ENABLING CITY

enhancing creative community resilience

Volume 2

chiara camponeschi

to my father,
who enabled me

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ENABLING
CITY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION
towards an enabling society

In his 1972 book *Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino tells the story of Marco Polo's voyage through exotic and enchanting lands. Polo's explorations unfold through an ongoing conversation with an aging emperor, Kublai Khan, who regularly receives worldly travelers to hear about the state of his vast empire. While many merchants return to court carrying treasures they have unearthed during their travels, Marco Polo's riches are, to the emperor's delight, stories about the places he has seen. Following themes as mysterious as 'cities and desire', 'hidden cities', and 'cities and memory', his ephemeral destinations are dreamlike, beguiling places where nothing is ever as it seems. There is Beersheba, a city with a more virtuous twin hovering above the sky to remind its inhabitants of what the lower city could aspire to; Isidora, where desires are instantly converted into memories; and Chloe, where residents wonder about each other but never exchange a word.

Though Marco Polo's places do not exist on any map, *Invisible Cities* was, and still is, an entry point into the elusiveness of urban centres. The idea that some of them are invisible (or leave much to be uncovered) a powerful lens through which to investigate not only what we collectively take for granted, but what we leave out. As Calvino explains in the introduction to the Italian edition of his book: "What matters to my Marco Polo is

"You take delight not in a city's seven or seventy wonders but in the answer it gives to a question of yours."
Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

discovering the secret reasons that lead people to live in cities, reasons that last beyond any crisis..."[1] His classic work remains a timely reminder that our cities – the ever-changing, always growing cities of the world – are shaped by struggle, by design, and by spontaneous interaction just as much as they are shaped by intuition and by vision.

In the three years that have passed since the first volume of Enabling City was released, urban centres have become the focus of many debates around the world, their prominence and role increasingly recognized as a major force in our society. What has happened in and to cities over the past three years exposes not only the challenges and opportunities of urbanization, but also the patterns that are influencing larger ecological, economic, and emancipatory trends worldwide.

These have been years of disruption and change all inevitably informed by or affecting the course of urbanization. From 2010 to 2013, we have seen spending cuts and unrelenting debt spread like wildfire from country to country; devastating floods and earthquakes occur with

1. Calvino, I. (2002 [1972]) *Le Città Invisibili*. Milan: Mondatori Editore, p. ix (Translated by the author.)

alarming frequency from Brazil to New Zealand; the Arab Spring and Occupy movement fuel protest across the world; and a renewed interest in the informal settlements of the world remind us that we do not need to turn to fiction to acknowledge the existence of hidden cities.

Crisis and collapse are seemingly everywhere, pointing beyond the need for triple bottom lines to a systematic breakdown of the very structures that have made urbanization possible. Confronting the magnitude and gravity of these events can be a crushing exercise, denial a tempting way out. But while the world is undoubtedly at a crossroads, for every single one of these events there are countless collaborative responses that seem to confirm that a transition to more livable, inclusive, and resilient cities is not only needed, but already underway. A quick look at the festivals and gatherings that have taken place around the world from 2010 to 2013 reveals an encouraging appreciation for the importance of public space, for resistance and livability, as well as a growing awareness that – in the era of instant connection – local communities can serve as global nodes in a wider network of urban solidarity.

During this time alone, the theme of Rotterdam's 5th Architecture Biennale was devoted to the practice of "Making City"; Milan organized four editions of its yearly Public Design Festival; and Phnom Phen launched Our City Festival, Cambodia's first and only public festival to focus on urbanism and its influence on contemporary culture. Istanbul's Adhocracy explored the intersection of design and social revolutions; Bangalore and Delhi launched City Spinning to look at expanding the use of public and unused urban spaces; and Zimbawe's 4th Protest Arts Festival took a look at the role of culture in development and participation. It seems that the time is ripe to re-examine

not only the way we want cities to function, but the kind of society we wish to be.

Already in 2007, when the idea for Enabling City was first coming to life, communities were prototyping innovative solutions and inspiring place-based action with great courage, vision and determination. Today, they are stronger – and more visible – than ever. In a matter of a few years, practices that were once confined to the realm of the experimental have been increasingly embraced for their problem-solving potential. The sharing economy has grown into a strong movement that continues to present ingenious opportunities for more meaningful exchange. Open data, civic activism, and crisis mapping are now practices embraced by institutions and citizens alike. Urban agriculture remains a powerful tool for inclusion, proving that urban challenges can (perhaps surprisingly) be tackled even with the five senses. The concept of enablement has too grown strong and now enjoys greater recognition. In 2012, UK-based Carnegie Foundation launched the Enabling State project to explore the relationship that people and communities have with the state, and how this in turn influences their quality of life[2]. In 2013, the civil society alliance CIVICUS published *Creating an Enabling Environment* and its related index as "a way of describing and assessing the conditions faced by civil society around the world."[3]

Everywhere, community-led and tech-enhanced projects are doubling as tools to celebrate belonging, respond to crisis, expose injustice, envision a more sustainable future, and even engage in playful brainstorming with others. Combined, these practices are creating a new language around the culture of everyday democracy. Today, however, they require us to devote our creative energies to addressing the most complex challenges that persist

2. Read more here: bit.ly/19NnfPs

3. See the CIVICUS website for more information: bit.ly/16IYFxw

beyond the enthusiasm and, as sometimes is the case, the hype.

A lot of progress has undoubtedly been made in a remarkably small period of time, and a lot more remains to be done. With practices like tactical urbanism, civic crowdfunding, and smart city planning entering mainstream discourse, now is the time to use the momentum inspired by these approaches to dig deeper, coming to terms with the often overlooked, 'thornier' issues that continue to be at the root of the challenges, the barriers, and the shortcomings that exist within participatory practices today. As attention towards them continues to grow, it can be humbling to remind ourselves that, beyond an over-enthusiastic pursuit of technology or an over-confident belief in 'business models that are going to save the world', what has been accomplished thus far is only scratching the surface of what collective problem-solving as a whole could tackle. Bringing our creative energy to the social inequities that often persist even in the process of creating common space for change ensures not only project longevity, but its very integrity.

The second volume of Enabling City may therefore be a little different from what you were expecting. While still firmly believing in the promise of place-based creative problem-solving, this edition begins to investigate issues – by no means the only ones – that are crucial in ensuring a genuine, holistic shift towards not just an enabling city, but an enabling society. It explores the relationship between participatory movements and the right to the city, the links between the commons and resilience and, ultimately, the role that civic innovation can and must play in order to safeguard and advance both. These topics comprise the focus of the three chapters that make up this second volume, and are supported by a collection of impressive initiatives that concretely investigate the dynamic

interplay between the optimism of experimentation and the urgency of crisis.

These initiatives complement the ones previously featured in Volume 1 and test the many other applications of place-based creative problem-solving beyond its now more 'mainstream' ones (a mindset that Karen Heller, with a nod to Joni Mitchell, aptly summarizes as "they're going to paint the parking lot, and put up a pop-up park."[4]) As you will notice, these practices are not all confined to urban centres either. Now that we no longer have "the luxury of outsourcing our resilience", Post Carbon Institute's Daniel Lerch invites us to rediscover and reinvent what that word means in our own time and place – whether in a city, a forest, or a small town. Alexa Mills of the MIT Community Innovators Lab shares a personal moment of reflection on Inclusive Cities and the work that her Lab has been carrying out in partnership with communities all the way from the Bronx to Nicaragua. York University's Roger Keil opens the Rural & Suburban Redesign section with a provocative piece titled "Occupy the Strip Malls", while Laura Tozer introduces us to the revolutionary world of Community Energy. Juliet Michaelson of UK-based new economics foundation continues the series with an article on the importance of Well-being & the Commons, while the team at Public Lab consider the remarkable contributions of Citizen Science & Mapping. Lastly, Lucinda Hartley of CoDesign Studio reflects on what Participatory Urbanism looks like in places like Australia and Cambodia, and Shareable Magazine co-founder Neal Gorenflo concludes with an enthusiastic piece about Sharing & Just Economies.

As you will notice, this volume is intentionally more international in its outlook. There are a total of 80 initiatives from over 40 countries selected precisely to invite the social innovation community to look beyond the English-
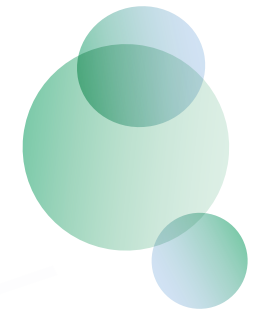
4. Heller, K. "Next Step in the Parkway's Makeover Promises Fun." *Inquirer Daily News*, July 1, 2013: bit.ly/16zmXRh

speaking (Western) world and become more intercultural in its focus, reversing the mostly one-way flow of information and inspiration that characterizes the lion's share of the exchange today. You will also find a series of visuals that introduce questions and provocations to guide a more critical engagement with popular practices like civic crowdfunding and smart city planning, as well as a proposal for a School of Civic Creativity to support the type of collaborative skills required for place-based creative problem-solving to thrive (see also Volume 1.)

As civic designers and facilitators of the everyday, there is no time like the present to extend the kind of creative thinking that has come to characterize urban centres into the suburbs, small towns, and in-between settlements of

the world. We have at our disposal one the most untapped resources of our times: the abundant (and renewable) site of potential that is our imagination.

During one of his stories, Marco Polo tells Kublai Khan that the real delight of a city is found not in its seven wonders but in a question it answers. Looking forward, that question may very well be: "if societies aren't enabling, then what are they?"[5]

5. Credit for this provocation goes to Jamey Coughlin, an Enabling City reader who first shared a slightly different version of this question with us and in the process sparked an engaging dialogue about the values that drive urban agendas today.

Quote:

Calvino, I. (1974) *Invisible Cities.* (William Weaver, transl.) New York: Harcourt, p. 44

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY
exploring the connection between public space and democracy

It is undeniable that we live in a rapidly urbanizing world. News articles and blog posts are replete with stories and statistics detailing the ascent of the 'urban species', documenting the epochal migration from rural areas to urban centres that is taking place around the world. Already in the 1960s, French sociologist Henri Lefebvre reflected on the "complete urbanization of society" and what this change would entail. It would no longer be accurate, Lefebvre theorized, to speak of distinct categories such as 'city' and 'countryside' because those boundaries would be blurred, the city spilling over other landscapes and bringing with it the attributes of an 'urban' way of life that we have all come to recognize and, increasingly, embrace[1]. This historically unprecedented shift is so powerful that is not only changing the scale through which we interpret the world, but is indeed producing astonishing effects all the way from the air we breathe to the streets we walk on.

Today, urbanization does not progress in even fashion but can instead extend from sprawling metropolises to suburban centres, from megacities to informal settlements. If cities were once considered secondary to national or international governments, today they are treated as vital engines of economic growth and global innovation. Consider this statement by Neil Brenner: "The urban can no longer be viewed as a distinct, relatively bounded site;

"Our public spaces are as profound as we allow them to be."
Candy Chang, artist

it has instead become a generalized, planetary condition in and through which the accumulation of capital, the continuous enclosure of 'common' spaces and realms (…) and the contestation of the earth and humanity's possible futures are simultaneously organized and fought out."[2] In other words, what happens in cities matters – and it transcends borders.

In the context of participatory practices, the growing focus on the urban suggests that understanding the relationship between patterns of urban growth and their implications for action is crucial in evaluating the tangled relationship between people, power, and place. In the age of mega-regions and meta cities, the consequences of uneven urbanization continue to have a direct impact on democracy, on the commons, and on societal well-being. For this reason, the relationship between the two cannot be seen as separate from processes of social innovation and community empowerment.

Studying urban space today can be a telling exercise: What is happening in the streets of the world? What kinds of exchanges are taking place? Who gets to shape the built environment? The renewed interest in the politics

1. Schmid, C. (2012) "Henri Lefebvre, the Right to the City, and the New Metropolitan Mainstream" in *Cities for People, Not For Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*, Brenner, N., P. Marcuse and M. Mayer, eds., New York: Routledge, p. 45
2. Brenner, N. (2012) "What Is Critical Urban Theory?" in *Cities for People, Not For Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*, Brenner, N., P. Marcuse and M. Mayer, eds., New York: Routledge, p. 21

and planning of cities has highlighted the many social, cultural, and economic complexities that characterize ongoing development. If we are indeed an urban species, then brainstorming and implementing solutions to these interconnected issues is the key challenge at once facing and defining us.

"Changing everyday life: this is the real revolution!"
Christian Schmid, Cities for People, Not for Profit

The right to the city: A co-revolutionary movement

Over the years, the cry for a right to the city has come to aptly capture many of the demands and the visions of social movements across the world. For Lefebvre, invoking the 'right to the city' meant making a city's resources accessible to all, providing a chance to articulate one's ideas regarding the everyday use of urban spaces and, of course, the right to access and enjoy these as well. The term points to a series of claims that, he argued, "would change reality if they entered into social practice: right to work, to training and education, to health, housing, leisure, to life."[3]

As a whole, the right to the city is a chance to collectively articulate the types of social relations we seek, the importance we attribute to the commons, and the kind of life we desire. For this reason, it is rapidly becoming what geographer David Harvey calls 'a co-revolutionary movement'[4] bringing together complementary struggles for livable and inclusive cities. Much like place-based creative problem-solving, this is a personal and communal journey of ownership and empowerment that unfolds as our streets and neighbourhoods change alongside us.

But what do we mean by right? To what kind of city? For whom?

Attempting to answer these questions is, of course, a political act. This is because our understanding of the city is in itself a negotiation of interests. Gated communities, the privatization of public space, and the criminalization of dissent are only a handful of examples of how the spatial landscape of cities is changing. Today, urban social movements work along complementary lines to address the root causes of what exacerbates forms of urban inequality, directly targeting the dominant approach to city-making as one of them.

Creating new narratives of resistance changes the stories that the city tells about itself and its overall role as an engine of growth, challenging the language of unevenness that is at the heart of neoliberal development. And this is an effort that affects urban communities just as much as it affects 'non-urban' residents. It is a process about the quality and inclusiveness of urban life, yes, but it also about the role of public space, the resilience of a place, the sustainability of society and the relationship between cities and suburbs, peri-urban and rural areas alike.

As facilitators of the everyday, community catalysts are now faced with the challenge of ensuring that what we appreciate about cities – the very openness, creativity, and opportunity that allow place-based projects to thrive – remain meaningful avenues for community empowerment as opposed to signifiers of empty promises. It will be up to these urban social movements to defend the integrity of words now entering our vocabulary – words like 'sharing economy', 'tactical urbanism', and 'open data' – from being co-opted and reduced to merely another fashionable trend to exploit. Failure to do so would inevitably see

3. Schmid, C. (2012) "Henri Lefebvre, the Right to the City, and the New Metropolitan Mainstream" in *Cities for People, Not For Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*, Brenner, N., P. Marcuse and M. Mayer, eds., New York: Routledge, p. 43

4. Marcuse, P. (2012) "Whose Right to the City?" in *Cities for People, Not For Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*, Brenner, N., P. Marcuse and M. Mayer, eds., New York: Routledge, p. 30

their mandate limited to what urban sociologist Sharon Zukin calls 'pacification by cappuccino'[5], in other words, a facet of the already problematic model of participation-through-consumption that all too often confuses entertainment with engagement.

Shifting the emphasis away from desiring and 'consuming' a project to creating a more knowledgeable citizen base can instead connect the practice of social innovation to a broader discussion about active citizenship and its rights. In turn, this ensures that, as cities grow, they are seen as more than growth engines, but as enablers of well-being and accountability.

A solidarity-based metropolis

An important step towards the recognition of cities as co-creators of 'enabling' frameworks was taken in December 2012 when United Cities and Local Governments – the world advocate for democratic local self-government – organized the first World Summit of Local Governments for the Right to the City in Saint-Denis, France. Attended by delegates from Austria to Uruguay, the event was designed to explore the "right to a solidarity-based metropolis" and to advance the various charters that have been adopted, from 2000 onwards, in support of it[6]. At the gathering, signatories of the Global Charter for Human Rights in the City agreed on a definition of the city as "a collective space which belongs to all its residents and which must offer the necessary conditions for a decent life from a social, political, cultural, economic and environmental point of view."[7] Together, they then set up a local agenda with concrete deadlines and indicators to assess their progress toward advancing this goal.

