Arendt, 2006: 152), nor our goals, which are the result of strategic thinking and careful consideration of different scenarios and all foreseeable consequences, are what makes our actions free. Quite to the contrary, they define and pin down and limit and dictate our actions which therefore can be free only insofar as they go *beyond* everything we specifically intend to achieve.

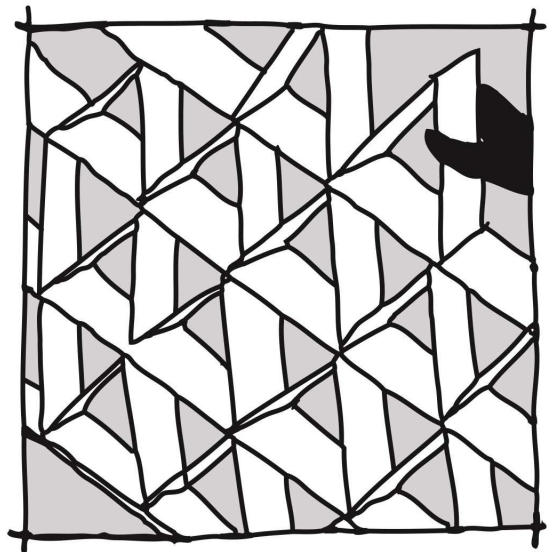
According to Arendt, this happens when we act on principle, that is, on the basis of our fundamental convictions. We can, to begin with, choose freely between different principles: Do we prefer honour over fame? courtesy over merit? freedom over security? And when we act, the principle of our choice does not determine but rather inspire our actions. There are many different ways to be honourable or to become famous etc. Freedom and determination, even though Arendt puts much effort into keeping them apart, should not be understood as an either-or. Rather, the free act “transcends”, as she says, its determining factors. Political action thus is free insofar as it is a matter of principle.

In our context, at any rate, it is crucial that freedom can become a worldly reality exclusively in the political realm since people act, which always means to act together with others, only when they are concerned with the common world and only when they are in public. To be sure, also the creators of works of art - the poets, writers, painters, composers etc. - and, to a lesser degree, craftsmen, architects and other types of world builders may be free while they work. But in their case the entire process of production happens, so to speak, behind closed doors and it is only the final product that appears in the world when eventually it is ready to leave the workshop.

Human freedom becomes manifest only through political action. Since nobody can act in isolation, political actors depend on shared space where they can come together.

Political space is thus a condition for freedom to become worldly reality.

UNPREDICTABILITY



The outcome of a debate is unpredictable. It may lead to groundbreaking agreement or end in persistent disagreement. It may offer delightful insights and inspiring thoughts or bore us with repetitions of truisms and clichés. What is more, the course of a debate can change suddenly, from one moment to the next, and when it does, it usually surprises everybody, even the participants themselves.

Arendt writes that in the political realm, “one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation” (Arendt, 1998: 190). To her, this unpredictability is part and parcel of human freedom which resides in our capacity to act and to begin something new. Unpredictability in politics obviously can be very frustrating. Arendt claims that therefore it has been attempted many times, both in theory and in practice, to exclude it from human affairs altogether. She famously called this the “substitution of making for acting” (Arendt, 1998: 220). In stark contrast to action, making is very reliable. The production process does not only have a definite beginning but also a definite end which determines and justifies all means necessary or qualified to achieve it. Not only after the object – whatever it may be – is finished, but also while it is still in the making, it

is easily possible to evaluate the (intermediate) result on the basis of the idea or the model which guides the entire process. Even though Arendt does not believe that, as long as we are still human, our freedom to act and hence the unpredictability of the future of the world could ever be entirely suppressed, she emphasises that the recurring attempts to substitute making for acting have too often turned leaders into rulers. They have dramatically changed the way we understand politics and influenced our expectations towards political action and political space.

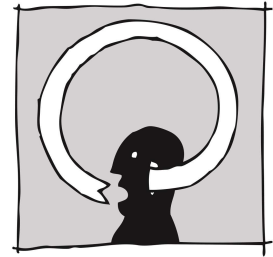
We are afraid of unpredictability in the political realm for very good reasons. But we should not overlook that surprises are not only hazardous but also a source of delight and joy. In the cultural sphere and also in our personal lives, for instance, we think much more positively about unpredictability than in the field of politics: Who would like to watch movies if the end was clear from the beginning? go to the theatre if we would know exactly what to expect? or put money on a football match if it was possible to calculate who is going to win? How boring would our lives become if we excluded all the serendipitous and also the tragic moments which we cannot foresee? In the end, most of us are happy that, as Forrest Gump's mother used to say, "life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you gonna get."

Moreover, our capacity to act is not only the source of unpredictability but also provides us with a remedy against it. This remedy, which limits but never erases unpredictability, lies in our power to make and to keep promises. Promises are not impeccable; we might not be able to keep them or break them willingly. Still, they are like "islands of certainty in an ocean of uncertainty" (Arendt, 1990: 244).

Political action is unpredictable. While political space must always leave room for surprises it simultaneously relies heavily on the capacity of its users to make and to keep mutual promises.

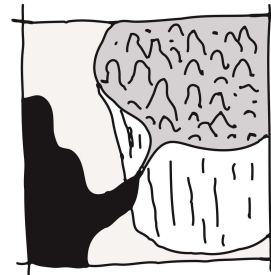
IRREVERSIBILITY

Political action is irreversible. In order to remain free actors, capable of making new beginnings, we rely on our capacity to forgive others. Political space encourages us to forgive.



BOUNDLESSNESS

Political action is boundless. Political relations and ventures thus depend on stabilising elements. Political space embodies and guarantees this stabilisation.



It should be clearly defined, well-structured, durable and moderate in every sense of the word.

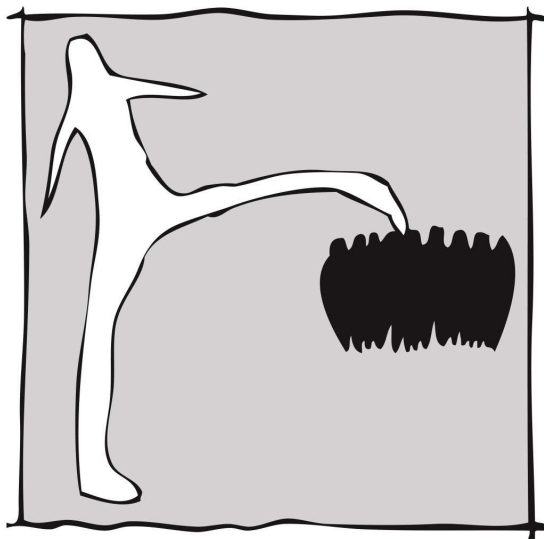


These are, as far as we can see, the relevant aspects of political action seen from the perspective of Hannah Arendt. To be sure, it would be possible to explain all of them in more detail, to analyse how they are related, to criticise them and to defend them against prejudice. Further, it is tempting to elaborate on the similarities and differences between Arendt's conception of political action and the standpoints of other political theorists; or to

compare the picture we have painted with the work of other Arendt-commentators.

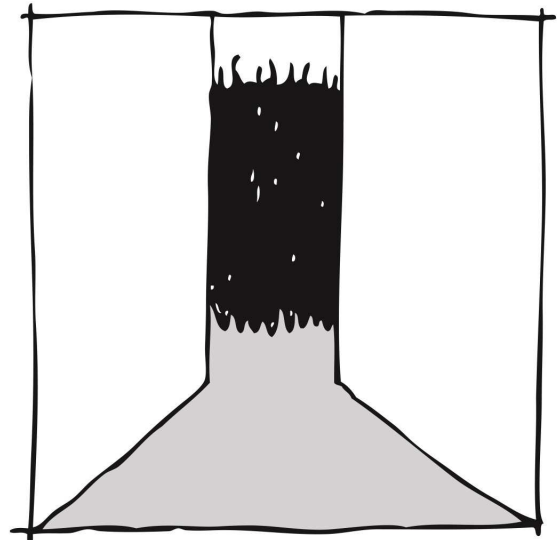


At this point, however, we shall only briefly point towards the most significant difference between Arendt's conception of political action and the mainstream of political theory in order to understand the actual significance of political space:

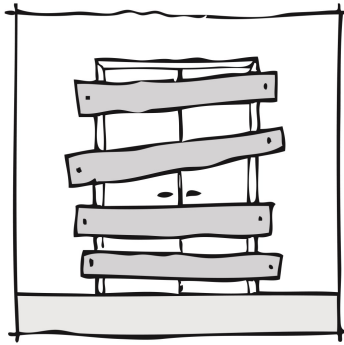


To Arendt, political action is not just a way of resolving conflicts between different groups and different interests, an everlasting struggle caused by the troublesome human condition of plurality. It is not just the government of public affairs, a never-ending argument about how we want to live together. To be sure, Arendt does not deny that conflicts of interests are dealt with in the political arena day in and day out, and she would agree that government, as distinguished from administration, is at the very centre of politics. But against prevalent definitions and understandings, Arendt highlights that acting

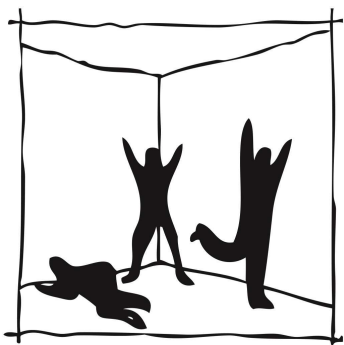
politically means, above all, to take initiative and to insert oneself into the common world, to be among one's peers, to experience freedom and not just liberty, to actively distinguish oneself from everybody else thereby forming a personal identity, and to share the world with others instead of just existing in it at the same time.



Since political action always involves different people and since its one and only concern is the common world, political actors depend on worldly spaces where they can gather. But these spaces - and that is the crux - are not only, perhaps not even primarily important because they are spaces of democracy. The standard argument about "true" democracy claims that those who are in power do not actually represent the majority of the people. But we can aspire, it is claimed, to a more democratic political system if we manage to "throw open the corridors of power to the public; to embrace social and civic movements; and to emancipate all levels of government from bureaucratic and corporate power" (DiEM25, 2016). It is true that political space matters for "real" democracy where the interests of the majority are also represented *by* the majority, because the public simply does not fit, and for the most part is not even allowed into to the existing political spaces. Still, the meaning of political space, according to Arendt, goes beyond representation!

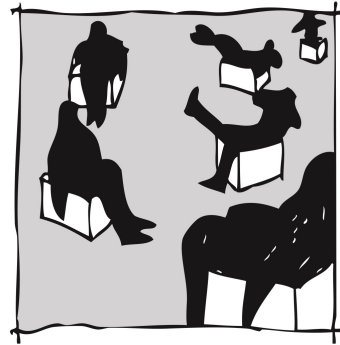


"The trouble lies in the lack of public spaces to which the people at large would have entrance and from which an élite could be selected, or rather, where it could select itself." (Arendt, 1990: 277)



Political space matters because those of us who do have political passions – “courage, the pursuit of public happiness, the taste of public freedom, an ambition that strives for excellence regardless not only of social status and administrative office but even of achievement and congratulation” - have nowhere else to go. Just as performers depend on theatres, party people on clubs and football players on pitches, those who would *like* to participate in politics, not because they have to or because they see the need to claim their rights and interests, but simply because they care, depend on the availability of adequate spaces for acting politically. These passions “are perhaps not as rare as we are inclined to think, living in a society that has perverted all virtues into social values; but they certainly are out of the ordinary under all circumstances” (Arendt, 1990: 275f). We probably need not be afraid, so to speak, that political spaces would be flooded by the masses; but that of course does not make them

any less important for those who are passionate about politics.

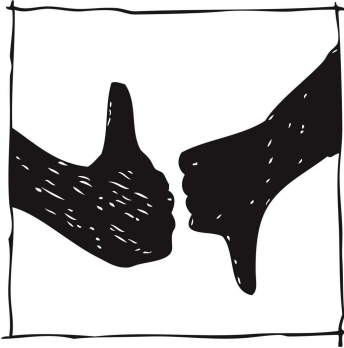


Moreover, political space matters because without it the common world will perish until it is reduced to a necessary minimum, just enough for all (or at least most) of us to survive and to live our own individual lives one next to the other. For decades now the modern world has been described as increasingly *individualistic*, not only by scholars from different academic disciplines but also by journalists, in talk shows and at dinner tables. Today we tend to celebrate every new initiative that opposes individualism and aims to bring people together again. Nonetheless, oftentimes these initiatives - the paradigmatic example in this respect is *urban gardening* - only bring together people who share one or several particular interests anyways. Though they change the world, perhaps for the better, they are not interested in the world as such but only in one or a few selected aspects of it; and by no means do they offer spaces where the world is at the centre of attention. This is perfectly fine and we may even find that, in certain ways, people act politically inside them. But for the most part we will have to admit that these initiatives and spaces merely replace individualism, so to say, with “groupism”. If instead we really care about the common *world*, we should pay more attention to political space since it is the only space where we come together and act as citizens of the world in which we all live together.

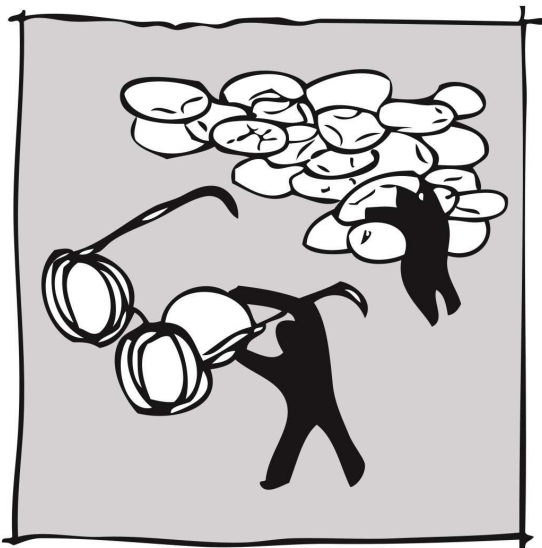
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PART II

POLITICAL SPACE

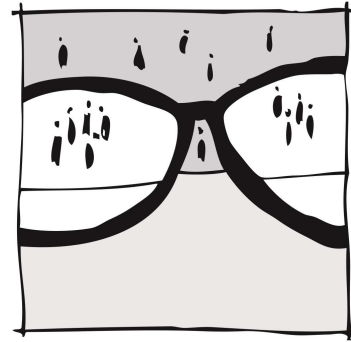


Political space is the immediate environment of political actors, the space into which our actions fall, the space where politics, so to speak, is at home. All forms of human activity, from the most unworldly and seemingly passive ones like thinking or reading to the most worldly and active ones such as playing football or throwing a party or participating in politics, depend to some extent on their respective environment. It influences if we act, how we act, and what results from our actions. Consequently, there are better and worse spaces for acting politically.

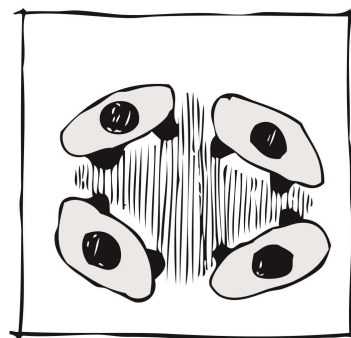


In order to understand what characterises good political spaces, we have taken a close look at the various aspects of political action. Now we can derive from these aspects a set of *principles* that informs us about what to expect from

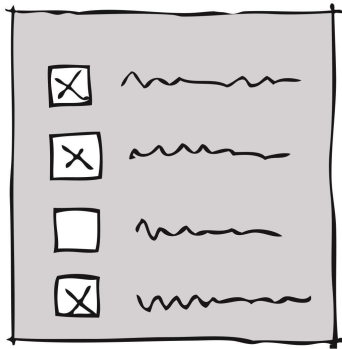
political space as a type of space and thus helping us to design and to determine the quality of particular political spaces. A political space, the surrounding of political actors, is good insofar as it embodies these principles. The more principles it embodies and the more evident this embodiment, the better a particular political space will be.



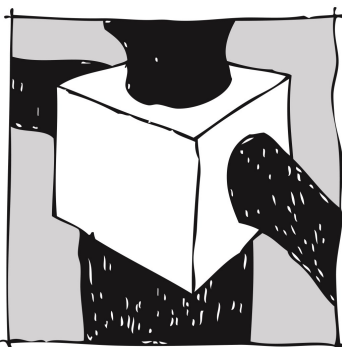
The principles refer to political space as a *type* of space. Hence they are valid for all particular spaces where people de facto act politically. Since political space is established through the actions of political actors which are not only a *conditio sine qua non* but the *conditio per quam* of political space, it does not matter whether the environment in which they gather was originally designed for acting politically or not. The respective space may have been the only available option, appropriated against resistance, or people may have just followed their intuition. Neither does the exact form of political action matter; for example whether the actors participate in the government of public affairs or “only” judge those who participate. In turn, political space cannot exist without people who act politically, irrespective of its name and the narrative around it.



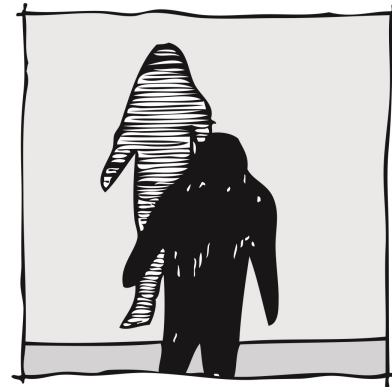
“The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be.”
(Arendt, 1998: 198)



There is no stringent hierarchy between the single principles and obviously our intention is not to offer an unequivocal definition of political space. Rather the principles remind of a checklist or a series of reference points that should help us to identify and/or to create good political spaces. In order not to repeat ourselves too much we simply list the principles without any explanation. Each principle is derived from one aspect of political action and they are presented in the exact same order in which the corresponding aspects of political action were discussed in *Part I* of this book.



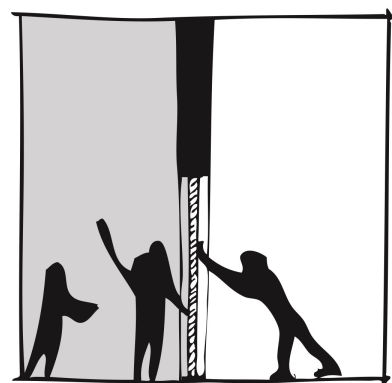
(Strictly speaking, space of course does not “support”, “welcome” or “encourage” anything because it is not an actor on its own. We often use these anthropomorphic formulations because they are shorter, more vivid and memorable than the available alternatives.)



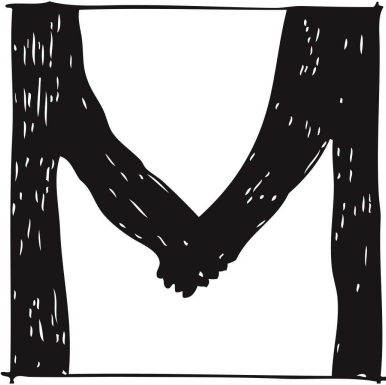
In political space it matters who we individually are.



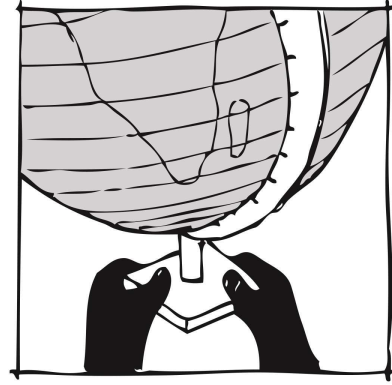
Political space welcomes, embraces and protects diversity.



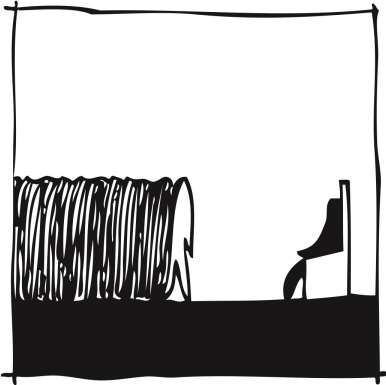
Political space excludes both altruism and violence.



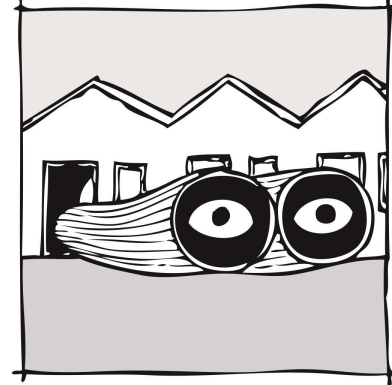
Political space establishes human relations.



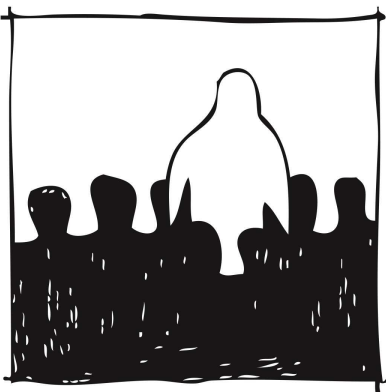
In political space we respond to worldly events.



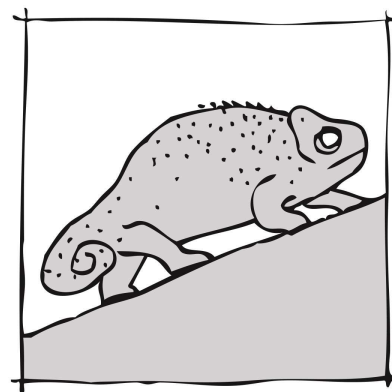
Political space supports leaders, not rulers.



Political space focuses only on public matters.



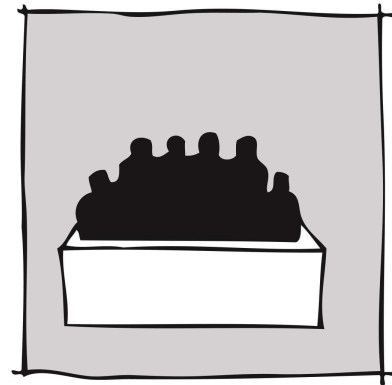
Political space encourages personal initiative.



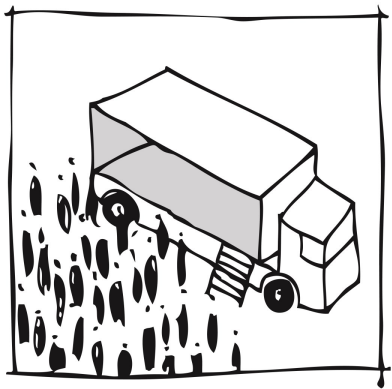
Political space reflects the world that surrounds it.



**Political space safeguards
political equality.**



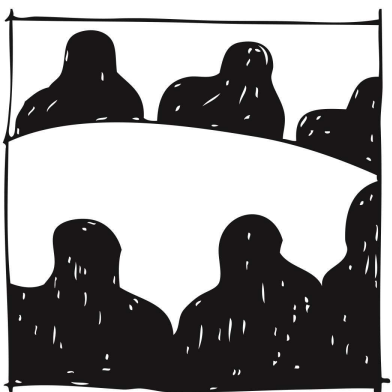
**Political space accommodates
judging spectators.**



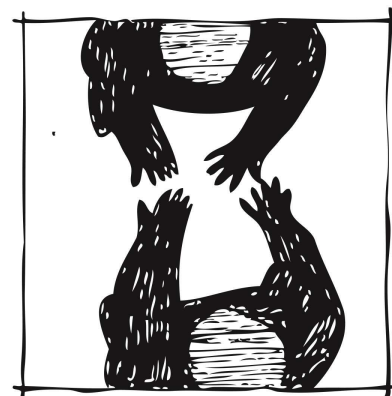
**Political space sets a stage for
political actors.**



**Political space encourages
actors and it demands
courage.**



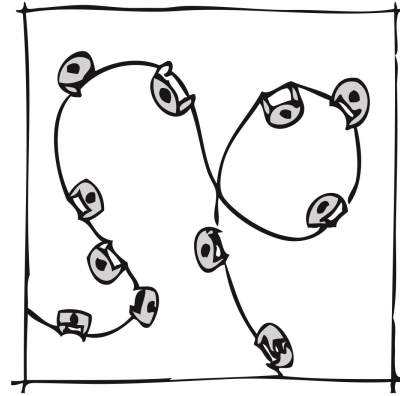
**In political space we speak
with and talk to each other.**



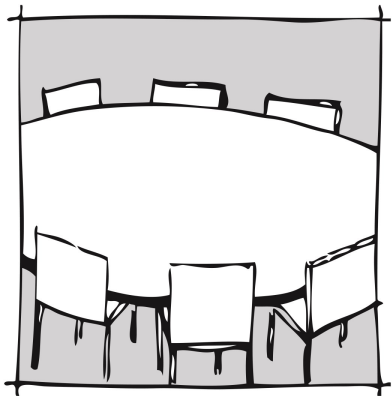
**In political space we exchange
opinions.**



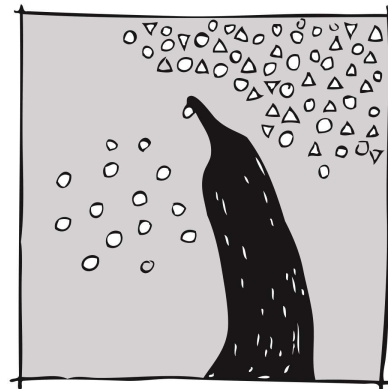
Political space encourages mutual persuasion.



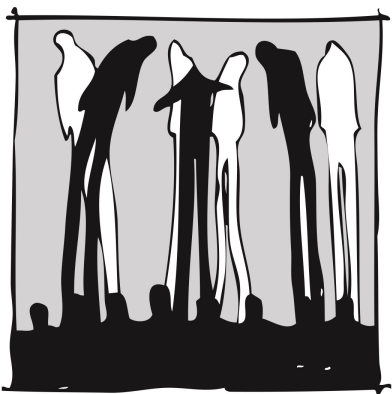
In political space we use popular language and common sense.



Political space is a space of deliberation.



Political space rests on the distinction between facts and opinions.



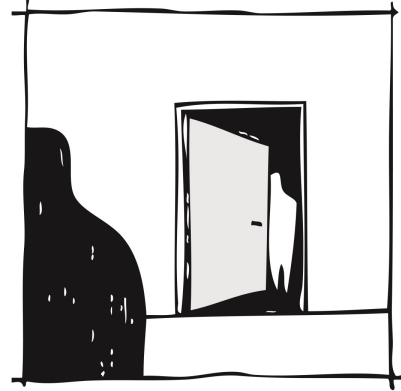
In political space we test each others' judgments.



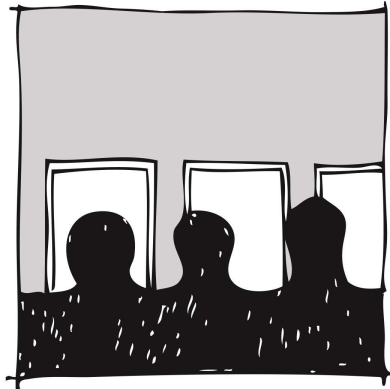
Political space is a space of hope.



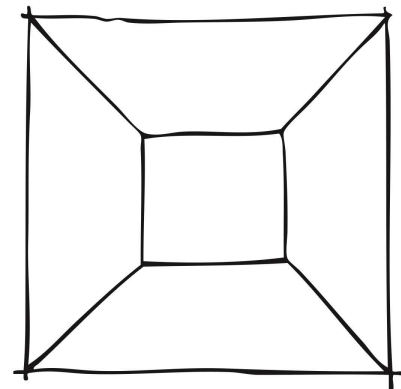
Principles become manifest in political space.



Political space rests on forgiveness.



Political space helps us to take decisions.



Political space keeps our actions within boundaries.



Political space rests on mutual promises.

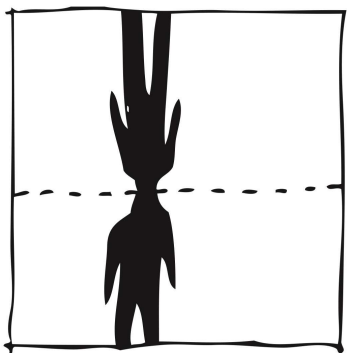
* * *

Now consider the following two situations which in our context are paradigmatic:



A municipal government decides to initiate a participatory process about a big local development project. Their acclaimed goal is to give citizens the opportunity to engage and to take part in the actual decision-making process about whether or not and perhaps how the project should be realised. Obviously, the participatory process has to happen *somewhere*. How can we tell whether we are confronted with a good political space or not?

A group of citizens tries to become engaged in the public affairs of their community without an official invitation from the government. They want to discuss politics and perhaps elaborate concrete proposals or demands. Evidently, they too have to meet *somewhere*. Where should they gather and how can they create a good political space?



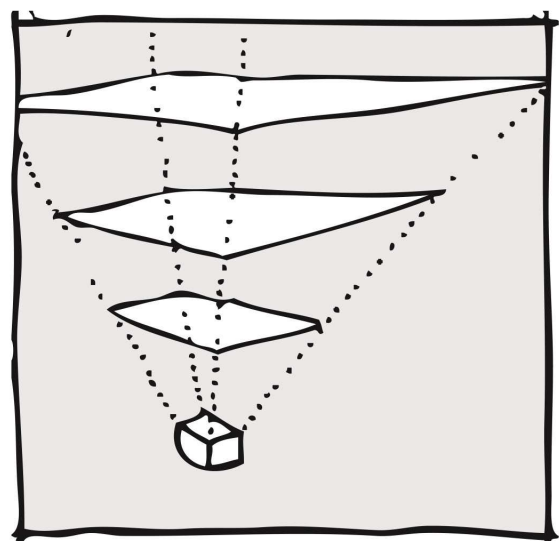
In these examples we are no longer concerned with political space as a type of space, but with *particular* specimens of (allegedly) political space. Suddenly, political space has a singular and a plural. In the first situation we look through the lenses of evaluators and the question that arises

is *How can we assess the quality of a particular political space?* In the second situation we see with the eyes of designers of political space and the question *How can we design a good political space?* pops up.

WHAT IS A SPACE?

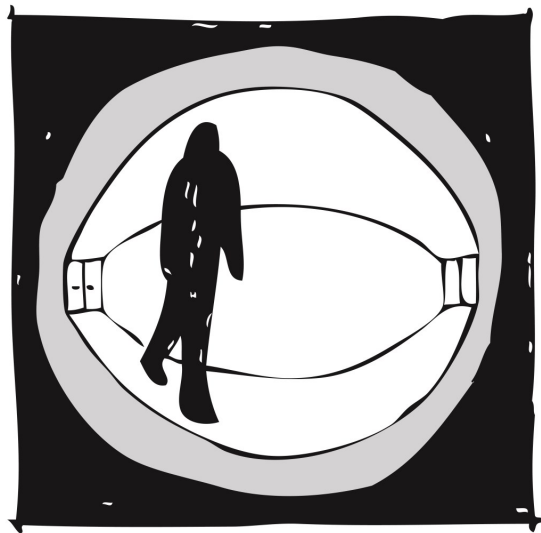
In order to answer them we first have to turn towards a third, underlying question, namely *What is a space?* So far we merely described political space as the direct environment of political actors, as that which is around the actors when they act. We shall now elaborate on this in more detail:

To begin with, every particular space is a *somewhere* as distinguished from everywhere and nowhere. As such, any space is by definition one part of a whole. If it was the whole itself we would call it “everywhere” and if it was not connected to the whole in one way or another we would call it “nowhere”. Every such somewhere is defined by its own limitations. The world is everywhere around and the space itself is what stretches between them.

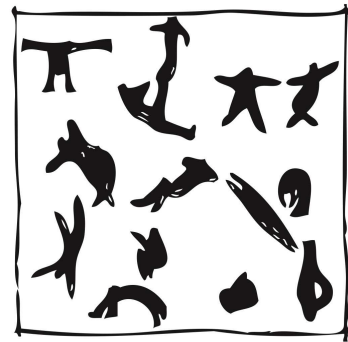


Thus a space - political or not - may be one room in a building, one building in a

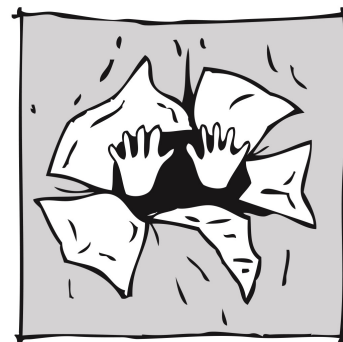
neighbourhood or one area in a city. Even if we scale up and look at an entire city, region or country as a space - which we will not do since we focus on *urban* political spaces -, we are still concerned with a particular somewhere. Moreover, we can also understand virtual forums, apps and websites as spaces in that sense.



Every space depends essentially on the world as a whole because it is only from within an existing world that a space can be defined. This assertion resembles what Arendt once remarked about life and death: They are actual *events* - and thus potentially beginning or end -, she says, only from the perspective of the world. If there was no human world, birth and death of individuals would be merely a part of the eternal cyclical movement of nature without any human relevance. We might say that borders are for space what events are for time and that, from this perspective, spaces are like time spans. The point of the matter is that both can be defined and recognised only against a worldly background. There could be no particular spaces without a world that is formed by all of them together and at the same time surrounds each of them individually.

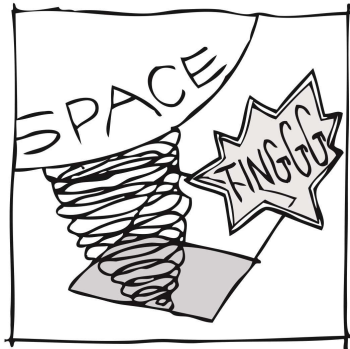


"Birth and death presuppose a world which is not in constant movement, but whose durability and relative permanence makes appearance and disappearance possible, which existed before any one individual appeared into it and will survive his eventual departure. Without a world into which men are born and from which they die, there would be nothing but changeless eternal recurrence, the deathless everlastingness of the human as of all other animal species." (Arendt, 1998: 97)



In that sense, spaces are *artificial* because we create them out of nowhere (though not like God created the earth out of nothing). Consequently, the human-made borders of space, whether they exist only in our minds or have become manifest in the form of walls, lines, rivers etc., can be shifted. Since shifting a border is a conscious act, it always happens from one moment to the next. Even if the shift itself does not result from an unequivocal event but from a gradual development, perhaps over the course of many years, it must be acknowledged at one point, suddenly and somehow officially. However, if the space should remain distinguishable, these shifts have to remain exceptional or they have to occur at

least regularly. If they happen too often and without recognisable pattern, the only possible result is confusion and ultimately the dissolution of a particular somewhere into everywhere or nowhere.

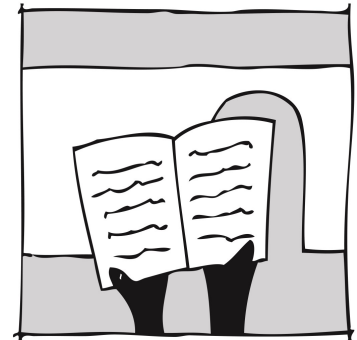


On the other hand, spaces can be short-dated; they can pop up, so to speak, out of nowhere and soon afterwards they may vanish again from the surface of the world. Usually such ephemeral spaces will not be remembered for very long simply because they did not exist long enough for stories to evolve inside their borders, but under exceptional circumstances they too may go down in history. Further, it is possible that spaces appear and disappear in regular intervals, for example every first Sunday of the month. (To avoid misunderstandings: the appearance of a space may coincide with an event or a social gathering, but they are not one and the same.) At any rate, the hallmark of space is not durability but *distinction*.

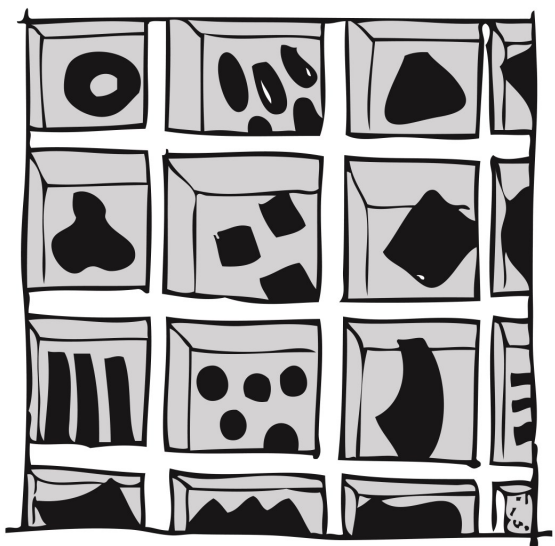


Even though borders are essentially what defines a space, they are only one part of what sets it apart from other spaces. We do not recognise a particular space only or even primarily because of its borders but because of what stretches between them. Shape and

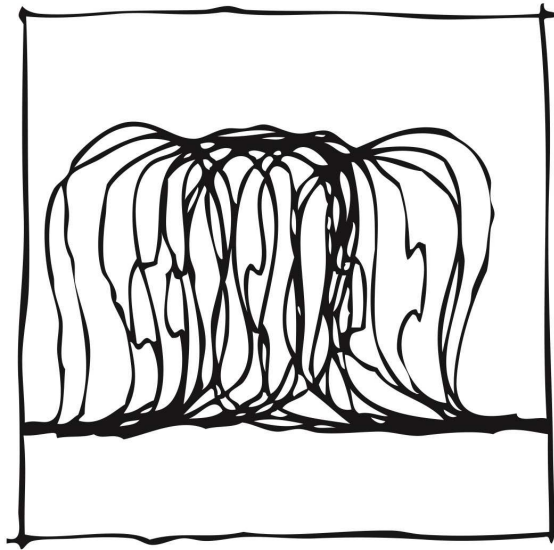
character of a space arise, so to speak, from within.



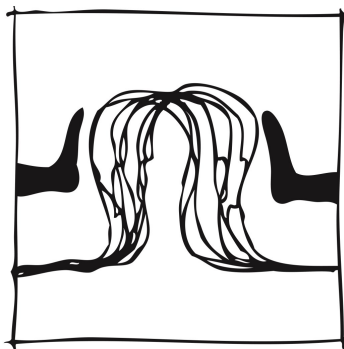
We are confronted here with both tangible and intangible elements and characteristics. In other words, the environment in which we act consists not only of floor, walls and ceiling, tables, chairs and stage, but also of the meanings that are attached to these objects and the stories for which they quite literally stand. Shape and character are determined not only by colour schemes, forms and materials but also by us, the actors that use the space, and by how we are formally and informally related to each other.



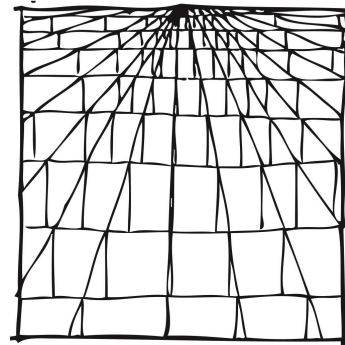
This is precisely what the well-established terminological distinction between “space” and “place” conveys. Parkinson for example remarks that the term “space” denotes “physical entities and settings” while “place” denotes “those settings filled with meanings, symbols, social practices, narratives, power relations, and so on.” (Parkinson, 2012: 11)



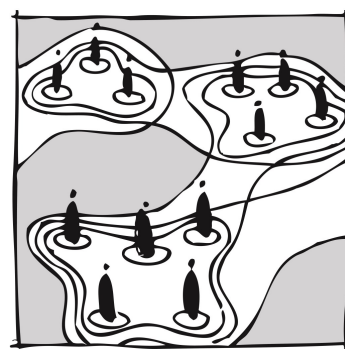
Obviously, some of these spatial elements and characteristics can be designed (here we could also say “planned”, “implemented”, “installed”, “established” etc.) while others just appear (or, alternatively, “come up”, “happen” etc.). We can install a table, refer to a tree as a meeting point or determine opening hours, but we cannot decide about people's associations with particular spatial elements. Even if they are meant to represent something specific they might be misunderstood. Neither is it possible to foresee which habits people develop and how they might influence the space where they are practiced. Memorials mean different things to different people, benches are not necessarily used for sitting etc. Nonetheless, space designers can make use of and work with what they cannot control. They can for example use the fact *that* something has a certain meaning for their design, even though they could not just create this meaning in the first place.



By and large, it seems fair to say that designers of space have huge influence on what a space looks and feels like, how it is used and what people associate with it; even though this influence never turns into total control.

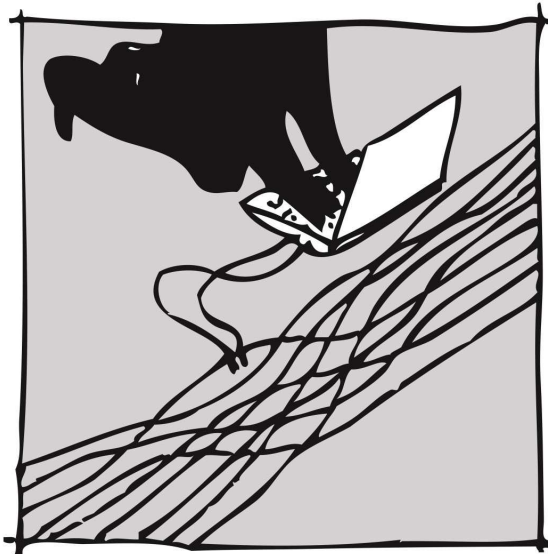


Each space that we establish by means of delineation is either an extension or a modification of the existing world and as such not only created from within an existing world but also connected to the rest of it in one way or another. No space is an island. The more worldly a space, the more it will be affected by changes in and of the world and vice versa. In extreme cases, unworldly spaces with very loose, vague or remote connections to the rest of the world can endure the most dramatic twists and turns of history almost as if nothing had happened; but the price they pay is that, from the perspective of the world, it is almost as if they did not exist. In turn, each space also influences the world around it; it radiates. Obviously, the more human relations exist inside or run through a particular space, the tighter and the more resilient they are, the more relevant that space will be for the common world.

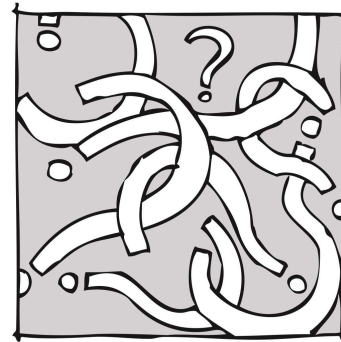


Finally, from the perspective of its users, those who are active on the inside, the space is an environment, a surrounding that stretches between recognisable borders, which, in order to be recognisable, do not necessarily have to be *explicitly* defined.

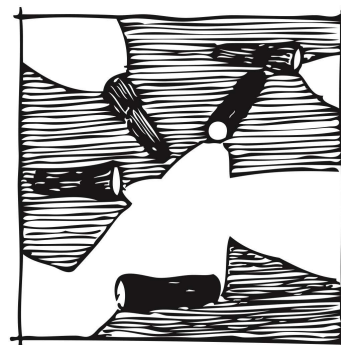
Context matters!



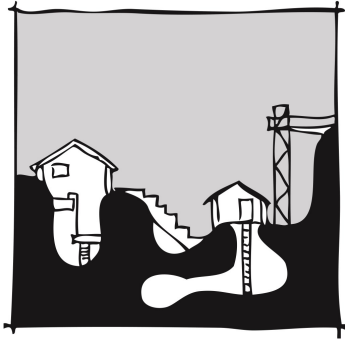
Since political space is exclusively concerned with worldly affairs and since, moreover, we use it as citizens of the world, it is *the* most worldly type of space that exists. Thus at least to some extent political spaces are good or bad in the specific contexts where they become relevant. Consequently, before evaluating or designing political spaces, we first have to understand the worlds that surround them. Evidently, this is an endeavour which never comes to an end because the world always keeps spinning; but which has to be interrupted, at least for the moment, as soon as we have the feeling that we understood. Context matters, and for political space more than for any other type of space!



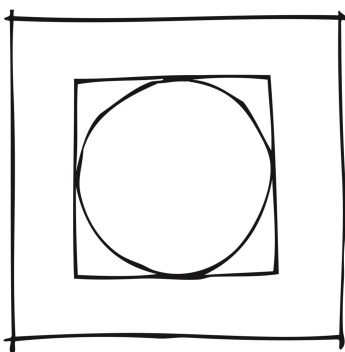
We have to ask questions such as *How does everyday life work in this world? How do the citizens usually engage and participate in politics? What other political spaces exist? How is the world governed? What are the dominant public concerns? Who are the most influential political actors? Is the respective space related to a particular issue or to public affairs in general? What should be the role of this space in the world? ...* Often we even have to consider the context of the context, e.g. the country to which a city belongs in which a political space is located.



Depending on the worldly context certain elements of political action will seem to be more relevant than others. While in one situation it may be crucial to stimulate the personal initiative of citizens because nobody is really engaged, in another moment it may be more important to strengthen leadership because participants can never agree on anything, or to clearly distinguish facts from opinions in order to avoid, for example, that some actors mislead others. To be sure, all the different aspects of political action are interrelated; but this should not keep us from singling out some of them rather than others. A good political space in *that* context will obviously promote and protect, above all, *these* aspects.



Accordingly, in many respects shape and character of a political space become reasonable only when they are explained in relation to the world around. Theatres for example will usually be good political spaces with regards to their layout, acoustics, visibility etc. But for historical reasons or simply because of its name - remember the Volksbühne -, one theatre may be preferable over others. Similarly, there is no need to highlight that debates usually benefit from a moderator. But who this moderator should be and which particular skills s/he should have cannot be decided without knowing the local community. Local knowledge is all the more important since oftentimes political spaces are not built from scratch but established within existing physical structures which have a history on their own, and which are now being adapted, modified and filled with new life, purpose and meaning.



Still, insofar as political spaces are designed purposefully, certain elements like table, stage or round of introductions, and spatial qualities like centrality, formality or worldliness are so typical, that it seems absolutely possible to work out a *typology* or, rather, a set of typologies of good political spaces. For representative political

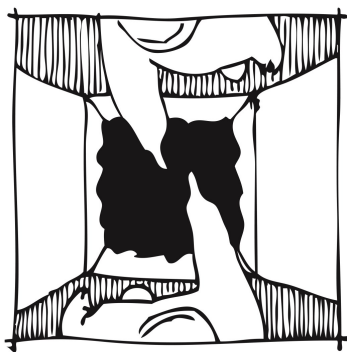
spaces like town halls or parliaments, such typologies exist (see for example Goodsell, 1988). Though there is no doubt that we can learn from them, they are almost always limited to the architectural dimension of space, leaving equally important institutional elements unattended; secondly, they do not tell us anything about the specificities of political spaces for ordinary citizens, a subcategory of political space that is becoming more and more important; and, finally, they have the inherent tendency to generalise all the interesting details of individual spaces away and to lump together what should better be kept apart and looked at on a case-to-case basis. At any event, typologies never tell the whole story; and they must not be mistaken for impeccable recipes of good political spaces!

Evaluating Political Space

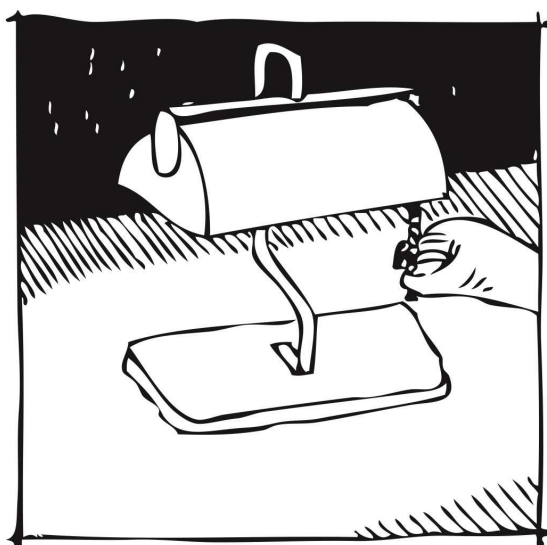


We may now return to our opening questions: First, *How can we assess the quality of a particular political space?* The evaluator's work begins with defining the borders of the respective space and with analysing the context in which it becomes relevant. "Context" here refers to both the physical world with all its apparent characteristics as well as the history of this world, ongoing processes to which the respective political space is related as well as

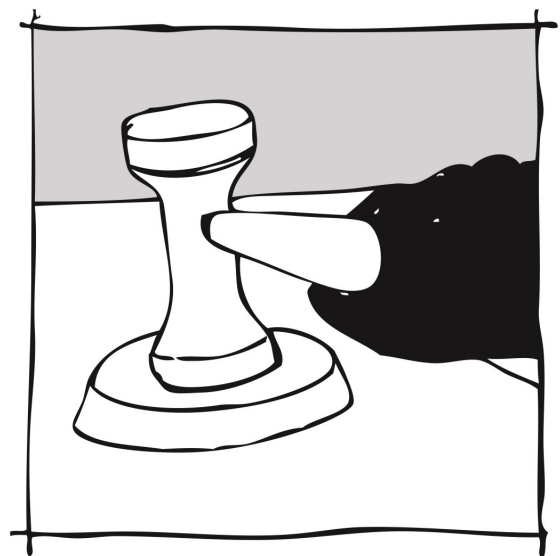
networks of actors and human relations. Subsequently, s/he will sift through all the more or less remarkable details of the space - tangible or intangible, designed or not, referring to “space” or to “place” - which together create its distinct shape and character. These details must be related, on the one side, to the respective principles of political space which they either support or hinder, and in some cases realise or prevent from being realised. On the other side, they should be linked to contextual specificities whenever this seems appropriate or helpful for understanding the analysis. Eventually, the evaluator will render a judgment, claiming that this political space in that context is good or bad for political actors in this or that sense.



Since they have to assess the quality of space, which by definition cannot simply be calculated, different evaluators may obviously arrive at different conclusions. Still, their opinions are of course not entirely subjective; they just always remain open to objections.



The first great advantage that evaluators of political space have over designers is that they know how the actors de facto act and behave in the space, which often makes it a whole lot easier to understand in which sense a political space is good or bad. Notwithstanding, our actions, especially in the political arena, are never fully determined by space. Hence the fact that people do or do not act in certain ways often indicates but never proves that their environment is appropriate or not for such actions. Hence an evaluation of political space may absolutely reveal obstacles or potentials for political actors that were previously undiscovered.

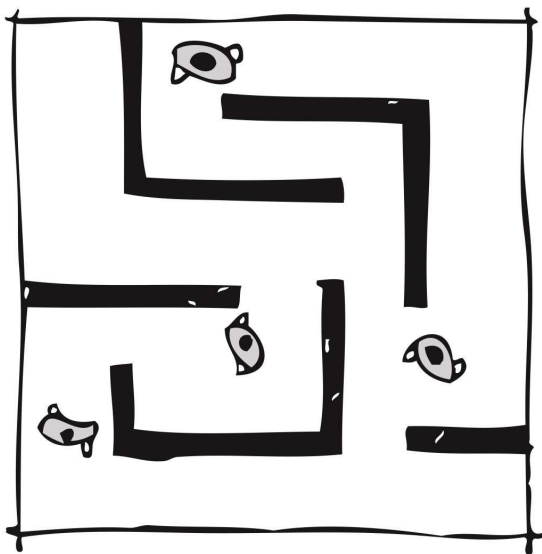


The second great advantage of the evaluators is that they can - and even have to - judge not only those details and characteristics that were actually designed, but also all those things that were never planned and perhaps not foreseeable for designers at all. In that sense, even our actions are relevant for and legitimate concerns of the analysis of political space as an environment of political actors, because the way we act today always influences how we will act tomorrow.



