



Introduction

LAB2: 'Different Urbanisations' served as an extension of the Critical Dialogues Series: the New Urban Agenda 'on the ground' since the first dialogue of the series left us hanging with the urge to go into more depth. From 14 to 18 September 2015, the LAB brought together 16 'unusual suspects' in Berlin to spend five days together to experience, exchange, produce and discuss the topic of 'Different Urbanisations'. The week closed with the Critical Dialogue on the same topic, a public event hosted at the ANCB in Berlin. Together with a 20-minute documentary, this publication compiles our experiences of LAB2.

The Series (criticalurbanagenda.com)

On the heels of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2016 is the year of Habitat III – the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, due to take place in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. There, the New Urban Agenda will be set for the coming 20 years. This is an important process to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, but the major question and key to success is how to approach and implement such a New Urban Agenda 'on the ground'. While urban complexity has most definitely not decreased since the 1990s, the efforts of the last decades towards 'sustainability' have not produced the desirable environmental and social effects, and with the current wave of urbanisation under way, we see a clear need to discuss the translation of any New Urban Agenda into local practice.

The Critical Dialogues Series addresses topics of central importance to Habitat III from **1) an unconventional angle and 2) an 'on the ground' perspective**. The topics are intentionally chosen as complex and cross-cutting issues, rather than being sector-based (e.g. transportation, energy, finance). They

are at the same time issues that are either intentionally overlooked by Habitat III or in need of a very different approach to that currently taken. Rather than add to the discussion of prescriptions and goals, this series aims to make a valuable contribution to a more realistic and modest agenda on the ground by applying 'reality' and unconventional theoretical frames to four critical urban issues in order to identify practical, yet effective, entry points for their implementation.

The topics in question are: 01: Overriding the Urban/Non-Urban Divide (April 2015); 02: Different Urbanisations (September 2015); UN Data (2016); and Power Relations/Commons (2016).

LAB2: 'Different Urbanisations'

LAB2: 'Different Urbanisations' focused on the role and limits of importing/exporting knowledge, technology and urbanisation patterns to and from different regions of the world, and discussed how culturally different processes of urbanisation are/should be.

The LAB format combined discussion with hands-on activities as well as inputs from the participants' own work and experiences. The topic was explored in three blocks: 1) import/export of Urban Patterns; 2) import/export of Technology; and 3) import/export of Knowledge. More details of these blocks can be found in the first pages of this publication. Several recurrent issues emerged from our analyses, discussions and interpretations as being crucial for the implementation of any urban agenda. In this publication, these issues are presented by the 10 invited participants as 10 entry points for an 'on the ground' implementation of 'a' New Urban Agenda.

The complementary media to this publication is available on:

criticalurbanagenda.com

import / export

Urban Patterns

If there is one obvious international phenomenon that should be considered in a 'global' urban agenda, it is the fantastic urban visions and master plans that are being imposed by international real estate developers and engineering and architectural companies on Indian (in the noughties) and now predominantly African cities. The term 'Dubai-ification' says it all, and by adding some 'smartness' and 'eco', the mix becomes irresistible. Has urban design become, as Vanessa Watson¹ claims,

“a superficial exercise of cut-and-paste graphics along with copied text to give the impression there is a concern with more than just profit?”

Is no link whatsoever made to the urban reality of these cities? What happens when one 'lands' from copying and matching UFOs (unidentified foreign objects) from a bird's-eye perspective to an all-senses reality on the ground? We can basically 'see' inequality growing, and even though the MDG target to 'reduce extreme poverty rates by half' was met five years ahead of the 2015 deadline, people with their feet on the ground know that these claims are based on faulty statistics or unrealistic definitions of what poverty means. "Set a poverty line low enough and much of the poverty will magically disappear" (David Satterthwaite²). Therefore, what really deserves a global focus is precisely the Dubai-ification (and accompanying privatisation) of cities that are at the same time becoming increasingly unequal, with large parts of the population consistently being excluded from basic infrastructures and public services.

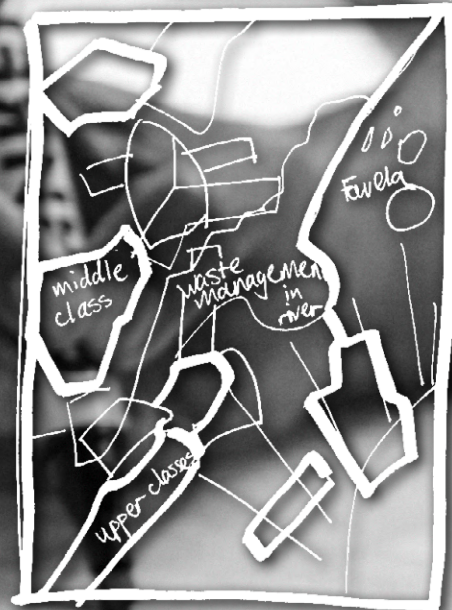
¹ Watson, V. (2014). A new old story. Cityscapes, Issue #05. www.cityscapesdigital.net (last accessed on 27.11.2015)

² Satterthwaite, David (2013). Setting the bar too low: is there really progress on UN development goals? www.iied.org (last accessed on 27.11.2015)

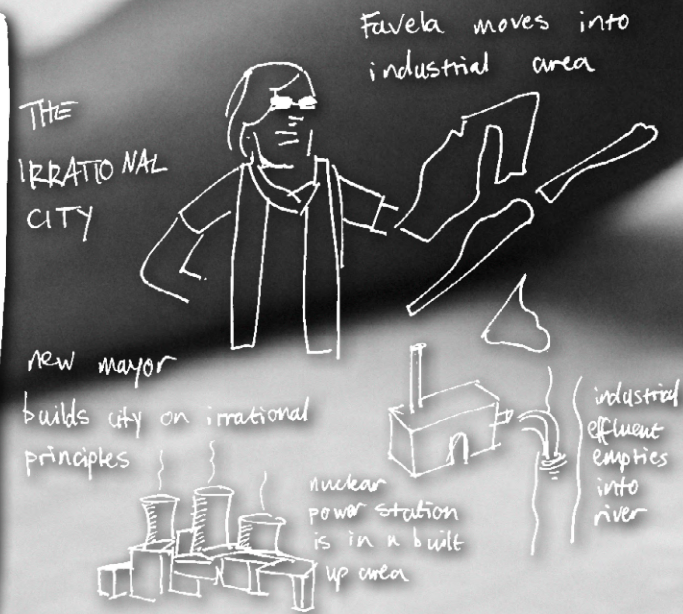
The workshop, block 1:

In this first block on urban patterns, three teams cut and pasted alien urban patterns into the city of their choice to spark a discussion on the import/export of different morphologies to other contexts. From a bird's-eye perspective, it was surprisingly easy and fast to match and align streets and 'make' those patterns fit. As one counterstrategy to this 'surgical grafting', the first team adopted a strategy of '**acupuncture**', which acknowledges and builds on the existing local realities and intervenes in small ways in carefully chosen places. A second counterstrategy to the import of rich districts into poor parts of the city was the '**favelisation of the city**' proposed by the second team. It built on the idea that favelas are community-built places where culture is born (think of Brasil) and people are 'happier'. This team identified the lack

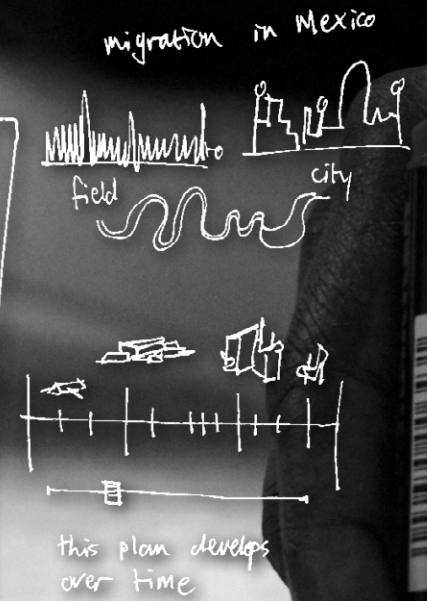
of public services as one of the main problems in favelas – as opposed to the small houses – and made sure that enough services were provided in their huge favela. The third team created a very timely scenario based on the import of a refugee camp into a large fairground in the middle of a rich European city. The scenario ran through the successive phases of walled containment, spill-over, and **the collapse of the European liveable city**, and ended with large government interventions. This scenario criticised the lack of strategies that could work 'with' the shock-induced transformation phase instead of trying to work against it.



the favelisation of the city



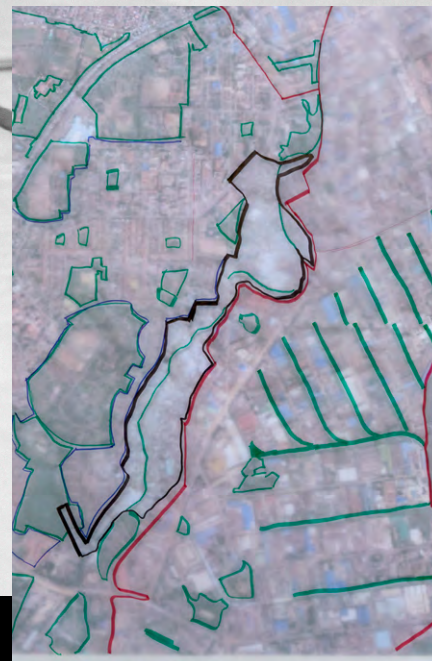
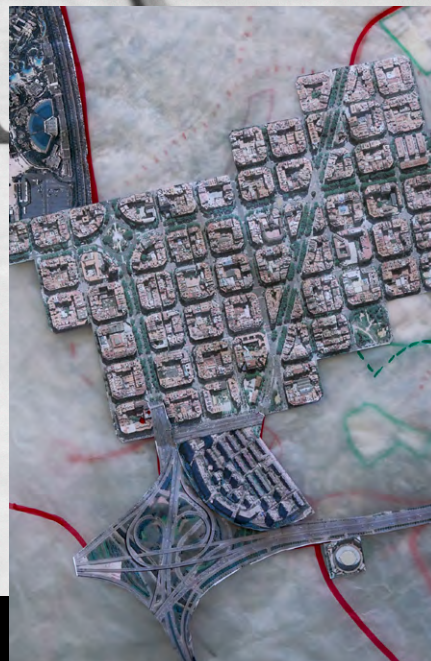
Crisis triggers an influx of refugees
 refugee corridor from station to fiera area
 then they disperse through the city creating social tension
 control-organised housing density is built



how do cities foster different types of social dynamics?