Elsewhere, countless everyday places and practices are being reclaimed to turn the local into a rich site of investment. From play streets to open streets and even street fairs, day-to-day urban life is witnessing a renewed interest and faith in what has for centuries been part of the public realm. As a whole, interventions in these sites, while at times operating at the edge of the law, work to spark a debate about the role and management of public space, the nature of civic involvement, and the limitations of dominant (often corporate-dominated) approaches to decision-making in cities.

"The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights."
David Harvey, Rebel Cities

Take mapping, for example. Once a 'closed' activity carried out solely by cartographers, today mapping is also a collaborative effort that leverages GPS and interactive technology to make the invisible visible. Uses vary from documenting intangible qualities like the culture of a street to exposing facts through data journalism, from soliciting crowdsourced feedback to providing real-time information for crisis response (see the Crisis Mappers network on p. 106) Added to a rich tradition of 'offline' participatory practices (community mapping or new, map-like projects like Candy Chang's "I Wish This Was"[8]), what was once the domain of experts is now a global cultural commons providing ample opportunity to interact with and use information in tangibly powerful ways.

Incremental interventions like pop-ups or interactive maps alone do not create systemic change – but they can accelerate it. Shared spaces provide the opportunity for urban livability to be negotiated and engaged with by a wide-range of actors, for stakeholders to realistically assess the inequities that can exist even within collaborative

5. Zukin, S. (1995) *The Culture of Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 28

6. This includes the World Charter on the Right to the City drafted by social movements at Porto Alegre's World Social Forum in 2001. Find it here: bit.ly/1fQLq5U

7. Read more here: bit.ly/16zmeQ6

8. See the project at: iwishthiswas.cc
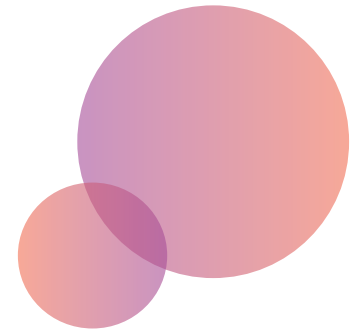
practices[9], and for participants to grow the reach of their projects while remaining vigilant against co-optation.

"What defines the character of a city is its public space, not its private space."
UN-HABITAT Executive Director Joan Clos i Matheu

Public space and the next age of planning

For Peter Bradwell, author of *Future Planners: Propositions for the Next Age of Planning*, the planning profession is especially well-suited to facilitate this multi-level governance shift. At a time when "change to the built and natural environment is not determined solely by the state"[10], Bradwell believes that the difficulty in connecting broad strategies with their place-based, 'lived' impact is part of a bigger narrative of which the discipline is also a part.

"The planner," he writes, "is caught in the middle of an ideological struggle between historic notions of private and public interest."[11] In the 'next age', their commitment to being independent agents of public value must be closely tied to an understanding of their role as mediators between private interests and public aspirations. To do so, planners will need what Bradwell calls "an open, collaborative model of expertise" that includes the capacity to listen differently and "a willingness to let the public ask different and challenging questions."[12] Central to this function as mediator will also be the ability to negotiate the differences between local and public value, and the willingness to take a stance against privatization.

Though public spaces extend beyond squares and parks, the two have become hotbeds of protest and experimentation, sites where meaning is created and contested in everyday life. Their accessibility and health

is essential to a strong democratic process, and key in ensuring the resilience of a place. The initiatives featured in this volume are all inventive ways of expanding, defending, and re-defining the value of the commons and of a 'culture of publicness'. They are collaborative first steps in support of a right to the city that moves beyond today's participation-through-consumption model to include the right of production (of meaning, processes, policies and services) as well.

The mere existence of a right, in fact, is not going to be enough to guarantee inclusion. To create livable, inclusive and resilient cities, it will not be enough for citizens to engage in placemaking or for decision-makers to 'open up' to participatory input – the right to the city requires new frameworks that guarantee genuine access to that right (and its definition) as well. Because as Harvey rightly points out, "the right to the city is an empty signifier. Everything depends on who gets to fill it with meaning."[13]

9. See, for example: The Real Utopias Project (bit.ly/15BCIB4), Community Economies Collective (bit.ly/1bQrOP8) and Democratizing Engagement (bit.ly/18zkRgm)

10. Bradwell, P. (2007) *Future Planners: Propositions for the Next Age of Planning*. London: Demos, p. 4

11. Ibid., p. 2

12. Ibid., p. 12

13. Harvey, D. (2012) *Rebel Cities*, London and New York: Verso, p. xv

Quotes, in order of appearance:

Candy Chang, Before I Die. Read more here: bit.ly/19dk8zr

Schmid, C. (2012) "Henri Lefebvre, the Right to the City, and the New Metropolitan Mainstream" in *Cities for People, Not For Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*, Brenner, N., P. Marcuse and M. Mayer, eds., New York: Routledge, p. 58

Harvey, D. (2012) *Rebel Cities*, London and New York: Verso, p.4

Bradwell, P. (2007) *Future Planners: Propositions for the Next Age of Planning*. London: Demos, p. 12
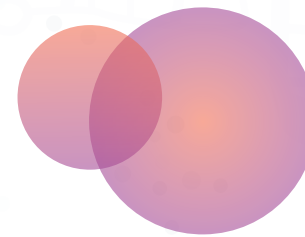
COLLABORATIVE TRANSITION
enhancing creative community resilience

In his 2006 essay, Richard Sennett warns of the rise of the Brittle City, a place where both the built infrastructure and social fabric of an urban centre are compromised by over-determination and excessive bureaucracy. In the Brittle City, the meaning of place is controlled through the strategic use of planning and zoning regulations to segregate functions and homogenize population. The result, Sennett writes, is that "urban imagination has lost its vitality."[1]

Participatory practices are particularly relevant in reviving this crisis of imagination, and resilience especially useful in responding to brittleness. Building on Jane Jacobs' idea of the Open City, Sennett identifies four systematic elements that make up the core of an open urban system: landscapes that are at once porous and resistant; room for change and improvement; the negotiation of conflict and, finally, democratic space – "democratic not in a legal sense," Sennett clarifies, "but as a physical experience."[2]

Finding antidotes to brittleness is the urgent task of our age. At a time when urban centres are only just beginning to address the many ramifications of widespread crisis, decision-makers face the pressing need to govern inclusively, think sustainably, and plan resiliently.

Resilience is especially important in relation to cities because over 50 per cent of the world's population now

> *" 'Innovation', as glorified in association with 'creative cities', the 'creative class' and 'city competition', more often than not is in the sole benefit of business and economic elites, and it fails to integrate the various dimensions of prosperity, particularly equitable development and environmental sustainability."*
> UN-HABITAT, State of the World's Cities 2012-/2013 Report

resides in urban centres. At present, 14 of the world's 19 largest cities are coastal cities[3], and recent memory alone provides numerous examples of severe events that have disrupted or even ended the lives of many of their inhabitants. This reality is further exacerbated by the fact that 75 per cent of urban dwellers live in developing countries, and that the most rapidly urbanizing countries in the world are also some of its poorest[4]. The ongoing convergence of urbanization and climate change – two powerful human-induced forces[5] – therefore points to the inherent connection between resilience and inclusive governance.

This volume of Enabling City focuses on a holistic definition of the term that takes into account not only ecological concerns but also the social, economic, and personal dimensions that determine the quality of urban life. While climate change is used as the primary lens through which to explore the connections between these

1. Sennett, R. (2006) *Housing and Urban Neighbourhoods: The Open City.* Berlin: Open Age, p. 1

2. Ibid, p. 4

3. UN-HABITAT (2012) *Prosperity of Cities: State of the World's Cities 2012-/2013 Report.* Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, p. 91

4. Moench, M., S. Tyler, and J. Lage (2011) *Catalyzing Urban Climate Resilience: Applying Resilience Concepts to Planning Practice in the ACCCRN Program (2009–2011)* Boulder, CO: Institute for Social and Environmental Transition, p.22

5. UN-HABITAT (2011) *Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements.* Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, p. 21

respective dimensions, place-based creative problem-solving encourages the emergence of new frameworks that open up spaces for participation, diversity, and experimentation in many domains. These models, in turn, strengthen networks of action that prepare communities to actively formulate innovative alternatives to Brittle City-like governance at large.

Global warming, local resilience

Many commonly think of resilience as strictly pertaining to science or emergency management, but in the era of openness and collaboration, resilience is also increasingly understood as having neighbours to count on, a responsive governance framework to rely on, and spaces in which to come together during a time of need.

The term is employed widely from digital infrastructure to psychology to describe a certain ability to 'bounce back'

"As a global phenomenon with profoundly local consequences, climate change represents a unique challenge."
Catalyzing Urban Climate Resilience report

in the face of a disturbance or stress. In ecology, resilience points to the requirement for flexible and responsive learning in order to adapt through innovation. In social systems, the term is applied to describe the capacity of humans to adequately plan and respond to shocks such as natural disasters, climate change, or the consequences of shrinking resources.

The practice of resilience-building entails identifying and strengthening fragile systems by limiting their vulnerability to given impacts, yet it also means enabling communities to develop new narratives of adaptation. In

fact, if our identities are anchored and in part informed by the landscapes surrounding us, then it is true that a warming planet changes not only our ecosystems, but our collective stories. Many are the cultural rituals connected, for example, to the change of season; countless the predictions that are made on a daily basis in relation to the weather and other natural conditions. For communities to have a sense of control and ownership over this change, the commons become the avenue through which to pool resources and resourcefulness together, in which to build consensus and facilitate decision-making, and in which to embed participation and transparency into the everyday norms that will inform the future responses of cities.

From design thinking to resilience thinking

Whether a city is resilient or brittle is an indicator of a history of past policy- and decision-making. A thriving, resilient city is one where infrastructure, physical assets and amenities are deployed to meet the needs of all – especially vulnerable populations – and where opportunities are equally distributed in a way that does not degrade the environment.

Systems and social agents play an important role in this process. Systems include the natural environment, the physical infrastructure, the social institutions and local knowledge of a place. Agents are actors like individuals, households, private firms, and civil society organizations that shape it. A truly comprehensive resilience strategy, then, is one that employs a collaborative approach that harnesses and supports the strengths of both.

Recently, the City of Copenhagen launched an ambitious city-wide strategy to become the world's first carbon neutral city by 2025. While still firmly anchored in the narrative of 'green growth', its Climate Adaptation Plan includes,

among other things, the creation of a climate-resilient neighbourhood and the work of a Chief Resilience Officer to encourage urban actors to work together[6]. The City of San Francisco, too, has recently launched a new partnership to bolster the links between social relations and resilience. The San Francisco Sharing Economy for Disaster Response initiative works with BayShare, the advocacy organization representing social economy leaders like Airbnb and Shareable Magazine (see co-founder Neal Gorenflo's article on p. 126), to ensure the best possible community response in the event of a disaster. Inspired in part by Airbnb's mobilization during Hurricane Sandy – when the organization launched a microsite to help displaced residents free of charge – an initial outcome of the program was the City's facilitation of a meeting with organizations like the Neighborhood Emergency Response Team and American Red Cross chapter to discuss how the sharing economy can help before, during, and after a disaster[7].

Other efforts include those of municipalities affiliated with ICLEI[8] – the international network of local governments in sustainability – or multilateral campaigns like UNISDR's My City Is Getting Ready, which currently supports 1499 cities in implementing measures to mitigate urban risk (see p. 29)[9]. Combined, these efforts make clear that, while at the national and even international level there is hesitancy and denial surrounding climate change, cities are no longer in a position to stall on the issue. Indeed, climate change is increasingly recognized as a 'meta-issue' that directly impacts all other city-related activities – from budgeting to disaster response, from infrastructure investments to public space animation, from welfare to well-being and beyond.

Resilience thinking will increasingly play a role in safeguarding and enhancing the state of critical urban systems that guarantee the provision of water and food,

drainage, waste disposal, coastal protection and more. However, efforts to foster a culture of collaboration and transparency, as well as more holistic interpretation of both resilience and wellbeing, can only succeed if they are attuned to emerging patterns of urban citizen participation and the new avenues of local participation that drive them.

Cutting the carbs: Resilient re-localization

Most blueprints for resilience planning suggest that cities are uniquely positioned to respond to the interconnected challenges of our time. Municipalities are the level of government closest to residents, and can therefore act as mediator between local needs and national resources. The urban scale also presents inherent advantages in terms of density, connectivity and infrastructure efficiency that

"Ultimately, in most cities it will be necessary for local government to become a key stakeholder that is willing and able to integrate climate change priorities into their activities."
Tyler et al, Planning for Urban Climate Resilience

allow urban actors to innovate, achieve more networked governance, and centralize the use of resources. A call for "re-localization" of ecosystems and economies is therefore made in order to decrease regional dependence of imported resources and encourage a shift to more humanly manageable, place-based scales.

Over the years, the cries for decentralization and greater community empowerment have taken many forms, from Lefebvre's concept of 'self-management' to the British conservative government's call for a Big Society[10]. Urbanization, globalization, and climate change are all systems that affect the outcome of such efforts, meaning
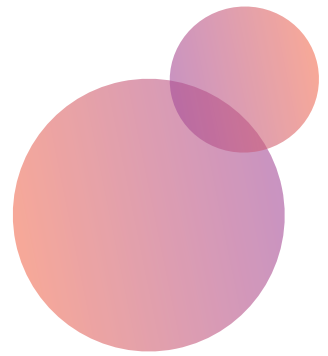
that resilience-building will only be successful if the goal of place-based empowerment is a genuine one facilitated by diversity and openness rather than used as a managerial tool to cut costs and services at the determent of already overburdened citizens.

"Creative adaptation comes from people feeling a sense of ownership and being able to participate in, shape and control their environment. This requires opening the environment up to people's needs, aspirations and ideas."

Samuel Jones and Melissa Mean, Resilient Places

Of course, addressing the climate crisis – and the subsequent ones it causes or exacerbates – requires efforts across every scale and level of governance. The international level is essential for the formulation and enforcement of a legally-binding climate treaty; the national one to address the particularities of climate hazards domestically and equip cities with the financial, regulatory, and infrastructural tools they need to design innovative resilience frameworks. The municipal level is key in operationalizing and overseeing the implementation of such policies on the ground, and the community level to articulate and assess place-based vulnerabilities.

Locally, a fast-growing number community-driven efforts are filling in the gaps and advocating for resilience with or without supportive institutions. Examples include initiatives like Toronto's Project Neutral (see p. 33) and Transition Towns, the global movement that works with communities and municipalities to address the challenges of peak oil and climate change through re-localization strategies (see Volume 1.). They extend to the launch of Mosaic, a crowdfunding platform for investing in renewable energy sources (p. 80); Seattle's Food Forest (p. 36),

11. Eyerman, R., & Jamison, A. (1991) *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach.* Oxford, UK: Polity Press, p. 4

and Depave (p. 35), a collaborative effort to remove unnecessary pavement from urban areas and increase the amount of land available for habitat restoration. Combined, these and the other initiatives featured in this volume represent what researchers Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison call ''temporary public spaces"[11], social movements of collective creation that provide society with ideas, identities, and even ideals to collectively explore narratives of innovative adaptation.

Creative adaptation for resilience and well-being

Resilience is important in the context of advancing social innovation because it makes explicit what many know intuitively: that inequality in one neighbourhood affects the city as a whole; that poverty and concentrations of wealth make cities brittle. Community-led adaptation includes not only a process of self-management, then, but also the technical, civic, and creative support for citizens to engage with (and re-design) government processes directly.

UN-HABITAT's *State of the World Cities 2012-2013* report focuses on the concept of prosperity to emphasize the role that cities must play in acting as sounding boards for positive social change. The prosperous city is not just a more productive economic city, but one that safeguards its role as a public forum, where non-material needs and aspirations can find an outlet. It is a place where well-being is an overarching framework that guides the efforts of local municipal governments towards resilient re-localization and the collective governance of the commons. As UN-HABITAT explains: "There is a clear positive association between a high degree of commitment to address quality of life and the possibility of designing specific policies. Unfortunately, the opposite also applies, and many cities

treat quality of life as a by-product or an 'after-effect' of policy intervention."[12]

Broadening the sphere of official concern from a narrow focus on GDP measures to adopting indicators of resilience and well-being (see p. 89) captures the (many) other values – like having a voice in shaping the future of one's city, belonging to supportive communities, etc. – that have a direct impact on the success of a policy. Creatively (re-) using infrastructure, designing multi-use destinations, and encouraging shared learning (see Long Time, No See, p. 37) enhance a city's physical experience – the quality of its lived experience in particular – and provide greater access to spaces for collective action.

