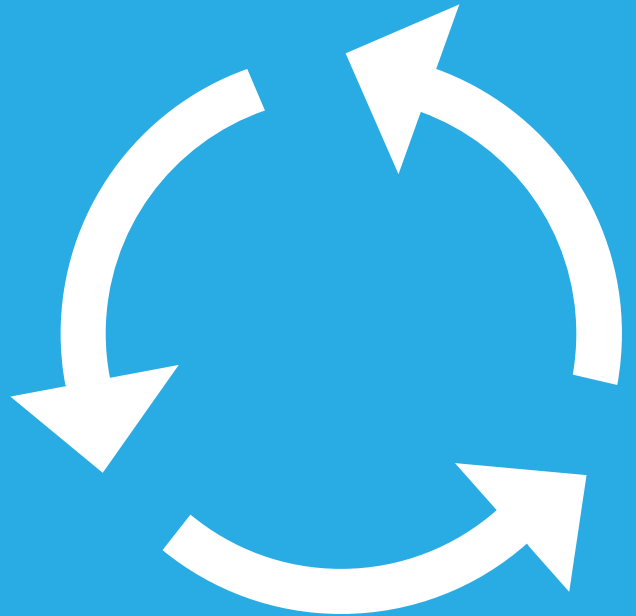


# KLAXON 11



## Artists Creating Urbanity

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# THE URBAN FACTORY

Pascal Le Brun-Cordier & Benoit Vreux

To observe public spaces and the various types of urban character, in urban centres as well as on their fringes, during key moments as well as in down-time, in the metropolises and the outlying cities, and not losing sight of the rural world. To describe and analyse artistic life in these spaces / times, the actions, the words, the objects that artists pose or graft into everyday urban life, and how these actions create or transform situations. In particular, to be attentive to contextual artistic and cultural projects that not only render public space and the city itself the artists' playground, but also make it a breeding ground for creative practices, especially performing – or visual – art projects that question the established “distribution of the sensible,” and activate public space in such a way as to transform it into a communal space, offering original life-forms, as well as more tangible and hospitable forms of a city. All-the-above succinctly sum up *Klaxon's* objectives, as formulated here in our latest edition by Pascal Le Brun-Cordier, our new editor-in-chief.

A survey conducted on some twenty European partners as part of a vast project that analysed artistic strategies at work in public space – initiated by the European network In Situ [bit.ly/2onu4vd](https://bit.ly/2onu4vd) – revealed that one of the most shared themes was artists' involvement in urban regeneration. Artists, with their pluralistic approach to urban spaces, have set themselves apart from those professionals traditionally in charge of transforming the built environment, such as urban planners, engineers, or architects. We concluded that it was fitting to devote *Klaxon's* 11<sup>th</sup> edition to this specific theme under the title “The Urban Factory.”

To kick off this issue, Pascal Le Brun-Cordier has singled out six stages in which artists not only create “in the city” but also create “the city,” thus identifying six distinct phases in the process, which begins with a sensitive prognosis and culminates with activating public spaces. This article, replete with concrete examples, thus explains the specific ramifications that artistic projects can have on urban planning and development, and more broadly on urban life.

The second article, by the journalist Julie Bordenave, focuses on urban psychoanalysis, an astonishing “poetic science” developed by the ANPU collective – *Agence Nationale de Psychoanalyse Urbaine* – that was founded by the artist Laurent Petit. Their highly distinctive approach to the city, at once seriously documented and joyfully fanciful, has radically renewed urban analysis, and has even begun to inspire urban planning projects.

Next up we present two key methods in “creating urbanity” by artists and cultural actors, in which we focus on two cities, Copenhagen and Tunis.

In Copenhagen, we met Tina Saaby, the Danish capital's former cityarchitect who has played a key role in transforming the city over recent years. In her fascinating interview with *Klaxon*, Saaby outlines how essential it is to have “artists involved in the process of creating urbanity.” Their role “differs completely from that which it was in the past” where it chiefly involved them “posing objects in public space.” We also had the pleasure of meeting Katrien Verwilt, artistic director of Metropolis, an “artistic platform for developing the creative city,” a platform that has spearheaded numerous projects in Copenhagen's public spaces and that works closely with the City Council. We wrap up our Danish dossier with an article devoted to an emblematic park, Superkilen, designed by the SUPERFLEX artistic collective. An interview with one of its founders, Jakob Fenger, thus brings to a close our visit to Copenhagen.

With respect to Tunis, we propose an interview with Sofiane Ouissi, dancer and choreographer, co-founder of Dream City, a multidisciplinary contemporary art biennial in public space, and Jan Goossens, its current artistic director. They talk us through the highly distinctive creative process of this deeply contextual event, which is being initiated *in* and *with* the Tunisian *médina*. While certain projects created during the biennial have truly transformed public spaces, they are primarily seeking “*to build a communal urban and politico-social space between artists, local residents, communities, and an emancipated, active citizenship.*” First and foremost, they are seeking to develop a political form of urbanity.

This issue of *Klaxon* continues its international trajectory and culminates with an interview with the Berlin-based collective raumlabor. Established in Berlin in 1999, raumlabor comprises a group of architects, artists, urban planners, and landscapers. Their name refers to the idea of space and laboratory, to in-situ research. For the last two decades this collective has been developing expertise in conceiving of innovative ways to design public spaces. Their work has inspired numerous architects and artists to invent strategies that revitalise neglected urban interstices, or to create that which the French collective *Encore Heureux* once referred to as “infinite places”: “*pioneering places that explore and experiment with collective processes in order to inhabit the world and build a commons*” [bit.ly/2FvxjGd](https://bit.ly/2FvxjGd). In addition to an introduction to two of raumlabor’s flagship projects, we also present a lengthy and insightful interview with the raumlabor collective by Jana Revedin, architect, theorist, and writer, and co-founder of the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, which raumlabor received in 2018.

By dint of their participation in creating urbanity, the artists we encountered while compiling this issue of *Klaxon* have done more than beautify urban space: they are creating the conditions for people to live together and for the common good.

## PLBC & BV

### Pascal Le Brun-Cordier



After having created and directed ZAT - *Zones Autonomes Temporaires*, an artistic event in public space in Montpellier, for five years, Pascal Le Brun-Cordier is currently undertaking studies and projects for cities or cultural structures, often in conjunction with architects and urban planners. He is currently the director of the Master in Cultural Projects in the Public Space at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, where he is an associate professor.

Photo: © Mathis Josselin

# ARTISTS CREATING URBANITY

Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

**Not only are artists increasingly seeking to create in the city, but to create the city itself. When and how do they get involved in the making of the city? What consequences do their artistic activities generate? What are the challenges and limitations of these innovative modes of generating urbanity?**

If artistic creation in public spaces *de facto* contributes to the making of urbanity, “*this public good*,” as the geographer Jacques Lévy calls it,<sup>1</sup> a “good” that is all at once material and intangible, spatial and social and that defines “*that which makes the city*,” then artists are increasingly not only looking to create in the city, in public spaces, but also to create the city itself, the public spaces. These artists are no longer merely involved in disseminating pre-written performances, or in producing certain objects to put on public display, but rather in contextual creation, directly linked to an urban situation that is as social as it is architectural in nature, as human as it is urban. In this article I will primarily focus on artistic creations that are part of urban projects, envisioned and pioneered in conjunction with developers, urban planners, and architects. After having outlined an urban project’s distinct phases where they are created and the variety of forms and artistic formats they assume, we will see, *inter alia*, how they succeed in transforming (in) the city, what precise impact they can have on urban development projects, and more broadly on urban life. Finally, I will try to assess the challenges and limitations such artistic approaches rooted in the heart of urban life must face.



## ANPU

Agence Nationale de Psychanalyse Urbaine  
© RR

### 1. THE DIAGNOSTIC PHASE

I have identified six distinct phases in any urban project where artists can intervene. The first, namely, the diagnostic phase, enables artists to roll out an array of tools and methods that can detect that which is not always identified by urban planning agents’ traditional approaches. Seismographers of the sentient, these artists who address the city have succeeded in picking up on weak signals linked to representations or practices, poetic singularities, subtle

potentials, latent uses in those localities where they have been involved. They often possess an astonishing capacity to listen to that which is whispered, to perceive that which is concealed, to feel that which is almost there. They can thus enrich analysis conducted by urban planners, architects, developers, or elected officials, adding, as it were, to regional diagnoses carried out elsewhere, by producing what we could call “sensitive diagnoses.” Not only are they sensitive to that which is perceived by the senses, but also to that which makes sense to people, to residents and users alike; sensitive to that which impacts their immediate experience or their overriding perceptions of a given place, and that which affects them positively and negatively.

Initiated by the artist Laurent Petit, urban psychoanalysis is undoubtedly one of the sensitive approaches to the city that is most able to enrich a specific area’s analysis. This highly original “*poetic science*” (presented in detail in our article, “Urban Psychoanalysis, a Poetic Science to Fathom Urban Life”) has begun to tune into a city’s subconscious whenever it collects utterances by its residents and users, whenever it examines local maps, history, and so forth. The challenge is to detect

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Lévy, “L’urbanité, ce bien public”, *Urbis* magazine, April 2017  
[bit.ly/2kKpgZ](http://bit.ly/2kKpgZ)





Agence Nationale de Psychanalyse Urbaine © RR



Agence Nationale de Psychanalyse Urbaine © RR



Bureau Detours, Grønningen, 2019 © RR

urban neurosis, to then establish a diagnosis and propose an urbanistic treatment in order to heal the “*locality patient*.” Its approach is both rigorous and free, whimsical and well-informed, humorously Lacanian and often inspiring. Since its inception 2008, the ANPU – *Agence Nationale de Psychanalyse Urbaine* – have had more than sixty cities recline on the couch, and initiated several collaborations with planning agencies and developers.

I should also mention the research in subjective cartography spearheaded by Catherine Jourdan, psychoanalyst and documentary artist, who wants to “give its hours of glory to a sensitive, singular, and collective geography, and make it public by means of a paper map developed by a transitory group of residents. Upon completing the creative project, the map will be published in 1000/2000 copies and exhibited in the city’s streets. Thus, publicly on display, it functions as an invitation to declare one’s itinerary, to imagine one’s representation of the common, and to de-construct the image.”<sup>2</sup> These subjective maps depict a locality with a multitude of unique points of view, and deploy social *imaginaries* and representations often far removed from official maps. Objective distances are replaced by perceived and experienced durations that are invariably elastic; urban professionals’ spatial rationales are thus confronted with daily routines that more often follow “*lines of desire*”<sup>3</sup> than agency layouts.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Jourdan’s website:  
[bit.ly/2OIKXkW](http://bit.ly/2OIKXkW)





Bureau Detours, Grønningen, 2019 © RR



Bureau Detours, Grønningen, 2019 © RR

Decrypting these subjective maps with their co-authors invariably results in rediscovering to what extent we occupy and criss-cross the world differently. I recall a map drawn up by a group of immigrant women from a district in Brussels, whose perceptions of the locality were largely determined by where they came from originally: theirs was a geography replete with stories, their city finely woven with personal narratives. If we would like to invent cities that are closer, friendlier, and more inclusive for those living there, such maps would constitute precious sensitive layers. It would be fascinating to superimpose them on the technical maps drafted by city designers and official administrators.

Other projects mentioned in this issue of *Klaxon* that have enabled, enriched and enhanced urban diagnoses prior to a project's design phase include the project spearheaded by Bureau Detours, a collective of artists, architects, and designers currently at work in Copenhagen's Grønningen district (see our interview with Katrien Verwilt: "How Metropolis has contributed to Reinventing Copenhagen"); or again in the Danish capital, the project by the SUPERFLEX artistic collective with Superkilen in 2012, (cf. the article "Superkilen – a singular, experiential, and hospitable urban park").

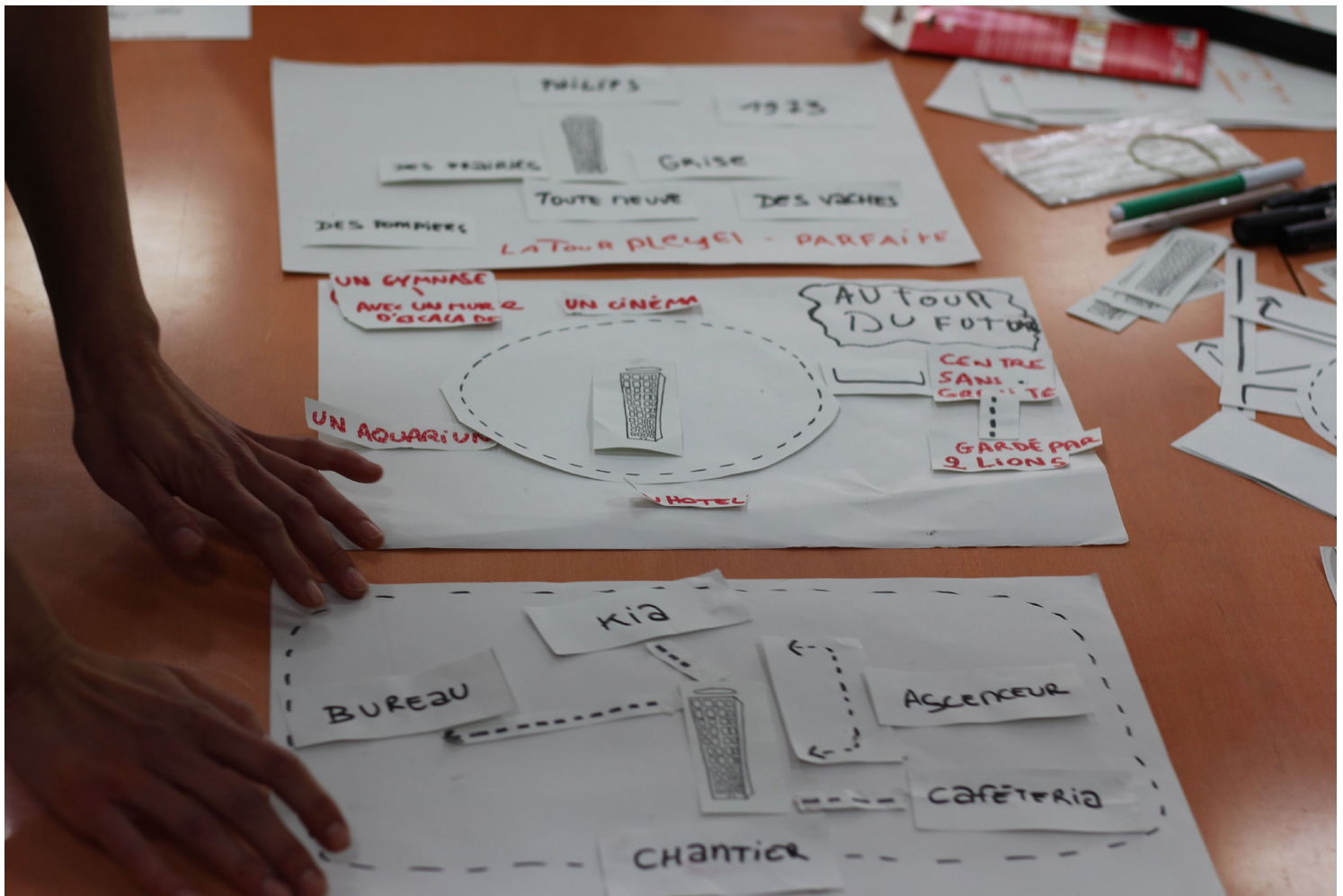


Subjective geography map fragments, Catherine Jourdan © RR

**3** Lines of desire are those visible paths on the ground or on the grass, created by the pedestrians' regular footsteps or by bicycle wheels; they are shorter, more practical, or more pleasant than those created by city planners.

**4** Cf. Catherine Jourdan and Florent Lahache, "Notes on Subjective Geography", *Klaxon* #3: [bit.ly/2IUSVoW](http://bit.ly/2IUSVoW)





Le terrain, le joueur et le consultant, Cuesta and Gongle, Saint-Denis, 2017 © Cuesta + GONGLE



Sketch Project, Cie Nieuwe Helden © RR



Le terrain, le joueur et le consultant, Cuesta and Gongle, Saint-Denis, 2017 © Louise Allavoine – Plaine Commune

## 2. THE CONSULTATIVE PHASE

Artists can participate in the second phase of the making of a city, namely that of consultation. Often highly formal, the classic modes of consultation concern only a few citizens. Moreover, such consultations seem to be largely “padlocked,” and more of an “upstream confirmatory process for a project” than a truly open and participative democratic discussion.<sup>5</sup>

Numerous artists have come up with devices to revitalise this consultative phase by involving more residents of all ages and from diverse social backgrounds in the challenges of urban renewal. This was the case with the group Gongle with their social and theatrical experimentation project *Le terrain, le joueur et le consultant* (The Pitch, the Player and the Consultant), which they rolled out in the Pleyel district of Saint-Denis in the north of Greater Paris in 2017 and 2018. In this

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Noyer and Bruno Raoul, “Concertation and “figures de l’habitant” dans le discours des projets de renouvellement urbain”, in *Études de communication*, 31, 2008.





Construction monumentale, Ville Ephémère, Olivier Grossetête, Marseille © Vincent Lucas

locality at the core of major urban transformation, where the Olympic Village for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games will be constructed, the Goggle artists, in conjunction with the Cuesta agency, conducted field work on sports commentary in order to talk about the city in the throes of transformation. Though not really an element in the regulatory consultation, this project clearly demonstrated how various forms of encounters and ex-changes surrounding a particular urban project can be reinvented.<sup>6</sup>

Sketch Project, a performance installation in public space by the Dutch company Nieuwe Helden, is a device that might arouse citizens' interest in the constructive act and in the urban project: an enormous sheet of drawing paper forms a cavity that is installed in public space into which the public can enter and interact with an architect, or discover other citizens' ideal cities or even sketch their own.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, I should also mention the visual artist Olivier Grossetête's collective monumental

constructions that he built using cardboard. These constructions can reach 25 meters in height, weigh more than a ton, and mobilise hundreds of participants during their design and construction, and thus offer a wide audience the possibility to experience an architectural creation, at once utopian and transient, and built without recourse to cranes or heavy machinery.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. THE CONCEPTUAL PHASE

The third phase where artistic creation can enrich an urban project is that of its conception and design. Designing public spaces, envisioning urban developments, inventing urban objects... This is exactly what the scenographer, designer, inventor, and builder François Delarozière has been so eloquently



Construction monumentale, Olivier Grossetête, Saintes, 2015 © Sébastien Laval

<sup>6</sup> Le terrain, le joueur et le consultant  
[bit.ly/2kMQ8Oq](https://bit.ly/2kMQ8Oq)

<sup>7</sup> Sketch Project, Nieuwe Helden  
[bit.ly/2kLOu1q](https://bit.ly/2kLOu1q)

<sup>8</sup> Olivier Grossetête's Les constructions monumentales  
[bit.ly/2kNAqCT](https://bit.ly/2kNAqCT)





Aire de jeux du Dragon, Kinya Maruyama, Nantes © Ville de Nantes



La Station, Anita Molinero, Paris, Porte de la Villette, 2013 © RR

doing in Nantes since 2003, with the large-scale project *Machines de l'Île* as part of the urban renewal scheme for Île de Nantes. During the program's early years, he did so in collaboration with the architect, urban planner, and landscaper Alexandre Chemetoff. Delarozière's "machines" are more than mere objects, particularly the Elephant, which has become one of Nantes' emblems. They are veritable "architectures in motion" and shape both public space and the landscape, all while proposing new urban experiences of great poetic force. Audiences have been discovering these perennial devices in Nantes, La Roche-sur-Yon, and recently in Toulouse, and on each occasion their presence have lent these cities a fantastic character.<sup>9</sup>

In Nantes artists have also designed multiple urban developments. Notable among these is Kinya Maruyama's playground: the Japanese architect and artist created a long dragon bristling with spikes and arrows, inside of which children can play. In Paimbœuf, a few dozen kilometres from Nantes, Maruyama designed an equally astonishing evolutionary *Jardin étoilé*. The illustrator and children's author Claude Ponti came up with a series of permanent installations for Nantes' Jardin des Plantes, including a giant bench, benches for chatting, and a

<sup>9</sup> Les Machines de l'Île (Nantes)

[bit.ly/2sRdPt6](http://bit.ly/2sRdPt6)

Les Animaux de la place (La Roche sur Yon)

[bit.ly/2N2Hc2t](http://bit.ly/2N2Hc2t)

La Halle de La Machine (Toulouse)

[bit.ly/2ZeTk4f](http://bit.ly/2ZeTk4f)





*Le Minotaure, Cie La Machine, Toulouse © Jordi Bover*



*Les Animaux de la place, Cie La Machine, La Roche sur Yon © Jordi Bover*

swing bench, as well as a play area made up of a cluster of giant flower with which a child's imagination turn them into cabins, gazebos, portals to other worlds...<sup>10</sup>

Street benches and bus shelters are among those urban objects that have most structured public space and they can strongly affect our cities' urbanity. Mention should be made of the Franco-Argentinean sculptor Pablo Reinoso's spaghetti-like benches with their sinuous and surrealist forms,<sup>11</sup> or the modified benches the Danish artist Jeppe Hein developed as part of his project *Modified Social*

*Benches* in New York as well as for the seaside resort of De Haan in Belgium.<sup>12</sup> Finally, we should not overlook the nine bus shelters at the tram station at Paris' Porte de la Villette created by the visual artist Anita Molinero. Tire tracks in the depths of the concrete walls become ornaments, birds pattering on the rooftops poetically disrupts our perception, while a rose window made from car headlamps illuminate these bus shelters that Molinero designed so as to be "like small theatres of waiting." Or, how to bring out the extraordinary in daily urban space.<sup>13</sup>

**10** Projects by Claude Ponti at Nantes's Jardin des Plantes

[bit.ly/2QvTDpQ](http://bit.ly/2QvTDpQ)

**11** Pablo Reinoso's website

[bit.ly/2ugt9h](http://bit.ly/2ugt9h)

**12** *Modified Social Benches* Project by Jeppe Hein

[bit.ly/2mhlEom](http://bit.ly/2mhlEom)

[bit.ly/2ma7ZPI](http://bit.ly/2ma7ZPI)

**13** *La Station* by Anita Molinero

[bit.ly/2lP8peo](http://bit.ly/2lP8peo)