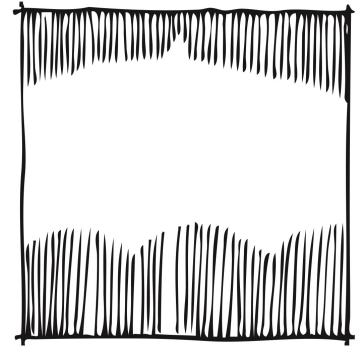
While the evaluators of political space must consider everything that is remarkable about the environments of political actors, they can criticise and praise only those things that were or that should have been part of a spatial design *for* political actors. It is their job to uncover what was hidden from, and to highlight what escaped the eyes of the designers of political space.

What is spatial design?

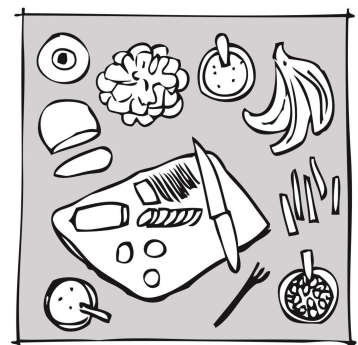


Our second opening question was *How can we design a good political space?* We have already underlined that, due to the great significance of its ever-changing worldly context as well as the fact that no space could ever be under the total control of any individual or group (at least as long as humans are still actors and not just machines), there are no impeccable recipes for designing good political spaces. This of course does not change the fact that space designers

have tremendous influence on space. It just means that designers of political space, have to work on a case-to-case basis, embrace the principle of trial-and-error and hope that practice makes perfect. Now questions remain: *What is spatial design?* and *How does spatial design influence political actors?*



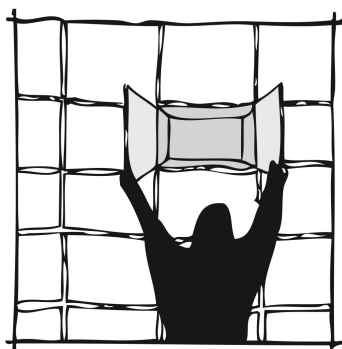
Spatial design is the umbrella term for all individual elements of a space that were purposefully installed or established, as well as for their overall composition insofar as it aims at realising certain spatial qualities.



Elements of spatial design can be singled out and evaluated individually, even though in praxis they always connect, interfere and interact with other elements. In a way, they are like the ingredients of a soup: it is often hard to tell what exactly is in there but the connoisseur will be able to guess many or even most of them right, and the cook, who in our case is of course the space designer, even knows their exact composition.

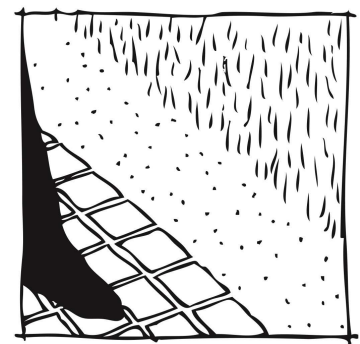


Spatial qualities, on the other side, result from the specific arrangement of different elements and express how a space is, e.g. open, lively, isolated or guarded. Consequently they are a matter of perception and cannot be identified and exposed with the same certainty as the elements of a space. Spatial qualities, though in many cases they are fairly obvious, can vary in the eyes of different onlookers and in that sense they are comparable to the taste of a soup. Spatial qualities, as it were, are an intermediate level between the abstract principles of political space and the concrete elements of particular specimens. Nonetheless, isolated from the elements they grow out of and from the worldly context which they affect and by which they are affected, they are not very informative. A space is central, but where? ... formal, but how? ... durable, compared to what? ... accessible, for whom? ... worldly, but why?

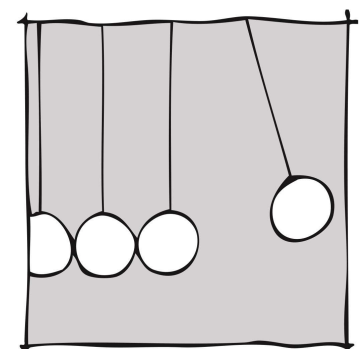


The purpose of spatial design, in any case, is to integrate a particular space into the world that surrounds it and to prepare it for certain users and activities. The integration is directed from inside the space towards the outside and from the world towards the space. Here space designers literally reach the limits of their area of

responsibility; they have to collaborate with others in one way or another. Good designers of political space thus never work entirely alone. The preparation of a space for users and activities, on the other hand, happens within the respective borders and can, within limits, be decided about by the designer(s) only. Spatial design always operates "within limits" because it is subject to the technical specifications, laws, customs etc. of the world around. (Seen from that perspective, even the preparation of a space for certain activities is a form of integrating it into its context.)

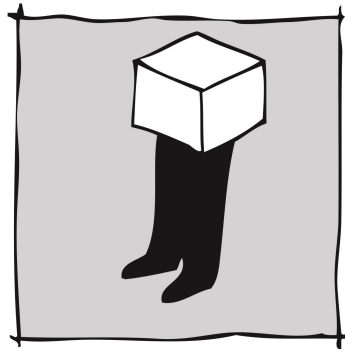


According to its specific purpose, spatial design ranges from cautious, almost invisible interventions to an all-encompassing set of measures. For instance: Both a wildlife sanctuary, which is excluded from, rather than included into the human world (but which nonetheless becomes part of it as soon as it is consciously delimited as such) and a hospital ward are designed spaces.



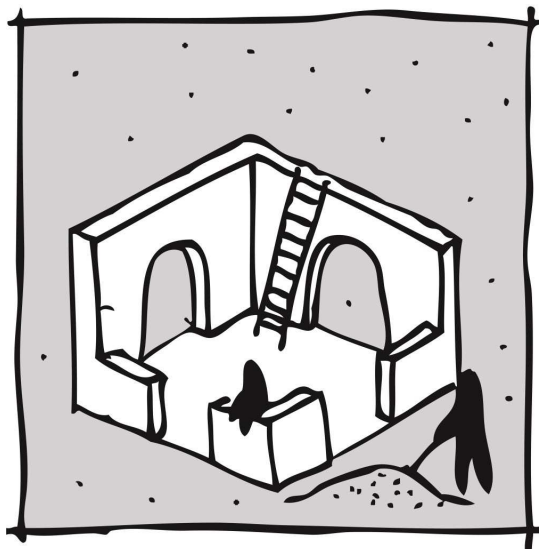
Furthermore, spatial design, especially with regards to political space, is *not* a one-time-thing but rather an iterative process that should (and sometimes must be) resumed once in a while, especially when the relation between space and

world changes notably. Spatial design, so to speak, has to keep up with the times.



A space as a space can survive changes of particular design-elements and qualities, and even move from one location - physical or virtual - to another as long as we recognise it as the *same* space. We know from everyday experiences that opinions about whether or not a space still is what it used to be can differ widely.

Architectural elements



Thinking of the terms “designer” and “space”, images of architects, craftsmen, construction workers, interior designers and urban planners come to mind. They shape *physical* space; some more skill- and thoughtfully than others. They use tangible materials like stone, wood, earth, metal, plastic or glass to create elements of

space like floors, walls and roofs, doors, windows, stairs, arcades, tables, chairs, benches, lamps, shelves, carpets, statues etc. Moreover, also less obvious elements like paintings, screens, computers, microphones, maps, documents, balloons etc. can be used as elements of spatial design.

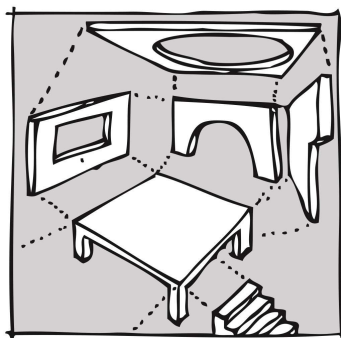


Further, nature and natural “things” too can become part of spatial design insofar as they acquire a purpose that does not follow directly from what they naturally are. Plants can be planted to create a more pleasant environment, rivers can be turned into borders and trees into meeting points, forests or mountains can be used as scenic backgrounds etc. In some cases - just think of a fountain - the natural and the artificial mix; and ultimately all fabricated elements are of course made from what the earth has to offer.



Last but not least, we mentioned above that also websites, apps and other virtual spaces can be interpreted as environments of actors. Consequently, buttons, walls, windows, folders, chat rooms, log-in areas and other such virtual “things” can be interpreted as material elements of spatial design. Though they do not belong to the real world and are not tangible in the same

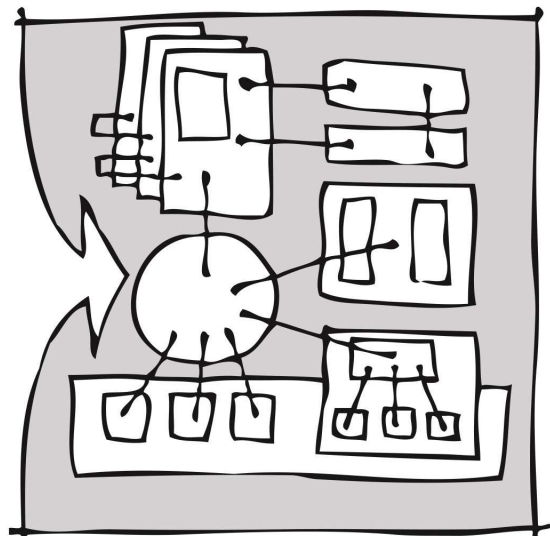
way as a table is tangible, we can still touch them on our touch screens and they help us to navigate through the virtual world, where more and more of our every-day interactions happen, just like streets and hallways give us orientation in its analogue antetype. Strictly speaking the virtual world is altogether intangible. The physical evidence of its existence - satellites, servers, routers, cables, computers etc. - is not part of the virtual world itself but rather the prerequisite of its existence. Hence all those things tell us very little about what the virtual world and the spaces inside it are actually like. We can only analyse them if we adopt and take serious the language of web-designers and programmers. Of course keywords like “material design” or “website architecture” are borrowed from the real world, but they are meaningful nonetheless. On the other side, we must not blur the borders between the virtual and the analogue world and we should never forget that every user of virtual space at the same time remains bound to an analogue environment.



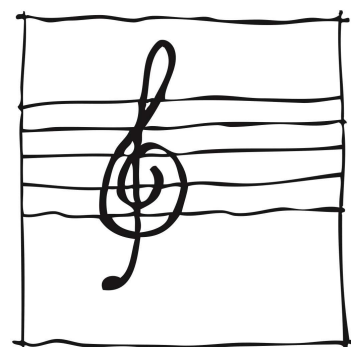
Material design-elements have to be distinguished from all the other details that create shape and character of a space. Desire lines in a park for example are not an element of spatial design; they just happened to appear with time. Nonetheless, they can belatedly be turned into an element of design; and as far as they could have been foreseen, the designer of the park can be criticised for the layout s/he designed. (A good evaluator will see that there should be a way, even without a desire line.) Additionally, things that have always been part of a space but never acquired any purpose or function as well as those things that somebody forgot in a space at one point are not elements

of design. Finally, different space designers may of course (purposefully or not) interfere with each other's designs. In order to distinguish those material elements of space that were designed from those that are, so to say, incidental, we may refer to them as the *architectural* elements of space.

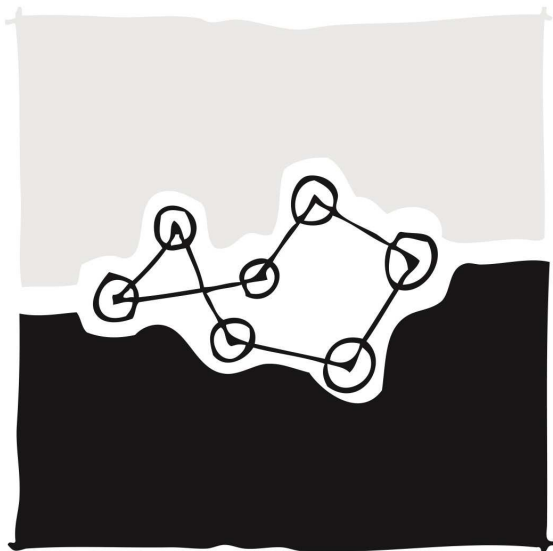
Institutional elements



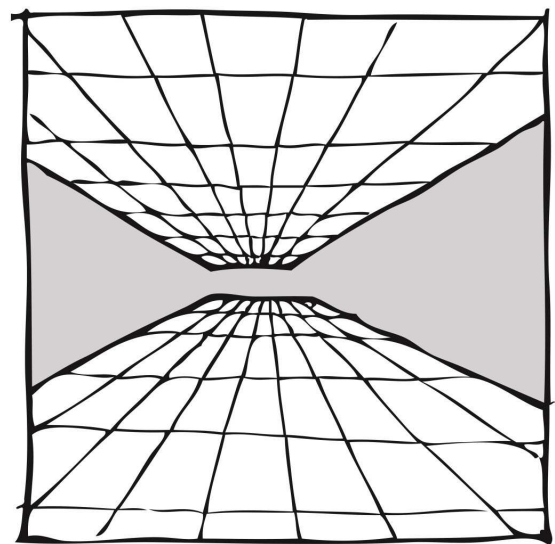
We have seen that in order to really understand the surrounding of actors we must consider not only the material elements that belong to the “space” but also the immaterial characteristics of the “place”. Here too we can distinguish between elements of design and unplanned, unintended details. But since we are now confronted with human practices and interactions, the borderline is a little fuzzier than in the case of tangible objects.



To begin with, let us consider a few examples: How we perceive and behave in apartment buildings does not only depend on bricks and mortar but also on the house rules that are established to organise cohabitation. The design of a park does only include the fence that surrounds it, the pathways that run through it and the benches that are set up in selected locations. Additionally, somebody has to decide about the opening hours, perhaps an entrance fee, whether or not dogs are allowed etc. The design of a library would be horrible if the books inside the shelves were not selected according to certain principles and structured systematically. Moreover, somebody has to design the processes of borrowing, reserving and returning books. In order to understand a school as an environment for learning, it is not enough to analyse size, interior, colour, setting etc. of classrooms, cafeteria and hallways. We also have to consider the duration of the teaching units and breaks, the authority of teachers over students without which our concept of a *school* would not even make sense as well as rules of behaviour, morning rituals etc. None of the countries in which we are at home could endure without laws, customs and festivities, which are all valid and practiced only in a specific area of application. Finally, even in the virtual world we find codes of conduct, the obligation to register or to accept the terms of agreement etc.

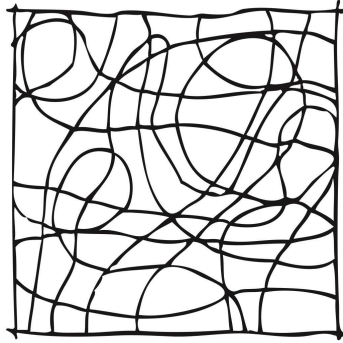


In all these examples a particular space is what it is partly or even mostly because of guidelines, rules, conventions, laws and other types of norms, as well as routines, customs and other recurring social practices. We might say that whereas the material elements belong, these elements *apply* to space; and while we think of architects and craftsmen as the designers of the material dimension of space, we may think of directors, legislators and curators as the designers of its immaterial dimension. The common characteristic of all of the elements we mentioned is the fact that they are instituted. We shall thus refer to them as the *institutional* elements of spatial design.

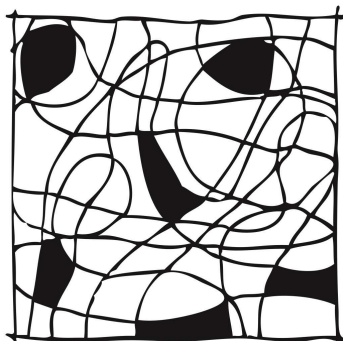


Simultaneously, we also find many immaterial spatial characteristics - some of them very influential for the environment - that are not established or set up in any way and thus totally incidental. If for example a football pitch is mostly frequented by players who like to dribble and often try new tricks, then rougher players will have a hard time to fit in. This particular pitch, in other words, will be good for some aspects of playing football but very bad for others. Still, we are not confronted with an element of design but rather with a type of behaviour that reinforces itself. Usually we find hierarchies between different groups of students in the schoolyard but even though they determine the environment, nobody planned them. Rather than for the beer, we might return

to a pub because of a group of funny old drunkards whose stories entertain the entire room, but who could not possibly be counted among the design-elements of the space (at least as long as they do not get paid).



It may be objected that social norms and practices are not actually elements of space, since they are not primarily related to the environment of actors, but instead to the interaction of those who gather in the respective environment. While it is certainly true that we usually employ the concepts of norms and practices in order to understand how people live and act together, this obviously does not mean that they cannot at the same time be helpful for studying space. Our intention, in other words, is not to study institutions, but to study the institutional dimension of space. (Moreover, we could criticise architectural elements on the same ground. After all, benches are not set up and lamps are not hung as elements of a space but for people to sit on them and to have enough light.)

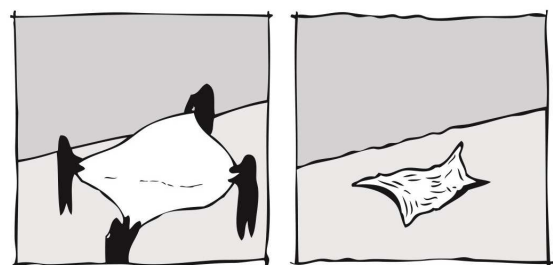


Further, it may be objected that the line between what counts as a design-element because it was instituted and what is “just” action or social practice is very fuzzy. While norms officially

take effect in a clearly defined area of application from one moment to the next, conventional practices usually develop through time, only gradually gain importance and often cannot be localised exactly. Additionally, some of them are never even officially recognised for what they are. This objection is justified: The line between immaterial design-elements, especially those that are not normative but “mere” social practices is as blurry as the line between a lake and a pond or a mountain and a hill.

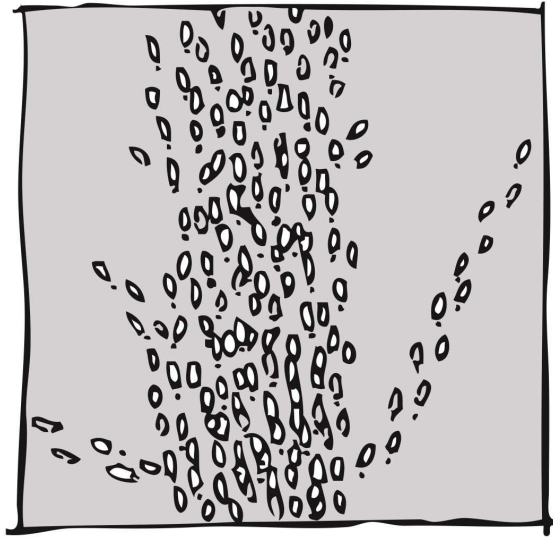
Nonetheless, they deserve to be highlighted as elements of spatial design because even though it is not always easy to figure out if they were instituted, it is definitely possible *to* institute them. Their specific power arises precisely from the fact that they are more subtle than norms and not directly related to sanctions. Therefore designers can only try to found new traditions and customs and sometimes it may be advisable to not even make others aware of the fact that something new is being set into motion. The price they pay for choosing to operate with non-normative design-elements is the certainty that what they institute will at least usually be complied with and cannot easily be changed by others.

Objectivity

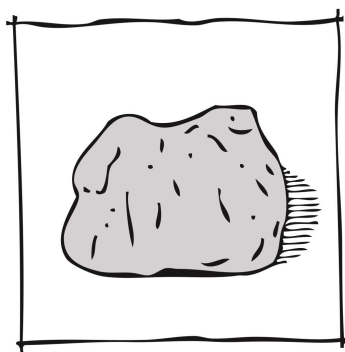


The chief difference between architectural and institutional elements of design is their objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*), which means that they exist independently, though not forever and not absolutely. While both the artifacts we produce and the natural “things” can endure

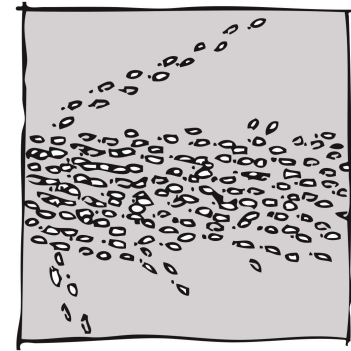
without our assistance, norms and social practices utterly depend on actors who put them into practice and without which they would exist only on paper or not at all.



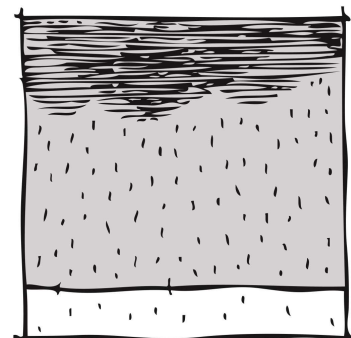
"Political institutions, no matter how well or how badly designed, depend for continued existence upon acting men; their conservation is achieved by the same means that brought them into being. Independent existence marks the work of art as a product of making; utter dependence upon further acts to keep it in existence marks the state as a product of action." (Arendt, 2006: 154)



At the same time, we often seem to be at the mercy of laws and many of our customs and traditions seem to be strong enough to endure forever. How is that possible? If institutions and thus institutional elements of space really depend on people to actualise them, then why do they often appear to be rock-solid?

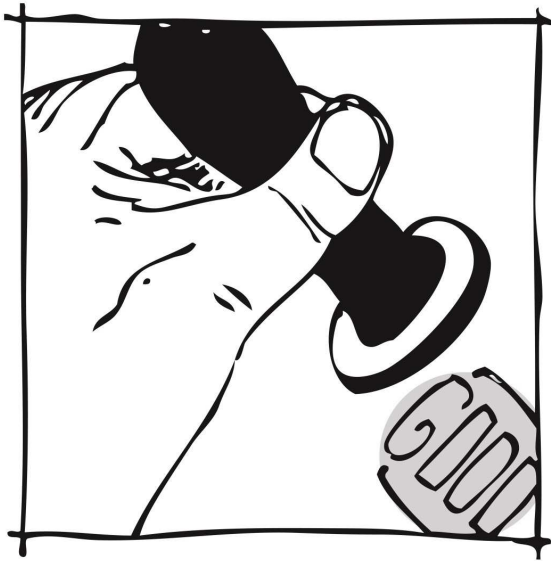


The seeming paradox can be resolved with the help of "the categorical distinction between the ontological and the epistemological perspective." Institutions are "not simply there like a mountain exists" but at the same time they are also "not dependent on our subjective attitude towards them" (Jaeggi, 2009: 10). We can, in other words, create, change and abolish institutional elements of space, but only *together*, never alone, simply because they always concern us and never only me.



Further, institutional elements often seem to be objective, because they are *objectified*. Agreements, declarations and laws are not only made available but also made durable in the form of official documents; walls, rivers or mountains become the manifestations of borders; statues, songs and poems prepare traditions for eternity etc. This relationship between the different spatial dimensions is obviously one-sided; architectural elements cannot be expressed through their institutional counterparts.

Spatial design and politics

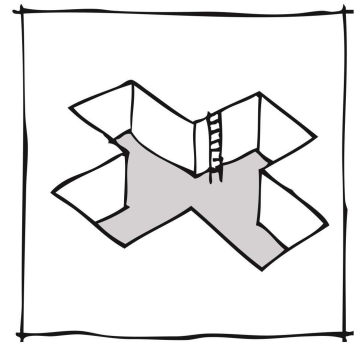


Political space, we said, is the space where people act politically. Good political space is characterised by a number of principles that derive from the various aspects of political action which we have identified at the example of *debate*. Designers of space, who operate with architectural and institutional elements, can realise these principles in countless ways and we can only judge whether or not they did a good job if we see the respective political space in the context of the world that surrounds it. Finally, we have to determine the significance of spatial design for politics or, more generally, the influence of the environment in which we act onto our actions.

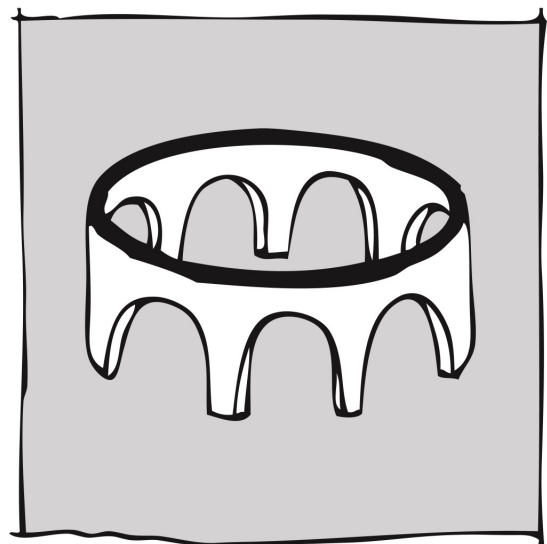


Though it has many different aspects, political action mostly consists in speaking with and talking to one another and that, after all, is something we can do practically everywhere?! Yes and No. Yes, because it has almost no

indispensable spatial preconditions. No, because it can benefit tremendously from appropriate environments.



Some types of human activity depend upon pretty complex spatial arrangements. Healing for example depends on a calm and clean environment that has to be provided and safeguarded with the help of strict rules and appropriate physical design-elements. If we are willing to count them among the architectural elements of space, we may even add the numerous tools and machines that hospitals and medical practices have to provide in order to function properly. In such cases, space has to fulfil many different criteria in order to be suitable at all.



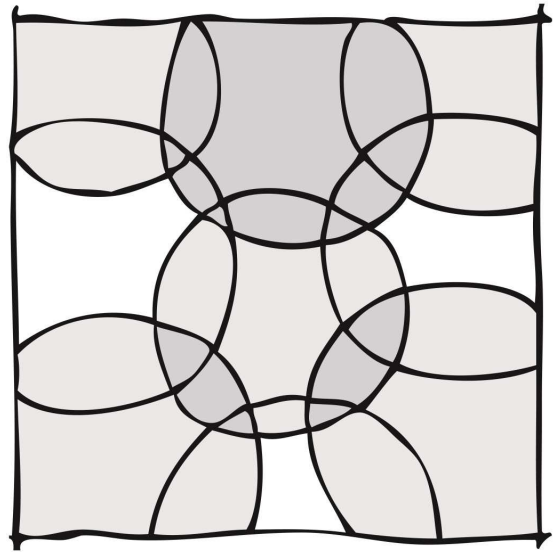
Political action, on the contrary, has relatively few spatial prerequisites. Since it goes on directly between people, without any material intermediary, it is true that almost any space can be used for acting politically. As far as we can

see, there are only three indispensable conditions for political action, namely, that the space is big enough to accommodate the actors (and in most cases also the spectators), that it is possible for everyone to see and hear everybody else and that people treat each other as political equals, which simply means that nobody has the right to give or the duty to obey orders. (A fourth condition is of course that there is a world around the space that the political actors can concern themselves with, but where this condition is not fulfilled there can be no space at all, hence we have to take it for granted anyways. Only political space depends on the world much more than other types of space.)

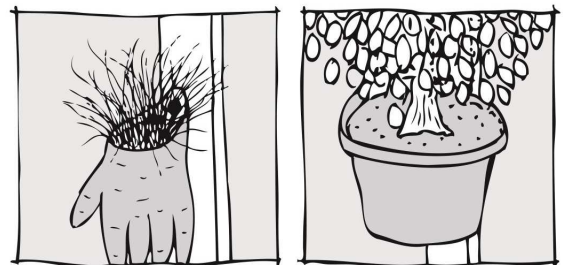


The first two preconditions must be realised with the help of basic architectural elements, whereas the third one can be guaranteed only by a commonly established and respected norm. Now these fundamental conditions are *relatively* easy to fulfil. On the one side, we have thus good reason to assume that establishing political space is not rocket science. New such spaces can be established almost everywhere and existing spaces can easily be adapted and transformed into political spaces. On the other side, we must be careful not to take them for granted! Quite to the contrary, we should be anxious to check whether a given space is actually big enough to accommodate everybody who should have access *and* would like to join; whether people can actually see and hear each other at least fairly well; and whether they really treat each other as equals.

Promotion & Protection

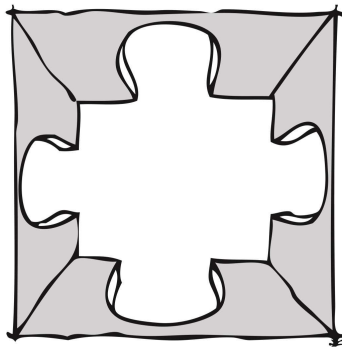


At any rate, spatial design is not binary; it is not only a matter making something possible or impossible; of keeping us from acting or commanding us to act. Space can also promote and protect or impede and expose our actions. And it is in this sphere of influence that the great significance of spatial design for political space becomes truly apparent.

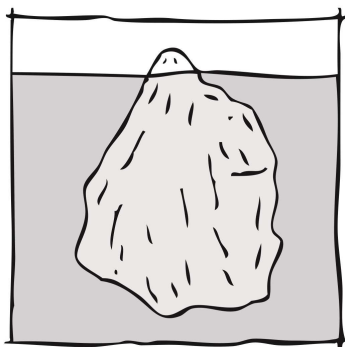


Consider first the world of theatre: It is quite possible to stage a play on every street corner, in every warehouse and in every backyard. Depending on the subject, the quality of the actors, the weather etc. such spaces may work just fine. Undoubtedly, however, there is a great difference between these kinds of improvised and provisional spaces and proper theatres. The latter are not only more comfortable for actors and spectators alike but also offer a wider range of possibilities for the play, better acoustics and lighting, a closed space for rehearsal, storage room for stage props, dressing rooms for the

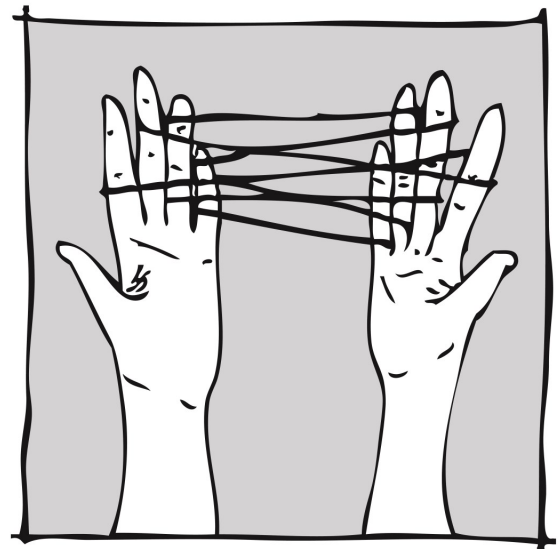
actors, a focused environment without distractions from the outside etc. Perhaps most importantly, they confer dignity to the entire spectacle and increase its visibility, credibility and apparent relevance. (In some cases provisional spaces may even have a certain charm and seem to be perfect because they are *not* a theatre. These cases are very relevant but exceptional. The point here is that *in general* real theatres are much more suitable spaces for acting and judging.)



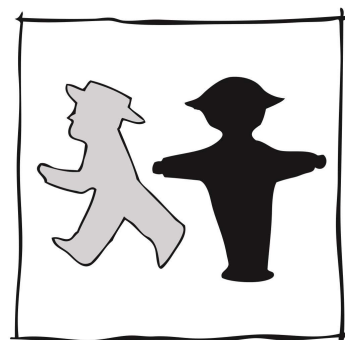
Good political spaces, to put it simple, do for political action what theatres do for performers: They are destination, shelter and training ground for political actors all at once. Good political spaces do not mandate but prompt us to act politically, encourage us to take initiative, remind us to consider not only our own interests but also those of others and to distinguish between facts and opinions, between public and private business, between judgment and prejudice. They protect us from interruption and disturbance, guarantee that we move among our peers, provide a concentrated atmosphere and a space to which we can return even after a longer break, a space where new beginnings can be made, where stories can unfold etc.



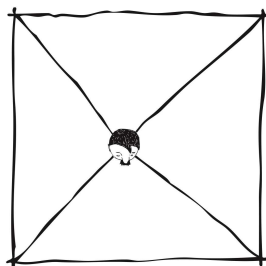
None of these spatial characteristics is self-evident. And while they are not absolutely necessary for political action, without them, due to its inherent fleetingness, unpredictability and boundlessness, we will probably not act for long. Perhaps we will not act at all, simply because political action, from the perspective of the individual, is much less urgent than making a living or catching some rest; and much less rewarding than for example creating a piece of art or even finishing a big puzzle.



It is hard to say whether the architectural or the institutional dimension of design is more important for creating a good political space. Since political action goes on directly between people, it may seem as if the institutional dimension is more fundamental; but since, on the other hand, institutional elements need the support of their tangible manifestations, and since political space must also reflect the world around it, the architectural dimension is probably no less crucial.



Now it may be objected that often it is not the architectural or institutional element *as such* which influences our actions, but rather the meaning that is attached to it. We have to distinguish here between meaning in the sense of unequivocal symbols and meaning in the sense of private associations. The Berliner Ampelmännchen for example is not only a traffic light that signals when pedestrians may cross the street, but also a symbol of former East Berlin which for different people represents different things, and which cannot be reduced to one meaning. In the former sense, the meaning itself is an institutional element of spatial design. In the latter sense, it is obvious that meaning cannot be designed but at the same time is very influential. Parkinson for instance highlights that “it is often the symbolic associations that do the political work, not the symbol itself, and while that makes the effects no less real, it also means that the effects are changed by things other than mere bulldozing or interior design.” (Parkinson, 2012: 17) His memorable example is the “intimidating effect of the long, monumental walk” that visitors had to take before arriving at Hitler's office in the Reich Chancellery. Parkinson argues that this

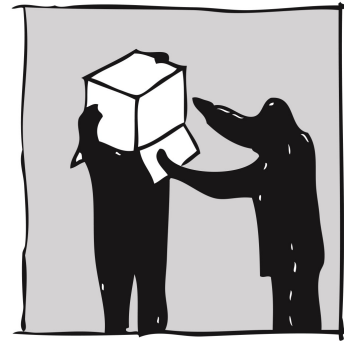


effect did not arise, at least not entirely, from the physical space as such but was “related to the fact that it was Hitler's office, and not just anyone's.” (Parkinson, 2012: 82)

Meaning itself cannot become an element of spatial design because it is always attached to something and exists, properly speaking, only in the minds of the people and not in the space itself.

But while designers cannot determine what different elements of space mean to us, they can – as far as they are aware – still make use of the fact *that* they mean something to us. The Ampelmännchen for instance is today (not only a souvenir for tourists but also) used in parts of West Berlin to symbolise the reunification of Germany. Moreover, the objection is practically

almost irrelevant because meaning cannot exist without a worldly point of reference, whether it is a book, a tree or an entire building; and because designers never work with *the* table but only with this or with that table.



To sum up: While it is possible to define a list of principles of political space as a type of space on the basis of the different aspects of political action, it is not possible to evaluate or design political spaces only on the basis of typologies or a set of desirable spatial qualities. Since political space is worldly space par excellence, we have no choice but to evaluate and design it as a part of a worldly context which informs us, on the one hand, about which aspects of political action are especially relevant for a given political space and, on the other hand, about which particular elements of spatial design (not the table, but this or that table) are appropriate or inappropriate to realise the concurring principles of political space. While evaluators are concerned with and informed about all notable details of a political space their job seems a lot easier than the work of space designers. The latter have to make sure that political spaces do not only allow us to act politically but also promote and protect our actions. For their work, they can use both architectural and institutional design-elements.

* * *

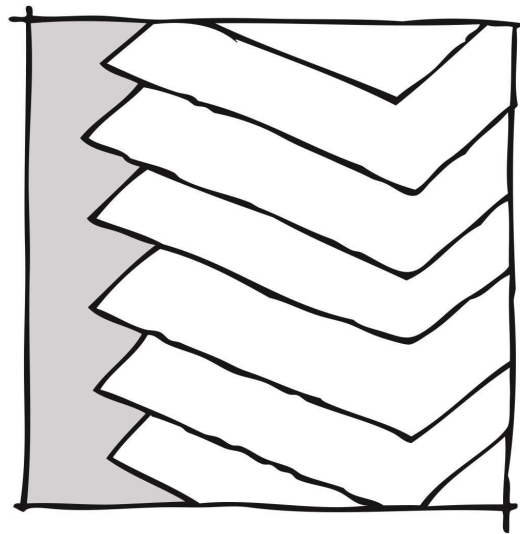
PART III

CASE STUDIES

In the first part of the book we have analysed the different aspects of political action. In the second part we have seen that and why space matters for politics and what space designers can do to create appropriate political spaces. In this final part of the book we would like to take a closer look at six urban political spaces where ordinary citizens, as distinguished from elected representatives, are involved or even play a leading role. These short essays are exercises in judging selected political spaces in different parts of Europe.

Our journey begins in Vienna where the municipal administration organises a participatory process around the development of the Donaufeld, Vienna's last inner-city greenfield. Afterwards we move on to Belgrade where the civic initiative called *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* is struggling with the government's plans for a supersized waterfront development. In Berlin we pay the virtual world a visit and try to understand in which ways it contributed to the participatory process that was initiated to elaborate a law for the future use and maintenance of the Tempelhofer Feld, the locals' favorite airfield. Subsequently, we jump into the Brussels Zinneke parade, an urban festivity designed to bring people together and to build bridges across divisions within the city. Our fifth excursion leads to Madrid where the citizens and government they elected because it promised to support them have serious difficulties to agree about who is more entitled to use an old market hall. Our journey ends in Copenhagen with a discussion about the future of the Freetown Christiania, Europe's most famous and recently legalised alternative community.

Each case study begins with a short analysis of the context, the situation as it presents itself to the observer, and then sharpens the focus on one of the central aspects, elements or details of this situation. The essays are complemented by collages of images that reflect our impressions and popular clichés about the different stops of our journey, the basic demographic indicators as well as a map of each city. Additionally, we visualised the network of actors and places that are involved in each respective case; and we provide an overview of the most notable recent events connected to each project or process.





VIENNA

VIENNA

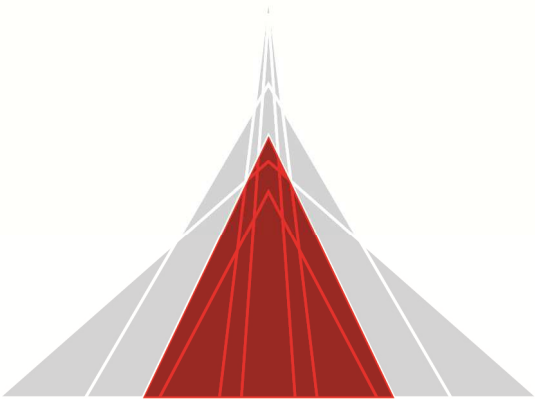
founded in 13th century



DENSITY

BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN

MADRID
VIENNA
BERLIN
BELGRADE

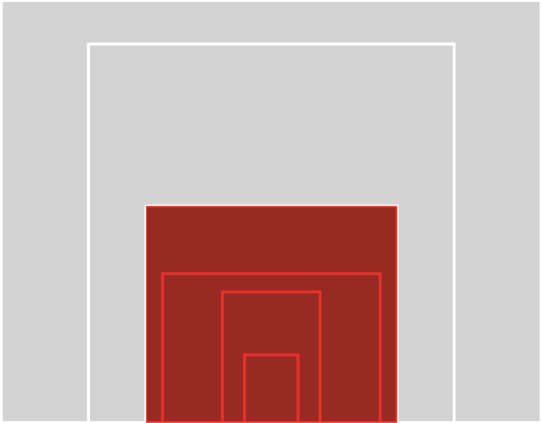


4 339
(per km²)

POPULATION

BERLIN
MADRID

VIENNA
BELGRADE
BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN



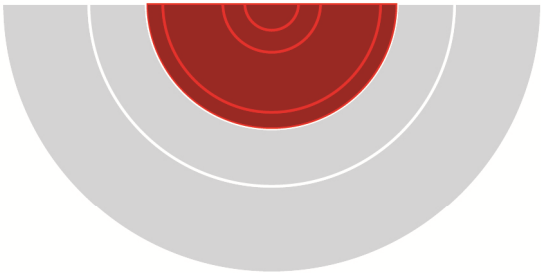
1 800 000
(20 % of all Austria)

SIZE

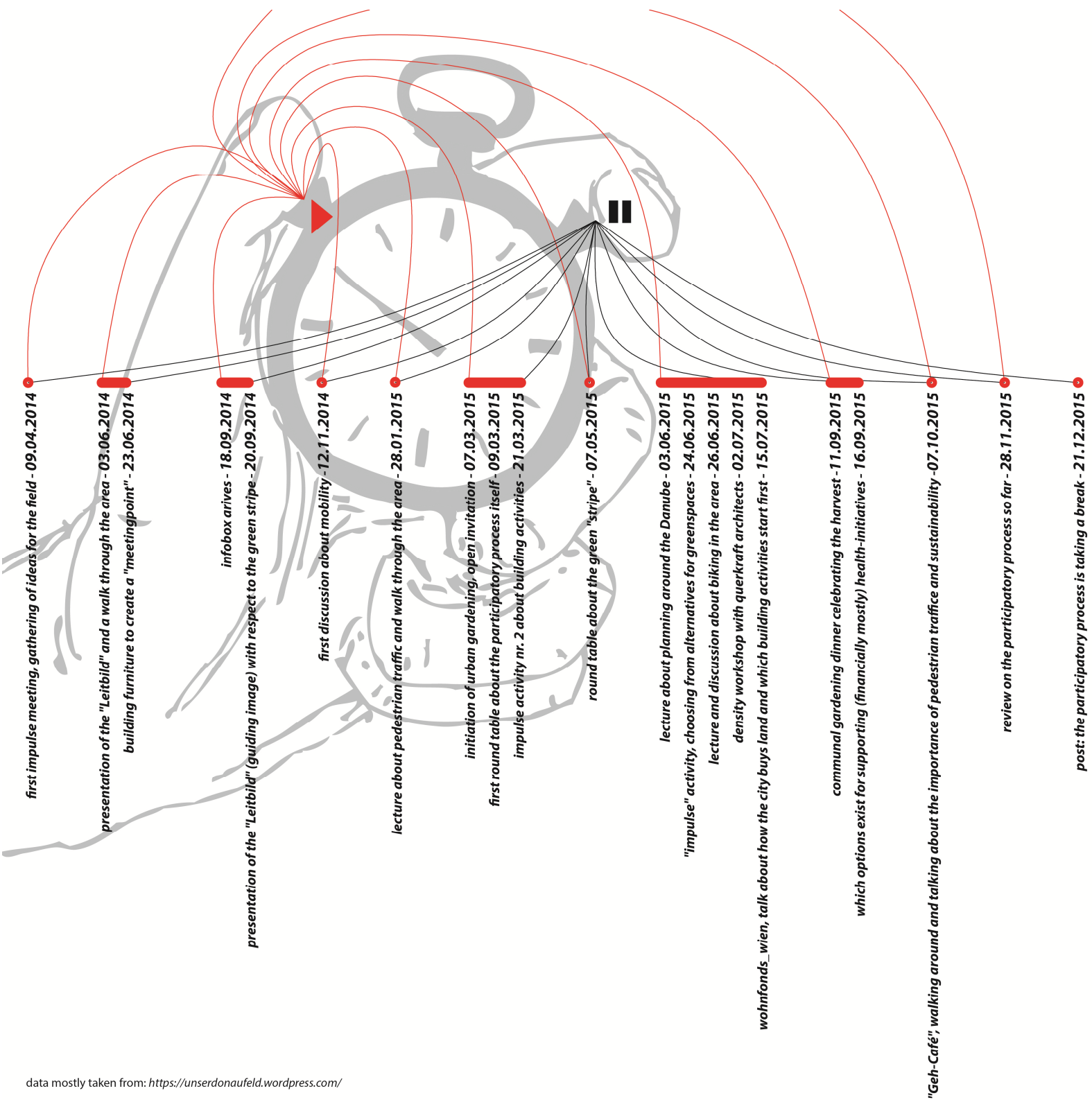
COPENHAGEN
BRUSSELS

BELGRADE
VIENNA
MADRID

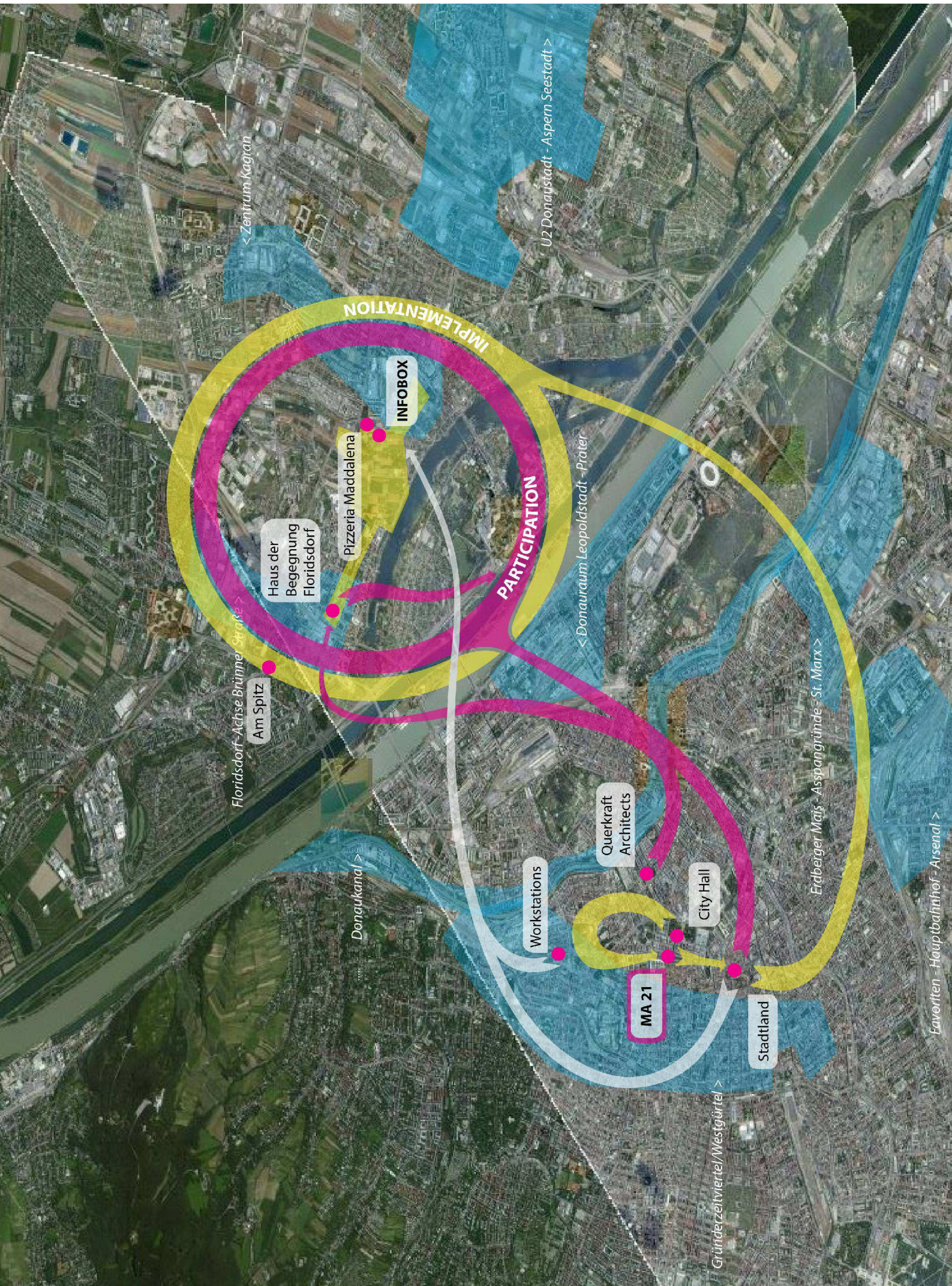
BERLIN



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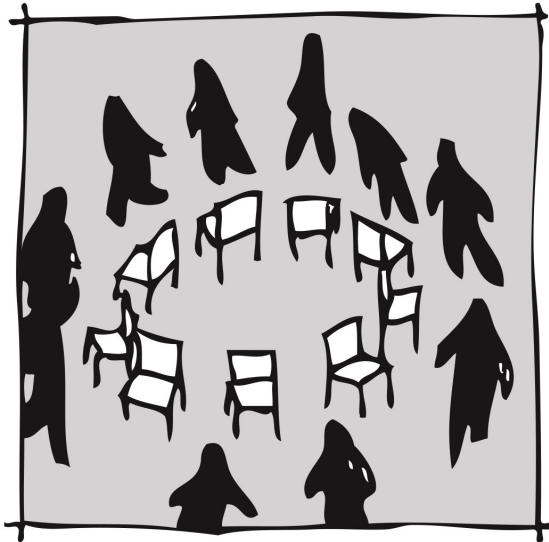


data mostly taken from: <https://unserdonaufeld.wordpress.com/>



Vienna /

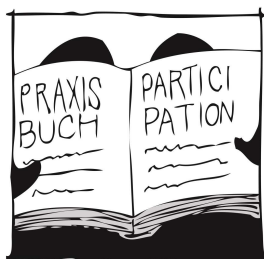
In the end everybody should understand...



When it comes to citizen participation in local public affairs, the city of Vienna belongs to the trailblazers in Europe. Almost every notable urban development project is accompanied by a participatory process and more than 200 *Grüzel-*initiatives listed on *wiengestalten.at* signal that the citizens have plenty opportunities to shape their city and to engage in public affairs.

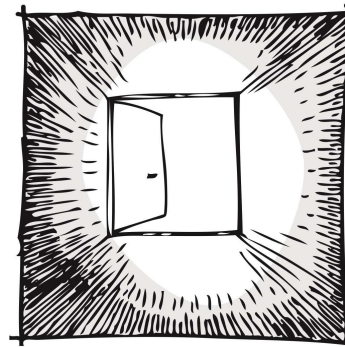


The workers of the municipal administration are using a guidebook that clarifies under which circumstances they have to, should or may initiate citizen participation, and that informs them about the potentials and the limits, the dos and the don'ts of such processes. Since recently this document is supported by the so called *Masterplan Partizipation* which provides



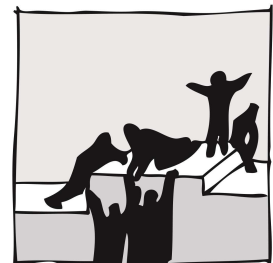
unequivocal standards for the political engagement of the Viennese population. As if this wasn't enough, the new municipal master plan

called *STEP2025* highlights the city's commitment to participation from the very first to the very last page and not only local politicians but also members of the municipal administration underline time and again that in Vienna participation is not just a consensus-generator but an opportunity for the citizens to take part in political decision-making processes.