For Samuel Jones and Melissa Mean, authors of the *Resilient Places* report, local authorities should consider developing measurement tools like a "resilience of place" index to understand their evolving needs and to better support their capacity for self-organization. They write: "The resilience of place provides a more useful gauge of how our towns and cities are faring because it recognizes that places are not static, but instead are dynamic and change over time."[13] When managed well, transparent, responsive governance frameworks can enable a wide range of bottom-up activities that lead to improved human well-being and contribute to a more holistic understanding of social innovation – one that incorporates environmental concerns into a framework for participatory governance that turns cities into holistic and collaborative hubs of socio-ecological resilience.

Once again, local culture and creativity will have to be acknowledged as integral parts of the process as they, too, are highly changeable factors connected to personal expression, collective identity, and civic engagement.

Without open spaces for community organizing, in fact, there is brittleness. Creative tools like participatory vulnerability assessments and civic storytelling, can instead enable the co-production of resilience outcomes and ensure the successful transition from what author Nick Wilding calls "break even communities" to "breakthrough communities" – places that anticipate and respond to shocks by taking coordinated action toward a commonly agreed to vision of a better future[14].

After all, to adapt is to exercise creativity, and the ability to collaboratively respond to change may just be the most important skill a community needs to deal with today's (and tomorrow's) uncertainty.
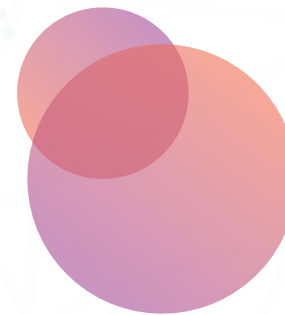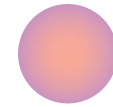
12. UN-HABITAT (2012) *Prosperity of Cities: State of the World's Cities 2012-/2013 Report*. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme p. 62

13. Jones, S. and M. Mean (2010) *Resilient Places: Character and Community in Everyday Heritage*. London: Demos, p. 17

14. Wilding, N. (2011) *Exploring Community Resilience in Time of Rapid Change*, Dunfermline, UK: Carnegie UK Trust, p. 35

Quotes, in order of appearance:

UN-HABITAT (2012) *Prosperity of Cities: State of the World's Cities 2012-/2013 Report*. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, p. 104

Moench, M., S. Tyler, and J. Lage (2011) *Catalyzing Urban Climate Resilience: Applying Resilience Concepts to Planning Practice in the ACCCRN Program (2009–2011)* Boulder, CO: Institute for Social and Environmental Transition, p. 125

Tyler, S. et al. (2010). Planning for Urban Climate Resilience: Framework and Examples from the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN). Climate Resilience in Concept and Practice Working Paper Series. Boulder, CO: Institute for Social and Environmental Transition, p. 40

Jones, S. and M. Mean (2010) *Resilient Places: Character and Community in Everyday Heritage*. London: Demos, p. 44

INNOVATIONS

placed-based creative
problem-solving in action
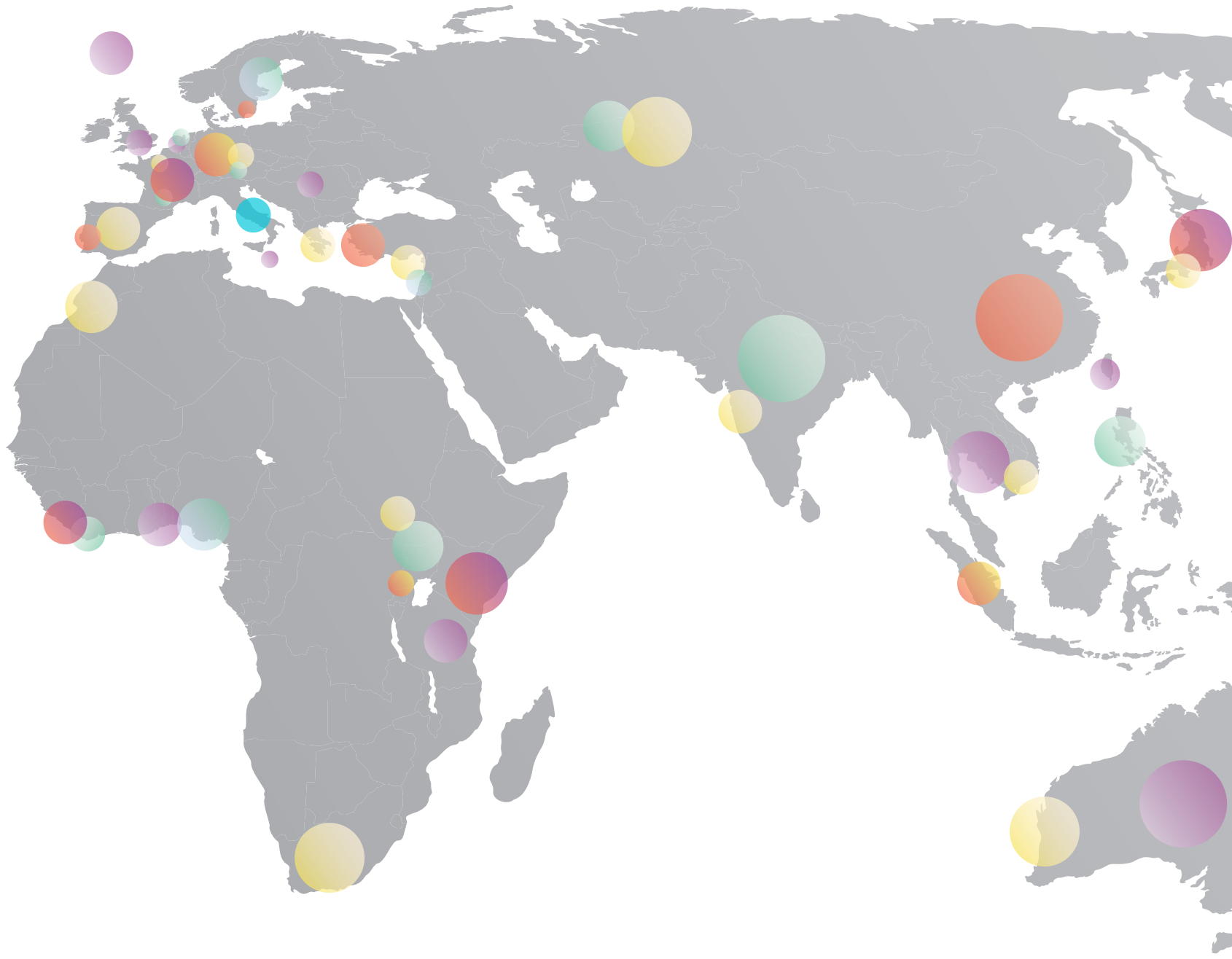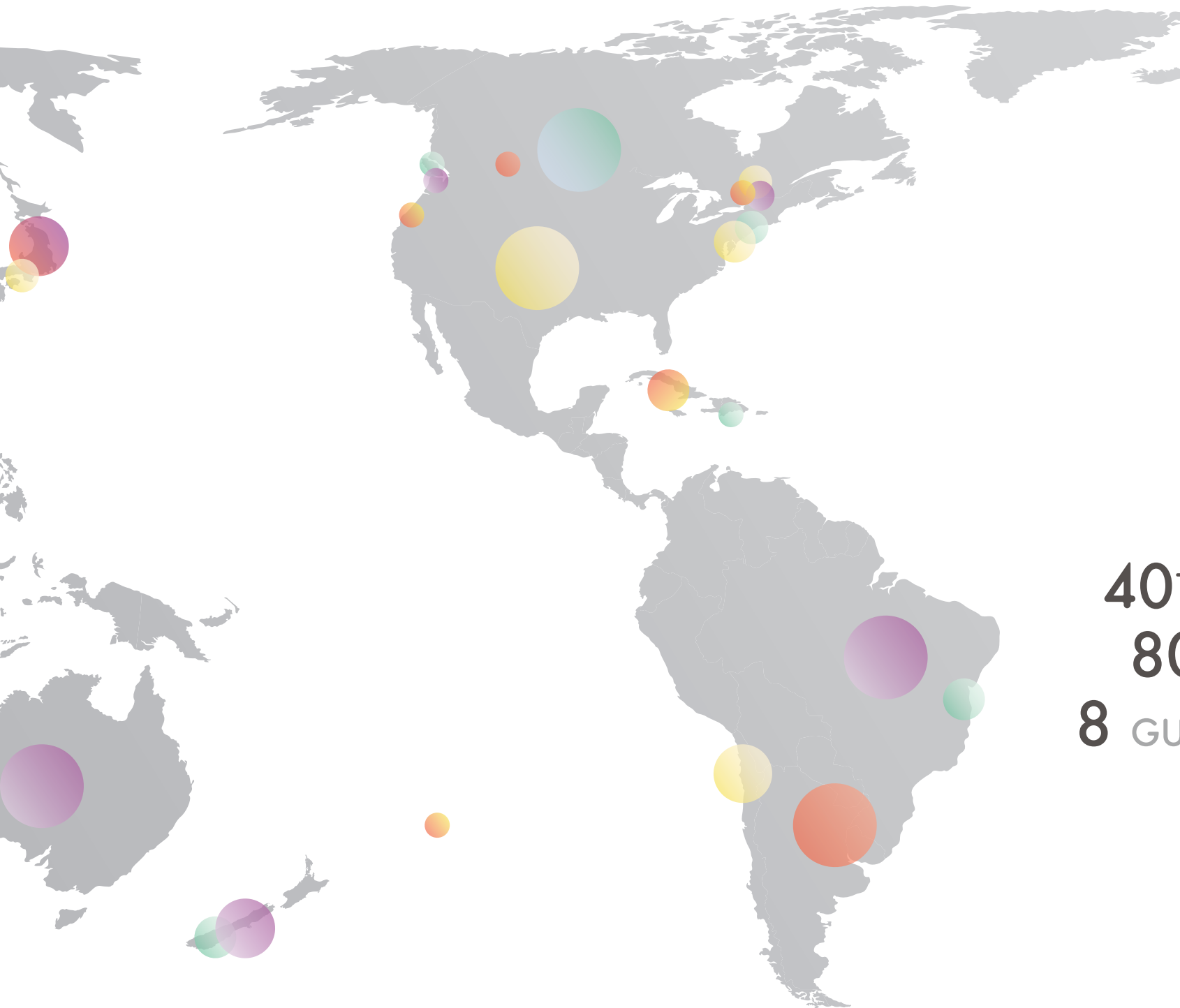
40[+] COUNTRIES
80 INITIATIVES
8 GUEST ARTICLES

CLIMATE
CHANGE(S)
PEOPLE'S
STORIES

Le climat change
l'histoire des gens

Chiara Camponeschi

RESILIENCE

REDISCOVERING RESILIENCE
Guest article by Daniel Lerch

In this era of climate change, we love talking about "resilience": New Orleans rebounding from Hurricane Katrina in 2005; Central Europe braving freezing, then flooding, and then extreme heat in 2010; Australia making it through 17 years of drought.

In the United States, resilience hit prime time in late 2012 when Superstorm Sandy barreled up the East Coast straight into New York. A few weeks and millions of Facebook photos later, the subways were pumped dry, the heat and lights were back on, and that most resilient of American cities was back in business. *Time*, the U.S. magazine of conventional-wisdom record, asked in January if resilience would be the "environmental buzzword of 2013."

There's certainly something attractive about advancing the public conversation about sustainability into new territory with a word like "resilience." After all, with many climate change impacts now unavoidable, we don't just need efficient, low-impact, eco-smart sustainable communities. We need resilient communities that are smart and strong, that can bounce back from whatever Nature throws at them.

But is bouncing back really enough?

As it happens, in ecosystems science "resilience" means quite a bit more than the mere ability to bounce back from disruption. Here, resilience in a system has three defining characteristics:

- The amount of change the system can undergo and still retain essentially the same function and structure;
- The degree to which the system is capable of self-organization;
- The ability to build and increase the capacity for learning and adaptation.[1]

Resilience scientists generally talk specifically about socio-ecological systems (the combination of an ecosystem with the human social system that uses it—and in doing so, changes it[2]), but it's irresistible to apply the concept to the complex systems that are our cities and towns.

Let's start with that first characteristic, "…and still retain essentially the same function and structure." If our system in question is a temperate deciduous forest, the function and structure are both clear and well-known. But it's a rather different matter if the system in question is a community of 500 000 people: Unlike the forest, the community can decide what its own function and structure might be. Even better, the community can forecast what the future may hold, and plan its function and structure accordingly. If the most fundamental drivers of our future challenges are climate change and peak oil, our ideal plan is obvious: Transition our communities and economies away from fossil fuels, and adapt to a new world of climate change impacts and a global economy buffeted by the end of cheap oil.

How communities might actually accomplish that enormous task, however, is the big question of the 21st century—and the

most commonly proffered solutions are rather disappointing. They tend to be heavy on technological innovation and centralized infrastructure, and assume that we'll achieve such a transition using "cleaner" fossil fuel (although they're getting more and more expensive) and by harnessing the resources and creativity of global capitalism (although it ignores environmental and social costs, and rarely looks beyond the next year's profits). It's not just the old way of doing things—it's emblematic of the rigidity of a system that's failing to learn, adapt, and re-organize.

Which brings us to the second and third characteristics of resilience, and their strikingly clear parallels to concepts of participatory governance, active citizenship, and cultural capacity-building—concepts which Chiara Camponeschi collectively calls "place-based creative problem-solving." It turns out these aren't just inspiring and fun urban sustainability tools—they're actually *critical components* of community resilience. Without them, our complex communities can neither learn from their citizens and institutions, nor adapt their economies and cultures, nor re-organize their governance and infrastructure.

Enabling City and the place-based creative problem solving it champions have roots in one of the most important (and most often forgotten) ideas in sustainability thinking: local self-determination. The idea is that local stakeholders—as opposed to centralized nation-level decision-makers—should be empowered to share information and influence decision-making because they are uniquely informed about local needs and resources.

All this thinking behind community resilience-building is only new in that we haven't really had to vocalize these ideas before. Cheap fossil fuels gave us the luxury of outsourcing our resilience. But now that the global systems which sustain us are threatened, it's high time to rediscover resilience and reinvent what it means in our own time and place.

Daniel Lerch
Publications Director, Post Carbon Institute

As Publications Director of Post Carbon Institute, Daniel is the lead editor and manager of the Institute's major print publications, including the four-book Community Resilience Guide series (2012-13) and The Post Carbon Reader (2010). He is also the author of Post Carbon Cities (2007), the first major local government guidebook on the end of cheap oil.

➡ www.postcarbon.org
🐦 @PostCarbon

1 "Resilience," Resilience Alliance website, October 29, 2002, bit.ly/16SQHmz. I've simplified the first characteristic slightly based on the more commonly cited definition of resilience found in Walker, B., C. S. Holling, S. R. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig, 2004, "Resilience, adaptability and transformability in social–ecological systems," *Ecology and Society* 9(2): 5, bit.ly/1bgKgOb.

2 For example, the North Atlantic cod fishery and both the fishers who harvest from it and the officials who regulate that harvest.

RESILIENCE CIRCLES

USA
www.localcircles.org
@ResilienCircles

Resilience Circles – small groups for tough times – is a new type of community space where members come together to learn skills, share resources, and participate in local and social action. Guided by a free, open-source curriculum, Circles consist of groups of 10-20 people who meet on a regular basis to openly explore community-based solutions for a kind of economy that is fair and in harmony with the earth. A pilot project of the Institute for Policy Studies on Inequality and the Common Good, Resilience Circles provides facilitators and participants with access to webinars, training, and local events that build economic security and redefine abundance.