*L'Éléphant, Cie La Machine, Nantes © RR*





Modified Social Benches, Jeppe Hein, New York © RR





*Les Togobancs*, Claude Ponti, Nantes © Ville de Nantes, Rodolphe Delaroque



*Banc géant*, Claude Ponti, Nantes, 2019 © Ville de Nantes



*Banc délirant*, Pablo Reinoso, Chaumont-sur-Loire, 2012 © RR



*Observatoire du ciel*, Pablo Reinoso, Bordeaux, 2017 © RR





Les Grands Voisins, le camping, Yes We Camp, Paris, 2017 © RR

## 4. THE TRANSITION PHASE

Urban projects often endure a waiting period, more often in fact than we might imagine: vacant periods, transition periods where nothing happens, stretches during which spaces and buildings might remain unoccupied for months on end, or even years before work eventually kicks off on the site. Developers are increasingly entrusting these unused spaces and vacant buildings to collectives in which artists are almost invariably present. This transitory or temporary form of urbanism enables exciting experiments to unfold: one of the most fascinating examples currently underway in Europe is undoubtedly *Les Grands Voisins*

(The Great Neighbours), on the abandoned site of a former hospital campus in Paris. Since 1915, a sizable group of artists have been living and working in this utopian village located right in the heart of Paris, in this “*happy laboratory of social integration and solidarity economy*.” Among those groups particularly active in the complex is the Yes We Camp collective, one of the site’s three founders and coordinators alongside Aurore and Plateau Urbain, who jointly execute artistic actions and develop spaces for socialising throughout the complex, with the help of Russian steam baths, comfortable benches and tables, a totem on wheels, wooden solariums...<sup>14</sup>

Urban projects sometimes unfold at demolition sites that can again become

the context or the subject-matter for artistic actions. The numerous stop-gap street art frescos painted on soon-to-be-demolished buildings across Europe come to mind: the frescoes, for example, on the nine-storied building close to the Place d’Italie in Paris’ 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement in which some one hundred artists took



Les Grands Voisins, Yes We Camp, Paris, 2019 © RR



Situation(s) Robespierre, Random collective, La Courneuve, 2018 © Random

<sup>14</sup> Les Grands Voisins  
[bit.ly/2ra03fA](https://bit.ly/2ra03fA)





Situation(s) Robespierre, Random collective, La Courneuve, 2018 © Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

part in 2013;<sup>15</sup> or the street art at the Fort d'Aubervilliers where the urban planner and curator Olivier Landes invited fifty artists in 2017 to occupy an area that had become a wasteland in order to engage in a dialogue with the spaces, its structures, and its history;<sup>16</sup> or the former Delhaize Molière store in Brussels that was temporarily transformed into a space for creative practices by Strokar Inside in 2018.<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, I should allude to the project by the Random Collective: they moved into Klaxon 11 - ARTISTS CREATING URBANITY

one of the last social housing blocks in the well-known Cité des 4000 in La Courneuve, one of the symbolic districts for the emergency urban planning schemes that were constructed across French suburbs throughout the 1960s, and which is now facing imminent destruction. This long-term artist's residency, as requested by the Établissement Public Territorial Plaine Commune, was envisioned as an "artistic support mission for the demolition process." As envisioned by Random, this multifaceted project notably was to assume the form of an

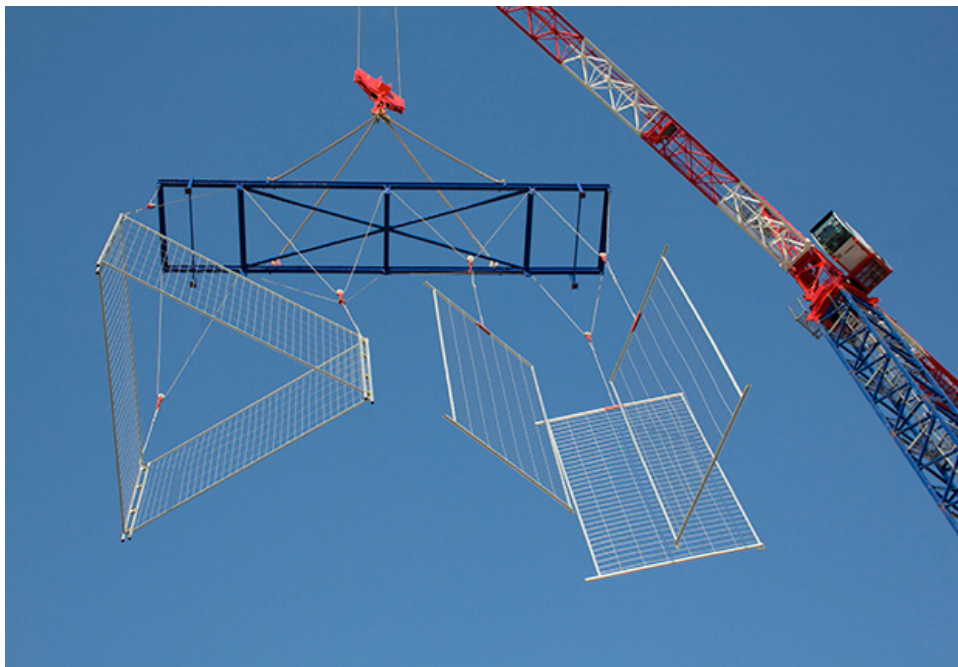
artistic installation inside an apartment. It was inspired by residents' stories and

**15** La Tour du 13<sup>ème</sup>, Paris's 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement  
[bit.ly/2IUOhr2](https://bit.ly/2IUOhr2)

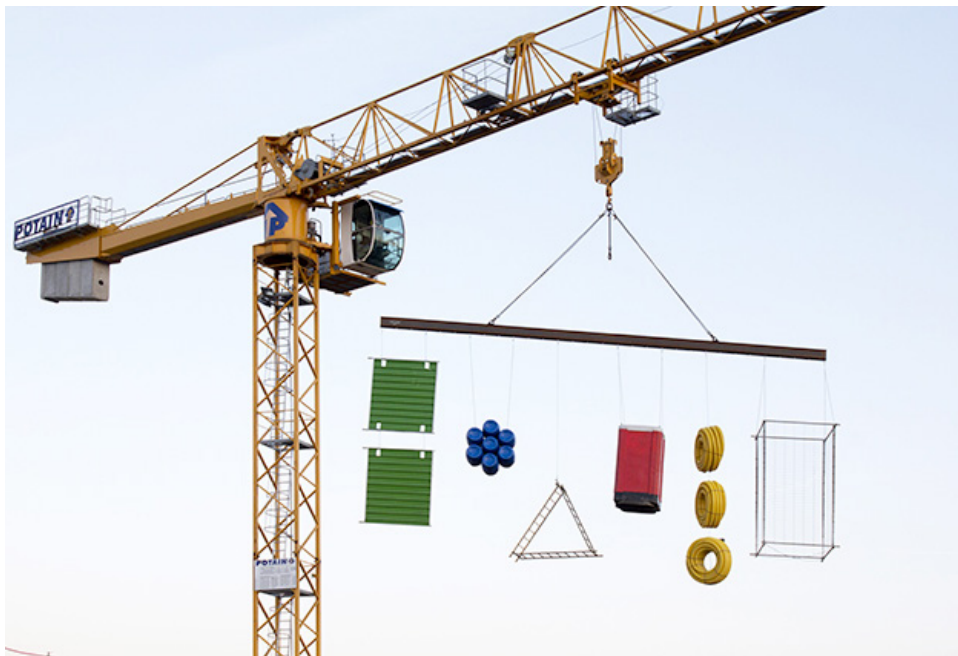
**16** Stéphanie Binet and Joséfa Lopez, "À Aubervilliers, le street art fait très fort", *Le Monde*, 18/7/2014  
[bit.ly/2kAz0f3](https://bit.ly/2kAz0f3)

**17** Transformation of Delhaize Molière in Brussels by a hundred invited artists by Strokar Inside  
[bit.ly/2MdICnK](https://bit.ly/2MdICnK)





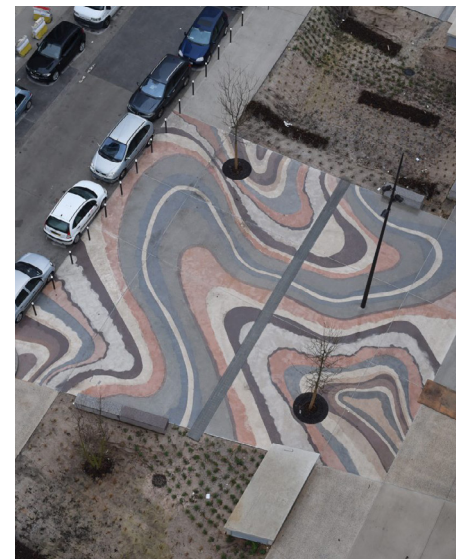
Calderpillar "Les Halles", Les Frères Ripoulain, Paris, 2012 © RR



Calderpillar "ZAC Renaudais", Les Frères Ripoulain, Betton, 2013 © RR



Calderpillar "Les Halles", Les Frères Ripoulain, Paris, 2012 © RR



Marbre d'ici, Stefan Shankland, Ivry, 2016  
© RR

archival materials, and featured several farewell rituals organised at the foot of the building, to the rhythm of the residents' successive departures.<sup>18</sup>

## 5. THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE

The fifth opportunity for artistic intervention during an urban project is the building phase. As an enclosed and often invisible space, and generally perceived as a source of disturbance, construction sites offer a rich source of material for artistic creation. A spectacular example was in 2012 in Paris with the Ripoulain brothers' mobile sculptures that were suspended from an IPN beam hooked to a very tall crane. Interestingly, the sculptures were made from objects used by the public works companies (traffic barriers, tires, scaffolding...), and placed right in the midst of the huge construction site at the Forum des Halles. The installation's title, "Calderpillar," jumbles together the name of (Alexander) Calder, the iconic sculptor and painter-creator of the innovative mobiles with that of Caterpillar, the American construction machinery firm.<sup>19</sup> And not forgetting the *Marbre d'ici* project by the visual artist Stefan Shankland, a "protocol for recycling rubble from demolition sites" that resulted in unique works, objects or urban developments such

<sup>18</sup> Collectif Random's website

[bit.ly/2ma89qi](http://bit.ly/2ma89qi)

<sup>19</sup> The Frères Ripoulain's website

[bit.ly/2IUOH0A](http://bit.ly/2IUOH0A)





Monument en Partage, Collectif Protocole, La Courneuve, 2016 © RR



Monument en Partage, Collectif Protocole, La Courneuve, 2016 © RR



Monument en Partage, Collectif Protocole and Hélène Motteau, La Courneuve, 2016  
© Hélène Motteau

as this plot of ground at the Place du Général-de-Gaulle in Ivry-sur-Seine.<sup>20</sup>

In the performing arts, a major player has taken foothold: the dance company Beau Geste's iconic choreographic spectacle *Transports Exceptionnels* has been performed more than 850 times in some 50 countries since its inception in 2005, and often on the occasion of the launching of urban operations. Set against the musical backdrop of an opera aria, this duet between a dancer and a mechanical digger brings into play the elegance and the fragility of the human body confronted with the machine's disturbing yet delicate power.<sup>21</sup> Mention should also be made of the contextual work by jugglers from the Collectif Protocole who, jointly with Monument en Partage, took up residence at a workspace in La Courneuve in 2016, for a series of juggling performances that incorporated the construction site's environment, its objects and materials, especially during an impressive show in front an audience of three-hundred spectators gathered at the building site for a highly unusual ceremony of the laying the site's foundation stone.

Aside from these performances, the Protocol jugglers in combination with Double M's architectural artists and the photographer and filmmaker Hélène Motteau, and in collaboration with Maison des Jonglages, have envisioned eight acts spread across two years in order to "question the appropriation of public space," "to create a story around the building site," and "to poetically speak of the locality now and in the future." Defined by Plaine Commune – the public community sponsor that is deeply involved in these initiatives<sup>22</sup> – as an "artistic support mission for a building site," this vast project has enabled hundreds of people to approach multiple urban concerns in a poetic and offbeat manner: they can approach the issue of the locality's cartography by means of workshops conducted in the street, or the presence of the fantastic and the poetic in everyday

<sup>20</sup> Website for Stefan Shankland's *Marbre d'Ici* project

[bit.ly/2kifK5L](http://bit.ly/2kifK5L)

<sup>21</sup> *Transports exceptionnels*, cie Beau Geste

[bit.ly/39Mjllu](http://bit.ly/39Mjllu)

<sup>22</sup> Website page for Établissement Public Territorial Plaine Commune presenting its scheme "Territoire de la Culture et de la Création":

[bit.ly/2lQ6YME](http://bit.ly/2lQ6YME)





*Bodies in urban spaces*, Cie Willi Dorner, Copenhagen, 2011 © RR



*Bodies in urban spaces*, Cie Willi Dorner, Cincinnati, 2014 © RR



*Bodies in urban spaces*, Cie Willi Dorner, Cincinnati, 2014 © RR

life (with the regular appearance of men with a horse's head in the streets and on the walls throughout the district); or through organising juggling performances, a parade and so on they can address the question of the appropriation and shifting use of public space.<sup>23</sup>

## 6. THE ACTIVATION PHASE

The activation phase is the last possible stage for an artist to get involved in an urban project. Whenever a project is ready for handover, or possibly thereafter, artists can intervene to unearth, shift, interrogate, or disrupt public spaces. Such activities constitute the core of most street arts and urban art events, or festivals, with some contextual dimension. Amongst the hundreds of performances, shows, and artistic interventions created in recent years across Europe with urban life as their subject matter, and which situate the relationship with place at the core of their project, we should mention the inspiring *Bodies in Urban Spaces* by the Austrian choreographer Willi Dorner who for over a decade now has been punctuating his urban trajectories with ephemeral human sculptures, gleefully slipping dancers into urban interstices, grafting human bodies onto architectural structures... This often-jubilant performance acts tells us a lot about our cities' sometimes poorly perceived singularities.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Monument en Partage project's website

[bit.ly/2kC05yr](http://bit.ly/2kC05yr)

<sup>24</sup> Willi Dorner, *Bodies in urban spaces*

[bit.ly/1ejsoHE](http://bit.ly/1ejsoHE)





Nikeground – Rethinking Space. The hardly believable Nikeplatz Trick, Eva and Franco Mattes, Vienna, 2003 © RR

## WHAT THESE PROJECTS CAN ACHIEVE

I have observed some of the effects these artistic approaches can have on urban projects: they enrich the diagnosis of a given locality; they sensitise residents and users alike to urban issues; they champion participation by a public not usually involved in the consultative process; they support residents so that they can have a better experience of a demolition or transformation operation; they single out cities by means of innovative urban developments or objects; they introduce poetic or fantastic spaces or acts into a city's everyday life.

More generally, these artistic projects can “stimulate the urban imaginary,”<sup>25</sup> and transform the representations that residents have of their city such as it is, and such as it could be, thus enabling them to imagine a city closer to their desires and their aspirations. Some of these projects, especially the choreographic ones, can set in motion innovative uses of the city, or other ways to walk around the city, and to live and experience it alone or in the company of others.<sup>26</sup>

By dint of the originality and the strength of the images they have to offer, many of these projects also contribute in enhancing the city's imageability. This concept, coined by the American urban planner and architect Kevin Lynch in 1960,<sup>27</sup> reflects a city's ability to “provoke an image in the individual and thus facilitate creating collective mental images,” and thus to be more habitable, more urban, more pleasant, and also more singular. This impact is all the more remarkable and intense if the city lacks this quality of imageability, or if its urban fabric is discontinuous and lacking a clear structure, or its cityscape lacks obvious landmarks.

Whenever these approaches involve urban planning professionals, as was the case with the *Monument en Partage* project mentioned above, we can observe the impact in how they view and think about the city. These artistic approaches make it possible to allow a greater place for subjectivity, for affects and emotions, and to foster a finer, more every day, and a more human understanding of the locality.<sup>28</sup> As I was told by Violette Arnoulet, the project manager of the Urban Renewal Department in the Plaine Commune: “As an urbanist, I'm interested in working with artists, especially

on a long-term residency, for it enables me to shift my gaze. Moreover, it enables me to get away from my basic professional tools, including those tools that are highly abstract, the map, and in this case the financial chart. Using the artists' tools, which here implement a sensitive approach to residents, enables me to observe usages and to understand them.”

<sup>25</sup> Pascal Le Brun-Cordier. “ZAT: A poetic strategy to stimulate the urban imagination”, in *La ville des créateurs: Berlin, Birmingham, Lausanne, Lyon, Montpellier, Montréal, Nantes*, Éditions Parenthèses, *La ville en train de se faire* collection, 2012.

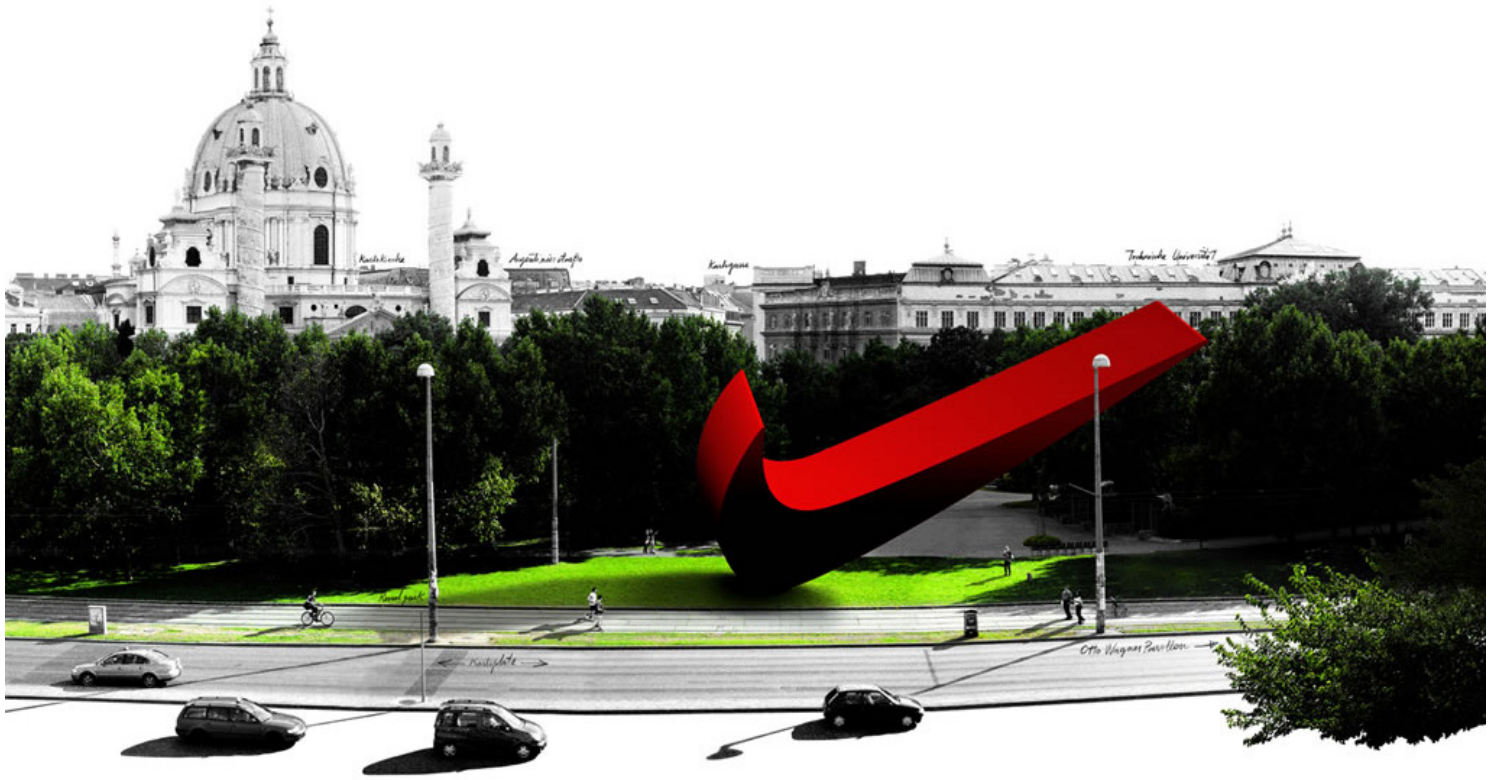
<sup>26</sup> To discover other artistic approaches linked to urban planning, consult the collaborative platform Arts et aménagement des territoires, conducted by pOlau, pôle des arts urbains (in French only)

[bit.ly/2IUW4VM](http://bit.ly/2IUW4VM)

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, 1960.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *L'accompagnement artistique de la transition urbaine au prisme de la participation. Étude des formes et des effets de la participation au projet Monument en Partage à La Courneuve 2016-2018*. A study commissioned by the Ville de la Courneuve and the Département de Seine-Saint-Denis to the Association Vertigo In Vivo, December 2018, directed by Pascal Le Brun-Cordier (a summary of this study will be published at the end of 2019).





Nike monument, Nikeground – Rethinking Space. The hardly believable Nikeplatz Trick, Eva and Franco Mattes, Vienna, 2003 © RR

In their book *Expérimenter l'intervention artistique en urbanisme*,<sup>29</sup> Nadia Arab, Burcu Özdirlik, and Elsa Vivant consider that approaches that combine artists and urban projects “*provoke the professional's subjectivity.*” Even if far from self-evident, knowing “*the difficulty that professionals have in letting go*” and “*in breaking with professional codes and conventions,*” these approaches are of significant interest: “*the expression of their subjectivity stimulates a reflective attitude. It has the effect of initiating a discussion and a debate on their representations of concepts such as public service and the common good, or even questioning their own categories of reasoning and evaluation.*”<sup>30</sup>

## INITIATING DEBATE ON THE URBAN FUTURE

Finally, and I will elaborate on this last point with some concrete examples, evoking artistic approaches that have succeeded in oxygenating democratic life by instigating debates, even polemical ones, on the future of urbanity, notably with regard to privatising public spaces, the influence of brands on cities, and the shifts in the real estate market... One only needs to recall the upset caused when the news went nationwide in Austria about the change of name for one of Vienna's most celebrated squares,



À vendre, Cie Thé à la rue © RR

the Karlsplatz, which was soon to be renamed Nikeplatz as part of a partnership deal with Nike, in addition to the monumental sculpture depicting the company's logo being installed there. This artistic prank, hatched in 2003 by the artist-duo Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.org, was to generate much heated discussion.