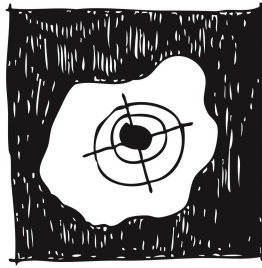
"Participation requires mutual respect and the willingness to communicate and learn on the part of all actors involved. For planning processes, this often signifies an entirely novel way of understanding and management: the objective is not only just the transparent communication of projects and decisions but rather involvement from day one, the open discussion of development goals (and not only of measures) and openness towards non-foreseeable solution proposals." (Vienna City Administration, 2014: 30)

The ongoing Donaufeld development process, which will integrate Vienna's last inner-city greenfield into the surrounding urban environment, is a prototypical example of citizen participation in the Austrian capital and it was even highlighted by a member of the municipal planning department for its "especially creative" approach towards citizen involvement.



The Donaufeld became a target of urban planners for the first time in 2005. The enterprise was taken up again and became more

concrete when in 2010 municipal administrators commissioned the planning agency *Stadtland* and the team from *Querkraft* architects to develop an

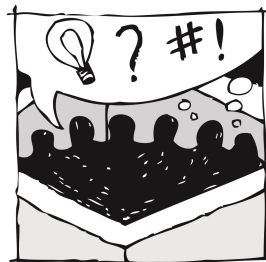


overall concept for the area of around 60ha that stretches between the urban centres of Floridsdorf and Kagan. Today the basic idea is to build around 6.000

housing units for the rapidly growing metropolis and to connect Floridsdorf an Kagan via a lively new neighbourhood which, according to the planners, will become a best practice in terms of “energy, mobility, public and free space, density of the built environment as well as contextual and procedural development.” (Stadtland, n.d.) The planning advanced quite a lot before in April 2014 a participatory process was initiated by the municipal administration to accompany, support and improve the development project.

This process, though it was not actually part of the project from “day one”, as the municipal master plan suggests, still aimed at opening “room for manoeuvre” and “innovative ideas”

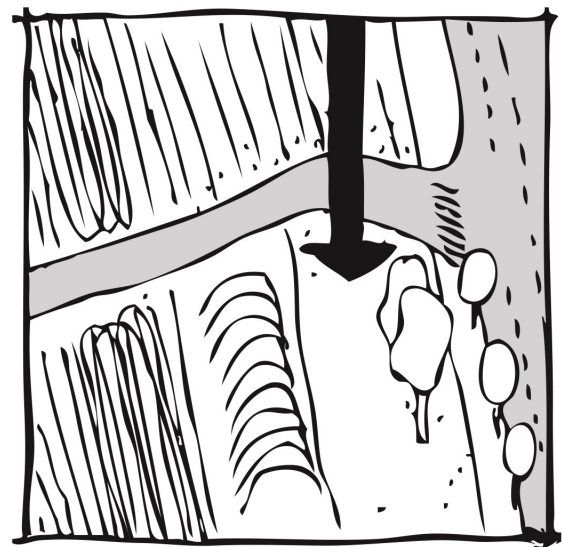
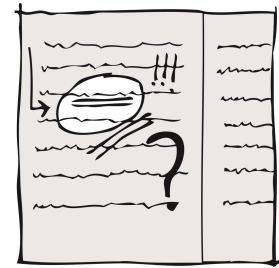
(Vienna Magistrat, n.d.) for ordinary citizens because only “their actions create space as a societal phenomenon anew every single day.” (MA 21, n.d.) The



planning department commissioned the team from *Stadtland*, which had been involved in the development from the very beginning, to plan and realise the entire participatory process.

In the following, we shall take a closer look at the participatory process as a whole and especially at the so called *Begegnungsort*, the space of encounter on the Donaufeld, where most of the events took place. We would like to find out whether and in which ways this space, the immediate environment of the participants, promoted or hindered their personal *initiative*.

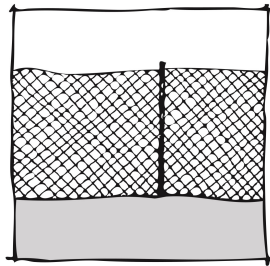
We focus only on personal initiative, since it was highlighted repeatedly by the municipal master plan, local politicians and administrators as an essential component of good participation. The results of our analysis, to put it bluntly, are pretty sobering.



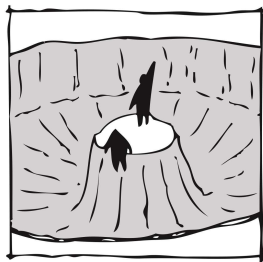
First of all, the space is located *on* the Donaufeld. This position may be interpreted as a positive signal, indicating that the participation happens where the actual change occurs. The problem however is that the space is practically dead most of the time. Since it is located on the very edge of the field, the perimeter of the space of encounter is half natural and half built environment. The field of course is almost completely empty and except for a few joggers and those who still use it for farming, no pedestrian has any reason to cross it. The built environment on the other side is separated from the field by a main road that marks a clear border.

Further, there are no shops or apartment buildings on the other side of the street but only a school and what looks like the leftovers of an industrial zone. The city is not far, but it is oriented *away* from the field. People who go

shopping, use public transport, take a walk, drink a coffee or follow other every-day activities are thus not likely to pass by the space of encounter which, moreover, is separated from the pedestrian way and the street by a mesh wire fence. Though the fence does not surround the space completely and can be bypassed easily, it is an obvious border and not particularly inviting, to say the least.

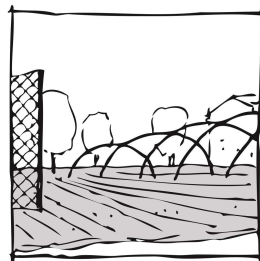


Additionally, all important actors in the process, from the politicians and administrators of the municipality to the agencies involved in the process are situated quite literally on the other side of town, far away from the field; and even the Floridsdorf district administration, which apparently was not all too involved in the development, is much more than a stone's throw away from where the participants gather. After all, the space really gives the impression of being disconnected and “in

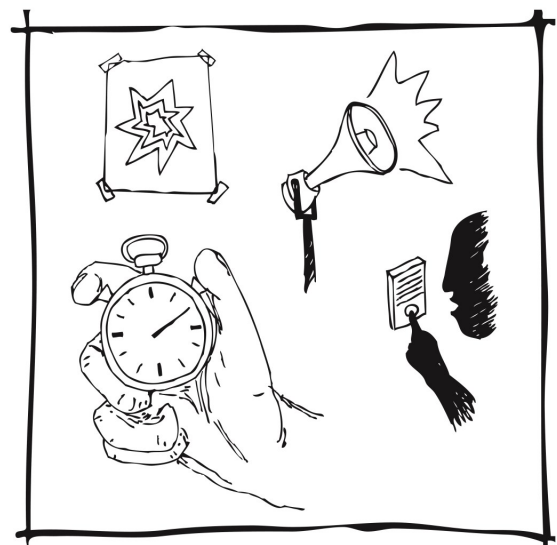
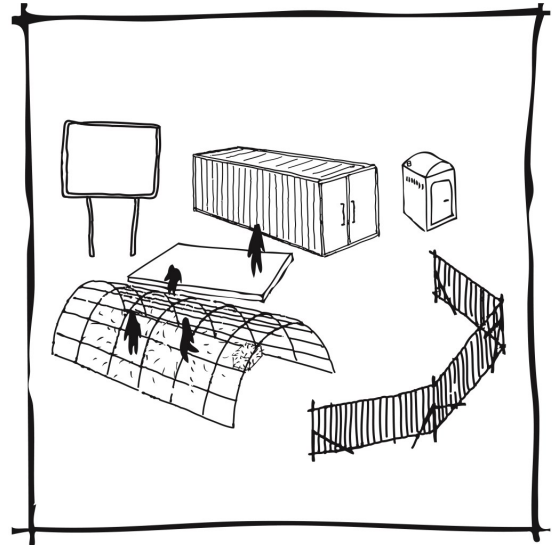


the middle of nowhere.”

At the same time, it has no clearly defined borders which makes it relatively difficult to even realise that one is entering a particular space with a specific purpose. Arriving, in other words, does not really feel like an arrival.

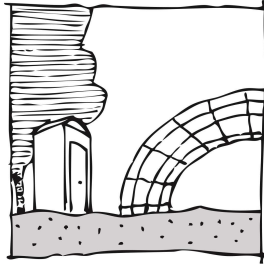


Physically, the space is characterised mainly by three elements, namely a shipping container, the skeleton of a greenhouse and a portable toilet.



The shipping container, to begin with, is used as an info point. It is branded in the typical Viennese yellow-white-stripes and sports the claim “*Wien! voraus*”, which clearly signals that the city is active in this area. Coming closer, one can find some posters on the wall of the container that inform passersby about the process. During two hours every week - yes, two hours - there is even a contact person inside the container who personally informs interested citizens about current and upcoming developments in the area. It is often highlighted that before people can get involved, they have to become informed. While this is true enough, the info point still does not exactly stimulate the personal initiative of regular citizens. On the contrary, its effect is discouraging because

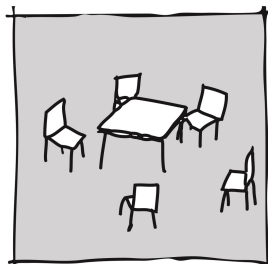
whenever people arrive it is either closed or allows only one-way-communication. The box primarily emits information; and even if it receives ideas and proposals from the people, it does not allow for a real conversation but rather works like an answering machine where citizens can leave a message after the beep.



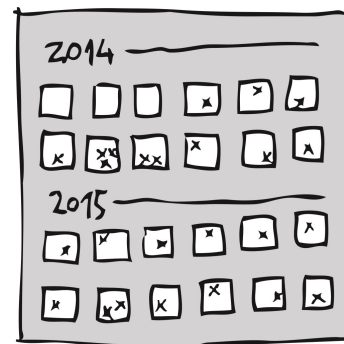
Located next to the shipping container, we find the structure of what apparently used to be a greenhouse. Since the structure itself remained unchanged,

it is not distinguishable from all the other greenhouses that are still located on the field. Hence it is not easy to realise that one is suddenly confronted not with a green house but instead with an alleged space of encounter. Moreover, while the shipping container, which in this process represents the municipality, was at least placed on a concrete floor prepared for this express purpose, the greenhouse, dedicated to the activities of citizens, stands on natural ground. The resultant impression is that the city did not really put much effort into providing a comfortable, durable or accessible space for citizens; an idea that is not far-fetched, considering the overall project horizon of 20 years. This impression is intensified by the portable blue plastic toilet which is the third constitutive physical element of the space.

Container, greenhouse and toilet are complemented by the furniture that was used during the events of the participatory process, namely a bunch of plastic folding chairs as well as a few pieces of furniture that were built from old wooden euro-pallets by a group of students from the school across the street. The most notable among these elements is a big, round table.



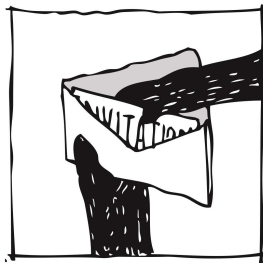
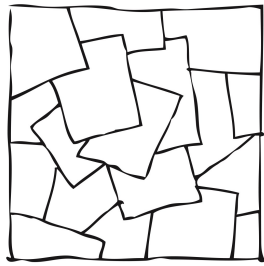
While its location makes the space seem remote and detached, these tangible elements convey the impression of an unimportant, improvised, sporadic, cheap and temporary space. In order to stimulate the initiative of citizens, a different set of adjectives would perhaps be more successful, especially in a flourishing metropolis like Vienna where the municipality could actually afford it.



At any rate, this overall impression is confirmed and even amplified by the immaterial characteristics of the space. We have already mentioned the downright ridiculous opening hours of the info point. Furthermore, the total number of participatory events, their duration and chronological structure as well as their purpose, all deserve to be highlighted. To begin with, the participatory process was a series of 18 events that took place between April 2014 and December 2015. Hence on average the citizens had the chance to gather more or less once per month; more events happened during the summer months than during the winter time; the maximum number of events per month was three. Since Christmas 2015 the process officially “takes a break” and there is no information available about when, if at all, it will continue or what the actual results of the process were.

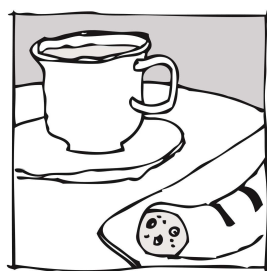
The single events never lasted longer than a couple of hours (rather two than five) and there was no continuity in the process whatsoever. Each event of course was related to the Donauefeld development, but connections between particular events or an arc of suspense in the process were missing entirely. In the long periods between the events, literally nothing was

going on and the events did not even happen in regular intervals. (The only exception was the urban gardening initiative which happened throughout spring and summer 2015; and in which around 20 “hobby gardeners” engaged.) This blatant discontinuity shows that the personal initiative of the citizens could at best flare up for a short moment before it was again smothered by vacuum.



The topics for the events were chosen, as far as we know, by the team from *Stadtland* without any consultation of the citizens. Further, only those citizens who live in the immediate surroundings of the development area, as well as the relatively vague group of “future residents” were invited to participate.

Twelve out of 18 events were either exclusively informational (e.g. expert lectures), social (e.g. harvest festival), or a mix of both (e.g. walk through the area). Events of this kind do not usually convey the impression that personal initiative of citizens could change anything. On the contrary, they leave behind the dry aftertaste of avoiding conflicts with the help of Wiener Würstel and Wiener Melange.



Unfortunately, the remaining six events were not much better if we see them through the lenses of political space and personal initiative: Very illustrative is the statement of a local politician during the first of two round table discussions. She claimed that “In the end, everybody should understand why this building,

this way or this park looks the way it does.” The effect of such a statement on the space of participation should not be underestimated; it influences the impression citizens take home and the expectations with which they return, if they return at all. Even more demonstrative is the fact that while the first round table discussion offered a small round table that was barely big enough for the two politicians and the moderator from *Stadtland*, the second event did not even offer a round

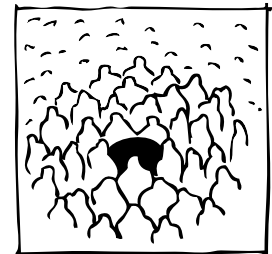
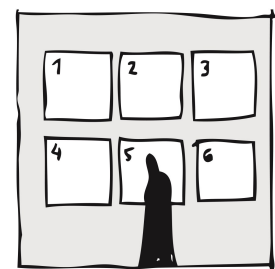


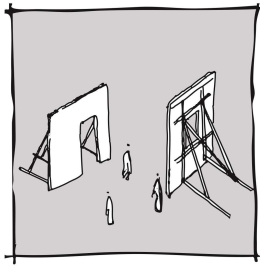
table at all, even though the big wooden specimen built by the students must have been available on the site. It almost seems that, rather than offering the citizens a seat at the big round table of equality, the organisers would prefer not use a table at all.

In fact, the only decision where citizens could really participate during the process concerned the design of the green areas in the future neighbourhood; and even here they were merely allowed to indicate preferences among six different design-types which were not even actual alternatives but merely generic examples. While this is surely a useful contribution to the process, it is hardly a demonstration of *personal* initiative. Personal contributions from the citizens would rather have concerned the questions whether or not there should be green spaces, how much of them, and what for? But these decisions were taken far away from the participatory process.

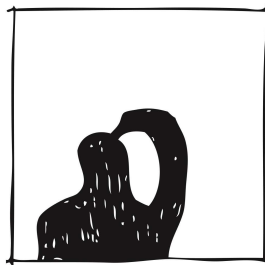


By and large, the whole space of encounter looks and feels like a cheap, temporary and improvised participation-scenery which does not encourage the political initiative of ordinary citizens but which, on the contrary, almost makes it impossible. The citizens did not have

the chance to leave any trace behind in the development that could be identified as *their* trace, e.g. an idea which this woman or that man had, a remark that is not anonymous but somebody's remark, or a change of plans that was provoked by a particular group of citizens.



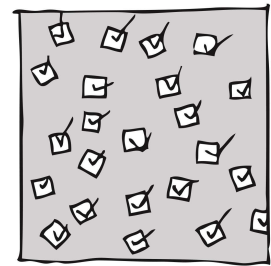
This glaring discrepancy between the municipality's ambition to initiate a participatory process "with an open end", where citizens can really contribute and become involved personally, and the reality on the field, has of course not remained unnoticed. On the side of the Viennese citizens, it has mostly led to confusion if not frustration. "One does not know what this whole thing is about. Should we contribute ideas, get informed or can we get involved?" (Gabler et. al., 2015: 29) And behind closed doors even the administrators admit that "information is not really participation" and that "actually the citizens never really change the course of a project. The best they can do is stop it completely."



This way of handling public affairs, which - looking at all the existing standards that this process complied with - is the rule rather than exception in Vienna, actually works fine for everybody. The government is apparently doing

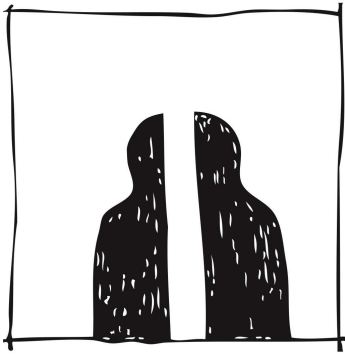
a pretty good job and the citizens have few reasons to complain. Vienna is a flourishing city, popular among tourists and citizens alike and occupying one of the top three positions in virtually every single city ranking that exists. Under these circumstances, the experts from within and without the municipality must be convinced that they do a better job at planning and developing the city than the citizens could ever do; if only because it is their *job* and if they would admit anything else they should be fired immediately!

As long as we understand participation as nothing but a way to collect useful contributions from citizens to urban developments and to increase the acceptance of certain projects among locals, things will remain the same in Vienna. If, however, we take Hannah Arendt's account of the meaning of political action serious, and begin to care about the citizens' opportunities to show personal initiative not in order to do something useful, but in order to insert themselves into the public realm and to leave behind traces in the history of their city or at least their *Grätzl*, then we have to change the environment in which they gather to act.



In Vienna, the key to this change is an institutional element of design that applies to the whole city and not only to the spaces involved in the Donauefeld development. The root of this big charade we were witnessing is the simple fact that administrators have neither the

mandate nor usually the qualification for, or any interest in initiating truly political processes or establishing truly political spaces. Since political action is inherently boundless, unpredictable and irreversible, it is nothing but crazy to expect that administrators who work *for* politicians and whose work is measured with the yardsticks of reliability, precision and predictability, will give the citizens a real chance to actually participate in public affairs. The same holds true for professional agencies like Stadtland which are commissioned to organise and guide participation. Both groups would risk their jobs if they created real openness and allowed for unpredictability.



"For the qualities of the [...] political man and the qualities of the [...] administrator are not only not the same, they are very seldom to be found in the same individual; the one is supposed to know how to deal with men in a field of human relations, whose principle is freedom, and the other must know how to manage things and people in a sphere of life whose principle is necessity." (Arendt, 1990: 274)



But this does not mean that municipalities are not capable to offer good political spaces for the

participation of their citizens. The city of Heidelberg for example does encourage the personal initiative of citizens: In Heidelberg everybody has access to a list of ideas for development projects that have to be registered at least three months before politicians even begin to officially discuss them in the municipal council. Further, citizen participation can be initiated not only by administrators but also by politicians, actors from the civil society and by the citizens themselves; and the concept for each process is elaborated not by the administration or external experts alone, but by the citizens, the administration *and* local politicians. These differences are systemic but their implementation by no means requires a revolution!

* * *



BELGRADE

BELGRADE

founded in 14th century



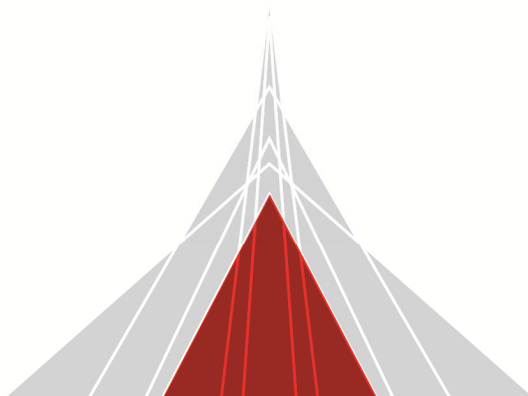
DENSITY

BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN

MADRID

VIENNA
BERLIN

BELGRADE



3 417
(per km²)

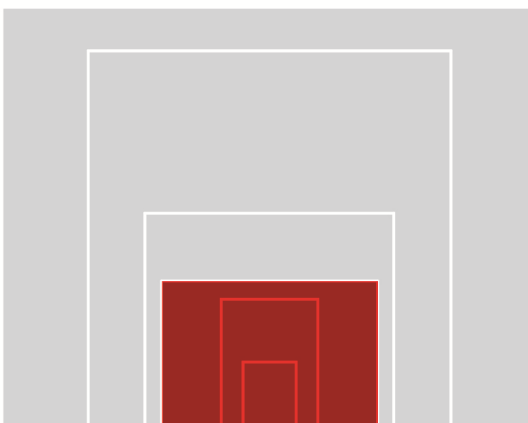
POPULATION

BERLIN
MADRID

VIENNA

BELGRADE
BRUSSELS

COPENHAGEN



1 230 000
(23 % of all Serbia)

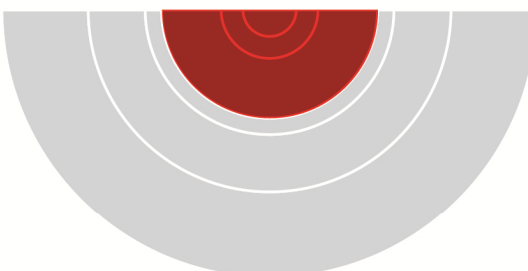
SIZE

COPENHAGEN
BRUSSELS

BELGRADE
VIENNA

MADRID

BERLIN

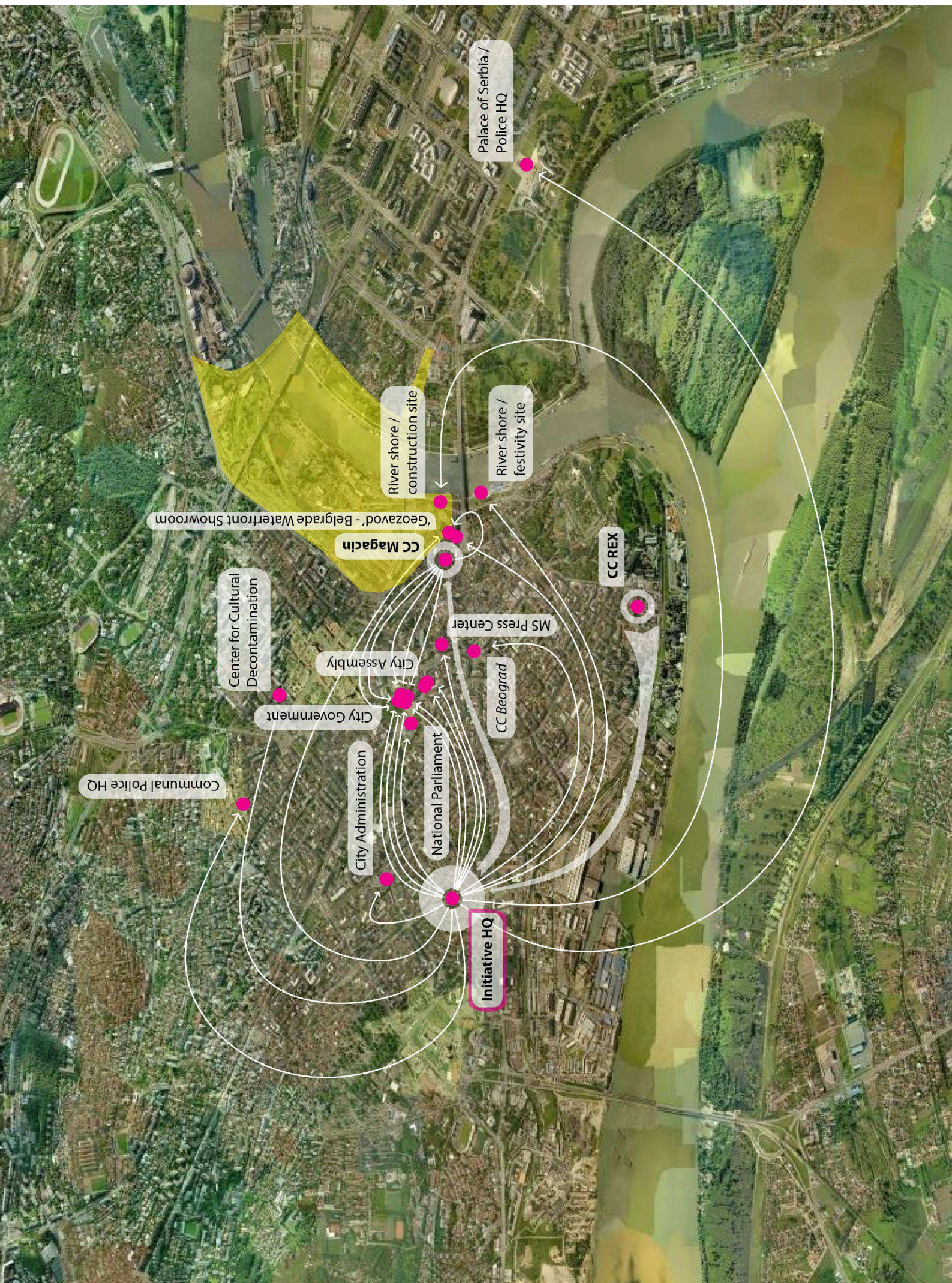


35 996
(ha)



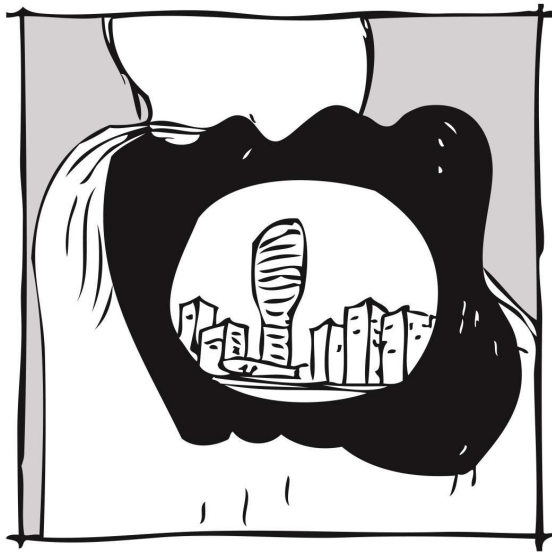
18.02.2014.	first public info about the project BEL
24.06.2014.	INURA conference
04.07.2014.	worktable - first collective action unit
22.07.2014.	public session
31.07.2014.	open letter of INURA network to the J
25.09.2014.	exhibition of the independent art sce
23.10.2014.	conference - Under the surface of Bel
05.11.2014.	protest at city administration Belgrad
07.11.2014.	protest at salon of Urbanism Belgrade
16.01.2015.	complaint for the Republic Urban Inspect
05.03.2015.	declaration about Belgrade Waterfront by
13.03.2015.	first printed issue of the newspaper Ne da(vi)mo
16.03.2015.	press conference of the Initiative
30.03.2015.	initiative of 15 Belgrade lawyers addressed to main State
31.03.2015.	personal letter to all parliament members before the adoption
02.04.2015.	first erection of the Duck in front of the National Parliament
26.04.2015.	protest of the Initiative Ne da(vi)mo Beograd in front of the Geozavod building
28.05.2015.	support event for the Initiative - meeting and evaluation
04.06.2015.	blocking of the presentation of Milutin Folc
27.06.2015.	51. Critical Mass under the title 'What will happen with the river path?'
30.07.2015.	protest in front of the Initiative - meeting and evaluation
16.07.2015.	blockade of the illegal construction works on the Sava riverside
29.08.2015.	'surprise' on the Belgrade Boat Carnival
11.09.2015.	revealing of the private status of the company Belgrade Waterfront
14.09.2015.	blocking of the way of the mayor
21.09.2015.	publishing of the analysis of the contract
27.09.2015.	protest of the initiative: 'We do not give Belgrade'
03.10.2015.	unsuccessful attempts of the Initiative to buy an apartment in the project Belgrade
28.11.2015.	action of marking of the illegally erected spars and flags as a promotional material
07.03.2016.	publishing of the second issue of the newspaper Ne da(vi)mo Beograd
21.03.2016.	press conference of the Initiative on fraudulent polling list
11.05.2016.	first big protest as a reaction to the masked demolishing of the city by 'unknown people'
25.05.2016.	protest - meeting in front of the city parliament and walk through the city central zone
11.06.2016.	protest - meeting in front of the city parliament and walk through the city central zone
25.06.2016.	protest - meeting in front of the city parliament and walk through the city central zone
01.07.2016.	protest - meeting in front of the city parliament and walk to the palace of Serbia - police HQ
13.07.2016.	protest action in front of the communal police HQ
18.07.2016.	protest - first big protest during the working week / meeting in front of the city parliament -
	protest in front of the city government - demanding of the resignation -

data mostly taken from: <https://nedavimobeograd.wordpress.com/>



Belgrade /

Protest is good, persuasion is better.



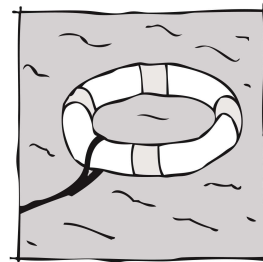
In recent years, few urban development projects in Europe have attracted so persistent, furious and widespread civic resistance as Belgrade's waterfront. The advocates of the project promise to transform a big chunk of inner-city land, which, at least for the most part, is in desolate condition, into a shiny new neighbourhood full of nice apartments, office space, the region's biggest shopping mall and several skyscrapers, the highest of which is supposed to be Serbia's new landmark. The plans are so contested because many people simply do not buy the official version of the story and do not believe the promises of politicians. Others have technical concerns or believe that there are much more meaningful ways to spend taxpayers' money. Further, many citizens are not happy with the way that this alleged "deal of the century" was made and how the government now handles objections and criticism from ordinary citizens and civil society actors.

What today appears to be a full-fledged protest movement with thousands and thousands of supporters was initiated by no more than a handful of citizens. Once the waterfront project had been announced publicly in the beginning of 2014 - first in a newspaper article and later in

a speech of prime minister Aleksandar Vučić -, the two activist groups *Ko gradi grad?* and *Ministarstvo prostora* came together in order to discuss what by then was known about Beograd na vodi. In the beginning they had primarily technical concerns about the overall feasibility of the project. Further, they noticed that the development plans for the new waterfront contradicted the existing General Urban Plan for Belgrade in several respects and so they filed complaints and appealed to the municipal institutions. Only when the government announced to adapt this plan to the project (instead of adapting the project to the plan) and more than 2.000 complaints from the citizens were dismissed as irrelevant *all at once*, things really turned political.

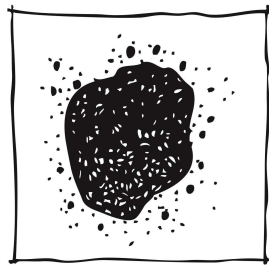


Suddenly technical details were less important than matters of principle. Suddenly the issue was about the citizens' *Right to the City* and about democracy as a whole. Suddenly those who opposed the waterfront project gave themselves a name and thereby became a political actor. Until today they are known as *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* which Herbert Wright (2015) from the Guardian so fittingly translated as "We won't let Belgrade d(r)own".



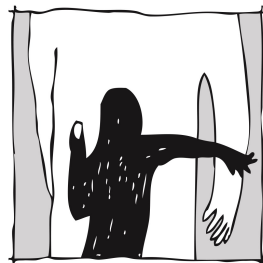
Ever since then, the movement slowly gained ground. The first noticeable milestone was the invention of the yellow plastic duck which became the simple, memorable and unifying symbol of the opposition. (This powerful element actually resulted from a coincident: A few artists without previous engagement in the movement were accidentally invited to a group meeting by email. They showed up and the idea for the plastic duck arose out of this unexpected connection.) The second milestone in recent history was the cloak-and-dagger operation of

an unknown group of gangsters who tore down (yes, they tore down!) some buildings in the Savamala district that were located inside the area which one jolly day should become Belgrade's new waterfront. Apparently the police was not very interested in solving the case and the municipality cleaned the remains of the buildings a little too quickly. Since additionally the prime minister himself is now accusing the political elite of Belgrade to be responsible for this incident, many newcomers joined the protest movement as they could not believe the scene that was unfolding in front of their eyes. Over the last months, several protests with between 15.000 and 20.000



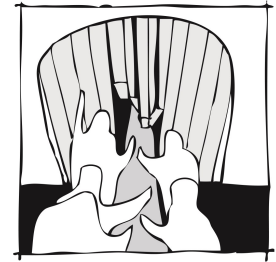
participants have been organised and while we are writing these lines the activists are probably planning the next event.

Now this story reminds an awful lot of the fight between David and Goliath. Obviously we are cheering for the underdog, not because we like to see the powerful stagger but because we are convinced that in this case the government is corrupt and the activists simply have the better arguments on their side. Still, we are not interested in arguing over who is right, who is wrong and what should be done with the wasteland on the shore of the river Sava. Rather, we would like to investigate if the opponents of Belgrade Waterfront, insofar as they are and want to be political actors, are using the right spaces to oppose the government and to create suitable environments for their actions?

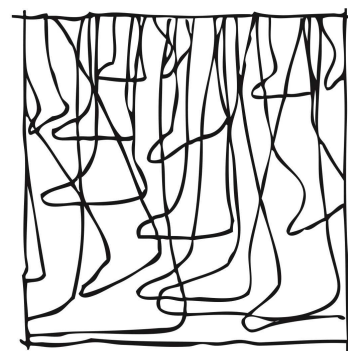


Protest is often portrayed as one of the most impactful ways for regular citizens to become engaged in politics. While some soberly describe protest as a “non-conventional” form of political participation that is important for a

spirited representative democracy (Barrett and Zani, 2015); others see in public uprisings the “spectacular manifestations of raw constituent power” and employ them to prove that “everybody” can “become democratic” (Purcell, 2013). Sometimes authors even seem to claim that politics *only*



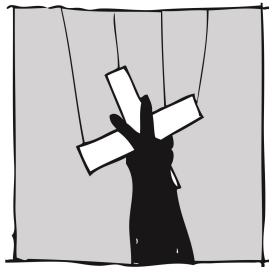
becomes reality in those rare moments “when the police order of society is confronted by a ‘part of those with no part’, a group of people who insist that they be taken into account not as subordinates with a limited (or no) part to play in society but as equals” (Davidson and Iveson, 2015).



From an Arendtian perspective, however, protest is a form of political action only if the protesters are marching for a cause which, to them, is a matter of principle. To be sure, this does not mean that they must not have private interests related to their engagement; but these interests should not completely determine their actions. In our case this means for example that those who join the protests because they are convinced that, as a matter of principle (and not because it pays off on the long run), taxpayers' money should be invested in the education of children rather than in luxury apartments do act political. Also those who believe that it is unjust that they do not have a say in the important decisions act politically. But those who protest only because they do not believe that the project will benefit them personally are simply selfish and do *not* act politically. (To be sure, in reality motives, goals and principles often overlap

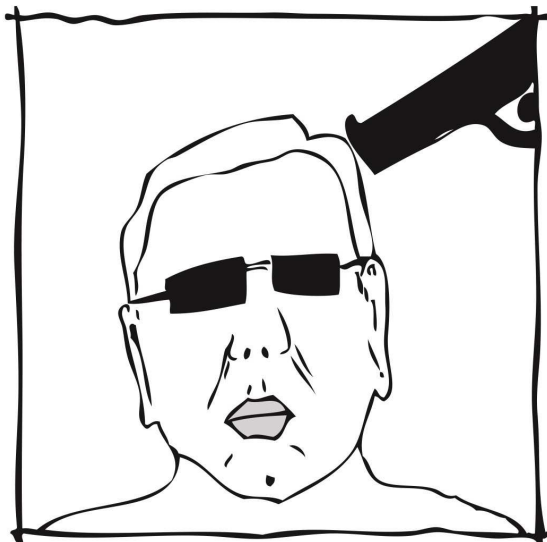
within one person and cannot strictly be kept apart. But this does not mean that tendencies and focus points could not be identified.)

Further, Arendt would argue that all the work that is necessary to organise a mass



demonstration - from writing invitations to preparing sandwiches, distributing water bottles or building a stage - is *not* political action in and by itself.

At best, it is political in the sense that it is inspired by and would not happen without underlying principles.



Finally, she would point out that when a protest really changes the course of events, this success is truly political only if it results from persuasion. In other words, should *Ne da(vi)mo* really be successful - which to them means that the waterfront project is called off or at least adapted in significant ways -, this is not a political success, if for example prime minister Vučić would resign only because the people literally or metaphorically speaking hold a pistol to his head.

The political potential of a protest lies in making claims in public and demonstrating that these claims are coming from the public. Its legitimate political intention is not to build irresistible pressure or to scare politicians, but to make

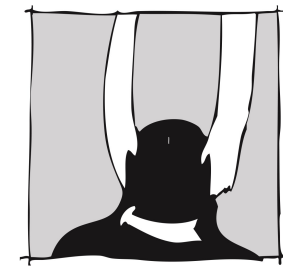
them aware of mistakes and aberrations and to show that, if they really want to rule in the name of the people, they should reconsider their



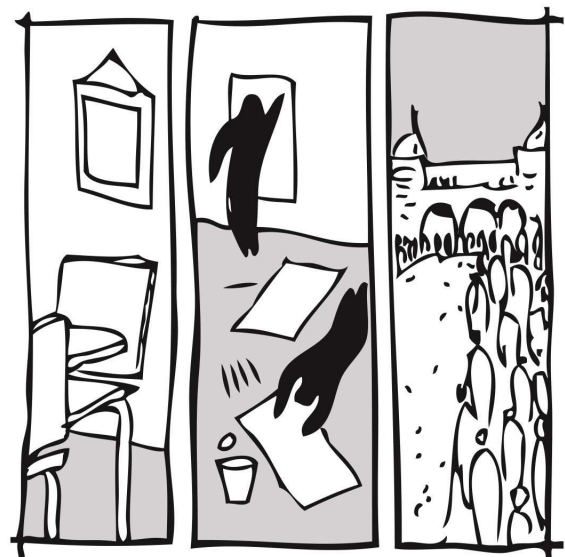
decisions and adapt their plans. In Belgrade, unfortunately, the government has proven that they do not react to these signals from the citizenry long time ago.

Consequently, what the movement needs, granted that the activists would like to win a truly political victory, are spaces that invite different standpoints and encourage mutual

persuasion. Only in such environments do they have a chance - no matter how small - to convince the advocates of the

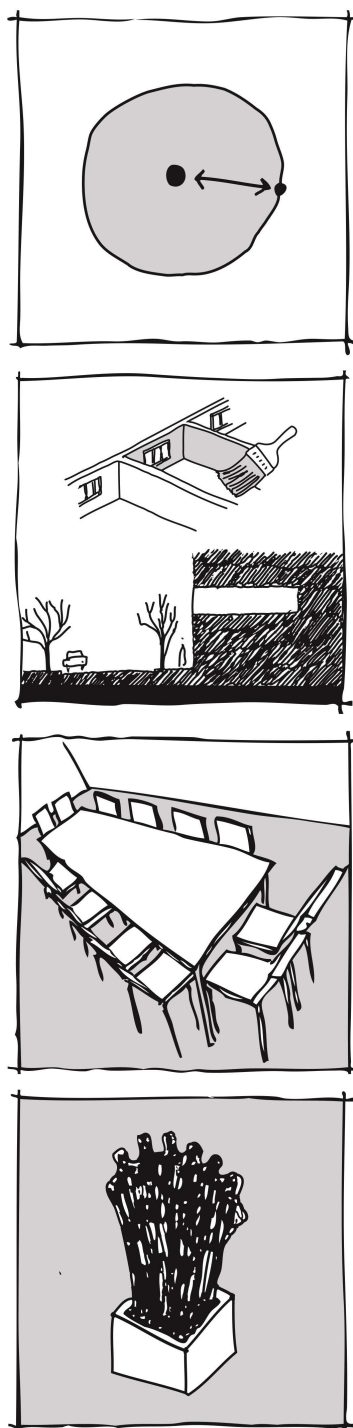


waterfront development, regular citizens and decision makers alike, to change their minds.

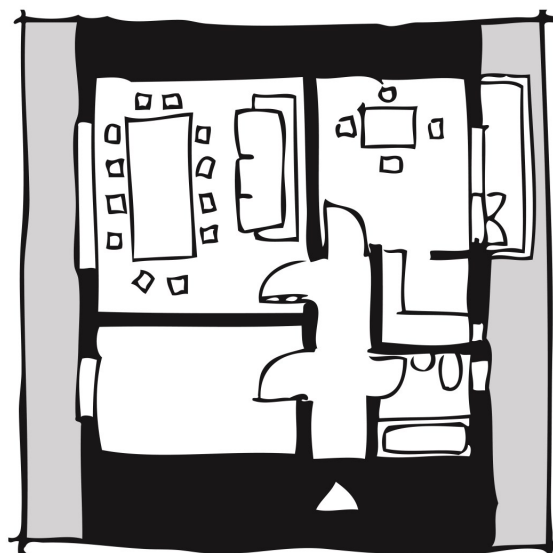


Basically the activists use three different spaces. The first is an apartment where they usually meet to discuss everything related to the whole conflict around Beograd na vodi and especially their next moves, publications and actions. Secondly, they use the space of Magacin, a

cultural centre that is only a cat's jump away from the official showroom for the waterfront project and, adjacent to it, the development area. They gather in Magacin to draw banners and manufacture various artefacts for all their different actions. Finally, they use the square in front of the city hall and the boulevards of inner-city Belgrade for the big protests.

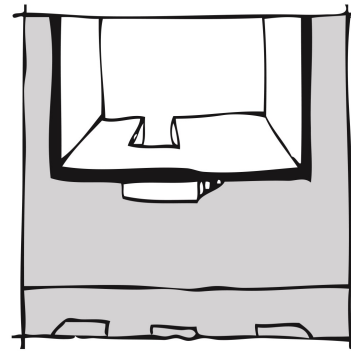


The apartment is located a little outside the centre on one of the upper floors of a housing block. It measures roughly 60m² and was transformed from a living into an office space a couple of years ago. Ever since then, it has been used by *Ministarstvo prostora*, one of the founding collectives of the movement. The space is dominated by a big rectangular table around which twelve people can sit comfortably. Here, the nucleus of *Ne da(vi)mo* gathers every Monday afternoon for at least two hours to discuss the current situation. Even though in general the initiative is open for newcomers, and many new helping hands have joined the group already, the actual core team does not grow, mostly because an expansion would make it even harder to agree on anything and to take decisions. All in all, the dominant characteristics of this space are privacy, safety, regularity and familiarity. The whole apartment is so much connected with one specific group of people who have nowhere else to go; and is so full of their spirit and habits, that it almost does not allow any other standpoint to enter. To be sure, the different members of the group engage in discussions and debates, but their overall standpoint is so similar that the room for persuasion is pretty limited.



All the public spaces the activists of *Ne da(vi)mo* use for their actions, most notably the square in front of the city hall, are in several ways the complete opposite of the apartment: They are in the centre of the city, always open to all sides

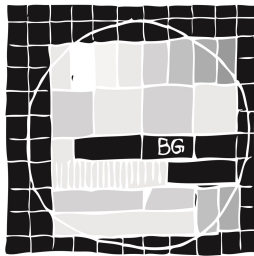
and to everybody, and neither related to one particular group of people nor to one specific purpose or activity. Hence their major characteristics are openness, unpredictability and worldliness. Hence they offer very good conditions. But during the protests, one has the unavoidable impression that these spaces suddenly “belong” to *Ne da(vi)mo*. This belonging is never real, and due to the sheer mass of people who are present, the respective space is not under the control of anybody (even though the protests are of course meticulously planned). But nonetheless, the openness of the space to different standpoints is gone. Why? The most dominant spatial element of any protest is neither the city hall in the background nor the route of the march or the small plastic ducks that people bring along in large numbers. The true centre of every protest is the vehicle which is placed in front of the city hall and which serves as a stage for speakers. The crucial detail is the orientation of the stage: The speaker faces the crowd on the square and not the government, represented by the city hall. While from the perspective of the protest this is only too reasonable, it is by no means trivial. The message is clear: We do not talk to you, we talk to the *people*! Moreover, the small stage is designed for *one* speaker at a time and obviously the speakers are invited by the activists and cannot just select themselves. Not only is there no direct discussion between different speakers; but all speakers basically share the same opinion; and even the vast majority of the people on the square is already convinced. Hence rather than a space of mutual persuasion, the protest-square is designed to be a space for propaganda and unity.



Finally, there is the cultural centre Magacin. At first glance, this space seems to be the least political of all, because it is solely used to prepare the artefacts for the marches, demonstrations and other events. A closer look, however, reveals that this space *could* be very inviting for mutual persuasion and different standpoints. It is neutral enough to be accepted by both oppositions and, generally speaking, by everybody who is concerned about the project. It is big, accessible and central enough to accommodate not only actors but also judging spectators and thus to create a truly public space. Since it is relatively empty inside and additionally offers a courtyard outside, it is a very flexible space and could be adapted easily for different settings. Further, it is a well-known and respected institution in Belgrade which helps to guarantee a set of formalities, to keep debates within boundaries; something that is particularly important for issues charged with so much emotion as Beograd na vodi. Finally, the fact that it is in the immediate neighbourhood of the development area could create a particular sense of responsibility for the future of the common world.

It may be objected that the government would never tolerate such events, let alone sent official representatives to discuss the waterfront project with activists. This argument is backed by common sense and tangible evidence: When *Ne da(vi)mo* organised a conference about Belgrade Waterfront in October 2014 in another cultural centre called Beograd, a few days later the director of this institution was fired for mysterious reasons. However, the deadlock between the two oppositions, it seems, is not exclusively the fault of the government. This

suggests an event that never happened: When in June 2015 Milutin Folic, Belgrade's chief urban planner, and thus an important advocate of Beograd na void, was invited to present the project during the Mikser Festival, he could never actually speak because the event was sabotaged by members of *Ne da(vi)mo!*



It is true that the government does many things to mute the opposition of ordinary citizens: Politicians keep lying to journalists, the police has not only confiscated *Ne da(vi)mo*'s fantastic, supersized yellow duck but also temporarily arrested several members of the group and interrupted various of their actions without legal justification. At the moment, the situation gets more and more out of hand. The core members of the group are being pressured and harassed more and more. One of them is even falsely



accused of attacking a police officer and afraid to end up in jail for several years. Still, the most effective weapon of the government against a genuinely *political* opponent is mere silence. For a long time, the government completely ignored the protest; and only when prime minister Vučić - probably by accident - talked about "the people with the yellow duck" the protest got media coverage for the first time.

After all, it seems as if the government plans to wait until the people get tired of protest and until the activists are too exhausted and disillusioned to



continue. In a country like contemporary Serbia, where most people have much more urgent problems than a long-term development project that they do not

know much about and that in the eyes of most people looks like a glimmer of hope rather than a future nightmare, their chances to sit out the resistance are not so bad after all, especially since the prime minister has just been reelected.



But this is not necessarily a reason to give up! Instead, it may be time to switch (back) from protest against the development to arguments about it and alternatives to it. What *Ne da(vi)mo* needs, among other things, are good enough political spaces and invitations that the government and/or the citizens who support the project simply cannot refuse. If the activists find ways to lure the government and to break the silence between the two oppositions, if they manage to create spaces that accommodate different standpoints and encourage mutual persuasion, they have reason to be confident since in the political realm, and only in the political realm, we can expect miracles to happen.