MY CITY IS GETTING READY

INTERNATIONAL

www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities

@UNISDR

In 2010, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) launched the 'My City is getting ready!' campaign to address issues of local governance and urban risk. With the support and recommendations of many partners, the campaign provides a "Ten Essentials" checklist to help cities become climate and risk resilient. To date, the UN agency has involved over a thousand local governments from every continent and is now calling on civil society, planners, and urban professionals to co-develop innovative solutions that reduce risk and strengthen local capacity.
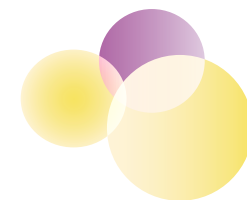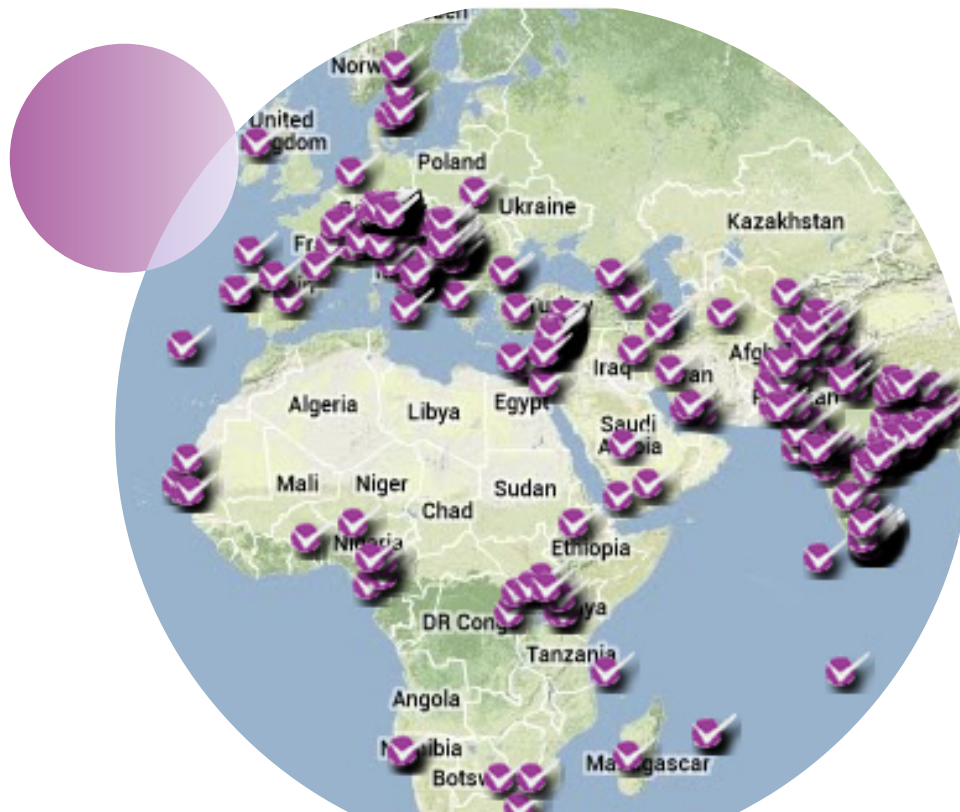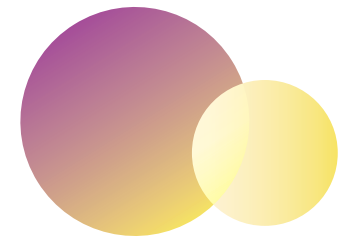
JOUR INONDABLE

TOURS, FRANCE

www.polau.org/programmations/jour-inondable

@pOlau3

For two days in 2012, experimental urban arts group pOlau organized the creative simulation of the flooding of the city of Tours. Run in collaboration with La folie kilomètre, a local arts collective, Jour Indondable invited city officials, first responders, residents, students, and artists to join a 24/7 urban expedition around the area of the city's imagined flood. Its unique approach blended arts and science to investigate a sensitive issue while simultaneously educating participants about the potential risks of flooding. From inundated river banks to emergency shelters, the project was conceived as a way to re-think issues of land-use while establishing the foundations for a more empowered community response to resilience.

GAP FILLER

CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

www.gapfiller.org.nz
@GapFillerChch

Gap Filler is an urban regeneration initiative started in response to Christchurch's 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. Seeing vacant sites as spaces for temporary and people-centered activities, Gap Filler works with artists, architects, landowners, librarians, designers, students, and engineers to facilitate the creation of projects that benefit the wider community. The group handles the legal and insurance requirements that are needed for projects to come to life, then joins forces with community groups to develop initiatives that prove that the city can grow in important ways even without large capital expenditure or major construction.

Photo credit: bit.ly/14ShLEX
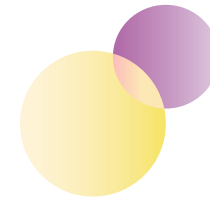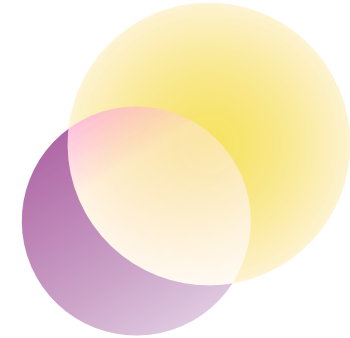
THAI
FLOOD HACKS

BANGKOK, THAILAND

thai-flood-hacks.tumblr.com

Climate-related disasters are on the rise, and they often catch city officials unprepared. When a devastating flood hit Thailand in 2011, hundreds of citizens took matters into their own hands and resourcefully adapted by creating makeshift survival tools to cope with rising water levels and general chaos. Thai Flood Hacks is a Tumblr site that brought international attention to the crisis by documenting the ingenuity of the Thai people. It did so mainly by providing on the ground accounts of people-powered infrastructure - anything from rafts made out of plastic bottles to floating toilets - that quickly became the symbol of climate change's lived impacts and of the need for responsive policies in the face of a disaster.

PROJECT NEUTRAL

TORONTO, CANADA

projectneutral.org
@ProjectNeutral

What happens when you mix an engineer, an urban planner, and a community builder? The result is Project Neutral, an initiative that works to transition two Toronto neighbourhoods to carbon neutrality. Guided by a common passion for healthy communities, a desire to act in response to climate change, and the belief in place-based action, Project Neutral is developing a set of indicators that allow participating households to compare their footprint, set an emission reduction target, and identify priority actions. With the support of community leaders, volunteers and experts, residents work together to brainstorm ideas and test new tools that allow for greater ownership over the process of achieving carbon neutrality.

WOTR

INDIA

wotr.org

@WOTRIndia

WOTR is an NGO that works in seven Indian states to alleviate rural poverty through participatory watershed development projects. Its mission is to help village communities eradicate poverty by mobilizing the creative potential of watershed dwellers to regenerate their own environment. Celebrated internationally for its people-centric participatory interventions, over the years the organization has trained over 600 000 people on issues as diverse as renewable energy, micro-finance, and climate change adaptation.

Photo credit: www.udel.edu/PR/UDaily/2008/jun/ICRISAT_landlg.jpg

DEPAVE

PORTLAND, USA

depave.org
@depave

Depave's definition of a livable city is one where people and wildlife coexist and prosper amidst clean air, clean water, robust urban forests, and a thriving local agriculture. Getting in the way of that, as they see it, is cement. Paved surfaces contribute to stormwater pollution, deprive a city of valuable farmland, and increase summertime temperatures through the heat island effect. Since 2007, Depave has been promoting the removal of unnecessary pavement (think parking lots and roadways) to create community green spaces and mitigate stormwater runoff. To date, thousands of square meters of asphalt have been depaved in Portland alone, and 7 million liters of stormwater have been diverted from storm drains as a result of the organization's volunteer-run projects.
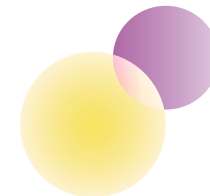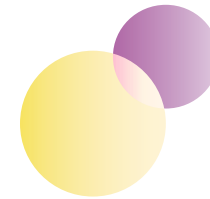
BEACON FOOD FOREST

SEATTLE, USA
beaconfoodforest.weebly.com

A Food Forest is a land management system that mimics a woodland ecosystem but substitutes in edible trees, shrubs, and perennials. Fruit and nut trees constitute the upper level of the forest, while below there are berry shrubs and other edible plants. Companions or beneficial plants are included to attract insects for natural pest management, while other plants are used to provide valuable soil nutrients like nitrogen and mulch. Together, these plants create relationships that give life to a forest garden ecosystem that is able to produce high yields of food with little maintenance. Seattle's Beacon Food Forest, supported by the city's Department of Neighbourhoods, involves volunteers and local institutions in the construction of a community space that contributes to food security, provides free access to healthy produce for vulnerable populations, and promotes biodiversity in the city.

LONG TIME, NO SEE?

BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

community.long-time-no-see.org

@ltns_

Long Time, No See? (LTNS) is a participatory project that draws residents of Brisbane into a multimedia arts-based exploration of sustainability. Leveraging the power of storytelling and mapping, LTNS wants to develop a new understanding of place, environment, and community, connecting people's experiences of the 'here and now' with their aspirations for the future. Enhanced by GPS and mobile technology, LTNS organizes workshops, provides free DIY tools, and curates a platform for real-time raw data that can be visualized and used to build local collaborative resilience, capacity, and governance.

INCLUSIVE CITIES
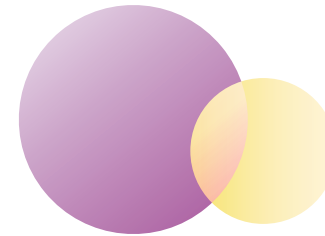
NURTURING LOCAL SPARKS

Guest article by Alexa Mills

I went for a ten-mile walk in Toledo, Ohio on a Sunday in June because I'd made a mistake with my flight times and didn't have a rental car. What else was there to do? Sitting in my mediocre hotel room seemed like a bad idea, and I'd never seen Toledo. About two hours into the walk, it started to pour. A man on a bike offered me an umbrella, but I declined. A few minutes later he came back with an umbrella from his house, and insisted I take it. He gave me his address, which was a few blocks over.

When it stopped raining, I started back towards his house. Searching for a house is a funny thing. You look at the other houses along the way and wonder if your destination is going to look more like this one or that one. I was getting close when I noticed a change in the pattern – a brown, muddy front yard after blocks of verdant lawns. This yard had been completely turned up and planted with vegetables. My umbrella-lender was right there in the mud, tending his tomatoes. "Michelle Obama said to plant gardens," he said, "But she didn't say where!" Michelle Obama, the first lady of the United States, had taken on healthy foods and obesity as her project. One of her efforts was to encourage people to plant vegetable gardens.

Americans have been hiding their gardens in their back yards for decades now. Front gardens were popular in colonial times, but they went out of style. People hid their gardens in the back so that their neighbors wouldn't know that they needed to grow some of their own food just to make ends meet. There was shame in that.

In every place, people are doing amazing little things to make their lives and their neighbors' lives better. On nothing but their own volition, people start projects that defy odds and redefine local culture, all because they have a vision for a more equitable planet.

This chapter is about the front gardens of the world – those projects and visions that start small and then grow to be a local movement. It's about how a community can enable and aggregate these sparks rather than beat them down. In my office at the MIT Community Innovators Lab (CoLab), we are looking for and learning from those sparks.

In Nicaragua, CoLab is working with a community of waste pickers that has decided to demand fair labour and housing standards from their municipal government. Although MIT is able to come in with new technologies for waste management and propose new business models for the waste pickers, local knowledge is at the forefront of the project. We are learning from them.

In the Bronx, CoLab is working with a team of local organizations and groups to build a network of worker-owned companies. The effort is a true collaboration

between several different stakeholders.

At CoLab's office in Boston, I run a blog in which anyone committed to improving cities can share her project or tell her story. In so many arenas – city planning and journalism among them – the powerful speak for the powerless. CoLab Radio strives to be a place where all people, powerful and powerless, can speak for themselves – for the sweeping policies and systems that mark their lives. But often those whose stories say most about the state of humanity are least likely to speak on a far-reaching platform.

That's what inclusion is all about – recognizing that every person has a story worth sharing and an idea worth hearing. The gardener in Toledo may know more about sustainability than the directors of a nearby sustainability office. The wastepicker in Nicaragua has a thing or two to teach an MIT technologist.

Alexa Mills
CoLab Director, Media Projects

Alexa is the Director of Media Projects at MIT Community Innovators Lab (CoLab), where she has combined her passion for stories with her passion for bottom-up urban planning. She is founder and curator of CoLab Radio, a blog site that publishes work by a mix of practitioners, academics, and individual residents who are committed to improving their communities.

➡ colabradio.mit.edu
🐦 @MITCoLab

41
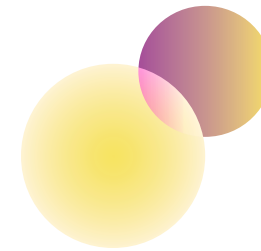
RED, BIKE AND GREEN

USA
www.redbikeandgreen.com

@redbikegreen

Red, Bike and Green is a community-building collective that wants to make city biking more inclusive for African American commuters living in the United States. Challenging the stereotype of the typically white male-dominated urban cycling scene, the group organizes regular city rides for singles and families, as well as events for those not necessarily interested in riding. Started as a local initiative in Oakland, the collective now has chapters in other major American cities and works to build an open bike culture while improving the physical and emotional well-being of its members.

ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

INTERNATIONAL

www.endangeredlanguages.com

A language is considered endangered when the number of its native speakers is in decline or when a more dominant language takes over. Today, it is estimated that more than 40 per cent of the world's languages are at risk of extinction, contributing to the loss of valuable scientific and cultural information that is comparable to the loss of a species. Endangered Languages is an initiative that promotes linguistic diversity by connecting scholars and experts to an open community of language champions and native speakers. Anyone can contribute to the initiative by submitting recordings and documents of their language. The site's comprehensive map provides information about the world's most vulnerable languages, while video interviews capture a glimpse of local cultures and their significance.
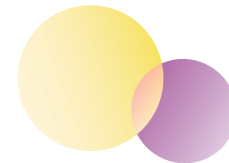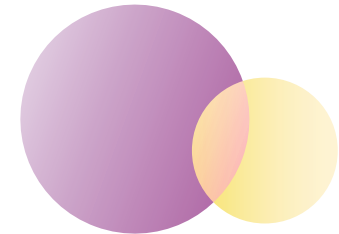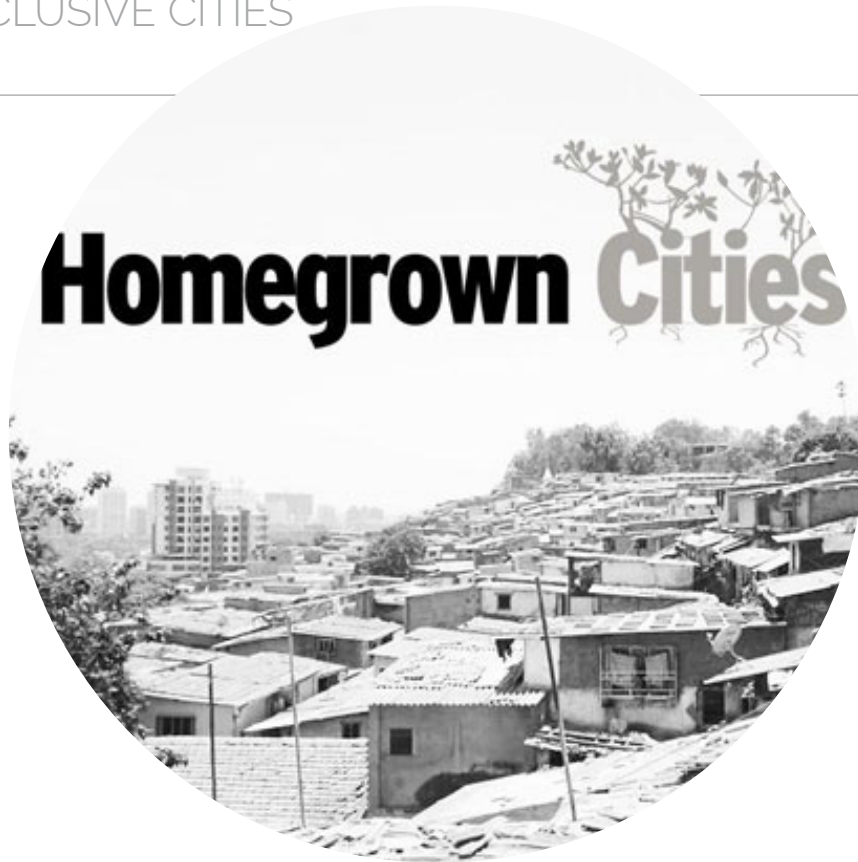
HOMEGROWN CITIES

MUMBAI, INDIA

urbz.net/the-homegrown-cities-project

@urbz_

In Mumbai, people living in locally built neighbourhoods are frequently the target of forced evictions. Homegrown Cities is a project that wants to give these residents an opportunity to build their own future. Operating from the point of view that 'slum' is an unfair label for communities that have a lot to teach, the project is working on a housing development in the neighbourhood of Bhandup, in the city's Northern suburbs, to find a solution to the problem of evictions. Its co-operative business model relies on the input and involvement of residents, engineers, and local builders who are equally involved in the building process. An initiative of experimental urban action collective URBZ, Homegrown Cities wants to provide opportunities for cross-learning and technical capacity-building to give vulnerable communities like the ones in Bhandup a say over where and how they live.