There was a similar sense of provocation in an incident involving Studio H5. In 2007, they erected a huge scaffolding in front of a private town-house adjacent to the Forney public library in Paris' historic Marais, on which they blazoned its upcoming makeover into a glitzy luxurious hotel complex and business centre. A promotional film featuring a fictional real estate developer, Immorose presented the market-

ing campaign on social networks and touted this delirious makeover, dubbed Renaissance Forney, as “*a paradise in the heart of Paris.*”<sup>31</sup> Many local residents and personalities rallied on hearing this marketing campaign announced! This was an effective way to initiate the debate on the privatising of public goods and on the “*Eurodisneyisation of capital cities.*”

<sup>29</sup> Nadia Arab, Burcu Özdirlik, Elsa Vivant, *Expérimenter l'intervention artistique en urbanisme*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., p. 95-96.

<sup>31</sup> Renaissance Forney, fictitious promotional film by the creative studio H5

[bit.ly/1JExesZ](http://bit.ly/1JExesZ)

In a similar vein, in 2011, the street theatre company Thé à la Rue conceived of *À Vendre*, a wandering theatre piece in which two real estate agents stroll around a neighbourhood explaining to the public and local residents that their agency is about to buy up the neighbourhood: “Gone are the days when the locality was administered by a municipality. From now on, nothing will beat private management!” Public space, a commodity just like the others...<sup>32</sup>

Finally, there was the case of *Chronoloc*, the incredible full-scale urban hoax by the group Ici-Même Paris whose aim, some fifteen years ago, was to draw public attention to the downward spiral in the real estate market. Salespersons from a so-called promoter Hausman & Road were proposing passers-by their new product: Chronoloc. Passers-by could visit these “innovative” housing prototypes: (very) small houses the size of a parking space, houses which could be leased and paid for just for the period they were occupied. Originally inspired by the concept of

time-sharing, this leasing model not only promised significant savings but also possibility to be “at home everywhere” and to “finally to live the dream of mobility,” for these modules were to be installed in several cities across Europe. The firm’s employees were charged with moving the nomadic tenants’ personal belongings from one housing unit to the next.<sup>33</sup>

At the core of this vast performance of invisible theatre in public space lay these real estate agents’ rhetorical skills, their ability to disguise the worst of low-cost arrangements, the precarisation of housing and of life itself, and that which is currently referred to as the Uberisation of the economy, with pseudo-concepts that match the supposed desires of their potential customers. During visits to these tiny houses details often provoked the public to react critically, or to express a doubt, or even disapproval. For example, that fake tenant, a supposed pensioner, agreed that visits could take place in her tiny

“home” while she was present, in exchange for a discount on her rent. While some prospective “clients” gradually came to understand the situation’s dystopian dimension, the theatrical setting into which they had entered, and the project’s critical aim, others, conversely, enthusiastically partook in the project... After a fortnight of performances and some kerfuffle, the municipality organised a public meeting with residents and artists to reveal the hoax and to debate the issues it was addressing.

Would such hyper-realistic projects, that were grating and scathing when they were devised some years ago, provoke similarly heated reactions today? Or, would they provoke us to laugh sourly? In many cities faced with a crisis in public finances, or because of failing public policies, the municipal authorities are increasingly yielding ground, both literally and figuratively, to private operators: they, in turn, are becoming designers and managers of public spaces, often



Renaissance Forney, H5, Paris, 2007 © RR



Renaissance Forney, H5, Paris, 2007 © RR

imposing norms and standards that are in line with their own economic interests ever before in any way concerning themselves with the public good. A few kilometres north of Paris, on the last patch of farmland in the Parisian region, a consortium of Franco-Chinese investors are planning to build a mega shopping and leisure centre whose first publicised model supposedly includes an aquatic park and an artificial ski-slope. Notwithstanding the loud outcry concerning the ecological costs and the consumerist rationale driving the project, Europacity is due to see the light of day within several years.<sup>34</sup>

## DIFFICULTIES AND LIMITATIONS

What difficulties and limitations do these artistic approaches to urban projects have to face? For those who deliver sensitive diagnoses that are likely to enrich the more traditional diagnoses of a given locality, the overriding difficulty they face is the conditions for the dialogue process between artists, cultural actors, and professionals involved in urban planning. These parties do not speak the same language; they do not use the same concepts and the same tool-kits. Hence, in order to promote listening, understanding, and the integration of artistic approaches

in urban projects, there is the need to use multi-lingual intermediaries, with the necessary skills and knowledge, and

<sup>32</sup> *À Vendre*, compagnie Thé à la rue  
[bit.ly/2SZ0KbY](http://bit.ly/2SZ0KbY)

<sup>33</sup> *Chronoclub*, Ici-Même Paris  
[bit.ly/2mbgtWP](http://bit.ly/2mbgtWP)  
[bit.ly/2IOla7U](http://bit.ly/2IOla7U)

<sup>34</sup> Report by the French television channel France 5 on the Europacity project and the opposition it encountered.  
[bit.ly/2mdM4ao](http://bit.ly/2mdM4ao)  
Due to controversies on the project's environmental sustainability and local opposition, the French government withdrew its support on 8 November 2019, and the project was abandoned.



a legitimacy in both worlds. Moreover, these intermediaries also need to clarify the definitions of the concepts that both parties use. In the regard, ESOPA Productions' *Critical Glossary of Cultural Urban Planning* might be highly useful.<sup>35</sup>

As for the artistic approaches during the urban project's second phase, namely consultation, their limitations primarily concern their capacity to reach a more diverse public than institutional approaches would (even if the willingness to leave their exclusive cultural community is often affirmed), and to propose spaces that will allow citizens effectively participate in the urban project, and not merely on a superficial level, or even a simple public presentation of the willingness to consult with the public. Artists and cultural actors might on occasion benefit by clarifying their ethical and political prerequisites in order that they avoid becoming token auxiliary agents for communication or marketing purposes for the locality.

During the third phase of the urban project, namely, the design phase, the chief challenge facing artists and cultural actors is to get involved in the process as soon as possible so that they can take part in deliberations about the project's fundamental parameters, such as the overall configuration of the space. Otherwise, they run the risk of being stuck in the traditional rationale for artistic creation in public space, namely, that of the "cherry on the cake," of placing an object in a space that is defined by others. Rather, here what is at stake is to play an active role in determining the recipe for the cake... That is not to say, however, that artistic objects simply placed in urban spaces cannot substantially modify the space's representations and uses: the examples from Nantes, cited above, bear witness to just how effective such objects can be.

For the fourth phase, that of transition, the risk manifests itself on two levels. An artistic and cultural presence in the context of transitional urban planning can contribute to gentrifying a locality and increasing a site's property value. While generalities on this subject should be avoided and gentrification's diversity of form and impact be highlighted, as was the case with Arnaud Idelon and those he came into contact with during a fascinating survey,<sup>36</sup> we can here, yet again, wish that artists and cultural actors specify their values

and their political visions. Let us also hope that an experiment such as the above-mentioned *Les Grands Voisins* in Paris might inspire other projects focused on the concept of an urbanism that embraces solidarity, an urbanism

## **"Prioritise citizens re-appropriating urban space and their greater participation in the decision-making processes that determine the city."**

that seeks to champion an effective social, cultural, and generational mix, and aims to be something more than just temples for the "cool," to being truly spaces for conviviality, in the sense that Ivan Illich gave to this concept back in the 1970s: in other words, to promote the autonomy or even the emancipation of those who spend time in these spaces.

The second risk with these artistic approaches, whenever they generate an urbanity deemed interesting, is that they develop without succeeding in impacting the urban project that was initially planned. For this to succeed, it is paramount to involve developers and local authorities from the very outset in monitoring the transitional projects implemented, and to pay close attention to that which is rolled out, to emerging practices, to users' aspirations, and to the potentials revealed... Here again, *Les Grands Voisins* might serve as a source for inspiration: a continuous dialogue between the founders, the elected officials, and the developer has helped to develop this urban project.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, for artistic and cultural initiatives developed during the construction phase, the foremost challenge is probably to be able to work in the space where the site is located and alongside the actors on the site, for the latter's concerns and exigencies can make artistic infiltration quite difficult.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT TO THE CITY**

To wrap up this sketch of an array of artistic practices that play a vital role in the making of urbanity, and of this partial summary of their ramifications and limitations, I would like to emphasize that many of these practices can contribute in implementing the "right

to the city," namely, the right to which the philosopher, sociologist, and urban thinker Henri Lefebvre called for. In his book published in 1968,<sup>38</sup> he developed a critique of functionalist urbanism, of the "metallic city" that neglects the need for imagination, for life, for celebration, and where the functional dimension dominates to the detriment of the social. Moreover, he denounced the

commercialisation of public space and the fact that planners, architects, developers yield excessive power over the process of generating urban life. As championed by Lefebvre, the right to the city was meant to prioritise citizens re-appropriating urban space and their greater participation in the decision-making processes that determine the city. Ultimately, he envisioned a city as a qualitative collective work, a common good: for Lefebvre, it constituted a starting point for the democratic transformation of society.

The evolution of such approaches that link art and urbanity, the rise of a form of cultural urbanism that embraces artistic creation,<sup>39</sup> the burgeoning interest in tactical urban planning methods and the "arts of the common"<sup>40</sup> lead me to believe that we are very much at the beginning of the story.

### **PLBC**

**35** ESOPA Productions  
[bit.ly/2IUvE6U](https://bit.ly/2IUvE6U)

**36** Arnaud Idelon, "Friches & gentrification, une longue histoire", *Medium*, January 2018  
[bit.ly/2FSev2c](https://bit.ly/2FSev2c)

**37** *Futur quartier* by Les Grands Voisins  
[bit.ly/2mjnLYP](https://bit.ly/2mjnLYP)

**38** Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la ville*, Éditions Economica-Anthropos (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), 2009.

**39** In France, the pOlau, *pôle des arts urbains* (directed by Maud Le Floch, whose activities to champion these approaches was decisive), since two years have regularly assembled young professionals developing "urbanisme culturel" projects  
[bit.ly/2lRrgW2](https://bit.ly/2lRrgW2)

On the initiative of notably the ANPU, *Agence Nationale de Psychanalyse Urbaine*, the RIM – *Rencontres Inter-Mondiales* on new ways of working with actors in architecture(s) and urbanism(s) from the emerging field gather in Rennes  
[bit.ly/2p9fGHP](https://bit.ly/2p9fGHP)

**40** Estelle Zhong Mengual, *L'art en commun – réinventer les formes du collectif en contexte démocratique*, Les presses du Réel, 2019.

# THE AGENCE NATIONALE DE PSYCHANALYSE URBAINE

## A POETIC SCIENCE TO FATHOM URBAN LIFE

Julie Bordenave

***By sitting cities down on the couch, urban psychoanalysis explores their unconscious, identifies their neuroses, and offers surprising treatments. An inquiry into an inventive and inspiring discipline.***

In 2008, an astonishing “*poetic science*” took flight. Rising from the embers of an intervention conducted in Latvia with the Exyzt Architects Collective, urban psychoanalysis was soon to spread its wings. At the forefront, an artist, Laurent Petit, a French actor well-acquainted with the street arts network, established himself a therapist in order to reveal the

neuroses buried in the urban unconscious. In no time a methodology emerged empirically. Underpinned by a rigorous field survey, punctuated by exploratory rummaging through various resources – archives, newspapers, encounters with scholars and specialists... – and “*divan operations*” conducted in public spaces with local residents, the Agence Nationale de

Psychanalyse Urbaine (National Agency of Urban Psychoanalysis/ ANPU) formulated a diagnosis for a particular city or neighbourhood and recommended a treatment adapted to their needs. Each locality is filtered by category in order to reveal the origin of its traumas: the “*mytho-genealogical tree*” delves into its tutelary or totemic figures; the “*morpho-cartography*” discerns the symbolism contained in a singular geographical configuration and its semantic aspect; the “*crypto-linguistics*” wrestles with the issue of the polysemy of proper names. Not to mention the review of trans-generational ordeals such as “*crises, epidemics, relegation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> division*”... Over the following years, the case-studies kept coming: Villeurbanne, Marseille, Cergy, Châlons-en-Champagne, Montpellier... as well as Helsingor (Denmark), Helsingborg (Sweden), London, Algiers, Tunis, and Charleroi have all found themselves reclining on the couch.





# EVOLUTION AND THE BURGEONING CRISIS

Amidst quirky revelations at first glance, and charming Lacanian puns such as “the inhabitant of Angers’ fear of sterility (...) confronted with urban expansion<sup>41</sup>,” the issues raised are nonetheless real: the Californisation of the Côtes d’Armor; Saint-Pierre-des-Corps’ inferiority complex with respect to Tours; Montpellier’s quest for ancient roots... The proposed therapeutic solutions take the form of urban projects, designed in conjunction with Charles Altorffer, architect and theatre director. In order to replace the automobile culture, for example, the ANPU came up with the idea of a *Transports*

*Hors du Commun* (THC/ extra-ordinary transport<sup>42</sup>) complemented by the AAAH, *Autoroutes Astucieusement Aménagées en Habitations* (Motorways Smartly Landscaped into Houses). In

“Town halls and local or municipal authorities require the ANPU’s services.”

order to combat urban sprawl, they advocated collective housing in lighthouses, abandoned tankers, and bridges... The ZOB, *Zones d’Occupation Bucoliques* (Bucolic Occupation Zones)<sup>43</sup> such as spiritual elevators or festive cemeteries, will be used to re-inject social glue into the heart of the cities. Research findings have been transmitted to the public in the form of a quirky conference, with the help of a commentated slide-show. Sometimes an architectural gesture has

emerged: in 2009, the Pôle des Arts Urbains (pOlau), which has underpinned the ANPU ever since its inception, promoted the launching of *Point Zéro*, a giant beacon symbolising the appeasement between Tours and the adjacent Saint-Pierre-des-Corps, thus marking the “starting point of a spiral of universal urban reconciliation.” On 24

December 2013, “over a glass of mulled wine” in front of the UN Headquarters, the ANPU, which was initially supposed to conclude operations by psychoanalysing the entire world, abandoned the idea of closing shop and then re-embarked on its mission for several years. In place of an initial assessment, Laurent Petit published *La Ville sur le Divan* (The City on the Couch, 2013) a book that documented the genesis of the science of Urban Psychoanalysis and a sample of its exemplary clinical cases.

In 2018, at the height of its pre-adolescence, the ANPU itself was in the throes of returning to a repressed state. Over the course of multiple case studies – more than sixty cities lay on the couch within a ten-year period – the formula became somewhat jaded. Above all, fundamental questions arose: this innovative

## ANPU Agence Nationale de Psychanalyse Urbaine

### Marquage d'un PNSU

### Le cas de Tours

**Contexte :** “Opération Spirale”, psychanalyse urbaine de la ville de Tours

**Névrose détectée :** relation conflictuelle, de type mère-fille, entre la ville de Tours et la ville de Saint-Pierre des Corps

**Point Névro Statistique Urbain (PNSU) :** portion d’autoroute A10 séparant les deux villes, communément appelée “Le mur de Berlin”

**Traitement :** édification du Point Zéro, envisagé comme le point de départ d’une vaste spirale de réconciliation urbaine universelle

**Concept designer :** Charles Altorffer

**Schéma Névro-Constructeur :** Laurent Petit

**Agent de liaison :** Fabienne Quémener

**Maîtrise d’ouvrage :** le pOlau (Pôle des Arts Urbains)

Inauguré le 25/09/09 en présence des maires des 2 villes concernées

<sup>41</sup> Translator’s note: A play on the French pronunciation of *l’habitant d’Angers* which could also be pronounced as *la bite en danger* (the endangered cock).

<sup>42</sup> Translator’s note: A wordplay on the French term for public transport *Transport en commun*.

<sup>43</sup> Translator’s note: *Zob* is a slang term for penis in French.











© Clémence Jost



ANPU in 2009 © Brice Pelleschi

productive in this respect: over a ten-year span there was a burgeoning of regional projects and architects collectives that assumed control of tactical and transitional urban planning (Collectif ETC in 2009; Yes We Camp in 2013...). Participatory democracy fulfilled its role; numerous artists are working toward “making the city,” at risk of finding themselves in a no-man’s land with ill-defined contours, and at times verging on being instrumentalised. The ANPU has decided to bounce back, to once again elude classification, and to continue to promote alternative modes of enquiry.

## UNPOPULAR EDUCATION<sup>44</sup> AND APPLIED RESEARCH

Offshoots emerged within the team. Laurent Petit chose to quit the field in order to devote himself to basic research. Re-engaging with the verve of the pseudo-lecturer, he expanded the spectrum of topics he addressed so as to embrace scientific, historical, economic and psycho-social spheres, by varying the scales: from micro-hard-science – an exhibition on mosquitoes in Camargue – to human macro-sciences with a conference on Europe at the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations

(Mucem); on the theme of energy at the National Energy Transition Institute in Dunkirk; on psychoanalysing the former French colonial empire at the Porte Dorée Museum in Paris; and, for the Université du Mans reflections on the labour crisis... Therein Petit discovered a new breeding ground in which to avail of his fertile imagination. “*In seeking out content beyond local history, I can make great strides in history, [I can] address philosophical, spiritual, and transcendental topics.*” The shift in focus enabled him to especially rediscover a freedom of speech, and to reconnect with the virulence of its beginnings. In his own words: “*those listening have a laugh whenever they hear a deluge of bad*

***“On the one hand, we introduce a symbolic and significant anchoring of an area’s history by being committed to its foundations. On the other hand, we collect the local residents’ words in a poetic and emotional way, outside the polite setting of consultations.”***

***Fabienne Quémeneur***

news!” Petit is currently advocating “unpopular education” in order to pursue his original goal, namely, to psychoanalyse the entire world by 24 December 2023, by continuing over the coming years to delve into environmental and energy issues, the most

recent hot potato in politics. He expects to complete his research with a conference on the theme of money titled: *L'appât du grain* (lure of grain<sup>45</sup>). He aims to detect links between the accumulation of wealth and faecal retention problems. Another line of enquiry will shed light on connections between bipolar disorder and the concept of borders on a global scale.

Another branch of the ANPU put down roots in the field when confronted with the emergence of cumbersome commissions, involving both a long-term investment and an increased number of interlocutors as was the case at Place de la Nation and Place d'Italie in Paris in conjunction with Coloco's landscape architects within the context of the *Projet des 7 Places* launched by the City of Paris in 2015; the Hautepierre district, in partnership with the Association Horizome and the City of Strasbourg... In the words of Charles Altorffer: “*Laurent Petit has this formula that I find interesting: he was fearful of switching from being the king's jester to the prince's armed wing. And yet, I was inclined to say that we were lucky to shift away from the field of basic research to that of applied research. It was well worth the effort!*” From 2016 on, the *Bienvenue à Babelville* project, conducted within the City of Paris's participatory budget framework, has been presented as a textbook case. A year of on-site research undertaken in conjunction with local residents and associations, set out to make the cosmopolitan district around the Rue de la Fontaine au Roi in north-eastern Paris more attractive. “*Our task was to try to reveal the neighbourhood's individual identity, for we soon realised that it had always been defining itself in relation to somewhere else – downhill from Belleville, adjacent to Oberkampf...*” The neighbourhood has been renamed Babelville, playing on the double evocation of the Tower of Babel and *Bal el*,

<sup>44</sup> Translator's note: An allusion to *éducation populaire* in France (popular education) as in education for the working classes.

<sup>45</sup> Translator's note: An allusion to the French phrase *appât du gain* meaning lure of money or profit.



which means “door” in Arabic. In collaboration with the urban graphic designer Gonzague Lacombe, a semi-perennial marking system was installed: a signage system that reveals “neighbourhood gems” that have been identified. And the venture has even conferred its name upon a local restaurant association, “la Cantine de Babelville.”

# ADVOCATING THE TARGETLESS APPROACH<sup>46</sup>

If its fundamental *modus operandi* remains unchanged, the results proposed by the ANPU will from now on be polymorphous. Fabienne Quémeneur, the ANPU’s co-pilot and liaison agent since its inception, is delighted about this: “It

is a poetic science that makes sense in our society, in line with older ones such as psycho-geography. It has contributed extensively since its inception, and currently incorporates multiple offshoots, several currents and fields of application.” Over the years, many talented individuals have joined the team in order to broaden

<sup>46</sup> Translator’s note: Here, a homophonous word play on *approche sans cible* (targetless approach) and *approche sensible* (sensible approach).

### PROBLÉMATIQUE DÉTECTÉE. LA SPIRALE HYSTORIQUE DE PARIS

Depuis la nuit des temps, le même phénomène se reproduit inexorablement. Paris affirme par à-coups son identité et ses contours par des annexions et l'érection d'enceintes successives. La spirale qui se déploie ainsi au fil des siècles nous révèle une caractéristique psychique fondamentale: à chaque fois que Paris, enceinte d'elle-même, fige sa silhouette, se produit à quelques années près une crise hystorique d'une rare ampleur.

Enceintes et Annexions	Crises
Enceinte de Philippe Auguste, fin XII <sup>e</sup>	» Capétiens/Plantagenêts 1199-1299
Enceinte de Charles V, fin XIV <sup>e</sup>	» Armagnacs/Bourguignons 1407-35
Enceinte de Louis XIII, fin XVII <sup>e</sup>	» Massacres St Barthélémy en 1572
Enceinte des fermiers généraux fin XVIII <sup>e</sup>	» Révolution Française de 1789
Enceinte de Thiers, 1844	» Révolution de 1848
Annexion des communes, 1860	» La Commune en 1871
Annexion de la Zone, 1920-1930	» Crise de février 1934
Enceinte du périphérique, 1956 - 1973	» Mai 68
Création du Grand Paris, 2016	» ...

Un autre élément troublant... Depuis la Révolution Française, un rythme régulier semble dicter la fréquence des crises hystoriques.

Entre 1789 et 1848	2 générations
Entre 1848 et 1871	1 génération
Entre 1871 et 1934	2 générations
Entre 1934 et 1968	1 génération
Entre 1968 et ...	2 générations

Dans la continuité de cette suite logique, une révolution serait actuellement en gestation. La question qui se pose alors est de voir comment en prendre conscience et développer des projets urbains révélateurs d'enjeux, pour que la révolution en cours soit l'occasion d'inventer un nouveau monde dans l'apaisement et la bonne humeur plutôt que dans l'effroi et la douleur.