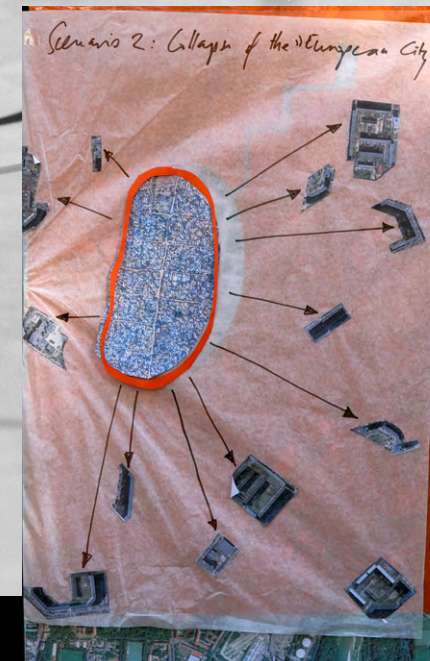
Surgical grafting vs acupuncture



Favelisation of the city



The collapse of the European liveable city



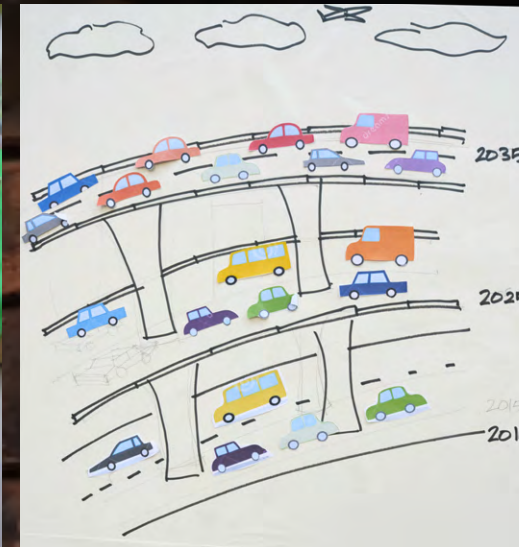
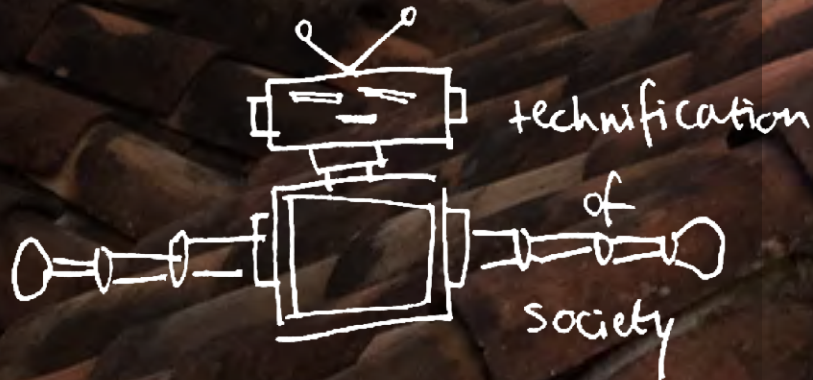
import / export

Technology

Technology produces both extremes of influence in urban reality (and everything in between). At the one extreme, it is used to control urbanites and exclude segments of society from access to basic resources (e.g. pre-paid water systems); at the other extreme, however, technology can empower people to be independent, to self-organise, to access information, or to produce a common knowledge base. A single view on the import/export of technology is therefore impossible and naïve.

The main issue remains the contextualisation of technology against the mere adoption of alien products or 'ways' without adapting them to a new local context.

If we go beyond seeing technology as an array of 'products' that make profits for their manufacturers or are used to create 'smart' cities, and if we go back to the origin of the word technology, namely, the 'science of craft' (from the Greek), the appropriation of techniques, skills, methods and processes comes to the forefront. This also means that some technologies can simply not be appropriated and should be rejected. Others will change their form, use or meaning during the process of appropriation.



“To keep producing vernacular building materials is very difficult as there is a huge lobby dominating the construction sector.”

“Let informal areas have access to services, so they can be included in the future.”

“The global regulation on construction material has to be reviewed.”

“The whole process of industrialisation has blinded us so we ignore the knowledge of what is locally available.”

“Media has a huge influence on people’s preferences and prejudices on the use of certain construction materials.”

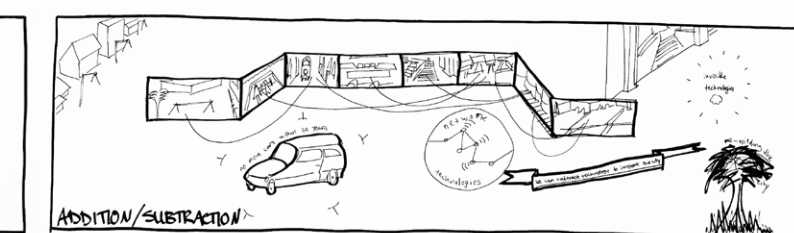
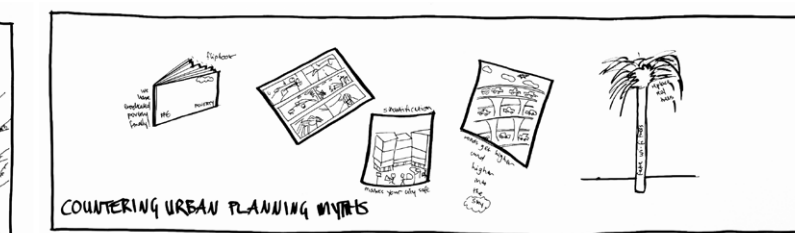
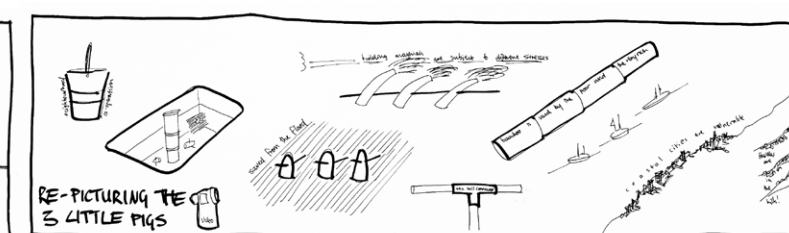
“We have to look at discourses around water – scarce as a commodity but abundant as a natural resource.”

“If access to water is a right, it cannot be prepaid. ‘UN Habitat, are you against prepaid water systems or not?’ ”

“How can we enlarge the concept of citizenship, so that it includes the illegal and informal and everyone else?”

“Where we come from, informality is an accepted order.”

“It is difficult to delink the struggle to access water from the struggle to legalise the existence in the city.”

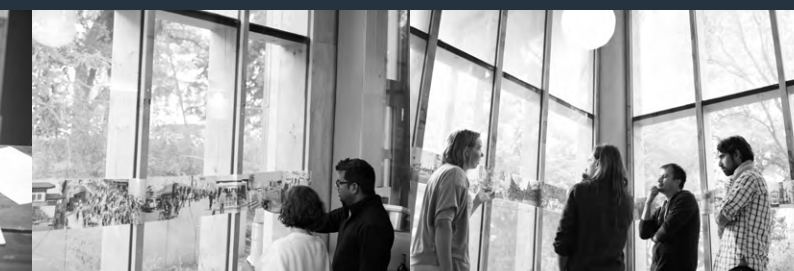
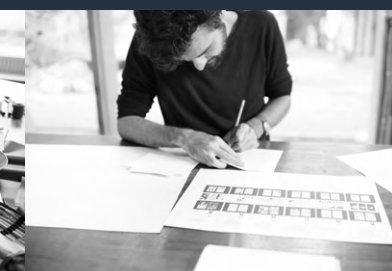
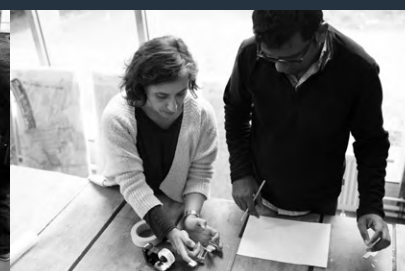


In Interactive station 1, the LAB2 teams ‘hacked’ a pre-paid water system that had cut off access to serviced water. Using their resourcefulness, participants had to recover access to this basic resource, since water has increasingly become a commodity in the hands of private companies that deny access to large parts of the urban population. Smart technologies create a distance between suppliers and low-income people by making them deal with the ‘machine’ and ‘self-disconnect’ when they are unable to pay.

In Movie station 2, the participants produced two new versions of “The Three Little Pigs” set in the year 2050. The Disney cartoon (originally released in 1933) of the fairy tale assumes that vernacular building materials are inferior to modern ones, thus encouraging the replacement of the former by the latter, even if they do not make any sense from a climate or cultural perspective. The 2050 versions had to deal with issues of resource scarcity, waste, natural threats and, of course, climate change.

Cartoon station 3 humorously busted several urban myths that are deeply embedded and widely reproduced in different parts of the world. Examples include: “Smartifying public space will make your city safe”; “To get rid of traffic jams, flyovers are a good solution”; and “High-rise buildings give your city status and will speed up economic growth”.

Image station 4 took a subtractive approach to our future world, contrary to what normally happens when we imagine our future surroundings: we usually add things to the present world. The question here was how to reduce, simplify, take out, say ‘no’, and contextualise the things that don’t belong in or have been imported to our place.



The workshop, block 2:

In this second block, small teams ran through four practical exercises to initiate discussions on the various implications of importing/exporting technologies.

are you against pre-paid water systems or not?

what about corporations?

import is something bad?

import / export

Knowledge

“Practices that become methods across generations become knowledge.”

“One billion people are transforming cities everyday by finding solutions on the ground about how to solve problems.”

“Food is one of the last things that can identify a society.”

“We need to contextualise planning and city growth, and have to acknowledge the existing dynamics of urbanisation.”

“We are always importing visions and objects, but we need to think of the appropriation or adoption of what we are importing.”

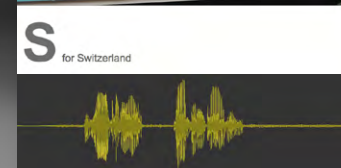
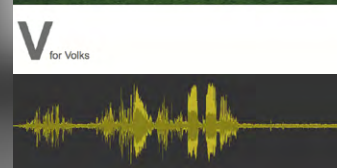
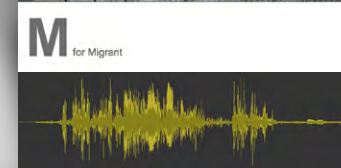
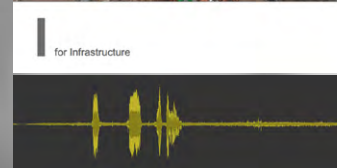
“Import is something good because it constantly makes us question what we have got.”

“We should acknowledge that there is an existing reality on the ground.”

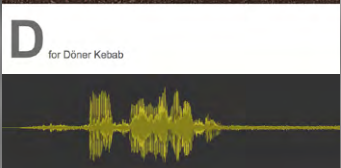
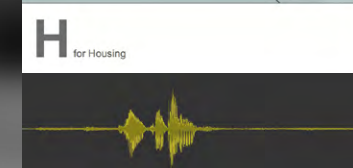
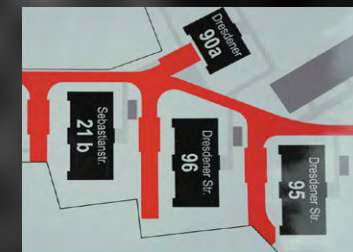
The workshop, block 3:

In this third block we headed out into the city to collect ideas, elements and objects with which to create an “ethnological museum of traditions in Berlin 2015”. We used Eugenio’s ojoVoz open source app (ojovoz.net) as a tool to collect sounds, images and voice recordings to create a joint platform of memories.

What would you import / export from Berlin in 2015?



Memories



how do you react to UN language?

Embracing quality
bridging
addressing
Integrating adequate
Fostering buildable
Deciding overall
Aligning strengthening

Implementing the Urban Agenda means:

Urban Rules and Regulations. The outcomes in terms of quality of an urban settlement is dependent on the set of rules and regulations and its implementation. Proper urbanization requires the rule of law.

Urban Planning and Design. Establishing the adequate provision of common goods, including streets and open spaces, together with an efficient pattern of buildable plots.

Municipal Finance. For a good management and maintenance of the city, local fiscal systems should redistribute parts of the urban value generated.

With the consideration of:

National Urban Policies. These establish a connection between the dynamics of urbanization and the overall process of national development.

WORDS COULD BE THE MEANING RESTORED THROUGH REAL DIALOGUE

OVERHEATING, UNDERHEATING WHO OF DEFINE

PLANNING AND DESIGN ARE COMPLEMENTARY TOOLS TO EXISTENCE OF COMMON GOODS

MANY SETS OF FORMS OF FINANCE GENERATE URBAN VALUE E.G. COMMUNITY BUSINESS ETC.