NEXT DOOR FAMILY

BELGIUM, CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, ITALY, MALTA, PORTUGAL, SLOVAKIA, SPAIN

www.nextdoorfamily.eu

Intercultural exchange has long been a goal of the European Union, but integration remains a long and difficult process for many. Launched in 2004, Next Door Family works to create new connections between local and foreign families who meet on a Sunday in November to share a meal together. Matched with participants of similar age and interests, hosts and guests are joined by a cultural mediator who is there to help in the event of any miscommunication. So far, over 1 000 families have sat down to lunch together, and 60 per cent of them have reported staying in touch, appreciating the opportunity "to live together and not just next to each other." Today, the project has expanded to seven other countries – Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Malta – and counts on the support of the European Union.
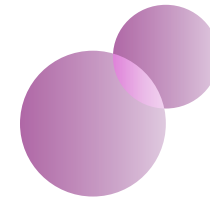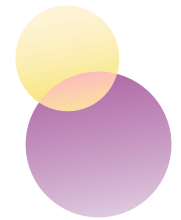
A-SMALL-LAB

TOKYO, JAPAN

www.a-small-lab.com

@a_small_lab

a-small-lab is a creative consultancy that mixes independent projects and collaborations with think tanks, organizations, educational institutions, businesses and local governments in Japan and internationally. Founded by Chris Berthelsen, a-small-lab explores the often overlooked aspects of major metropolises like Tokyo, paying special attention to small spaces for frugal DIY interventions, experiments in alternative education, and local fruit landscapes. Projects include Hand-Made Play, an open research project investigating, enjoying, and learning from the self-initiated and non-commercial play of children, and the City at Child Scale, a study on the child's perception of the street.

SHACK/SLUM DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL

AFRICA, ASIA, LATIN AMERICA

www.sdinet.org

@sdinet

Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a network of community-based organizations defending the rights of the urban poor in 33 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Launched in 1996, the organization has evolved from a grassroots federation working against slum evictions into a strong international network with the traction to advance "pro-poor" urban agendas. In each country where SDI has a presence, affiliate organizations come together at the community, city, and national level to build the platform for informal settlers to engage with governments and international organizations directly, working to influence policy and raise awareness about the challenges of urban development.
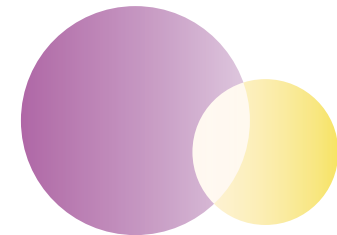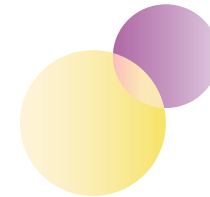
DIASPORIC GENIUS

TORONTO, CANADA

diasporicgenius.com

@DiasporicGenius

Diasporic Genius works to stimulate the creative capacity of individuals through the power of large-scale public gathering and performance. With its process of "civic interweaving" – a neighbourhood-specific and story-inspired form of community-building – the project leverages the insights of Toronto's diverse communities to bring visibility to the challenges and opportunities of community-based economic resilience. Its Story and Creativity Circles are a means to release the untapped wisdom of residents, celebrating personal experiences (the "Old Story") and collective capacity (the "New Story") as a way to re-imagine both their neighbourhood and the city. These stories are then given full expression in major public celebrations tied to the seasons, and are woven into the organization's overall approach to economic development.

8-80 CITIES

TORONTO, CANADA

www.8-80cities.org

@penalosa_g

We often hear about the benefits of a healthier, more active lifestyle and of how public spaces can transform a city. What we don't often talk about, however, is how to make those options available to younger and older generations, too. 8-80 Cities is a non-profit organization that works internationally to create vibrant cities where people can walk, bike, access public transit, and enjoy parks and public places regardless of age. Its hands-on and people-friendly engagement framework involves community groups and decision-makers in the creation of programs that reflect social equality and inclusiveness in the public realm. Drawing on extensive first-hand experience and an impressive collection of international best practices, 8-80 Cities is recognized for its simple and effective philosophy: that if you create a city that's good for an 8-year-old as well as an 80-year-old, you will create a safe, healthy city for everyone.
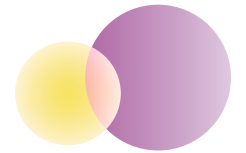
GIRLS LEARNING CODE

TORONTO, CANADA

girlslearningcode.com

@llcodedotcom

In the age of social networking and instant communication, digital literacy has become a valuable asset for anyone wishing to make their voice heard. Recognizing that HTML, PHP and CSS are still mostly the domain of men, Ladies Learning Code organizes workshops for women who want to learn beginner-friendly computer programming in a social and collaborative way. The Girls Learning Code program takes this mission one step further and trains young girls between the age of 8 and 17 to develop the technical skills they need to change the world. The organization's tech camps and workshops have been so successful that they are now open to an even bigger age group and also provide co-ed learning opportunities to young students.

MMOFRA FOUNDATION

ACCRA, GHANA
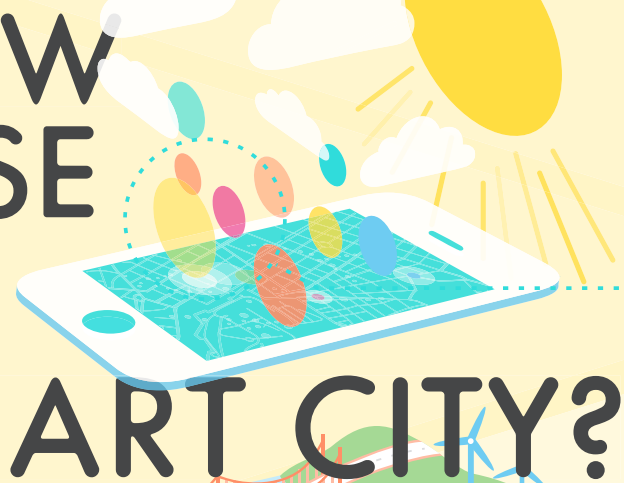
mmofraghana.org

@mmofra_ghana

The Mmofra Foundation was established to celebrate the legacy of Ghanaian writer and educator Efua T. Sutherland, the country's foremost children's advocate. For over four decades, Sutherland played a major role in developing educational curricula, literature, theatre and film for and about Ghanaian children. Today, Mmofra – which means "children" in Akan, one of Ghana's widely spoken languages – is a model creative space for child-centered thought and action. Grounded in local culture but enriched by interaction with the world, the foundation's programs reach thousands of children through a range of literacy and public health initiatives, multimedia resource production, and research projects.
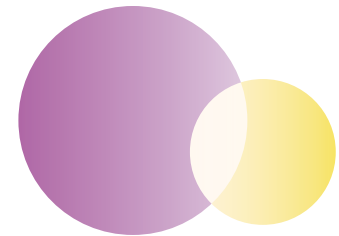
HOW WISE IS A SMART CITY?

Here are some encouraging initiatives that keep cities wise, open, and just:

Treat the data as a commons

A smart city is not necessarily a democratic city. Who owns the data that is produced on a daily basis, and who has a say over its use? Clouds and cables are part of a closed system that can, if not transparently owned and monitored, amount to little more than an infrastructure of command and control. To be truly smart, the infrastructure must be subject to democratic review and the data treated as a commons.

> *By prioritizing open access, the Government of Australia's Engage report encourages all Australian institutions to open their data sets and make them freely available under Creative Commons license. (1) This way, public sector information is seen as a national resource that makes a strong contribution to healthy democracy.*

As demands grow and budgets tighten, the smart city agenda is being celebrated for its promise of increased efficiency, better problem-solving, and system-wide coordination.

Sensors are embedded into the urban fabric to improve the performance of infrastructure, and data analysis is employed to monitor environmental issues, improve transportation, and provide more responsive services to citizens. But is efficiency really synonymous with engagement?

Co-create the menu

While often interactive, smart technology very rarely offers an opportunity to shape the platform itself. As Richard Sennett writes, user-friendly is increasingly synonymous with "choosing menu options rather than creating the menu." (2) A truly smart city values and experiments with models of collective ownership, knowing that citizens can do more than just use a technology – they can co-create it and have a say on how it is run as well.

Civic not-for-profits Code for America, Open Knowledge Foundation, and Sunlight Labs understand that smart cities are above all about citizens, not sensors. Their programs are designed to foster greater accountability and harness the power of digital tools to keep deliberation at the heart of technological interaction.

Smart governance is just governance

Smart cities are not neutral. While the digital revolution can improve our lives and open up previously closed systems, none of its benefits will be truly transformative if the structure they rely on is not aligned with the systems that support meaningful change.

Fairphone is an innovation that brings social justice to the heart of 'smart governance'. If it's true that we rely on interactive tools and civic software more than ever, then we cannot forget that without an honest look at the 'dark' side of technology (e-waste, unfair labour conditions, pollution, conflict and more) we cannot speak of truly 'open' innovation until we acknowledge and correct the imbalances currently at the heart of the digital infrastructures we rely on.

Don't forget to unplug
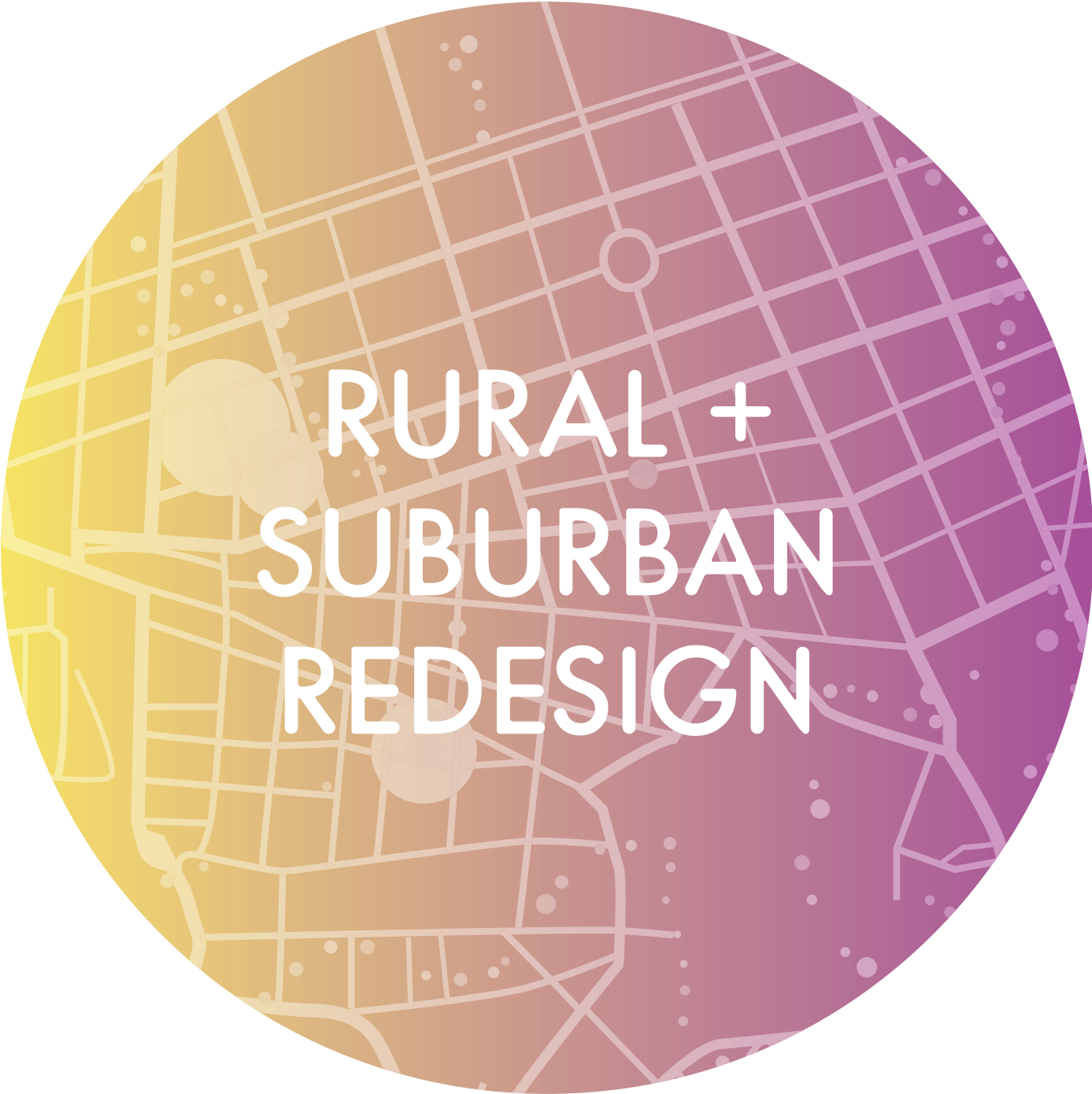
The ultimate test of smart technology is how well it leads to 'offline' behaviour change. The affordability of data plans and the continuing digital divide are two factors directly impacting the opportunity to participate. If a sensor can't track it, does it still count? And how can technology be used to enhance, not replace, what is happening locally?
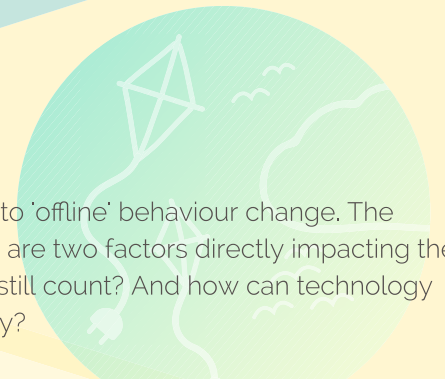
Smart technology can be applied to complement, not dominate, methods and tools to make services more responsive. Interactive public art projects like Candy Chang's I Wish This Was are a great way to take a cue from existing community efforts and track local aspirations by diversifying the way feedback is generated.

References:

Engage: Getting On With Government 2.0, Report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce
http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/gov20taskforcereport/

Richard Sennett, No One Likes A City That's Too Smart
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/04/smart-city-rio-songdo-masdar

Fairphone www.fairphone.com

I Wish This Was http://iwishthiswas.cc

RURAL + SUBURBAN REDESIGN

OCCUPY THE STRIP MALLS

Guest article by Roger Keil

The Occupy Movement that flared up in 2011 and spread geographically and rhyzomatically through our societies in the West has left a mixed legacy in cities.

What Occupy has put into motion is the reassessment of how and where we live. The movement has created a new notion of centrality as it has occupied specific symbolic locales where a dense, almost medieval urbanity of transitory structures has nestled into existing built environments. Often, these locations are near or even in the heart of what the French urbanist Henri Lefebvre has called the "decision-making centers" in cities[1]. Not surprisingly, given the focus of Occupy on wealth disparity and the role of the financial sector in creating it, tents were pitched in the face of bank towers, be it in New York or Frankfurt, London or Toronto. In Canada, even Winnipeg's demonstration staged itself at Portage and Main, which is as close to a financial core as one can get on the prairies. It is the nerve centers of the global cities that matter in the locational and symbolic placemaking Occupy is engaged in.