*« Je ne parle jamais avec les mots de la révolte. La révolte doit être implicite dans la richesse des solutions... La troisième parole est une boucle: le signe de l'effroi engendrant d'une boucle. Nous avons un paradoxe naturel, il est désormais permis, nous avons créé un paradoxe artificiel qui est en train d'aggraver de nous perdre. Le Troisième paradoxe est l'union de la nature et de l'artifice, un lien de gestation pour une nouvelle civilisation. »*

Anthropologue Perennet. Contribution à la grande histoire de la psychanalyse urbaine. Thid. Marc-Laure. Coll. 750

### SPIRALES HYSTORIQUE ? DE PARIS ET DE PAS PARIS !

RÉALISÉ PAR L'ANPU  
AGENCE NATIONALE DE PSYCHANALYSE URBAINE

La Spirale Hystorique de Paris, Portrait Psy la Villette © ANPU

### TRAITEMENT PROPOSÉ. LA CITÉ DES CONSCIENCES

L'urbanisme trans-historique consiste à donner à la ville la vocation d'annexer le passant petit à petit ou soudainement à un niveau de sagesse exemplaire.

*« ... Science sans conscience n'est que ruine de l'homme. »*  
Rabelais. Auteur d'un bon vin. Contribution à la grande histoire de la psychanalyse urbaine. p. 181

- 1 FRICHE DU FUTUR**  
La fin de l'ère automobile est proche. Nos descendants développeront une nouvelle ville de la culture et des infrastructures modernes comme un parc d'aggrégation pour les friches industrielles. Comment le boulevard périphérique, l'axe Thiers d'acier, sera-t-il libéré en valeur, déconstruit, inventé? Comment préfigurer la nature adjuvante de ce Thiers espace?
- 2 DÉPOLLUTION PÉDAGOGIQUE**  
La dépollution de l'ancienne station service ne pourrait-elle pas servir de support à la mise en scène des enjeux liés à la dépollution? On pourra y expérimenter et scénographier des techniques naturelles de dépollution en y intégrant par exemple une zone de décompression psychosomatique (qualification par les champignons).
- 3 L'EAU DE LA**  
La chambre d'union connexion des eaux potables de Paris avec celles de la banlieue se trouve sous le rond-point. Elle pourrait devenir le symbole fort d'un enjeu qui s'annonce crucial dans les années à venir.
- 4 LA TOUR DE LA VILLE HÔTE**  
Les nouveaux propriétaires de la tour de la Villette lui cherchent un nouveau nom... C'est l'opportunité d'affirmer une nouvelle image pour tout le quartier, révélation de son identité historiquement accueillante.
- 5 LE TRAIN DE VIE**  
Pourrait-on transformer les réseaux de transports en vaisseau mouvant de vie? Des wagons handicapés, wagons gym, wagons jeux, wagons cinéma, wagons école pop, wagons cocktail de rage, wagons pétanque, wagons danse floor, tout reste à inventer.
- 6 L'ÉCLAIRAGE PUBLIC VIVANT**  
On ne peut pas expliquer les qualités de certains organismes vivants comme par exemple les bactéries détectées chez les chaméleons, pourrai-elles bien développer leur rapport à l'illumination et à terme initier peut-être un nouveau siècle de la lumière?
- 7 FUN ÉPARE**  
La capitale fêterait un programme théâtral d'urbanisme enchanté cher à ANPU. Il pourrait inspirer le film d'animation. Comment vivre avec son monde? On disparaît? Un rituel cathartique sur l'axe Zone non sanctifiée pourrait la Nuit Blanche du 6 octobre 2019 permettant de revivre et de se libérer du reflux du 6 octobre 1940.
- 8 OÙ PAÏRE ?**  
Si nous pensons la ville pour qu'elle soit acceptable pour l'animal, elle sera beaucoup plus supportable pour nous. L'habitation humaine nous fait tolérer des conditions que notre corps n'est pas préparé à subir.
- 9 LA FORÊT SANS FRONTIÈRE**  
Proposition d'aménagement... pour y accéder la question de la nature en ville, la perméabilité, les pédestres, l'agriculture urbaine...
- 10 LA DÉCHETTERIE**  
... pour y mettre en scène la question des déchets...
- 11 LE MAUSOLÉE DE LA SUPER MARCHÉ**  
... pour réfléchir à la notion du savoir essentiel, de l'absence de l'absence, des limites de la société de consommation... mais nous pourrions aussi imaginer la ville.
- 12** ... pour introduire le sport au quotidien dans l'espace public. Le mouvement du corps comme moyen et non comme fin.
- 13** ... pour mettre en valeur la place de la femme.
- 14** ... pour pouvoir jouer la ville aux enfants.
- 15** ... pour répondre à la question des risques. La déshérence des assurances...

### PROJET D'URBANISME ENCHANTEUR RÉALISÉ PAR L'ANPU - AGENCE NATIONALE DE PSYCHANALYSE URBAINE

La Cité des Consciences, Portrait Psy la Villette © ANPU



its scope with their expertise: Hélène Dattler, scenographer and architect; Jean-Maxime Santuré, landscape artist; Clémence Jost, graphic designer... Written records are increasingly prevalent. In comic-strip fashion, Charles Altorffer devoted himself to the *Traité d'Urbanisme Enchanteur*, (Enchanting Urbanism Treatise, see below), a summary of the issues they tackled down through the years: rising water-levels, energy, mobility... Over the course of multiple experiments, innovative forms have also been integrated into ANPU's tool-kit: photo novels, tourist guides, exhibitions... Commissioned by the Loire-Foréz Agglomération, a cartographic Atlas is now available in the area's media libraries. In April 2019, during the Saint-Étienne International Biennial Design, a five-hour guided tour was organised through the city streets, in partnership with the Saint-Étienne's Public Planning Institution.

In its desire to push the boundaries and to subliminally influence the processes involved in city making, the ANPU has succeeded in eluding being

compartmentalised. *"Our strength is to be cross-functional, elusive, which, in turn, prevents us from responding to commissions submissively,"* says Fabienne Quémeneur. *"With the ANPU, there have been multiple cases of censure. Of course, it's tough for communicators to hear that a city isn't doing well!"* The ANPU's persistent ploughing has gradually convinced its partners to integrate new denominations in order to testify to the ANPU's innovative approach. *"When we started taking on urban commissions, we were pigeon-holed under communication and consultation. We are now gradually referred to as that which we are: poetic science, cross-disciplinary approach, targetless analysis, and storytelling... They no longer seek to saddle us with functions with which we don't feel at ease; it's a victory."* Together with MG-AU, the urban planning agency, the ANPU is currently working on the re-assessment study for Porte de la Villette in Paris; it's *en route* to being an operational command in urban planning. *"We set the tone for the project! With two aspects that are missing*

*from urban expertise. On one hand, we contribute a symbolic and significant anchoring of a locality's history by being committed to its foundations, beyond the traditional approach that remains highly technical and geographical, and is mainly concerned with population pools, statistics... And then we collect the local residents' utterances in a poetic and emotional way, outside the polite setting of consultations,"* remarks Fabienne. Next step: exchanges are underway about working together with Plan Urbanisme Construction Architecture (PUCA), an inter-ministerial agency that has launched incentive research and action-research programs, aimed at advancing knowledge about areas and cities in order to enlighten public action. As the ANPU would say... *Y'a puca!*<sup>47</sup>

JB

<sup>47</sup> Translator's note: A play of words on the organisation's title PUCA and *y'a puca*, derived from the childish way of saying *Y'a plus qu'à* which translates as "We just got to get down to it".

## Julie Bordenave



A journalist who specialises in popular or alternative arts (street arts, rock, comics...), Julie Bordenave specifically examines creative processes in public spaces. Using Marseille as her starting point, Bordenave is now observing natural or cultural ecosystems, sharpening her regard on the Mediterranean cultural landscape as well as on the festival biotope; two contexts that are conducive to delivering moments of grace but that also interesting devices for seduction, camouflage, and predation. Bordenave also contributes her writing talents to specialised media including *Stradda*, *Mouvement*, *Alternatives Théâtrales*, *Arte Culture Touch*, *La Scène*, *Théâtre(s)*, *Zibeline* and so forth, as well as to theatre companies (Agence de Voyages Imaginaires, Libertivore...), and cultural institutions (FAI-AR, Ina, Citron Jaune, La Brèche, pOlau...), thematic books (*Cahier forain des Magnifiques*; *Tout ouïe, la création sonore et musicale en espace public*; *Les Poétiques de l'illusion*...).

Photo: © Fabien Pérani



# CARTOGRAPHIE DU SUBCONSCIENT



S'il ne fallait retenir qu'une carte de cet atlas, ce serait celle-ci. Il faudrait que tous les enfants de

Loire Forez l'apprennent par cœur.



# **“TRAITÉ D’URBANISME ENCHANTEUR”**

## **CHAPTER: RISING WATER (EXTRACT)**

Charles Altorffer, ANPU, 2018



### Chapter: The Downwelling of Water

Urbain, there's something in all that you're telling me about your world that leaves me wondering.

Agreed, water levels will rise. Let's assume it's linked to the climatic disturbance initiated by the Industrial Revolution.



But why doesn't anybody think of the possibility of using the communicating vessels?

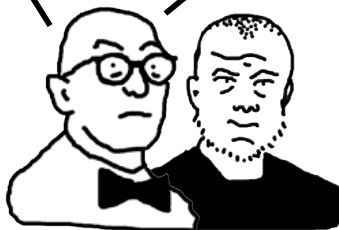
When alive I used to work for the city of Algiers...

Yes, I know, but we said we'd only touch on that on page 387.



Given that the system of communicating vessels has been reliable and effective for a very long time, it seems possible...

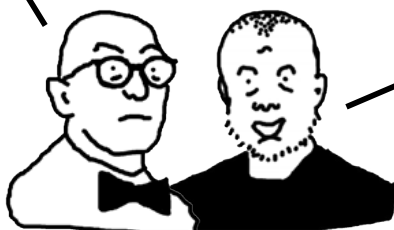
... to apply it on a planetary level by drilling inland seas in order to accumulate the excess water from the existing seas.



Well, I was saying to myself that we could drill a sea in the Algerian desert in order to absorb the overflow.

Excellent Maître!

And you're right. Algeria is the ideal location!



Algiers is known as "Algiers the White" on account of its colonial façades overlooking its famous bay.

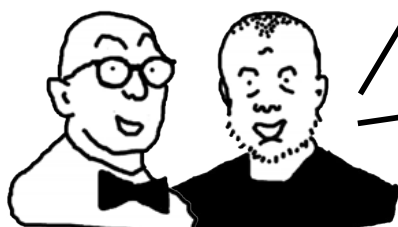
It is resolutely facing the Mediterranean and hence on the farther shore, toward France.

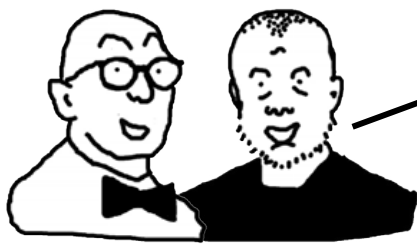
Symbolically, it reveals the Stockholm syndrome between the captive Algiers, which to this day remains very Francophile, and its jailer, the French colonial State.



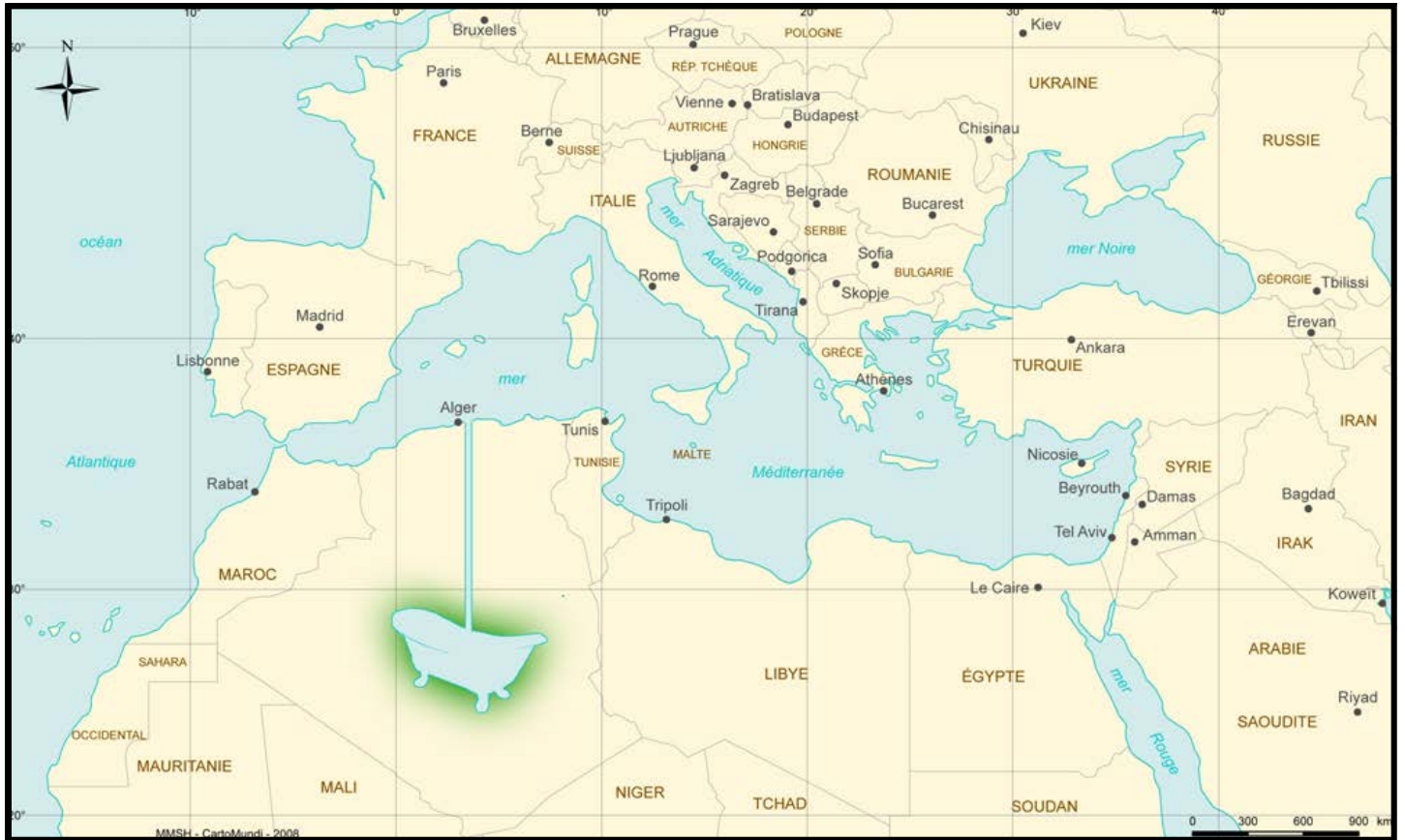
An inland sea project would enable Algiers to return to its African roots and to shake off the syndrome.

The Bay of Algiers the White would thus leave space, on the post card, for the inland sea that would save the world from rising waters.

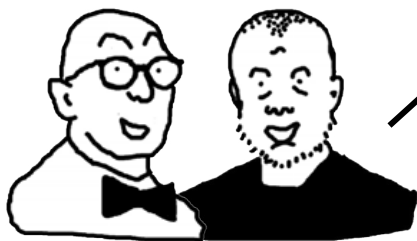




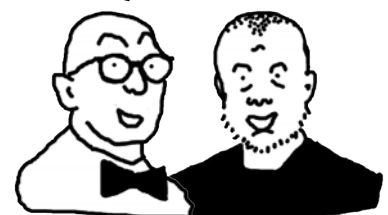
The Black Bay of Algiers!



Bravo Maître!



And at the same time, we could fertilise the desert, the population could be better spread out. And perhaps a new economy might even enable the country to escape its addictions to petroleum.



# “LA VILLE SUR LE DIVAN”

## INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOANALYSIS OF THE WORLD (EXTRACT)

Laurent Petit, Éditions La Contre Allée, 2013

### Appendix 421

#### Urban Psychoanalysis's Eight Commandments

*“The fact is Urban Psychoanalysis is my creation [...]. I even think I can say that even today, where I'm far from being the sole Urban Psychoanalyst, nobody is better placed than me to know what Urban Psychoanalysis is, how it differs from other modes of psycho-urban exploration, what can be designated by this term, or what could be better designated otherwise.”*

*Laurent Petit. Contribution to the Great History of Urban Psychoanalysis.  
Translation: Marie-Laure Cazin. P 1.*

**A** Urban Psychoanalysis can be defined as a method of investigation essentially consisting of **highlighting** the unconsciousness behind the urban development of a city or of a city neighbourhood.

**B** It is equally an endeavour work to bring to its inhabitants' consciousness the repressed psychic content that enabled it to reach **that** point ...

**AB** Hence, the Urban Psychoanalyst's task is to sort out, amidst the incessant play of irresponsible behaviours that underlies the organization of a city, those behind profound urban neurotic **disorders** on account of they're having been isolated from it.

**C** At architecture school, architects acquire training that broadly is the opposite of what they would need to prepare themselves as Urban Psychoanalysts. Their attention is directed to architectural realities more influenced by the physics of materials and all kinds of budgetary constraints than by a real concern for medical treatment. Their interest in the **psychic** aspects of the phenomena of urban life has not been awakened; the study of the mind's higher operations does not concern architecture; that is the domain of another faculty, namely Urban Psychoanalysis.

**C+** Urban analysis is invariably carried out by **progressive** trial and error; the city needs to agree to be probed everywhere, even in places that may seem at first glance embarrassing or even indelicate ...

**CC+** The analyst's expectation can also be described as the opening up of a field of possibilities within the city-patient itself. It actually refuses to consider the current situation of the city-patient as definitive or **inevitable** and it makes the assumption that the city-patient can get over it, that there is room for a new story, that even the concept of a “cursed city” is not a jinx, that everything can sort itself out with a little good will ...

**E** **Even if** the cure's objective, more so than the awareness of the city-patient's unconscious desires, aims at liberating fresh forces that impel citizen-patients toward change and toward action, one can only dread the population's reaction struggling with a boundless **enchantment** that for centuries vainly sought its equivalent in reality...

**EE** Any good urban psychoanalyst **can** indeed be considered as an invisible fabric merchant who demonstrates his deceptive wares with subtle gestures, but should not the whole world **crawl back into the hole they came out of** from time to time?

*“The most sincere search for truth is never more than the subtlest form of lie, particularly as cutting through illusions to reach at truth is nothing more than taking the illusory path from illusion toward truth.”*

*“Translator's note: French text says... mais le monde entier ne devrait-il pas de temps en temps aller se rhabiller (...but should not the whole world go and get dressed again from time to time?). The expression aller se rhabiller means to crawl back into the hole one came out of, but is also an allusion to the fabric merchant and his wares.*

## MetHodology

### Step 0

**A city's commitment** to the path of Urban Psychoanalysis needs to be frank, huge and sincere, it **is necessary**, that the sums we are allocated are colossal in order that city-patient proves its will to make a commitment to the healing path **so that we can** work at optimal conditions, particularly at the level of catering, which is best way to savour the cities/// before

### Step 1

**... Laying the city on the divan...**  
... by launching our work with a thorough investigation that can be summarized via "divan operations" **primarily** meant to better discern the city's personality through its inhabitants utterances; this information is supplemented by all kinds of interviews with contact persons that we have co-opted as some sort of "experts." What follows all throughout our odyssey is a series of fortuitous, furtive, and irrational encounters that enrich our thinking because...

### Step 2

...thinking already is reflection and our research inevitably passes through **a necessary maceration work** and an analysis of a heap of interwoven data where we sometimes have to check-out the most remote regions of the Imagination **and** avail of particularly smart tools, invented by us, such as  
- morpho-cartography (highlighting, through the study of maps and plans of the area-patient, singular forms linked to the area's unconscious)  
- crypto-linguistics (highlighting coded messages in the area's very name)  
- the NCS, i.e. Neuro Constructive Schema (a technique that enables one to decipher the area-patient's neuroses via a range of overlapping semantics inspired by the great Jacques, aka Jacques Lacan)

in such a way as to prepare...

### Step 3

**the long-awaited feedback with** in the VIP lounge in city hall of the city-patient, for example,  
**... a presentation of the findings** of our research destined for the residents of the city-patient...  
**... at which are highlighted....**

**Step 3.1.** the area-patient's **mythogenealogical tree**. Examples of ancestral ancestors thus far detected: a founding saint, a river, a rock, a tropical sea, a sort of great mayor, an invasion, an ocean, a black mountain, a diplomatic incident, a schism, an earthquake, a throw of the dice, a twist of fate, a wasted effort etc, ...

**Step 3.2.** the way in which an area **traverses the hardships of history** such as wars, epidemics, economic crises or simply a relegation to the second division that is often perceived as a veritable humiliation for those overly psychologically vulnerable cities that cling on to the religion of soccer as though it were a buoy of sorts...

**Step 2.3.** **one or more PNSU**, PNSU for *Point Névro Stratégique Urbain*, in other words a strategic urban nerve-point, the area-patient's symbolic location, where all the hitherto highlighted neuroses are now concentrated...

**Step 2.4.** **RUT propositions** (Radical Urban Treatments), **of RAT** (Radical Architectural Treatment) **and of RCT** (Radical Cathartic Treatment) to be applied to the PNSU so that the area-patient succeeds in attaining its complete fulfillment within thirty years, if all passes off smoothly, or within forty years, if the area-patient is severely afflicted...

### Step 4 urban creations

various forms of treatment are thus blueprinted **that appropriate local populations** who are initially stupefied but who later set themselves down to work with a curious mix of joy and jubilation, whereby collective works of all sorts very appropriately start here and there where sometimes certain frail building collapse while other more robust ones resist and unexpectedly offer a thousand colours to cities that we believed would remain grey for ever...

Emerging from these few flames lit here and there over the vast area eventually appeased, a vast eventually reconciled fireworks of imaginaries grow, fluctuate, shoot up, and mellow, where each finds its place in all its singularity to illuminate, shine, grow, to become the incandescent stars of a new Milky Way. Everything suddenly radiates with a thousand fires, as if the beautiful and noble Humanity finally reconstituted suddenly found itself

**struggling with boundless enchantment**  
that over centuries had sought in vain its equivalent in reality.

### Step 5 Urban Nirvana



# AN URBAN EXPLORATION IN COPENHAGEN, FAR FROM THE LITTLE MERMAID

Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

Copenhagen's iconic little mermaid sits atop her rock, facing the hundreds of thousands of tourists that flock to the Danish capital each year. Given how the statue represents the polar opposite to that which is currently happening on the ground in Copenhagen, it is a practical starting point to investigate the role of artists in the city! In the words of Tina Saaby – Copenhagen's former cityarchitect who played a vital role in the city's transformation over recent years (see our interview below) – the key is now to have “artists involved in the process of making a city;” their function “utterly differs to that which it was in the past,” where it was chiefly concerned with “posing objects in public space.” That's why we went for a stroll through Superkilen, a fascinating large-scale park co-designed by the SUPERFLEX collective (read our article and the interview with Jakob Fenger). During our stay we also visited the Grønningen neighbourhood where the Metropolis team – “an artistic platform for developing the creative city,” – in conjunction with the city's urban planning services has been calling upon artists before initiating work on developing a park (read the interview with Katrien Verwilt, Metropolis' programmer). Join us on this exploratory stroll through Copenhagen, a city where artists are engaged in city making!