* * *



BERLIN

BERLIN

founded in 12th century

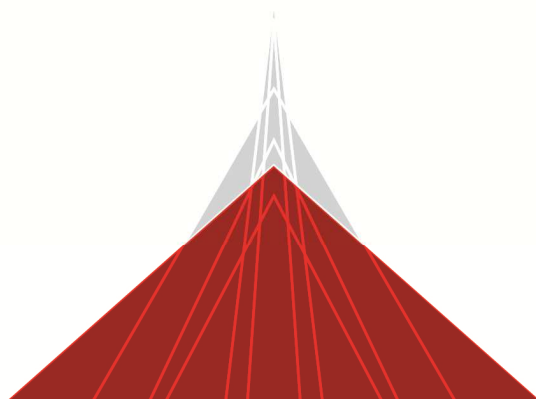


DENSITY

BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN

MADRID

VIENNA
BERLIN
BELGRADE

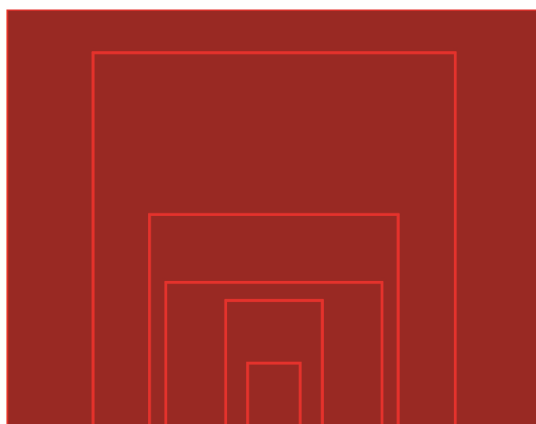


3 925
(per km²)

POPULATION

BERLIN
MADRID

VIENNA
BELGRADE
BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN



3 500 000
(4.3 % of Germany)

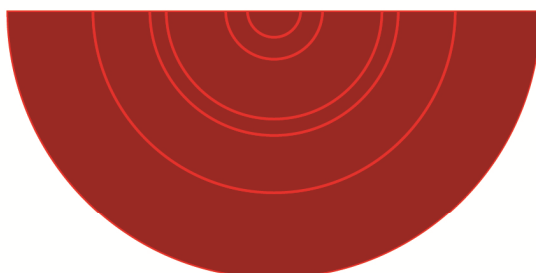
SIZE

COPENHAGEN
BRUSSELS

BELGRADE
VIENNA

MADRID

BERLIN



89 168
(ha)

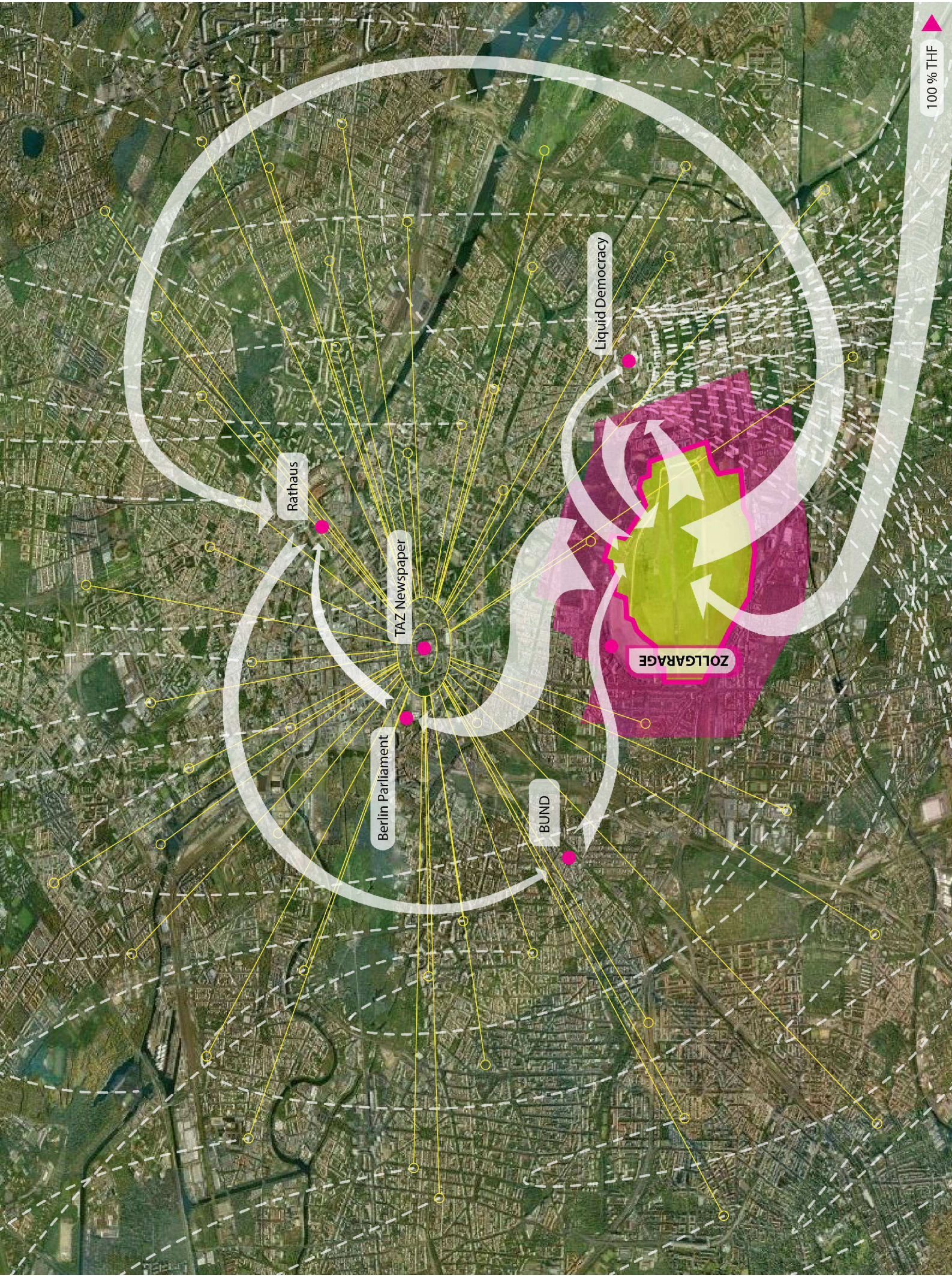


30.10.2008	final closing of the airport Tempelhof
2008 / 09	"Have you ever squatted an airport?" + "Tempelhof für alle!"
2010	opening of THF as public park
2010	Masterplan for THF from the City
June 2012	foundation of "100%THF!"
14.09.2013	start signature collection
13.01.2014	stop signature collection
25.05.2014	Referendum
June 2014	law for the preservation and future use of THF is active mandate for "Epp" (future planning) to Tilmann Heuser mandat for online participation to Liquid Democracy
27.09.2014	"Launch event"

07.11.2014	Phase 1: "Information and Collection of Ideas"
23.04.2015	
08.05.2015	Phase 2: "Thematic workshops"
28.09.2015	
Oct 2015	Phase 3: "Uniting and Checking Results"
30.11.2015	
Dec 2015	Phase 4: "Presentation of the Results"

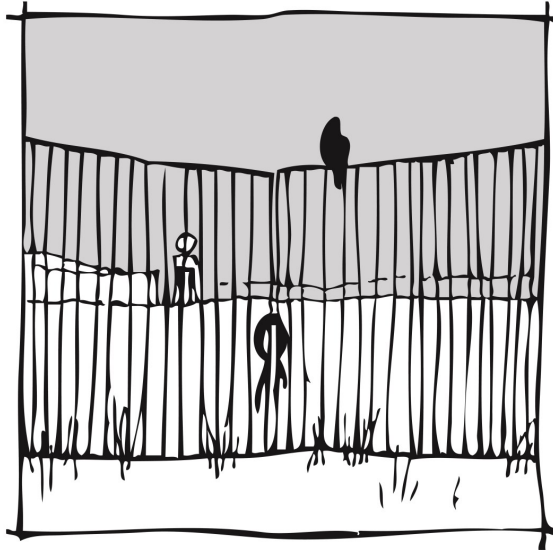
15.12.2015 Handover to Abgeordnetenhaus

data mostly taken from: <https://tempelhofer-feld.berlin.de/>



Berlin /

On the difference between the messengers and the message



The Tempelhofer Feld is full of history. It was used by farmers, the military and Berlin's first football clubs. Later, in the beginning of the 20th century, Count Zeppelin and Orville Wright heralded a new usage when they flew over the field before the eyes of amazed spectators. In 1923 an airport opened its gates in Tempelhof and the its airfield soon became one of Europe's busiest destinations. But in the reunited Berlin the airports in Tegel and Schönefeld took over most of the passenger flights, citizens rallied against the inner-city airport and the finally government decided to close it.

In 2008, the authorities locked not only the airport buildings but also the entire airfield. The citizens of Berlin were not very pleased with this decision and activist groups squatted the airport without further ado.



Their eviction was followed by a series of protests and in the end the government felt obliged to open the more than 300ha of empty space to the public in 2010. In the same year, a development

plan for the former airfield was published. This plan did not make a lot of friends among the locals who did not believe the claims of the government to use the outer ring of the field, a real gem of urban land, to build housing “for everybody”.

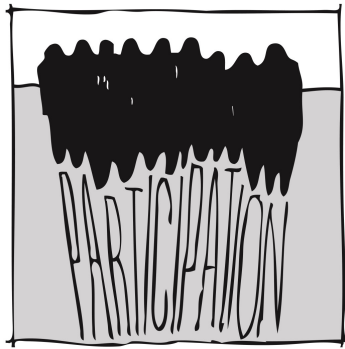
As the planning process advanced, the citizen initiative called *100%THF* was founded in 2012 and soon started collecting signatures to enforce a referendum about the future of the airfield. In the last days of May 2014 the time for the big showdown had arrived: Would the government go through with their plans or would the citizens baffle the enterprise?



As we all know, the government lost and Berlin's former mayor Wowereit and Senator Müller, his successor in office who, at the time, was responsible for city development, had to admit their defeat. Then something remarkable happened: The government hired Tilmann Heuser, one of the most prominent critics of their original plans, to initiate and lead a participatory process to elaborate a new law for the future use and maintenance of the Tempelhofer Feld. It is pretty irrelevant if this move was an honest gesture of recognition or if the government secretly hoped that Heuser would fail. More important is the signal that the same citizens who voted against the development plans of the government should now be responsible for the future of this big chunk of inner-city land.



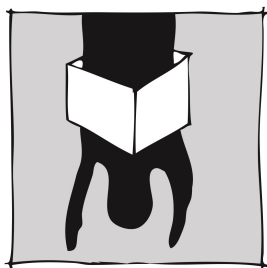
Heuser took his job very serious and before we sharpen our focus, it deserves to be highlighted that - in contrast to so many other examples from all over Europe that carry the same label - this process really was participatory in all the important respects.



This success is of course related to the comfortable initial position - the site is deeply rooted in the city's history, many people were familiar with the recent events and already went to vote, and, perhaps most importantly, keeping the field as it is was always one of the really good options - but it was by no means their necessary result.



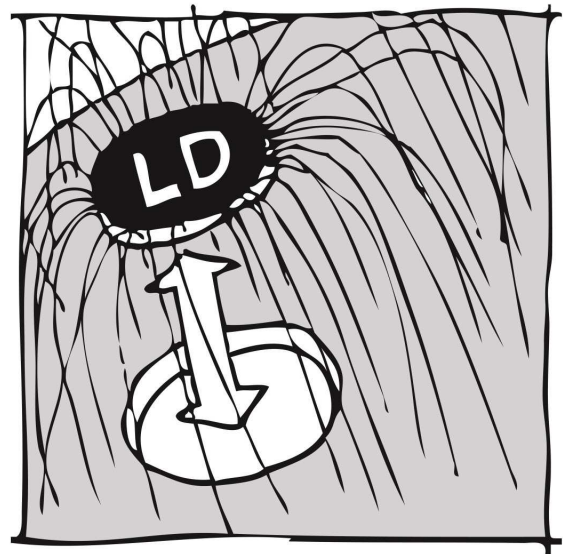
At any rate, Heuser decided - and this is the only decision that we shall elaborate on - to initiate a double tracked process that would happen in the



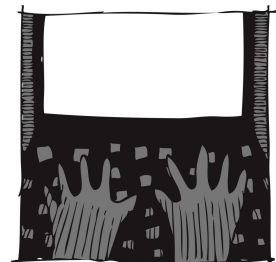
analogue and in the virtual world. Most of the almost 200 events that were part of the process until today took place in a building called Alte Zollgarage located on the field, and the others happened out in the wide open or in the adjacent neighbourhoods. Some of them were purely informational, others were social and many offered opportunities for the citizens to deliberate about the future of the Tempelhofer Feld.

Since Heuser and his peers wanted to give as many citizens as possible the chance to participate in the process, independent of working hours, travel distance, social class, age etc., they commissioned *Liquid Democracy*, a non-profit civil-society association, to develop an online platform that would complement the process going on in the real world. Our

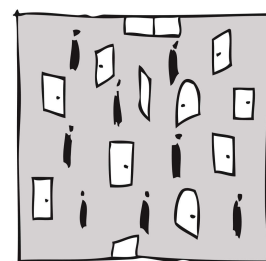
interlocutor from *Liquid Democracy* said that their overall goal is to create "deliberative spaces online". How successful were they?



We shall argue that the virtual space they designed is almost as good as any virtual space for deliberation - that is, for liberating ourselves from our own personal standpoints - could ever be. Notwithstanding, and that is the crux, virtual space in general has one fundamental deficit compared to its real-world antetype.



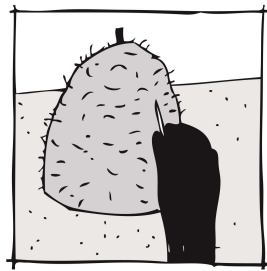
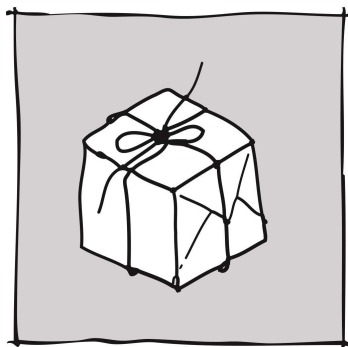
To begin with, we shall highlight all the relevant spatial characteristics of the website beginning with its location. Just like most real-world spaces, also virtual spaces have a definite location, an address. But in the virtual world, in contrast to our analogue surroundings, we are *equally* far away from all existing locations. No matter where we would like to go, it just takes one click. This means of course that the website



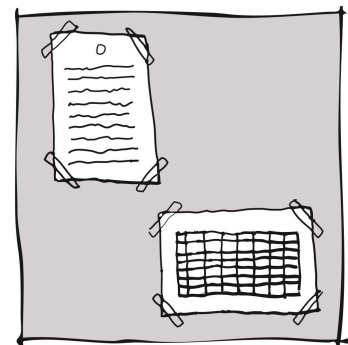
is incredibly accessible. But what we should not forget is that every other website is equally accessible. In praxis, this proximity to everything tempts

us to “browse” and to “surf” the web, to move constantly from one space to the next without ever actually arriving anywhere. This tendency is not exactly helpful for deliberation which needs focus and attention, but after all it is not a necessity to move around. On the internet, too, we can stay where we are.

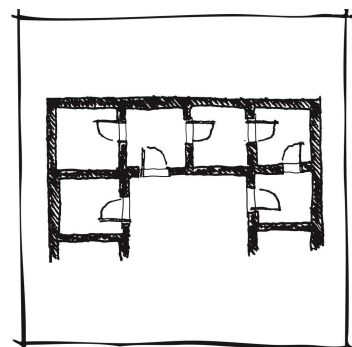
Secondly, just like in the real world we have to know the space where we want to go or alternatively it should be, so to speak, on our way so that we may stumble upon it. Since the internet is incredibly vast and since innumerable websites are courting our attention, it is not easy for a virtual space to become popular, or to be so present that people will just come across it by accident. In our case for example it was only after a local newspaper published an article about the participatory process and the possibility to contribute online that suddenly the citizens started to use this offer. With respect to deliberation, it may be remarked that high user numbers are often but not automatically good, simply because deliberation is only possible where people with *different* opinions and standpoints come together. We could speculate, for example, - but we do not - that most of those users who participated online because they read the same newspaper article, will also have similar beliefs, principles and opinions. After all, the newspapers we read often do tell us something about their readers. In that case, despite a skyrocketing user number, the website would still not be a good space for deliberation due to a lack of differences.



The website itself, at any rate, is nicely designed. Various elements from the colour scheme to the logo underline the fact that it is an official platform, backed up and financed by the municipality. This helps to convey the formality, seriousness and impact of the process to the users. The structure of the page is clear and intuitive which helps us to orient ourselves. This is crucial in the virtual world, where we are inclined to leave a website as soon as we get even just a tiny bit confused.

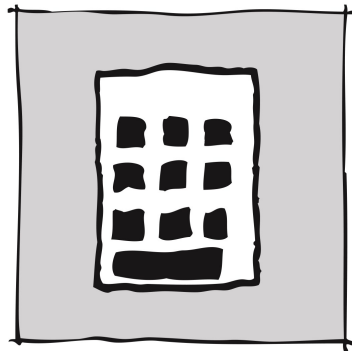


Various parts of the website provide the visitors with technical information about concept, development and goals of the process, upcoming events, presentations and protocols of previous events, maps of the site, general info about the legal framework etc. All these elements are very important and helpful, but with respect to deliberation, to weighing up different opinions against each other, they are secondary; or, more precisely, they *must* be taken for granted. We may imagine them as a foundation that is necessary for solid deliberation rather than the actual objects of deliberation.



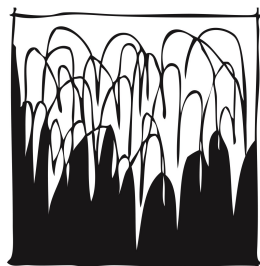
Much more important in this regard was the room where registered users could post their

own ideas and *like*, *dislike* and *comment* on the proposals of others. On this big market square of ideas, many hundreds of proposals have been posted during the initial stage of the participatory process. Our interlocutor from *Liquid Democracy* highlighted - and we fully agree after browsing through different threads for some hours - that almost all of these ideas were comprehensible and reasonable in one way or another and really deserved to be discussed.

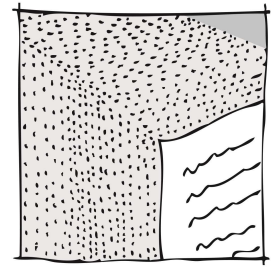


What is more, the code of conduct created a common ground that guided user interactions on the platform. And the need to register before being allowed to post anything was another wisely used institutional element which, without making anybody fully accountable, surely had a daunting effect on troublemakers and hecklers. Many comments on the website are sneering - something that must be expected in Berlin and that any Berliner can handle -, but as far as we could see, none of them were abusive or offensive.

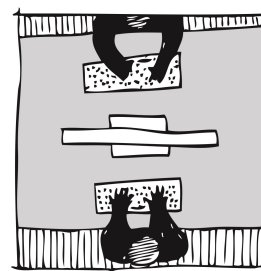
In all these respects the website is a great success. Still, at second glance one notices that only very few topics were actually *discussed*. Even where we find dozens of comments about one proposal, they are hardly ever related to each other. Reading through them, in other words, one almost never has the feeling of following a *conversation*. Why is that and what does it mean for the quality of the space with regards to deliberation?



On the one side, we may trace this impression back to the fact that we see *everything* that was ever posted. We see all the things that people just avoided because they were not interesting or seemed somehow irrelevant or self-evident. In the real world, on the other hand, all these things just disappear once they have been said out loud and we usually forget them sooner than later. Still, these omissions should be exceptional, granted that, as we have just stated, most of the proposals deserve to be discussed. So what was the problem?



The problem was simply that the people who met in the virtual space did not *really* meet. Since



they did not have to look each other directly in the eye, since they were actually alone in front of their screens, since they did not feel the presence of their

interlocutors, since they did not appear fully as the ones who they individually are, it was much easier for them to ignore the others instead of engaging with them. The result is a massive pile of proposals, *likes*, *dislikes* and critical *comments*, but very little that resembles the transcript of an actual conversation.

This is decisive with regards to our question and a point, of course, that concerns not only our particular case but any process where people are supposed to deliberate online: Virtual space is not a good space for deliberation because to deliberate means to discuss with others and to ponder a given issue from different perspectives. This requires

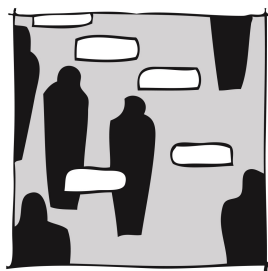


more from us than just to register or see other opinions. We can only liberate ourselves from our own personal standpoints if we take other standpoints so serious that we actually *respond* to them and try to learn more about them until finally we have understood them. Otherwise, how could we ever put ourselves in somebody else's position?

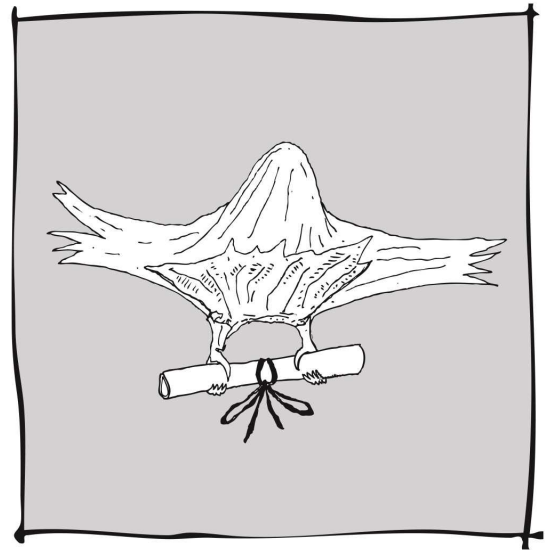


Further, the results of deliberation, that is, the opinions we hold or the decisions we take, are not always and not even usually something that existed in the beginning of the process of deliberation. Deliberation, to put it differently, does not mean to put seven ideas on the table and then to select the best one. Rather, it means that seven people bring seven ideas to the table and then see what happens when they talk about their differences, similarities, advantages and disadvantages.

The point here is neither that deliberation is impossible online, nor that it happens



automatically in the real world. It can happen online and we often miss it very sadly in the real world, but as a *tendency* it seems fair to say that we are much more likely to deliberate where we are in one room with other people who do not share our opinions, than when we see nothing but their usernames on our computer screens.



This is why in Berlin all the decisions were taken offline while the results from the online participation served to preselect important topics and to take some pressure out of the actual process of deliberation. Virtual spaces make political participation easier, they extend the reach of organisers, and they are a first step towards deliberation. Nonetheless, they can never replace but only vaguely resemble the actual appearance of unique somebodies. What appears online is just the message, never the messenger. This point seems self-evident, but perhaps it still deserves to be highlighted in times when many people already or still seem to have unlimited faith in technical progress and the possibilities of the internet.

* * *

EPILOG

Dear Reader,

Welcome back! We hope that you had a nice journey and that, after all, you agree with the main points of this text.

The spaces where we (are supposed to) become engaged in political affairs influence if and how we engage; and also how the world will respond to our engagement. They can hardly force us to act and only seldom do they make action impossible. But they do have tremendous influence on the quality and the specific form of our actions and interactions. Spaces can prompt us into action when otherwise we would not become involved, and they can protect and promote our engagement against influences from the outside and against the frustrations that arise from political action itself.

In our opinion, paying attention to the spaces of political action is decisive granted that we really aspire to change the relation between political representatives and ordinary citizens, irrespective of whether this means to abolish elections and representatives altogether or just offer regular citizens more actual opportunities to become engaged with the world in which they are at home.

Perhaps, we should think less about political systems and more about what we are actually doing when and what it means that we *act* politically.

Despite widespread demands for “real” democracy and endless predictions of political change, ordinary citizens still have great trouble to find appropriate spaces where they can become engaged, not only with the government of public affairs but with worldly concerns in general. This, of course, is not exclusively the fault of governments but also of the citizens and civic initiatives themselves. Both sides are very

busy thinking about who owns what and who can decide about which space. What they forget to think about, it seems, is *where* they act.

We should pay attention to *particular* political spaces and to the *context* in which they appear.

When evaluating and designing political spaces, we should not only consider *either* the tangible *or* the intangible elements of space, but both these dimensions together; and we should also investigate their interrelations.

In the future, we would like to begin further explorations of political spaces in Europe and perhaps elsewhere. We would like to convince space designers, politicians, researchers, and citizens about the importance of political space. And we would be happy about opportunities to design political spaces on our own.

For now we should just say thank you to the organisers and lecturers of the *4Cities* master program who put us in the position to do this research; and to everybody who supported us during the last two years.



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Appendix I

TOGETHERNESS

Elements of political action



Neither love nor hate makes us debate. We do not want to have anything to do with those who we truly hate. We may ignore them, attack them with words or even physically, but we will not be willing to sit down and discuss anything with them. To our loved ones, on the contrary, we feel a very strong connection which we do not dare to put at risk for some banality.

Arendt says that both love and hate are “worldless” feelings. Those who hate each other, it seems, live in two different worlds and it is as if they burnt all the bridges that connected these worlds, so that now there is no way left to reach out to one another. And those who love each other do not care about the world around them. In the case of romantic love it even seems as though nothing could ever come between them. (Only in the most severe political situations are we prepared to overcome our hatred and to distance us from our loved ones.) Since debate in particular and political action in general is always concerned with public affairs and the problems of this world in which we live together, neither love nor hate are political sensations. They are apolitical as long as they are simply unconcerned with, and antipolitical as soon as they start to actively destroy the world that lies between us.

Hence neither the good deeds we do out of love for others nor the bad ones we commit against

others belong to the field of political action. Physical violence as well as words that are meant to hurt, begins where all actual debate, which is essentially a form of speaking *with* each other, has come to an end. Genuine benevolence, on the other hand, implies selflessness. The benefactor, in order to be truly *altruistic*, has to remain anonymous and must even be self-forgetting.

Consequently, only forms of acting together *with* others can be political. And if people do act politically, they will be able to experience the joy of being in the company of their peers. Of course the political realm is full of conflicts over different interests and goals, but it is important to point out - and this is precisely Arendt's intention - that the very essence of political action, and hence the condition of politics is the acting together of those who are neither friends nor foes but *peers*.

Political action is essentially a form of human togetherness that can appear only where people are active neither for nor against, but with others. Consequently, political space by definition excludes both altruism and violence.

POWER



Agreement feels powerful. When a group of people, after the exhausting process of forming and exchanging opinions, of getting to know

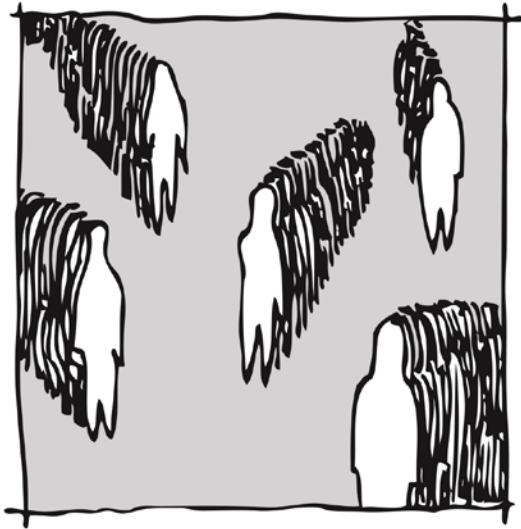
and getting along with each other, of understanding and assessing the current situation and discussing what should be done in the future; when they finally arrive at an agreement, the moment of settlement is usually accompanied by an almost unconditional belief that “We can do this!”

The captivating feeling of being able to achieve something together is the sensation of *power*. Essentially, Arendt argues, power is a “potential and not an unchangeable, measurable, and reliable entity like force or strength” (Arendt, 1998: 200). Consequently, nobody is *naturally* more powerful than others as men are naturally stronger than women; and nobody can *possess* power like one can possess a gun. As any potential, power becomes real only under certain conditions, and it vanishes as soon as these conditions are no longer provided. Power arises whenever people act in concert, which is precisely the case, and perhaps most glaringly obvious in the very moment when a group of equals arrives at an agreement. However, it is also the case when a ruler commands and others obey, since “in politics, obedience and support are the same” (Arendt, 1990: 228). Power then accompanies the respective actors for as long as they really act together. But it disappears entirely as soon as the action is over, either because the actors have lost touch or because they turned against each other. Sometimes power disintegrates suddenly and quickly, sometimes it follows a slow process of decay.

At any event, power does not automatically increase with the number of actors but rather with the density and the stability of the human relations within the group. A small group of people whose actions are concerted can thus be infinitely more powerful than a big organisation with thousands of members who are all just nominal members, that is, as the Germans say so beautifully, “*Kartelleichen*”.

Power arises when people act in concert. Consequently, those political spaces that gather people who really act *together* will soon become the “powerhouses” of politics.

LEADERS



Some participants are opinion leaders. Whenever people engage in discussion, some are more convincing than others. And where different groups of people are involved in a political process, each collective typically delegates a few members to represent the entire group.

What distinguishes them from the rest, what makes them so convincing, is, on the one hand, their ability to persuade and, on the other hand, their capacity for representative thought.

To be capable of *representation* means to be able to look at one topic not only from your personal standpoint but also from the perspectives of others. This capacity goes hand in hand with deliberation, which is essentially the liberation from our individual standpoints in the common world. Deliberation leads to “a true freedom of movement in our mental world that parallels our freedom of movement in the physical one” (Arendt, 2005: 168). To be sure, this does not mean that we have to abandon our personal standpoints once and for all but rather that we can leave and return whenever we please. Further, it does not mean that when we look at the world from the perspectives of others, we automatically adopt the actual views of others. Instead, we make present before the inner eye, that is, we *re-present*, their standpoints.

In order to do so, we have to be familiar with the physical environment and the conditions of life, every-day problems, the necessary skills one needs handle them, how one is being looked at by others etc. It goes without saying that our representation will be more accurate and our articulation of what we represent will be more vivid if we who represent have actually “walked in the shoes” of those who we represent. Otherwise we must be or we must have been directly confronted with them. The weakest basis for representation is of course the hearsay from far away. Our inner representation becomes a vantage- or checkpoint for the process of opinion formation.

Representative thought enables us to understand different realities. Persuasive speech, on the other side, enables us to articulate these realities adequately. Both capacities boost each other, so to speak. Taken together they create in a person what the Greeks called *phronesis* and what Arendt describes as “discerning insight” (Arendt, 2005: 169). This discerning insight, which is neither wisdom nor knowledge, is the central characteristic of the political actor, the “one outstanding virtue of the statesman” because it enables those who possess it “to communicate between the citizens and their opinions so that the commonness of this world becomes apparent” (Arendt, 2005: 18).

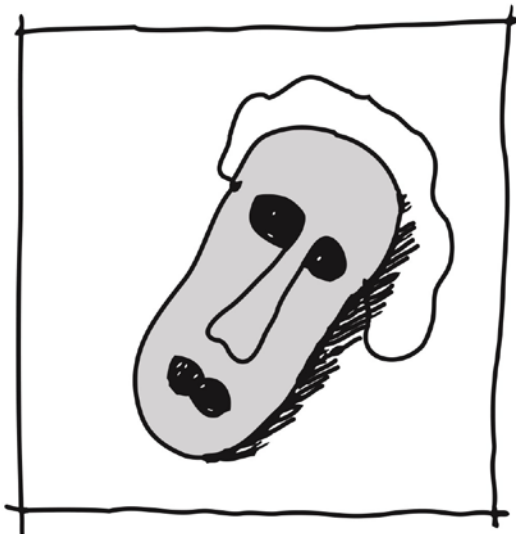
In the political realm, which is exclusively concerned with the common world, this ability, if it is accompanied by the necessary courage and personal initiative, qualifies those who are most able for *leadership*. What it does not qualify for, and what the truly political actor is not interested in because s/he knows that it must ultimately result in self-defeat, is rule. The difference is very simple: While the leader is a *primus inter pares*, the first among equals, the ruler is entitled to give orders. The leader leads the way, s/he is a beginner, a pioneer, we might say. The ruler, on the contrary, dictates what is to be done. While rulers and oligarchs - elected or not - depend only on obedience, compliance and non-resistance, leaders always depend on the

consent, the initiative and the active support of others to see through what they have started.

Leadership is incredibly important in the political realm not only because leaders are the ones who lead the way, but also because in all political problems that cannot be solved locally, the leaders of each local community will almost naturally turn into delegates and representatives (without necessarily being elected for several years) and move up, as it were, to the next higher political scale. Leaders, in other words, do not only assume responsibility for the world, they are also asked to take responsibility, that is, to respond in the name of their community and to represent those who are absent.

Discerning insight, the ability to understand multiple realities and to communicate between differences, qualifies political actors for leadership. Political space encourages and makes room for leaders.

FORMALITY



Debates are formal events. They take place in public and not in the living room or at the regulars' table. They usually begin with an introduction of the participants and the topic that will be discussed. If decisions need to be taken, a debate culminates with an official agreement. It can be expected that the participants - perhaps also the audience - wear "better" clothes etc.

The formalisation of debates - which can differ tremendously from case to case - reminds us that political action, due to its inherent qualities, has to be treated with great care. Further, it highlights the importance and dignity of political affairs. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it indicates that when we act politically, we do not act as private individuals but as *citizens*, that is, as members of the political community that we belong to. By acting politically, we put citizenship into practice. Political action, when it interrupts our every-day life, demands not only special focus and attention, but also an environment in which it is "not the natural Ego" that appears but "a right-and-duty-bearing person" (Arendt, 1990: 107). To be sure, this does not mean that we are not ourselves anymore when we act politically. We simply distance and liberate ourselves, as it were, from the private individual with private interests, private wants and private needs who each of us is, and turn into the member of our community who each of us *also* is.

The most fundamental of all formal aspects of debate in particular and political action in general is political equality (*Ebenbürtigkeit*) which simply means that in the political realm nobody has the right (or the obligation) to give orders or commands. In turn, nobody who is politically active has to obey, and nobody can point the finger at superiors when looking for excuses or alibis. It is important to be aware that political equality is *not* a natural factum but, on the contrary, an artificial creation that has to be protected in and by political space.

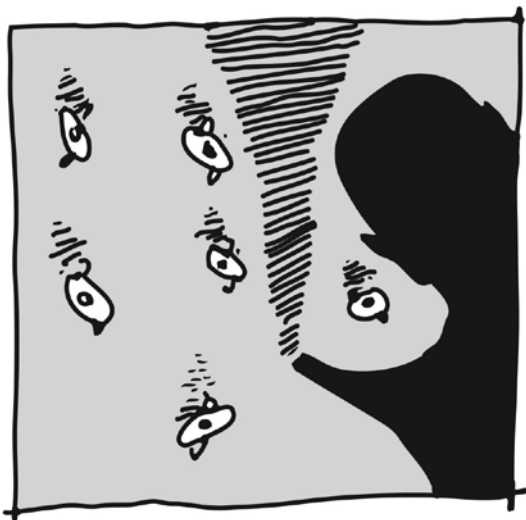
Political action is formalised in different ways and for various reasons. Political space is concrete expression and area of application of these formalities. Above all, political space safeguards the political equality of all its users.

JUDGMENT

The spectators judge the participants. During a debate we can hardly resist sorting everything that happens on stage into the categories of beautiful or ugly, good or bad, adequate or

inadequate, authentic or hypocrite, pleasant or disgusting, meaningful or meaningless etc. And we are eager to discuss every detail with other spectators.

Judging, just like understanding or forming an opinion, is a faculty of the mind. Since it goes on inside us; nobody else can do it for us. Still, judging is not something we can practice in solitude. Our capacity to judge is based on critical thinking which means, on the one hand, to challenge “doctrines and concepts one receives from others, to the prejudices and traditions one inherits” and, on the other side, to test our own thoughts and ideas on their validity. “And this application one cannot learn without publicity, without the testing that arises from contact with other people’s thinking.” (Arendt, 1982: 42)



This mutual testing of our judgments, closely related to the process of exchanging opinions, is for Arendt “one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass” (Arendt, 2006: 218). Her emphasis is based on the conviction that human judgment is always concerned with particular situations. And since the world never stands still, each particular situation is potentially so new - whether this novelty is evident immediately or not - that it could not possibly have been anticipated in full, let alone judged adequately, even a day before. (We are actually experiencing this quite often these days.)

Consequently, Arendt argues, there cannot be general standards for our judgments. To be sure, past judgments can guide us. They do contain “exemplary validity” (Arendt, 1982: 84), but this validity is never absolute. Since there will always be situations which cannot be judged adequately from the perspective and with the standards of the past, we have to make the effort and judge *today*. But how are we then to distinguish between good and bad judgments? Arendt, following Kant, argues that the validity of judgments is based on their appeal to everyone and thus to our common sense.

Further, Arendt highlights that the best spectators are more capable to judge than the greatest actors. Their advantage is that, since they are not on stage themselves, they see the *whole* spectacle while the actors, playing their part, can only have a partial view by definition. Further, since the spectators have no direct interest in what unfolds before their eyes, they are much more credible than any of the actors involved.

Nonetheless, the border between the actors and spectators is permeable enough. Arendt highlights that “a spectator sits in every actor” (Arendt, 1982: 63), and we might add that, at least potentially, an actor sits in every spectator. Actors are capable, so to speak, to take a step back and to look at things from the outside, at least for a moment. Spectators, on the other side, are capable to become actors if they care about what is going on, if they feel that they can respond to events, and if they have the courage to step on stage themselves. Still, oftentimes the best judges will not interfere with public affairs simply because, in contrast to practical reason, our judgments do *not* tell us what to do, they do not speak “in imperatives”. (Arendt, 1982: 15)

In any case, as soon as we understand spectators as *judges*, they are not entirely passive anymore. Even though they do not participate directly in the spectacle which, in our context, is primarily the government of public affairs, they are still actively engaged in the political realm. They are not second-rank political actors but politically active in an entirely different way. ”Judging-

spectatorship”, argues also Bryan Garsten, “is a distinct role for the great majority of citizens who are not actively participating [in the government of public affairs].” (Garsten, 2010: 337) Their judgments, if they are based on facts and critical thought, must be taken serious by those who govern, not despite but precisely because of the fact that they come from the outside.

Judging is an important form of political action. It is the privilege and responsibility of all those who do not directly participate in the government of public affairs. Political space encourages judgment and it gives us the opportunity to practice critical thinking.

UNDERSTANDING



Debates help us *understand* the world. Even though the facts may be clear, it can still be hard for us to really comprehend what is going on or what has happened. In these cases it is very helpful to “talk things through” with others.

The exchange of opinions about the world is not only a way to prepare decisions in order to shape the world in which we would like to live. It also helps us to understand the world as it is. “Understanding, as distinguished from having correct information and scientific knowledge, is a complicated process which never produces unequivocal results.” (Arendt, 1994: 307) For Arendt, understanding is so important that she calls it “the specifically human way of being

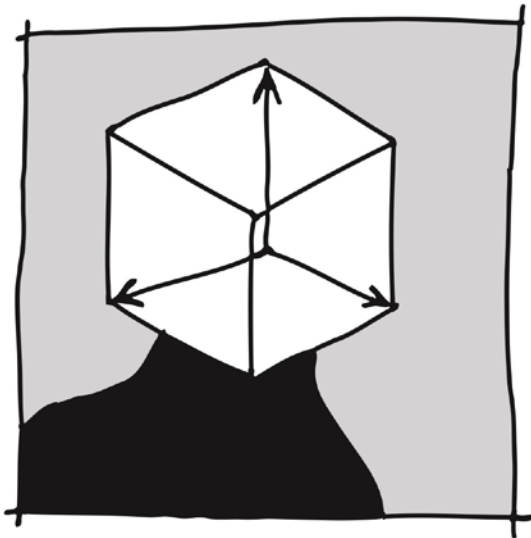
alive; for every single person needs to be reconciled to a world into which he was born a stranger and in which, to the extent of his unique distinctness, he always remains a stranger” (Arendt, 1994: 308). Without understanding, in other words, we could never feel at home in the world.

The relevance of understanding and coming to terms with the world of human affairs is perhaps not as evident as the significance of our decisions about its future. Still, today we can sense more and more the desperation of all those who have the feeling that “I don't understand anything anymore!” because it seems that the world has become too complex and too confusing.

Understanding is a mental process and as such it goes on *inside* the individual. Hence just like nobody can deliberate for us, nobody can understand for us. Even though it is essentially a solitary business, the process of understanding is related to the public-political realm in at least three ways: First of all, it is concerned with what is going on in the common world. Secondly, it is stimulated by the presence of and our exchange with other people. Others help us to understand because they confirm, correct and complement our thoughts. Thirdly, understanding can be meaningful only when it is rooted in popular language. “Popular language, as it expresses preliminary understanding, thus starts the process of true understanding. Its discovery must always remain the content of true understanding, if it is not to lose itself in the clouds of mere speculation - a danger always present.” (Arendt, 1994: 312)

Political action is not only the government of public affairs which comes about through decision-making. It also helps us to come to terms with reality and history. Hence political space is not only a space for governing, it is also a space for understanding. We can expect from political space that it helps us to “be at home” in the world in which we live, but only under the condition that it is a space of popular language and common sense.

TRUTH



All participants recognise certain facts. Opinions are always based on facts. These facts, even though they may be interpreted differently, have to be acknowledged by everyone. Facts are very popular among debaters precisely because they are unalterable, because there can be no two opinions about them. Those who ignore or deny obvious facts will not be taken seriously by their peers; they will instead be considered to be out of tune with reality.

Facts and opinions are clearly not the same. According to Arendt, articulating and exchanging opinions is an important form of political action. Searching for, proving, publishing or stating facts, however, is not. This means that everybody - especially scientists and experts -, as far as they are concerned with matters of fact, are *not* political actors; and that all questions - *Is it correct...?*, *Is it possible...?*, *Did they really...?*, *Will there maybe...?*, *How can we...?* -, as far as they can be answered by simple facts or probabilities (which may of course be the result of the most complicated calculations), are not political questions.

Arendt has often been criticised for her sharp distinction of the political realm. It has been argued, for example, that her understanding of “the political” makes it impossible to discuss important social questions, for example poverty, in political terms. This is not true. Arendt does

not argue that these issues are per se not political. Rather, she emphasises that they are political only in certain ways and, most importantly, that they have to be *made* political. As long as the poor, to stick with our example, just want a bigger piece of the cake or sometimes just a few crumbs to fill their bellies, their demands are not political but purely economic and, in the worst case simply a matter of life and death. In this situation we are not confronted with opinions, but with “hard facts”. Similarly, the solution of the problem does not require the exchange of opinions but either more or a different distribution of the existing resources. There can be different possibilities, but it is a matter of calculation and expertise to find the best one, that is, the most efficient solution. We are confronted with a question of necessity and its technical or administrative solution. Poverty only becomes a genuinely political issue insofar as we discuss it in such a way that our discussion really allows for different opinions, insofar as it becomes a matter of principle, insofar as we have a choice, insofar as it is a question of how we want to live together.

In reality, we are of course not confronted with a black and white scheme of political and non-political questions. One look at the discussion of a *Basic Unconditional Income* is enough to see that there are political and non-political sides to one and the same question. The important thing is to keep these two sides apart.

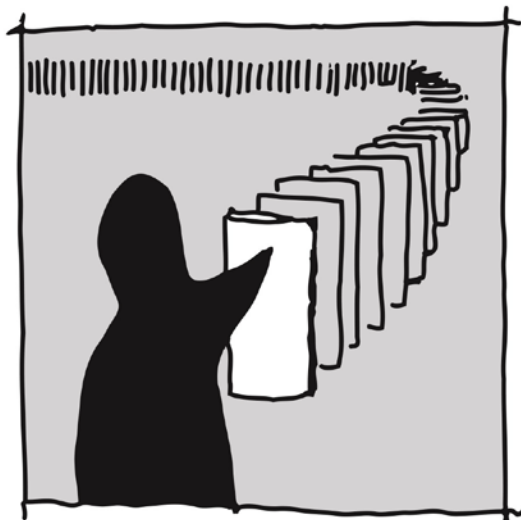
Despite the important differences between opinion and truth, whether factual or philosophical, they are not opposites. They “belong to the same realm. Facts inform opinions, and opinions, inspired by different interests and passions, can differ widely and still be legitimate as long as they respect factual truth.” (Arendt, 2006: 234) The opposite of factual truth is not opinion but the deliberate *lie*. While opinions are simply different from facts, lies turn facts upside down.

Facts, in other words, limit the range of opinion, interpretation and debate. “And it is only by respecting its own borders that this realm, where

we are free to act and to change, can remain intact, preserving its integrity and keeping its promises.” (Arendt, 2006: 259) We must therefore be very careful not to speak of opinions as if they were facts or about facts as if they were opinions. Further, we must try our best to prevent participants from lying since lies, too, threaten the integrity of the political realm, for example by making false promises; or destroy it altogether, for instance through false accusations.

Political action, insofar as it is an exchange of opinions, is limited by factual truth. Crossing these limits threatens the integrity of the political realm. Therefore, political space depends on the clear distinction of opinions and facts.

BEGINNING



Agreement is always possible. No matter how hopeless a deadlock, how irresolvable an argument, how unrelenting the conflicting parties may seem. A sudden change of heart and mind is possible until the very end. In the political realm, hope dies last.

Arendt often characterises our capacity to act as the ability to begin something new. The theme of beginning is so essential to Arendt's work that Margaret Canovan once called her the “theorist of beginnings” (Arendt, 1998: vii). To begin means to initiate something which

otherwise would not happen, to start a process that is not merely the natural or logical effect of some previous cause. Beginnings are always and by definition unexpected and oftentimes they can be identified as a beginning only when the story they set into motion unfolds farther.

This capacity to begin, says Arendt, is ontologically rooted in the fact of human natality. Hence beginning to us is like a “second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. [...] Because they are initium, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action.” (Arendt, 1998: 176f)

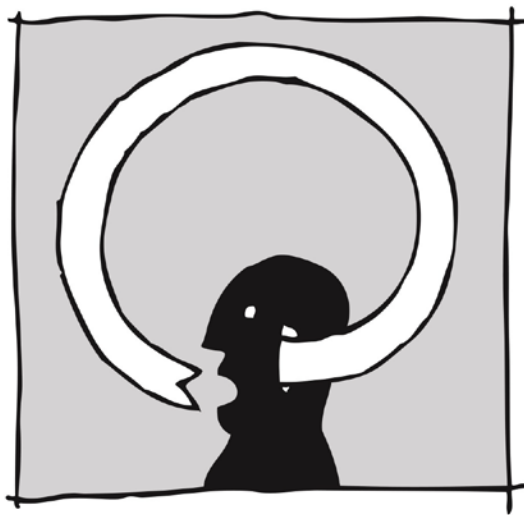
It is the beginning that distinguishes action, the *human* activity par excellence, from labor and work, the two other fundamental human capacities. Labor, the mastering of life's necessities, is a cyclical movement which knows neither beginning nor end. Even birth and death, the beginning and end of our individual lives are events only from the perspective of the human world which, without work and action would not exist at all. Work, on the other side, does have a starting point, but it is primarily defined by its *end* which, since it is clear from the very beginning, guides the entire process of production. Action, finally, has a beginning but it never has a clear end because every act “acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes” (Arendt, 1998: 190). Hence the moment we *select* as the end of any story, is to some extent arbitrary; and human history never really comes to an end as long as humans are alive.

In order to illustrate her understanding of new beginnings in the political realm, Arendt repeatedly referred to extraordinary events like the American Revolution. But this of course does not mean that every new beginning is as radical as a revolution. She used these events as examples because they illustrate most clearly what she means, and because they are well-known points of reference. But most beginnings - without losing their very essence - are much

“smaller” and less spectacular events. The point Arendt wants to make is simply that *qua* humans we are not entirely bound by whatever happened. In the political realm - and only in the political realm! - we are free, though not to reverse time or to start from scratch, to beat the odds, to break away from all calculations of cause and effect, to agree, for example, when agreement seemed no longer possible.

Political action means to begin something new. Hence in political space we have good reason to expect the unexpected, to never lose hope and to believe in “miracles”.

IRREVERSIBILITY



We cannot take back what we have said. As soon as we have said something out loud it is impossible for us to reverse time and to take it back. “What's done is done.”

Consequently, the debaters will be very careful what they say, not only because they are worried about their own appearance but also because they know that whatever they say is out of their control as soon as it has left their lips. Even the simplest expression such as a thoughtless sigh may be the reason for great regret - especially today, when almost everything that those who still dare to appear in public say and do, is recorded, analysed from all possible perspectives and often (over)interpreted.

To Arendt, *irreversibility* is one of the three great frustrations of human action (the other two are unpredictability and boundlessness). All of them stand in sharp opposition to the faculty of making. While human hands are capable to destroy and to take back, as it were, everything they have made, they are helpless with respect to the deeds they have done. This helplessness is one of the reasons why we distrust the political realm; and why so many have tried to turn political action into a form of making.

Luckily humans have the power to *forgive*. While we make promises in order to limit the unpredictability of the future, we forgive in order to free ourselves from the past. If we could not forgive each other, we would be bound forever to what we have done; and action would turn into a series of reactions, thereby losing its very essence, namely the power to begin new processes that cannot be reduced to causes and effects.

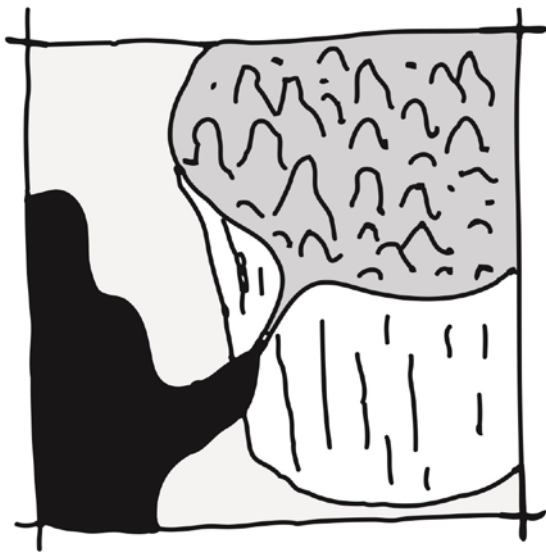
But while “the power of stabilization inherent in the faculty of making promises has been known throughout our tradition”, Arendt remarks that forgiveness “has always been deemed unrealistic and inadmissible in the public realm” (Arendt, 1998: 243). Nonetheless, forgiving is an authentic political experience - I cannot forgive myself; and your forgiveness is irrelevant if I do not accept and affirm it - with such an enormous impact on the realm of human affairs that Arendt once described it as “one of the greatest human capacities and perhaps the boldest of human actions” (Arendt, 1994: 308).

It should be pointed out in passing that forgiving, in contrast to forgetting, is a human *capacity*. We can forgive; it does not just happen. Forgetfulness, on the other hand, is natural and it often happens even though we try our best to avoid it. The only way to make sure that we will not forget whatever we would like to remember is to transform fleeting thoughts, words and deeds into durable objects. In this respect, action is completely helpless since it cannot produce anything that would survive the moment of action. Therefore “acting and speaking men need the help of [...] the artist, of

poets and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers, because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all.” (Arendt, 1998: 173)

Political action is irreversible. In order to remain free actors, capable of making new beginnings, we rely on our capacity to forgive others. Political space encourages us to forgive.

BOUNDLESSNESS



Debates usually have a moderator. The moderator makes sure that the debate stays within boundaries. S/he guarantees that the participants do not divagate too much from the original topic, pours oil on troubled water and mediates between participants whenever it is needed, gives a good example for how to behave and, if necessary, assures that the participants arrive at an agreement. Just as a good referee, a good moderator is practically invisible.

Arendt highlights that action is inherently “boundless”. What she means is that human action - political or not - since it always goes on between different actors, by definition establishes *human* relations. Since, furthermore, action is unpredictable and irreversible, these connections cannot be undone at will and it is not foreseeable where they will lead or which new relations may arise from them in the future.

Today, we are well aware of the great potential of human networks and we try to exploit it through events, platforms and the like. But despite all this optimism we should not forget about the less pleasant aspects of boundlessness, especially in the political realm. On the one hand, political action is fleeting. Human relations often dissolve as quickly as they are established and who permanently creates new connections risks that, in the end, none of them will last. The more we look for novelty, in other words, the less time we have to actually complete something, to turn a beginning into a story. On the other hand, political action has the tendency to “force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries” (Arendt, 1998: 191). Our projects, ventures and undertakings easily get out of hand as soon as others get involved. Therefore, our original intentions and motives may not endure. Too many cooks, so to say, may spoil the broth.

No remedy against the boundlessness of action arises from the realm of action itself. But we can support and stabilise (political) action with the help of principles, rules, guidelines, laws, limitations and the like. All these elements can be *made* but are never done. They evoke the very tangible metaphors of foundations, corner stones, pillars, paths or fences. Still, the authority and bindingness of these elements of course arises from active compliance and lived respect for them. Hence they somehow lie at the intersection of acting and making. The moderator, for example, is not usually the one who makes the rules, but the one who makes sure that they are respected and, if necessary, makes or allows exceptions.

Political action is boundless. Political relations and ventures thus depend on stabilising elements. Political space embodies and guarantees this stabilisation. It should be clearly defined, well-structured, durable and moderate in every sense of the word.