THERE IS NO ONE EFFICIENT PATTERN SOLUTIONS ARE DEEPLY CONNECTED TO LOCAL CONTEXT

HIGHLIGHTING STREETS, PLOTS + OPEN SPACE HERE MON

HOW?

CRITICAL DIALOGUES SERIES LAB2 DIFFERENT URBANISATIONS

Rethinking the Urban Agenda is:

Embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlements, more appropriate policies can that embrace urbanization across physical space, bridging urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks, moderate the mechanism of the co-production of space at different territorial and administrative scales.

Integrating equity to the development agenda. Equity becomes an issue of social justice, ensures access to the public sphere, extends opportunities and increases the commons.

Fostering national urban planning and planned city extensions. Urban planning understood as a process should be based on dynamics of urbanization and the urban context.

Deciding how relevant sustainable development goals will be supported through less unsustainable urbanization.

Aligning and strengthening institutional arrangements with the substantive outcomes of Habitat III, so as to ensure effective delivery of the new Urban Agenda.

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CRITICAL DIALOGUES SERIES LAB2 DIFFERENT URBANISATIONS

there is nothing specific about it.

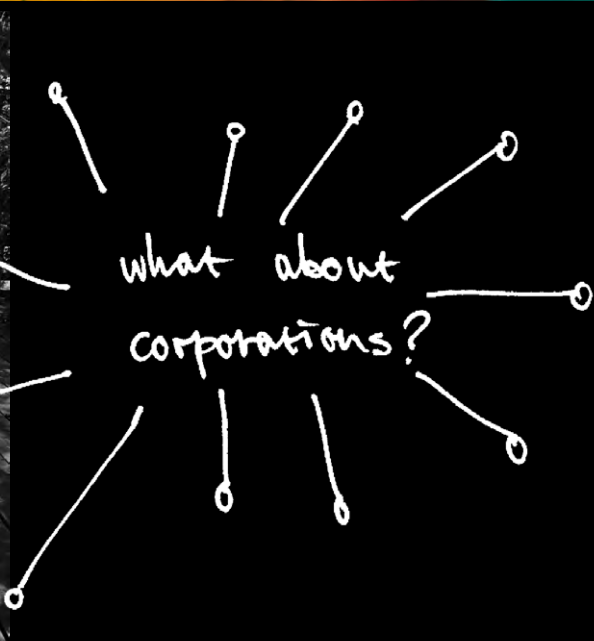
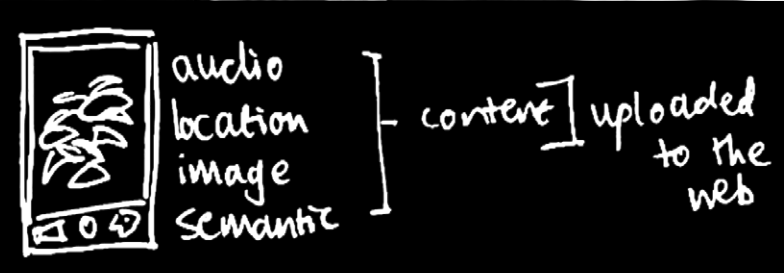
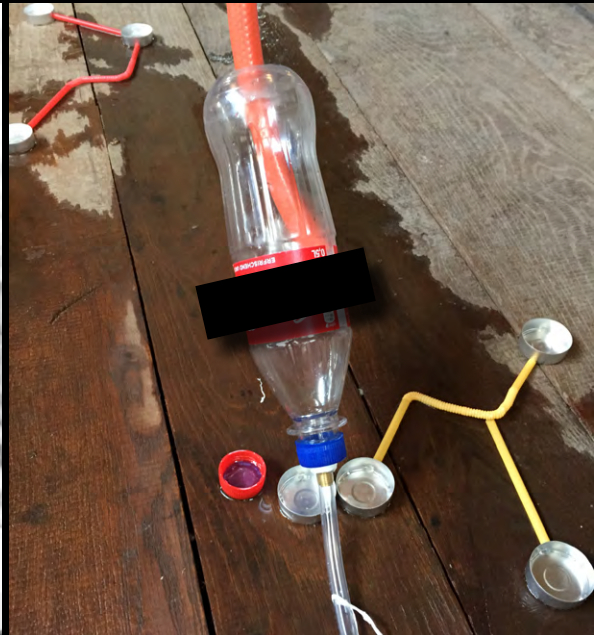
Unusual Suspects

unusual framing of a global process

The members of the transdisciplinary LAB2 team have roots in many different countries, their common denominator being critical thinking and emersion in local urban practice. In the following pages, the 10 invited participants each introduce one entry point for an ‘on the ground’ implementation of a New Urban Agenda.

LAB2 Concept and Organisation		LAB2 Invited Participants										LAB2 Documentation Team			
															
Katleen: “the one who believes that unusual suspects have to shake up the global debate”	Susi: “the one who gets things done”	Juan: “the one who sees connections between the good, the bad and the ugly”	Eugenio: “the one who codes because he wants to take software to the streets”	Sénamé: “the one who founded the first MakerSpace in Togo aimed at democratising technology”	Adi: “the one who believes that planner-activists can change the world”	Vidhya: “the one who wants to close the gap between people and cities”	Oliver: “the one with the critical mind who can see through many different glasses”	Yasar: “the one who wants to make the invisible visible”	Mahesh: “the one who works with traditional craftsmen”	Philipp: “the one who questions the question”	María: “the one who permanently tries to identify and play with systems”	Ricardo: “the one who believes that culture is what cities are for”	Jana: “the one with the camera”	John: “the one with the sketchbook”	Jodi: “the one who can listen, speak and write at the same time”
Belgium; now Berlin-based	Berlin, Germany	Bogotá, Colombia; now Berlin-based	México DF, México	Lomé, Togo	India; now based in Cape Town, SA	Chennai, India	Berlin, Germany	Istanbul, Turkey	Chennai, India	Berlin, Germany	Bogotá, Colombia; now Berlin-based	Olinda, Brasil	Berlin, Germany	London, UK	Sydney, Australia; now Berlin-based





The infinite game of the commons

In his book *Finite and Infinite Games*, James P. Carse argued that there are at least two kinds of games: one that is played for the purpose of winning (finite) and one that is played for the purpose of continuing play (infinite). In a finite game, rules may not change in the course of play, whereas in an infinite game the rules must change constantly. We could claim that life itself is an infinite game, especially in times of generalised instability:

how could we 'play the game of life' using stable rules when everything around us seems to shift, shake and collapse?

Throughout my work, I have seen many examples of players engaged in infinite games. A group of small-scale farmers in Tanzania with whom I carried out the project Sauti ya wakulima¹ provided what is perhaps the most powerful example. By using mobile phones and the Internet, the farmers who participated in Sauti ya wakulima created a collective, shareable and dynamic knowledge commons about local agriculture. They documented and socialised their farming practices and techniques, thus configuring a common online and offline space for mutual learning. I believe that the collaborative production of such a knowledge commons is essential when facing the challenges posed by unstable markets and ecosystems, since they require continuous adaptation or, in other words, the constant generation of resilient, locally relevant knowledge and practices. Tanzanian small-scale farmers are remarkable innovators: they try out every possible crop and technique, and reinvent their practice with every crop cycle in order to cope with complexity and instability. They play an infinite game in which fixed, stable rules would simply not make sense.

But what does the knowledge-based resilience of small-scale Tanzanian farmers have to do with life in contemporary cities? Perhaps much more than what appears at first sight. The economic and ecological challenges faced by farmers are practically the same as those confronted by urban dwellers in their everyday lives. Thus, I suggest that by allowing the inhabitants of cities to freely play the infinite game that the mobilisation of a local knowledge commons requires, the resilience of urban environments might be greatly increased.

Recently, I have applied the tools and methodologies² that I developed for Tanzanian farmers in Mexico City, with the aim of

1. Sauti ya wakulima (The voice of the farmers in Swahili): <http://sautiyawakulima.net>
2. The software tools and sociotechnical methodologies, known as the ojoVoz platform, may be accessed through an open-source license at <http://ojovoz.net>



Eugenio Tisselli

Play the Game of Life

The bottom-up production and mobilisation of contextualised knowledge can be regarded as a form of commons that has the potential to increase the resilience of rural and urban environments. In times when public goods become increasingly privatised under the overpowering influence of transnational corporations, cities may turn to the collective production of common goods as a means of ensuring that their citizens may still play the 'infinite game of life'.



Photo by redresiduossolidosmx.net (CC BY-NC-ND)



Photo by malacachtepec.net (CC BY-NC-ND)

ixtapaluca ●maquinaria ●material recuperado ●municipal ●neumáticos ●obras
complementarias ●pepenadores ●pepenadores hombres ●pozos de venteo ●privado ●relleno
sanitario ●saneamiento ●sdf clausurado ●sdf controlado ●sdf en operacion
●sdf no controlado ●zona agricola ●zona boscosa ●zona rural

redresiduossolidosmx.net



comida ●cultivo ●enfermedad ●entrevista ●explicacion ●faro ●fauna ●flora ●historia ●incendio forestal ●jornadas ●maiz ●mapa ●mercado ●milpa ●milpa alta ●monte ●musica ●nopal ●organizacion ●pyamel ●paisaje ●plaga ●poda ●reunion ●saludo ●santa martha ●taller ●tecnologia ●telar de cintura ●teutzin ●tradicion

malacachtepec.net



visualising and mobilising the richness of the knowledge commons that its inhabitants possess. For example, the project Malacachtepec.net³ engaged a group of urban farmers in the creation and socialisation of an online knowledge commons about traditional agriculture. The participants in this project were particularly interested in strengthening and preserving their traditional knowledge (together with their communally owned lands) from the threats of uncontrolled urban growth and the extreme commodification of local agriculture. Those same tools were also used by environmental researchers, who created an unprecedented map of the sites where solid residues are dumped around Mexico City,⁴ thereby increasing awareness about the chaotic spatial distribution as well as the complex social and ecological consequences of a negative commons.

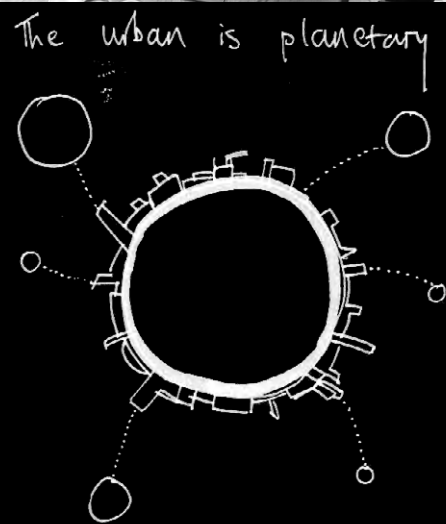
The lessons learned in these projects lead me to suggest that the bottom-up production and mobilisation of contextualised knowledge can be regarded as a form of commons that has the potential to increase the resilience of rural and urban environments.

Therefore, urban planners should guarantee the conditions for the sustained generation and mobilisation of locally held knowledge, as well as recognising it as a valuable factor in the livelihoods of citizens.

In times when public goods become increasingly privatised under the overpowering influence of transnational corporations, cities may turn to the collective production of common goods as a means of ensuring that their citizens may still play the ‘infinite game of life’.