PLBC



Superkilen, The Black Market, Copenhagen, 2012 © Iwan Baann

# SUPERKILEN – A SINGULAR, EXPERIENTIAL, AND HOSPITABLE URBAN PARK

Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

***Copenhagen's emblematic park, Superkilen was co-designed by the SUPERFLEX artistic collective in 2012. Seven years later, Pascal Le Brun-Cordier visited the park for a walk-around. In the company of Céline Estenne, he also interviewed Jakob Fenger of SUPERFLEX about the process of creating this astounding public space.***

Superkilen, located in Nørrebro, one of Copenhagen's last working-class and downtown neighbourhoods, is home to some 70 000 residents, many

of whom are immigrants with North African, Near Eastern and Middle Eastern backgrounds. While tour guides currently tout the district as

a desirable address – “a hipster little village,” “a cool and trendy destination,” “one of the city's most vibrant areas”... –, Nørrebro had long been stigmatised and identified as a dangerous neighbourhood. At least until the creation of Superkilen in 2012.

Superkilen was created on an abandoned railway brownfield site nearly a kilometre long that passed through Copenhagen's urban fabric like a large scar. On the initiative of the City of Copenhagen and the Realdania Foundation, and equipped with a budget of eight million Euros, an urban landscaping operation was launched in 2008 to transform the site into a “super neighbourhood” (“Superkilen”).

The team chosen to transform this wasteland combined the SUPERFLEX artistic collective [bit.ly/2IkqalG](https://bit.ly/2IkqalG); the architecture agency BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group [bit.ly/2AmjcBF](https://bit.ly/2AmjcBF), and Topotek1,

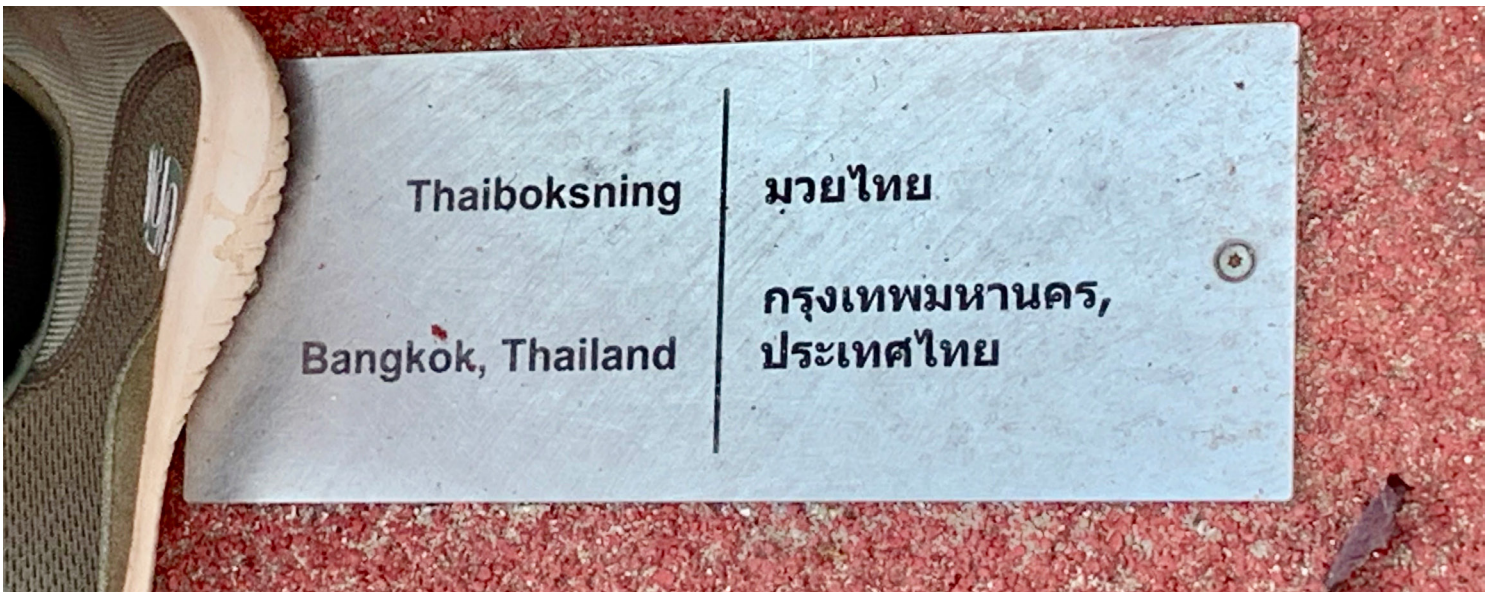


London bin, The Red Square, 2012 © SUPERFLEX





Thai boxing ring, Bangkok, The Red Square, 2012 © Iwan Baann



Descriptive plaque on the ground, The Red Square, 2019 © Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

an agency of landscape architects, [bit.ly/2meWCq1](https://bit.ly/2meWCq1). Their *modus operandi*, which SUPERFLEX refers to as “extreme participation,” involved drawing strongly upon input from the neighbourhood’s residents and the park’s future users in its design process. Moreover, the team championed the locality’s cultural diversity, a diversity that is considered both a contextual reality and a social and urban quality to celebrate.

SUPERFLEX’s artists asked local residents and future-users to select urban objects that are characteristic of their home countries: benches, games,

manhole covers, road signs, trees... Trips were then organised to Palestine, Spain, Thailand, Texas, and Jamaica in order to acquire the selected items, while those that could not be imported were faithfully reproduced in-situ. In total, more than one hundred objects from more than fifty countries were installed in the park: these include swings from Iraq, benches from Brazil, a fountain from Morocco, litter bins from England, a boxing ring from Thailand, a black octopus with slides and footbridges from Japan, a wall dedicated to the former Chilean president Salvador Allende, neon signs from Russia and China... Steel plaques embedded in the ground describe each

object and its origin, in both Danish and in the language of the object’s country of origin.

These objects are distributed across the park’s three main areas, each of which is identified by a dominant colour: The Red Square, a very open and lively square, is conceived of as an extension of the “neighbourhood house,” where one can play, skate, drink coffee, sit on benches or swings. The Black Market, a quieter space, crossed by long sinuous white lines drawn on a black ground, is marked by the presence of the black octopus and a small hill on which children take pleasure in climbing, a fountain from





Bicycle stand, The Netherlands, The Red Square, 2012 © SUPERFLEX



Manhole cover, Paris, The Red Square, 2012 © SUPERFLEX



Bicycle stand, Germany, The Red Square, 2012 © SUPERFLEX

Morocco, chess tables, and Chinese Palm trees. The Green Park is a calm area where one can picnic, take a nap on the lawn, or play sports, walk one's dog...

While strolling through Superkilen, we wanted to see and feel for ourselves how things were playing out in this urban park with its specific background and its singular forms seven years after its inception. Our first impression: three public spaces visibly experienced as communal areas, made up of heterogeneous objects, thus composing an astonishing cultural patchwork, at once energetic and playful, a joyously dissonant urban symphony. Three public spaces with highly distinctive styles and rhythms, used on a daily basis and traversed by children, teenagers, adults, and the elderly, pedestrians, cyclists, skateboarders, women and men. The entire site is fluid: all and sundry intersect without any problems. Skillfully organised, Superkilen's sub-spaces have been designed in such a way as to enable the co-existence of multiple uses: urban sports, chess games, picnics, siestas, games for young children... Two prominent zones offer views from a height: one considered as though a solarium stand in the Red Square and the other like a small hill in the Black Market.

Two residents with whom we walked through Superkilen confirmed to us that this park, which has become emblematic of the neighbourhood, was, for them, a success and even a source of pride, despite the fact that some residents still regret that their particular initial request (a classic park with trees and lawns) had not been selected. Moreover, the park's online allure is not insignificant: as a highly instagrammable public spot, Superkilen has become a "super-like." The downside of its success, however, has





The Black Octopus, Tokyo, The Black Market, 2012 © Iwan Baann

meant that some of the park's equipment has suffered wear and tear due to overuse (the Jamaican sound system had even to be removed) and some colours have faded over time – (the Red Square has lost its gloss).

Lastly, Superkilen strikes us as a convincing illustration of the experiential city that we are increasingly witnessing springing up here and there, a city that offers multiple experiences in creating urbanity, and that is rich in amenities, surprising and fun. Moreover, and this is a rarer quality, given its highly contextual and participatory design process, Superkilen exemplifies what an

inclusive, hospitable city could be not only in terms of its spatial forms (attentive to the diversity in age of its users and its uses), but also in its symbolic aspects (mindful to take into account the diversity of worlds and origins of

***“An astonishingly cultural, energetic and playful patchwork, a joyously dissonant urban symphony.”***

those who live in the locality). This is precisely what the jury from the American Institute of Architects highlighted when they awarded Superkilen project the 2013 AIA Honor Awards for Regional and Urban Design. The jury stressed the fact that this urban project

reflects *“the true nature of the local district, rather than perpetuating an ossified image of a homogeneous Denmark.”* Finally, and equally rare, thanks to SUPERFLEX's artistic approach in its choice of red and black – two colours seldom

used to define urban spaces – and of the colourful and assorted collection of singular objects, Superkilen is a truly original urban

space, endowed with an originality that is a source of astonishment and pleasure, which, in turn, activates a delightful and joyful city.

**PLBC**

# WHEN ARTISTS PARTICIPATE IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE: A FOCUS ON SUPERKILEN

## AN INTERVIEW WITH JAKOB FENGER, CO-FOUNDER OF SUPERFLEX

Céline Estenne & Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

**Céline Estenne:** What was the process involved in creating Superkilen? What was its artistic concept, and the artistic intention behind it?

**Jakob Fenger:** In the beginning, we were approached by BIG architects [bit.ly/2AmjcBF](https://bit.ly/2AmjcBF) to partake in the competition. For us, it was essential that we not just add things to the park afterwards, as artists traditionally do, but rather that we play an active part in the conceptualisation of the park, and to take part in the basic idea of the place.

We are quite familiar with the area, because it used to be our neighbourhood – we’ve moved a little bit away but our studio used to be located right next to the park. So, of course, it’s an area that matters a lot to us. And it’s a very diverse area. The media describes a part of it as a very problematic neighbourhood. We had actually done projects there before, focusing on that area, and tried to create another narrative for it, because most people living there are just ordinary people going on about their lives who at some point are labeled as residents of a problematic neighborhood. Then, as part of the package received for the competition, we obtained an information document from the city that had been put together by a consultancy com-

pany, a survey in which they interviewed residents about what they would like for that area. It also indicated that more than sixty different nationalities were represented, and referred to the neighbourhood’s potential and a lot of other things. And, of course, that is one of the key elements whenever the media malign the neighbourhood: it is a very diverse neighbourhood. So, our idea from the beginning was: “*Why don’t we try to work with this narrative?*” – that’s actually one of the things that attracted us initially.

In Copenhagen – as in most cities – there is a specific kind of equipment used for park areas or public spaces:

***“With the Superkilen project, people were invited to participate: they were tasked with selecting objects from somewhere else and to add their story to the public space. Once the objects are placed in public space, others can use the objects and invent their own stories about them.”***

three different kinds of benches, three different kinds of trash bins, and they are all of a similar colour and they all look alike. So, we thought: “*Why not break this rule of how Copenhagen public space is furnished; why not open it up?*” And to have it represent residents in the neighbourhood, somewhat like the UN building: many nations are represented inside that building, as well as by their flags outside. It’s a kind of simple narrative to the outer world, but

also a way of having a tool to communicate directly with people living in the neighbourhood. So, we said: “*We’re going to do a park and furnish it with various elements.*” That was our starting point; this idea of a kind of copy-paste park, as well as the idea that any person – not only someone from another background, but anybody – could select whatever they wanted. It didn’t have to be something from their home country; it could be something from their honeymoon to the States. The idea wasn’t dogmatic: we would select equipment for which the rules for park areas and public spaces didn’t apply, something from the outside.

Another concept was to divide the area into three separate zones: a red, a black and a green one. It was a way of trying to organise the area in another way, based on the need for various activities stated in the consultancy report. Given it’s a

very small area with many different needs from cultural institutions, residents, and different groupings... What would they like to have in this park? So, that’s also why it’s heavily programmed. One way of creating an atmosphere and to give it a sense of “place” was to divide it into these three zones. The red is the most sportive or the most cultural area; it’s the central part and hasn’t much furniture at all, because of the need to be able to host events there. The Black





Playground rack, Delhi, The Red Square, 2019 © Pascal Le Brun-Cordier



Swing bench, Baghdad, The Red Square, 2019 © Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

Square is more like a striped black square that we actually tried to make as square-like as possible in order to imitate a kind of classical square. It was a messy space beforehand with a road going through it; it really was an area unlike any other. The Green Park is more like a green area for picnicking. The area used to have a lot of issues with teenagers or pre-teenagers jumping around and being messy, so we tried to make something that could be interesting for them, such as this ring from Santa Monica that they can swing in.

[bit.ly/2kGeTfh](https://bit.ly/2kGeTfh)

These are the main concepts in whose creation we took an active part. That was the beginning. Then, Topotek1, the landscape architects [bit.ly/2meWCq1](https://bit.ly/2meWCq1)

joined the process and went with this concept, for they took to the idea. But, the basic concept came from us.

**Céline:** You talked about a copy-paste process. Did you clearly set out to refer to ready-made aesthetics?

**Jakob:** As artists, we have been working a lot with this idea of displacement: when you move things from one place to another. For example, a bench taken from one place and placed in another context assumes another meaning. Context is important, especially with art, at least with the kind of art we work with! It's a very simple artistic idea in a way, that we just put into practice in a whole park. And people participate: they try to make that link and that story. Sometimes we

copied things, at other times we bought them online. Other cities even donated things to us: there are multiple ways of dealing with it.

**Pascal Le Brun-Cordier:** Would you say it's a postmodernist point of view? Does it make sense to say that?

**Jakob:** For me, it has to do with relational aesthetics. And, it's also a part of where we come from as an artist group: building platforms and doing things where people can interact. It comes more from an artistic approach than an architectural framework. For us, the concept, the idea of moving things, is linked with how we connect with a community. This is the most important aspect.



The Black Square, 2012 © Iwan Baann





The Black Market, 2012 © Mike Magnussen



Chess table, Sofia, The Black Market, 2019 © Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

**Pascal:** Is it a kind of toolbox?

**Jakob:** That's how we work: we describe our projects as tools, as proposals where people are invited to participate, and which open up multiple areas for use. With the Superkilen project, people were tasked with selecting objects from somewhere else and to add their story to the public space. Once the objects are placed in public space, others can use the objects and invent their own stories about them.

**Pascal:** How has this place been since its conception in 2012? Were you surprised by how people used it?

**Jakob:** It's always extremely lively now: when the sun is out there's always many people, and even when the sun goes down there's still people there. It wasn't like that before: one wouldn't really go there at night. To some extent this evolution is positive, for it has made the neighbourhood more secure, but, on the other hand, some people are getting very tired of the tourists. Many tourists are going there now to photograph, especially the Black Square. It has become a kind of Copenhagen icon. That happens to be the downside of success. I actually pass through that space a lot, and my kids are constantly on skateboards on the Red Square, so I know what's going on there. My impression is that broadly speaking it has been a positive change for the area. However, not everything has changed. You still might have a drug dealer sitting on a bench next to a family. It's like Christmas: everybody comes together. It still has that kind of feeling.

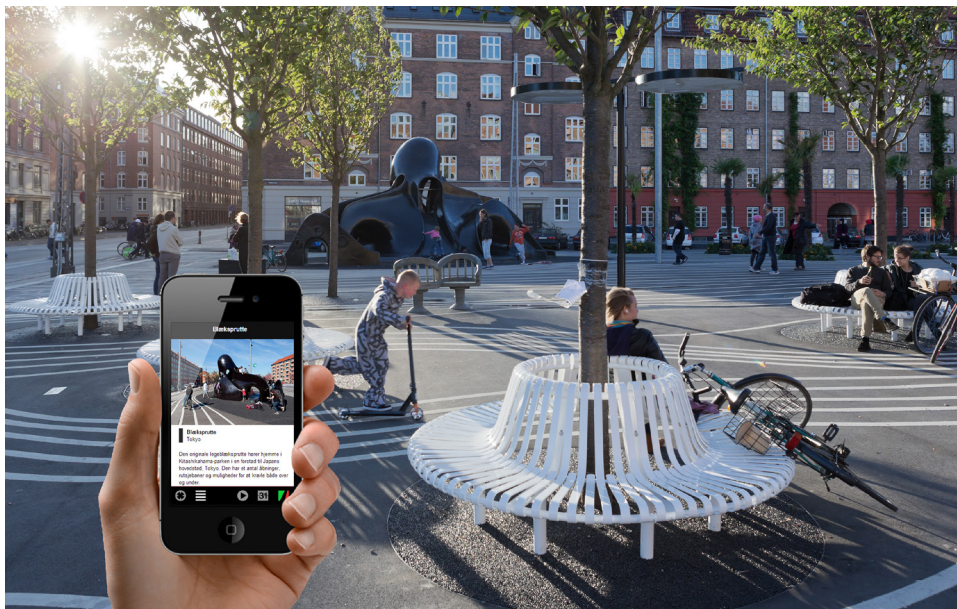
**Céline:** Do you have a specific example of some use or appropriation that surprised you, or wasn't what you expected?

**Jakob:** In the process of selecting objects, we decided to undertake our own survey with residents, because, for us, citizen involvement was – and classically so – extremely rigid and stiff. Meetings were set up at the local library or community house, where people were invited to comment on the project. Those coming to these meetings are mostly elderly white men, between 50 and 60 – because they have time – whereas what we see on the streets is a completely different public: lots of kids, lots of different nationalities, various social groups. So, we went around with our own team and did interviews in local





Bench, Havana, The Red Square, 2012 © Torben Eskerod



The Superkilen App, 2012 © N/A

computer gaming clubs, music clubs, line dancing clubs, and so on, where we knew other people would come together. We actually got a lot of objects for the park through that process.

We thought about *Extreme Makeover*, this horrible American TV show, where they go to suburban houses and have a team of Disney-crazy scenography people basically do a total makeover on the house. It's actually horrible, but they come to a family and surprise them by saying: "What do you wanna do with your living room?" The mother might say: "I want this and that," and they will respond: "Ok, let's do it!" And, putting aside everything else in that show, we liked this "Ok, let's do it!" energy. So,

**"'Extreme participation' is a participatory process where you ask people what they want, and then you just do it."**

we set up five trips where we went to people and asked them what they wanted. We called it "*participation extreme*." It's a participatory process where you ask people what they want, and then you just do it. We did that with five different objects, and one of them was the boxing ring.

We decided to ask a Thai-boxer from Lebanon, who trains many kids in the neighbourhood and does a lot of social work just using Thai boxing. We asked him: "What would you like?" He wanted a boxing ring from Thailand, so we went to Bangkok and found a boxing ring.

However, afterwards when we went to meetings with the City Council they were completely against this boxing ring! They protested: "Why do you want to impose violence on this neighbourhood? You're just planting the seeds of violence and possibilities for being violent in a very violent neighbourhood." They kept complaining about it. So, of course we got a little bit nervous in this process. But we insisted, and it actually happened that all sorts of people used it – even if now it's really worn down because of over-use. It's a hang-out for kids to jump up and down, and not even used for boxing. And, of course, for the local boxing club as well. So, that particular object I was a little nervous about is actually an object that surprised me a lot. It's brought a lot more happiness than anything resembling violence.

There have been a few such surprises. One of the problems at the beginning, when Superkilen was still very popular, was that people loved hanging out and using the various facilities – and therefore they were used a lot. That was a downside, for it makes the place slightly noisier and demands more maintenance. This is what the City Council refers to as a "luxury problem." A problem we believe they should handle by contributing more money toward maintenance. But, generally speaking, it has been great to see how popular Superkilen is – especially with the residents, and how much it is being used.

**Interview by Céline Estenne and Pascal Le Brun-Cordier in May 2019.**



## SUPERFLEX



SUPERFLEX [bit.ly/2lkqalG](https://bit.ly/2lkqalG) was founded in 1993 by Jakob Fenger, Rasmus Nielsen, and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen. Through a diverse and complex practice, SUPERFLEX address the artist's role in contemporary society and explore the ramifications of globalisation and power systems. SUPERFLEX describe their projects as tools, and as proposals that invite people to participate, thus suggesting various spaces of uses and application.

Photo: © Jan Søndergaard



# HAVING ARTISTS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

## AN ENCOUNTER WITH TINA SAABY, COPENHAGEN'S FORMER CITYARCHITECT

Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

***How did Tina Saaby serve as cityarchitect in Copenhagen? What role can artists have in the urban factory according to her? An informal discussion illustrated with inspiring examples.***

**Pascal Le Brun-Cordier:** Tina, how did you become cityarchitect in Copenhagen, and what did your job entail?

**Tina Saaby:** I worked as the cityarchitect in the city administration for eight-and-a-half years. Before that I ran my own office, where we worked on many projects in various neighbourhoods, projects that were based on working and designing in new ways, together with local residents. It had a lot to do with building design and the design of urban spaces, as well as the way one designs the process: a more inclusive process in many ways.

I then became the cityarchitect in Copenhagen. I applied for the job in 2010; it was a fixed contract, so my contract



Tina Saaby © Agnes Saaby Thomsen

expired on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2019. It's a special role. Not many cities in Europe or in the world have cityarchitects organised in this way. The cityarchitect, as it functions in Copenhagen, is an individual – one individual – who is not responsible for finances or resources, but whose role is to advise politicians, co-managers, colleagues, and citizens, and to try to understand the physical and aesthetic nature of our urban surroundings. My role was to advise politicians about the strategic issues we were dealing with: the site-specific plans we were working on, as well as how specific projects were being developed

in order to ensure that it was connected with a site-specific plan and the strategic issues. My job was to be a kind of match-maker, for it mostly consisted in getting people to talk with each other. It's a management position in the city administration that doesn't follow the normal hierarchical vertical ascent: I had to draw people together horizontally from various departments and projects, so as to try to get them to talk together and to understand that projects would improve if they got input and knowledge from each other. I facilitated a conversation between them.