Appendix II

Case studies continuation /

Brussels,

Madrid,

Copenhagen



BRUSSELS

BRUSSELS

founded in 11th century

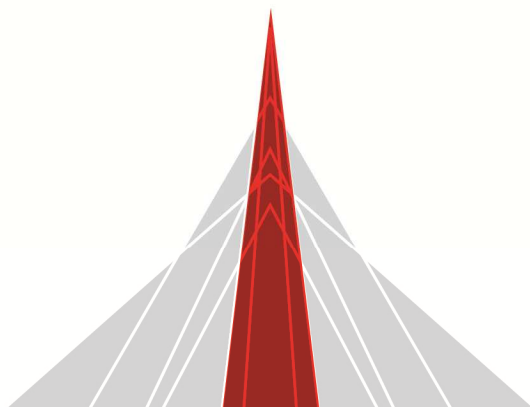


DENSITY

BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN

MADRID

VIENNA
BERLIN
BELGRADE



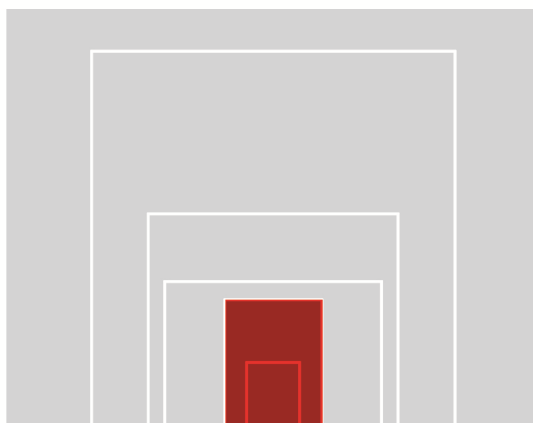
6 691
(per km²)

POPULATION

BERLIN
MADRID

VIENNA

BELGRADE
BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN



1 080 000
(10 % of all Belgium)

SIZE

COPENHAGEN
BRUSSELS

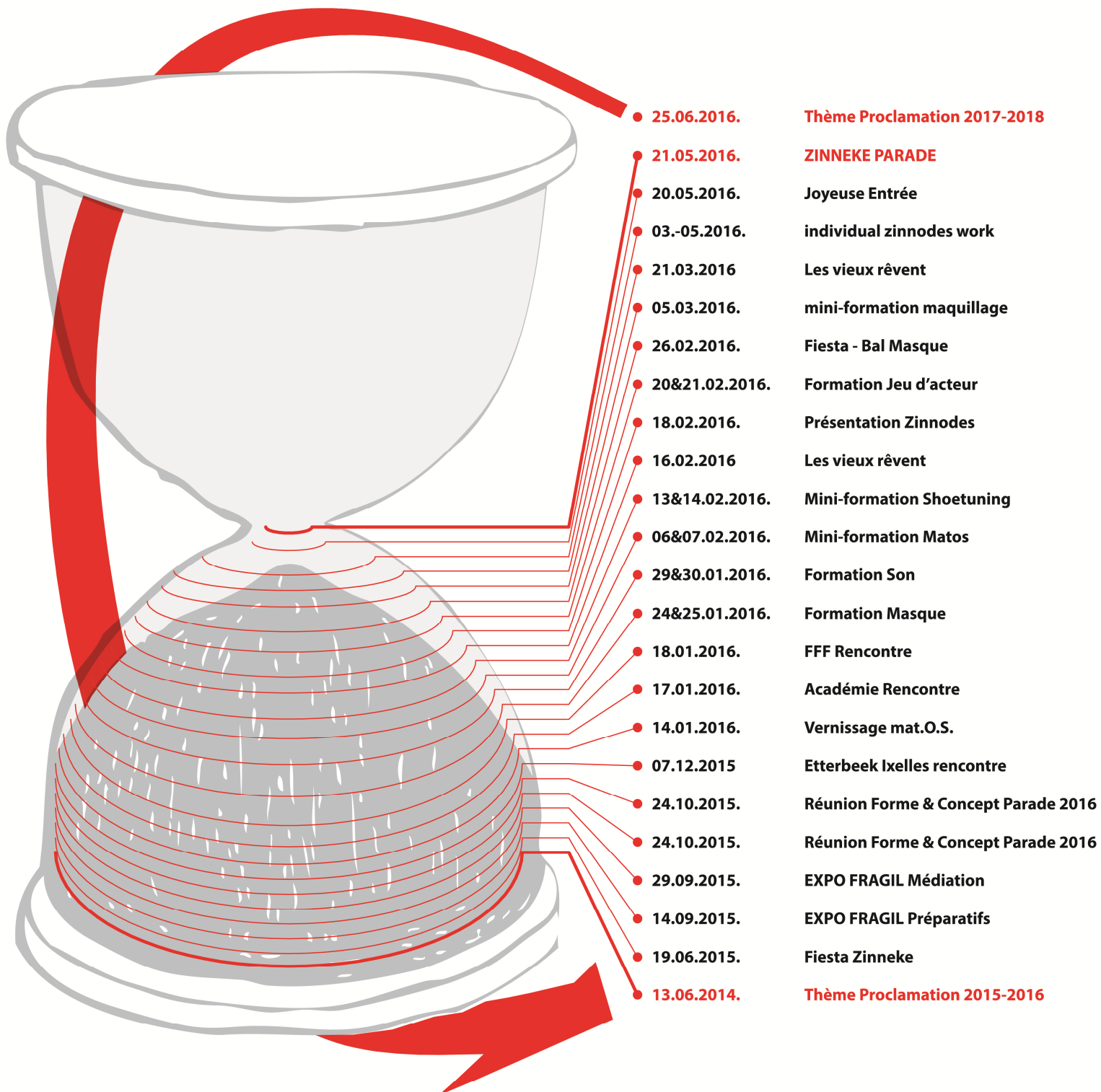
BELGRADE
VIENNA

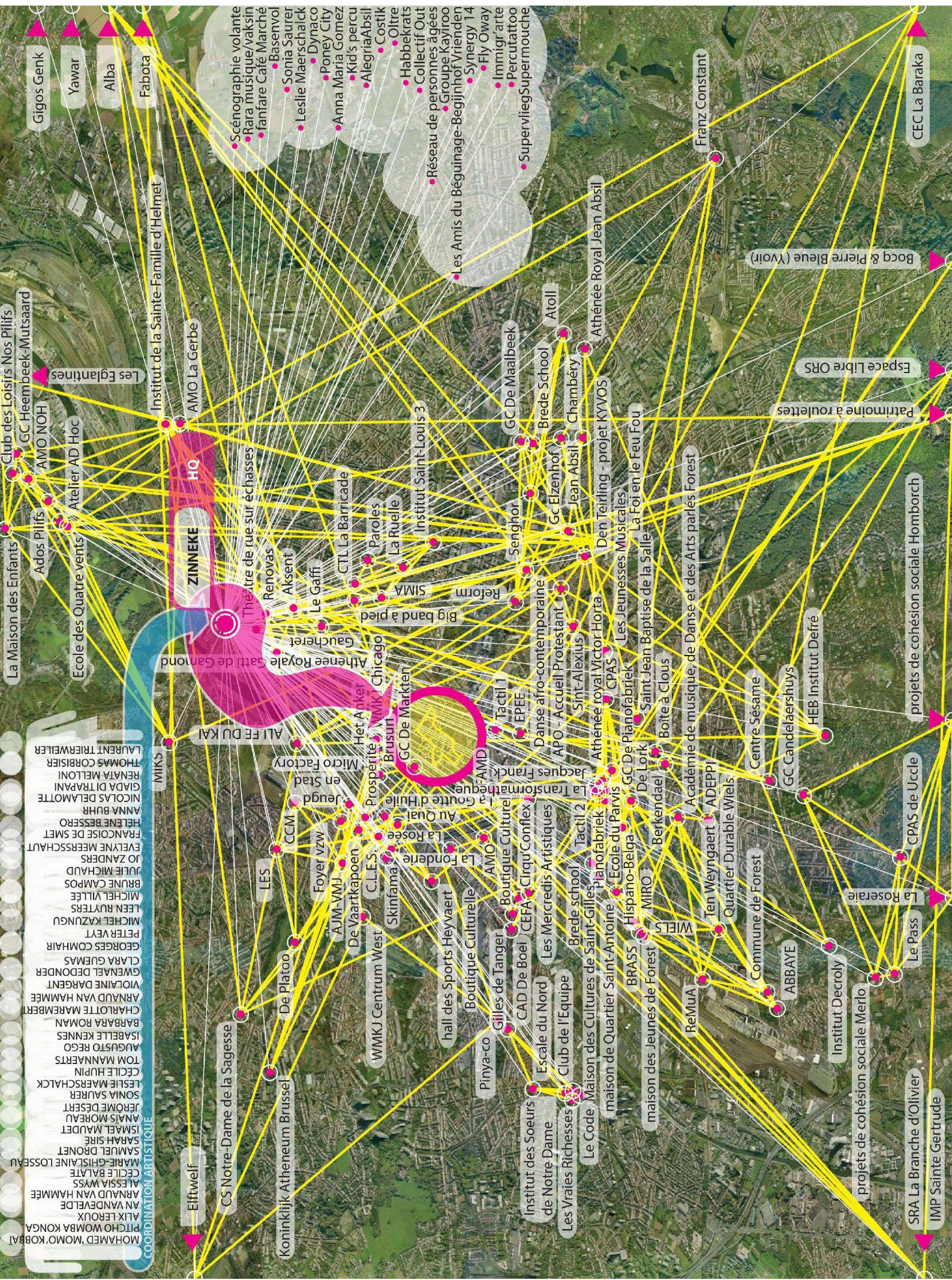
MADRID

BERLIN



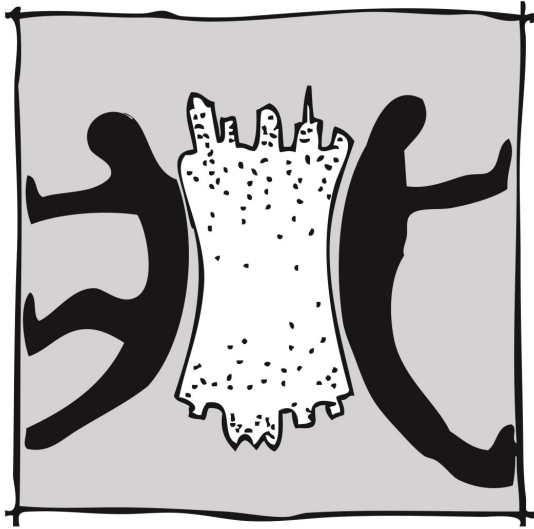
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(ha)





Brussels /

Yes we are political!



The first things that people usually mention when they talk about Brussels are European institutions, fries, Manneken Pis and the borders within the city. Brussels is often characterised as a divided city because it is the capital of a divided country, “squeezed”, as Eric Corijn once remarked, in between Flanders and Wallonia. Since both regions claim their influence in the national capital, its administrative structure can become pretty confusing and sometimes even frustrating. Every school, every community-, cultural- and youth-centre is administered and funded by either the French-speaking Wallonia or the Dutch-speaking Flanders. The segregation of the wealthy residents who reside mostly in the south-eastern part of the city and the much poorer inhabitants who usually make their living up in the north, adds more dividing lines to the already complicated picture. What is more, recent events have deepened prejudice and trenches.

Evidently, these divisions can lead to complications in a city that, on paper, is one city. More importantly, they tempt different groups of citizens to

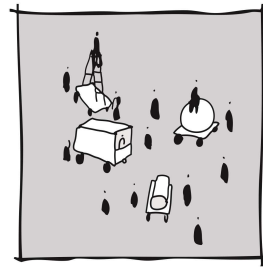


think in terms of “us” versus “them”. Despite or precisely because of the noticeable negative influence of these internal borders, separations and divides on the life in the city, Brussels is at the same time one of the most shining examples of how we can live together *on the basis* of differences.

In this respect, Zinneke parade, a biennial event that not only happens in but is *about* Brussels, is perhaps the most demonstrative, astonishing and impactful case in point. The parade happened for the first time in the year 2000 when the European capital was at the same time the continent's capital of culture. Ever since then the parade has managed to become a fixture of the city's cultural life.



The basic concept is this: Regular citizens from all ways of life as well as institutions from all over the city come together and collaborate. At least three and at most 15 different actors form one working group, a so called *Zinnode*. All *Zinnodes* deal with the same topic, the overall motto of the parade (e.g. “illegal” or “fragile”). But each of them can, will and has to find an independent approach towards this topic and their own way of dealing with it.

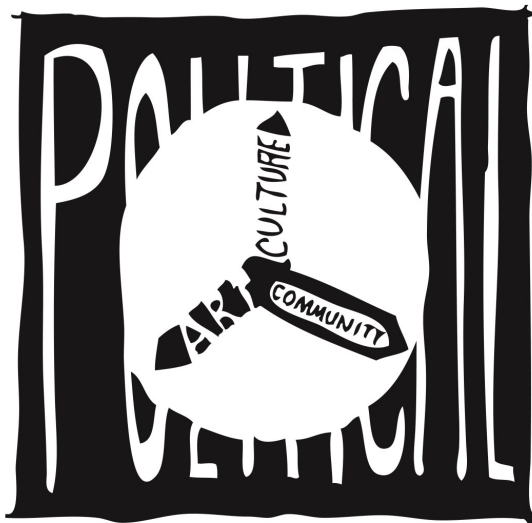


Their work is facilitated and promoted but not determined by one artistic coordinator per group. Then, one happy summer day, the results of these collaborations - which are sometimes mesmerising, sometimes weird, sometimes clear and sometimes hard to understand, but always meaningful - are presented to the public in the city centre in the form of a parade.



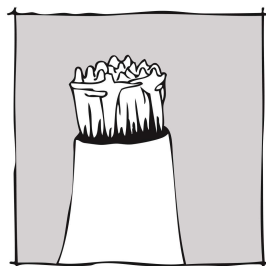
The overall goal of the organisers is to make differences interact. It is not about putting one group next to the other but about putting them in touch

with each other; nor does it mean to resolve all differences and to create true unity, but instead to articulate and to respond to differences.



At first glance, this has little to do with politics. It seems to be much more related to art, culture and community. It is true enough that the parade is a cultural event that primarily makes use of artistic expression and creates a sense of belonging to a community. Nonetheless, the parade itself and all the preparation that precedes it also have a political dimension:

Hannah Arendt describes the meaning of political action more clearly and profoundly than any other author we know of, and she teaches us to see in politics more than the government of public affairs: Politics is not the same as administration, and its realm reaches far beyond the circles of our elected representatives. Essentially, to act politically means to *share* the common world



with others instead of just existing in it one next to the other. And Zinneke parade, a project with absolutely no intention to govern anything, is nonetheless political because it gives us an opportunity to do exactly that, to share the world that is common to all of us.

This sharing-the-world can only come about in the modus of being *with* others as distinguished from being for or against them. The participants of the Zinneke parade



are not doing each other a favour, neither do they work for anybody. On the other side, they are not trying to sabotage each other either; they may sometimes compete with each other, but then their goal is to be better in something than others and not to mute them or even to kick them out of the group. During the parade and its preparation, just like in many other everyday situations, people are simply together. The difference between an event like the Zinneke parade and most other situations is the degree to which both the *sharing* and the *world* come to the fore. Such events are like epiphanies: they are moments in which it becomes exceptionally obvious and clear that we all exist together in the world; and that this human world, as distinguished from the earth with its natural limitations, strictly speaking, only exists insofar as we actively share it.

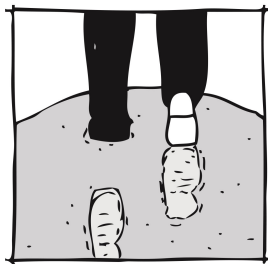
If we did not share the world, there would be no politics. But this does not mean that sharing the world is pre-political in the same way as survival is. Quite to



the contrary, sharing the world is essentially political. Living together in the world can be very troublesome, and the Zinneke parade reminds us that it is also something wonderful. The director of the parade told us how many participants speak about their experience as

something that was incredibly rewarding, even though it was not all just fun and games but hard work, full of conflicts and stress, and on top of everything unpaid! How is that possible?

Obviously human relations and the opportunity to begin something new, to take part in an adventure, are the two key elements. The participants engage in a process with a completely open end and along the way they really get to know each other and they can reveal in front of others not only what they are capable of and how they can contribute, but also and especially *who* they individually are. Their adventure, and this is crucial, is not private and intimate like a love affair, but related to the world and therefore meaningful in a completely different way. The topic they engage with



and, finally, to appear in public, to be admired for their courage and to leave behind a trace in the local history.

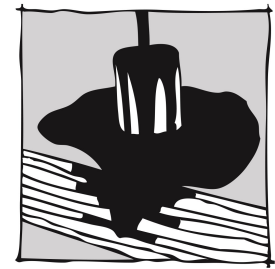
From the perspective of the spectators, on the other side, the event is more than just entertainment. Since it is specifically related to the world in which they are at home and since it is not just anybody who they see but their peers and often their friends, colleagues or even relatives, their relation to the spectacle is, at least as a tendency, closer than to other shows or events. For them the parade is an opportunity to reflect about the world in which they live and, as Arendt would say, to “come to terms with it”.



Though the political impact of the parade in terms of government is hard to trace, nobody would seriously deny that the parade influences

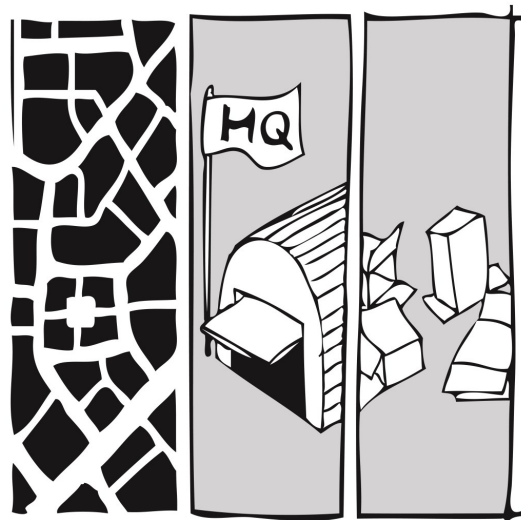
local government.

The director of the parade highlights for example that the general message of “celebrating diversity” - a motto that often sounds phony but



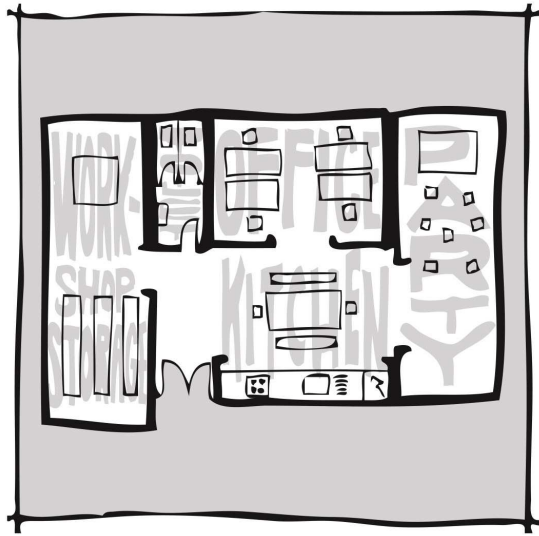
here becomes incredibly credible just because she says it - is “slowly trickling down” through all layers of the city. Moreover, the parade creates many long-lasting relationships between citizens and enhances the collaboration across social, cultural and political borders.

Now what we would like to investigate in the following is the role of space in this whole endeavour called Zinneke parade, but only insofar as it is a *political* endeavour in the sense that we have just carved out.



The parade depends on three types of space. The first is the headquarter which is mostly reserved for the team without which the Zinneke parade as such would not exist; but which is also open to all *Zinnodes* for producing material artefacts to be used during the parade and for discussion and rehearsal, in case there is no other suitable space available. The second are the numerous spaces used by the individual

Zinnodes to prepare their artistic contribution. These spaces are chosen on a use-whatever-you-can-use basis. The third is the *parcours* of the actual parade, which changes every time but always runs through the inner city.



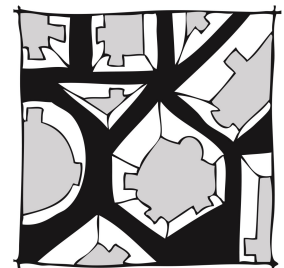
We shall first talk about the architectural elements of these spaces. The headquarter is a big old building which is not really in the best condition but which, for the technical requirements of an organisation like *Zinneke* is almost perfect. It offers space for offices, celebrations, a kitchen, a huge workshop and storage. None of these requirements are directly related to the political dimension of the enterprise; the only thing that may be noted is the kitchen as the central meeting space which, like in every company, is very important for working together. What we would actually like to point out, however, is that without catering for the technical requirements, also the political dimension of the *Zinneke* parade would be gone simply because the parade would never happen. In that mediate but fundamental respect the space matters a lot and thus it is worth mentioning that even though the parade is an important element of Brussels' cultural scene for almost 20 years, the organisation was given a long-term contract and the assurance that they could stay in the building only very recently.

With respect to all the small spaces the single *Zinnodes* are using, the situation is similar. Each *Zinnode* has different technical requirements depending on what exactly the group is planning. Some need big spaces, others need public spaces, some need spaces where they can make noise, others need darkness etc. Once again, the political elements of the group work - establishing personal relations, acting together, writing history, handling conflict and responding to a worldly issue - can come to the fore pretty much everywhere and this often happens without the participants even being aware of it.



Nonetheless - this has been confirmed by our interview partners -, the groups are much more able to focus on and to enjoy these aspects of their work if they have a space that fulfils their technical requirements and which is relatively central, always or at least regularly available, affordable and so on. Once again, this availability must not be taken for granted! Regularly *Zinnodes* have serious difficulties to find suitable spaces or to find spaces at all. In the worst case they have to use the *Zinneke* headquarter; but this space does not offer unlimited possibilities either and it should actually be reserved for the organisers. Hence sometimes working groups simply improvise and use whatever they can use despite significant shortcomings.

Furthermore - and this aspect is directly related to the political dimension of the group work - the space a *Zinnode* uses must not be biased since it has to be used by very different groups. The space should either be neutral; or, if it belongs to one of the participating organisations, it is usually important that also the other involved institutions

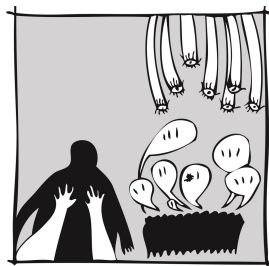


can offer a space and appear as a host, simply in order to maintain the sense of equality among the participants.



Regarding the parade itself, the space is so obviously relevant that we barely need to highlight anything. It is a worldly event and therefore the best possible space

for it to happen is the very centre of the world to which it belongs. Indeed, Zinneke parade can freely choose whatever *parcours* they would like and of course they do so with specific intentions. This is very nice and all but we should not forget that it stands in sharp contrast to what has been pointed out above. Somehow it seems ironic that *Zinneke* gets full support from the city for their final performance, but oftentimes has to overcome difficulties during the two years that are needed to prepare this one-day event.

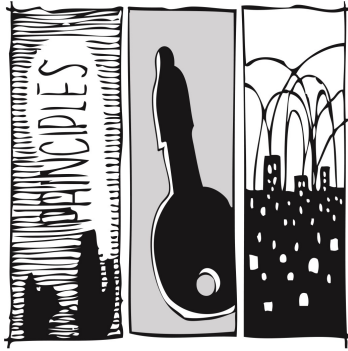


The space of the parade is incredibly visible, loud, open, inviting and worldly. The sharing-of-the-world is promoted and emphasised by the sheer mass of

people that the space can accommodate and by the density that the parade creates. The understanding of what is going on is enhanced by small pamphlets with explanations of all the *Zinnodes* and their concepts, which visitors can get everywhere and which are trilingual. Further, the costumes and artefacts that are used and the performance itself also promote and create a basis for understanding what is going on. The worldliness of the space is particularly intense because it is designed to “move” through the city.



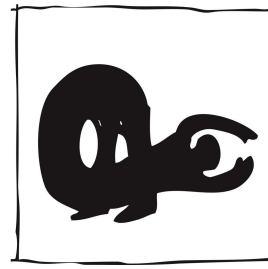
Finally, we should say a few words about the institutional elements of these three spaces. Let us proceed in reverse. The basic fact that the parade is designed to be a parade and thus moving and ephemeral is important because movement creates interaction and the appearance for a brief moment in time makes the event all the more dense, compact, intense and radiating. The worldliness of the parade is guaranteed and the sharing-of-the-world comes to pass in the election of the theme which is a public event that happens almost immediately after the parade itself is over. The citizens choose the topic that the next parade should deal with, but - wisely enough - they can choose only from a pre-selection of five options that are all relevant from the perspective of the core team. Moreover, the parade is intentionally festive and though it deals with serious issues, it does not feel all too serious. This creates a loose environment and makes it easier for people to interact. Another small element is the request of the organisers to the spectators to leave their phones at home or in their pockets; not to take photos or to make videos during the parade so that they are free to share the moment with everybody around, and to be part of the here and now.



Secondly, the spaces where the *Zinnodes* work are also interspersed with and surrounded by institutional elements. Most importantly, their work is never determined by rules but only guided by principles. This is essential in order to assure that the process as such remains open (and it is usually missing in processes that are related to the actual government of public affairs, at least insofar as the administration is dealing with the citizens). The ambition to create a “shared space” and the general idea that everybody is free to “step in and out at all times”, for example, are two of the fundamental principles. Now the director of the parade shared the following observation with us: It actually works. The point of the matter is not that rules are unnecessary or bad, but simply that principles seem to be good. Of course there are conflicts but they are - because it is another principle “not to avoid conflict” - oftentimes embraced. (This does not mean that the people are super-happy every time they have a serious problem with another participant. Rather, that in the back of their heads they are sure that it is better to talk about this problem than to be silent or to become violent.) Further, the artistic coordinators are key figures in the process. They are not rulers and not even supposed to be leaders. Still, their job is to stimulate and enhance the group work whenever necessary, and to guarantee that all participants have the chance to contribute. The organisers also play a role in the working process. It is remarkable that they understand themselves, first of all, as *listeners*. On the other side, the organisation functions like a bridge that connects different institutions from all over the city, and obviously not randomly. (Strictly speaking, these final two

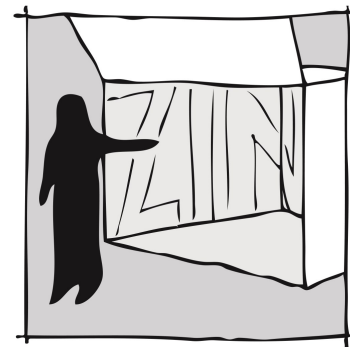
elements are not spatial elements of design, because they do not directly apply to an actual space; but they come very close because they highly influence what the character of a space will turn out to be.)

Our general impression of *Zinneke's* institutional elements is that they are consciously designed



and assembled to be open for interpretation and thus somehow softer than those of many other workshops and political spaces.

Further, many of them are articulated through practices that are repeated every two years. Even in these practices the openness to reinterpretation is evident. It almost creates the expectation towards every new cohort to challenge how things have been done the last time and to keep looking for more adequate ways to illuminate the guiding principle under the given circumstances.



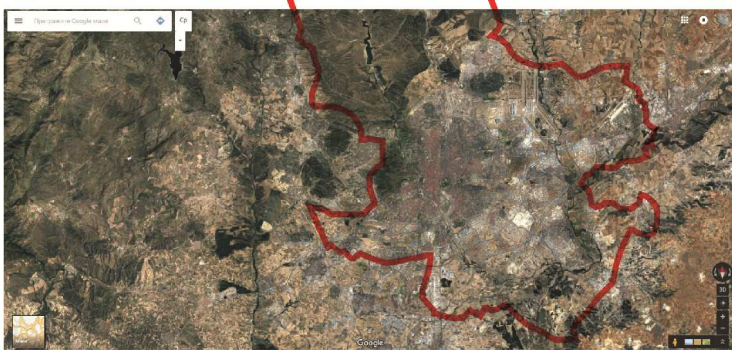
After all, the *Zinneke* parade not only illustrates the acute scarcity of spaces that are dedicated exclusively or at least partly to worldly affairs; but it also invites us to question the way how government works. Perhaps we should ask ourselves: *What can we learn from Zinneke parade about bringing people together who often seem to be coming from entirely different worlds?*

* * *



MADRID

founded in 9th century

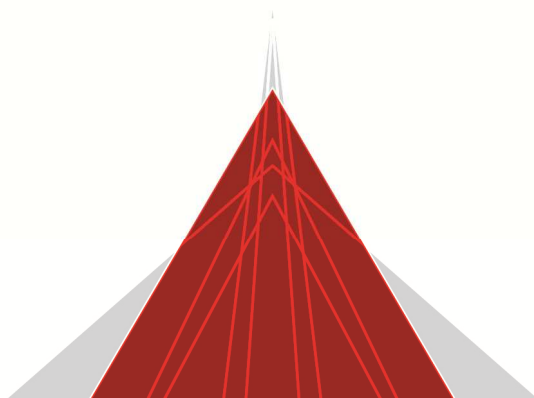


DENSITY

BRUSSELS
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VIENNA
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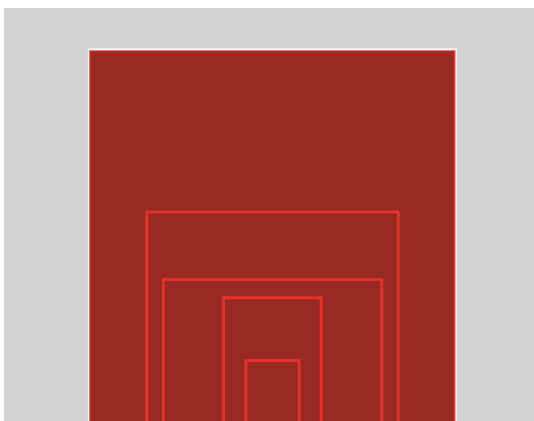


5 146
(per km²)

POPULATION

BERLIN
MADRID

VIENNA
BELGRADE
BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN



3 140 000
(7 % of all Spain)

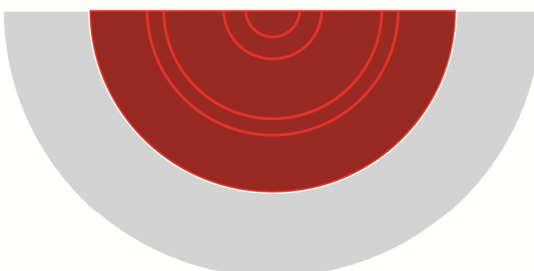
SIZE

COPENHAGEN
BRUSSELS

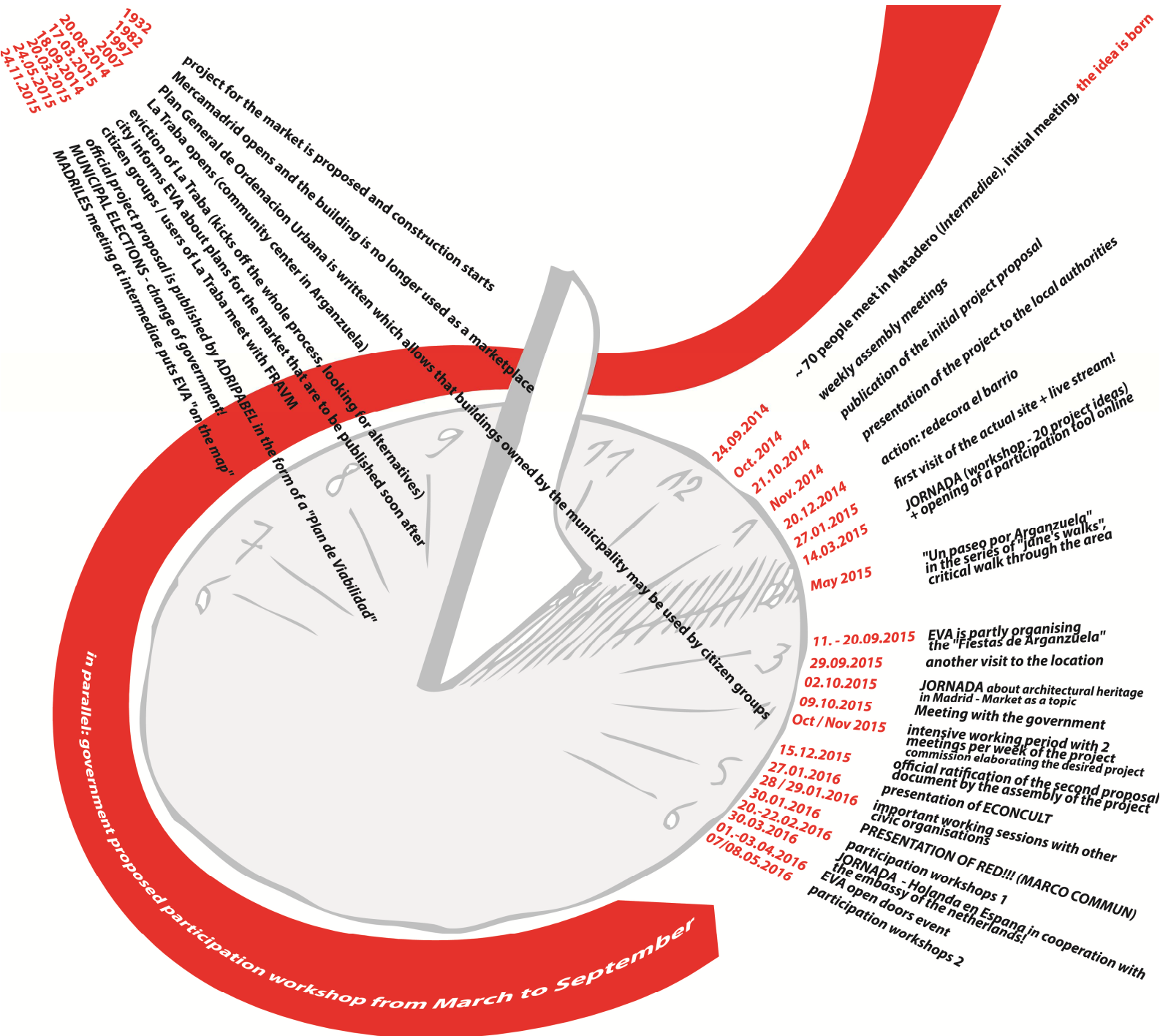
BELGRADE
VIENNA

MADRID

BERLIN



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(ha)





GRUPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN TRANSDISCIPLINAR SOBRE TRANSICIONES SOCIOECOLÓGICAS (GIN TRANS2) / Universidad Autónoma, Madrid, Spain

ESTUDIO NÓMADA / Ames
Santiago de Compostela

PATIO MARAVILLAS

OFICINA MÚLTIPLE

ARQUITECTOS SIN FRONTERAS (ASF)

AMPA COLEGIO SAN EUGENIO Y SAN ISIDRO

ARGANSUMMO

CAMPO DE LA CEBADA

ASOCIACIÓN DE VECINOS PASILLO VERDE - IMPERIAL

AMPA IES JUAN DE LA CIERVA

ASAMBLEA POPULAR DE ARGANZUELA - 15M

ZULOARK

ACCIÓN EDUCATIVA

ASOCIACIÓN A PIE

ASOCIACIÓN MADROLL

COLECTIVO UNO + ADOPTA

MADRID STREET ART PROJECT

PROYECTO PICO DEL PANUELO

RED DE MUJERES DE KARABACHEL

ASOCIACIÓN VECINAL NUEVO LEGAZPI

COLECTIVO JUANA DOÑA ARGANZUELA

COLECTIVO JOVENES DE ARGANZUELA

COLECTIVO DE JOVENES DE ARGANZUELA "ARGANZUELA MAQUIS"

JORGE RIECHMANN FERNÁNDEZ (Profesor de Filosofía Moral - UAM)

EDUARDO MANGADA (ARQUITECTO)

ASAMBLEA MAREA VERDE MADRID

VIVERO DE INICIATIVAS CIUDADANAS

XXXO ARQUITECTURA Y CREACIÓN AUDIOVISUAL

OFICINA DE DESOBEDECENCIA ECONÓMICA DE LEGAZPI

RED DE SOLIDARIDAD POPULAR CENTRO-ARGANZUELA

ESPACIO VECINAL MONTAMARTA

FEDERACIÓN REGIONAL DE ASOCIACIONES DE VECINOS (FRAVM)

CENTRO SOCIAL SECO

ASOCIACIÓN VECINAL HUERTO LA REVOLTOSA

COLECTIVO LA TRABA

ASOCIACIÓN DE VECINOS EL PLANETARIO

AMPA CEIP MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO

ASAMBLEA CEIP MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO

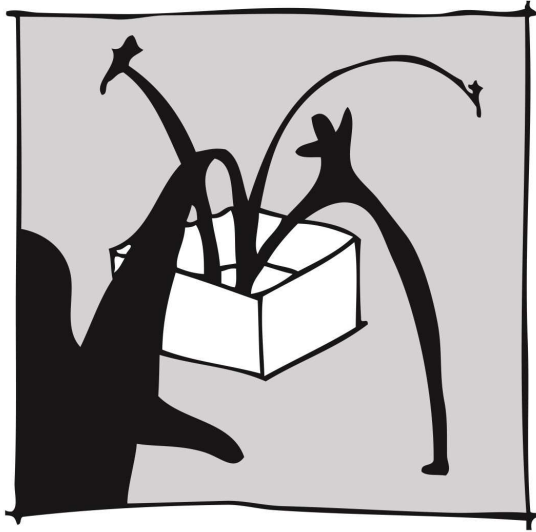
ASSEMBLY INTERMEDIAR

TODO POR LA PRAXIS

ASOCIACIÓN DE VECINOS NUDO SUR

Madrid/

A market for the world



The current political situation in Madrid is exceptional and without precedent. Since the government changed after the last municipal elections in May 2015 the various councils and administrative bodies of the Spanish capital are suddenly interspersed with former urban activists and researchers, who, in their previous lives, were the leaders of grassroots initiatives and all kinds of Madrid-based collectives, fighting for a *Right to the City* and similar causes. Even the mayor is so attached to the *ciudadanía* that, when running for office, she gave her first speech of the whole electoral campaign in the famous Campo de la Cebada, one of Madrid's iconic examples of strong ties between neighbours and the struggle over urban space.

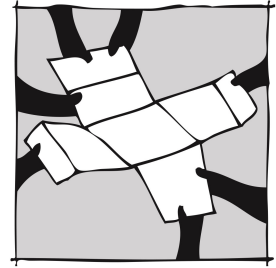
Under these circumstances, do we have reason to believe in political change? Are we perhaps witnessing the initial stage of a “general rearrangement of the way in which we think about the relationship between citizens and politics” (Moro, 2015: 499)



that is so often announced in theory but has not yet knocked on the doors of reality? Where should change happen if not in Madrid, the city

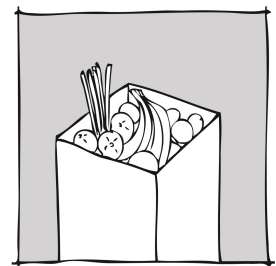
that probably counts more civic initiatives than any other European metropolis? When should change happen if not under this promising new municipal government?

On the other hand, changing the political course of a municipality like Madrid is not an easy job, partly because of and partly despite the fact that the city hall, the district councils and other public institutions are full of



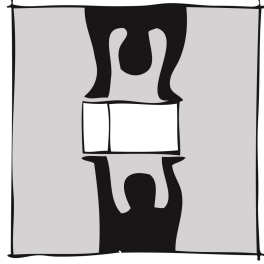
idealists who had the courage to jump into the cold waters of government without any previous knowledge about how to swim. What is more, those who moved up into the ranks of government belonged to the very spearhead of the *ciudadanía*, and suddenly their peers have to continue without them. On top of everything, Madrid's budget is very tight, one term in office is everything but an eternity, and the needs and wants of civic initiatives are not the only thing on the mayor's mind.

As a result, the situation in Madrid is pretty tense. We can trace it in more detail by looking at the spaces of the city. Among the many interesting projects that reflect the relation between ordinary citizens and the local government, one particular case stands out: Right now, the most wanted space in the whole city is the Mercado de Frutas y Verduras de Legazpi. The old market hall from the 1930s, which has not seen a market since the 1980s and which has been largely unused for almost a decade, is suddenly treasured and sought-after not only by the citizens but also by the municipality.

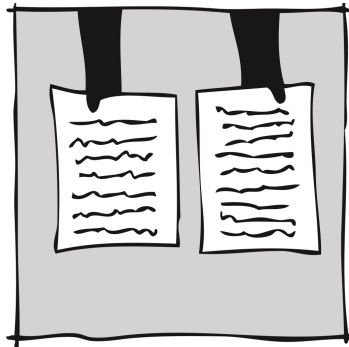


What we have in front of us is a conflict between the active citizens of Madrid in general and the neighbours of Arganzuela, the district where the building is located, in particular; and the government they elected because it

promised to be attentive to their needs and wants, to support their initiative and to provide them with the appropriate infrastructure. Both sides have elaborated

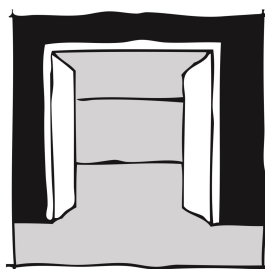


proposals declaring that and how they would like to use the space for public purposes. Both sides acknowledge in principle the needs of their respective opposition and are willing to make compromise. Both sides assure that *they* offer the greater public benefit and therefore claim primacy for their own plan. What is to be done? Who is more entitled to use this space - the government or the *ciudadanía*?



We shall now take a look at the two proposals handed in by the citizens and their government, and then try to show that and why the citizens clearly have the better arguments on their side.

The basic idea of all those neighbours, citizens and civic initiatives who gather under the collective name *EVA* (Espacio Vecinal de Arganzuela) is to open a building to the public which, despite being part of Madrid's patrimonial heritage, has been completely underused for many years. Due to a lack of public spaces for civic use in the neighbourhood where the huge triangular market hall with its vast central courtyard is located, and due to the rapid population growth



of the last years, this proposal intuitively makes quite a lot of sense.



The citizens were the first to publicly declare their interest in the space in September 2014, only shortly after one of the few cultural centres in their neighbourhood, an occupied building called La Traba was evicted by the old (!) government after seven years. This detail further adds a note of justice to *EVA*'s claims. Being in need for an alternative space and pretty angry at the authorities for taking away their only refuge, the citizenry decided to aim high and developed a proposal for the enormous Mercado de Frutas y Verduras without further ado. Their initial proposal from 2014 is around 30 pages long, and the updated edition from 2015 already covers 60 pages (admittedly with quite a lot of images). The entire proposal is comprehensible, novel and as detailed as possible, keeping in mind that the citizens barely had the chance to see the Mercado from the inside. The text explains *EVA*'s intentions, arguments, working methods, their plans for the future programming of the market and the institutional structures of their collective.

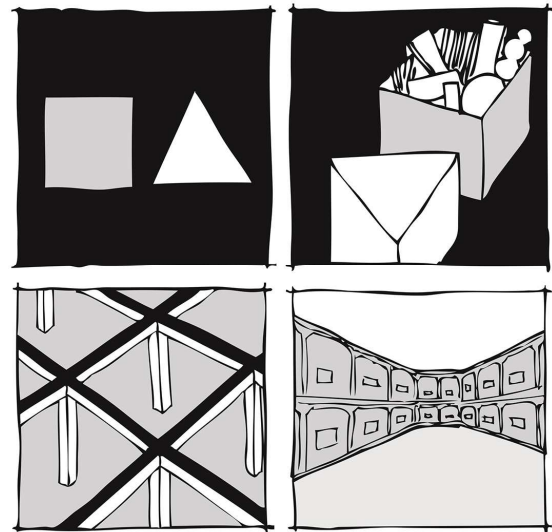
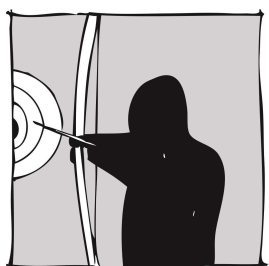
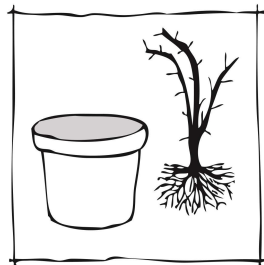
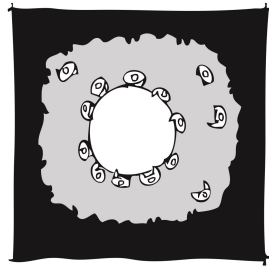
In order to elaborate the proposal, *EVA* established a weekly assembly in late 2014 and instituted a committee whose members would be accepted by everybody as the leaders of the project, but who would always remain accountable to Tuesday's general assembly. In

total, the movement is supported by more than 40 initiatives coming not only from the neighbourhood but from all over Madrid and even from all parts of Spain. The fact that these people are the most active citizens in the country adds credibility to their arguments and urgency to their observations.

EVA highlights that in the dense neighbourhood of Arganzuela and in Madrid in general the citizens are lacking spaces where they can go to *be* citizens, that is, to become engaged with public affairs and get in touch with their community and with the world in which they all live together. They argue that if we - the citizens and the elected representatives - value *human* relations between neighbours, the joy and delight that arises from being and acting together as well as people's engagement in and for the common world, then we need to provide spaces for these things. How else should they flourish and unfold their full potential? To *EVA*, it seems as if the Mercado de Frutas y Verduras is just about the perfect space for the neighbours of Arganzuela in particular and all Madrileños in general.

They could also have taken the seemingly easier option and send an application for several smaller spaces to Matadero, a big “centre of contemporary creation”, as it reads on their website, that is anyways sponsored by the municipality and still not fully used. But instead they decided to claim the market hall on the other side of the street, even though

it is in worse condition and promised, from the very beginning, a lot of discussions, problems and uncertainty about the future. Why?



Several attributes of the building seem to be decisive. While location-wise the Mercado and Matadero are equally central, the Mercado is much fresher; not in the sense of age, smell or coolness, but in the sense of not being loaded with rules, routines, habits, frequent users, clichés, associations and the like. Consequently, the space is much less biased and more open to new principles, regulations and guidelines to be established almost from scratch. Secondly, the so called skeleton structure of the building is very flexible and offers ample opportunities for small, medium-sized and big groups of people alike. The space is small enough to move with ease from one side to the other and big enough to accommodate many different groups and activities. Moreover, the building is introvert and thus creates the typical atmosphere of a microcosm, but without losing its connection and openness to the outside world. Further, the *plaza* in the centre is an inviting meeting ground and a space capable to host all kinds of events and festivities.

Additionally, the history of the building inspires and supports the plans developed by *EVA*. The old market for fruits and vegetables is now imagined to turn into a market place for ideas, a space where citizens can show what they have to offer and where they find many different goods,

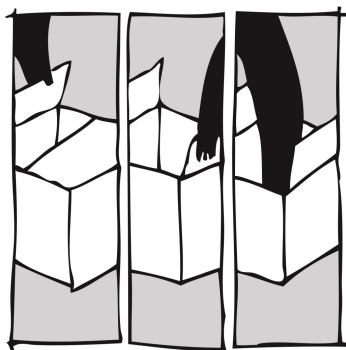
services and curiosities. Just like any good market, it should be open to everybody and used frequently and regularly. The activities that are “on offer” should correspond to “the demand” - the needs, the wants and wishes of the citizens - and sometimes “customers” will want to be surprised by their “dealers” with novelties and special offers. The space should become a node in the city, offer something for everybody and become so lively that people go there just to be among others, to experience the commonness of the world and to exchange the latest news with their neighbours and fellow citizens.



Programme-wise, the new Mercado is imagined to be extremely diverse, ranging from a skate park and a sound studio to theatre groups, poetry workshops and spaces where young and old meet. Also assemblies and debates as well as incubator spaces for social entrepreneurship, urban gardening, spaces for civic associations, co-working and much more are planned. This incredible diversity is not an empty



announcement but already backed up by more than 70 concrete proposals from the neighbours of Arganzuela and the citizens of Madrid. There is, in other words, real demand and a great pile of ideas looking for space where they can flourish.



EVA suggests to open the market to the public in three phases, starting with a small area close to the entrance from the city and then expanding deeper into the space step by step. The exact use of the market should be determined through a participatory process which basically was initiated already in the fall of 2014 and which has been going on without interruptions ever since. It is kept alive by the weekly assembly and a myriad of events that are being organised in the context of the enterprise. The proposal highlights that the citizens do not plan to take over services for which the public authorities are responsible. Thus the government should be included into the programming and design of the space from the very beginning and run, at least on the longer term, various facilities such as a municipal library inside the Mercado. All that the citizens demand is to be *en par* with their representatives in all questions regarding the design and future use of this building.

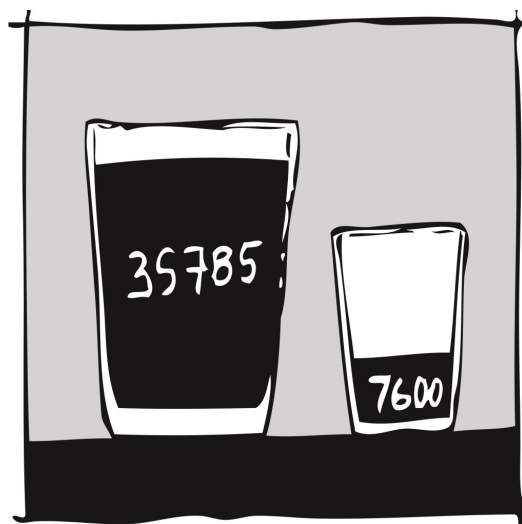
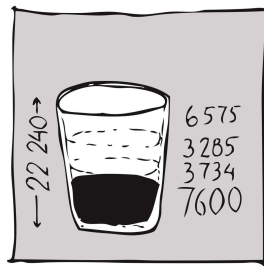
Further, it deserves to be highlighted that the support from many different collectives and civil society actors is not just a gesture of loyalty but also the expression of all their hopes that this particular case could open the doors into a new reality, that it could become a precedent, a chance for citizens to demonstrate that growing tomatoes on deserted inner-city plots is not everything they are capable of. They even



developed a common proposal, the so called *Marco Común*, in which they present their ideas about how the existing state- and municipal authorities could engage in fruitful collaboration with the *ciudadanía*. Their equally simple and realistic suggestion is to test different models in different cases and under varying circumstances.

Now let us take a look at the other side of the story. The municipality published plans to turn the market into “a new centrality at the service of the citizens”. Behind this headline stands the

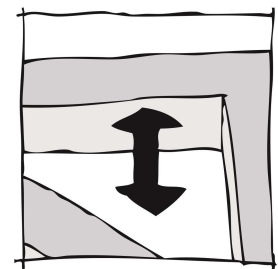
plan to create office space for ca. 2.000 municipal administrators in the market building. The rest of the space, so their claim, is dedicated to “public use”. While the proposal asserts that the citizens will be the “protagonists” in the newly developed Mercado, the numbers and the architectural drawings speak a different language: Out of 22.240m² which are *not* dedicated to office space for the administration, the citizens will be able to use only 1/3 (7.600m²) for the creation of “neighbourhood spaces” such as a library, aulas, workshops and whatever else fits. The other two thirds are divided into a “*plaza*” (6575m²) which is entirely different from the existing patio and which should rather be described as a ramp than as a square; a “forest” (3285m²) which itself is divided into small pieces instead of being one space; a “street” (3734m²) that runs through the entire triangular structure and which functions as a service-space for all the things it connects but which is not a space for activities on its own; and a “cinema market” (940m²) that is not explained any further in the proposal.