Cities are complex and vulnerable ecosystems: they require careful management in which grassroots participation is recognised and integrated into the larger picture. Therefore, the creation of inclusive city councils that comprise not only representatives of the local government and citizen associations, but also people from the so-called ‘informal sector’ (who are often those that more actively produce and mobilise a city’s knowledge commons) should be encouraged. Such councils must be endowed with real political power to decide the future of a city. They should also be allowed to become an effective counterbalance against the current tendency of public-private sector partnerships to impose top-down urban development, as exemplified by the innumerable megaprojects that are generally carried out against the will (or even the knowledge) of citizens in different parts of the world. ●

3. Malacachtepec.net: <http://malacachtepec.net>
4. Red de Residuos Sólidos del Valle de México: <http://redresiduossolidosmx.net>



Rethinking the New Urban Agenda and why Habitat 3 can't have it easy

While the New Urban Agenda tries to address a multitude of issues from social cohesion and spatial planning to the economy, governance and urban services, what it fails to do is outline a larger vision – this is a chance to define the future of our cities in the context of an increasingly urbanised future. Yet by putting its fingers into so many different pies without a single unifying vision, Habitat 3's New Urban Agenda runs the risk of being overstretched and diluted. So, what is needed first and foremost is a consensus on the direction of growth for our cities.

Here we can take our cue from history. A closer look at city planning paradigms through history reveals that despite the various socio-economic and technological frameworks that have governed the processes that shaped our cities, there is one concept that we have revisited time and again – the idea of designing people-centric cities. Early Greek cities were among the first to emphasise the human dimension in city planning. They created one of the earliest urban typologies – the agora, literally meaning a 'gathering place'. The agora was the centre of the city's athletic, artistic, spiritual and political life; it is the earliest known example of a 'commons'. Renaissance planning also emphasised piazzas as great outdoor living rooms that were capable of transcending political boundaries. This was best embodied in the Piazza del Campo in Siena, which brought together different sections of the city administration at a common urban node. In the next centuries, for every 'grand diagram' that shaped the urban form of a city, there was an equally impactful counter-paradigm that redirected the focus to the human experience of cities – the Parks Movement spearheaded by Frederick Law Olmsted, Kevin Lynch's theory of imageability, William Whyte's studies on the social life of small urban spaces, Jane Jacobs' battles for social consciousness in urban planning and, most recently, Jan Gehl's work.

There is a reason why there are disciplines of study devoted entirely to the spatial dimension of cities. If carefully orchestrated, the urban



Vidhya Mohankumar

Make it Count

Given the not-so-great track record of previous Habitat Conferences, this piece is both a critique as well as a proposal to make the Habitat 3 endeavour more meaningful, starting with shifting the focus to the urban form of cities as a great leveller.

form of cities can be a great leveller. Urban form is an indicator of both the processes that shape it and the needs of the inhabitants it serves. It gives us clues to the levels of inclusiveness that exist in a city as well as the levels of resource consumption. Therefore, shifting the focus to the urban form of cities – especially cities that will expand and grow to absorb an influx of new residents over the next 20 years – can be a starting point to define this single, overarching vision of Habitat 3's New Urban Agenda.

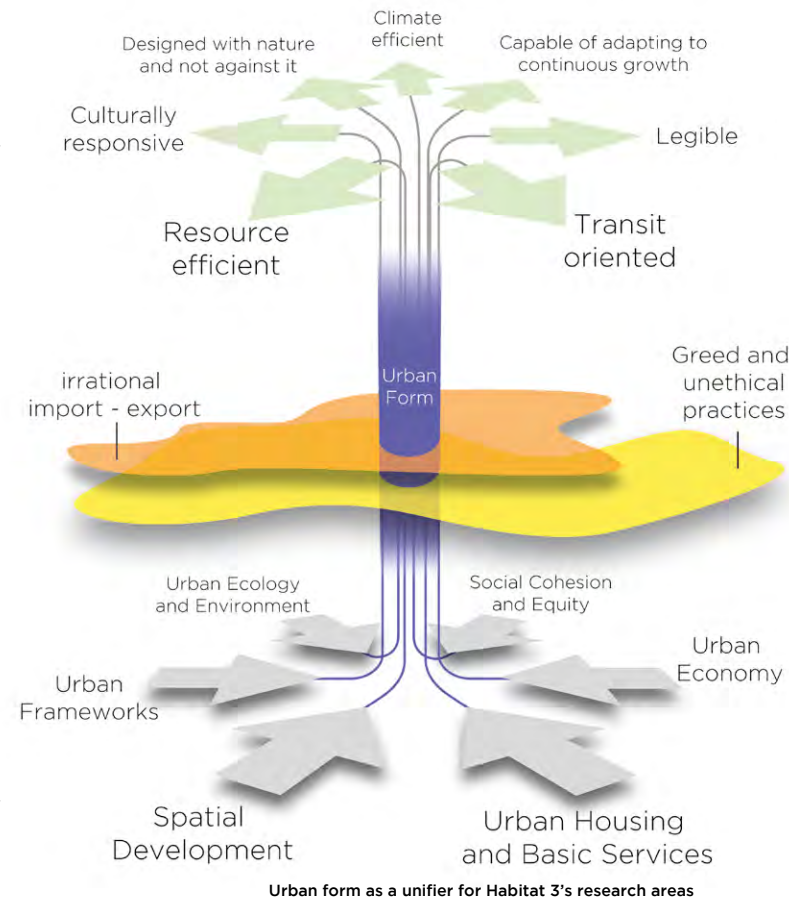
If we apply the key lessons of history, it becomes obvious that the most resilient cities that are capable of addressing the major challenges of urbanisation today – climate change, depleting resources and increasing populations – will be the ones that start to redefine themselves as people-centric cities through their urban form.

- These cities must create improved frameworks for citizen-level participation in the city-building process.
- They must invest in a greater level of inclusiveness, be that in infrastructure, technology, governance or the creation of new socio-economic frameworks.
- They must address sustainable development goals through the lens of the liveability of cities simply because it is becoming increasingly evident that sustainability is intertwined with that liveability.

A New Urban Agenda that is focussed on the liveability metrics of cities through the optimisation of its urban form would hold much more promise for delivering a better future 20 years from now. In his book *Triumph of the City*, Harvard professor of economics Edward Glaeser reiterates that the city is by far the greatest human invention that has fostered, nurtured, and defined our culture, civilisation and economy. Yet his central point is that a city is made up of people, and the strength of human collaboration is the primary reason why cities exist.

Put simply, the New Urban Agenda needs to be redefined around the idea of 'Creating Liveable Cities through Community Engagement'.

But there is a real problem that undermines the realisation of such an agenda. Or for that matter, any agenda that Habitat 3 seals the deal on. Irrespective of political commitments, rules and regulations,



planning and financial frameworks, the two factors that hinder real progress for our cities are:

1. Greed and unethical practices associated with urban development and
2. Mindsets that promote the irrational import-export of ideas, especially with regard to urban form.

These are the real forces that drive the trajectory of urbanisation, and yet any forum worth its salt turns a blind eye to them, perhaps in favour of diplomatic caution or because these are problems too real to deal with from the comfort of a global forum.

It is most unfortunate that cities have become the new cash cow of the twenty-first century and we have responded en masse by becoming a consumerist populace. Indeed, everything and everyone is for sale. It is this greed and desire for ownership that is devouring our cities and its resources. This is exacerbated by the mindless import and export of ideas, again with the primary objective of capital gains. In such a climate, what assurance do we have that Habitat 3's New Urban Agenda will not be conveniently reinterpreted to feed this raging fire by defining new priorities for international development funding to cities. Informal settlements will continue to get displaced in the name of poverty alleviation. Poor-quality and inefficient mobility infrastructure will continue to get built. Agricultural land will continue to be devoured in the name of planned extensions to urban agglomerations. Basic urban services will continue to be privatised. Marginalised communities will continue to be gentrified in the name of some national renewal scheme. And the rest of us will readjust our realities to the horrors that are unfolding in front of our eyes in the name of urban development. If indeed ideas are the currency of our age, then there is a dire need for ideas to address these two very real problems. These ideas need to come from the cities themselves. It is here that Habitat 3 has an opportunity to play a meaningful role over the next 20 years as a facilitator for these ideas to be realised through human collaboration – if it is really desirous of a meaningful outcome.

If, however, Habitat 3 is not in a position to address and curb these ground-level realities that drive the current trajectory of urbanisation, then perhaps it would be better not to bother with an urban agenda at all.

Because if we don't take adequate measures to curb the demons that plague our cities, in expending the effort to arrive at a purely utopian agenda for them and securing political commitment across nations to fulfil the same, we will actually be letting our cities down. Why bring this shame upon ourselves? •

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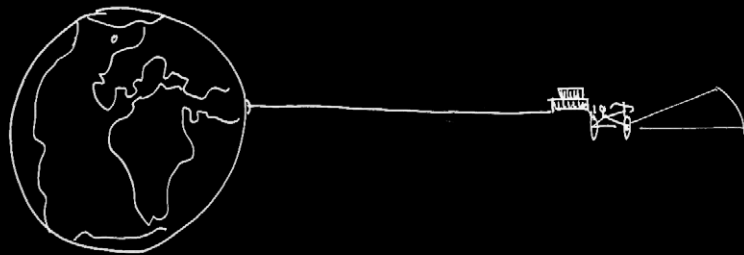
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'Where is your Chennai?'. Chennai, December 2014. by urbandesigncollective.org



Global doesn't scale
to local



Transfer the knowledge of 'making' to our urban practices

The New Urban Agenda proposes that we embrace urbanisation to counter current (and future) issues of development across the globe. The issues it considers range from social cohesion and equity to urban frameworks, urban economy, spatial planning, urban ecology and environment, urban housing and basic services. At first glance, this idea appears to be a novel solution to the problems of our cities, but the realities on the ground suggest otherwise.

From an Indian perspective, the current landscape of development in cities is in a sorry state: there is a lack of transparency and participation; traditional knowledge and history is erased; logic is ignored in favour of urbanisation; communities are marginalised; speculation and short-term investor gains thrive; and the mindless import of mostly unsustainable ideas and goods is rampant.

The New Urban Agenda also implicitly promotes a certain type of urbanisation by suggesting city extensions, street patterns and buildable plots¹. To assume that urbanisation is the solution to current and future problems in this context is extremely short-sighted. Current processes of urbanisation as well as those proposed by Habitat III have neglected the potential of cultural practices to overcome the problems faced by twenty-first-century cities. It is therefore imperative to reinvent craft and craftsmanship, as both a medium and a message, at the micro-level first, in order to be able to deal with the urbanisation challenges ahead of us.

Against the background of increasingly homogenous urban development, craft is pivotal to preserving local identities. Craft is organic, informal, community-based and evolved out of need as opposed to greed.

It is traditional, vernacular, informed by oral processes and, more importantly, always responsive to climate, the prevailing culture,

1. Implementing the 'New Urban Agenda'. habitat3.org



Mahesh Radhakrishnan

Reinvent Craft and Craftsmanship

The New Urban Agenda ignores the existing cultural processes that are the basis of sustainable urban development. This proposal urges us to reinvent craft and craftsmanship in order to strengthen the identity of local communities.