And this is a problem. Why? Because strategically, Occupy has made its nest in the shadow of the 1 per cent in order to bring to light the growing plight of the 99 per cent far removed from where the latter live, work and play. Its fixation on centers (where powers, real and medial can be found and will take notice) has the potential of weakening the movement as it grows from protest to organization, an inevitable step if it wants to survive politically.

There is an interesting myth developing around the Occupy sites which fetishizes monolithic centres. Matt Yglesias writes in his emphatic piece on "the burden of the city": "Nobody wants to occupy the strip mall or the office park or the park and ride lot. Not today and not ever. Core municipalities have a special role as gathering places, focal points, and hubs of activity."[2]

Some have begun to spin a different yarn. Peter Marcuse has blogged on the various aspects of space and warned of a "fetishization of space"[3]. Pham Binh quips: "You can't evict a revolution" noting the place- and spacelessness of revolt[4]. This sounds good but is not true as we well know from the history of revolutions. After cycling around Lower Manhattan in the morning after the Occupy Wall Street eviction a decidedly less cheery Sarah Goodyear asked exasperatedly and rhetorically: "Where is Occupy Wall Street without Zuccotti Park?" and responds to herself: "The movement has always intended to reach beyond the boundaries of Zuccotti Park. As powerful and useful as that place has been, if the force behind OWS is as powerful as its organizers believe, it will soon spring up somewhere else."[5]

We need to realize that our urban world has grown beyond the centers. Centrality now encompasses a different scale. When Lefebvre coined the idea of the "right to the city" as a reaction to the exclusion of the Nanterre students from the promises of Paris, he did not endorse the fetishization of the "decision-making centers". Rather, he cast a light on the subordination of the peripheries where the 99 per cent of his contemporaries worked, studied and mostly lived. There has been a Haussmannian history of evicting the working class from the centre. Clearly what happened in Paris more than a century ago is now a presence in the gentrified, corporatized capitals of capital of which New York is the prime example. Perhaps there is a strong lesson here: We can increasingly disregard the symbolic but ultimately vacuous power centers of global capital and concentrate on the politics of everyday life where it actually goes on. Life is in the post-suburban expanses and in-between spaces of our metropolitan areas.

A good place to start looking for the politics of change are rather "remote" exurban spaces like Imperial Valley in L.A., where Mike Davis[6] has found much determination to put up a fight with a combination of history, place and virtuality. A new centrality indeed.

There is much space for enabling in those spaces. And there is room to move into new political arenas that are not tied to the symbolic capital of capital. Strip malls, the unloved, problematic and failing signature spaces of many suburbs, nerve centers of the suburban neighbourhood economy, and product of an unsustainable automobile age, have started to be reimagined in commercial and social contexts. "Strip appeal"[7] may now have to be extended to the political sphere: Let's occupy the strip malls!

Roger Keil
Professor, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

Roger Keil is Professor at the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto, where he researches global suburbanization, cities and infectious disease, and regional governance. As Principal Investigator of a Major Collaborative Research Initiative on Global Suburbanisms, he works with 50 researchers and 18 partner organizations to document and evaluate recent forms of urbanization and emerging forms of (sub) urbanism worldwide.

➡ www.yorku.ca/city/?page_id=222
🐦 @rkeil

1. Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003: 119.

2. bit.ly/17c8x7l

3. pmarcuse.wordpress.com

4. bit.ly/19JpiVX

5. bit.ly/1fy5JYb

6. lat.ms/1ayMxDq

7. *Curb Magazine: Places, Spaces, People*, Theme issue on Suburban Land Use: Strip Malls and Parking Lots. Volume 3, 2, City-Region Studies Centre, University of Alberta, 2012.
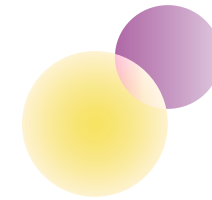
GINEAGROTIS

ATHENS, GREECE

www.gineagrotis.gr/el

@GineAgrotis

Gineagrotis, which means 'become a farmer' in Greek, is an open platform that connects city dwellers with farmers who have land to spare and are willing to rent it out for a fee. Users specify the size of the plot they are interested in, what they would like to grow on it, and where to receive their weekly supply. The community has only two main rules: all renters must eventually visit their farmer, and farmers must commit to delivering their produce within 24 hours of its harvest. Because of its farm-to-table model, food is on average 70 per cent cheaper than in supermarkets and is also more sustainable, because it is locally sourced and provides guaranteed income to the farmers who grow it. Born in the midst of the Green debt crisis, so far, over 500 households have joined the initiative, and Gineagrotis is now testing the option for users to donate part of their produce to soup kitchens in the Athens area.

FARM HACK

NEW YORK, USA

www.youngfarmers.org/practical/farm-hack

@NYFCnyfc

For generations, farmers developed their own tools in the field, covering anything from seeding to tillage and transport. Farm Hack is an open community that develops and shares tools for resilient agriculture. The farmer–to–farmer network connects growers with engineers, designers, architects, and other allies who help younger generations solve problems by becoming better inventors. The exchange stimulates the development of creative solutions that fit the scale and ethics of sustainable family farms, making it possible for growers to reclaim this traditional practice and share their innovations with a growing community of like-minded individuals.
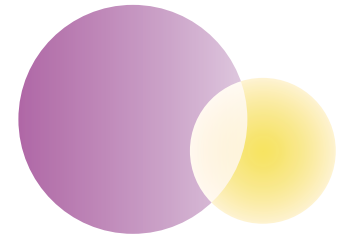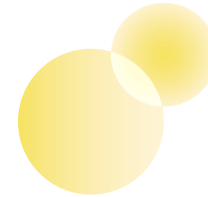
YADO NOMADO

JAPAN

yadonomado.jimdo.com

Yado Nomado is a volunteer network consisting of IT professionals who work to support small local inns in remote parts of Japan. Members create websites, build social media presence, and implement online booking/shopping systems so that the inns can be better connected to the rest of the country. Volunteers also run workshops to help local residents become self-sufficient and acquire important skills – like using the internet and social media platforms – that support their local economy and create stronger connections between rural and urban communities in the country.

UNMONASTERY

MATERA, ITALY

www.unmonastery.eu

@unMonastery

unMonastery is like an artist residency, but with a twist. The initiative embeds committed, skilled individuals within communities that could benefit from their involvement, creating the opportunity for them to collaborate. Residencies last 1-4 months during which time 'unmonasterians' work on a personal project – anything from a startup to a new civically mind resource – while receiving free accommodation and a monthly stipend of €400. The intent is to reproduce the best of the social functions of the traditional monastery: giving members a greater purpose, a chance to develop deep relationships with one another, and a degree of freedom from the need to generate a living income for the duration of their stay. The first pilot run of the project is scheduled to launch in January of 2014 in the rural town of Matera, in Italy.
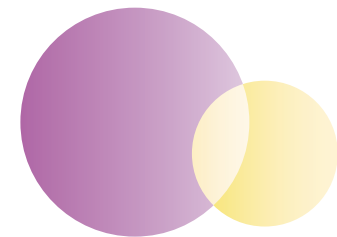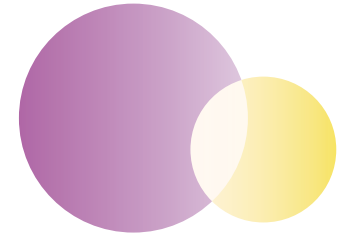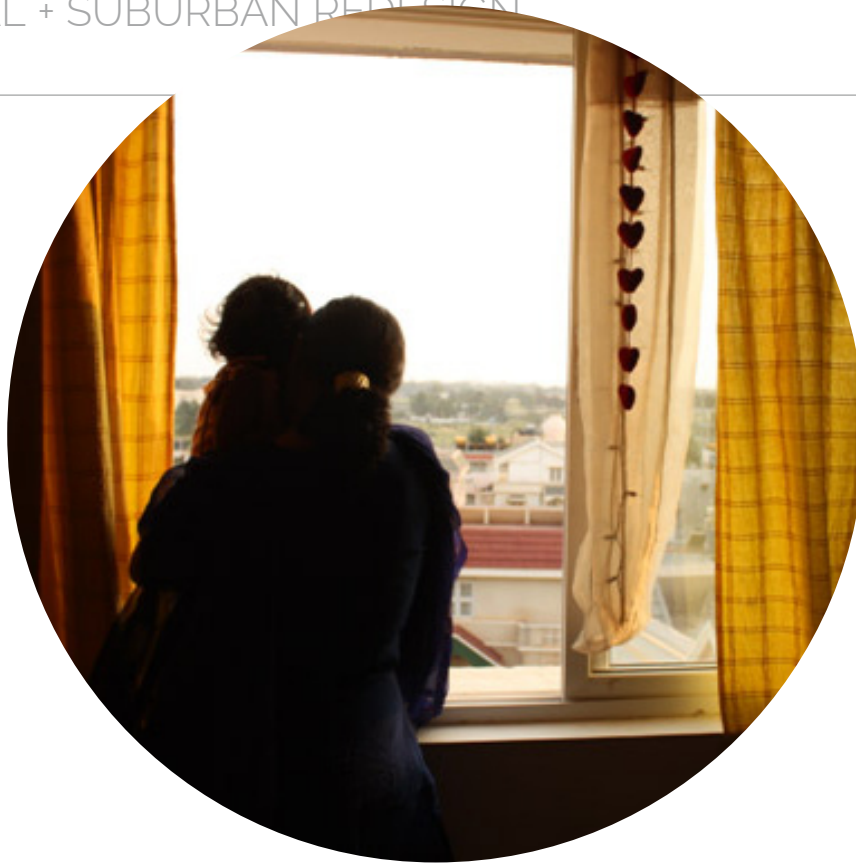
OUT MY WINDOW

BRAZIL, CAMBODIA, CANADA, CUBA, CZECH REPUBLIC, INDIA, LEBANON, NETHERLANDS, SOUTH AFRICA, TAIWAN, TURKEY, USA

highrise.nfb.ca

Out My Window is the first major project of Highrise, a multi-year, multimedia collaborative documentary experience directed by Katerina Cizek for the National Film Board of Canada. The project explores life in the most commonly built form of the last century: the concrete residential building. With more than 90 minutes of material to explore, Out My Window features 49 stories from 13 cities – told in 13 languages – of residents who harness the power of community to find meaning amongst the ruins of modernism. The project has so far met with enormous success, earning an Emmy and an innovative collaboration with the New York Times along the way. As one of the world's first interactive 360° documentaries, Highrise investigates how the documentary process can participate in social innovation rather than just document it, in the process re-defining what it means to be an urban species in the 21st century.

STRIP APPEAL

ALBERTA, CANADA

www.strip-appeal.com

In North America, small-scale strip malls were once considered hubs of local retail activity. Today, they are ailing and underutilized spaces in desperate need of new life. Strip Appeal is a design competition and travelling exhibition intended to stimulate and showcase creative design proposals for strip malls in the Canadian province of Alberta. In 2012, the project called on architects, creatives and the general public to propose innovative ideas for the aesthetic reinvention and adaptive reuse of these places, reimagining their potential as local neighbourhood spaces that make walkability and sustainability part of the suburban experience.
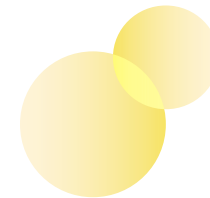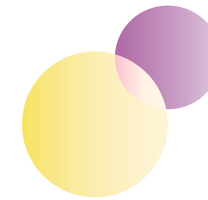
WE CARE SOLAR

NIGERIA, HAITI, LIBERIA, USA AND OTHER 21 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE

www.wecaresolar.org

@WeCareSolar

WE CARE Solar, which stands for Women's Emergency Communication and Reliable Electricity, is a compact solar system that fits into a suitcase. It is an innovation that provides portable, cost-effective medical devices to clinics affected by unreliable electricity supplies. WE CARE suitcases are equipped with overhead LED lighting, walkie-talkies, essential medical devices, and mobile communication technology that ensure safer surgical procedures and reduce the risk of maternal mortality. To date, over 300 Solar Suitcases have been deployed in countries like Haiti – where they were used by medical relief teams during the 2010 earthquake – to increase the capacity of health workers to care for patients with obstetric complications. Thanks to WE CARE, workers now report more confidence in performing skilled care and no longer fear the night shift.

CASA NETURAL

MATERA, ITALY

www.benetural.com

@CasaNetural

Casa Netural, or "neutral house" in Italian, is a co-living and co-working space in the heart of Matera, in Italy. It is the first Italian social enterprise to bring the kind of creative talent so abundant in urban centers to a rural setting, creating opportunities for local (and international) professionals to work on new projects, expand their network, and grow their social impact. In keeping with its mandate, Casa Netural is designed to be as carbon neutral as possible, and regularly organizes workshops to teach sustainable living skills and revive public spaces for improved tourism and local investment opportunities.
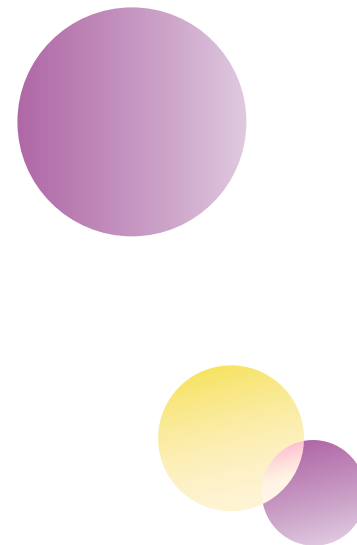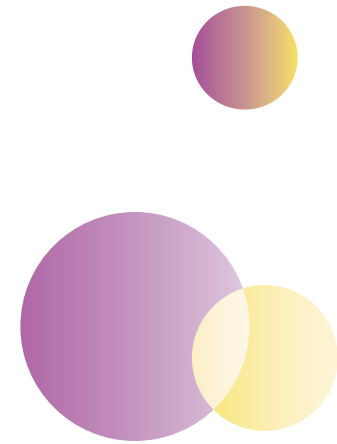
CITIZEN'S INSTITUTE ON RURAL DESIGN

USA

www.rural-design.org

Rural design is an important tool for small communities to enhance their existing assets and improve quality of life. The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and New York's Project for Public Spaces that offers rural communities the opportunity to tackle local challenges through a design-based approach. The Institute provides the technical assistance and expertise needed to turn community ideas into reality, and offers an annual competitive grant to encourage the emergence of innovative design solutions in communities with populations of 50 000 or under.

52 SUBURBS AROUND THE WORLD

AUSTRALIA, CHINA, FRANCE, GERMANY, INDIA, ITALY, JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND, TURKEY, USA

52suburbs.com

@52suburbs

52 Suburbs is the brainchild of Louise Hawson, an Australian photographer with a strong interest in the 'unfamous' side of famous cities. Feeling like a stranger in her own city, in 2009 Hawson decided to spend a year photographing one new Sydney suburb a week. In 2012, she and her daughter embarked on a second exploration – this time an international one. 52 Suburbs Around the World peeks into the 'real lives' of neighbourhoods on the outskirts of cities like Hong Kong, Paris, Tokyo and Sydney and provides a glimpse of life outside the well-traveled tourist path. The project's strong following has so far led to the publication of a book and the launch of a major exhibition, and will soon be followed by two new additions to Hawson's catalogue.

Electric Pedal · *bit.ly/14Skga8*
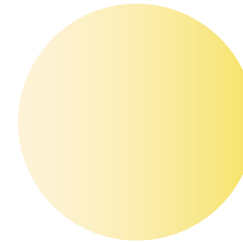
COMMUNITY ENERGY

POWERING THE ENERGY REVOLUTION

Guest article by Laura Tozer

In 2012, overlooking the West Bay on beautiful Manitoulin Island in Canada, the community of M'Chigeeng First Nation celebrated the grand opening of their 4 MW wind power project. It was the first 100 per cent First Nation owned wind project built in the Canadian province of Ontario. The community spent many years bringing it to fruition, but the opportunities for local economic development, job creation, and environmental leadership pulled the project to completion. On a summer's day in 2012, they celebrated their success with a traditional sunrise ceremony in the shadow of the pair of wind turbines that are now a part of their community.