**Pascal:** Where is the cityarchitect situated in the organisation chart ?

**Tina:** There are seven departments in Copenhagen's administration. The cityarchitect is physically situated in the Technical and Environmental Department, alongside technicians, managers, and other staff: all the people working on the Neighbourhood Improvement Program.<sup>48</sup>

There are 2 200 persons working in this department: cleaning the city, giving out tickets for parking infringements, giving entrance tickets for buildings, urban spaces and so forth. They manage urban space – not design it – : those doing master plans, local plans, business plans, strategic thinking dealing with the city's physical surroundings, waste plans, and other such matters. Quite a broad spectrum of people! Physically, I was situated in the group working with strategic thinking and site-specific planning, in the directorate of that section. What makes the role of the cityarchitect crucial is that it inter-connects. No other role does that: it's a connecting role, which aims at getting a holistic view of projects.

**Pascal:** How was your relationship with the Culture Department?

**Tina:** The Culture Department is an essential department to ensure that the city is habitable and of good standing. Given it is a department in its own right, it has its own deputy-mayor, budget, and leadership structure. While not directly a part of the day-to-day leadership structure, the cityarchitect does advise staff about projects in the Culture Department. As part of our strategic thinking about "A City With An Edge" (see below), I've had conversations with staff in the Culture Department about the significance of the decisions they are making in creating the city's environment. We discussed art, culture, and other relevant matters. In that way the cityarchitect's role is also to try to integrate culture into our planning system, for they are seen as two separate things. And, the head of the Culture Department was on the jury that hired the new cityarchitect.

**Pascal:** In your opinion, what could be the role, or the place for artists in the making of a city and in urban life?

**Tina:** That's a tough question (*laughs*). The way we currently look at city making differs somewhat from fifty years ago, during a more modernist period. At that point, even though the world was already complex, it was a world in which people were more specialised; planning involved working with concrete plans. They used to ask and invite artists in the process of creating a new neighbourhood by commissioning an artwork. The artist might then come up with a sculpture; everyone regarded it as an object. Nowadays, the way that we ourselves and artists look at city-making is more complex, as are the processes through which people get involved. So, of course there are still some sculptures in public spaces, and I think they should still be a part of art in public space, but today artists are also involved in the process. We should look at art not only as an object in itself, but also as an integral part of the process of regenerating a city. Artists are thus a lot more involved in designing urban space, and not only in discussing about where to situate a particular sculpture. It's completely different from how we looked at the role of art and artists as city-makers in the past.

***"Artists are thus a lot more involved in designing urban space, and not only in discussing where to place a sculpture. The role of art and the artist in urban development is completely different from what it was seen as in the past."***

**Pascal:** I totally agree with you. At what stage should artists get involved in this process? At the beginning, in the design of public space, during construction, or afterwards, when everything is completed and there is a need to activate public space?

**Tina:** At each and every stage. One of the shifts in today's culture is that you can't ask of an artist that he or she work in such and such a way, as in the past. So, sometimes they get involved in the beginning of the process: artists get involved in new ways to discuss various kinds of neighbourhoods, or to work on some temporary projects, to investigate the site. They can also be involved in the designing phase, in the way of looking at a permanent space, and at a detailed plan or master-plan with an artistic approach: how to perceive the space, how can it be a place with an artistic aspect? Alternatively, they could get involved when

a space is almost designed and there are many ongoing processes that will go on forever, so that the project will never finish, and there's always possibility for new directions. I think artists are somewhat better than others at questioning: to question situations, to question society, to question physical space. This questioning is equally as important in the beginning as in later developmental phases.

**Pascal:** Could you tell me more about some of the projects you have worked on, and at what stage you got involved in the process?

**Tina:** One of my favourite artistic projects, which took place at the end of the process, is a site-specific video installation by an artist called Hanne Lise Thomsen (see insert below) in the neighbourhood of Vesterbro. She made a project in which she visited forty apartments, where she interviewed and photographed families about life in their street, questioning them about the changes and transformation in the neighbourhood. She then created a site-specific video installation that was screened on the fifteen-meter-high

façades of an old school. It was a poetic, authentic, intense, and site-specific way of trying to open up a discussion about all the people living there, whose lives are totally diverse, and to show their inside lives outside.

**Pascal:** And what was the impact of this work?

**Tina:** I don't think you can calculate the impact. I love data, I love evidence, and I love talking about the impact, but I also try to embrace – and want to embrace – that there's many things with impacts that we can't calculate. It's just as important if you can't calculate than if you can.

<sup>48</sup> The Neighbourhood Improvement Program is a five-year program being implemented in several neighbourhoods across Copenhagen whose target is to develop urban spaces in cooperation with local communities, and often includes artists in the process.



**Pascal:** Perhaps it can change the way we understand the city, and it changes our point of view?

**Tina:** I think so. It's also a way of understanding space differently. For example, given Hanne was working with physical surroundings such as the scale of the school, she changed my understanding of what that space's physical framework is, for we would usually say that the building where she held the event is... boring. So, it was a way of bringing something to life that was normally quite dead. In that sense, it was also a three-dimensional understanding of the space.

Anyway, this happened at the end of the process. Whenever we work on Neighbourhood Improvement projects, however, artists start getting involved at the beginning of the process, before there's a definitive plan for a specific site: during neighbourhood surveys, or by participating in the design of some temporary spaces. Each Neighbourhood Improvement project works with artists in a different way. Sometimes it's about a concrete physical urban space, while at other times it's more related to the neighbourhood's identity.

Superkilen is an example of a Neighbourhood Improvement project, as a project done with a concrete design for a specific urban space. In this instance, artists got involved in the middle phase, when SUPERFLEX had already started working together with Topotek and BIG in integrated urban design. Now I can't tell you whether it was BIG, Topotek, or SUPERFLEX who made this, that, or the other. I think that is the project's strong point. It's a strong project for all three partners involved in the designing process.

**Pascal:** For you, has the project been a success? Have some things changed in this place? And why is it a success for you? Why does it work better here than elsewhere?

**Tina:** Yeah, it is a success! For many reasons that have not only to do with the design, but a lot more with decisions made before the design-phase. I often think we talk about projects as though only the artist or the architect owned the project. We should be more aware of the complexity in making this kind of project. The project's greatest success was that a decision was taken to undertake a project, ever before we knew which

project exactly or ever before we had organised the competition. It takes many years work with a lot of people to be able to say: *"This is what we think is the key issue in order to give this neighbourhood a new chance."* Before Superkilen, this neighbourhood was a kind of brownfield area: an old railway line that traversed the city. Nothing had previously bound that site together; in a sense, it was a scar dividing the city in two. From that standpoint, we started to say: *"This is going to be a new recreational area for bicycles and pedestrians. Superkilen will be one of those projects that sews the city together again, interlinking the city instead of dividing it in two."* That makes it a big success! What is interesting about the Superkilen project is that it does so in an iconic way. One should always be aware of using icons as something to salvage everything, but in this particular case it was an important element that a part of this long scar going through the city had a fixed point where it became iconic. The project that the three partners did there is very iconic; it became a new identity. It was also a project that divided people, however, for there was a lot of conflict at first.



Inside Out Istedgade, Hanne Lise Thomsen, 2015 © Torben Eskerod





Inside Out Istedgade, Hanne Lise Thomsen, 2015 © Torben Eskerod

**Pascal:** In the beginning did people want something else?

**Tina:** As far as I know, there were many people that would have preferred something more nature-like, and maybe not so iconic. Maybe they would have accepted that project if they had been included in its design, but many people felt that they had been left out of the process, because the method chosen was to identify a few people to represent the others. But, the others didn't feel they were being represented. That's a very interesting dilemma. As I see it, a conflict can often be a positive thing in neighbourhood improvement and urban development in general, for conflict is a way of embracing diversity in public space, of acknowledging that diversity exists. It's often not a negative thing; it only becomes negative if we cannot talk about it.

Anyway, I think this space was needed, especially for the many young people who needed some kind of place where they could feel they belong. I came to understand this in

talking to my son, who is nineteen now. This whole episode took place when he was going around on skateboard, in his early teenage years. We were talking about the space and its design. I said to him that from my point of view and to my taste, I would have chosen it differently. He then said that he thought it was the most exciting urban space we had. So, whenever we talk about design and taste, we should be aware that to have a diverse city we should have places that might not be as beautiful as we think, as long as there are those with different opinions, and as long as the space is effective. Superkilen is working very well. So many people

***“Artists are better than others at questioning: to question situations, to question society, to question physical space... this questioning is equally important in the beginning as well as in the developmental phase.”***

pass through the area, so many people are participating in activities there!

**Pascal:** How many people?

**Tina:** So many people. In that way it's a huge success: it offered a better

urban life to that neighbourhood. Copenhagen has a strategic vision about urban life: to have people remain outdoors for longer periods. That is one of the things we have figures for: between 2015 and 2025, we have a precise goal of wanting everybody to spend 20% more time outdoors. So, one could say if that is our goal, then it's important that we get everybody outside, and that we have a diverse range of activities and that we can invite people to do a lot of different things in urban space. Superkilen is a huge success from that point of view. So, you can discuss its success from multiple perspectives.

**Pascal:** Is there another example of an interesting collaboration with artists in The Neighbourhood Improvement Program, or in another context?

**Tina:** Kenneth Balfelt's project (his website: [bit.ly/2m6K6su](http://bit.ly/2m6K6su); documentary on the project: [bit.ly/2IZL5ui](http://bit.ly/2IZL5ui)). It also took place in Vesterbro, where we were going to build a new metro station. This entailed demolishing an urban space used by many diverse groups, especially one





Enghave Minipark, Kenneth Balfelt, 2010-2011 © Kenneth Balfelt

group of socially marginalised people, some of whom were homeless, most of them drinking. People who didn't feel they belonged anywhere, and who were very depressed about this demolition. So, Kenneth Balfelt designed a project together with that group of people on the outskirts of that area, involving a long bench, a pergola, and a grill... The "users" were included in the whole process and the project was constantly adjusted to their needs and uses. It resulted in a very special and unique space, whose aesthetic I like. As it's a temporary space, I don't know if it will be permanent, for the metro project is now completed: we'll see how it will work after that.

**Pascal:** When was that?

**Tina:** In 2010-11. He's a very interesting artist! He's been working with specific groups of people, groups that nobody else usually cares about. That is one of the things we try to discuss: how can we create cities where we can also include such groups?

**Pascal:** What kind of missions should artists undertake in public spaces in Copenhagen over the coming years? What specific problems, questions, goals need to be addressed concerning life in public space?

**Tina:** Last year the Technical and Environmental Department in Copenhagen adopted a strategy known as *Fælleskab København* (Co-creating

Copenhagen). Its vision is to develop the Danish capital in collaboration with anyone who uses it – residents and tourists alike – to turn it into a "habitable city... a city with an edge". This is a very open question: many people ask: "What is a city with an edge?" and we reply: "We don't know, that's the whole idea!" We want to have a city where we can discuss the atmosphere, the character, and diversity of the various neighbourhoods, and allow time for that discussion. This means questioning and going through experiments about what is a city with an edge; to get wiser and wiser, to understand more and more what it might be. Artists have a significant role in this questioning and in all these experiments: to make artworks that are part of this questioning, and to keep it as an open question. This is a very positive approach and I hope that our politicians and all the city managers have the courage to keep that as an open question, and not a closed one, just because we might know what a city with an edge is supposed to be.

**Pascal:** Are there artists in Copenhagen who place provocative questions in public space that make people think and question? Don't you think that too many artistic projects in the public domain are too meek? Don't we need more provocative, confrontational, and disturbing projects that awaken citizens, that incite big discussions and controversy?



Enghave Minipark, Kenneth Balfelt, 2010-2011 © Kenneth Balfelt





Enghave Minipark, Kenneth Balfelt, 2010-2011 © Kenneth Balfelt

**Tina:** Both yes and no. Yes, of course, we should have provocative questioning, but I think that other things are also good. If you are going to be provocative in a public space where you

force people to go, you should also be responsible for how it impacts people, and understand that some people can deal with it, while others cannot. So, in that way you also have

to have respect for people, and how it impacts them.

**Interview by Pascal Le Brun-Cordier in Copenhagen on 23 May 2019.**



# A CITY WITH AN EDGE

*Extract from the Co-create Copenhagen brochure edited by the Technical and Environmental Administration of the City of Copenhagen.*

[bit.ly/2IEydk](https://bit.ly/2IEydk)

Co-create Copenhagen is a vision with aims and targets for technical and environmental issues towards 2025.

The three aims of the vision, “a liveable city”, “a city with an edge” and “a responsible city” are to be realised on the basis of the municipal plan for Copenhagen. The vision will also strengthen and interact with a number of other municipal policies and strategies.

## A CITY WITH AN EDGE

The clash of contrasts is what infuses a metropolis with its unique sense of vibrancy.

Contrast between neatly trimmed parks and rough-and-ready, regenerated industrial sites. Between Michelin-starred restaurants and street kitchens. Between modern, experimental architecture and 300-year-old buildings.

We need to pave the way for the city’s diversity to play an even more prominent role. It would be good if Copenhagen were even bolder and had more of an edge. We need room for wild, creative initiatives and architecture that evokes strong emotions – without the city breaking at the seams and becoming divided.

To make Copenhagen a city with more of an edge, the City of Copenhagen will focus on:

- **Flexibility and creativity.** Cities that don’t constantly change become drab and predictable. We want a more flexible and dynamic Copenhagen that reflects the myriad of lives lived here. There will be room for experimental projects that may have a limited lifespan. There will be freedom to start up and test new things. Buildings and areas will change their function over time. We must have the courage to surprise and innovate.
- **Unique neighbourhoods that belong together.** While contrasts are important, Copenhagen must avoid growing into a divided city. Getting around and across it has to be easy, safe and inspiring. A city with an edge depends on its people and businesses daring to be different, so it is important that all types of people have the opportunity to live here. Neighbourhoods must all be attractive and organised in a way that supports both the individual choice and the emergence of new communities.

## 2025 TARGETS:

- **A majority** of Copenhageners consider Copenhagen a city with an edge
- **70%** of Copenhageners find that they have plenty of opportunity to get involved at local level
- **Twice as many** volunteers take part in the development, care and maintenance of the city
- The number of deprived areas is at least **halved**
- **90%** of Copenhageners find it easy to get around the city
- At least **70%** of new social housing is placed in school districts with less than 20% social housing

## BY THE PEOPLE:

Perhaps the most important contribution to a city with an edge will come from the people themselves.

Those who have the willingness, creativity and vision to make an original mark on the city must have better opportunities and more flexible frameworks to do so.

We believe that involving those who are willing and able to make a difference will generate new communities, life and cohesion.

## 2050'S OUTLOOK:

In 2050, Copenhagen welcomes change and provides space for the unknown.

It is a unified city, and deprived areas are a thing of the past.



A NORTHERN FOCUS

# INSIDE OUT ISTEDGADE

A project by Hanne Lise Thomsen, 2015

Her website: [bit.ly/2m0y9Ev](https://bit.ly/2m0y9Ev)

In all, the residents of forty apartments on Istedgade street participated in *Inside Out Istedgade*. The idea was to have as many residents as possible talk about life on Istedgade through individual meetings with each of them. The residents thus contributed to a diverse but common visual and auditory narrative.

Each meeting was documented in photography, film, and sound, and formed a continuous background and inspiration for the artistic interpretations.

The project was developed in urban space using various approaches; a sound montage was broadcast at the main railway station, in the space facing Reventlowsgade street, while images were projected onto a facade on Gasværksvej street (an 8-9 minute loop, shown for 3 days after nightfall).

Furthermore, the project's many images and stories were documented and collated in the publication *Inside Out Istedgade*. The Danish Arts Foundation and the Copenhagen Municipality initiated the project as part of the urban renewal of Istedgade street.



*Inside Out Istedgade*, Hanne Lise Thomsen, 2015 © Pressefoto



# HOW METROPOLIS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO REINVENTING COPENHAGEN

## AN INTERVIEW WITH KATRIEN VERWILT, METROPOLIS'S CO-DIRECTOR

Sonia Lavadinho & Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

***Metropolis is an “artistic platform for developing the creative city” that has been offering shows and performances in Copenhagen’s public spaces for many years. In order to understand how Metropolis has contributed to the Danish capital’s urban reinvention, Klaxon went along to meet Katrien Verwilt, Metropolis’s programmer and co-director (in conjunction with Trevor Davies). We met at the Vivaldi café in the heart of Copenhagen on 22 May 2019. Alongside Pascal Le Brun-Cordier, Klaxon’s editor-in-chief, Sonia Lavadinho, urban anthropologist, sat in on the conversation.***

**Pascal Le Brun-Cordier:** Could you explain the Metropolis project?

**Katrien Verwilt:** Metropolis emerged in 2007, at a juncture when the discourse around creative cities was gaining traction<sup>49</sup>: how to create cities that are pleasant to live in, given they are becoming increasingly bigger? Before that point we existed as the Copenhagen International Theatre (KIT - *Københavns Internationale Teater*), but we never had a theatre as such. We have always operated as a festival during the summer, featuring contemporary international performing arts. Before Metropolis came into existence, we were already well-experienced working with the street arts and for programming works in-situ, for we had been doing that since the 1980s: that was the result of us not having our own “place”; we used the city as a stage, as a theatre.

We were and remain convinced that artists have a role to play in creating more vibrant cities and neighbourhoods. In our current program, *everything* is in situ: for each project, for each work, we try to find the right place, to be contextual. The neighbourhood has to need the project.

**Sonia Lavadinho:** Is each project actually conceived for a specific context?

**Katrien:** It’s a matter of striking a balance between hosting foreign production teams and in-situ projects. In the past we worked extensively on projects from France, Switzerland, and elsewhere; they would come for three days, for three performances and then up and leave. And then there was the in-situ-projects, created by artists who arrive with a concept that has to be

produced here. Still, that involves giving more time to the artists, and to ourselves; that type of project requires that. That’s why over the last two years we proposed a season that runs from May to September. We have thus changed our blueprint; previously it alternated a biennial festival with a “laboratory” that consisted of professional seminars that brought together artists, architects, urban planners, landscapers, researchers... Moreover, we are increasingly seeking to organise participatory projects, in which local residents should get involved in order for the project to work, in which they are no longer just mere spectators.

<sup>49</sup> The creative city concept was developed as of the end of the 1980s by authors such as David Yencke, Charles Landry, and Richard Florida. It proposes a model of urban development centred on creativity, knowledge and tolerance.



**Sonia:** Are you seeking to achieve cultural inclusion, to reach new audiences?

**Katrien:** Yes. And in neighbourhoods where residents have never seen works of high artistic quality. Our policy is that, in as far as possible, everything be free of charge. In this way we can reach those who would never buy a theatre ticket, citizens – in fact, we no longer speak so much about the public, but rather of citizens –, to have them discover artworks they can see on their way to the supermarket.

**Pascal:** If I understand correctly, Metropolis's general principle is to involve artists in recreating urban life? In what ways can artists contribute in making the city?

**Sonia:** Do you also think that the fact of working in a particular neighbourhood can bring to light its potential. Do planners say: "Yes, so we really want to do something there!"?

**Katrien:** It's not easy to talk about that matter because it's not straightforward to evaluate... At first, we used to compare our work with acupuncture: you propose

something without knowing what concrete results it will have... I can tell you about a project we launched this year in Grønningen, in the north-west of Copenhagen, which is moving in that direction. We jointly set it up with Sara Katrine Nissen,<sup>50</sup> from the City's Urban Planning Department, where Tina Saaby, who is also board member of our association, used to work as cityarchitect from 2010 to 2018 (see our interview with Tina Saaby above). Some neighbourhoods have been selected, often at some distance from the city, in which a lot of money is being invested for urban renewal, for creating parks, for developing



Karoline H. Larsen, *Collective Strings* © Maja Nyda Eriksen

public spaces, squares... Together with Tina Saaby, we invited residents from the various neighbourhoods as well as the city's urban planners. We introduced them to the approach taken by Metropolis by telling them: "We feel that we could play a role, or that artists can play a role in developing some regeneration projects. Let's work together to see the kind of projects to develop. We can help you for such and such a place, a park, a neighbourhood." We know that they always work a lot with local residents. We believe that the artistic work makes it possible to bring in people from elsewhere, people who see the city in a fresh way.

**Pascal:** At what stage does Metropolis intervene? Ever before the project is defined? Or during the diagnostic or consultative phase?

**Katrien:** Yes, in advance! For example, that is what we are doing right now with Sara in the Grønningen district, with a lawn project that will later be transformed into a park. We will work there to see what residents need, and how we can create more links between people who don't know each other, or who don't make use of this lawn.

[bit.ly/2kGnheE](http://bit.ly/2kGnheE)

**Pascal:** Is it Karoline H. Larsen's *Collective Strings* project that will be launched today?

**Katrien:** Yes, it features among the seven projects that was proposed for this space. *Collective Strings* is a participatory project that aims to create a kaleidoscopic maze, using miles of ropes and fabrics throughout the entire Grønningen district. [bit.ly/2kdnSUX](http://bit.ly/2kdnSUX) This project should enable local people to come

<sup>50</sup> Project manager for the program for Northwest Urban Renewal in the City's administration.





XY © Samuel Buton

in contact with each other, to come out of their apartments, or to bring them out onto their balconies and look, or to come onto the lawn, and to discuss, to play, to make something...

There is also Bureau Detours, a collective of artists, architects and designers, who have set up in the neighbourhood with their toolbox. They have been introducing chairs and benches with built-in chips to the centre of the neighbourhood. This will then enable them to follow how residents and visitors move this street furniture around the lawn, where they set them down or move them to. Bureau Detours will subsequently develop creative environments at those very spots where this furniture is found most often.

[bit.ly/2mf8GaN](https://bit.ly/2mf8GaN)

**Pascal:** Is the goal of the operation, for Sara Katrine Nissen, to gather information about the locality, to have a better understanding of what residents are doing, would like to have, or would like to do?

**Katrien:** Yes, that's right. And starting this autumn, the city's Planning Department will start working on the project to design the park with landscapers and engineers.