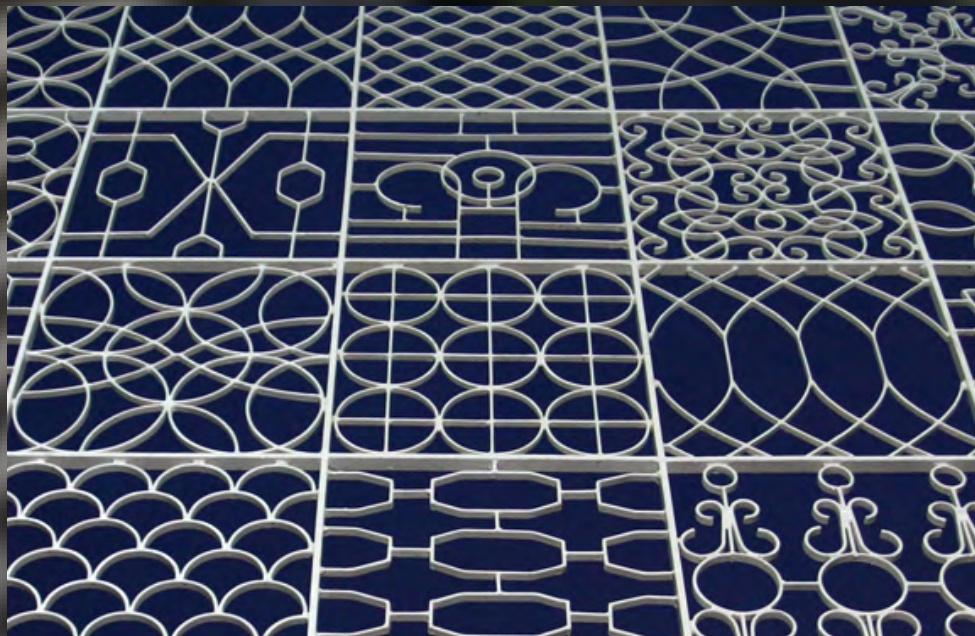
Demolished history



Reclaimed material



New construction



www.moad.in

local politics and social values. An urbanisation path based on a strong cultural foundation that is both diverse and inclusive is essential for a sustainable urban agenda.

What craftsmanship can teach us?

“‘Craftsmanship’ may suggest a way of life that waned with the advent of industrial society – but this is misleading. Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake.”

Richard Sennet, *The Craftsman*

Craftsmanship is not just the skill of making things well; it is also about the responsible use of local materials. The process of ‘making’ is highly conscious of resources and their relation to time (time related to the sourcing of natural materials as well as time involved in the ‘making’ itself), in addition to the strategy of reusing and recycling when resources are scarce. All of these features are fundamental to sustainable practice. There is an urgent need to transfer the knowledge of ‘making’ to our urban practices through rigorous participation.

Crafting future cities

As we head into a rapidly urbanising future, cities should

- Strengthen local cultural practices;
- Build self-sufficient neighbourhoods that are responsive to the environment;
- Invent and support informal solutions using available resources;
- Micro-manage infrastructure and investments; and
- Build institutional frameworks for co-creating cities.●



Who should build the cities we want?

The SDG and Habitat III processes help us to define the kinds of cities we want to live in in the future. But there's one very important question that tends to be overlooked: who should build the cities we want? Now there is a lot of posturing and muscle-flexing by urban governments and mayors, who are trying to capitalise on the new attention that cities are getting in the Habitat III process. Cities are trying to position themselves as key agents for the implementation of the sustainable development goals. While I fully endorse stronger decentralisation and municipal empowerment, we should be wary of false expectations and promises. Urban municipalities are only one actor amongst many, and let's be realistic concerning the leverages of mayors.

Cities are only to a certain extent planable. They do not respond to precise sets of top-down prescriptions delivered through traditional planning and policy instruments.

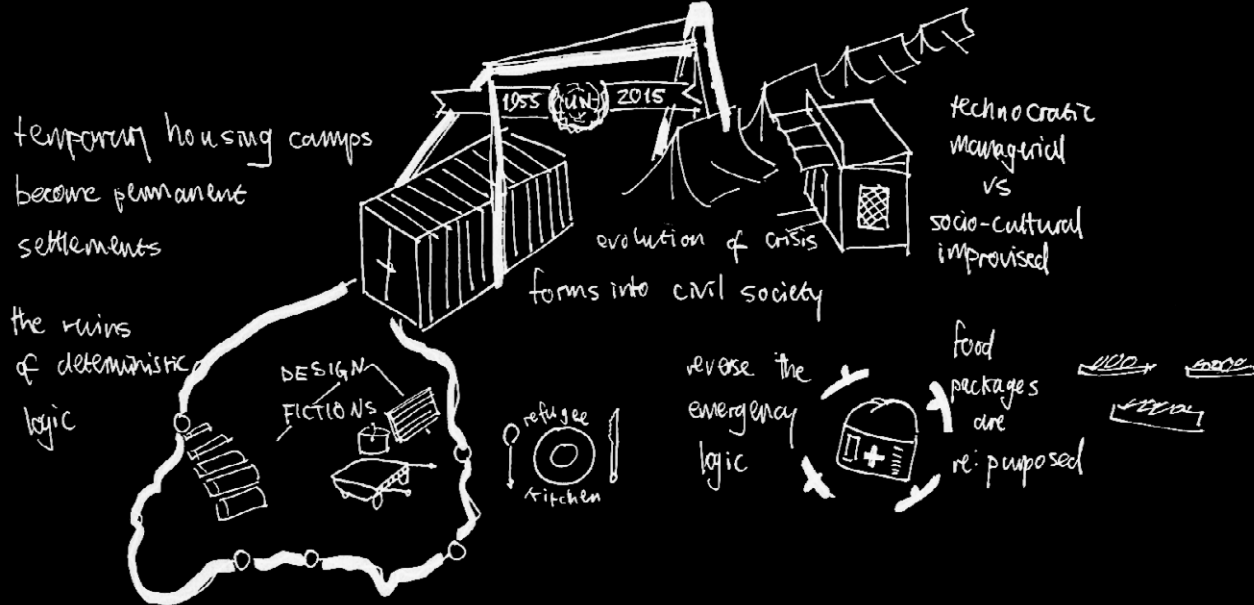
As planners and urban experts, we should have realised by now that cities are much more complex entities, built by a multitude of different actors with very different interests and agendas. Plans change in unpredictable processes and get shaped by forces of which many are beyond our control. And I would go further: getting fixated on precision and precise outputs can be dangerous. Berlin is a good example: in the late 1990s the city was told by demographic experts that it was shrinking, so it began to destroy a well-functioning infrastructure and sell public land. Only a few years later, against all expert forecasts, Berlin is growing again. The shrink-to-fit strategy proved to be a disaster. So the question is: can we understand this reality of uncertainty not as a threat to planning, but as a reality that we need to respond to positively? Can blurriness or fuzziness in planning and urban governance be understood as a constructive tool through which we can live with the prospect of many possible futures? Blurriness needs to be built into the rationale with which we think about cities and through which we try to improve them. This is the challenge. While past Habitat gatherings in 1976 and 1996 urged new actors such as NGOs or residents' associations to participate in urban decision-making, I think what is now important is to find ways of positively embracing the fact that we cannot control the future. It's critical that we acknowledge that as planners or mayors we can only exert strategic influence on a small part of how our cities will develop. We need a broad range of actors to help us build better cities and we will need to develop infrastructure planning, land management, property systems or governance structures that embrace uncertainty. So the question of who builds the city is as important – if not more important – than the question of what kind of city we would like to live in.●



Philipp Misselwitz

Blurriness as a Strategy

We need to understand the reality of uncertainty not as a threat to planning, but as a reality that we need to respond to positively. Blurriness needs to be built into the rationale with which we think about cities and through which we try to improve them.





Lessons to be learned from Habitat III and the SDGs

It is one of life's pleasures to engage in critical dialogue because it is an antidote to most things that come in the form of routine, that is, the bulk of our particular digressions, perceived necessities and obligations, or cheap distractions. It is something that requires concentration and deliberation; it builds confidence and opens doors into the unknown.

In short, it makes you feel alive. At least that's what it does for me. So I am happy I was invited to this event, where I met up with an interesting crowd. Seeing as nobody needed to walk over anybody else in order to build their particular criticalness, I may even have made some friends – time will tell. The exercise was interesting, and hopefully you will get positive vibrations from this publication. I had already written a text for these pages that ended up on the website, and I felt that a mere repetition of this format would be tedious. If the present text, which is more liberal and essayistic, is inspiring, look up the more sober one in the section of critical letters at criticalurbanagenda.de

Actually, my original text is more of a statement than a letter, because I do not think that I have anything to say on the subject of Habitat III that could interest anybody there – at least, I hope I don't. Why? Well, shortly after the workshop, I was watching one of the side sessions of the Sustainable Development Summit on the livestream of United Nations Web TV. Government delegates spoke, as did representatives from civil society, and the latter included some well-wrapped and politely phrased criticism in their three-minute speeches.

The more critical their statements, the louder was the applause and the more enthusiastic the response of the chair

(she may have actually been on something – at the very least the after-effects of a motivational seminar). One speaker, who had helped to auto-organise civil society before joining the UN, had an emotional moment that prompted an ovation – the ensuing speech itself



Oliver Schetter

Don't Get Co-opted

Critical discourse should not try to complement something like Habitat III or the SDGs from the inside, it is more effective to stand in front of the gate and make yourself heard.



was, however, insignificant and trite. The organisation obviously has absorption and co-optation potentials that make it hard for individuals to stick to their own convictions. And, in the face of such incredible resilience sustained by both stout and politically correct behaviour, the cities around the globe, no matter how smart, will turn green with envy.

HABITAT III



All of this is a clear sign to me that critical discourse should not try to complement something like Habitat III or the SDGs from the inside, at least where they become political on the surface. I fear that one ends up losing one's wits, credibility, self-esteem, or agenda. Unless you have the stamina for a thousand and one NOs (and are fortunate enough to find yourself inserted into a narrative structure where talking about something entirely unrelated leads to a happy ending that awkwardly includes good governance – and that only happens in literature), it is more effective to stand in front of the gate and make yourself heard. Yet, the UN will have no trouble guaranteeing the relevance of the SDGs in the coming years – even if not much that is relevant will directly result from this relevance, according to my purely personal and pessimistic prediction. Among an impressive total of 17 goals, 169 targets, and 304 provisional indicators, you can always get lost or find something going your way. That must certainly be relevant in itself one way or another. The delegate speaking on behalf of Colombia during the aforementioned event highlighted that the country's current national peace process involves most of the SDGs – I am sure other peace processes will not want to lag behind, so here already is one match made in heaven.

Unfortunately, things are so complex that there are always reasons why things don't work out – I must say, I fear a bit for Colombia given its track record. This complexity and negative track record also echo in UN Habitat: While Habitat I centred on the lack and provision of shelter, Habitat II drafted a list of related items, since the negative externalities of the phenomenon itself had grown disproportionately in the interim.

The New Urban Agenda for Habitat III will certainly be even more complicated given its aspiration to be comprehensive.

After discovering the multidimensional relations of poverty and complex spatial dependencies, Habitat III will really roll out the multiplicity of the topic – and that will include cities and decentralised budgets among all sorts of other issues. Even if this is all well intended, spelling it out in this manner is ineffective. The UN already included the right to housing in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Why should there be another resolution? What is there to resolve? Unless, of course, you cannot grant this right or governments covertly do not because the market says otherwise.

There is a question of representation related to this continuous reassessment of events, and the slogan adopted by the South African branch of Shack Dwellers International – nothing for us without us – makes sense. There is nothing new here, in principle; therefore, it is a good lesson to learn. And the way to ensure this might be through the message contained in the Billy Bragg pop song “No Power Without Accountability”. But, of course, if the topic is accountability, oops, it has already been mainstreamed into the system during the 13 odd years since the song's inception, during which time the MDGs have increasingly ailed. The message plays on my CD player, but

no one will be able to hold the mass of data that the SDGs are going to shower us with accountable. In order to be comprehensive, you do (not) need loads of relations and indicators that are practically impossible to measure in most places.