In any case, it may be doubted that the *ciudadanía* will really play the main role in the Mercado if they are only granted 7.600m² to accommodate all their ideas and concepts. It seems much more

likely that the municipal administration with 2.000 employees will dominate the entire complex, simply because they are all colleagues, a more or less steady team that is doing a very important job for the city and all Madrileños. These people will go to work from Monday to Friday and use the space from the early morning until the late afternoon, or, if they have a *siesta*, even until the evening hours. (Nonetheless, they too will have to work side by side and back to back because on the total of 35.785m² reserved for their offices and all related facilities.)

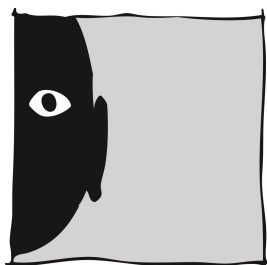
The municipality plans to open the building to the public at once, but of course only after renovating and modifying it until it is almost no longer recognisable as a market but has basically become an office block. The development is estimated to cost between 50 and 70 million Euros - an investment that will amortise within five to six years as leasing costs are omitted elsewhere - and it will add many new square meters to the available surface. But this addition has a price: The building will be changed significantly. The most drastic change is the elevation of the patio and its transfiguration into a ramp which, coming from the city, rises softly into the inside of the complex.



These plans have been discussed with interested citizens during the summer months. There would be many things to say about this participatory process, but we shall highlight merely one significant detail: In the initial meeting the government *only* presented their plans as a basis for discussion. Nobody even mentioned *EVA*, despite the fact that *EVA* was the first to declare interest in the Mercado; and even though the administration is of course fully aware of their existence, interests,

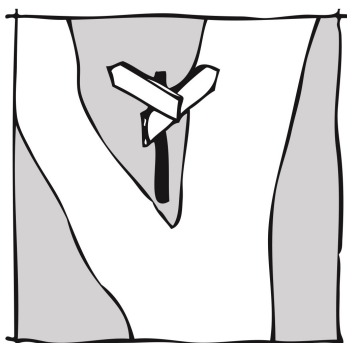


arguments and activities. The members of *EVA* were allowed to participate, but only as individual citizens and not as the collective, which they have become already in 2014. This move can be interpreted in different ways and we do not want to speculate too much; but one thing is clear: In this moment, the government missed a great opportunity to show that those in power actually take the citizens seriously; not only as a mass on the street or a whole, which exists nowhere but on paper, or as atomised individuals with all sorts of private interests that can be counted like noses, but as *collectives* of people who act together and who become powerful only because of their acting together. Instead, the peoples' representatives and those who were sent to organise the process, completely ignored a reality that could not be any more obvious. This surely must have felt like a slap in the face, especially for those who are part of the committee of *EVA* because they were selected by their peers as leaders and who would probably have been selected as delegates too.



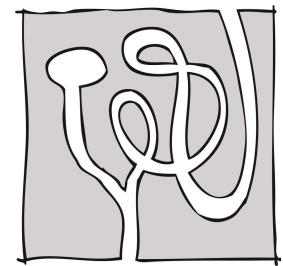
(This procedure cannot be justified as a protection of those other citizens who are not involved with *EVA* but nonetheless interested in the future of the market.

On the contrary, the opportunity to be faced with both opposing proposals would have made it much easier for everybody to make up their minds about what could be better about each of them and how they could perhaps be combined.)

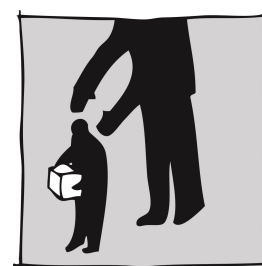


After all, which plan should enjoy primacy? The proposal from the citizens, to begin with, requires much less initial investment; and their plans, just like their working method is much more open to modifications, unexpected events and changing demands than the proposal from the local authorities.

Further, while the administration would like to move from one space into another, the citizens are trying to move into a space, coming out of nowhere. What is more, technically the employees of the municipal administration could work everywhere in Madrid. Even though it may be difficult to find another suitable space for them, the possibilities are much more ample - especially considering



that apparently 70 million Euros are ready to be invested - than for the neighbours from Arganzuela, who are totally dependent on a space inside *their* neighbourhood. The importance of this factor is increased by the demographic development: the number of inhabitants of the area doubled over the last ten years! And we are tempted to ask the government: How come that the 2.000

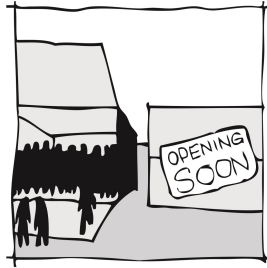


last 30 years?

administrators are *suddenly* looking for a new workplace, now that the citizens would like to use the Mercado? Why did nobody think about this move during the

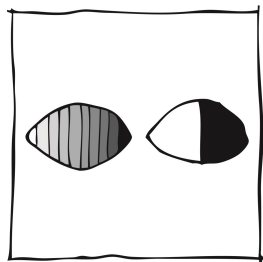
Additionally, the citizens' proposal is much more suitable with respect to the existing building structure, its history, meaning and original purpose. The building was designed to be a market place; a space filled with many people going in and out, a space of human interaction, of negotiation, presentation and exchange, a noisy, smelly, dirty and above all lively space full of movement and stories, of

differences, jokes and arguments. Hence the citizens could basically move in and start their activities tomorrow while the administration will need years to change the space until it is finally good enough for their purposes.



Even if the ultimate goal is to find a good compromise between the two proposals, it should be based rather on the contribution coming from *EVA* than on the one from the government, because apparently *EVA's* working method and suggestions pay more attention to the political equality of different actors and the collaboration between the citizens and their government.

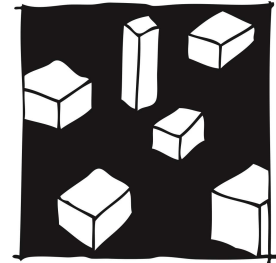
Finally, let us take a look at the programming of the Mercado: The citizens would like to use it as a space where neighbours and citizens encounter each other, where they can follow and initiate all sorts of playful and serious, meaningful and useful, regular and extraordinary, novel and traditional activities. The authorities, on the contrary, suggest one dominant type of use for the market: they want to accommodate 2.000 administrators and agree to offer the citizens whatever is left of the building. It is out of question that



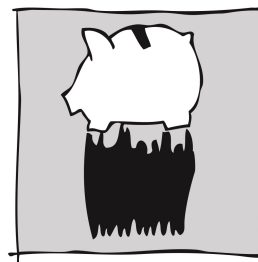
the municipal administration is an essential, requisite, unavoidable part of Madrid, and much

more *necessary* for the survival and continuity of the common world than any particular civic initiative will ever be.

But this just means that the provision of space for the administration is more urgent than for civic purposes. If there were no spatial alternatives, in other words, the sheer necessity to administer the city would trump pretty much any other plan. But there is at least one alternative option, namely the space that the administration is using at the moment.



Hence what we have to ask ourselves - if we put all the other factors, as well as the history of the conflict aside for a moment - is whether the 15 million Euros which the municipality claims to save annually are a good enough reason to cross the plans of the citizens?

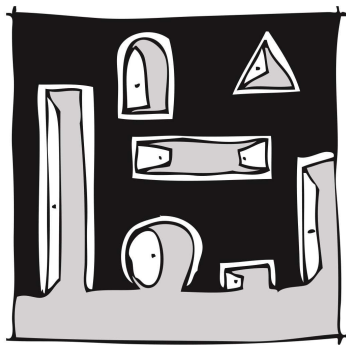


This question cannot be answered economically by calculating if the citizens' proposal is likely to generate revenue or to save costs elsewhere. The reasons are that, on the one side, the future cannot be calculated; and, on the other side, *EVA* neither a company nor another organisation that would be primarily efficient, and it should not be treated as such. Rather, we should look at the true "benefit" the initiative promises, and that is an incredibly worldly space.

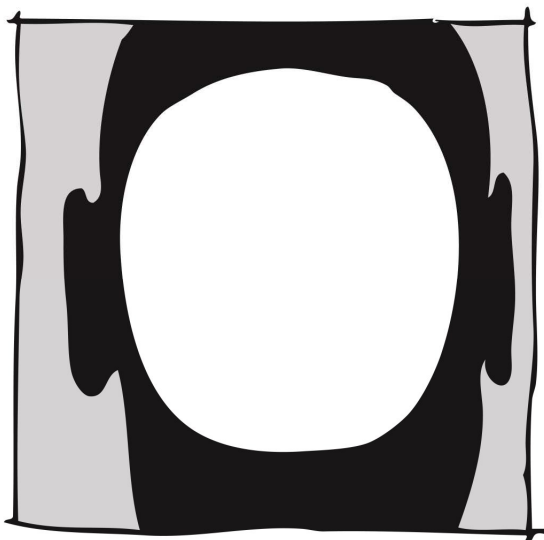


EVA strives to turn the market into a space that invites, embraces and protects diversity. It will be a space that makes differences interact, that gives us the opportunity to experience the richness of the common world and to get to know those who we usually do not get in touch

with because we are too far away, not interested or perhaps even scared. It will be a space where we can learn to put ourselves in the position of others, a space that creates human relations, as distinguished, for instance, from professional relations between colleagues or impersonal relations between administrators and citizens. It will not only be a space that helps us to take care of the necessities of life, but also a space where we get involved with the common world once all the necessities of life have been taken care of.



EVA would like to design a space that enriches Madrid, the common world of all Madrileños, tremendously. And there is still hope that at least they are given a chance to try their best inside the protecting walls of a space that seems to be just perfect for what they have in mind.



* * *



COPENHAGEN

COPENHAGEN

founded in 13th century

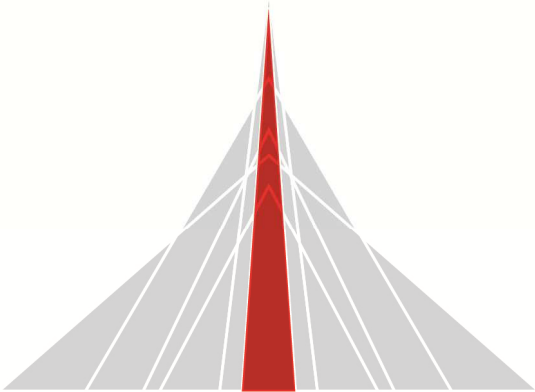


DENSITY

BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN

MADRID

VIENNA
BERLIN
BELGRADE



6 345
(per km²)

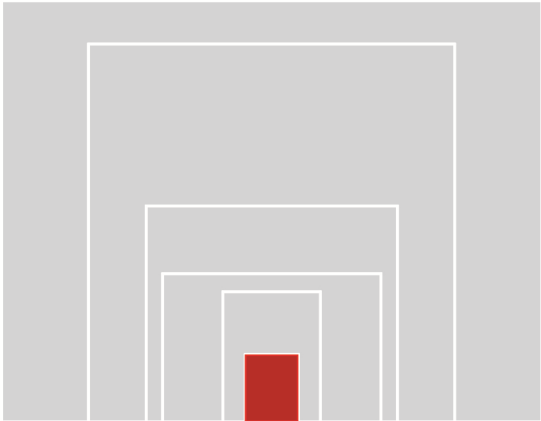
POPULATION

BERLIN
MADRID

VIENNA

BELGRADE
BRUSSELS

COPENHAGEN



560 000
(10 % of all Denmark)

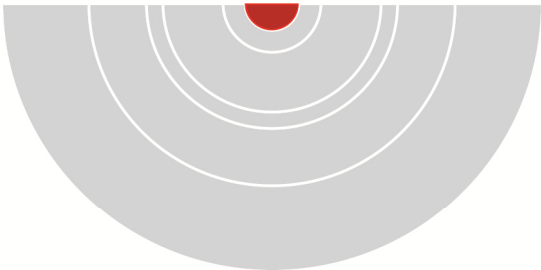
SIZE

COPENHAGEN
BRUSSELS

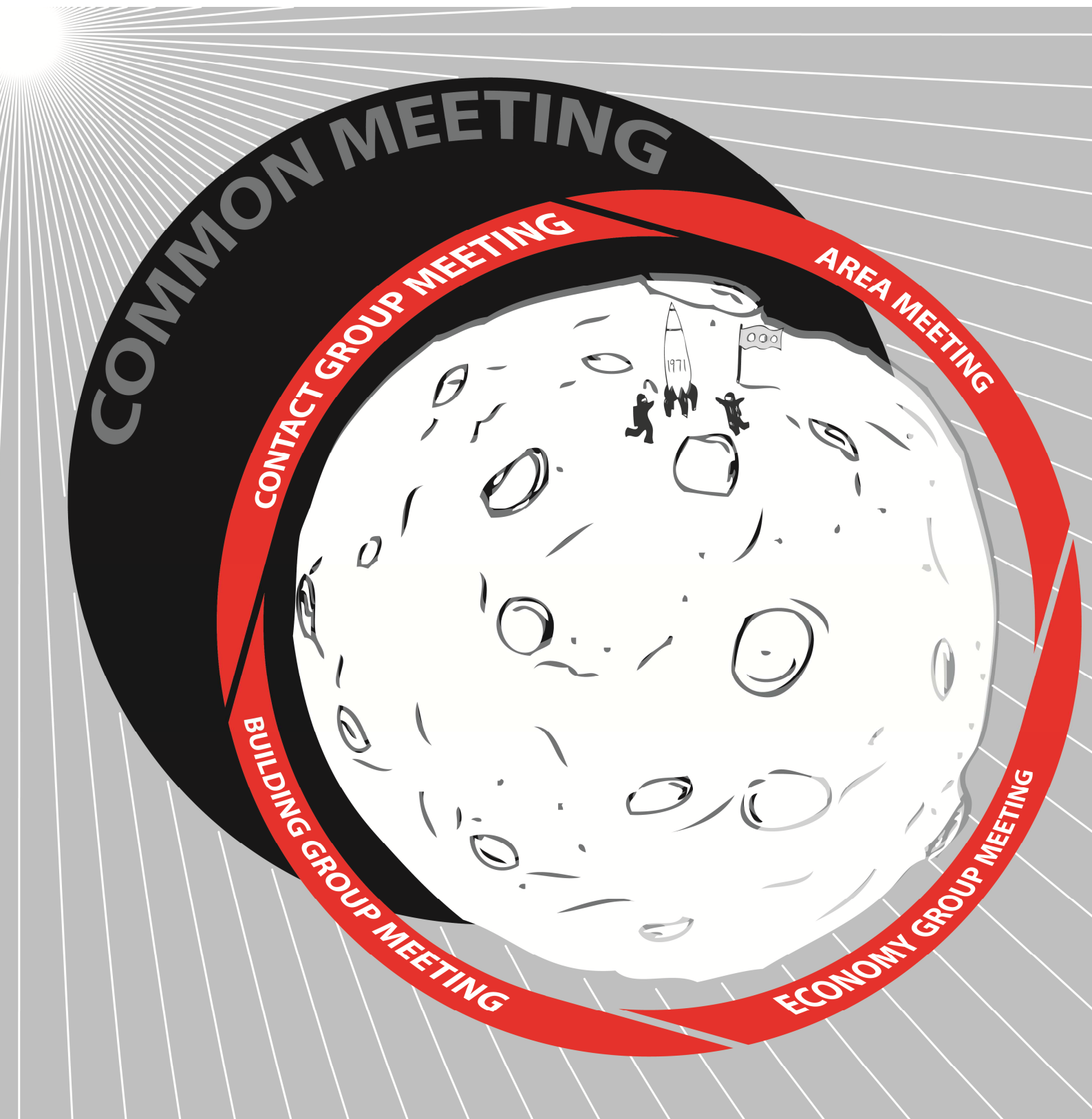
BELGRADE
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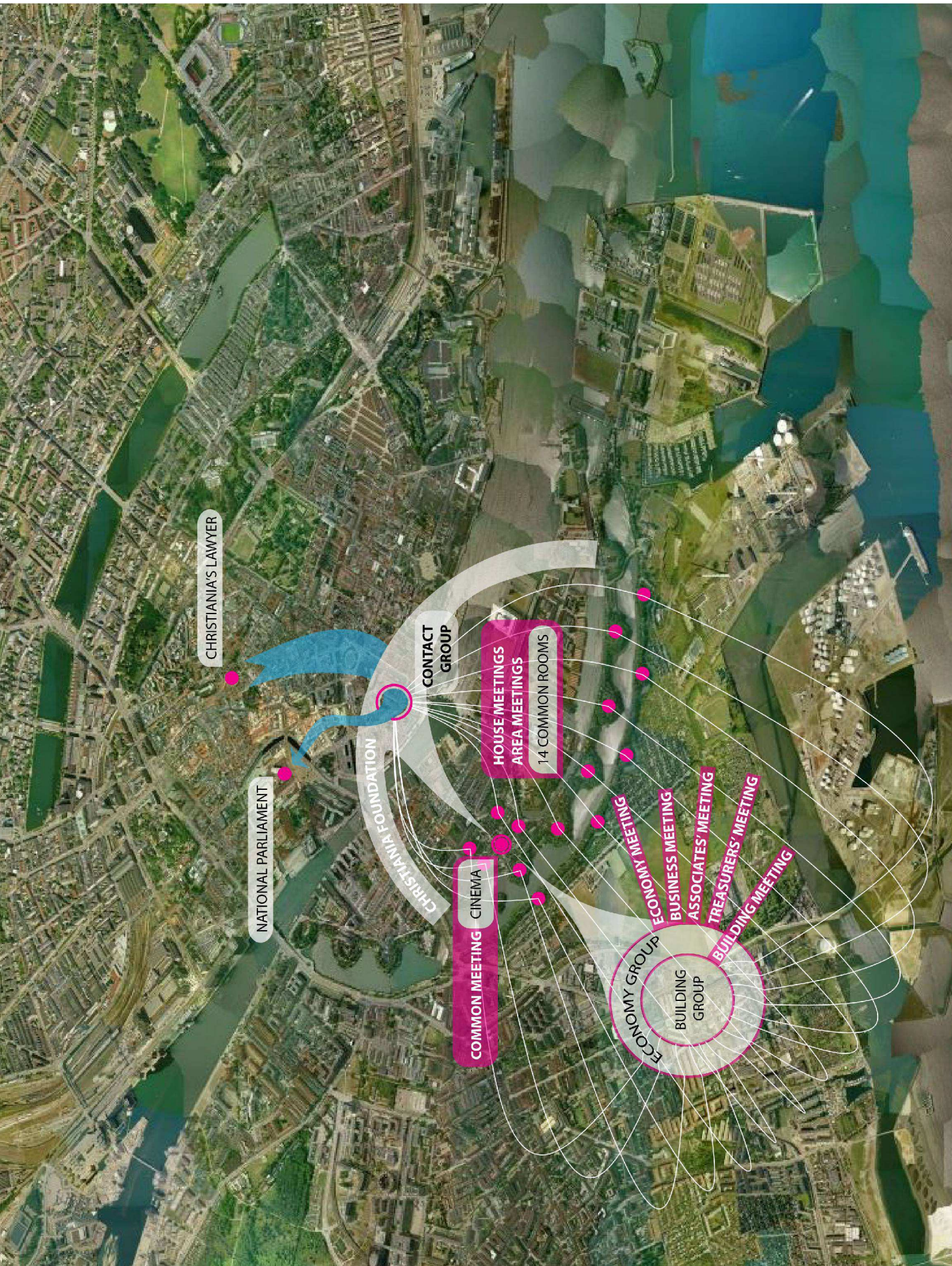
MADRID

BERLIN



8 825
(ha)





CHRISTIANA'S LAWYER

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

CHRISTIANA FOUNDATION

CONTACT GROUP

HOUSE MEETINGS
AREA MEETINGS
14 COMMON ROOMS

COMMON MEETING
CINEMA

ECONOMY GROUP
BUILDING GROUP

ECONOMY MEETING

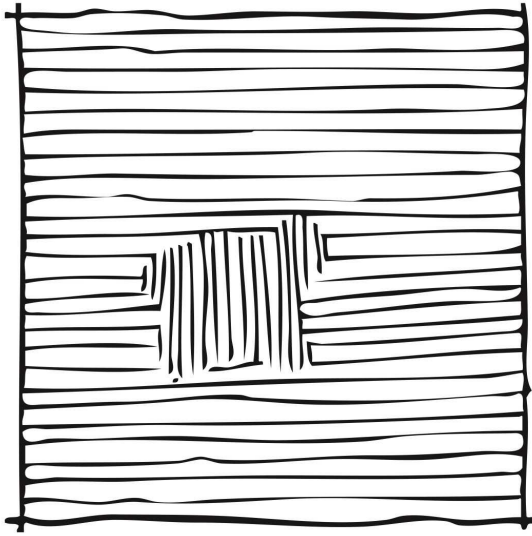
BUSINESS MEETING

ASSOCIATES' MEETING

TREASURERS' MEETING

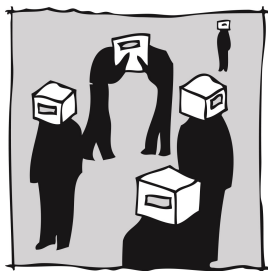
BUILDING MEETING

Copenhagen / Looking for a new beginning



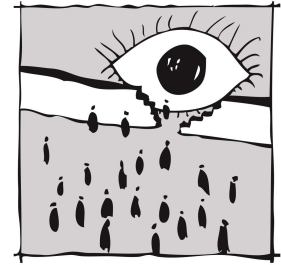
The Freetown Christiania is an exceptional place, an island of difference in an ocean of sameness. Almost everybody who visits Copenhagen either comes primarily in order to see Christiania or at least takes a curious stroll through this "hippie community" that was founded in 1971 on around 35 ha of land right in the centre of the Danish Capital and that has accumulated more than 40 years of history. Everybody who lives in Copenhagen has an opinion about the Freetown and the long-time *Christianites* receive invitations from all over the world just to talk about the place where they live.

Christiania was declared a free town in 1971 after various groups of people that we usually put into boxes with labels such as "homeless" and "junkies", "hippies" and "squatters", "libertines" and "idealists" had entered an area that was formerly used by the military but then handed over to the municipality because it was no longer necessary to protect the city against attacks of foreign armies. As the government did not seem to be doing anything with the land those who

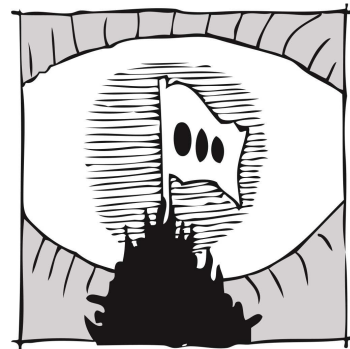


had nowhere else to go in the "normal" world forced their way into this no man's land and even started to live there under miserable conditions.

Within weeks, several hundred people had literally moved into the area without asking anybody for permission and many hundreds more visited the site every

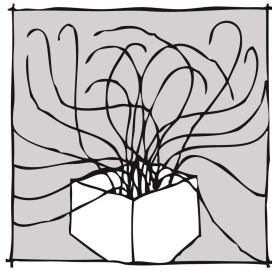


day to celebrate and to get high, but also to discuss about politics, capitalism, the society in which they had come to live and the freedom they aspired to. The municipality was not exactly pleased, but incapable to do anything about the situation, if only because of the sheer size of the area and the large number of people that would have to be evicted violently. In order to avoid bloodshed, the government waited to see how things would develop, probably hoping that the situation would calm down and that the people would lose their appetite for rebellion.

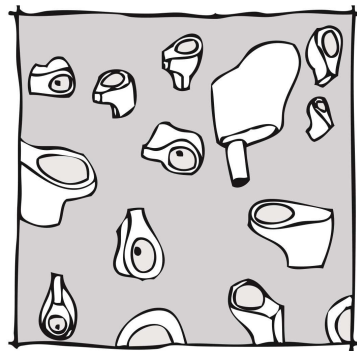


The result was of course quite the opposite. Public interest in the case grew and grew, the parties only got better and even intellectuals, urban planners and parts of the media supported the squatters for different reasons. Then, suddenly, from one day to the next, the area was declared the Freetown Christiania.

This moment of *constitution* was decisive. It turned a loose group of people into the members of a political community and it gave the world a name to which they had just given birth. The power that was inherent in this act of



foundation was so great that it must have surprised not only the government on the outside but also the *Christianites* themselves. Because it manifested their desires and beliefs, their principles and the spirit of the moment, it contributed more than anything else to making all these things endure over time.



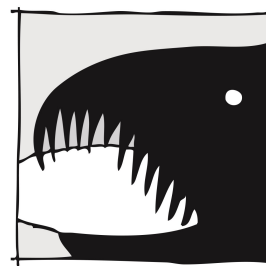
The rest is history. The government first tolerated Christiania as a “social experiment” and then started a series of attempts to “normalise” the area in any non-violent way they could imagine. Meanwhile the *Christianites* improved and remodelled the existing buildings and built many new ones. The best illustration of how much work they invested into constructing their own little world is the number of toilets which grew from 24 in the early seventies to more than 400 at the moment. They paved ways and created public spaces, opened many different cultural institutions and party places (among them a truly legendary jazz club), restaurants, bodegas and even a post office, workshops and a huge hardware store. They started running their own rubbish and recycling systems, collected money for communal affairs from all residents and somehow managed to make their own little world function more or less smoothly. They resisted, at least for the most part, the more or less constant pressure from the government but were, on the other hand, willing to make a number of agreements that would regulate Christiania little by little. The *Christianites* organised a Junk Blockade to

free their town from hard drugs, they survived a war between the Hells Angels and the so called Bullshits (yes, a great name for a biker gang), and invented a new type of bicycle that is nowadays known all around Europe as the “Christiania bike”. They always kept their arms wide open and welcomed Copenhageners and tourists alike, since their affection and support protected them before the authorities. Until today, they make political theatre, organise exhibitions about topics the mass media ignore and tolerate those who are not tolerated elsewhere.

(The bare fact that those from whom we would least expect it have done all this is pretty remarkable and it teaches us quite a lot about what people can do if they are given the chance and, on the other side, if they are expected to take over responsibility for the common world.)

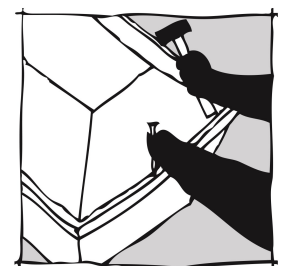


Nonetheless, today many are afraid that Christiania, this island of difference will soon be swallowed by the world that surrounds it and flooded with sameness. Tourists say the same things about Christiania that they say about Cuba: “You should go there now before it’s too late!” And quite a few



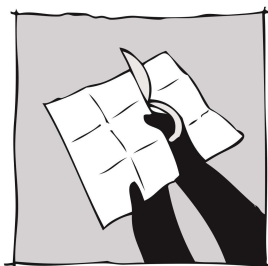
of the almost 1.000 residents claim that Christiania has already lost its authenticity, that it is not anymore what it once used to be. What happened?

In 2011, after they had resisted the authorities’ longing for normalisation for so many years, the residents of Christiania entered an agreement with the government that



could be interpreted as the Freetown's death certificate in the same sense as the charter from 1971 could be called its birth certificate. Indeed, many of the Christianites call this deal the first or the final - that depends on who you ask - nail in the Christiania's coffin.

Essentially, the contract states that the current residents legally acquire a big part of the land that they and their fellows occupied illegally in 1971 for a price that is much below the actual market price. The rest of the land, mostly green areas on the ramparts close to the water, where not many people live, will be given back to the municipality of Copenhagen. Only few houses will be cleared.



Actually this seems to be “a very, very beautiful agreement” (Admin, 2011), as Knud Foldshack, the lawyer, who represented Christiania during seven years of negotiations, put it. Neighbours will remain neighbours, the tension between Christiania and the outside world may finally resolve and the preservation of the roads, squares, houses and everything in between, which the residents have built with their own hands, is secured.

So where is the rub? Many *Christianites* speak about an uneasy gut feeling they have with

respect to the contract. This feeling, it seems, stems not so much from the actual deal they signed, but rather from the impression that this deal closes their case. After so many years of fighting for freedom, which, in their opinion, could not become a reality in the “normal” world, they are now officially about to become a part of this world.

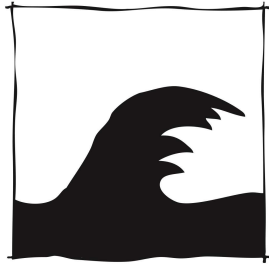
The deal they made is really good, keeping in mind that they pinched a beautiful chunk of land in central Copenhagen and are now officially allowed to stay while many other people have great difficulties to find an affordable apartment (let alone a house with garden) anywhere close to the city. The problem is not the content of the deal; it is the fact that they made a deal at all.



So why did they do it then? The answer is twofold: First of all, most of the *Christianites* are tired. All the “veterans”, as they like to call themselves, are now in their sixties, seventies and eighties; and quite a few of them already passed away. Many years of conflict lie behind them, not only with two governments but also with various criminal organisations that see in Christiania a gold mine and not an island of freedom or a lifeworld where they wake up in the morning and go to sleep in the evening. After so many struggles, naturally most of them just wanted peace and quiet. And their primary goal must have been to keep Christiania alive as a *physical* reality, even if the price they had to pay was that this world would no longer be an actual exception but turn into a normalised space with an exceptional history.

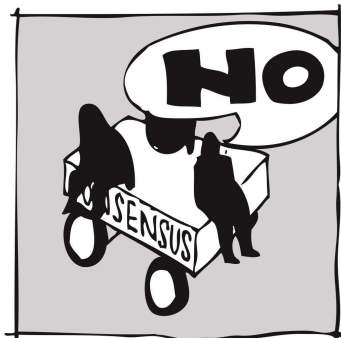


Secondly, many of the *Christianites* are disillusioned. When they founded the Freetown in 1971 the spirit of beginning something new carried them like a wave, but this wave had to



break at one point. The absolute urgency to improve the condition of their new homes kept them busy for years, and the chance to become creative, that

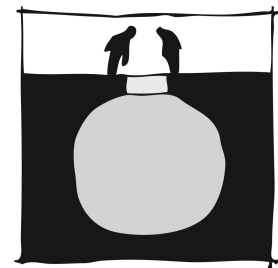
is, to design the world in which they had always wanted to live, filled them with pride. But now this world exists; it just has to be maintained and maintenance is much less exciting than creation. In the early years many of the *Christianites* were enthusiastic about all the meetings that would last until the early morning hours whereas today most people complain about too many meetings. And if they last until late at night they usually assume that somebody drags them intentionally until most of the participants have to go to sleep, or simply cannot stand it any longer.



Consensus democracy seemed like a great political system that would always protect minorities; something that must have been incredibly important for the *Christianites*, most of whom felt like misfits out in the “normal” world. But over the years, we were told, consensus became nothing but a vehicle for naysayers to block decisions. And when decisions are finally taken, we heard, many people do not really care anymore and those who do often feel helpless since Christiania has no law enforcement. Further, the so called *Pushers* who organise Christiania's notorious weed and hash market became more and more influential over the years because allegedly they bribe residents and threaten those who they cannot bribe. Participation in communal affairs

was never ubiquitous, not even in Christiania. But it used to be pretty high and unfortunately it has been receding for many years now. Perhaps most importantly, the *Christianites* did not start the revolution of which they had dreamt, and even though it is often assumed, Christiania was never and could never be “autonomous” or “independent” of the surrounding world; it was just granted some additional space for political freedom.

Seen from this perspective, the agreement that was signed in 2011 looks like the official acceptance, and at the same time like the motor of a tendency that first appeared long before the contract was on the table. But if this is true, then we also have reason to believe that the contract itself is not the problem, at least not the biggest one in Christiania.



The real issues in the Freetown are, on the one hand, the generational change and, on the other hand, the loss of faith in political engagement and political actors. These factors are much bigger threats to Christiania - understood not as the sum of all houses, roads and squares, but as the shelter of freedom that it always aspired to be and that, in various ways, it has always been - than the fact that soon they will no longer be the

illegal occupants of the houses they renovated or build from scratch, but the actual landlords.



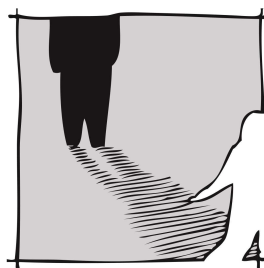
Now the question remains: Is there still hope for Christiania? Of course there is, but right now it really looks like just a glimmer. With respect to the generational change, the biggest obstacles are the temptations of Pusher Street and the fact that the history of Christiania was written almost entirely by the older generation.



The Pusher Street is an easy and fast way to make big money or at least to have a carefree life. The *Pushers*, probably knowingly, involve many of the young

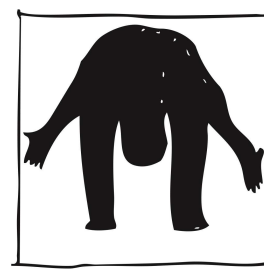
Christianites into their business which does not only expand their sphere of influence in Christiania but also turns the second generation of residents into businesswo/men with private interests on their mind rather than into political wo/men for whom the world and the freedom to act are primary concerns.

Further, what could the young generation possibly do? Either they will inherit a never-ending conflict with the authorities that did not really lead anywhere during the last 40 years, or they will administer, maintain and perhaps capitalise on what their parents have begun as a matter of principle in 1971. Neither of these options is tempting from



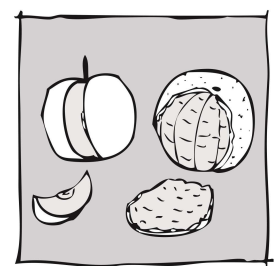
a *political* standpoint, and it seems that in any case these kids will stand in the shadows of their parents. Seen from this angle it is obvious why nobody from the younger generation has serious political ambitions in Christiania.

With respect to political action, finally, there are several severe impediments but all of them could be dealt with. The first big problem, one that we also see outside Christiania, is a lack of understanding of what it actually means to act politically. Many people simply do not like political actors, and mostly for the wrong reasons. In Christiania, to give just one example, we have often heard people complaining that it would be “undemocratic” that those people have more influence on political decisions who are courageous enough to speak in front of others and persuasive enough to change people's opinions. But is



courage not one of the central political virtues, and are rhetoric talent and representative thought not precisely what characterises good politicians?

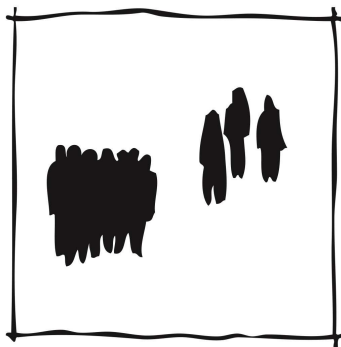
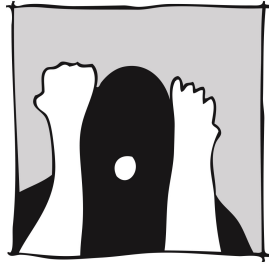
To misunderstand political action in such fundamental ways also means that things which have nothing to do with politics whatsoever - for example dragging



meetings into the early morning, manipulating instead of convincing or even threatening people - are accepted as part and parcel of government and public affairs. The most fundamental misconception is *consensus* itself: It is not the goal of politics and it will never work in praxis that everybody agrees on everything! Consensus can work for easy decisions (*Should violence be one of our founding principles or not?*) and for decisions that can be broken down into calculations of cost and benefit (*Should we build this bridge or not?*), but it can never work for

genuinely political questions which will always put the differences between us in the very centre of attention. This circumstance is not a pity but, on the contrary, probably the only reason why humans did not yet die out of sheer boredom.

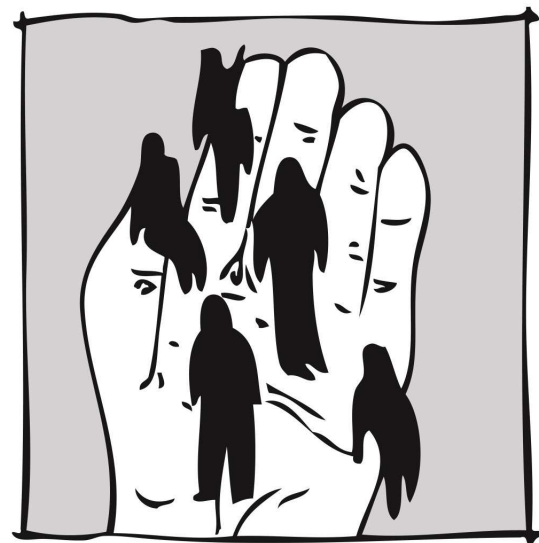
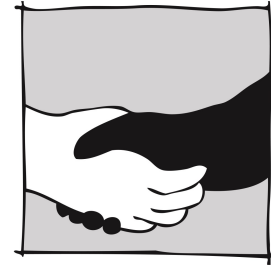
To be sure, the fact – and it is a fact – that consensus does not work on the long run, does not mean that the majority should rule over the minority. It only means that if a decision has to be taken we cannot discuss until literally everybody agrees because this will almost never happen. Hence to build a political community on the principle of consensus will sooner or later result either in paralysis and deadlocks, because no decision is ever taken, or in phoniness and sabotage. Both options unavoidably lead to frustration, at least among the genuinely political actors.



“[M]ajority decision [...] is a technical device, likely to be adopted almost automatically in all types of deliberative councils and assemblies, whether these are the whole electorate or a town-hall meeting or small councils of chosen advisers to the respective rulers. In other words, the principle of majority is inherent in the very process of decision-making and thus present in all forms of government” (Arendt, 1990: 164)

To avoid misunderstandings: Criticising the principle of consensus does not mean that we should never even try to convince others. Further, there is no doubt that a decision becomes more powerful the more people

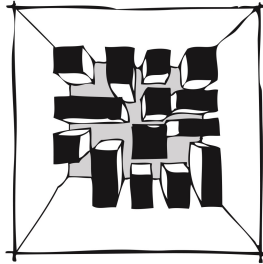
actually agree with it; and agreements can be made even without actual consensus (“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.”). Most importantly, it does not concern the principle that everybody should be entitled to participate in the decision-making process itself. On the contrary, this principle which in Christiania goes hand in hand with the aspiration to reach consensus is the greatest political achievement of the Freetown. If there is one thing the outside world can learn from more than 40 years of Christiania it is this: The consequence of opening up the realm of government to *everybody* is not necessarily chaos, at least not on a neighbourhood scale.



We need not be afraid that everybody will want to take part, simply because most people do not care. Ole Lykke, Christiania's archivist and long-time resident, for example estimates that around 1/3 of the population regularly participates in meetings and actually cares about Christiania and not only about their private lives and interests. Another one of our interlocutors even claims that basically Christiania is governed by a hand full of people, and that in fact *one* man worked more for Christiania than all other inhabitants together. There will always be a

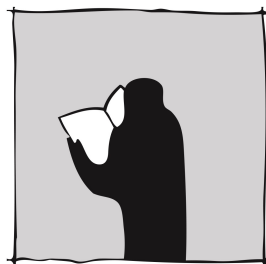
political elite; the question is just how this elite is selected.

Apart from the confusion around the actual nature of political action, Christiania's public realm suffers from a lack of clarity. The political structures of the Freetown are clear and comprehensible only on the surface. There are



regular area meetings in the 14 subunits of Christiania, meetings of different specialised groups such as the Contact Group which is something like the foreign ministry of the Freetown, the Building group responsible for everything that concerns the built environment and the Economy Group that takes care of all financial affairs. Finally, whenever something truly important and unforeseeable happens to somebody or to the community as a whole, a common meeting is organised in which all residents can participate.

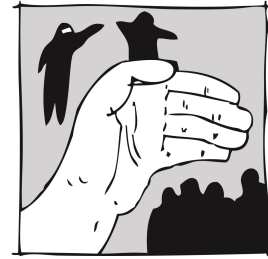
While all this makes quite a lot of sense, the decision-making process and the implementation of decisions are much less clear and can be very tiring because technically one naysayer is enough to tie the hands of everybody else. In



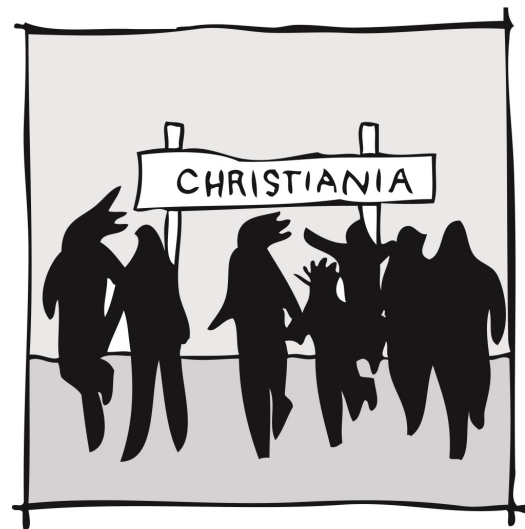
reality, this has led to both frustrated majorities and minorities under pressure. Officially, decisions are only valid if they are published in the *Weekly Mirror*, Christiania's newspaper, but it is unclear how many people actually have to participate in the process, who is entitled to moderate debates, and sometimes people do not even know if they have just taken a decision or not. Even if a clear decision was taken, we were told that "If you want to do something in Christiania, you usually have to do it alone."

In contrast to the generational change and the temptation to make more money than one actually needs (instead of becoming engaged in

public affairs), all these issues are not natural but artificial. They can be solved by good institutional design which encourages us to take part in



politics and at the same time protects those who care about the world from those who do not.



At the moment the Freetown Christiania, an exceptionally informative case for everybody who is interested in politics, the *Right to the City* or democracy is facing many challenges. But after all, its future as a free town - paradoxically enough - depends primarily on whether or not the second generation of *Christianites* will find a way to free themselves from the heritage of their parents and to make a new *beginning* on their own. They will not be able to do so as long as they live in the same world that their parents have built. But if we believe the words of the veterans, this world is about to come to an end soon, and perhaps we are about to witness a miracle when we least expect it.

* * *

Appendix III

Interviews

In the following appendix you can find transcripts and notes made after the interviews which we did during our work.

We decided to do two interviews per city, with different actors involved in the processes we analysed.

The style, the length, and the nature of every interview was pretty much different. They vary in between official talks behind the closed doors of some serious institutions to the relaxed talks over a dinner at our place. We tried to adopt to the respondents as much as possible and we believe that the following material is interesting to be read in the context of our work and that is why it found its place in here.

They are listed in the following order:

Vienna

Rupp-Ebenspanger - employee of MA21 - municipal planning department

Professor Dangschat - Institute of the Sociology for Spatial Planning and Architecture, TU Wien

Belgrade

Iva Čukić - one of the founders of the initiative Ne da(vi)mo Beograd

Milutin Folić - the chief urban planner of Belgrade

Berlin

Rouven Brües - member of Liquid Democracy - a non-profit organization, working on the development and implementation of innovative concepts for democratic participation - responsible for the creation of the online platform for the Tempelhofer Feld

Philipp Wurm - Zitty magazine Journalist knowledgeable in the field of local public affairs

Brussels

Myriam Stoffen - Zinneke Parade director

Charlotte Marembert - artistic coordinator HopBox team

Madrid

Basurama - an artist collective involved in many 'social design' processes in the city

Eduardo Mangada - adviser for Territorial Policies, Public Works, Transport and Urban Planning for the city of Madrid

Copenhagen

Ole Lykke - Christiania archivist and resident of Christiania

Bjarne Maagensen - resident of Christiania

Vienna / Transcript interview / Rupp-Ebenspanger / 01.07.2015.

we are interested to find out how initiatives (big and small) motivate and sustain engagement of citizens

we are trying to figure this out ourselves

citiesnacks, Fr. Daniela Krautsack

we are interested in your personal view on the field, different projects you have experienced, and the STEP2025 as a special and important project with respect to participation

there is also a masterplan participation coming up

I was not so much involved in the STEP, it is a project of MA 18

how do you understand civic participation?

constructive collaboration with citizens

not “selling” our own planning

going out and understanding what “moves” (bewegt) people; listening

using local expertise and take it into the planning process (mitnehmen)

a good citizen?

not against it from the beginning (wutbürger)

and not coming only with personal interest

having the common good in the head

but this is difficult if you have a “single family home”

we have to go out and say “look this is our plan”

we take with us “what moves you”

the information from the beginning onwards is the most important thing, this is what we have seen, the people want to be constantly informed and see what is happening

we used the masterplan participation to determine when to begin (which is not so easy)

by defining different phases: “okay there is the idea”; if the idea fits the strategy then the city planning can say “yes this is a project” and then (the earliest!) it goes public

“Klärungsphase” using it for information but you can also do a questionnaire to check on key issues

there are also things coming up that have nothing to do with the project; but also there we have to show that we take it up and to value it and say “we pass it on”

planning phase: checking the “Leitthemen” and guiding images and make events on these topics; either you create it or it is already there

this is an early point in time because the “Handlungsspielraum” is still “relatively” big; later on it is difficult to change issues that were set up in the earlier phase

has a fixed project from the city ever been changed fundamentally or does this never happen?

at least not based on an alternative idea from within the public

rather projects have been cancelled due to resistance from the public

if we notice that there is very huge resistance then actually you have to “cancel participation”; but sometimes also there is a “mediation” instead (min 10:30)

(example for mediation (until 12:00))

one person who collected 60.000 signatures against a housing project left the negotiations and started publishing articles in the Kronenzeitung; another guy who was for the project in the beginning also left and changed his mind)

how to handle these problems? there is a Praxisbuch participation - is there a similar document for citizens?

no, I don't think so

the praxisbuch is available to everybody but there is no special doc for the public

duties, rights, how does planning work, criteria for participation etc.

would be a good idea

----- information is actually not participation but we declare it as such in the guidebook, it is the basis of participation but not strictly speaking (13:30 - 14:30) -----

flächenwidmung is only a small part of the planning process, the rest is not really that transparent

what are the biggest obstacles to a successful participation?

it is difficult to really reach different people with little effort

if you really want to reach them you have to have people power

actually, for participatory projects, there come always the same people (we have heard this before during our studies!)

in Giesing (min 17:00) we sent out 27.000 invitations and 30 interested people came

invitations are sent via a “Verteilfirma” because the Post is more expensive and we cannot do it due to Datenschutz reasons

we would have to raise the data anew for each event because we cannot save the data

a colleague was called by a citizen who said “leave me alone with all this bullshit”

you started talking about the different groups of people and mentioned Nordbahnhof as a good example; are we speaking about different milieus too?

no it is relatively monoton - one milieu - I think (but I am not personally involved)

And so it works better when you personally talk to people (collaboration with MA 21; Gebietsbetreuung)

yes

can you recall a very special way of invitation / activation / approaching? (21:00)

DONAUFELD

Möbelwerkstatt for young people has built from wood Möbel with young people

they have developed a concept to start a communal gardening project with local inhabitants

but this is a first step ... how can you sustain this collaboration?

Feldvorlesungen

continuous invitations

but I have the feeling that the same people come again and again

would you say that civic participation is more important for the city or the citizens?

do I have to decide?

for citizens: it is realising how the city develops; and to see that my contribution is valorized

what is a big issue for me is the transition from planning to reality; because our competence is limited to planning and plans and ideas and concepts

afterwards there is a detailed planning and the realisation begins and then it can look very different in reality

there is a break / shift

okay, there are sometimes project leaders that take care of according realisation; but it can also happen that “wünsche auf der Strecke bleiben” and then the planning department is the scapegoat sometimes

so i would wish for a unified workprocess

es gibt “solche und solche” some take care, others dont

is there any attempt to change the structure?

“Projektleitungen” are a first institution which can bring different departments from different MAs together

What about Dr. Häupl in civic participation?

(27:50) If he would say something about the topic it would surely be a great help

but he is not involved

it would be nice if there was an institution for “participation in the city”, no matter what topic

online participation: we have tried it; you need to start over and over again; and the reactions are very few / little

if there was ONE platform open for everybody and comprising everything than it would be easier for citizens

what is the difference between this and Wien Gestalten?

wien gestalten is a private page basically

dialog plus is the agency

in German cities there are Stellen for participation with their proper budget

and we responsible for participation are part of MA21 (?) (30:00)

i think it would be easier if there was one institution

wien gestalten exists because dialog plus got the Auftrag to write the Praxisbuch!!!!

and the guy wanted that this praxisbuch has a “dynamic” part - the website

because of budget reasons this was not realised

but Peter Kühnberger did it on his own initiative!

now he wants to sell the data to the city

we have to talk now how to do it exactly (32:30)

I think this was pretty brave of him! (33:00)

yeah you need these single individuals

can we talk about smart city initiative?

i know only very little

what are the characteristics of a smart citizen?

i would say Tina Hohmeyer can help you more with that

in the handbook it is said that participation is a process with “open end” (“ergebnisoffen”); at the same time you say it is initiated from “above” - is there a conflict?

if participation is initiated from above then we know (from above) what we want

if we want 500 apartments then maybe it is 400 in the end but it is housing

and then you cannot talk about an open process anymore

but we can at least give good reasons (city is growing, best area ...)

but yeah people then often dont know why they should even participate

37:40: what is the political effect of all these urban gardening initiatives?

38:30: I think that urban gardening initiatives: make possible that urban space is used differently, that communities come into being, and that people who are not yet involved see that change is possible / alternatives exist; and they can see that i can dooo something

but the danger is that it has to be open towards new members; it cannot become a closed group / society

but in general i think it is a good opportunity to connect people

there are not only urban gardening initiatives, but also the “open Grezl” which is an agenda to support small local initiatives (chi gong, rollrasen, whatever); they get support but only if they can show that they are open and furthering communities

this makes it easier for the city too: you then have one representative to talk to who can forward your message

41:30: step: we created focus groups with addresses from the MA 62, we defined: okay we need 7.500 people, half men half female, and then they were invited; replies we got like 200 - 300; it was a personal invitation; better Rücklaufquote than with impersonal messages

i noticed from my personal experience that when i call people back answering their questions, the responses are much more friendly and understanding

and it is much easier than writing and less time demanding

we try to talk more directly to the people

we try to go away from all the Podiumsgeschichten

almost no classroom atmosphere

instead we do “theme tables” and engage citizens in real talk

what we have to learn is to prepare better! take more time for preparation!

citizen and planner are sometimes like to trains (47:20) that drive in opposite directions: one is on the emotional level, the other on the factual level

this is still one-sided: you learn and have Schulungen, but the citizens dont learn from the other side

true

there is one project from a landscape planner who is going to the schools

we are now putting together an “Argumentarium” with fixed answers for certain topics

one time in the end: social media. how successful is this from your perspective - big potential or almost no effect for participation?

i think it makes sense because you can involve people who cannot come to events

a good combination of online and offline would be very positive

but also: if you have to do it again and again it gets annoying because you have very little Rücklauf (50:20)

but if there was one forum it would be easier for everybody

you need profis and we have no experience with media; you need a “communications expert”

some people say “i dont use facebook for planning” because we have no controle (51:30)

example: library (52:00)

we are “scheu” towards social media because we are not experts

but it would be valuable especially outside of our own forums

because a lack of controle! outside our domain

but it would be nice because then the city would be one among many (maximum: primus inter pares)

Vienna / Transcript Interview / Professor Dangschat / 08.07.15

what is your understanding of civic part., pol. engagement and citizenship?