**Pascal:** In parallel to the city organising a public consultation?

**Katrien:** Yes. But the problem with these consultative meetings is that invariably it is the same people who attend...

**Pascal:** It is also for this reason that this approach is of interest, isn't it? Aren't Tina Saaby, and today Sara,

***"Through our projects, architects or urban planners see the city in another way, it makes them think..."***

developing these approaches with Metropolis because they think that they will be able to get another kind of information about the context and develop another kind of relationship with local residents?

**Katrien:** Yes, of course, that's why! I can give you another example: in Belahøj, a very mixed and problematic neighbourhood with many immigrants, and difficulties with young people... We presented Metropolis to the neighbourhood committee and we are now organising there a project by the [French circus collective] Compagnie XY. The group's twenty acrobats infiltrate a neighbourhood for a week, in a very physical way. Mute, simply dressed in black, they interact with passers-by and local residents. They

carry them, twirl them around; they perform figures, and also conduct walks with people who have their eyes closed. As such there is no "show" there except at the end of the week.

[bit.ly/2kehrRA](https://bit.ly/2kehrRA)

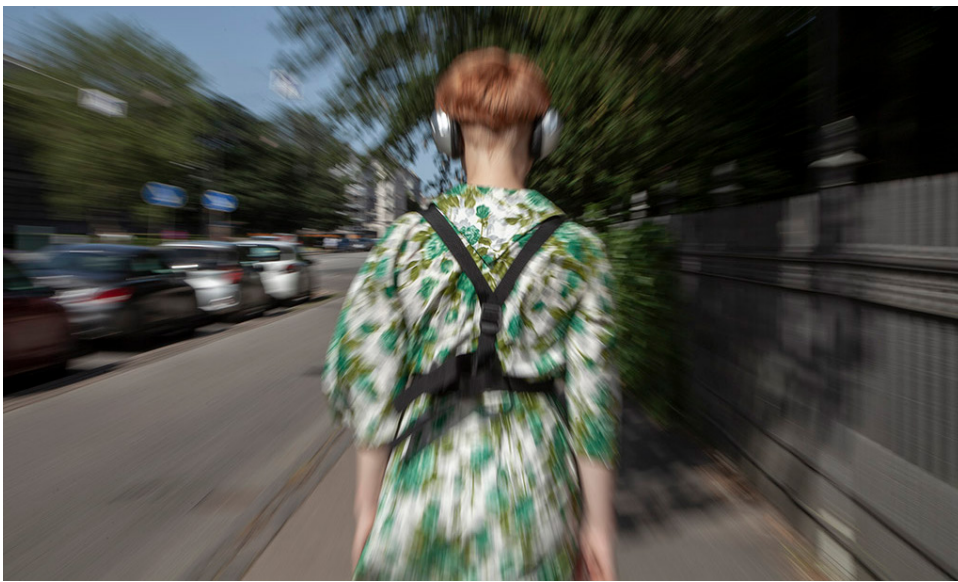
**Pascal:** Why did you choose this project for this neighbourhood?

**Katrien:** I really like XY's way of working and the idea of having this physical encounter with this neighbourhood, a relationship with architecture, with verticality. It is also a neighbourhood where the circus would visit in the past.

**Pascal:** What is the defined aim of person responsible for the neighbourhood project?

**Katrien:** Here, there has been no urban renewal project thus far. It is thus more of an image issue: this neighbourhood doesn't have a good image. One would think twice before going there. I myself have never been there. By inviting a high-quality performance company to work there, we can attract our performances' regular spectators and thus offer them another impression of this neighbourhood, its atmosphere... We often worked in places





Johannes Bellinkx, *Reverse* © Thomas Seest



Pierre Sauvageot, *Grand Ensemble* © Kim Matthai Leland

that people never knew before, where they had never set foot, and that's a real plus!

**Pascal:** Is it a criterion of success to succeed in getting people from the centre of Copenhagen, for instance, to come to these neighbourhoods that are routinely shunned or not easily accessible.

**Katrien:** Yes, we love when we succeed in mixing audiences, the locals with our regular audience.

**Pascal:** And have you succeeded in doing that? Is it working well?

**Katrien:** It depends on the project. Large-scale projects such as XY with their twenty acrobats give us the opportunity to attract many spectators, but fewer people are interested in walking backward by themselves as in Johannes Bellinkx's *Reverse* project

(laughs) [bit.ly/2meqG4Y](https://bit.ly/2meqG4Y). Last year, for example, we did *Grand Ensemble*<sup>51</sup>. For us, it was important to do this project in a building with a social mix. However, in Copenhagen we mostly find blocks of flats in new neighbourhoods such as Ørestad or Nordhavn, where no great diversity is to be found. In the end, we did it in north-west Copenhagen. It was great, for we had an authentic mix of social backgrounds.

**Pascal:** So, what you offer are artistic projects pioneered by Metropolis, all while connected with and partly funded by the Department of Urban Planning and the neighbourhoods where they take place?

**Katrien:** Yes, for example, for the project that we're doing with XY in Belahøj, we put a lot of our own money into it, the biggest slice of the budget. And yet, the neighbourhood fund still managed to contribute 10000 Euros, which represents a considerable sum for them...

**Pascal:** If I understand correctly, the actions you are putting in place as of this year will always take place before the urban projects begin, before they are defined, while they are still in the diagnostic, research, planning, or consultative phase, or ever before planners or landscapers kick off on the work. And your objectives are either to provide input for the urban renewal project's design, or to help improve the neighbourhood's image, or to involve or bring people together?

**Katrien:** Yes, that's what we're seeking to achieve. There were also projects that took place after the urban project had been designed, or during its implementation... Some years ago, that was the case in Ørestad, a problematic neighbourhood that was developed in the early 1990s, in a manner that has been heavily criticised. So, we really wanted to do something there. A decade or so ago, we organised a project in the park, where we, too, proposed vertical dance on the rooftops of two buildings, featuring the French circus artist Eric Lecomte and the Belgian choreographer Odile Gheysens. It was really beautiful.

[bit.ly/2k9AJHI](https://bit.ly/2k9AJHI)

**Pascal:** What is the reaction of professionals working in urban planning and architecture who have been following your projects?

**Katrien:** We have the impression that in terms of public perceptions of Metropolis, architects or town planners are sometimes more interested than theatre people. I sometimes hear architects or urban planners responding very enthusiastically: they see the city in another way, it makes them think...

For more information: [bit.ly/2ky8hzJ](https://bit.ly/2ky8hzJ)

PLBC

<sup>51</sup> A musical show by Pierre Sauvageot / Lieux Public, played from the windows and balconies of a residential building, which tells of the life of this "great ensemble".

[bit.ly/2khipi0Q](https://bit.ly/2khipi0Q)



## Katrien Verwilt



### METROPOLIS

Since 2009, Metropolis has been a member of IN SITU, the European platform for artistic creation in public space:

[bit.ly/2ILSJZg](https://bit.ly/2ILSJZg)

After Katrien Verwilt completed her MA in Roman Philology and Theatre Studies from the universities of Leuven, Bologna, and Aarhus, she began her training in cultural management with KAOSPILOT (Denmark). In 1994, she joined the Copenhagen 96<sup>th</sup> European Capital of Culture team as an international secretary. Since 1998 she has been with Københavns Internationale Teater as its programme coordinator and co-director. KIT launched Metropolis in 2007, an artistic platform for the development of the creative city. This initiative's objective was to exit the theatre and to explore the city in order to create art, life, and debate. Metropolis was a festival 2007-15, and since 2017 is a summer season presenting performing arts based experiences in city streets – far from traditional street performances – such as artistic adaptations of significant buildings, squares and roads.

Photo: © Mikkel Møller Jørgensen



# DREAM CITY, AN ART BIENNIAL IN THE MÉDINA, IN THE HEART OF TUNIS

## ENCOUNTER WITH JAN GOOSSENS AND SOFIANE OUISSI

Pascal Le Brun-Cordier

***Established in 2007, three years before the Tunisian revolution, by the Tunisian dancers and choreographers Sofiane and Selma Ouissi, Dream City is an artistic biennial organised in the médina in Tunis in order to create “dreamed societies.” The creations by invited artists, dancers, playwrights, performers, musicians, writers and so forth mature during a long process that involve residencies and encounters. They are then displayed and performed during the biennial in a variety of enclosed or open spaces, in areas of social life: streets, squares, libraries, schools, restaurants, shops, the list goes on.***

Jan Goossens, former director of KVS, the Royal Flemish Theatre (Brussels), currently director of the Marseille Festival, has been involved with Dream City's programming since 2014. As of 2019, in constant tandem with the project's two founders, Goossens has been steering the project with the team from the Association L'Art Rue. The Klaxon team got in touch with him, as well as with Sofiane Ouissi, in order to try to fathom how Dream City has contributed to transforming both urban and political public spaces in Tunis.

**Pascal Le Brun-Cordier:** Could you introduce us to Dream City?

**Jan Goossens:** The project encompasses in-situ creations that invite everybody, primarily artists, to engage with a very specific context, namely that of Tunis with its *médina*, its public spaces and its major political, social, and cultural issues. It is at once a strategy and a tool designed and developed to help artists create both *in* and *with* this specific urban setting, over long periods. They are invited to nurture themselves in all sorts of possible ways; through encounters with citizens, spaces, architectures, snippets of the past and of the present, and to feed on all this for their creative practices. There

is two-year interval between each edition of Dream City, punctuated by several long working sessions directly on site with a production and technical team, in conjunction with a network of people who are ever-ready to nurture the artists with their resources. Time is the key element in this project: we offer the artists time. We offer them a blank canvas. Everything is possible in terms of form, outcome, and subject area. Yet, at the same time there is this dense, rich context surrounding this blank canvas, for which the L'Art rue team, the organisation steering the Dream City project, has developed considerable expertise, which I've not seen elsewhere. The production teams are perfectly familiar with



the terrain: its major political and social issues, its people, its networks, and everything that needs to be explored in order to access, understand and transform its spaces.

**Pascal:** So, is Dream City an art biennial in public space?

**Jan:** It is more an art biennial in the *cit  * than in *public space*. I prefer to say "in the *cit  *," for while public space is an integral part of the *cit  *, it is not the whole of the *cit  *. For me, it is paramount that we are not in big cultural venues, and that we view the *m  dina* as an archive and a potential repository of contents, as a platform for creation, a platform for presentation and exchange with audiences and citizens. Dream City is a work-in-progress with a key moment every two years that we are now trying to expand: the 2019 edition will be held over ten days instead of three or four. The *m  dina* remains the core, the nexus of Dream City: as a close-knit sanctuary that symbolises an entire nation's history and identity, present and future. It is truly fascinating. We're also starting to develop links with other neighbourhoods in the city, or even with suburbs such as La Goulette.<sup>52</sup>

Besides, I prefer to speak about the *cit  *, for we really embrace this *m  dina* as a starting point, as a community of communities, where the entire country is present, where every generation is present, where we confront all of Tunisia's major issues, and where everyone finds refuge – in its public spaces, in its houses,

in its courtyards, on its roofs, in its old abandoned palaces. We see all the *m  dina*'s urban architecture in terms of possibilities. Sometimes we even think that it is in the *m  dina*'s under-explored areas that a new, more interesting, more liberated, and more mysterious concept of public space might be possible, rather than in its streets and squares, which are actually quite rare, for there are very few public squares in the *m  dina*.

**Pascal:** What is Dream City hoping to build?

**Jan:** I hope that Dream City succeeds in building a shared urban and politico-social space between artists, inhabitants, and communities... I hope that Dream City helps to foster an emancipated,

*"We think that sometimes it's in the m  dina's scarcely explored areas that a new concept of a more interesting, freer, and also more mysterious public space may be possible."*

active citizenship – a citizenship that has yet to really see the light of day and to be consolidated in Tunisia, especially amongst younger generations. I hope that Dream City also develops a concept for creation. And, given we ourselves are creative practitioners, that our concept differs from the one frequently seen in Europe, for instance. Yes, I believe that Dream City creates all kinds of things that are linked with the commons, with forms of citizen emancipation, and with forms of site-specific artistic creation.

**Pascal:** Which projects best illustrate what you've just described?

**Jan:** Among the projects featured in the 2019 edition [of Dream City], I would like to mention the one by the artist-painter Atef Maatallah, from Tunis [bit.ly/35A9cRx](http://bit.ly/35A9cRx). He set out to transform a public space in the *m  dina*, not far from the headquarters of L'Art rue, which had become a huge rubbish heap where drug dealers and drug addicts were coming to shoot up. And yet, it was a square where children and families would go every day. With an entire team at his disposal, with L'Art rue, with landscape designers and historians, but also with local residents, Atef launched a project to transform this space. It was not only meant as an artistic and aesthetic transformation but also an urban and even a social one. It involved a major clean-up phase, a tree-planting phase, and a phase for architectural intervention.

Now, as an artist, he is painting frescoes on every large wall surrounding the square. What we are witnessing is that the whole neighbourhood is appropriating the square and looking after it.

**Jan Goossens**

They are also proposing to launch a similar process in other small squares in the vicinity. Here, we have a shared space that exemplifies citizen emancipation and a fairly new approach to artistic creation.

I would also like to mention the project by Serge Aim   Coulibaly, a choreographer from Burkina Faso [bit.ly/303RRPM](http://bit.ly/303RRPM). Over two years he has gathered around him about twenty young people from highly contrasting neighbourhoods within the *m  dina*, from neighbourhoods whose residents normally do not mix. With their extremely intense, rich, and complicated lives, these young people never danced before. Together with them, Serge Aim   Coulibaly has created a performance featuring dance and movement, whose content is grounded in their lives and the realities they face. These young people now constitute a dance group in their own right, and even if Serge Aim   Coulibaly is not around, they still meet up and rehearse. Over two years, a collective of citizens and performers has thus been created; they talk about their own life stories, their lives, and their realities, and, in doing so, transform them. They will undoubtedly remain



El Msabb, Atef Maatallah    Nao Maltese

<sup>52</sup> Located about ten kilometres north-east of Tunis, La Goulette is a cosmopolitan area where the main port of the capital city is situated





El Msabb, Atef Maatallah © Nao Maltese

together after Serge Aimé's project and the 2019 edition of Dream City.

I would also like to talk about Nidhal Chamekh's project [bit.ly/22T4qcwD](https://bit.ly/22T4qcwD). He's a visual artist and cartoonist from Tunis, who, for this edition of Dream City, decided to launch a collective of young architects, historians, and artists from diverse backgrounds around the question of the agora. Known as Sans adresse, the collective questions how exactly to create an *agora* – a shared public open space – what major issues to discuss there; which speakers to invite, and where to locate it within the *médina*. The challenge facing them is to find where and how to ensure that debates involving citizens and the public can really take place outside the very well-known, ossified and closed models and political and media formats that are increasingly vacuous. During Dream City, the Sans adresse collective will move around the *médina*, inviting residents and people from elsewhere to come and discuss Tunisia's major societal issues.

**Pascal: Sofiane Ouissi, you envisioned and founded Dream City along with your sister Selma in 2007. What did you hope to achieve through this project?**

**Sofiane Ouissi:** Initially, it was really a case of speaking out. It all dates back to 7 November 2007 as a response to politicians, and to the commandeering of public space by politics, following the censorship Selma and I experienced on the airwaves. Given we were already working in Europe, we had a fairly detached understanding of this crisis-ridden country in terms of artistic creation.

Nothing was happening, everything was stuck in a rut. As we perceived it at that time, politics had commandeered public space; it totally controlled all the spaces, the black box, the galleries, and it also controlled what people were thinking, it was totally isolating what they were thinking. So, after our experience of censorship, we started thinking about a multidisciplinary collective movement – the idea of the collective was imperative at that time – that would combine artistic gestures and ideas, all while integrating the citizen at the heart of the strategy. Our idea was to initiate a tactical plan around walking: this would then give rise to an urban choreography in the old city in order to delve back into the history of this locality, and to the renaissance of something.

At that point, this movement was meant as a once-off, for it was a gesture or an urban choreography that was supposed to last three days. Ultimately, it was somehow a victim of its own success. Of course, the authorities panicked. I was summoned to a police station where fifty plain-clothes officers interrogated me about everything. They were very violent in how they triggered pressure and incited fear. But, our movement was robust enough; our strategy was so powerful that they could not drive us out of public spaces. The diplomatic corps was present in public space alongside the artists. Obviously, it was this outsider's view that scared the dictatorial Tunisian State in 2007.

After this initial success, the citizens, the artists, the art critics, as well as the intellectuals who had been following from near and afar this idea of a walk through

the *médina*, told us: *"It's all and well how you've created a space for freedom, a democratic space for meeting that was a first in this locality, but you don't have the right to step aside in this way. This action must continue!"* This was a real source of anguish for Selma and I, for we are not artistic directors. We are artists who have been experimenting with protocols and strategies linked to communities, in complete freedom, with devices where the artist is allowed to take the time, or where we could take risks that we wouldn't take today in the institutional world. We wanted to retain that freedom. That's why we longed for Dream City to be a device that could thoroughly question its context at any given moment, and the urgency confronting the locality and its residents, on the margins of all dominant discourses. This is why Dream City constantly moves around the city; this is why artists set up camp wherever the need exists to provoke a debate or to provoke a discourse, and to come up with a solution.

Given we had seen how stagnant the situation was, here and elsewhere, our idea behind Dream City was thus to jostle the artists into action. In our view, there was a lack of invention. The institutional world was taking precedence over the artistic gesture, by conditioning it and even assuming, in its own way, a dictatorial attitude toward artistic gesture and the freedom of artistic gesture, on account of all the financial conditioning and all these financial schema that entrap us all in very closed and compartmentalised systems, through very precise commissioning systems over limited time-spans. It was the realisation of just how suffocating this all was that led us to come up





Serge Aimé Coulibaly rehearsing with a group of young people © Nadjib Rahmani

with Dream City as an open-air Bauhaus, where people would come together to share ideas and artistic gestures in a spirit of outright confrontation. [We wanted that] everyone could envision initiating projects with complete transparency, and to give themselves the necessary time to nurture them.

It's magnificent, for there are artists we've been nurturing for four years. It involves taking risks, and yet it's truly relevant, for each artist has an individual stance, rhythm, dynamic, and a way of immersing themselves into a particular context, and of revealing that context's political, societal, economic, and aesthetic weaknesses. They can really develop them in-depth, all while being genuine in their encounters with others. That's what Dream City is increasingly offering. That is what Dream City has been developing and deepening thanks to this collaboration with Jan, and this three-way conversation with Selma and I.

**Pascal:** What has Dream City contributed with regard to the question of consensus and dissent?

**Jan:** We are constantly searching for topics, issues, major issues that currently generate widespread dissent within Tunisian society, or topics that should create genuine debate, but for which there is neither enough space nor scope, and *for* which and *in* which there isn't enough willingness to listen and transform. Perhaps our goal might not be to create a consensus, but rather to forge

a certain common ground around topics that are deeply divisive, topics we don't discuss enough, and yet which are at the heart of a city's and society's future. Some artists are very attuned to these issues, particularly the question of younger generations, with their outright lack of prospects within a society where they are overwhelmingly in the majority. And yet, they have no power, and are without any political representation and economic clout. There is also all the discussion around gender: the LGBT community is very present in the *médina*, and yet there is total hypocrisy when

***"With Dream City, artists pose their baggage where there's need to provoke debate, to provoke discourse, and to invent a gesture."***

**Sofiane Ouissi**

it comes to this subject. There is the question of space and of urban transformation, and of how to approach it in a sustainable and participatory fashion. This is the focus of Atef Maatallah's project: it consequently gives rise to all kinds of discussions: how to transform urban space? How, as an artist and a citizen, can we take action and make proposals? We are also trying to address issues concerning inequality and the environment. These are really not consensual questions or topics within this society, and around which we are often confronted by outright hypocrisy. The Constitution states that there should be scope for this and that, but in real life the political construction of society still makes this very complicated. So, Dream City is a space and a platform where we are creating secure spaces to

discuss all these topics, to make room for dissent in a clear and profound way. What we hope to get from all this is perhaps not a consensus, but rather a sense of listening, of a dialogue taking place, and of linking with others. That's what lies at the heart of our project.

**Sofiane:** I fully agree with Jan: it's out of the question to be bound by the consensus principle. With Dream City, there is an ethical dimension, the championing of democratic space, a meeting place for a highly diverse population, and not just for artists! We want to somehow jostle the artists, to show them that they are not alone in this world. We want to question their intelligence, their aesthetic aspect, but through friction with others. All our research

is driven by our longing to create a commons in order to alleviate this tension-ridden space in this traumatised society that is ill-at-ease with itself. Yes, there is really a traumatic aspect, which is very present in this territory, on all levels, be it among children or the elderly... And, also an emboldened youth, and an active civil society.

I would like to come back to Atef Maatallah's project: it must be said that politicians never ever set foot in this neighbourhood. Local residents were left to fend for themselves, completely overwhelmed by this mound of rubbish. We can see these layers of rubbish that the artist decided not to completely bury, but instead chose to exhibit, to transform, and to sublimate. I find that very strong: it



speaks volumes about the state of this area and the way in which it is governed, and how residents have been mistreated.

**Jan:** Yes, this “rubbish” space is now a shared space that neighbours have appropriated, and which is now

“contaminating” the entire neighbourhood. There are citizen and spontaneous movements that are being triggered around the question of how to take care not only of this square but also of this neighbourhood, and of each and every one of us.

**Interview conducted in May 2019 by Pascal Le Brun-Cordier, transcribed by Céline Estenne.**

Read also the interview with Sofiane and Selma Ouissi published in the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of *Klaxon*: [bit.ly/2kCWnUX](https://bit.ly/2kCWnUX)

Jan Goossens was director of KVS, the Flemish Royal Theatre in Brussels, where, in parallel with his duties at this city theatre, he undertook projects in the city, as well as in several neighbourhoods and in public spaces. From 2016 on, Goossens has been director of Festival de Marseille, a festival that he not only opened up to multiple genres, but also to creative practices, as well as collaborating with the city of Marseille in the creative sector, particularly with regard to the festival's international dimension. Since his arrival at the festival, it has taken a keener interest in the entire Mediterranean region with which Marseille has been closely linked.

It is partly thanks to Goossens's extensive knowledge of artists from the Middle East and North Africa that Selma and Sofiane Ouissi asked him to work with them to program Dream City in 2014: his role in the festival's artistic direction has evolved with each successive edition all while continuing to be part of a dialogue with the two founders.