In 1997, a windy island in Denmark home to about 4 000 people entered a government contest to become a 100 per cent renewable energy powered island. They won. Residents in the community bought into the idea – particularly excited about the prospect for local job creation – and they eventually erected 21 wind turbines on the island. Everyday citizens co-own 20 of them and earn more than $8 million in revenue per year. These days, the residents of the island of Samsø export surplus green energy, they've built straw or wood-burning district heating systems, they've started producing biofuel, and they have installed solar panels and heat pumps.

These are stories of community energy resilience.

There is an urgent opportunity to remake the energy systems on which our communities depend. Communities' energy support systems are based on tenuous supply chains that stretch across the globe and pump huge amounts of global warming pollution into the atmosphere. As communities have recognized the unsustainability of this system, some have begun remaking theirs to increase energy resilience, like the M'Chigeeng First Nation and the island of Samsø.

In order to succeed, community energy resilience has to be pursued co-operatively by diverse players. Local governments, community groups, and citizens can all make huge strides for their communities, but it is also critical that they are enabled by regional and national governments.

Energy management at the local government level covers a broad scope: from the efficiency of the built environment to transportation to energy generation infrastructure.

Another big player in the field of community energy resilience is community-owned renewable energy ('community power' or 'community energy'), which are renewable energy generation projects that are developed and owned by groups of citizens. In a nutshell, people co-invest in the energy infrastructure that will power their homes and businesses and make a return on

their investment. In Germany, over half of the country's renewable energy capacity is owned by citizens. Many projects are owned by rural co-operatives that have pooled investment of over $1 billion USD in private capital to invest in renewable energy projects.

Regular citizens can contribute to their community's energy resilience on their own, too. Most people know that significant savings can be made through efficiency upgrades to homes, but citizens can also be generators of electricity. Solar photovoltaic panels can be installed by farmers who diversify their operations to harvest not just wheat and soybeans, but also energy from the sun itself. Homeowners can take advantage of local natural resources like never before to produce enough power to meet all of their needs.

People in a community can overhaul their energy support system, but they can only go so far on their own. The policies enacted by regional and national governments are critical enablers of action for truly transformative change. Farmers can't feed renewable solar power into the electricity grid, for example, without policies that pave the way. Policies like feed-in tariffs for renewable energy allow communities to build an electricity generation grid that is decentralized, distributed, renewable and resilient.

A community that acknowledges its energy vulnerability and takes steps to address the glaring chinks in its armour moves towards a more stable and resilient support system. It's a community with more local economic opportunity. It's a community that is meeting needs efficiently without squandering resources. It's a community that is reaching for sustainability.

Laura Tozer
Founder, Decarbon Strategies

Laura Tozer is an environmental scientist with policy expertise on both the national and local levels. She was Director of Operations for the Community Energy Partnerships Program, and has researched adaptation to climate change for the Global Environmental Change Research Group. She is currently pursuing a PhD with a focus on urban climate change mitigation.

➡ www.lauratozer.com
🐦 @LMTozer

SOLAR SCHOOLS

UK

www.solarschools.org.uk

@1010

Solar Schools is an organization that is putting clean energy in classrooms all over the UK. Participating institutions set a fundraising target for their very own solar panels, then launch a crowdfunding campaign to buy them. Now in its second run, the organization helps schools overcome financial barriers to renewable energy by providing the tools, training, and support they need to contribute to their energy independence. This way, students get to learn first-hand about sustainability and schools are able to invest their savings into keeping extracurricular programs alive –an important advantage at a time of budget cuts. So far, schools have raised over £100 000 in just over one term, have been celebrated in British parliament, and have won several awards for their efforts.

SUN COUNTRY HIGHWAY

CANADA

www.suncountryhighway.ca

@SunCountryHwy

Sun Country Highway wants to rapidly accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) by providing the infrastructure needed for zero emission transportation to grow. Recognizing that roads are a shared resource with enormous potential, the company recently installed a network of EV charging stations along the Trans-Canada Highway, the longest of its kind in the world. Because lack of infrastructure is recognized as the biggest obstacle to the proliferation of EVs worldwide, Sun Country Highway gives priority to areas typically not reached by investors, and works with municipalities and private companies to make this technology accessible to all. Drivers can access the company's updated online map to find chargers near them, and can use its EV trip planner to schedule longer drives.
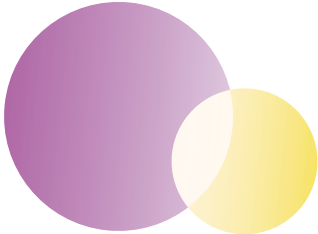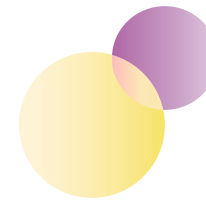
FOCUS THE NATION

USA

focusthenation.org

@FocusTheNation

Young people are disproportionally affected by the consequences of a warming planet, so it's no surprise to find many of them at the forefront of innovative climate solutions. Focus the Nation is a youth-led movement that helps over 300 000 young people embrace the challenges, excitement, and realities of moving their communities toward clean energy. Organized around four action profiles – technicians, innovators, politicos and storytellers – Focus the Nation's programming is intensely focused on facilitating the civic and systems-thinking capacities needed to build the innovative workforce of tomorrow. Its activities include Clean Energy Forums and campus projects; funding for highly entrepreneurial young innovators; retreats for community leaders; and the development of resources like *The WATT?*, an e-book that promotes energy-literacy among youth.

THE TOKELAU RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT

TOKELAU, NEW ZEALAND

bit.ly/16STo7u

The remote islands of Tokelau made international news when the government of New Zealand announced a $7 million solar project intended to transition them entirely to solar energy. Tokelau, which is a New Zealand-governed territory in the South Pacific, previously depended on a yearly supply of 2 000 barrels of oil to meet its energy needs. The new solar system is designed to withstand strong winds, high temperatures, and a corrosive salt-laden atmosphere to provide a clean, safe and reliable alternative to fossil fuels. Thanks to this investment, communities in Tokelau will soon be able to harness an abundant local resource and move from 0 per cent to 90 per cent renewable electricity in just one push.

Photo credit: bit.ly/17c9BrF
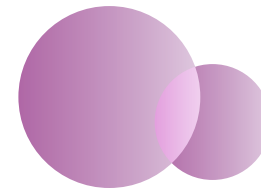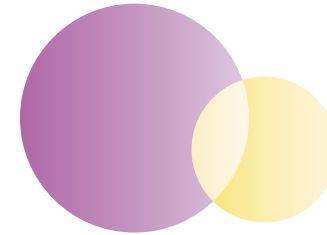
GROUNDSWELL

WASHINGTON (DC), USA

www.groundswell.org

@Grndswell

Groundswell's mission is to leverage the shared economic power of communities to combat economic inequality and environmental decline. Using a partnerships-driven approach, the organization's Community Power Program works with faith-based groups to unlock their collective buying power and secure low prices for clean energy. Through its Strong Homes Programs, Groundswell further supports community members in coordinating their home energy audits and efficiency upgrades, enabling them to reinvest their savings into high-impact infrastructure. To date, Groundswell has worked with over 120 groups and 1 000 families, collectively saving over $700 000 in energy costs.

EVERY ROOFTOP

AUSTRALIA

www.flickr.com/photos/ari/4055625811

@EveryRooftop

Every Rooftop is Australia's first residential solar leasing scheme. The project is an innovative social venture that makes solar power accessible to Australian households without expensive investments or complicated government subsidies. With a lease, upfront costs are minimized or eliminated altogether, making it possible to save money on energy costs from the very beginning. The program is powered by a referral system that rewards participants for introducing new customers to the program and at the same time returns a commission to the organization, which allows for the scaling up of its environmental education and disaster resilience programs.

Photo credit: www.flickr.com/photos/ari/4055625811
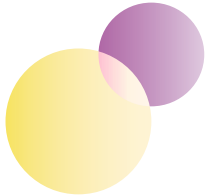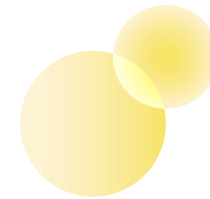
SOLAR SISTER

NIGERIA, RWANDA, SOUTH SUDAN, TANZANIA, UGANDA

www.solarsister.org

@Solar_Sister

Solar Sister is a social enterprise that provides women with the training and support they need to create solar-powered micro-businesses that generate both household income and sustainable energy. Participating 'solar sisters' are trained to operate and maintain the very solar technology they rely on, and receive mentoring to grow their business endeavours. As a 'for women by women' distribution network, projects thrive on local family, friend, and community ties. Solar Sister, in fact, believes in the value of long-term relationships in creating an atmosphere of trust and understanding that enables the sharing of both knowledge and technology.

GREAT OUTDOOR GYM COMPANY

UK

www.tgogc.com

@TGO_OutdoorGyms

The Great Outdoor Gym Company (TGOGC) is the world's first workout facility to transform people-powered cardio activity into useable electricity (that's "community energy" in the literal sense!) Its barrier-free outdoors gyms and sport zones are designed to be accessible and can be used 24/7 to produce street lightning. So far, 390 gyms have been installed in parks, schools, and community spaces across the UK, successfully involving kids, seniors, and hard to reach groups in improving their physical activity levels. TGOGC facilities, which are entirely produced in the country, are now being expanded into new packages and models conceived for every budget, and will soon come with an app that provides personal training support on the go.
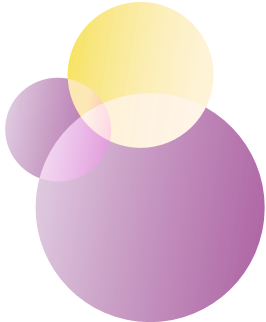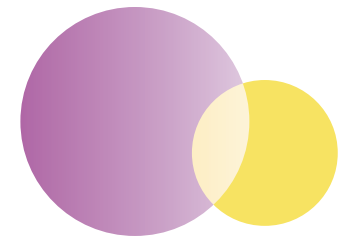
MOSAIC

USA

www.joinmosaic.com

@SolarMosaic

Mosaic is a platform that connects individual investors to solar projects in need of financing. Co-founded by Billy Parish, a young environmental activist, Mosaic was launched to democratize access and reduce barriers to renewable energy investment. The cost of solar power has dropped 80 per cent in the last five years, making it comparable (if not cheaper) to power derived from fossil fuels. The challenge remains finding resources to fund clean energy. Through its online marketplace, Mosaic facilitates crowdsourced investing in solar projects while fundamentally changing the way they are financed. The year of its launch demand for renewable energy was so high that Mosaic sold out shares in all of its public projects within 24 hours, pooling over $300 000 in projects across the US. Today, Mosaic has raised $1.1 million from more than 700 investors and has financed twelve rooftop solar power plants in California, Arizona and New Jersey.

PEDAL CAFÉ

SOUTH WALES, UK

www.pedalcafe.co.uk
@Pedal_Cafe

Love renewable energy and socializing? Pedal Café is a South Wales initiative that combines a strong desire to promote sustainability with creative educational tools made from broken objects. Inventions include a Bicycle Blender that turns into a pop-up café; a Bicycle Bingo game unit for community events; a pedal-powered bubble machine and busking set-up, as well as a Bicycle Cinema system. Whether it's through a tasty smoothie, a movie or a game of bingo, the Pedal Café crew travels to events, fairs, and festivals to promote cycling and sustainability in a fun and unusual way, offering workshops that range from healthy eating to basic electrical circuits, from recycling to fitness.
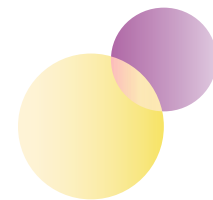
do you
talk to
your
neighbors?

yes   no

yes yes yes yes no no no

state
...Support
noon

WELL-BEING + THE COMMONS

WHY MEASURING WELL-BEING IS IMPORTANT FOR CITIES

Guest article by Juliet Michaelson

In recent years, the idea of measuring population wellbeing has attracted growing policy attention at international, national and city levels, with leaders like UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon pointing to the importance of robustly measuring well-being, and countries like the UK beginning to build up a time series of official statistics on people's experienced well-being.

So why is measuring well-being so important? Here are five key reasons.

1. Well-being indicators directly capture information about human lives

There is now a wealth of evidence showing that we can robustly measure how people feel about their lives, using indicators that converge with a whole range of other types of data. These measures give us direct information about how lives are going that proxy measures – like how much people spend on products and services – cannot.

2. Measuring well-being broadens the scope of an overly narrow politics

Politicians have become so used to their success or failure being judged according to the headline measure of economic growth that their scope of action has become extremely narrow. Maximising GDP growth is not the same as reducing stark economic inequalities, ensuring people have meaningful work to do in the right quantities, or an education that prepares them for life and not just the jobs market, to name only a few.

3. People support well-being as a goal for governments as well as themselves

There has long been evidence that people think well-being is an important goal for governments to pursue. A BBC poll in 2006 found that 81 per cent of people in the UK supported the idea that government's prime objective should be the 'greatest happiness' rather than the 'greatest wealth'. A similar poll in France in 2012 found 89 per cent of people thought that well-being could constitute a common goal for the future. And data collected recently by the OECD found that people regarded life satisfaction and health as the two most important life domains.

4. Well-being evidence improves the quality of decisions made on our behalf

Government plans have a wide ranging impact on our lives, so those making decisions on our behalf should have access to the best evidence about whether those decisions will result in positive or negative impacts. Well-being measures reveal links between well-being and all sorts of aspects of people's lives that are affected

by policy plans, including employment status, housing conditions and air pollution. As a UK government source said at the time of the launch of the UK's national well-being programme: "Next time we have a comprehensive spending review, let's not just guess what effect various policies will have on people's well-being. Let's actually know."[1]

5. Measuring well-being is a fundamentally democratic approach

Directly measuring how people feel about their lives reduces the need for 'experts' to decide what is important to them – it brings people's voices into the heart of politics. Well-being measures allow people to weigh for themselves the different aspects of their lives to make a 'direct personal judgement', rather than reflecting what 'experts or governments think should define a good life'[2]. They bring a fundamentally democratic approach into policy-making.

An explicit focus on well-being can therefore help cities to make decisions about allocating resources and to manage trade-offs to most effectively improve people's lives.

No wonder then that we are beginning to see genuine city-level action on this agenda. Santa Monica, California won $1 million in the 2013 Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayor's Challenge to create a headline well-being index, while the Happy City project in Bristol, UK is gathering momentum behind its plans for a 'Happy City Index'. At nef, we expect to see many more cities around the world follow in their footsteps, to ensure that they're doing all they can to help support good lives for their residents.

Juliet Michaelson

Senior Researcher, Centre for Wellbeing, new economics foundation

Juliet is Senior Researcher and Programme Coordinator at nef's Centre for Wellbeing. She leads research projects which explore the measurement of well-being and its implications for policy, including work on National Accounts of Wellbeing and the Happy Planet Index.

→ www.neweconomics.org/issues/entry/well-being

🐦 @NEFWellbeing

1. Stratton A (2010, November 15) UK happiness index to gauge national mood. *The Guardian*, p1.

2. Helliwell JF, Layard R and Sachs JD (2012) *World Happiness Report*. New York: The Earth Institute, Columbia University.
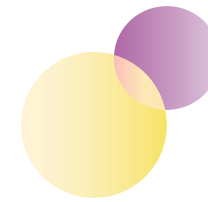
BICICLOTECA

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

bicicloteca.wordpress.com

Bicicloteca is a bicycle that carries a small library through the city of São Paulo. Robson Mendonça, a 61-year-old librarian who used to live on the streets of the city, created the project as an inclusive way to encourage reading among hard to reach groups – especially those who do not have access to proof of residence and identification documents required by librarians to loan books. So far, the Bicicloteca has carried out more than 107 000 loans without any bureaucracy, drawing on a collection of more than 30 000 books. Today, the initiative is part of the Instituto Mobilidade Verde (IMV, or Green Mobility Institute), an NGO focused on alternative and sustainable means of urban transportation. Bicicloteca also lends Braille books for the visually impaired, promotes activities in public squares, and is equipped to provide free, solar-powered internet wherever it goes.