04:00

participation is still something that is “allowed” top-down.

participation as a term is not clear enough, not well-defined,

we all know the ladder of participation

(04:30) first step: information, okay blabla it is maybe formally participation but its really the basic step (the kleine 1*1);

(04:50) next thing is the question: how can i gather ideas and make ideas interact (so that not just one is put upon the other); and then the question is how do the planners filter the ideas and what do they do with the ideas? ...

(05:30) **FRAMEWORK one of the central problems is that cities are not aware of their job (and the necessity) to create (good) guidelines and rules for participation! they often like to leave it open (in terms of “how do we deal with it”) because the way they deal with it depends on what are the results actually. If they like them they do it if not, they will not do it / use them and say “this was not representative”, “only the loudspeakers (Schreihälse) have won / made their voice count” and other excuses (my word).**

(06:00) so I expect from a city government that they assume strategic responsibility and say “This is my planning procedure and at this and this and that point we allow this and that format of participation; and this are the guidelines / framework for this kind of participation”.

the decision is still up to the government and it is not determined how they come up with a decision! this how has to be guided by rules

(until 09:00) long example: participatory budget; citizens get a relatively small share to decide upon and they consider how to use the money and what they can do on their own etc.

in the end: when the money is short there is no room for participatory budgeting

of course the higher i climb in the latter the more i also expect from the citizens - in terms of knowledge, methodology, social skills etc. so we are almost dealing with professionals and in deed citizens have learned a lot! but they still represent their own interests and this brings us to the point which we have to be careful with: we criticise the “Wutbürger” (= citizen of rage) and “Nimbi” (?) people - we criticise that people represent their own interest - but what the fuck are they supposed to do??? (09:30)

i participate because i have an interest, because i think something will become worse or i want to avoid things becoming worse; everybody has interest - lobbyists, vegan people, everybody - there is no such thing as the “common wealth” anymore that somebody would represent. and out of all we criticise the citizens who dont earn any money with their engagement for representing their interest!

of course i am happy about any process that teaches us to relate and melt into each other particular interests! but that i expect from citizens but also from everybody else!

example: we go to a local administration and teach the people there to relate their interests so that they can act as ONE agent when facing an investor (until 11:30)

we have to integrate the economy much much more!

csr is in everybody's mouth - large companies donate something for cancer aid and blabla - but no! we need companies that, when they settle somewhere, they show commitment where they are! locally, that would be interesting and it is all companies not just the big ones.

so this is participation.

and now the job of the administration is to say: which way is the best for which project?

so: there is not one IDEAL participation, we have to think about the whole "partitur"; we have to challenge the administration on the UPPER LEVEL!

but yeah there are many different systems of participation in different cities!

(13:30 to 15:10) okay: framework has to be clear, you have to be aware to NOT create an overload for one process (to do too much in too little time); also i am just annoyed because i am constantly involved as an "expert" in all kinds of participation projects and all the world cafes and round tables and blabla - i am just pissed cus i dont think its the right way so we have to think about something new; speeddating thing, you have a quick round here, you draw and blabla; and it is contrary to the purpose: those who scream the loudest win, you are faced with a lot of "Wortfetzen" (word splinters) that are taken out of context and sometimes i dont know anymore: do we want more of this (wortfetzen) or less or what is that supposed to mean?! TO ME THIS IS WORTHLESS

(15:10) and we just did that! mrs. vassilakou did this thing (and i was there): example vienna! PARTIZIPATIONSSPIELCHEN (games of participation) with experts, it was just WAHLPROPAGANDA for the green party, there were a lot of green politicians there; and yes we can write a lot and everybody can write a lot but it doesn't get better - and then this is just the opposite of what participation is made for!

(16:00) **SO WAS THERE EVER AN EXAMPLE THAT YOU WERE REALLY HAPPY WITH?** I dont think so, no! but is is also because of my perspective on vienna: i have lived in hamburg for 40 years; and there is a different culture; i also criticized it in hamburg but here it is even worse! this is on one hand due to social democratic party; they are in vienna (and to some degree in hh too) they are soooo uncreative, not innovative, conservative and they believe that they are the GOOD, they always try to use the same ways and measures;

i am in a working group of the friedrich ebert stiftung (the german): it is a catastrophe if it was students i would "um die ohren hauen"; it is badly written (more about the example until 17:50)

lets say: I am mostly in participatory processes where i am invited as an expert; sometimes i was also moderator. I am always unhappy because there is a lot of "symbolhandlung"; it is always the same routine: you start with coffee and breakfast, you listen to some presentations; you have a podium discussion; when it gets interesting the time is unfortunately over; people give important warnings and wishes and demands for the future; people present it to the same people and everybody is bored; and in the end there is a group of politicians who say how important everything around participation is and blabla; then you have 5 of these events and at one point you receive a paper (strategic) that says what will be important blabla but in the end nobody knows what is going to happen (until 18:50)

SYMBOLIC ACTS everywhere, you do something for one day, you have networking going on, its nothing but a get-together. and contentwise it is SOOOO Boring (STERBENSLANGWEILIG)

we take as one casestudy the STEP 2025. would you also say the same (and sign it) for the step 2025 what you just said?

YES! OKAY, the step before that one was even worse! but okay some years passed (19:30)

the step now has one big problem! this is not a participatory problem but a content problem - and okay, lets say: for a paper that was made by an administration it is quite useful ("brauchbar") - what is in there about participation ... okay you have to take a close look and i cannot give a judgement.

(20:20) CENTRAL PROBLEM: the central chapter about "STADTGESELLSCHAFT" as such is missing. it is always mentioned "city society" / "civic society" here and there and everywhere but: what you understand as "stadtgesellschaft", I think it is wrong! ("überzogen")

all the "diversity"-debate is sooo annoying (he is mentioning diversity as one of the aspects of the citysociety that is in the heads of planners and politicians); so even if you discuss it now nothing happens because they have their own image! just because since Richard Florida we all have to say that diversity is superdupercool, we do it, and write papers that are "schwebend" in the clouds; but when you listen to people in the tram it is obviously racist what they say! (21:11)

thats why i wrote a paper on why "diversity" is overchallenging city administrations.

diversity is only positively connoted! and all the REAL problems that go along with it are ignored! what about the people who dont see any positive sides of diversity? with good reasons... well the authors who write about diversity they dont live in the diverse neighbourhoods! they are not the people who do integration work.

of course my image of participation is determined also by: how do they deal with contradictions to a paternalistic and conservative administration?

RED VIENNA (22:40) is something that killed a huge civic movement by saying: okay we will build the houses for you.

23:20: but okay, if you consider yourself a critical social scientist, it is never enough. our mistake is that we give good proposals on how everything should be - high up on the ladder of participation; but we have TOO LITTLE RESEARCH about WHAT AN ADMINISTRATION CAN DO! the administration has to check: what is "opportun", what does the majority want; they cannot give the opposition the ball;

QUESTIONS: the symposium "direct democracy now". you where there; i asked frau Ebenspanger about more radical measures that would allow better / more participationsuch as basic income. is that true?

maybe, but i didnt participate; and it is surely not what is dominating the public political discourse; (example: suisse economist from the 80s, 20 h of work per week) talking about advantages of basic income: yeah it would have mannnnyyyyyy yooooooo. preventive and positive change blabla. my wife is "Lesepatin" (reading for kids) in a school and she is sooo happy about it. now imagine every school would have that? there are 25 kids and 2 have German as a mothertounge blabla until (27:40)

it would be great but NOBODY DARES.

... (until 31:00)

next point: SMART CITY programme "its ideology, stupid?"

well i dont remember almost ... wasnt really my article.

key word smart citizen: it comes from a purely technological perspective! it is especially menat to lower consumption of electricity.

basically what happens: all big concepts - smart city, sustainability and eeverything that is good is put into one package! two problems: it is not possible anymore to critizise! and we miss the point that different aims and goals of the whole beautiful package are contradictory to each other!

so i would wish for a more distinguished concept. and most of all we have to have a chapter on WHAT IS THE CURRENT CITY SOCIETY OF VIENNA.

is a smart citizen one who uses ONLY HIS TABLET? and then i was at a conference where a scientist gets 1.6 million euros per year for his research. and he says: my mobile phone is my best friend! it knows more about me than my friends. (until 36:30)

technology is going in the direction: "i have the solution, where is the problem?"

we need more "Messpunkte" about the citysociety instead of technical ones!

Urban gardening (37:30)

how do you see them? is there political potential for good participation? or is it totally wack?

i would subsume it under the broader "right to the city movement". there is a useful distinction between very political initiatives (for example squatting) and the less political (urban gardening, putting chairs on the street etc.); either you do it "legally" with a document from the city. okay: so this is positive basically. ("ich finds erstmal gut"); on the other side: looking from the perspective of a normal citizen: sometimes i am just annoyed by them! why is there such a thing in my way on the pedestrian walk? - of course you can say: why dont you complain about the cars, they are many more and also in the way; true ... - if its on the pedestrian walk its shitty, if its on a former carpark i like it much better; second point is: it sometimes just looks shitty! aesthetically; they take often old palletts, the put them together like amateurs, kids can paint them in the end ... and it looks ugly. so why do i have to see it?

okay the pedestrian walks in vienna are small anyways; i was in berlin for 5 days and there i enjoyed a reaaal fucking pedestrian way.

okay ... (40:50). i really think that the right to the city movement is politically justified and right! i also agree that participation should be demanded from below; i also enjoy that the social media are part of it. BUT: i also would like to see a process: how should we decide it? not just do it but discuss it in advance. we have to take care that a certain "Mittelschicht" middle class is building their city as they want it.

a city is diversity. so i also want to have houses where i dont care about neighbours, dont bbq with neighbours blabla.

FOR WHOME IS PARTICIPATION MORE IMPORTANT? FOR THE CITY OR THE CITIZEN? (43:10)

i wouldnt say "either-or" but i would understand it as a "win-win". the city can see it as a support for the decision making process (under the conditions discussed above).

from the citizens: a part will benefit. namely those who see fulfilment in engagement! a great share of the citizens wants to be left in peace!!! okay but the people who see fulfilment - the next questions are: should this core become bigger?

for: what is a citizen?: yeah the citizen is exactly the guy who sees fulfillment in participation. it supports a local way of politics, namely one that supports Interessenausgleich, that has a picture of justice; a way that is focused on identification; and this way of politics needs participation.

if it was "taught" and pushed then you think people would engage more? YEAH. it is a question of long duree and of socialisation; but

HEIDELBERG is a good example; 20-30 years of a SPD mayor (social democrat party in germany). this is a CULTURE of participation that takes time to grow.

participation is either hyped or doomed!

Belgrade / Transcript interview / Iva Čukić / 12.09.2015

To start with, as an introduction to the talk, I would like to know who are you and what is the path that brought you to the place called Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd?

I never saw myself, five years ago when it all started, in this kind of things. I didn't know anything about social movements and the right to the city fight. It always caught my interest but through my studies and all the things I did i didn't see what could come out of it, I didn't know how you can make a turn. And then the turn happen when we started Ministry of Space, when we started working with Inex Film, Street Gallery, cinemas and topics alike - How the city is being developed, who decide about it and in what format, to whom city belongs, what you can do as an individual or as a collective, etc. For these 5 years while being engaged with these topics, we became stronger and stronger and until the moment of the launching of the Belgrade Waterfront project it never happen such a big thing which demanded serious confrontation. This project was in a bit less ambitious version, presented to Serbian public for almost 30 years. Every political party intended to do something on this location in the periods of elections. So our first reaction on such a project, back in 2012, was 'whoa look what these guys came up with'. Then we got interested into an idea of transforming of Savamala into a creative quarter and it all looked to me as a fest land for gentrification. It usually last longer but in this case somebody intended to do everything in one year - to import foreign artists and make a diamante out of it. It all looked a bit 'too-arranged'.

And then somehow naturally after all these events there it is - a big project! I really liked your approach of highlighting corruption in this case and not architectural or urban aspects of the project. We discussed a lot about it. In the beginning we checked the renderings, then we talked about the architecture and about the physical model, etc. but what is actually at stake is that the whole thing is a reflection of all the problems this country has been facing for years and then this become your fight which is awfully complex.

How would you describe the initiative Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd? (although this is nicely explained on your website, I would like to hear some sort of a reflection on the already passed "road", namely is it and how initiative evolved since its foundation?)

Well, the initiative is formed as some sort of an opponent of the idea of Belgrade Waterfront and that kind of planning which is non-transparent and totally exclusive. Even in the narrative of the decision makers it is possible to recognize that the whole thing is for tourists and for investors. But where are the citizens, where are the people who really live here? It seemed as if we don't have any rights if we are not investors or tourists. What i would like this initiative to achieve is to set into motion some wider movement which is not dealing only with questions of Belgrade Waterfront. Just to mention, together with people from block 9A we succeeded to block the illegal construction site on an open green field - this was stopped. I would like if also these small spatial fights turn successful. I would like the initiative to cover the wide image of the city, the one where the problem of building the two parking spots and building of some hectares in the city are treated equally. So, we should systematically change the way we manage the city and developed the city.

Did your personal understanding of the initiative and of its role in the society evolved through time?

Yes, through actions of the initiative you establish the system of values which you find important. For example, one of the initiative members, on his own during the week of Pride placed on the webpage of the initiative the duck with the pride flag and it arrived to the horrific reactions on the page from radical nationalists to football fans, who supported us until that very moment. It seems that some people are against

Belgrade Waterfront because they are planning to build up a huge mosque and the investors are Arab. And we don't need these people. So with this excesses we are covering certain topics which are not directly related to Belgrade Waterfront and filtering people with whom we can work further. I found it great that that 100 to 200 people left our page and our group. Really slowly we react to some topics which are not directly Belgrade Waterfront but which are important for us. For example, the refugee question, two times we organized lunch where we cooked for them. It is not something that we promoted heavily but it is clear that you have to cover the wide spectrum of topics if you want to make any systemic change.

How organizational structure of the initiative look like? As someone who was present at the very first meeting, where we discussed about the name of the initiative, I am interested in the logistic organization of all the conducted actions (not in detail about everyone, but more structurally - who conceptualized them, who motivated participants, who implemented them, who did postproduction, etc.)

There is no clear work division, maybe it would be good if we have one, then there wouldn't be a situation where everybody is doing everything. Our actions up until now were mostly 'defensive'. Maybe one or two were rather actions than reactions on the events. We function in the way we meet once per week, it is obligatory thing. If there is something more time demanding we are organizing Hackathons. We isolate ourselves in some space in Belgrade where we are working on such a thing, for example: newspapers, protest preparation, action preparation, etc. Making decisions is totally horizontal, there are no rulers, we vote for proposals, we reflect about them, discuss about them. These meetings are pretty exhausting, it is common that they last for up to 5 to 6 hours, even the easy one. But it is really important that everybody understand what happened, what is going on and what will happen. Then according to the decision, we are distributing the tasks according to our personal abilities and interests. Some people are more into design, some for conceptualizing, some for PR, some with technical knowledge, etc. We function through several mailing lists and chat rooms, and it is the place where we came into being as the initiative.

It seems that the initiative has all capacities to skillfully handle different mediums, all conducted actions are talking in favor of it (different web-presentations, printed material, performances with scenographies , even usage of a high-tech drones :). I am interested if you are satisfied with the peoples responses to your "provocations" (to name them like this), those people who are not part of the initiative but "ordinary" citizens?

In principle, I think that the newspapers had the biggest impact. And the newspapers itself were the result of the fact that we were totally marginalized in media. Suddenly nobody wanted to listen the other side of the whole thing. Why I shouldn't be allowed to criticize something which I find bad. It does not mean that I will stop it but let me say what I think. Our first urge to say something was the writing of the objections on the change of GUP (General Urban Plan), where we gathered 2000 signatures from people and where as the result all of them were rejected as irrelevant. Well ok, it was one bureaucratic path, something which should be legal and legitimate approach. Then we tried again, and we ended up rejected again. And through all this we are faced with some sort of simulation of democracy. But actually nowhere you can talk about it and then we turned towards scandals. Which means to gather and to make one big yellow duck and to leave it in front on the National Parliament. And what then happened, the Prime Minister on live recording from the Parliament says - outside are some people with the yellow duck and suddenly everybody knows who are the people with the Duck. If he didn't mention it, probably nobody would hear about us because nobody is reporting about us. So, with the newspapers, with 10000 copies, which second issue is in production at the

moment, some of our friends who had a legal permit to distribute them got arrested! One friend and I left the place just 10 minutes before the arrest. One journalist from BETA who was supposed to be there was arrested together with them, and thanks to her who wrote an article about what happened - that she was arrested even after showing the press card, we got the very same day 15000 people on our FB page. It proves that people reacted on it - as they probably work something when they present sudden danger. At the end, our popularity is mostly built up by them than what we can manage with building it up.

Interesting thought.

At the protests there are mostly young people, some crew from the city, but there are also older people. It was pretty diverse when we organized the newspaper benefit party - be our tycoon, because we were accused that Miskovic (local imprisoned tycoon) is paying us, and then on this party we saw what kind of people are supporting us.

Does once involved citizens in the activities of the initiative stay active members of the group? In other words, does the number of those engaged is changing through time - increases or decreases?

Small number of people who come for the first time stay in continuity. The problem is that when you start doing a deconstruction of a certain problem it is quite exhausting and time and energy demanding. The protest dynamic is not that regular, we need to collect the material. We cannot go to the streets every day and run without the reason, just to have fun. At least it is not our style. And in this in between time we work on ourselves and on all the things that didn't work fine, how we will proceed next time, what can generate reaction and provocation, etc. and all these things are tiring. On the other side, when we have a specific activity that we have to do I think that people are more easily involving into the process. It is good to know on whom you can count when, especially if it is understood from the very beginning. The thing which is possible to notice with actions is that people would like a bit more radical approach. When we did a blockade people asked why we don't demolish the fence. I would also like something to happen but we should judge the right moment for it. It is totally stupid if somebody end up in jail because we were bored.

For whom and why do you think that civic participation and political engagement are better, for city or for citizens?

I absolutely think that for both of them it is really important. By taking part in making decisions, in rethinking the city, in using the city, we are changing ourselves because the city is a reflection of the things we do. If you are dealing with it and if you have the urge to change something in the city you will see this change and it will recurrently influence you. It is process that goes in round. You cannot expect that something will fall from the sky, that somebody will deal with you, because it is totally obvious that the dominant paradigm is oriented towards the 'Investor Urbanism' , or to 1% of people whose needs should be fulfilled. It is totally absurd to me and I don't understand this type of dealing with the city. On one side we have the census results from 2011 which clearly indicate the number of housing units needed in Belgrade, and as a result we have a project building up apartments for non-existing people, because to those people of Belgrade these apartments are just unreachable - they cannot afford it. Then I wish that people turn active and to react on everything that is going on because only like that somebody will take you in consideration. Our new city urban planner (Milutin Folc) came out with the project IME (Identity, Mobility, Ecology), as the program for citizen participation and the first thing was 'let's choose the color for our buses'. Weeel, don't fuck me around! In the first place you refused all possibilities to speak about the project which is an issue for me because from my pocket you are taking the money and now you want me to choose the color. And okey, then people have chosen red but

then they announce - we cannot change the color of all the busses because some of them are Japanese and they said that busses must stay yellow. It is a simulation of some democratic process which to me it seems totally in MontyPython style.

In your opinion, what kind of influence the engagement of the initiative has on rest of Serbia?

Newspapers succeeded to reach people outside of Belgrade. We organized several tribune in Novi Sad, also one in Nis. You know about the relation of cities throughout Serbia with Belgrade, it is not a problem that such a project financed from the state budget and that every person who is a taxpayer will feel it, but the problem is that it is going on in Belgrade and not in Nis. That kind of provocation is at stake, and then we have to change the direction for addressing these people in order to mobilize them. I think that people are getting what is going on. The problem is that the same thing is happening through all things - the Steel Factory Smederevo, the South Corridor, health system, education, everywhere same problems are noticeable. And then it became tiresome, it exhaust the energy and that is why our focus is at the moment on Belgrade with an idea to spread it as much as possible.

Do you and how you are collaborating with initiatives from the surrounding and from the region.

We collaborated and we still do with the Right To The City from Zagreb, with the initiative Srdj Is Ours from Dubrovnik. We got a support of , that initiated us, INURA conference which happened last year in June. They wrote, on our request, a letter which had a good impact in public, it was among the most readable articles on Pescanik. The letter explains, with pretty much simple language, what is the problem with the project and only on the idea basis. At the moment there were still no published data except of the physical model which we could see and some trillions of Euros which were mentioned and about which nobody is talking anymore. And even with so little info this letter succeeded to sum up basic problems accommodated by this project proposal.

I remember of that conference, I was there.

Well yes, that was our impeller. We saw during first discussion which criticized the project that there are around 350 people, and the discussion in English which is additional problem, because people are having difficulties even in Serbian to explain what exactly they find wrong. Some people were accused about changing the identity, because they had the urge to express their disagreement. And after all, what is wrong with the old identity, if we have it at all. Who decide if we are going to change the identity, in which way, etc... these things were said out loudly without too much of consideration for the opinion of the wider public.

What do you see as a main initiators of the group and a main obstacles and jammers?

First, I think that the main jammer is the fact that it require a lot of dedication, it is impossible to work on it two hours per week. If you really want to do something about it you have to do it seriously and with total dedication. Second, we don't have money, nobody is financing us, we don't have salaries, there is nothing that comes from aside like with some NGO, everything is pro bono and then it additionally burden you because you already are having difficulties to make an end and this is just one extra serious thing. Third, the fact that you are totally marginalized. Even after that discussion which lasted for 7 hours on the occasion of GUP change, we got out and the chief urban planner approached us with saying: you are all right but you know the things are different. And then you feel disabled, you don't know what to do, should you cry? On one side we are constantly surrounded by these heavy words and cheep states - either you are paid by a

tycoon, or you are a foreign hireling which would like to ruin the Government or you are just against Serbia. Well, we are not! And we will show you even that, so it is one additional thing on our to-do list.

How do you keep élan and focus?

It was one moment, right after the blockage of bulldozers, when I thought that I cannot stand it anymore. We were all exhausted and the whole year was tough with so many things which we survived such as police inspector who is calling you to ask where are you and what are you doing. Your life change so fast. Then you stop for a bit, and somebody else takes the whole thing and then you come back. Processes of conceptualizing the protest are really interesting, when you go out on the street and when you see people who would like to express their opinion and that they are many, than it full your energy. And like that all the way in circles.

Describe some of the "contacts" in between the initiative and those from the "other side", and some of the results of these contacts and of your actions.

I remember of some images in front of Geozavod, it looked pretty successful and massive. What do you think about it?

It was one of the most successful protests, which was by the way organized in two days. Call whoever you can, find that person, call that person, who carry the Duck, how it ends, how long it lasts, etc. everything was a bit hysteric. Their solution for the situation was that in the moment when the Investor, the Minister of Infrastructure and the Mayor leave out from the building, stop two trams which in that moment had passengers inside, in order to block the group of people who were protesting. What was interesting about it is that millions of photographs are proving that we were previously blocked by two cordons of police, that there is nobody around trams, and that on the other side is a group of police, the Investor and other decision makers. The Mayor stated on that occasion that the trams stopped because they were blocked by the demonstrators. The same evening we heard the news on B92 television - Sinisa Mali (the Mayor) lie! Photos proved that there was nobody on the rails. After people step on rails when tram drivers got an order to continue, as some sort of a reaction to what they did. Afterwards we got, according to the law about accessibility of the publicly important information, a confirmation from the public transport company GSP, that the trams were stopped by the order of police. So that the future investor can get two trams to block the people who are against the idea of 'Belgrade is on sale'.

Last year, by writing a paper for my current studies, i did a small analysis by comparing the two presentations of on one side Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd, and on the other Belgrade Waterfront. Based on what was written on websites of these two, chronologically comparing, it is clear that most of the actions of the initiative are merely reactions on those actions performed by the government - "when something happen, initiative react". meaninglessness

Do you have the same impression and does anything change since then. And does it happen that the initiative started conducting actions that in their formulations overcoming merely reactions on the meaninglessness of the project Belgrade waterfront, but which are directly related to your understanding of the city and how one should live in the city?

It is much easier to work with a reaction, when you have a concrete material and the addressing is easier. And if you want to be against than you need to formulate that message really clear and to balance with the upcoming events so you don't lose your energy. We now have the situation that the Government in

announcing publishing of the contract, even though for six months already, so the idea is to go on the street and ask for showing off the contract - why not. But, it overlaps with the erection of the foundation stone which also requires certain action, and you cannot organize two protests in a week. You can, but afterwards you probably have to go to hospital.

Really successful protest was the one with the Duck on the Boat Festival. I was skeptical about it, and i didn't knew that this event is insomuch visited under the title Water Amusement. We placed the Duck, we rented the boat, applied for defile, everything was legal, we placed the poster and suddenly the police approached us, actually arrested us because we are sending a clear political message and that was not a political manifestation and the second why was: 'you know why'. So, they wrote our personal details, removed the poster. Only later they returned it to us, but we were not allowed to mount it on our boat. And this news was really widely spread. Many media covered it. Also magazines Vreme published a text about it, and Draza Petrovic (columnist) also wrote about us. It was clear to people that it is not allowed anymore to state their opinion, it was clear that suddenly they should know why something is not right.

Reflection of others on the things which you are doing is also important, other media which should spread the news, because they already have their audience.

And since the media is not independent, really rarely they are following us and publishing about us. And then we have to stand up and do our own newspapers because it is the way how I can express my disagreement and to explain what is the problem.

Do you have defined something like a development plan of the initiative, that summarize presuppositions of the group in relation to the project belgrade waterfront and others suspicious activities of the current government?

Concerning the project itself, i doubt that anything more than two towers and one shopping mall will be built, but regardless of it our wish that initiative overcome the limits of the project. People are mentioning even referendum and some similar things but all of it requires a lot of money and a lot of engagement. So, concerning the referendum I don't see it soon. I think that it would be good to organize one but the results are also questionable . Some statistics recently indicated the feeling of people towards the project, where one third of the respondents was for, one third against, and one does not believe that anything will happen. So, if you turn this third group on your side, then you have some political power.

After a year, by returning to Belgrade, I met several people for whom I knew that they were part of the initiative or were generally like-minded. I was surprised by the format of these talks, where one dominant phrase was occasionally repeated - "us and them". I have a feeling that the consciousness about the complex situation of our society is so fragmented that even those like-minded have a need to additionally interpret the general state and by doing it classify people on "us" and "them". I think that it has a potential to reduce the efforts of the group and certainly is not the setting which can generate the idea of a better life. (this is really personal thought and you are the first one with whom i share it)

What do you think about it?

In the beginning it was a group who gathered mostly from the NGO sector - people who are into topics of human rights, workers rights, ecology, etc. And it was almost impossible to make a decision on what to do. All the times we were discussing some protocol things, we tried to determine the structure, the way we

decide, etc. and we had to react much faster. Then which topic is important? First it was the topic of human rights, for which I think it is an important one but not as a trigger, and then those people involved with it felt insulted because the topic was not represented enough. I don't think so that the topic should be totally excluded but nobody was prevented from doing whatever they know the best. For building up the movement it is important to work with topics that can mobilize people.

And then we had big misunderstandings - of how to appear in public, as an individual or as the community and we mostly had disagreements.

And finally, this newly gathered group happen by a pure mistake of Mika (colleague) who mistakenly sent an invitation to another chat room, to one group of artistic people with whom we collaborated on some other project. First we were uncertain about what will come out of it, but it turned to be really good. These new people showed a great interest, they are all active and it really feels good. We don't have the feeling of pulling somebody and to push people. For example, if somebody is interested in making the new visual identity of the Initiative, he/she can do it without having 30 people deciding about it, which is great. For newspapers, if somebody have an idea of how to contribute, he or she can just do that and it is good to have it.

So these error are after all not without a reason.

How do you see the Belgrade in 7 years?

It is difficult to foresee the future but let's say what we succeeded to do in 5 years - something that is a small thing for some general image but big for some people whose needs are satisfied by these actions. It was the INEX, which will probably soon be closed because of a changed circumstances, but it is the project which provoked people who used to work there and are now searching for new spaces around the city. It was Zvezda as well that happened, many things started. If this initiative succeed to unleash the powerful wave, where all of these small fights around the city are part of it, and the people act because they know that they are part of a bigger story, it would be great! To establish the system of transparent and just decision making. As long as you are manipulating with my money and my space i want to be asked!

I understand. Thank you, All of this which we talked is highly valuable for me. And it is good to talk about it and even better to record with text. For both of it will be good.

Belgrade / Interview summary / Milutin Folić / 16.01.2016

Since it was organized informally (Vitamin B), he felt relaxed to invite me for an interview in a cafe on a weekend day. The setting was totally relaxed, with two more people present at the table + a dog who run and bark around us all the time. Music was loud and people were chatting around us. The feeling and the impression of the interview was highly influenced by this setting.

I tried to be as harmless as possible with the questions, not to put him in a guard position. Since we have a lot of information about what is at stake, how things are discussed and decided, my intention was to hear and to find out what He is doing, and what is His position in this process.

So, I started the talk with the question about his position within the structure of the city government.

He said, that once he 'got in' he found himself in the situation which was really difficult and (he used this expression) 'braked'. There were numerous reasons and he didn't want to comment on them but he mentioned some, such as racketeering of the investors, unsolved ownerships, slow administration, etc.

What he did, as soon as he became the chief Urban planner of Belgrade (before him an un-existed position) he automatically became a Chairman of the Board of the Planning Commission. This gave him much more power and possibility. He used this power to reduce the number of the Board members from 11 to 7, and to appoint a meetings of the Board once per week. This, as he said, increased the productivity of the planning commission and brought to the implementation phase numerous constructions in Belgrade which created a dynamic building industry in the city and raised the budget.

Every construction site is paying infrastructure taxes, that is why suddenly the city of Belgrade got millions of Euros on this basis. The money is used almost exclusively for investments in infrastructure but it also created space for some 'new' investment zones.

Together with his newly formed team, he founded something called 'IME', which stands for Identity, Mobility, Ecology. These are the three focus points of his team, and a desired paths to go in the time to come. Under this platform there are currently about 20 projects going on (which he could not recall) but some of the most important ones are processes of formulating the 'Regulations for public space development' and the 'Standards for public space development'. These two are currently not existing documents which he sees as an important contribution of his team. Inclusion of citizens in the process of defining these two documents does not exist, even as an idea. ('it is a job for professionals')

Under the project IME, they institutionalized two (and only two) ways and approaches for citizen participation. One of the two is still not quite ready, but they hope it will be launched this summer. The first, 'neighborhood participation' or 'city-pockets', which is based on the participatory process designed by Milena Ivkovic (Serbian lady from the Netherlands, I know her), who is invited and in charge of implementing this process with local population. The basic concept with this approach is that it is useful to ask people who live in close vicinity to the city-pocket, what they think about how it should be transformed. The major characteristic of these locations are that they are underused, they are in the city central zone, and they have something with beautification of the central zone of the city. In order to include people and to somehow contextualize the 'new look' with the sensibility of the people, participatory process is invented. As we saw in Vienna, and on many other locations, this process is highly controlled and highly one-direction orientated. Either those who are organizers extract the info about let's say color of the benches, or those who participate

are served with the content which they have to work with. With one already finished and built project based on this methodology, reconstruction of the street 'Momo Kapor', he thinks that the process is working perfectly and bringing good and fast results. The use of this methodology will definitely continue.

As a complement to this method, he was proud to announce the second institutionalized approach, namely the phone app called Beogradjani (APP!) Still in its formation phase, this app should serve to gather or extract people's opinions about certain topics - mostly this 'city-pockets', like 'what they would like from that place to be'. The raw model for this application they found in a Moscow's Active Citizen application - which he claimed is the best of this kind (hmm, interesting also for us to see how it works, maybe Victoria can help us to understand). He mention how this application will improve the number of those who participate and give 'them a right amount of what they expect', and to the city it will serve as an opinion checker. He even used a phrase mini-referendums. The motivation or the triggers for using the app they see similar as we talked about our application - when the institutions such as museums, galleries, cinemas, etc. will open their doors and 'stipend' the users for their good actions as citizens.

Other than in these two approaches, he does not sees citizens involved with the process of a city development.

After I asked him what he sees as an obstacles in the process of citizen participation he said 'nothing!' 'As soon as you 'intelligently' divide jobs or to-dos list into a professional and an amateur (directly related with citizens), there is no room for problems or obstacles, as I called them. (crazy shit)

My biggest impression is that 'as long as you are digging something in people's courtyard it is logical to ask them about the opinion, and professionals are just doing their job!'

After being asked about for whom it is important, the citizen participation, for the city or for citizens themselves, he said equally and for both! By asking people about their opinion, the city gets a project assignment, and then it is easy to work.

Then we switched towards the Belgrade Waterfront story, and how about 'project assignment' in this case. He immediately got serious and said how this project, defined as it is, was possible only in this kind of a process. First of all, he got on this position when the process was already on. Second, everything happened according to the law (which they changed for this purpose :). And the third, for him as a professional, it is a soothing thought that the investor charged the best world-known companies to do the design of the project. He named all of them, but for us it is not so important. What is important is the process, or how it went. First the newly formed government on the basis of personal relationship got into an agreement with the UAE and into an open discussion about possible investments into Serbian economy. One of the investors that took part in these meetings was Eagle Hills. This investor, as he said, 'is the one that does not know for any borders or conditions. He is the one who built Dubai out of nowhere' and he is the one that can do whatever he wants on the basis of the investment in Serbia. So, all public institutions were placed into a service providers for this investor. By labeling it as a project of a national importance, they skipped all the city institutions - including his planning department, and created a 'legal pocket' where everything is possible. After these big planning companies from around the world (RTKL, BIRDA, SWA, COWI, ARCADIS) did their job, the planning institute of Belgrade started adopting it to the local jurisdiction and planning regulations (this is totally crazy). By changing of the law they actually adopted much more local laws to this plan than the other way around. What this law brought is the possibility to move and displace people

and institutions from the project area. National rail company, bus station, many other companies and workers of those companies who lived in this part of the city for decades.

'By emitting such a message to the world of investors, he believe Belgrade and Serbia represent the serious and safe investment ground, and that is why all of this is needed. For almost 5 years, the city construction industry is dead and without any serious project going on. This is why it is necessary to go for it. While the others are developing, we cannot sit and wait.'

The resistance to the project he sees before all as a logical thing. 'Investment of this amount, and production of space of this kind, is definitely not welcomed by local tycoons and investors who cannot compete with the investor of this kind. This dynamic on the construction market in Belgrade will bring a new quality of the city offer and motivate new investments.' He somehow relate all the protests and critic (which is crazy) as an instrument of the local investors and tycoons who sees the project as the competition, competition for space production and consumption!

After all my impression is that he is proud and satisfied with what he did and strongly convinced that the way he is doing things is right. He is trying to push, for example, all first prize winners from an old architectural competitions into an implementation phase. They are working on a reconstruction and beautification of the central city zone, turning streets into pedestrian zones. The general idea is that Belgrade should be a city of pedestrians and it is exactly how he sees the city in 7 years. By pushing parking zones underground, by working with a pavement and a design of the open public space (city squares and city pockets) and by installing a new greenery, he is convinced that the city will look better, feel better, work better.

Berlin / Transcript Interview / Liquid Democracy / 15.08.2015

Who are you? And what are you doing? What were your biggest success and failure?

I am here since the beginning of 2014, started with an internship; we develop the participation software liquid democracy using (among other tools probably) scrum. So my own experience only begins in 2014.

LD exists since 2009 and we are “gemeinnützig”, part of “transparente Zivilgesellschaft” and during the last year we grew quite a lot! From seven or eight people to more than 30! This is mostly due to the fact that we have now updated our software from version 2.0 to 3.0. and plus we are doing TENTOS now which is about: register yourself anonymously in a participation programme; this is important as a criteria for authentication (for example: this is really a citizen of our city) while the person really stays anonym so nobody can trace who it really is.

Since I am here we only had great success and not really a failure I would say. The biggest success is for us taking part in big projects: this is for example the new and big citywide participation platform for Berlin which is going online in a few months. (05:00) and also the big research projects from the EU that we participate in. These are “success” because it gives us the money to develop the software which is OPEN SOURCE - this means everybody can theoretically download and use the software we develop.

How do you guys here understand civic participation, political engagement and citizenship?

first of all, we are people with many different backgrounds; and also the concept of liquid democracy can be interpreted in different ways - this also is valid for “civic participation”. okay, but at the same time we “pull on one string”. So what does it mean to us?

WITH LIQUID DEMOCRACY WE BASICALLY TRY TO OPEN UP A DELIBERATIVE SPACE ONLINE. (07:00)

this should help to better prepare political decisions! and ideally also to increase the number of people who participate in the decision. and with every project we do / participate in, we try to include civic participation / political engagement (in which way ever).

unfortunately, this is not easy since we live in a society where political engagement / participation is not popular. So by doing participation online we are trying to lower the entry barrier for political participation. To reach people so that they can collect experiences with participation (in politics / of citizens). And we are trying to push / cater for / increase participation over the coming years and decades peu a peu.

What are the biggest hurdles / obstacles to politically engage citizens?

(specifically for Tempelhofer Feld project)

-> explanation of the project (08:20)

THF project is an initiation from the city of Berlin (LATER EXPLAIN BACKGROUND INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPP WURM) who asked Tillmann Heuser from the BUND after the petition against the building plans of the city of Berlin to realise the law draft that was created after the result of the petition was valid. Okay: so the former Senator of City and Environment (more or less ...) who is now the MAYOR OF

BERLIN (Michael Müller) asked the CEO of the biggest COUNTERPLAYER OF THE CITY in the case of THF (tempelhofer feld) to develop a plan for realising the law!!!

That's the call from the city. Now, Tillmann Heuser asked us to provide an online participation platform so that the citizens of Berlin can engage online in the Participatory process. So we are responsible only for the online world; we are a service provider. But there are also offline events. We also gave advice / counselling / consulting on how to link the online world to offline events. Some of our proposals were realised, others were not.

Everything that happens offline is not our business. I introduced the online platform several times, especially in the initial stage of the project. And yes, we also, to a certain extent, see and experience how the offline participation events work.

I CAN OF COURSE GIVE YOU THE CONTACTS OF THE RESPONSIBLES FOR THE OFFLINE EVENTS.

So the biggest obstacle is: how to reach citizens? (the people as citizens); and no matter if online or offline, the biggest challenge is to reach the people who will actually participate.

we have used various channels to reach our network (fb, twitter, newsletter etc.); we also stepped in for offline "advertisements" (Werbung!) - which was not done ... öööhm, yea .. well.

it was considered briefly, to make advertisements. okay, and I think as a compromise there are some PLAKATE and an info box on the field (that was used especially during the summer months when people really come to the field).

From my personal point of view it could have been "a little more" (advertisements, channels, effort). (12:45) but well, this is always a need to find a "balance" because there is a certain budget that was mostly planned for the actual workshops. Okay and at one point, the TAZ (local newspaper) wrote about the whole action and since then it really accelerated. Then suddenly over 2000 people registered online. So today we have 2076 registered users, plus many more people who check out the site and read along (without proposing). And now we are in the second phase for text development - where less people register (because it is harder / more demanding than proposing stuff). All in all around 60.000 people have visited the sites.

So how do you estimate this number? It is relative of course, it sounds a lot at first, but when you look at the 3.5 million people living here it looks very small...

Yeah the number is definitely relative. So the project is a double consultation: the city asks Tillmann Heuser, Tillmann Heuser asks the people. Three phases: propositions, text development, text evaluation and refinements.

In the end Tillmann Heuser will give it to the Abgeordnetenhaus (City council) and they have to decide in the end. Well, but they already said last year that they are willing to accept whatever is coming as a final proposal if it was made as an entirely participatory project!

I would claim that it is a success (the online platform). When you compare it to pure offline actions because more people were reached, were engaged ("could participate in the end") and that more people were

informed - without the online channel less people would have known the whole story. AND ALMOST ALL THE CONTRIBUTIONS WERE HIGH QUALITY! so this is a real success.

so how do you deal with the propositions?

it is a question of representativeness: the participatory process is not representative. from among 700.000 people who voted for the remaining of the THF as it is today (against the city plans). ... [blabla] so i dont know if it really is (should be) a goal of the process to be representative. (its mostly people who have time, who speak german, who have heard of it etc.)

lets put this question aside. just: what about contradicting proposals when they go from online to offline

(table tennis vs. beach volleyball vs. nothing)

the online rankings are just to figure out which are the most important / discussed issues / questions. to talk about them first. it was not about DECISION MAKING online.

so the process was open from the beginning: that means the participants decided upon the rules of the game!!! so it was not clear from the beginning how the process structure looks like but it was developed by the participants!!!! "This was also the most complicated thing about the whole enterprise" (we can see here the up and the downside of this step!!!!)

(20:00)

(this was done in january february)

so then it was decided that the single units of the law (free time activities, buildings, opening hours etc.) are discussed and decided upon in workshops! so the online proposals were discussed offline in the workshops.

also there were some questionnaires (umfragen) that were discussed; and it was considered that there are for sure people who dont want to change anything (this was kept in mind).

so now how exactly the decision was made - what exactly happened to the proposals - is "Schwammig" (fuzzy) because to evaluate this you really would have to be at the workshops.

they are during the week, early evening - so you have to have the time to go ... originally it was planned to "rückkoppel" the workshops online - so to give immediate feedback to the workshops online ("hey your proposal was nice etc.") - we thought it was good, but now it is not done; actually now they make a protocol and this is put online later and can be commented (each paragraph). so its a little fuzzy: we cannot per se say that a proposal (say: opening hours) that has a lot of importance (many votes, and mostly positive) is realised. For example the hopening hours - which also interested me personally - was not accepted in the workshop. So now you can criticise this in the protocol ... (22:30) but i am afraid it will stay like this ...at least in this case. SO THERE WERE NO CLEAR RULES ON HOW ONLINE INPUT IS USED DURING THE WORKSHOP.

(my comment: it is levelling down the online input under the offline conversation clearly. this may be legitimate since the online input is not representative (the offline thing is neither!!!;plus: is his answer correct?

were there no clear rules or was it explicit that online input is not binding for the offline decision making process? ASK THIS)

let's go more in general into online participation. what are the main criticisms of online participation?

I WOULD SAY IT IS RATHER SCEPTICISM THAN CRITICISM. since there are no experiences in online participation oftentimes. so: we propose what you can do with online participation, and then people say: yeaah, but then this and this and that will happen.

The most common fear is probably that of “trolling” / “mobbing”. People think that people will start bashing and discriminating. This did not happen once in the six years of our history.

That is what we always say.

also, often the initiators dont want “too much” participation. so - this is our job - to work against this prejudice / position.

And for online again: yeaah, “everybody can participate”.

What if somebody (let's say I) would say that he is afraid that in online participation, the “personal” element will be lost?

Yeah, I think this is a point. But I always ask myself: when would those people come together in the real world to engage politically with each other???

not even at the elections ...

if i watch television ... its only one direction

so in the end, we only have this encounter only online!

CONSTERNATION ON MY SIDE YOOO!

but at the same time I think it is often a legitimate claim that people will state their opinion more boldly (does that also mean openly, firmly?) online than perhaps offline when they are face to face in one room with the other people. (25:30)

(later comes the perplexing other side of the story: ONLINE IT IS MORE ON THE FACTUAL LEVEL THAN OFFLINE! this points totally in the direction that Sennett describes in Fall of Public Man; and to the simple fact that is asked in the end of the article (below): is there a lack of deliberative culture (“DISKUSSIONSKULTUR”).

So trolling or offenses we did not have so far....

what did i want to say??? ... well ... yeah ... its important for us to state that it is not about online OR offline but that you always need a combination. otherwise you will not reach people who are working shifts, who dont have time, who are elsewhere in the world, who ... (ISSUE: VREME BRATE). So, normatively, I would say that it is “slightly more just” if you give those people at least partly the chance to participate. (26:15)

Cool. But still, at least I would say, that it is difficult to trigger and create or to enact a discussion online as it would be “face to face”. Is it still possible to go further in this direction of imitation and if so, is that your aim?

our goal is to improve the online deliberation. often we are faced with “Baumstrukturen” (treelike structures of the discussion) - today we are trying to make this more intuitive, to work more with tags; there is a lot of research in that direction.

I try to think when I talk about politics offline ... mh it is mostly with friends and family. and of course during my experiences at work. Well. And I have to say that the discussion online is “more productive” since different people have more time to work on the issues (and at different times), to read everything and to react. So it is not our aim to replace or imitate offline discussion. Our goal is to make online stuff transparent and reaching out far and more people.

But what you are playing at is emotion? - RATHER RHETORICS AND EXPRESSIVITY - yeah okay, there is a huge philosophical discussion about the issue. DEFINITION OF POLITICS: some understand politics as the “agglomeration of preferences” (Schumpeter et al.); others understand it as a deliberative space (29:30)

It is claimed that the rationally better argument wins. Me myself I am going even further into the direction of radical democracy, meaning that you can really separate emotional from the rational.

well it is for me not so much about the symbolism and the emotional level. it is more about the liveliness of the whole thing. I would be more in the mood to go and join a discussion and deliberation offline than online.

well yeah ... try and go to a discussion round offline ;) It is verry veeery tiering (“langwierig”). If you have 50 people and everybody speaks 1 minute and then you have answer time.

okay but yeah, surely, one dimension of the political experience is missing. Yeah, it is another experience of the political space online than offline.

lets ask the other way around. what can offline learn from online?

time and space are not important, ideally also class and status, even language (there is research on how you can connect different languages). it is often said that online is more transparent, you can always re-read what has been said.

it is also cheaper! THF project for example is at the same time an archive that can always be looked at again.

(my comment: HELL YEAH THAT'S TRUE BUT IT IS NOT NECESSARILY GOOD NEWS. it is the perfect explanation of what is missing: liveliness!!! futility of real action and the spoken word! what is making it “einmalig”, a one-time-and-one-time-only-experience, is going over board!!! at the same time, this has always happened since men invented the written word!!! it is nothing new, it is just a new level. written word, recording, video, internet. in the end: doing stuff online means: using stone blocks, letters, radio and television only in real time, mixed and in both directions. and even though it is true that social media are different than newspapers and television, but only in the same way as they are different from books; they are not so much different from an exchange of letters.)

wishes for the future?

(33:00) we are working against the “fragmentation of the political space”, an argument that is often put forward: we move inside a bubble with our algorithms where we only talk with people who have the same attitude / opinion anyways. and that at the same time the experience is fragmented on the internet over sooo many sites etc.

So we are working on the new version of our software: (33:40) people should be able to embed the software. so say it is working on one server and than you can have “iframes”. so this would mean in the end that people could participate in one and the same discussions through many different channels and networks.

the biggest goal of course is that we promote and push the concept of liquid democracy in the world.

DELEGATED VOTING:

the tentos project is going in this direction. so authenticated user accounts with which you can decide upon “smaller” issues.

so far there are unfortunately almost no examples of where delegated voting was really used. so the delegation of votes is from a legal point not possible. (there is some research about it 35:40); in the economy (bourse rated companies have delegated voting already).

I am writing my phd thesis on: (36:00) the relation of democracy concept with the software. one of my assumptions is that our understanding of democracy is translated into software, and vice versa the possibilities of online software change our perception of democracy.

so how the software looks is influenced by us of course and by our project partners. plus there may be a discrepancy between how the software is meant to be, how it actually is and how it is used in practice.

where is delegation possible? aaahm. yeah. so the projects we had so far there was no delegation. so that is also why we are not developing further the feature! so we have now one project where it will be used but yeah ... our work is mostly about generating money for the kind of projects that allow us to develop what we are doing - so its a mix of our wishes and the jobs we get the money for.

so again focusing on our thesis. what are the best / most creative ways online to engage people.

so yeah, how do i reach the people? a good balance of different channels for participation, online and offline is important.

the people you reach - what is the best way for them? how does the message have to be:

VERBINDLICHKEIT! “binding” (but he means even more “effective”) - I have to know what do I use my time for and what may be the effect of using my time. This is why local projects and programmes are the most effective!

for whom is participation more important? for the city or the citizens?

I WOULD SAY, FOR THE CITIZENS. WE DEVELOP THE SOFTWARE from the perspective of and FOR THE PEOPLE. For them its about creating / changing their environment. Well the city is actually the

representation of the citizens. and she has the task to represent the citizens opinion. so for berlin it is important also to ask the citizens again - such as in the case of tempelhofer feld.

do you see participation as something useful or rather as a dimension of life, a way of existence?

I think the efficiency argument is important; and its “lucky byproducts” that help selling it etc.. But my personal opinion is that NORMATIVELY participation comes first!

are you financed by the city?

JUP. Ursula Renka responsible for the masterplan of the senate, now she is still responsible for the project and passed it on to Tillmann Heuser.

USEFUL LINK: ARTICLE SÜDDEUTSCHE <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/buergerbeteiligung-am-tempelhofer-feld-die-gestaltung-der-leere-1.2380613-2>

article on eparticipation written by a ladie from zebralog

<http://www.digital-development-debates.org/issue-12-power--top-down--more-top-down-participation-please.html>

Berlin / Transcript Interview / Philipp Wurm/ 15.08.2015

the first thing I would like to ask is what do you understand as citizenship? and how it is understood here in Berlin

So first of all Berlin is a good city to understand the concept because there is a long tradition of civic participation (also in the sense of activism). Starting with the Häuserkämpfe here (comparable to Frankfurt). So first of all: the concept and actual initiatives are falling on very fertile ground here in Berlin.

(see contradiction to Brües “it is not very popular in our society”)

Okay, and what I understand as citizenship: The main point is that citizenship goes beyond the “duties” of a citizen: beyond reading and being informed about political issues (in the city) by the media (OF COURSE, SAYS THE JOURNALIST), and beyond election; and that you engage actively! maybe to participate or to initiate! (example skyscraper settlement) (02:00)

beyond the “formal duties” of the citizen (02:15)

which projects come to your mind when thinking about civic participation

one big issue was the Rekommunalisierung of the Wasserwerke (watersupply of Berlin). AND what currently is a huuuuge issue is the whole debate around gentrification, explosion of the rent prices;

(we order water and beer (03:20))

it is as follows, many activists come from the milieu around Kottbusser Tor (hipster kiez in Berlin) rents go up, tourists, many old renters (20-30 years) cannot afford the rents anymore but want to stay because they like it. From this emerged the idea to have a “Mietenvolksentscheid” (petition, decision of the people comparable to THF) - this is something that is bothering the Senate and giving the politicians “cold feet” because they fear that something like the THF happens again! Pressure!

maybe they would loose the case; the model of politics “Politikmodell” would “go bathing” and the one of the citizens would win - which would mean a return to social housing, which would mean maybe a “Mietpreisbremse” (a break for rising rents, maximum price raise rate or something like this); and buying back apartments that were sold to investors in the past.

so this is a really interesting thing because the activists get more and more “Rückenwind” - because it is likely now that the activists will collect enough voices to counter the politics of the senate.

how do the politicians deal with that? counter campaigning or embracement (to take out the wind)?