Siblings, choreographers, dancers, video artists, and exhibition curators, Selma and Sofiane Ouissi (Tunis, 1975 and 1972, respectively) have been creating and dancing together from the outset of their careers. Today, they are leading figures in contemporary dance in the Arab world. In 2007, Selma and Sofiane Ouissi established *Association L'Art Rue*, which is devoted to producing and disseminating contemporary art in public spaces across Tunisia. Within this organisation where all art forms, ideas, and academic schools of thought co-exist, intersect and come together, the duo established, inter alia, Dream City – Multidisciplinary Biennial of Contemporary Art in Public Space; the artistic factory of popular space in the rural area of Laaroussa; the magazine *Z.A.T. (Zone Artistique Temporaire)*, as well as developing programs to foster young Tunisian artists and for young audiences. In 2016, Selma and Sofiane Ouissi created the protocol *Le Moindre Geste* at the Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain in Metz and presented it at the 2017 Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels.

## Jan Goossens, Sofiane & Selma Ouissi



Photo: © Pol Guillard



PORTRAIT

# RAUMLABOR

## THIRTY YEARS OF INSPIRING AR(T)CHITECTURAL ACTIONS

Jana Revedin

***For three decades, the Berlin collective raumlabor has been a stimulating reference for dozens of architect and artist collectives committed to urban regeneration throughout Europe. Who are they? What conceptions of the city have they been developing? What are their modus operandi?***

In the field of artistic creation generating urbanity we explore in this issue of *Klaxon*, we also highlight many architects whose practices, far removed from the traditional processes and formats of architecture and urbanism, claim themselves artistic. These ar(t)-chitects, generally grouped together in the form of a collective, implement projects sometimes described as living architecture, assuming the form of original socio-spatial devices, open and relational works. Often ephemeral, invariably designed in a participative manner with those people who live or use the places where they unfold, these projects help to revitalise public space, to reinvent the city and the forms of the common in a more general sense.

Active throughout Europe, many of these collectives have been inspired by the Berlin group raumlabor [bit.ly/2oe6Wj1](https://bit.ly/2oe6Wj1). This is why we wanted to focus on this collective that emerged thirty years ago, whose founding members are: Markus Bader, Andrea Hofmann, Jan Liesegang, and Christof Mayer. Francesco Apuzzo,



The raumlabor collective in 2018 © raumlabor Berlin

Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius, Matthias Rick (+ 2012) and Axel Timm joined the team between 2001 and 2005, followed by Frauke Gerstenberg in 2013 and Florian Stirnemann in 2016. raumlabor's members have various educational backgrounds at TU Berlin, the Bartlett, Royal Academy Copenhagen or Cooper Union New York, all marked by experimental and participatory experiences.

raumlabor was awarded the 2018 Global Award for Sustainable Architecture.

This award, initiated in 2007 by the architect and professor Jana Revedin in conjunction with the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine in Paris, each year rewards five architects who share the ethos of sustainable development and propose innovative experiences in urban areas as well as in the countryside. The theme for the award's 12<sup>th</sup> edition was: "Architecture as an emancipating agent for citizens." Fighting for a form of architecture and urbanism that emancipate its users, ultimately





A gardening project on the Neukölln site, Berlin © raumlabor Berlin

led raumlabor to develop methods that embrace co-programming, co-design, and even co-production; they outline these in this interview conducted by Jana Revedin. This exchange is complemented by a focus on two raumlabor projects, their celebrated Kitchen Monument, a mobile inflatable structure, and the Sauna Tower, a public sauna in Gothenburg (Sweden).<sup>53</sup>

**Jana Revedin:** How did your work begin in 1999 and how is it organised – legally and economically?

**raumlabor:** raumlabor was driven by common interests from the very start – but running a business wasn't one of them. We all had day jobs in different Berlin offices and met in the evenings, at weekends to push projects that we saw as vital – as a political and ethical mission! We wanted to find ways of encouraging more immediate interaction in the urban environment based on action or performance. In this way raumlabor, as a group, empirically discovered ways of working. We set up an informal, adaptable network structure that wasn't limited by waiting for commissions but fully based on individual

engagement. To this day our principle aim is to ensure research flexibility and artistic freedom. Economic pressure and constraints are up to the individual. We are all self-employed architects and independent artists: auto-entrepreneurs. At the same time we are all citizens: the raumlabor actions have accumulated symbolic capital over the past 20 years.

**Jana:** You develop your research and transmission as a free entity, somewhat like the reformatory Bauhaus in its day, defining architecture as “a service to society”?<sup>54</sup>

**raumlabor:** We believe in learning through passing on skills, conversation and the common exploration and discovery of an urban context in the form of new behaviours and modes of action.

The “Open raumlabor University” was founded in 2015 in response to this and we use it as a vehicle for exploring our methods of production and actively assembling workshops, projects and initiatives in which we can highlight possible educational aspects.

For example, we are working with the Urban School Ruhr in Germany's Ruhr valley. The first complex educational initiative of the Open raumlabor University is being carried out in collaboration with Urbane Künste Ruhr, a polymorphous and decentralised institution for contemporary art in the Ruhr region. Unlike most existing academic environments the urban school invites everyone to join the conversation. Access is unrestricted. The urban school wants to be as open as possible and believes that two guidelines make a good school: Firstly, all expertise is of equal value: expertise, understood as a separate body of knowledge, needs intense connections and live exchanges with other expertise in order to remain innovative and thriving. Secondly, everyone is a teacher as well as a learner: we try to overcome traditional hierarchies and role descriptions. The Urban School acknowledges the situated knowledge brought into the conversation

<sup>53</sup> This interview and the two texts below were published in *Sustainable Design 7. Towards A New Ethics For Architecture And The City*, Éditions Alternatives / Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine, 2019.

<sup>54</sup> Walter Gropius, *Architektur*, Berlin, Fischer, 1956.



by locals. Connecting this local expertise to the specific expertise brought in so by internationally active tutors and participants creates a productive sphere for the development of urban narratives and learning questions related to the specific place and context.

**Jana:** You all trained as architects but, from the beginning of raumlabor in 1999, based your project processes on interdisciplinary cooperation. What have been the results of such “open work”?<sup>55</sup>

**raumlabor:** We fought for a broader understanding of space at the interface

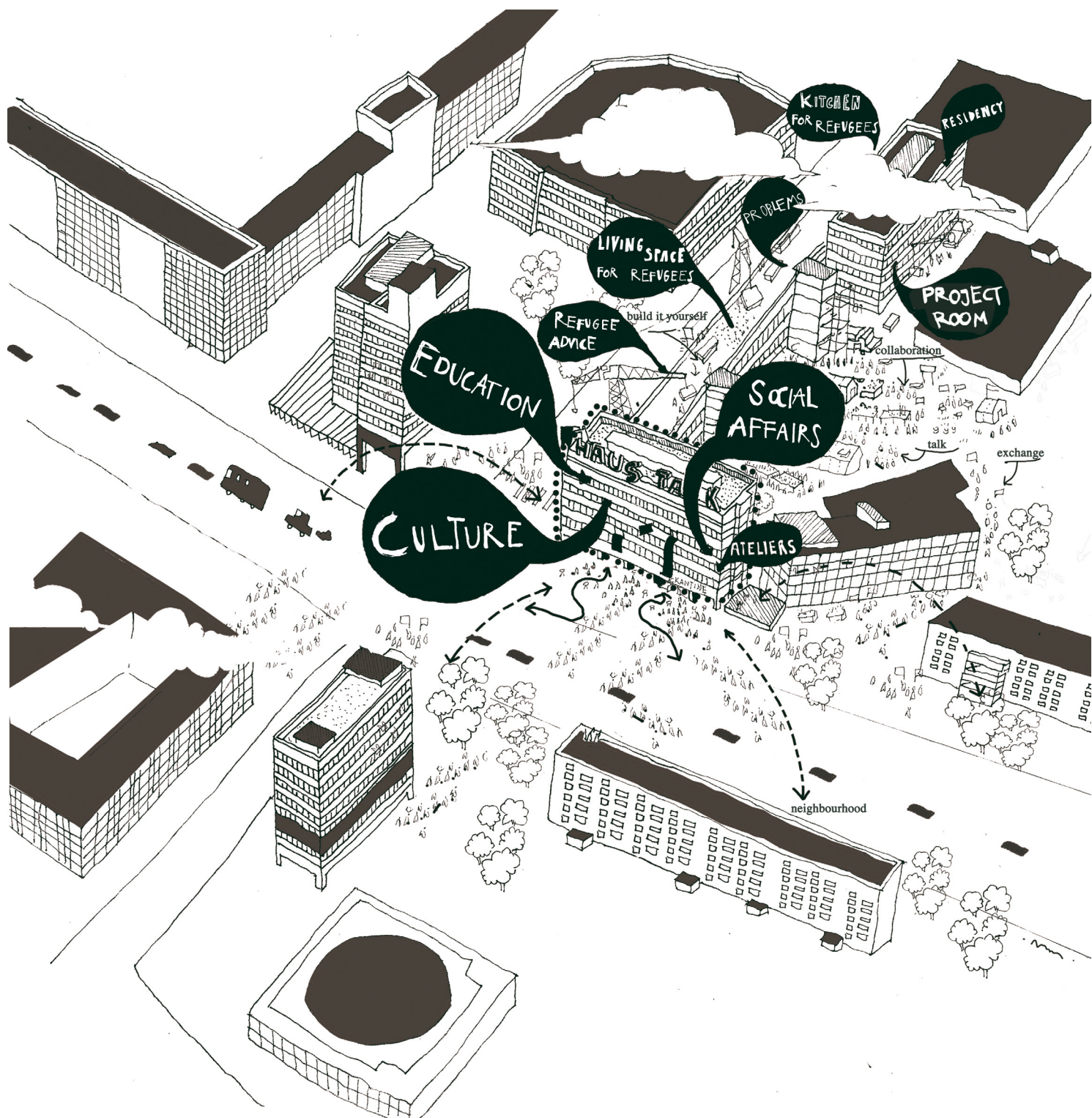
between architecture, urbanism, art and activism by creating links between different fields and bypasses between different scales. Within our spatial practice we’ve created skills, expertise and knowledge that enable us to produce by exploiting the loopholes of current economic conditions: an architecture without a client that finds new markets by itself! Our projects want to be understood as interpretations, concepts, proposals open to testing and inhabitation rather than material products in the sense of an architectural object. Our inflatable pop-up architectures are not commercial objects, they are tools designed

to stimulate a process – rather than a final product.

**Jana:** How did projects such as Tempelhof Airport or Coop Campus change the political and social context?

**raumlabor:** In 2007 raumlabor became part of a Think Tank set up by Berlin’s Urban Development Senate to consider the future of Tempelhof Airport. Working within the large, slow structures of local politics and government enabled

<sup>55</sup> Umberto Eco, *L’Opera aperta*, Milano, Bompiani, 1962.





us to appreciate the flexibility and creative dynamics of working outside such structures. We tried to implement a framework for use-based urban development. An initial open process lasting five years would create diversity and test various scenarios in order to find true needs before consolidating these in long-term programmes. This was conceived as an open dialogue between equals based on both top down and grass root expertise. The Coop Campus, on the other hand, is an ongoing incremental process that deals with the development of former cemeteries. Located on the edge of Berlin Neukölln and close to the former Tempelhof Airport, Coop Campus is part of an area that has been facing radical change due to gentrification for years. The catalyst for the process was the temporary JuniPark project in 2014 which was conceived as an open structure that could be inhabited by heterogeneous social groups from the neighbourhood.

This project led raumlabor to become involved in the upcoming transformation of the cemeteries. We have a strategic partner – the property manager of the landowner, the Protestant Church – who supports our objective of community engagement. We started in spring 2015 with the “Gärtnerei”, a green nursery jointly developed with and for refugees. It consists of a school, woodworking shop, kitchen and urban garden. The launch of the Coop Campus in 2017 as both an example of and a structure for all projects investigating communal issues such as gardening, learning and living enabled a range of actors to become involved as a means of promoting step-by-step development. A greenhouse was constructed as the first building of the campus with the aim of increasing its visibility and raising its relevance as a stakeholder in the transformation process.

**Jana: Which is your approach instead in the House of Statistics?**

**raumlabor:** We chose a different approach in this project, that we launched in 2015. It deals with the reprogramming of the former House of Statistics, a building complex in the centre of Berlin consisting of five buildings with a total floor area of around 40000 m<sup>2</sup>. The publicly owned complex has been empty for over 10 years. The department of urban development wanted it to be demolished to make way for a commercial development. In an artistic action a giant poster was installed on the facade of the building as an act of symbolic squatting and we announced the development of spaces in the building for art, culture, education and social issues. By using social media to promote this action the initiative

**“Our projects want to be understood as interpretations, concepts, proposals open to testing and inhabitation rather than material products in the sense of an architectural object.”**

was launched and a political discussion opened. The aim of the initiative is that the State of Berlin acquires the property from the Federal Government. The inheritable lease on the building would then be handed over to a cooperative which would be given the mandate to develop it as an economically feasible framework and transfer it to a non-profit organisation. In spring 2016 the development cooperative ZUsammenKUNFT was founded in order to provide a legal framework for further steps. The parliamentary elections in Berlin in September 2016 led to a new red-red-green left-wing coalition government. This was a breakthrough for the process. Negotiations are now being held regarding the development of 25% of the property by the cooperative and the current goal is that this will be one of the eleven-storey blocks.

**Jana: What does experimentation, “learning by doing”, mean for you? How much time do you dedicate to Hannah Arendt’s *vita activa*<sup>56</sup> approach in your practice?**

**raumlabor:** A lot, if you look at projects like the Sauna House realised in 2014!

The jury of the Swedish Architecture Prize 2015 stated: *“Like a stranded container it stands there. A slight unshaped figure with a corrugated surface, in the old basin of Frihamnen. The sauna gives vitality, contributes to new life and a new future. With its zest for life and will to create, it becomes more than just a creative haven – it also becomes a vitamin injection for the whole town.”* As a result of this both collectively programmed and finely designed project (like the Bauhaus in its time, we insist upon perfect mastery of both design and detail) our client, the City of Gothenburg, is now planning the realisation of a “Jubilee Park” within a period of seven years, 2014-2021. If shared effectively between planning and implementation we believe that this timespan (as you cited – Arendt’s book) could contribute to the creation of a new common space: a platform in the city that is both physical and relational.

**Jana: In 2016, the Quito Summit declared the dogmas of late modern functionalism as definitively “obsolete”<sup>57</sup>. What will be raumlabor’s future direction?**

**raumlabor:** We reflect the idea of a city as a location of diversity and contradiction between varying interests. However, we mustn’t lose sight of who should gain from the desired results. It’s therefore essential to recognise the opportunities that come from an urban practice which fosters the use of the city by society as a whole. The processes initiated within such a practice must be able to flourish within the political and economic parameters.

**Interview with Jana Revedin.**

<sup>56</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958: “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”

<sup>57</sup> Joan Clos, Richard Sennett, Ricky Burdett, Saskia Sassen, *Towards an Open City: the Quito papers and the new urban agenda*, UN Habitat III Forum, Quito, 2016: “More work is needed to complement the New Urban Agenda, helping to mark a paradigm shift away from the rigidity of the technocratic, generic modernist model we have inherited from the Charter of Athens towards a more open, malleable and incremental urbanism. [...] The new paradigm requires the embracement of a broader time horizon, the concepts of flexibility and resilience, accommodating heterogeneity and change and allowing people to re-appropriate spaces.”



## Jana Revedin



Born 1965 in Constance, Germany, Jana Revedin is an architect and graduate from the Polytechnic University of Milan and PhD in architecture, habilitated for research direction from the University of Venice. Professor of architecture at the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris and at ENSA Lyon, she is a UNESCO delegate on the research and education commission of the International Union of Architects. She has taught at the University of Venice and at the Universities of Umea and Karlskrona in Sweden.

From 2005 to 2012, the European Commission appointed her to lead the first student competition for sustainable architecture, gau:di.

In 2006, she established the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, giving way to a worldwide community of scientific and professional exchange and experimentation. Her "*radicant*" design theory proposes the collective transformations of contemporary urban environments through "*open work*" morphologies, experimented in participatory processes.

She is a French chevalière des Arts et des Lettres (2014) and was decorated with the Médaille de la Prospective de l'Académie d'Architecture (2017).

Photo: © Gernot Gleiss

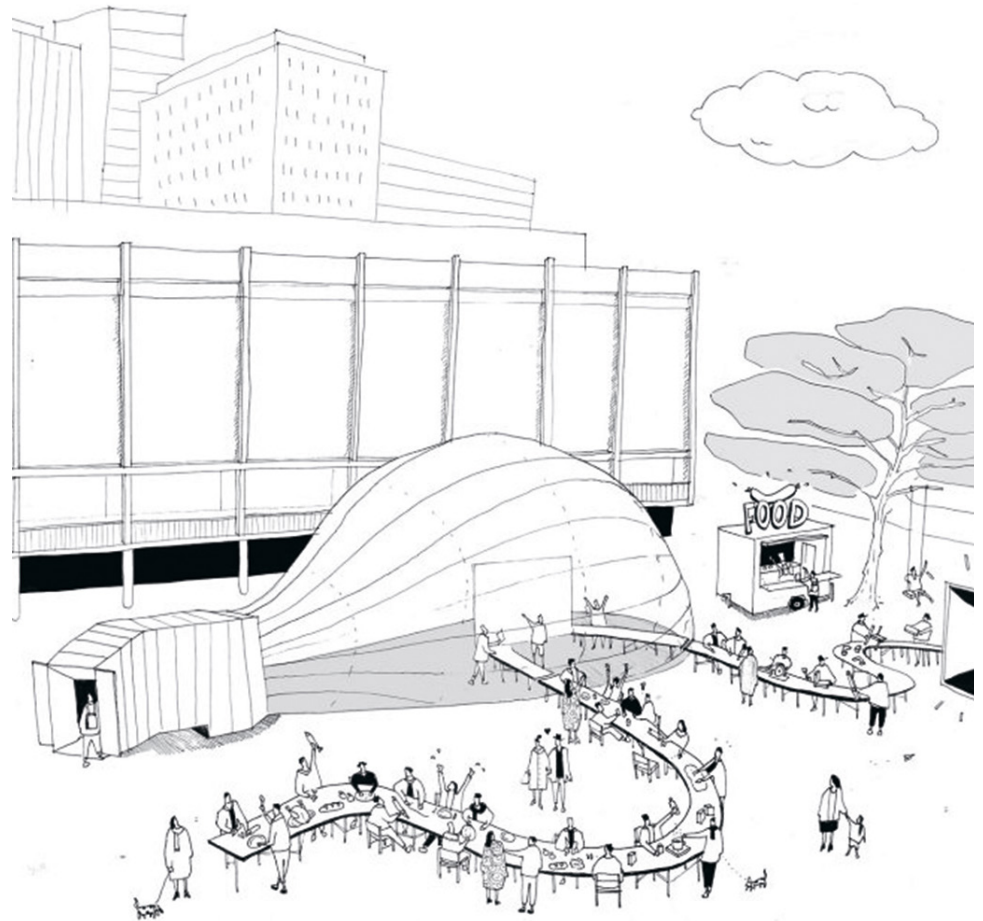


# TWO CREATIONS BY RAUMLABOR

## KITCHEN MONUMENT inflatable and mobile structure

**Design and production:** raumlabor

The *Kitchen Monument* is a mobile sculpture clad with zinc sheet, which can be extended by a pneumatic spatial cover in order to create a temporary public space. "Its broad spectrum of uses includes a banqueting and concert hall, conference room, cinema, ballroom, dormitory..." This bubble is a tool used by raumlabor on the sites of their performances and sessions and for the workshops of Urban School Ruhr, such as those that took place in the Ruhr and Liverpool in 2016. USR offers its participants "face-to-face encounters with cultural and spatial producers, with site-visits, workshops or by simply cooking and eating together." The bubble was brought to Frankfurt in 2017. "The Museum Judengasse wanted to move in the city to attract attention. In an echo of the Jewish tradition of temporary buildings, the bubble, re-inflated every morning, symbolised the fragile character of Jewish places in history."



Project for the installation of the *Kitchen Monument* in Frankfurt, 2017 © raumlabor Berlin



*Kitchen Monument*, Duisburg, 2006 © raumlabor Berlin



*Kitchen Monument*, Liverpool, 2006 © raumlabor Berlin



## SAUNA TOWER bathing culture programme

Former industrial harbour of  
Frihamnen, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014

**Client:** Älvstranden Utveckling AB

**Architects:** raumlabor – Francesco  
Apuzzo, Jan Liesegang

Frihamnen harbour is losing its industrial activities and becoming a new, central part of the city that is ready to be discovered and adopted by its citizens. Imagining new uses and links between the water, the land and the neighbourhood was crucial for its redevelopment.

raumlabor proposed to create a public bath in order to change perceptions of this rough environment.

*“Public baths, once intense places for social gatherings in Nordic cities, were substituted with bleak and leisure-based swimming pools.”* raumlabor proposed the baths as a social space in which people could meet and spend time together.

raumlabor are committed to dealing with places at a scale of 1:1. *“It is important to plan and build the prototype together with the people who will use and manage it. It gives them an opportunity to expand their urban life by creating their own space in the city.”*



The sauna, with its interior walls in wood foliage © raumlabor Berlin



Access to the cabins, on the right, with their translucent wall made of stacked bottles, Sauna Tower © raumlabor Berlin



Sauna and walkways made of recycled materials, spectacular objects in a night atmosphere, Sauna Tower © raumlabor Berlin



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IN SITU is the European platform for artistic creation in public space. Since 2003, it has supported more than two hundred artists working outside conventional venues and contributing to the transformation of our territories. IN SITU is an ecosystem connecting a new generation of artists with audiences, programmers, and key-players involved in the economic, political and social realities around Europe. IN SITU develops an ecology of creation based on transnational artistic workshops and laboratories, European and international residencies and collective mentoring for pilot artistic projects. IN SITU also designs tailored consulting and expertise for European cities, online training modules (MOOC) and a Think Tank dedicated to artistic creation in public space.

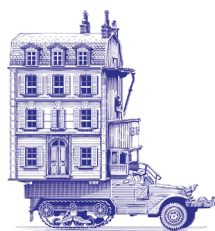
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Since 2018, the IN SITU Cloud gathers new associated members around IN SITU. So far, Bildstörung Europäisches Straßentheaterfestival Detmold (Germany), Biela Noč (Slovakia), Eleusis 2021 European Capital of Culture (Greece) and FiraTàrrega (Spain).

More to come soon.

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