Especially when you know that this encourages manipulation and arbitrary appraisal of data all the way up and down the ladder, from international governance and research organisations to local government. The UN will surely learn that lesson in the coming

years. It will also learn that there is a need for points of reference in this maze of goals, targets and indicators beyond the basic trinity – and then it will become even more complex. The UN will probably end up hiring a team of trackers. Maybe one day you'll even be able to book a weekend adventure cruise to take you through the exciting territory of the SDGs.

Just the other day I read an interview where someone from the inner circle of Cities Alliance commented on the policies of structural adjustment disseminated by the World Bank, saying that those policies had been made without sufficiently considering their social impact – what a convenient lesson to learn! I imagine what a sequence of light-bulb moments that would have set off for the people at the World Bank. This is one of the great jests (and lessons?) of the development circus in recent decades: no matter how obvious the lesson, you can always learn it, and learn it, and learn it yet again. And nobody tires of it – at least on the outside. I have tried to condense this Lesson Learned as a stylised fact:

At the bottom of the uselessness
so many projects in development
proliferate around the globe

when they hit a dead end or else
simply close shop unexcitingly
with one last breath and dully

draw the curtain on their scene
with the adjustment of the scales
to weigh the lack of impact in

the last report that's left behind,
the final exit door conveniently
spells out as –

lessons learned!

During his lecture at the first Critical Dialogue about overriding the urban/non-urban divide in April 2015, Abdou Maliq Simone said: “The urban sells itself whatever it is.” I reference this because I consider it important to assert context in this series and construct momentum. Let me paraphrase that: “The urban sells itself whatever you do.” Well, and if what you do is what you do and afterwards you happen to need a convincing justification for whatever (re-)solution, maybe this poem will suit you.●



Olinda at night. Image by Ricardo Ruiz Freire

The pivotal role of local traditions for the production of spaces with identity

“Culture is not only beneficial to cities; in a deeper sense, it is what cities are for” - Rebecca Solnit

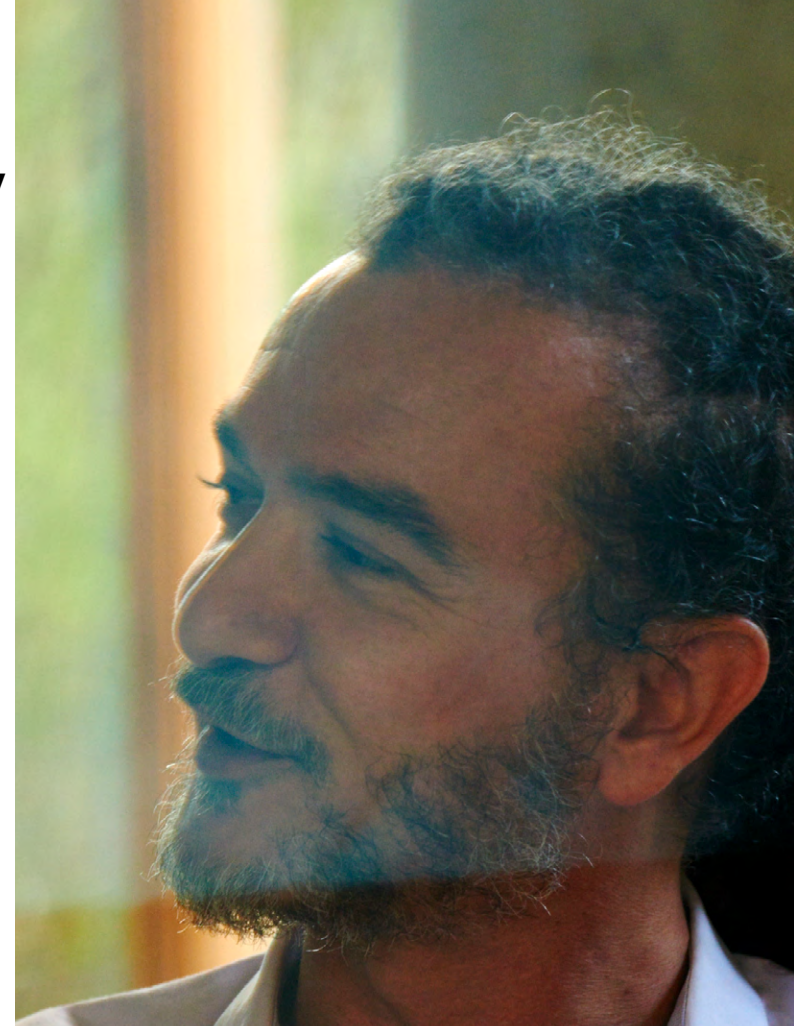
When reading texts about UN Habitat’s New Urban Agenda, one can criticise the language used. Patronising terms like ‘embracing’ or ‘fostering’ appear alongside vague prescriptions of ‘equity’ and the need to ‘assist’ local development with no knowledge of the real degree and sphere of agency for this equity or assistance. When developing policies on a global scale, it is fundamentally important to perceive the traps that language can impose on us. We clearly know that global agendas are used, to some extent, by corrupt and semi-dictatorial governments as a tool with which to subdue local culture and economies.

While pondering these prescriptions and goals, we need to consider the means by which we can accomplish them. From my perspective, cultural expressions and local traditions could play a vital role here. I believe that local traditions are the only possible stable foundation for the creation and retention of spaces with identity. At the same time, encouraging people’s affection for their territories is a fundamental part of making citizens participate in building the cities we need.

We cannot, however, fool ourselves into thinking of these cultural expressions as a creative economy and focus on the commercial aspect of what can hardly be considered culture. To give an example,

in my hometown Olinda (Brasil), it is not the historical buildings (World Heritage Site) but the population’s relationship to their territory that fuels the vitality of the city. Indeed, most of the cultural activities actually happen quite far away from the historical buildings in the downtown area.

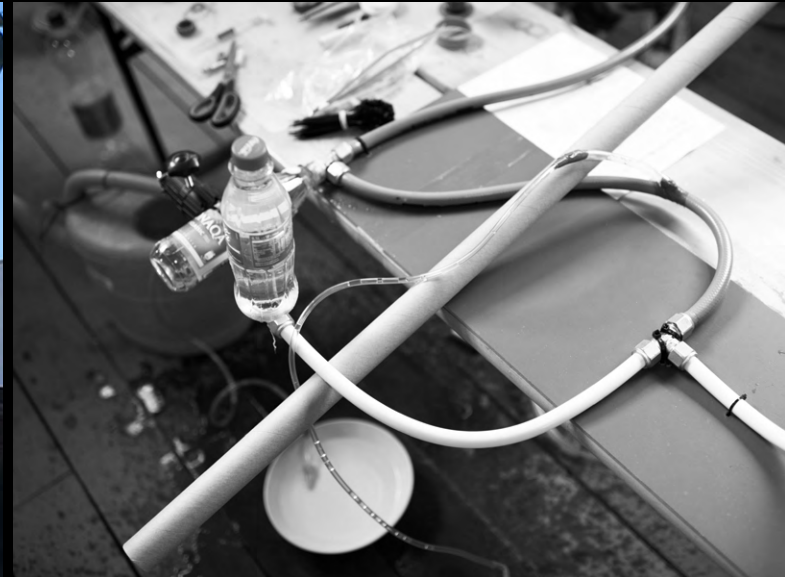
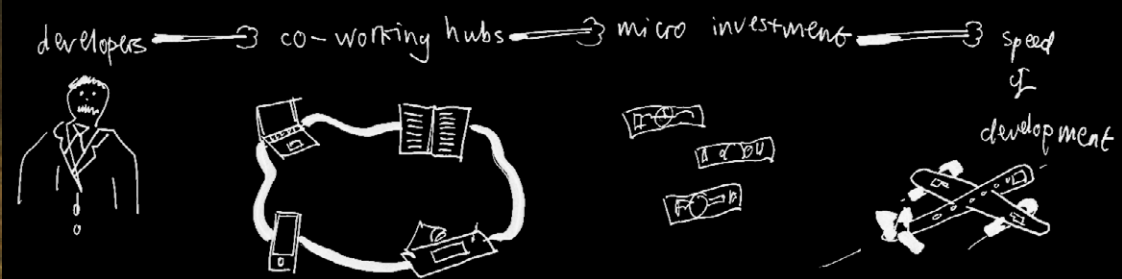
We need to develop mechanisms for preserving local traditions and cultures, taking into account the diverse aspects of culture and its many forms of expression: from growing your own food and producing open data technologies to folk music. We need to creatively keep the memory of our ancestors alive in the day-to-day development of our communities.●



Ricardo Ruiz Freire

Reclaim the Streets for Local Culture

Local culture cannot be reduced to creative economies or historical buildings. Local traditions and cultures, taking into account their many forms of expression, are the only possible stable foundation for the creation and retention of spaces with identity.



Sublimate the resourcefulness of the informal sector

The question of the vernacular emerged in the very first conversations at the Berlin LAB. It seemed to me that it was present in all the very interesting debates, like a watermark trying to make the city more efficient, even in the surprising experiments that punctuated the LAB. For example, when we tried to ‘hack’ a water distribution system, all the ethical and practical potential of bottom-up solutions and informal action came into focus.

All this confirms the intuition that guides my own commitment to the urban question. Indeed with the project HubCity in Lomé, Togo, which is grounded in the theory of #LowHighTech,¹ I am trying to find ways to involve local brainpower. It’s a fact that people, wherever they are and irrespective of their educational level, are able to contribute to the urban experiment. It comes down to recognising this, structuring it and allowing it in order to exploit its potential.

The African HubCity² initiative is a model for an alternative and inclusive urbanisation; the testing ground is a district of Lomé, Togo. It aims to empower poor populations to transform their own living environment using #LowHighTech technologies.

The initiative is based on the values of (1) transparency – rooted in the hacker ethic (access, freedom of information and improved quality of life) and the open-source idea – (2) inclusion (local potential and know-how), and (3) the democratisation of technology.

We identified three things that are missing in the valorisation of this bottom-up urbanism: laws, concepts and tools. To release the potential of the informal sector and its culture of resourcefulness, the New Urban Agenda must contribute to creating the conditions for this to happen.●

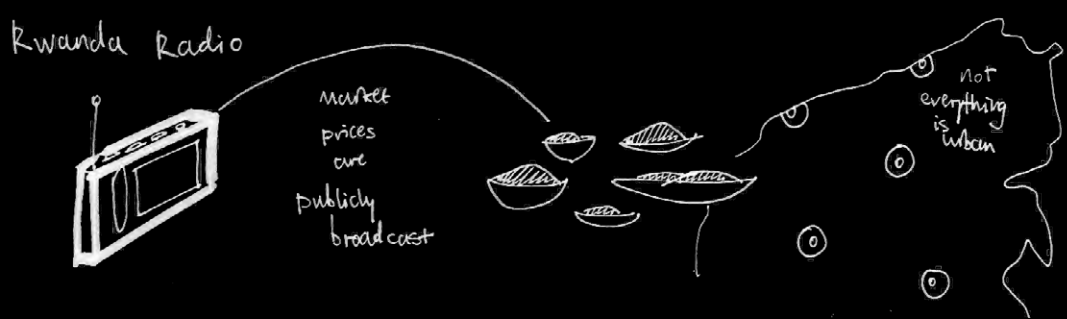
¹ #LowHighTech refers to experimental and advanced technological projects made with modest local resources, for example, the first 3D printer “made in Africa” from electronic waste (now practically a ‘local’ material in Africa).
² We use the word ‘hub’ to denote all kinds of co-working spaces, including Hackerspaces and FabLabs. Those spaces are generally dedicated to meetings, discussions and sharing for the development of projects related to information and communication technologies. In our case, the hub serves to empower under-served communities by co-producing technology at the street level.