I believe that they learned from the “desaster” of the THF (plan was to build shit on the outer ring of the field; this was countered by the initiative “100% THF”) So they learned from this and now are strategically about to say “we want to make a compromise” “we are going towards you, stretching our hands”. So they hope to have a united law proposal to avoid a petition / Volksentscheid

but the activists right now say “no, we are not up for negotiations” because they know that perhaps the concept would be “entkernt” (taking out the core of a fruit). So now it seems like shit is going down. There

will be a proposal and the senate will try to “discredit” the proposal. Scaring citizens: aaaah tax money is going to waste, and costs will explode (“Kostenexplosion”)

how again do the activists react right now? and second, how are the strategies of the activists to collect signatures? any creative attempts?

well the activists, i would say are very smart! (09:00) 1. they know that (as a tendency) they have the media “on their side” (later he will make clear that to say this is a little too much), especially in a city like Berlin.

journalists have the tendency, not always but often, to take the side of the “Entrechteten” (the ones falling victim to injustice) - (in other words, David vs. Goliath) - and the activists of course know that very well! (an exception are maybe the media belonging to Axel Springer Verlag (they have a very large print edition 200.000 * Morgenpost vs. 40.000 Zitty).

and in a city like Berlin this is again more common than in Düsseldorf, Stuttgart or München. This is what they know to use. They have a nice website, they play on social media channels, they regularly invite the press for a conference etc. Extremely Professional Level that is not less professional than the administration - sometimes even more professional. But this is really typical for Berlin (not representative for whole Germany)

Have you had an interview with any of those guys? Are they moving on the factual level (Sachebene) or is it rather going in the direction of the Wutbürger (raging citizen) and more on the emotional level?

(11:30) Well I think that in the end the people can “durchsetzen” who are working on a rational level and professionally. But I have also heard and seen that there are also people who are doing an ego-trip (“Egoshow”), especially in the beginning. And that goes back to their personal narcissism (Narzismus). But I think that in the end people are successful who work on a factual level (Sachebene). People who engage are mostly people who not only represent an opinion (in the sense of something that can easily change) like the “mob” on the street (not meant in a racist way but just using ordinary language in German). And I dont want to say this is a distinction between “Akademiker” (people who have a university degree) and Nicht-Akademiker. But I just mean that those guys are really able to think and develop a grounded position. (12:30) People who “can think” (!!!!!!!!!!!!! ARENDT BRATE!!!!)

So also in the case of the renting issue. Mietenvolksentscheid. That are also people who - I would say - know that it is harmful to swing the polemical bat (Keule schwingen). So they dont use numbers in a manipulative way! They really try to be self-critical!

This is particularly interesting here because now in the proposal for the proposal of a law there is “grobe handwerklicher Fehler” (a mistake of the worker that should not happen if you are a pro at what your doing). There is one passage that would allow the rents of publicly subsidised rents to be too high - they did not take into account enough the “Vergleichsmieten” (comparable rent level). This is a problem because it is a subsidy to private people / companies renting out. So the subsidy would be too high. So this is perfect for the senate because they can say now: SEE, YOU CANNOT EVEN CALCULATE AND IF YOU WOULD DECIDE THE TAX MONEY OF THE CITIZENS WOULD GO TO WASTE (lets keep in mind that Berlin is in huuuuuge debt!) (14:30)

So now the cool thing is: they are open to acknowledge the mistake and say “hey lets improve it”. but now they cannot change it anymore. So this is where the participatory initiatives are behind, experiencing a lack - while they may be better at social media stuff, they are behind in professional expertise at times.

... yeah of course, they are not payed to deal with that shit 40 hours per week ...

lets go back to the role of the media: how is the issue discussed and perceived in the newspapers, among journalists (Redaktion)?

So first of all, there is not the attitude of: hey, we are of course on their side because we hang around with them anyways or because we are antiste or whatever - it is not blind trust or unreasoned alliance. We journalists really think: is that responsible / reasonable what they are proposing? But yeah, in a city like Berlin we mostly really arrive at the conclusion: it is reasonable - and then citizen participation makes sense. But of course this is something that still works in front of your own “perspective on the world” (kurz vor 17:00) So it may be different for the guys from the Springer newspapers / magazines.

differences to those media?

Well they are simply in favor of the economy / capitalism / free market.

and in case of the zitty? is there the declared goal to do political coverage and spread the word about civic participation? (forum: hey look this is happening ...)

so yeah, i really think that this is a central topic of the journalism of the zitty! And in general the zitty belongs to a group of local newspapers that emerged in the 70s. the claim was: Yeah, Berlin needs an independent, critical local magazine.

Similar things happen in Cologne and Frankfurt ...

So thats why there is a “natural” closeness (Nähe) to the topic of civic participation. And the tendency to analyse the whole thing (and, if reasonable, be in favor).

and the city? what is the strategy of the city towards the topic and initiatives? are they competent and is it serious effort? example: the new portal for participation in the city, and the conference once a year... PRO FORMA / ALIBI OR REAL?

so i dont know all about it ... dont know every side, heard of it.

i think you have to judge the individual issue. In general, its probably small things that are realised in this way. It is less the “big issues” that the cities approach! When it comes to essential things, they dont want to run the risk!

Are there issues in the city where participation would make sense but is not realised?

i cannot think of any field of politics that is totally out of sight. The most virulent topic right now is RENTS.

I think Berlin is the city in Germany that is “the furthest” (am Weitesten).

should it be possible for journalists to have a clear opinion?

This is a burning issue - should the journalist also be allowed to be an activist? There is a burning discussion. And I think there should be both - activist journalism and neutral debate. It wouldn't make sense to try to deny or forbid this.

What we are talking about is not just "opinion"; it is more about a political attitude that runs through the whole work of the journalist like a red thread! (REAAAALLY IMPORTANT POINT!!!)

how potent are media articles? the written word? can it trigger political engagement in citizens?

well, this is a very difficult question. The first thing is: media is the gatekeeper to the public (zur Öffentlichkeit). only because of media there is publicity. so you can say: without the media there is no public debate. But can you turn it around and claim influence? Well, you cannot measure it in the end ... There is the assumption that the media are the "Zünglein an der Waage" sometimes ... but in the end it is hard to pin it down ultimately!

Where do you see potential for improvement in participation processes?

i have participated again and again (immer mal wieder). and worked as a local journalist in cologne where i experienced those things.

mhhh

asked the other way around: what is going wrong?

so what I can think of is this: you have to make sure that you remain GESPRÄCHSOFFEN and not work with RESENTIMENT! It is a big problem also that there is this "POLITIKERHASS" (hating politicians). this is part of the reason why less people want to become politicians! and this is a big problem.

Maybe you don't see the people saying it publicly because they are not the ones who are sent to the press conference. But behind the scenes you have this kind of talk! (from the left and from the right political side) Which is bullshit because politicians are really often people who are absolutely willing to engage and work for the common good (at least try to). And who have to listen to a lot of criticism all day long - some justified some not.

Only rarely, people who want to make a career - they become CEO, not politician, they don't even become politicians! So this is why the stressful and complicated job is not valued by the people! And the "politician-bashing" is too much!

and from the other side - do politicians have the prejudice towards citizens: AMATEURS! ???

yeah, sure there was a time when politicians were very arrogant and didn't take serious ideas of the people. Well, this will still be the case in the "backoffices" (same like behind the scenes). At the same time there was a HUGE learning process from the whole thing THF. They learned a looooot here in Berlin.

But this is very different when looking at superregional politics (Germany). Where, for example in the discussion around TTIP, Siegmund Gabriel (vice chancellor) is incredibly arrogant towards the citizens!

Brussels / Transcript interview / Myriam Stoffen / 21.01.2016

What exactly is a shared space in the case of Zinneke parade?

Phd on shared space?!

For us the notion of shared space refers to the dynamics that we try to create through the process of Zinneke: let people collaborate not having their usual habits and practices; they might work in their usual environment but with unusual collaborations; confront them with other concepts, methods, publics, territories

Try to temporarily (through project work: social artistic work... which most of them are not used to) take them out of their routine.

Seek and find a place for everybody around the table

Take care of each other

How are the participating groups / institutions selected?

Every project has at least three partners, the biggest partnership is around 15 partners

For this edition we are heading for 24 zinnodes

How the zinnode is set-up really depends

What is the role of the organisation “Zinneke”?

Our role is a) listening to desires and b) help to set up a suitable project and participatory project

The other way around works as well: we go around the city and knock on doors, look for interesting groups that perhaps “the city” (as a whole) does not work with enough

Initiating or helping to set-up a sensemaking partnership

From then on it is about supporting them on all levels: on the artistic level (helping them reflect on the methods, interdisciplinary work between artistic disciplines and how to include the artistic potential of everybody); on the collaboration level (helping people to actually collaborate and work together; important to break out of “classical” ways of working which is especially difficult when working with “classical” institutions; how to set-up a common, something that is a “third-space for everybody”; its micro-politics but its about micro-governments); on the logistical / organisational level (printing, space, money etc.; again its about sharing knowledge and means)

How does it work when different ideas are in a competition? Which qualities decide? Principles or spontaneous?

Depends what we are talking about

The artists are the key persons to propose methods

Every project has its own history and development, there are no fix rules

Sometimes: the partners demand a proposal from the artist or the artist proposes an “entrance point”

Often it is the theme that is explored first and then they go into what they want to do, sometimes its the other way around: first its about artistic disciplines and then its pingpong how it can be connected to the theme

How is the theme fixed?

Inspiration from the last biennial

Small group of people, each participant brings 5 topics, 1-minute-pitch, consensus seeking process of elimination until only 3 to 5 are left which were given to the people of Brussels to decide immediately after the last parade

Voting bureaus in the city for two weeks where the people could decide (on the market, on the website and so on)

Description of what we did where? YES. how to get it now?

Where do the groups meet?

Up to them to decide, happens sometimes where they work, sometimes in a neutral space like the headquarter, sometimes changing

Avoid spaces that are culturally biased or inaccessible or too much connoted

Starting from: what space do we have?

Half of the organisations have a territorial embedding and then mostly they offer a space or they know very well where they can knock

Considering: what kind of space do we need for what kind of activity (noise, equipment ...)

Is there some kind of formal inauguration / oath / ... ?

No, but there is a moment in each zinnode in one meeting where people agree that “yes, we are a zinnode!” but it is not formalised

There is an agenda and a transcript / protocol of every meeting!

On this years topic: fragil - how does it relate to recent events?

We decided a long time ago, much before the attacks in Paris and Brussels:

We decided that we wanted to work together with certain artists because of the methods they use, how they work and also because they TAKE A POSITION

They do what a good artist should do: they question society, our lives and how we live together

Most of the time the political dimension of a project comes from the artist (but not all the time, some artists are all about form), the organisations usually do not bring in so much (min. 31:..)

We seek to question how things work

* IT SEEMS TO BE LESS ABOUT EXPLAINING BUT MORE ABOUT QUESTIONING

Concretely: Attacks in Paris, Refugee crisis ... do the Zinnodes react?

Yes of course, on two levels

1. On the interpretation of the theme
2. On the type of public they want to work with / for

For some Zinnodes it helped to go a little more in depth with the topic; for some Zinnodes they decided for example: we will actively try to work with refugees

Plus: some organisations decided to get into zinneke parade due to the events (two social / refugee center knocked on our doors 'cus they wanted to help the refugees)

Apart from that there are individuals who join zinnodes out of nothing

How is the route selected?

As with everything, it is a huge learning process! We try to make things better / not make the same mistakes

The theme is an inspiration

Each biennial is different

In three moments in the history of the parade we had big changes

In the last parade we had a huge rupture with what happened during the three parades before. We now try to continue to work on a concept that gives us a quality of play / showcasing the zinnodes (artistic performance quality) combined with the aspect of the popular feast (public coming in) with at least two layers (in terms of the public): a big part of the public is somehow connected to the zinnodes and they have to have the possibility to see what they have a relation with and then follow them! And then you have a second layer of the wider public: generally interested spectators and touristic spectators. It is important to reflect on all these levels to see how the best connection can be made.

We want the people to invest (play and / or meaningful) much more in the public space! With everything there is: the facades, urban mobilier, with everything that is there.

We present and invite them to see the “parkour” which we propose and try to “hook” them and get them interested in the space!

It is still a very tough job and quite “light” for most of the zinnodes.

Why? Because the whole process is already super-demanding and a huge job, “incredibly heavy” and “very complex”. So that everything on top that we try to stimulate is “just that little too much”.

A common agenda for artist, organisations and all the participants is already super difficult.

There is still more potential. Nevertheless, there is already an important evolution in the projects: a) we are more and more capable to select the “right type of artist” to take care of this kind of process; b) the mass critique / critical mass of actors in the city that have experimented with the parade already and now they get more sensitive about space

In the beginning they talked about the city center as a stage / scene. For me that was never really the definition. It has always been a “terre d'accueil” where people LIVE. and the parade is a moment in that living space. The parade should not “clean up” and “privatise” this living space but integrate with it. So we see how we can collaborate as much as possible with the daily users of the space!

The POLITICAL DIMENSION for me remains quite “implicit” and “subliminaire”.

Last example: MOLENBEEK: after the attacks when Molenbeek (and other areas) was stigmatised, people from Molenbeek called us and asked us to connect the parade physically to Molenbeek. We had the course already planned and it is not something that you can just change.

Also the decision for the parkour is made in a participatory way.

We consider it our “obligation” to check what we can do and to do something at least.

Even though it has to remain “possible” in the frame of the schedule.

What is the impact of the parade on the coordinators, the participants and on the city as a whole and perhaps the government?

Participants: We create an “inclusive space where people can quite easily get involved in” and that creates long lasting relations between people (often ...)

Inclusivity in all kinds of dynamics: generations, class, disabilities physical and mentally etc.: connecting and mixing people really works well!

Partners: connecting organisations (civil society and institutions from different sectors); zinneke contributes clearly to collaboration through boundaries (territorial, sectorial, language etc.)

Political / Governance level: difficult to say, the message of what zinneke stands for is “triggling down”: the message of “celebrating diversity and seeing diversity as a strength”! “Brussels politicians take that as a standard”!!!

.... It sets an example, “concrete utopia”

Apart from that: the importance of culture in these types of social processes is noticed more and more. Zinneke raises awareness that culture is important in this process of “city building”.

“They do not often say it but ... yeah ... we hear it more often now”

“We are still at the very beginning of exploring this question (how to live together on the basis of difference) with institutions.”

I am absolutely convinced that we have to reinvent our model of representative government

“Building awareness that each of us is an actor in this making society”

What zinneke offers is an experimental space for how to reinvent governance / democracy ...; we must be aware of this.

Let people feel what it is to be heard, to express yourself, to let yourself inspire by other people, the strength of what it is to do things together. (72:00)

As microscopic as it might be, it is something that has to be experimented with on the micro level. That is for example what the media do not understand: they always want big groups and a lot of noise etc.; but when you go to a workshop, most of the time it is a small group!

21 fazari bogado

Is the parade more about the process of “getting there” than about showing the results?

Both are important. Exactly because you have the tension line between this process of being tired, exhausted, happy etc. in the preparation phase and then this very big moment are on a completely different scale

The power of being received with the eyes of others and the energy they “give” (75:00); and from the perspective of the public: in one way or another people feel that there is something very powerful behind the performance they see and this is about human energy.

Urban togetherness

Ephemeral character of the event is very powerful

The dynamics of being able to “step in and out” is really important, that the people are free to contribute or not.

Zinneke proves the human desire to “connect”: people make a huge effort to go out and do something with people they do not know, they have to learn new techniques and make compromise and discuss and so on ... why would they do that?

Brussels / Transcript interview / Charlotte Marembert / 20.05.2016

Can you please tell us something about your position in the Zinneke Parade?

I work for Zinneke parade since 2010 as artistic coordinator of a zinnode.

This year it is my 4th parade as zinnode coordinator.

I participated in the parade as an actress on stilts in 2006 ... It's been a long time!

I also participated as an artist in the collective exhibitions where artists work on the theme of the parade of the following year.

I realize that, in writing these lines, my collaboration is quite narrow for several years. Anyway, I love working for zinneke, I like the human aspect of this work, I enjoy working with this nice team, this is a job that is not always easy, but very rewarding, and which generates a lot of beautiful emotions.

Can you shortly describe your Zinnode?

the theme / how many people are involved / how many institutions / where you are working and how / the performance

The big theme of the parade is Fragile. We worked around the theme with the visual arts as medium during two workshops. The big work to start is participatory creation, to take ideas of everyone (there are no bad ideas), listen to everyone. Then my work and that of the artistic team of the zinnode is to create a show with these ideas.

The main idea is linked to emotions. Emotions make fragile. So we often hide our emotions, our secret feelings to appear more solid, stronger before others.

There are 65 participants in my zinnode, and 3 institutions in the end. We work with teenagers who are in high school arts option, a higher school which trains future educators, and a day space for people in psychiatric treatment.

We worked in a place called Allee du Kaai, a collective place where several associations work. There are many young people who frequent the space.

For the show, there are three groups of characters that represent different emotions groups, and each group has its way to conceal and reveal them. It also has a construction which rolls, a kind of box that opens and closes, the "brain" with a musical machinery, such as a matrix within.

How your work is related to the city?

My work in the zinnode is not directly related to the city. It is related to the city because it's a work with the people who are in the city...

A zinnode is different people, from different backgrounds (age, culture, life itinerary, lifestyle, social environment, ...). A project like Zinneke allows a mix, meeting new people, new places.

Moreover, and this is most important, my job is to create a show that is played in the city, outside, in the streets, which circulates in the streets, which is visible by people who come to see this show but also by people who did not come to see the show. We are here to create emotions, spark feelings. The people are in the city.

But I do not work with street furniture, not this year actually.

Do a show in the city, with people, for others, completely free, is to live a collective experience, is proposing emotions live without filter. The viewer must just go on the sidewalk, which he does every day! There is no barrier like to go to a theater, cinema, ... There is no ticket to buy, there is no filter.

What is expected (or perceived) outcome of your Zinnode?

It is difficult to answer to this question...

At the beginning of the project, it is always the same, I expect nothing.

My role is to build progressively a coherent show, a dramatic point of view, esthetic.

Do not wait for something, otherwise, we are disappointed!

I am the coordinator of the zinnode but it is not MY zinnode, the zinnode belongs to each participant, each giving his ideas, his vision of the project. This show is theirs.

Today, the day before the parade, I expect that everyone takes pleasure in what he does, he's having fun, he is ok with the choice of the same group except not always easy. I expect each leave different from this experience, he experienced something special, he met new people who opened his mind ,...

I expect that sort of thing.

What you learned by building up the Zinneke?

This year, I mainly learned how difficult it is to work with teenagers sometimes ... !!!

I always learn a lot of things, I learn every time a little more human ...

I learn how to do better, how to improve participatory creation. I learn teamwork, each time with new people, new challenges for each partner ...

This is a field work, active, always react to different situations ...

Bullet points from the Talk afterwards >>>

what is important >

- working with the group of people with mental disabilities is really important for us
- this year is really important because there is a new space Alles du Kaai, which we used for our work, and we worked over there two days per week - the first one, for the construction, and the second one, for costumes and choreography, and because we had one space for all our activities we were much more productive and efficient than before

- it is a great big space, open, where many activities are placed

about the process >

- very important moment is the evaluation of the previous zinnodes, from 2 years ago, it is the moment where you can reflect and see what you can improve
- realizing the specificities of the group and the participating team is important, for example understanding of the disabilities of a participating group is a precondition for establishing a good working process
- we realized on our previous experience that it is a good relation in between the mentally ill people and the teenagers and that is why we wanted to do the same this year, but we found it difficult to work with different kind of teenagers this year - art instead of technical students, which didn't fit the same as the last time
- you have to motivate people every day, to tell them that it will be great
- sometimes we are 20, some we are 30 so it is difficult to prepare, we never know how many people will come
- from November to January is the idea collection, from January onwards is a production of the show
- participants join us in October

the evolution of the idea trough the process >

- we organized two main workshops, the first at the end of November with everybody where we collect all the ideas from all the participants, and the second in January where we made the choice of what to 'put in' and with what to work on
- it is not easy to put together all the ideas into one story
- the most important thing is that everybody get the feeling that 'this is our story'
- every year we get better

coordination during the process >

- coordination with the Zinneke team is going on a monthly basis, we work close together, we talk a lot, and the Zinneke coordinators are there to provide a global vision and to help with all the difficulties

about participating teams after the parade >

- there are some connections left with one of the group of mentally ill people and the clinic, but with the schools is a bit different
- to continue afterwards is not so easy

zinneke parade a growing phenomenon? >

- it is growing not so much in numbers but in terms of established connections

Madrid / Transcript interview / Basurama / 16.03.2016

free intro talk ... City is opening new possibilities for public space and for the people

Our ex colleagues are now on high positions in the Government and they are inviting us to do things around the city, and it is a nice time for us, many things are happening

Municipalities are facing different problems.

We are also involved in many international projects, which are of a different kind than the one we are doing here. The process is different. In our own city we can deal with much bigger complexity

Our team is stable, we have interns and people are coming and going and it is really good atmosphere and we are enjoying working

Can you shortly explain your developing course?

We started in 2001 as a group of friends, doing useful things with trash. We wanted to do things on our own. We proposed a lot of things, closely connected to the school of architecture.

We started inviting people to bring their trash or unused things and we challenge ourselves with this material and by using simple methods we started creating great things.

After being supported by our professors we opened a cultural center in 2004. We started to grow and to reflect with the help of people. With other artists and professionals, all of them interested into trash questions. We started to widen the concept of trash, all the way to digital trash.

We started developing the methodology for working with communities. And we developed really simple tools which were easy accessible to people. And it created great results.

We even did some artistic projects, some more some less successful.

We developed 4 to 5 parallel working lines, all connected to trash questions.

Talking about the environment, for us, the re-use of trash is what we think is important. So the concept of re-use instead of using any materials.

Could you say a few words about the general political change in Spain and how you are connected with it?

Well, everything started with 15M and the urban bubble which brought to it. As a reaction to this whole thing there were many social movements among which our 15M movement emerged. It is interesting the connection to Arab spring with the weather element and the 'spring'. What was unique about it was the feminist influence which brought really special esthetic of the protest. People refused any symbols, they were people of the city, who doesn't want to be part of anything with government rules.

Even though the whole thing stopped in October, people spread the energy throughout the city and the change was noticeable everywhere.

Something called the wave was created around topics of health and education.

Podemos emerged and they got a lot of support.

During the 15M I remember that somebody proposed the idea of forming the party but majority was against that shit. People were much more for social movements.

Traditional parties were afraid about this new rising power of people who got its form with the Ahora Madrid. And the change of the city Government really influenced the following events.

For me, the most important message of 15M is that we don't want to play with your rules.

As a consequences people started opening urban gardens where ever they wanted in the city, without asking for permits. In 2013 we had up to 50 urban gardens, which were not legal but without a permit.

These gardens became some sort of a social centers and meeting spots for residents and some even turned into provisional kindergartens.

People even created a federation of urban gardens which provided tools and knowledge in such processes

But how is Basurama involved to all of this?

In different ways, we have gave our support in some of these places. They mostly call us. We sometimes find the way how to do something, we can borrow our tools, we try to link our resources with the necessities of the places. We had to adopt our way of working for the period after the crisis, because we are money dependent but all our projects are not commercial. That is why we try to work a lot in collaboration with institutions, private sector, agencies, social groups.

Networking and Madrid?

I think that there is a lot of actors. With a big desire to change the public space, Intermediae started initiating a lot of cultural and art projects and they found the way to support some projects working with public space. Back in 2012, in the middle of the crisis, Intermediae as a municipality agency, supported us in a project. We thought that it would be great to invite people from out of Spain, like the project Urban Cooks.

Los Madriles is one attempt of marking the city network.

The network also vary from project to project. Sometimes we are working with poor and uneducated people, sometime with well established social practices. On the periphery zone we also work with people from the administration who are professionals functioning as moderators specialized in one social issue present in the area (like poverty, addiction, disability, etc.). Sometimes we also work with NGOs etc.

From where the initiative comes from in projects you are part of?

Mostly from us. In case of El Campo de Cebada they invited us to organize the White Night Event. After we successfully 'planted the seed' with this event we switched the rolls and took part in the process as equals.

Sometimes the idea come from the administration and then it come to us by the Intermediae.

It is quite interesting to see how different processes produce different results.

Understanding of political space?

We don't really know what is official definition. But we think that the space is always political. As soon as we put one palette on the street we are making politic. The questions of which kind of program we would like to bring into the space, which are going to be the rules, who will be visible, all this things that are around the objects as the core of architects attention is political. Following this idea, mainly for everyone who is using the participation as a key word of their work - the participation is the tool to get a final object, for us, building up the object is a tool for getting the participation. It is all about process, and what is happening is what is important. If people decide to leave the space, it should be fine with us. We are not attached to our projects and built objects in that traditional sense, we care much more about processes.

Life is about changing and facing new challenges all the time so its impossible to find a final product. You can find many products along the process, which will be really useful at a certain point.

How you see your objects, as dead objects or as seeds for new cycles of actions? - reference to Jimenez

Sometimes object are quite useful thing when you are finishing a phase, but suddenly when you go through that phase it can became so 'heavy' and attached to the identity and difficult to maintain them or to get rid of it. For example of Campo de Cebada, the objects are so strong (the image) that we cannot do anything anymore with them. Sometimes it is important to get rid of them in order to continue the process. That is why we started doing things a bit less physically connected - for example in case of Autobarrios with theatre festival. We went abroad to find what we are missing.

We think a lot about the role of our objects.

I remember of our first action in Autobarrios was to make (just) this big writing over there, which had a great result. And we always try to improve our actions and our tools. We don't work to make beautiful things, but to reflect on the process. Paintings are the tool, theatre is the tool, text is the tool, etc.

We like to provoke and to invite different voices and make people question what they are doing all the time.

People don't like the unexpected because it force people to do unexpected things but it is important to practice these abilities of acting within flexible boundaries.

What is a good scenario for creating a good surrounding with flexible boundaries and scenario where people can surprise each other and stay within boundaries?

Imagine you are doing a party at home principle - just think of elements

how you invite people,

you need music

you need lights

you need different people, but still not too different, not too many from one group

you need food, etc.

For us working with hands is also a great tool to create such an environment.

The trick is also to make people feel like they are on the place that they have never been before.

How important are you as mediators of these processes?

Somebody has to lead the process, if you organize a party you will be a host but not a ruler who is saying 'who will kiss whom'.

What is the difference in between your projects and parties?

Not so much :)

Seduction is an important element for a success of bringing people to the project / party

We don't have a master plan and the process is open to unexpected. we have a believe that something will happen. We always say this is what we did and what we are about to do here will be something different and something unique. People have sometimes difficulties to work with us. Because we work with the complexity which is based on all the people involved and the end result can happen only after we go through it together.

Madrid / Transcript interview / Eduardo Mangada/ 22.05.2016

Spaces became more and more specialised, and consolidated typologies

Iconography defines what it is on the inside

Congress of Madrid, lions as symbols of force and power

Today there are new spaces, they pop up spontaneously, they occupy the “vacios” of the city, no regulated forms of action, and of social societal organisation

The most modern is emerging groups that create space with their presence

Proposal about neutral space in puerta del sol, take all the statues etc. away, that would open space for everybody

Colleague proposed “tribuna”, “ephimera” architecture; but what about the vacios?

--- getting the article ---

The potential of these spaces is to advance the new paradigm: (re)create the city in the city instead of expanding

Dont use more territory but densify spaces

Society is getting more and more “spontaneous” and they want “autogestion” and they need to find space! In Madrid you have many examples of this kind

Example architect from Amsterdam

What the civic initiatives now want is a space anti-establishment, the initiatives get more professional

It is not a group of neighbours anymore but a group of collectives and organisations

The citizens do not want a predetermined space, architecture always establishes a hierarchy

In Madrid you have many “vacios” that is to say: spaces without predetermined use

--- new article on the table ---

They want to make the jump from participation to collaboration!

What the government is now doing is privatise the public, their plan is a “joke”

They organise a looooot of activities which do not exist in the official repertoire! They enrich the cultural life of the city

Matadero is not what they want!, what they want is the power in one space to get organised and more powerful, what they want is empty spaces

now : batalla!

The proposal from the government: 2.000 people, dominates the space, + the architectural part: the square which is not a square and which is a space without life

Will be a big event tomorrow, big 25.; guests from all over Spain

Interventions from different disciplines

...

The space they will create is very diverse

Now we must not only speak about the space as a physical reality, but also about space in sociological terms

What grows in Eva are ideas

What for him is political space: an idea that becomes manifest within the city

Eva does not want the whole building, well.. Some want, but not many

For them it would be enough to have part, but they want a lot of activities

Public space has to be space where many things can happen

The best is like Plaza de Siena (but he does not get the difference between the market and the plaza ...)

Fight against financial industry and capitalism ...

“So that’s what Eva is all about”

Copenhagen / Transcript Interview / Ole Lykke / 22.10.2015

what is your role in the community?

arrived in 1979 and took part in the blockade against hard drugs

café called "The golden needle"

blockade was founded on the idea that dealers have to leave; addicts have the choice to either leave or go into rehab and after half a year be able to return

60 people went into treatment and 40 went through but nobody returned because to them Christiania was only about drugs

I was cofounder of the commune of "arahag" (something like that) and then I moved two times ...

I have been hairdresser, bartender, restoring buildings, editor of Christianias newspaper for 10 years, working on a couple of books about C., taken a lot of fotos and making tours in other countries and Denmark to explain C.

everywhere I collected everything I could get

in 2000 my girlfriend and I made an exhibition and founded the Christiania archive

but we had nowhere to store the stuff (it was in three different places and not really accessible)

here in the building was a printing workshop (too expensive etc.)

so 5 years ago I took over this place and now its been 5 years of changing the place from a worn-out place into an archive (just fixing everything - windows, floors, walls everything)

also I participated in most of the negotiations between C. and Cph.

C is a very historical thing in Denmark, we have 17 thousand paper clipping

if anybody wants to write the history of Denmark in the late 20th century, C. is very important because it has become symbolic of a lot of stuff

everybody has to have an opinion about C

now its like the little murmaid, you cannot go to cph and not see C.

I have a cooperation now with the national museum in the center of Cph.

they want to make a Christiania exhibition in 2021 when C. turns 50

I also arranged a very big C. exhibition 2 years ago just outside cph.

that is my idea about the archive: we can gather the stuff to make exhibitions about C. and for historians to write about C.

up to now it has been mostly foreign researchers, especially from Sweden who were interested in C.

so this is my last big job in C., running the archive and turning it into a place that someone can take over! (I turn 60 - or 70? - next year...)

is there anyone from the second generation who is active in the community

not really, no.

most people under 30 years are not interested in history, in the here and now

all over Denmark you have these local archives (over 500 in Denmark)

usually people who have got their pension work for free in the archives

so I think unless you create a paid job it is really hard to get young people

I have gotten money for restoring the place

my idea for my own part is that I want to make some kind of history book

everything is being digitalised now, all posters and newspapers...

political realm: consensus democracy; format from the very beginning?

in the 70s it was not called consensus democracy

but you have this idea in the squatting movement that you have common meetings

there was a very big hippymanifestation in Jutland, daily meeting to decide what is going on

everybody can come, everybody can say something, everybody is part of the decision

but it has always been a problem!

there is always some small group ...

in consensus democracy everybody should take part in the decision and agree

it is a guard against dictatorship of the majority

the minority can always say "no, no, no, no"

a very small minority can block important decisions

that makes things very very difficult

especially when you have this very big criminal element like we have

which brings a lot of trouble to C.

we had a very good agreement with the state between 1991 and 2004

then the right-wing-majority government changed the position and said: either you take away the criminal element or we take away the agreement

and in this position it is stupid to have consensus democracy!

these few guys have this great privilege to operate in this part of the city

you cannot get 200 hash dealers to agree to cut down and to reduce the business

as a result, christiania lost the agreement

then 6 years of negotiations followed

we founded the foundation; in 5 and in 25 years we will give 2 parts of C. back to the state, we signed that from here (showing on the map) we will give C. back to the state

that was stupid, but it showed the weakness of consensus democracy

if we had made a vote we would have had at least 2 thirds who would have said: “okay, look - hash dealing has to be cut down”

so this is how consensus democracy makes it easy for the minority to dominate decisions

in reality, when you look at the structure: C. is run by meetings

the third tuesday evening every month there are area meetings, 14 areas

(22:00)

each area has three representatives: one for the building office, one for the economy group, one for the contact group!

these three representatives go every week to the respective meetings and report to their areas

so in reality we have a representative democracy because what makes christiania run are these guys; we elect them

[wrong, they are not elected for a fix period but always stay accountable to the area meeting]

somehow on top of this we have the common meeting, and this is based on consensus

but very often you have this group that has decided before the meeting: we will run it like this and that and then get our idea through

there is a lot of things happening behind the scene

if you want to have a lot of influence in c. you go to a lot of meetings

when you get fed up with all this (for example if you have 2 small childrens that you have to bring to bed every night) ... you cannot go to all the meetings

“it would be better if you could work from home”

it has some advantages what we call consensus democracy, but in certain situations when it

when it is an internal problem without a deadline its okay

but when you have a deadline (reference to the agreement thing) then it is "nearly impossible"

and the only thing that makes it possible is when a small group pushes something through! "we dont care what everybody says"

all the rules in C. now are very pragmatic and related to real problems

the positive thing about consensus is that when everybody agrees it is really strong

we do not have a police to enforce the stuff. when you do not have an authority to enforce the stuff the laws are not laws but actually just "good advice"

can you make some kind of historical overview of these meetings? decreasing number of participants

on the other hand we had a very big meeting monday night. it depends on the situation ...

there was a very strong poster!

it was "letting a lot of steam out"

a lot of people came because they are concerned and depressed about the pusherstreet situation, people with masks etc.

so monday evening a lot of people came because they thought:

"wow this poster expresses exactly what i was thinking - but i didnt know that others were thinking the same"

in the seventies we had the common meeting and something like the area meetings

so then in the beginning of the 80s the economy meeting was really important

all the people from the workshops came

we got the hairdresser saloon, the women smith etc. after the junk-blockade and they could get some kind of starting money to make it going and later they could pay the money back

then we had contact to the architectural firm which wanted to make a plan for C.

in this circumstances the contact group was created

in 87 we got money from the state to repair buildings; not really good news

so we said: look guys, we dont want the money, we want to do it our way

then we had established the building office with representatives (one person elected from each area) from the areas

subgroups: electricity, sewage, green spaces, water supply

sensual organisation for the infrastructure! because C. (map) (34:15)

this part was without sewage without water without electricity, nothing

so there was the only house with water! its called "the water house"

so in the beginning, people had candles, they went every morning to get water, and digged holes in the ground to take a shit

the supply for the rest of C. was very weak

after the second world war it became obvious that it is stupid to have big military barracks in the city center - so nobody repaired shit!

so in the beginning the system was very fucked up and it was important that C. repaired and improved the infrastructure

so until the middle of the nineties there was a lot of work to do!

so the meetings in that time were oriented towards the practical questions?

yeah

in the middle of all this (89) the state claimed that there should be a new agreement

and the government made a new plan for C. without cooperation

they wanted to clear housing in the green part and focus housing in the frontpart

and of course we protested and started negotiations

in 91 we established an agreement

what was nice: the status of monument heritage was taken away so we could "do whatever we wanted"

second thing was that we indeed kept some areas free of housing - but not everything

that means that there are some areas in "dysen" (?) without housing which is nice for everybody

also it said that we have to pay 100% of everything that comes in (electricity and water); before that we paid like 80% - and we did since 91

so it was a good agreement and it produce "optimism"

in 71 it was counted that there were 24 toilets in C.; now there are 400something toilets

you know the thing called "town renewal"?

my estimate is that more than 90 percent of the buildings that were here in 71 are still here - they have been remodeled and everything, but they are here

so we made a very soft and careful change of the buildings from barracks into housing; it was only used for storage - the idea was only to keep the rain out

so actually we built a lot of houses in those houses

biker gang called "bullshit" had fights with the "hells angels" and there was the gang war in C.

in the end the angels won the war, 7 bullshit members were killed

the bullshits dissolved themselves and the ones who survived started working for the hells angels!

so in the beginning of the 90s the hash market exploded!

after the agreement with the state the police had to accept that C. will stay but they did not want to accept the hash market and made a 16 month campaign!

in the beginning 40 voluntary officers, later 70 volunteers

it was a bad "gang" so the ministry of justice stopped the actions (throwing tear gas everyday)

so for four years there was nearly no police in C. in this time the pusher street started as we see it today

then the Swedish were complaining and the police started working again

in 2001 we had the right wing government with total majority

the danish folk party said: we will support the government but we want a change in C.

so just after the government came in, the trouble started

now C. was squeezed between the Mafia and the state; and we make it work in between

regarding the technical part of these meetings: how are meetings organised? who is inviting, who is making the agenda etc.?

nearly all the meetings are regular (first tuesday in the month xxx, second tuesday economy, third area meetings, fourth building meetings)

the only meeting that is not steady is the common meeting. most of them are called by the contact group

the contact group meets every monday

so then most common meetings are called on a monday, transforming the contact group meeting into a bigger gathering

if we had violent episodes it is traditionally the common meeting that decides about what happened and what should happen to the one who did it etc.

now we are talking about having a group of people who we can turn to if we want to have a common meeting! since it is too hard for one person to organise

we have had it before, we will now establish it again probably

contact group: you are part of this ... can you tell me more?

we meet once a week ever since 91

the main purpose is taking care of business between something / somebody / some institution inside C. and outside C.

it is our foreign ministry ...

1 or 2 people from each area

gets smaller in peaceful times and bigger in troubled times

you could see after the junk blockade: the economy group got really important

we see something like that now with the contact group: it is getting a big influence on internal problems in C.

it is actually special that the contact group calls a meeting about the hash-marked because its an internal problem now

it is a constant group, but the participation changes a lot

because people get fed up! and new people are sometimes very interested

you have some people who really really like to have power

they take part in all meetings

so you have some people who say (or feel): we are much more qualified to take decisions because we go to all the meetings and know what is going on

by and large, most problems derive from the fact that C. is divided into two "countries": the criminal country and the more idealistic "be nice to each other"

relation: ... you have a big group in the middle ... otherwise it would not work at all

-> so actually no comment on numbers! <-

conference in Estonia (57:30)

invited to make a kind of Christiania over there!

because we have so much experience with military barracks

just one year before they kicked out the Russians

one problem was that the soviet economy: you make all the windows in Ukraine, the paint somewhere else etc.

so you could not just go out and find everything in the neighbourhood

in Cph we could go out in the night and get material to repair houses in C.

but the biggest problem was that after two weeks the mafia would have taken over

in a way the same thing happened here: we have the strong mafia!

tüdelüdle (60:40)

so that mafia thing is not only a problem for C., it would - actually it is - a problem everywhere when you make it “open” like this

so you have a criminal element and many people who do not contribute, who do not give but take energy; all places I have been to that are somehow like C. talk about the same problems

how and where are the meetings between C. and the city?

now it is very different because we have the foundation

we had the contact group but mostly we had the negotiation group with 5 people and then we got this lawyer from 2004 to 2011

and somehow he - the lawyer - more or less took over

during this process C. changed from being a political project into a legal / juridical project!

political project: if there is a problem, you discuss

juridical project: if there is a problem, you go to court

now what does this tell us?

so in those years C. gradually changed!

and then in 2011 we were more or less forced into buying land of C.

so for me the anarchistic C. ended in 2011

now C. is something very different, it is not political, it is part of the normal economic system

you know I have always been very eager to be informed

today it is really hard for me (as for anybody) to really know what is going on because many decisions are taken outside of C.

the umbrella consists of 11 people, six from C., 5 from outside

but in the daily correspondence it's the lawyer and his office

I don't think the guy is really reliable, he has his own “agenda”

most revolutions end up with some fucking dictator

Tito was alright - in some ways

what about the building there? mayor?

it is the building office that will move in

because there is so much stuff around this house so it is naturally for the building group to move in there

I do not think it will be a town hall

are we nearly finished?

what about the role of the newspaper and the radio?

the radio is nothing! 20 hours of music, working online, not really well organised, not so many people working on the team, fooling around, photographing the police all the time, more or less working for the pushers

the newspaper is really important!

at one point we had 4-5 newspapers; radical left, hippy, sometimes pushers

most of them faded out in the late 70s and early 80s

than the weekly mirror started in 81

all decisions from meetings, in order to be decisions, have to be published in the weekly mirror!

that is why it is very important to have the archive!

decisions have to be in the weekly mirror, otherwise its not a decision

plus you have people writing and discussing ideological stuff

plus all the announcements for cultural things

internet is also becoming more and more important

at least 150 people are getting the weekly mirror online

but still C. is very much a spoken society

people meet and people talk!

for whom is it more important the political engagement? C. as organisation or residents as citizens?

not sure what you mean

my estimation is that you have ⅓ of the residents who take part in the meetings

and there is a lot of meetings

⅓ is part of pusher street who only comes to meetings when they are called

½ who does not give a shit, just comment and talk

compared to the rest of Cph it ½ is a looooot

thank you very much

Copenhagen / Transcript Interview / Bjarne Maagensen / 27.10.2015

In the beginning participation in Christiania was bigger!

'...we rather make democracy at home', and the area meetings turn into a backbone of the community

There is a floating opinion about who has the power in Christiania, is it the Area meeting or the Common meeting. But it seems that the common society has more power

Nobody is elected!

Later in the time, the meetings were going down with participation, especially around the subject of legalization. Because the process was very difficult.

Many of those people who stopped participating they don't get along again.

It is unclear who is taking decisions now. people think that the decisions are taken away from our people

There is one lawyer, he is somebody about whom people spec that he has too much of power, and there are speculations about people with power from Christiania, that they are doing the things 'under the table'

How the decisions are actualized? We heard about the Christiania newspaper and the protocol of publishing decisions in them?

Normally after one Common meeting there would be a writing of what happened.

Did it happen last time, the one that we saw?

No.

The meetings are build up like this that they are really good for saying no, and really bad for saying yes. It means that every time you have to make a decision we don't know what is the opinion of the meeting. So it is a question about who said something and who didn't say something. For example, if I am important person and say something in the meeting - I suggest that for example, and everybody will repeat but there will be no decision, this is quite common. And even if there is decision, the meeting will be so small. And even if they write in the newspaper that the decision is like this and this, maybe nobody is reading it or listening or looking at it.

So when it comes to internal decisions, because there is no police, the decisions could not be enforced and if people don't care they don't care?

Yeah, no.

In the Common Meeting there will be two kind of meeting, the one with the outside subjects with pressures generated from the outside and the other for the inside subjects with pressures coming from inside. And normally for outside subjects there would be some minister or decision makers who wants us to do something, and from inside normally it would be inside problems with violence, neighbor problems, police actions, but there is no decisions.

I don't know if Ole mentioned you the 'quarantine', which we use as measure for aggressive and violent people to exclude them for one year out of the community. So, there will be 60 people who know and only 20 that really know who was the guy was.

Contact meeting. The Monday meeting is the meeting of Christiania. But it is a 'contact' group so it means only contact no discussion about problems with the Government outside.

The Fund, Christiania Fund. 6 outside people and 5 inside people. Christiania is not allowed to control the Fund by themselves, but one of the people who is from the outside is our lawyer. He is there to take nothing can happen to vote us out.

This people from Contact group and from the Fund, all of them i know for 30 years There are not voted they said we would like to do it - ok go and do it. It is a problem to find people who would like to do it and that they will be able to do it. Because it is not an easy job. Today's Christiania is very complicated, because of mortgage and lawns and big money for banks also the Government is still here. Before the legalization we just built things, now we always have to put papers into the Government and they have to suggest... Because of all this situation, some people are saying the project is finished! The period of the society of Christiania does not exist anymore, this have become an ordinary place inside the Danish law controlled by whoever knows.

The green room Monday meeting (Contact group) will not be more than 40 people including those from the outside. Out of more than 600 people, and they are talking about consensus democracy, there is no such a thing as consensus democracy.

What are the main reasons for people to be fed up, is there no urge in people to change something?

When Christiania started, already 500 people were meeting here and it grew up to 700 people. Nobody had control of these people, but the little group of about 100 people who had this power to control the society. So many people were mentally ill and pushers and drinking and smoking people they don't participate. We never could allowed the participation of those people who had issues. And all these years we have the same or similar group of up to 100 people who actually participate. If you make election here nobody will come, not only to vote but also to be elected.

The big people, political ones, they can make people taking decisions. But this is not common. Those who are at the meeting are taking decisions and the other ones just accept it.

Then in Area political thing, there will seat up to 5 people, mainly women, and they will running for years. And these are the same one who come for the Common meeting. It is a consensus among the little group not among the everybody.

If you work inside the Christiania in the daytime you have more political power in Christiania.

I was also on top in between 1989 - 1991, in this period I took in 20 million Danish crowns and built a lot of houses here in Christiania together with many other people, but it was me who did it. I was active you know. This people, the leaders, are sitting there for some time. They are not elected, they are there because they want to do it, probably they will be more active than the other people who are there and some of them will be aggressive to have the power. Problem is that they are getting tired and old.

The knowledge that they need to sit in these meetings is so easy to lose. So quickly you are outside you cannot understand anymore what is happening. And this is the weakness of the political system because it is not able to produce the people who can take over after the old ones who are tired. Earlier it was not a problem, because all our money was put on the table, now it is on bank accounts and people are confuse. I don't know what they are doing.

Economy meeting is a meeting about economy. And it is not the same people but the same group of people with the same social status as the Contact group meeting.

There is no politicians in Christiania. There is nobody who knows what will happen in the future. Because the political system is only responding on problems. We don't have the free politician who can say I want to do this and this..

For this reason the Hells Angels are coming here and taking the central zone for pusher street, because we don't have any politician who has an opinion about it. This will kill the society

These people who are in power, the 5 people from the Fund, the public workers who are working in the community with the administration, the green meeting people, these people don't want any change. They know about everything, and they are sticking to the power. Keeping the power for themselves.

I don't know if these people are like this, but I know that in a situation when people get in a position when they can get power normally they take the power.

We cannot change the system. Only those in power can do it. Whatever you say on the meeting, they say do it yourself. But I cannot do it.

When your perspective changed about the Christiania?

Legalization changed my mind. But it was already in crisis. There is a big difference in between a floating ship with the accidentally sitting captain where nobody is taking decisions and nobody is taking control of this society, and now.. Now people say - these people are doing their job, i hate them because they are politicians. People don't like politicians. It means that more people are drawing away from these people who are running the whole thing, the crew will be even smaller and more distant, the crew will be stronger internally and they will break away from Christiania and they will not be followed or understood by anybody but just be decision makers. The politician is a prophet who says I am the best, I want this office and I want to do like this. But we have none of them in Christiania. For this reason the political system will break through slowly. Left back will be the imagination of the Common meeting which will be containing maybe 40 - 50 people and the Fund, the members of the Fund. The rest will weaken.

On the north east, these people they will put up enclosure. They will try to make inheritance of their flats, they will have a car, a dog, a garden, they will have a summer house. They will not be interested in what is going on in Christiania.

In this sense, in the center will survive because of charisma of Christiania. The name has crazy attraction and it will produce millions of reasons for people to come. It will be very expensive area.

Down here they will have enclosure, up there they will make money and in the middle there will be a political system which is not working because we don't have politicians.

Our kids are exploiting the capacities of this place, they will be the first one to economically use this place, and it is not good. How they will do the politics? We don't know.

But the name will stay forever!

Many people say this is an experiment, but it is not anymore. Our kids also think that this is an experiment. And it difficult to explain them that this is over.

After the society had been a revolutionary unit it will change just to sustain itself, and this is what is happening over here. I am not criticizing anybody but I am thinking how we can make a survive and this will be very difficult. I think that this lawyer will be the person who control this, if he survive. He is the one who convinced the powerful politicians that legalization was necessary and also that he is the one who could do it and also the one who was elected by Government to be the best friend of them.

The thing right now is that we have the area, which is really prosperous because of tourism and hashish. It is really cheap to stay here, almost three times cheaper than outside.

Is there any second generation person involved in the political realm of Christiania?

There are some but they have different sensibility. They know that we had been fighting but they don't know what it is about, what we were dreaming about.

What you were dreaming about?

We were trying to make revolution in society. In that moment in the 60s and 70s this was a topic, we were all thinking about that. I was studying on university at that time - history.

We were reading Habermas, Mendel, Karl Marx, and I was told - don't study this.

.... it goes on for another hour but it got a bit more about personal experience, not so much relevant for the topic, still we put out only some interesting details.

- the informal requirement for staying in the community was the active life in the community. those passive were asked to leave the place

- the 'veterans' and the children of the veterans will have the joy of usage of this area until they die

- people are getting into politics because it brings excitement, and joy

- we need active people, and those who are controlling active people need them to point at them if they do things correctly

- the group:

the lady (Hulde) who is power hungry, 'she does not show the cards'. she showed an extraordinary hunger for power, and she is really powerful person

the guy (Peter Plet), he is really funny one. the charismatic person, since 1976 he is active - every fucking day! he is a good guy, nice guy. but they say that the importance of one charismatic person will die in the same moment when his goal is fulfilled or if he does not have a goal, and he will die as a charismatic person. he had

been inside this society for so many time and I can say that he had worked as much as all the others here in Christiania together. He had been involved in all the political process of this society except of the one I was in charge of.

the boy, in the charismatic system it would normally be that the king is followed by his son. but we have nobody here who i can see taking it over after that guy and that women. the charisma of this guy will die.

but the name of Christiania will stay!

- drug drillers are bribing people
- gangs are in control, and i cannot say anything about them and if i say anything they could kill me. no matter what i think it is not good to oppose them
- from the last meeting : first crying, than suggestions, than negotiation proposal
- the lawyer is very aggressive, and Peter is the only one who can say no to him
- the idea of the infection by the action of others
- he is fighting for Christiania without compromises
- when we had a voting time for or against legalization, those who were minority against legalization were pressured from the community and almost humiliated but then I wrote an article in the newspaper calling for tolerance and it stopped but people changed their opinion
- if there is no possibility, nobody will turn political, because he will rather like to sleep