Sénamé Koffi Agbodjinou

Democratise Technology

Equal and open access to technologies is both the basis of vernacular architecture and #LowHighTech. It empowers populations to transform their own living environment and puts local resourcefulness on an equal basis as formal planning.



Radical shift in strategies: from simple, static bubbles to complex, dynamic fields

“If there is [a] general connection between complexity theory and spatiality it is also because the former has the potential to force the latter to mean something different.” (Massey, 2005)¹

At least two different models of spatial organisation can be illustrated with regard to structure, connectivity, behaviour, stability and control: bubbles, or closed models of organisation, and fields, or open models of organisation.

Bubbles host closed systems that are finite and stable. They have by definition a protected core and a clear boundary.

Around the core and inside the boundaries, they host a certain dynamic that can be predicted and controlled. The exchange with the outside environment is based on energy rather than matter. In some extreme cases, these systems are completely isolated. Even if a complex environment can be observed inside the bubble, any exchange and interaction beyond the boundaries follows a dialectical logic of arrangements based on conflicts and contradictions of opposites: the inside/outside duality.

Fields are open, dynamic and uncertain. They host open systems that are flexible, adaptive and resilient.

In the field, the system’s extents expand and contract and the system’s core gets displaced and relocated until new synergies are activated. Fields exchange matter and energy with their environment and by doing so they deform and reconfigure. However, these complex open systems are not endless. They do not claim wholeness. They are extremely dynamic and adaptive but do at the same time demarcate limits that can be described and temporally and spatially localised. The system’s boundaries are defined by its own properties, field conditions and game rules. These rules permanently adapt to very specific but variable conditions on the ground. The most remarkable trait of these systems is their

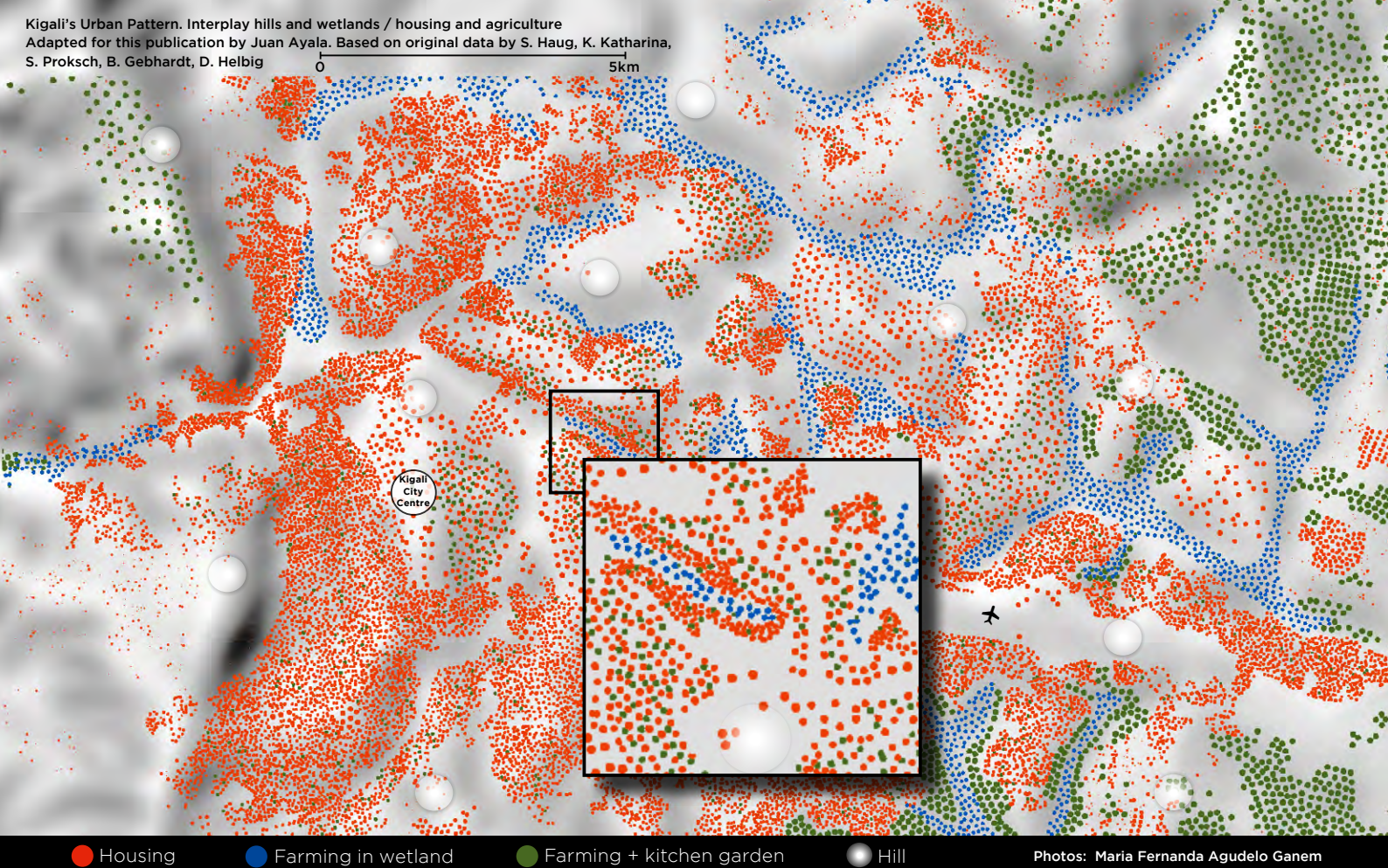
1. Doreen Massey, For Space. SAGE, Minnesota 2005. pp. 127–128



María Fernanda Agudelo Ganem

From Bubbles to Fields

Because there is a strong connection between complexity and space, complexity becomes a political issue at some point. Complexity sets a frame in which democratic parameters can develop exactly because it drives differentiation and richness instead of uniformity. Shifting strategies from bubbles to fields ratifies a possible shift in the exercise of democracy: from one where equality translates into homogenisation to one where equality means the legitimisation of difference.



resilience that allows them, time and again, to cope with the stress exerted by these permanently changing conditions. Open systems survive precisely because of the dynamics of complex processes that take place on the ground!

So the difference between bubbles and fields is found in the uncertainty about the boundary of the system and in how the flows of energy and matter take place. Depending on how these flows and exchanges are organised, they might have the capacity to overcome the culture-nature division.

However, contradictions and conflicts in design and planning happen because of a permanent struggle to address the uncertainty embedded in complex environments. Probably one of the most explicit examples to illustrate what a shift of strategies from bubbles to fields means is the conceptualisation of infrastructure and its relationship to space. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the conceptualisation of infrastructure moved:

from a mono-functional, centralised, often massive one that sought to simplify order and reduce complexity. This infrastructure, highly engineered and rational, followed linear systems of production. These linear systems are closed and finite models and are calculated and prepared for a certain amount of shock and overload. For example, huge dams and gigantic power stations that service one specific territory. This kind of model tends to create geographic units and special operative zones that are managed as bubbles. In this model, the rigid rules of control are clearly imposed by culture over nature as clearly separated categories.

through one in which infrastructure responds less to a territorial logic and more to global intangible data sets and indexes. This model is based on an incredible amount of quantitative research and data analysis. The unprecedented statistical profiling and monitoring of the metabolism of urbanisation (e.g. smart city dogmas under the premise of climate change) produces indicators such as footprints and ‘convenient’ standardisation, completely detaching the metabolic information from the ground. Here, nature provides ecosystem services to culture.

towards one that is based on bypasses and interfaces that guarantee once again the seamless flow of resources and information between culture and nature. This infrastructure performs and interacts at very different scales and in-between scales. It follows

the hybrid, adaptive and combinatory logic of non-linear complex systems. It is sometimes highly designed and sometimes an ongoing design process, sometimes soft and sometimes hard. Examples include self-organised (online) platforms for sharing crops and knowledge in rural regions as a self-sufficiency infrastructure or micro-gardens for food production connected to local grey water treatment boxes in very dense urbanised areas. This infrastructure actively intends to blur the boundaries between culture and nature by facilitating interactions and performance between systems and actors (human and non-human).² Due to a cross-scalar ability, the dualities of centre vs periphery and top-down vs bottom-up dissolve. On the ground, site-specific interfaces are characterised by their specific engagement with local conditions rather than generalised forms.

This model supersedes the purely territorial or purely technological geographies and attempts to analyse the spatial complexity of processes by engaging with their social, political, economic, technological and ecological components. Here space is directly recognised as the physical imprint of complex metabolic processes, and space becomes the physical interface in the system.

Case: Urban food systems in Kigali, Rwanda as ‘interface’

Rwanda is called the land of a thousand hills. This topography strongly influences Kigali’s morphology, producing intervals of hills and wetlands that generate a polycentric, extended urban pattern. This unique phenomenon presents one possible option for addressing and redefining the relationship between the centre and the hinterland. If we think of the centre not as a static geographical position read against an extended hinterland, but as a temporal coordinate that emerges from temporal processes and intensities, then it might be possible to imagine the centre and the hinterland as more dynamic alternating cores in a system that is permanently looking for new synergies and arrangements.

The Kigali wetlands alternate with dense urbanised areas, shaping the urban fabric and introducing agricultural activities into the urban context. The urban production of food becomes a key topic. These interdependences are not defined by an overarching concept but by emerging local connections. They bypass different scales in the spatial, natural, socio-political and economic domains. Thus, the urban food chain (production, distribution, access, consumption, waste, etc.) becomes an interface.●

2. Amphibious Architecture, The living and Natalie Jeremijenko. 2009
<http://chriswoebken.com/filter/The-Living/AMPHIBIOUS-ARCHITECTURE> (last accessed on 1.11.2015)



**No polished texts match the
calculated actions of the urban poor**

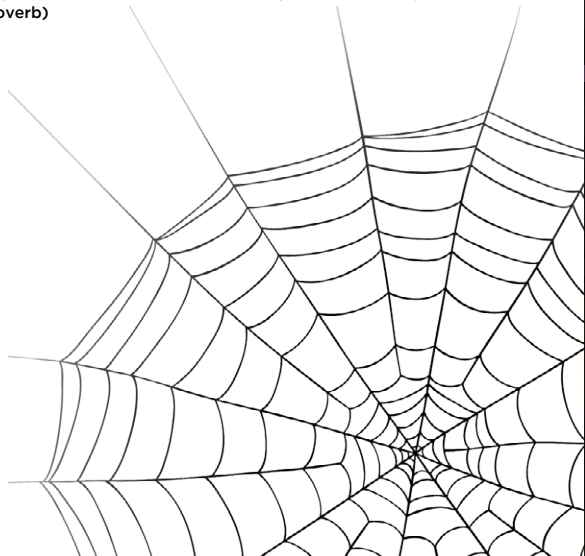
Global statistics suggest that by 2050, almost 3 billion people will live in slums and informal settlements. These statistics are an injustice to the agency of the slum dwellers and the urban poor.

For decades, these slum dwellers have been defining a new urban agenda and transforming our cities through direct action.

No polished text, UN resolution or sophisticated testimonial can match the calculated actions of land invasions, organised social movements, and struggles for housing and services. Yet in spite of this, there continues to be little direct support for the largest constituency that shapes our cities.

What will bring about a change in urban practice? When will we learn to listen to the poor? While the colonial past and neo-liberal practices cannot be easily redressed, redistribution can serve as an entry point to this new urban agenda. In this instance, the politics of redistribution does not only refer to wealth, but also to the restructuring of the ideas, thoughts, mindsets and cultural values that are being eroded by capitalism. By strengthening the voice of the people, social movements and civil society, it may be possible to realise sustainable and resilient change in our cities.●

“When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.”
(Ethiopian proverb)



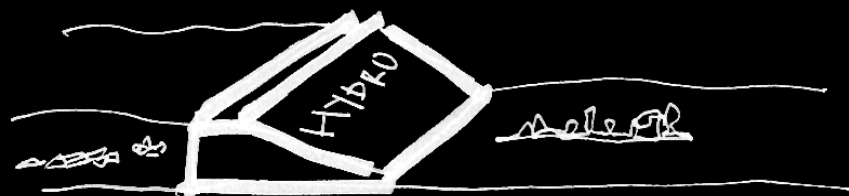
Aditya Kumar

Redistribute

The global statistics on slum dwellers are an injustice to the agency of the urban poor. The politics of redistribution should not only refer to wealth, but also to the restructuring of the ideas, thoughts, mindsets and cultural values that are being eroded by capitalism.



Megaprojects



Mapping networks of dispossession

The freedom of the media in Turkey is shrinking with every passing day. The press is being censored directly by the government. What's more, the partnerships that are being established through legal concessions between media oligarchs and governmental institutions render the press a mere marketing tool and leave us uninformed about the processes that dispossess us of our air, our water, our soil and our public spaces. We initiated a project in Istanbul motivated by the recognition that if powerful actors are in fact taking our land, our neighbourhoods, our forests and our public spaces, we'd better be clear about who they are.

“Networks of Dispossession” (mulksuzlestirme.org) is a collective data compiling and mapping project dedicated to revealing the relationship between urban development projects and the concentration of capital and power in Turkey.

The project consists of three maps. The first map, ‘**Projects of Dispossession**’, exposes partnerships of private corporations and governmental institutions in Turkey in projects such as the third airport that will destroy the North Forests of Istanbul, urban transformation projects that displaced inhabitants of Tarlabaşı and Sulukule, the Ilıu hydroelectric power plant project that will inundate Hasankeyf under the dam reservoir, and the Grand Pera project that led to the demolition of the Emek Theatre. The second map, ‘**Partnerships of Dispossession**’, zooms in on the partnerships that are established by the members of the boards of the companies who undertake these projects. The third map, ‘**Dispossessed Minorities**’, reveals the reallocation paths of the properties of minorities that were confiscated by governmental organisations.

All the data used to generate the maps is referenced to sources that are open to the public, such as the web pages of corporations, the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce database and the Trade Registry Gazette, as well as secondary sources like newspaper articles. The Information Box of each node contains information on the budget, dates, location and labour crimes, if any, along with their references. By virtue of the self-organising software map, the names naturally find their position through connecting forces, revealing central actors, indirect links, and organic clusters.



YAŞAR ADNAN ADANALI

Make the Invisible Visible

To be informed about the processes that dispossess us of our land, our forests, our neighbourhoods and our public spaces, we should make visible the actors, institutions and partnerships that are being formed and map who really holds the power in global urbanism.



3. Havalimanı

Project

İstanbul Eyüp

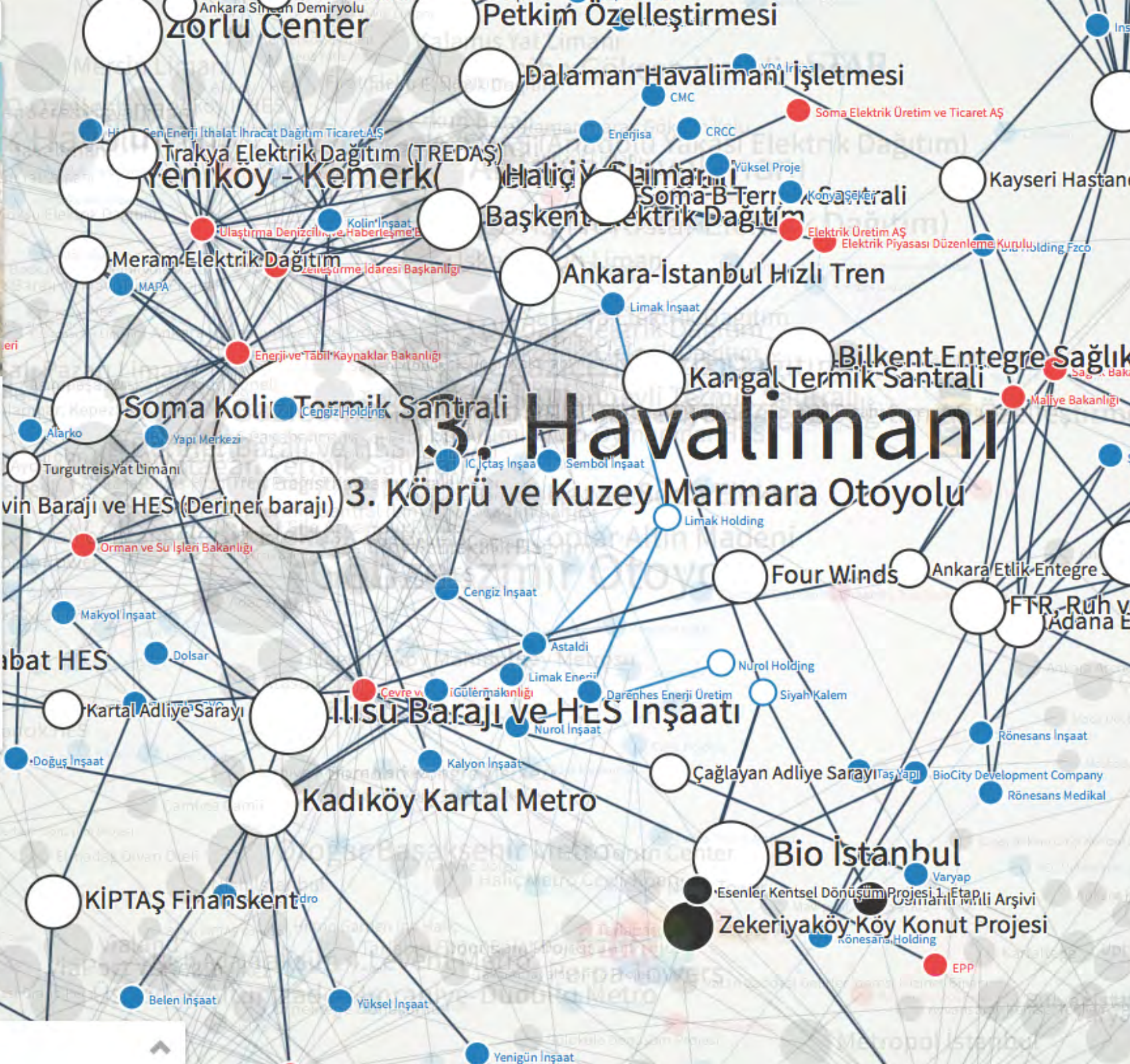
58890 Million TL

2013

→ Connections:

- Cengiz İnşaat
- Kalyon İnşaat
- Kolin İnşaat
- Limak İnşaat
- MAPA
- Orman ve Su İşleri Bakanlığı

Share



Kocamustafapaşa Surp Kevoork Erm

Images from mulksuzlestirme.org

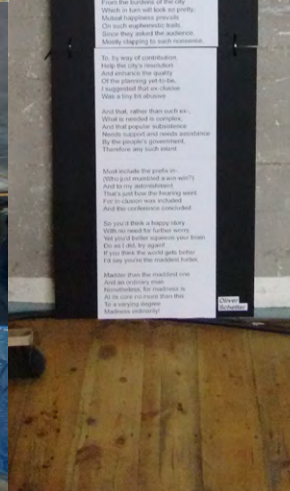
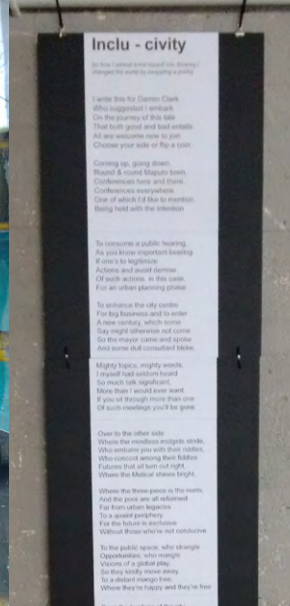
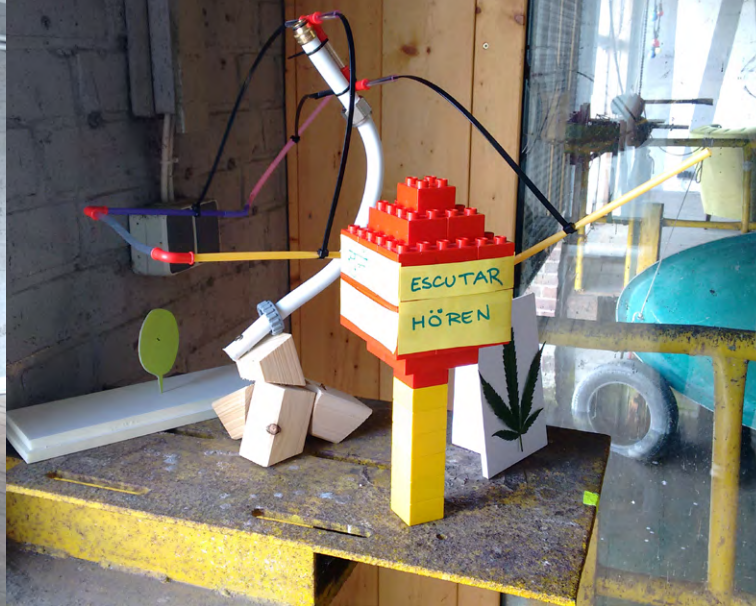
For us, making these real partnerships visible was important to show that it is not a kind of invisible hand that is operating in our cities, but that these are real actors, real institutions and real partnerships that are being formed.

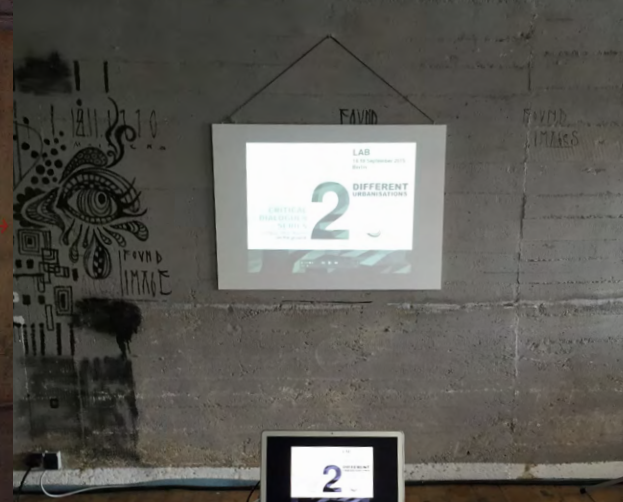
In addition, the mapped media ownerships clearly show that the access to information is not democratic. You can see on the maps that some companies are actually quite central. Some of the actors are giants that are not only active in Turkey but have projects all around the world. They often receive privileged construction permits and privileged land-grabbing rights. So again, it is not an invisible capitalism and neo-liberal system that we are fighting against, but real actors and real companies.

If we gain more control over information on our commons, we can start to sit at the table, discussing and negotiating. Going towards Habitat III, I ask myself if we can come up with a meaningful map that shows who really holds the power in global urbanism? Can we make the global actors of urbanism more visible to the global community? Can we increase the dots on the map from Istanbul to other cities to make the invisible visible regarding our urban commons? •

English · Türkçe

Shortcuts





what is your take
on the urban agenda?

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