NATURE SACRED

USA

naturesacred.org
@NatureSacred

Individual and community wellness are more directly linked to nature than most people realize. For 20 years, Nature Sacred has been creating green spaces where people can retreat from the stresses of urban living and enjoy a slower pace. Over the years, the organization has built dozens of Sacred Places – outdoor spaces for wholeness and healing – on university campuses, as well as in inner-city neighbourhoods, hospitals and prisons. These spaces are considered adaptive pieces of urban infrastructure that are vital to community well-being, self-expression, and resilience. Today, Nature Sacred is investing $4.5 million in six new projects and will work with an interdisciplinary team of researchers to rigourously track the impact of nature's healing powers.
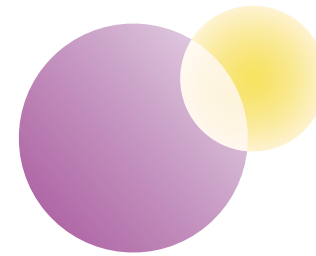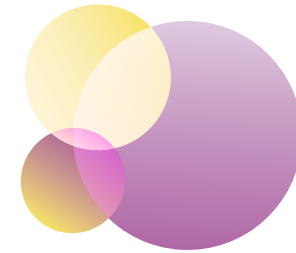
BAREFOOT ACUPUNCTURISTS

MUMBAI, INDIA

www.barefootacupuncturists.com/en/about-us.html

In many parts of the world, vulnerable populations are often too poor to afford quality treatment. Barefoot Acupuncturists is a non-profit organization that offers free acupuncture treatments and training to populations who suffer from chronic illness. Its goal is to support informal settlers and rural residents in having greater autonomy over their healthcare experience. Building on existing local know-how and healing traditions, Barefoot Acupuncturists focuses on training communities so that they too can become what they call "humanitarian acupuncturists", practitioners who can provide versatile and low-cost treatment options to those in need.

HAPPY PLANET INDEX

INTERNATIONAL

www.happyplanetindex.org

@nefWellBeing

Most measures of national progress are actually just measures of economic activity –how much countries are producing or consuming. By only using indicators like GDP to measure success we are not accounting for what really matters: producing happy lives for people now and in the future. The Happy Planet Index (HPI) was created by Nic Marks, founder of the Centre for Well-being at the new economics foundation, as a way to capture measures of life expectancy, experienced well-being, and environmental impact. These indicators are used to provide a more accurate picture of the extent to which countries deliver long, happy, sustainable lives for the people that live in them. Since 2006, nef has released three HPI indexes ranking over 150 countries, and is now calling on world leaders and the UN to develop a similar indicator to put well-being at the heart of our societal and economic decision-making processes.

Happy
Planet
Index
(HPI)
2012

HPI is a measure of efficiency, good countries are at achievin while keeping the planet happ

HPI ≈ 😊 × ⏳ ÷ 👣

89
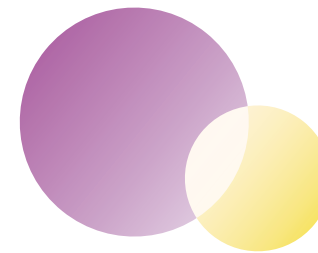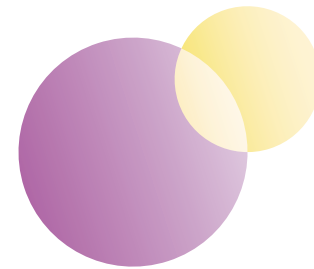
THE CIRCLE MOVEMENT

UK

www.participle.net/projects/view/5/101

@WeAreParticiple

Britain's population is ageing, a trend that is affecting the very funding and delivery of public services across the nation. Particularly worrying is the issue of senior care. How will the country care for the growing number of older people, and who will pay for it? Circle's approach to care and ageing expands the definition of 'resources' to combine public, private, and voluntary assets that support a radical change in the way services are configured. As a membership-based organization, Circle works with diverse actors to meet the needs and desires of senior citizens in ways that allow for more autonomy, stronger social networks, and a renewed sense of purpose. Initially developed in partnership with over 250 senior citizens, Circles have expanded across the UK and have generated such international attention that they are now considered one of the most innovative new approaches to ageing.

MACHI NO HOIKUEN

JAPAN

machihoiku.jp

Machi no Hoikuen is a multi-purpose nursery that attracts neighbourhood residents of all ages thanks to its art gallery and café spaces. The facility was conceived as a dynamic way to contribute to the well-being of local children by encouraging social interaction and community exchange across all age groups. An innovative building and program designed by Japanese architects created the initial spark, but deep and fulfilling relationships make the center a success. Today, Machi no Hoikuen has become an important fixture of Japan's Roppongi and Nerima neighbourhoods.
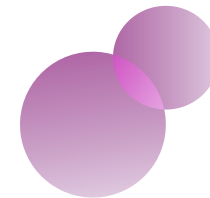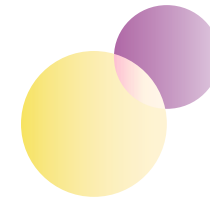
INNOSERV

EUROPE

www.inno-serv.eu

@InnoservProject

Innoserv is an online community that brings together research, practice, and policy representatives to share the latest best practices in service delivery. The project focuses on identifying the future potential of social services – especially multi-stakeholder input and emerging open policy frameworks. The platform was designed to act as an interactive space to overcome the communication gaps that often exist between the worlds of policy and practice, and is used to connect with a wider audience of service users. Together, participants mutually assess recent trends, identify knowledge gaps, and propose research questions and agendas to address them.

THEATRUM MUNDI

LONDON, UK & NEW YORK CITY, USA

theatrum-mundi.org

@TheatrumM

Theatrum Mundi is a collective of academics, architects, planners, and artists who have joined forces to stimulate discussion about the links between urbanism and performance. Acting as both provocateurs and enablers of engaging exchange, the network – which counts on the support of advisors like Richard Sennett, Saskia Sassen and Geoff Mulgan – explores contemporary urban life in cities like London, New York, Frankfurt, Berlin, Copenhagen and Rio de Janeiro. Founded in 2012, Theatrum Mundi's workshops, salons, exhibitions, and conferences have already gathered significant international attention and continue to provide valuable insight into the connections between stage and street.
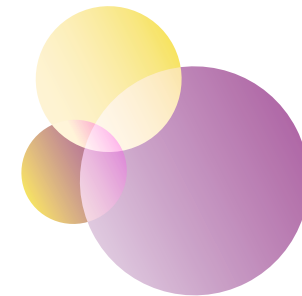
AFRICA YOGA PROJECT

KENYA

www.africayogaproject.org

@AfricaYoga

The Africa Yoga Project harnesses the transformative power of yoga to create opportunities for youth to become self-reliant individuals and future community leaders. Started in 2007 in some of Kenya's poorest areas, the project employed yoga and the moving arts as tools for experiential learning and development. Today, over 5 000 people participate in more than 250 weekly yoga classes in 80 locations. Participants report a wide range of benefits from the practice, including personal empowerment, emotional healing, and increased physical health and vitality. The organization has also trained more than 50 young people who are now earning a living wage by teaching yoga to people who otherwise would not have the opportunity to practice.
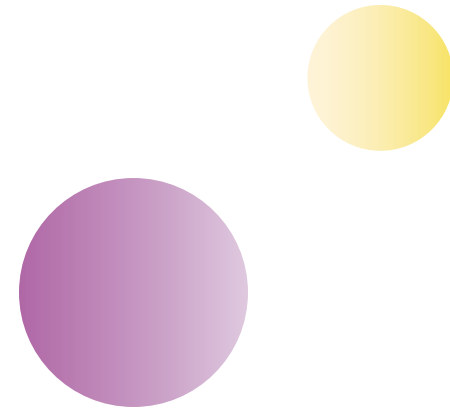
PROJECT INGEBORG

KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA

pingeb.org

Klagenfurt's Project Ingeborg brings new technology to old classics by providing a mobile library entirely accessible by QR codes. Stickers are scattered throughout the city – bus stops, heritage buildings, storefront windows – to encourage reading in an interactive and creative way. To bring the project to life, volunteers at Project Ingeborg collaborated with volunteers at Project Gutenberg – an initiative which has digitized over 40 000 freely accessible books – to make an initial set of 70 titles available to residents. These works can be downloaded at no cost because their copyrights have expired and are now part of the public domain. So far, over 3 500 downloads have been counted, and the project has expanded to three other Austrian cities.
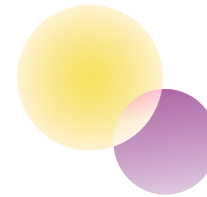
CITIZEN SCIENCE
+ MAPPING

DEMOCRATIZING ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Guest article by Public Lab

If you're worried that a toxic pollutant might be finding its way onto your property and into your water, your first thought might be to call up your local water utility or some other government agency for help. But after the 2010 BP oil spill dispersed millions of gallons of crude into the Gulf of Mexico, that wasn't a viable option for Gulf Coast residents. In the initial aftermath of the spill, the government imposed a flight restriction over the affected area forbidding aircraft from flying below 3 000 feet and the Coast Guard actively turned boats away from the area, essentially keeping everyone, residents and journalists alike, from even being able to see what was going on. As the oil continued to flow from the Deep Water Horizon, residents were left without reliable information about the spill, including where and when it would make landfall, because BP and the government agencies responsible for the crisis response weren't releasing it.

In response, a 'Grassroots Mapping' effort led by community members, local students, and nonprofits used tethered balloons and kites with point-and-shoot cameras attached, flying them from beaches and from boats where possible, to collect over 100 000 aerial images of the BP oil spill. The resulting maps covered over 100 miles of the Gulf Coast, and provided locals with important information about which communities would be most affected by the spill. Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science (Public Lab) was born from this collaboration, with the mission of supporting a global, collaborative community of citizen researchers who seek to answer questions about their local environment using accessible, open-source, do-it-yourself (DIY) scientific tools and techniques.

Since 2010, Public Lab has continued to apply this grassroots, scientific inquiry approach to help marginalized communities identify, redress, remediate, and create awareness and accountability around their own environmental concerns. Kite imagery from the Public Lab community has been used in litigation against a polluting coal terminal in Louisiana to challenge a construction permit at a nuclear power plant. Public Lab members have worked closely with the EPA in assessing the Gowanus Superfund site using citizen-collected aerial imagery. In addition to continuing our mapping efforts, the Public Lab community has been actively developing new research tools for citizen scientists. Recent tool uses include:

- deployment of our DIY Spectrometer by NASA DEVELOP to analyze emissions from refinery flares in the Gulf Coast
- use of our Infragram tool, an imaging platform allowing users to create near infrared photos, by US Fish and

Wildlife to assess the extent of invasive water chestnut (Trapa natans) coverage in Lake Warner, Massachusetts; and

• implementation of our Infragram tool to assess the effectiveness of low-tillage crop treatment alternatives by farming researchers in Lee, New Hampshire.

Moving forward, we're especially interested in how open hardware and software can revolutionize the way science is currently being done and bring it back into the public sphere. We're starting to see a significant number of new projects coming into this space and its going to be fascinating to see how citizen science changes because of it. There's a $37 billion dollar a year scientific research equipment industry out there that has never seen individual users as a market and so has never created for them. Meanwhile, the mapping technologies available are advancing in leaps and bounds, with more and more sophisticated tools making their way into the hands of the public everyday. The combination of novel tools designed specifically for and by citizen scientists for their own particular needs and interests and the ever increasing mapping capabilities available to the public is going to have major impacts on the way that citizens are able to engage with their environment, their government and their cities. As our experiences in the Gulf Coast and elsewhere illustrate, there is a real and present need for genuine citizen participation in this arena and we're excited to be part of the movement facilitating that participation.

The Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science (Public Lab) is a community that develops and applies open source tools to environmental exploration and investigation. By democratizing inexpensive and accessible "Do-It-Yourself" techniques, Public Lab creates a collaborative network of practitioners who actively re-imagine the human relationship with the environment. Shannon Dosemagen is a staff member of the Public Lab non-profit, while Jessica Breen (University of Kentucky) and Don Blair (University of Massachusetts-Amherst) are Public Lab organizers. They are co-authors of this article..

→ www.publiclab.org
🐦 @PublicLab
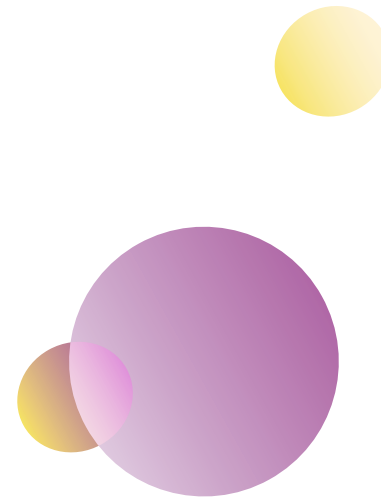
INFRAGRAM

USA
publiclab.org
@PublicLab

Near-infrared photography is used by NASA and large farms to assess plant health through sensors that are mounted on airplanes and satellites. As a technology, it can be useful in detecting damage to the local ecology, but its cost can be prohibitive for many. Public Lab, the collaborative citizen science community, developed a low-cost, DIY "infragram" camera that enables backyard gardeners, small-scale farmers, teachers, and amateurs to monitor their environment and collect quantifiable data. Its technique uses a modified digital camera to capture near-infrared and blue light in different colour channels that reveal the health of plants, parks, crops, and nearby wetlands. With its accessible price, Infragram is an inexpensive alternative for anyone who is curious about the secret lives of plants or is concerned about issues of food security, biodiversity, and environmental degradation.

WITNESS KING TIDES

AUSTRALIA

www.witnesskingtides.org

@GreenCrossAus

Rising sea levels pose a threat to many coastal communities. By drawing attention to king tides – a term that is sometimes used to refer to an especially high tide – Witness King Tides provides an opportunity for the public to understand what sea level rise projections mean for their local community. The project is a collaborative online platform where users can contribute or browse photos of reported high tides across the country. In the process, they can learn more about the effects of climate change and become involved in proactively preparing to care for a changing coastal landscape.

Photo credit: bit.ly/1ayQPdY
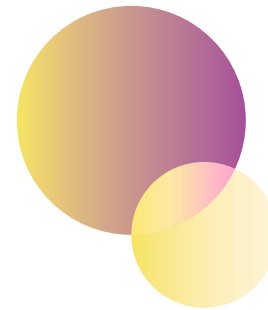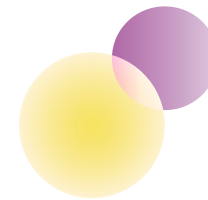
SMART CITIZEN KIT

BARCELONA, SPAIN

www.smartcitizen.me

Sensors are great tools to collect valuable information and make informed decisions, but they are expensive and often hard to use. Smart Citizen Kit is an open-source platform that empowers individuals to co-create a crowdsourced, interactive database of urban environmental data. The kit's solar-powered hardware measures air composition, temperature, light intensity, sound levels, and humidity levels to give a picture of the health of a nearby environment. Online, users visualize and share their data streams with the global community, and can access a multilingual forum to learn from the experiences of others. The kit also includes an app that allows for data to be synched to other devices, keeping smart cities open-source hubs of human-centered well-being.

EAU DE PARIS

PARIS, FRANCE

www.eaudeparis.fr/page/accueil?page_id=1

Public drinking fountains are disappearing from many cities, but Paris's Eau de Paris wants to change that. The project maps the availability of public water fountains across the city, and works to protect the quality of water sources in the region. Started as a crowdsourced map of the city's 220 drinking spots, Eau de Paris now also serves as a municipal platform to raise awareness about the benefits of tap water and to disseminate valuable information about the many uses of this precious resource.
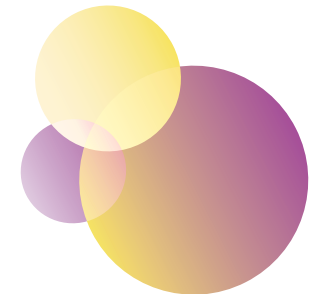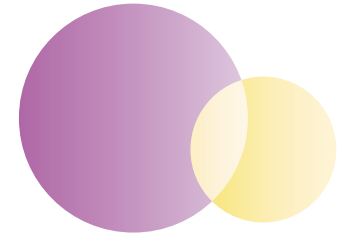
PROJECT NOAH

INTERNATIONAL

www.projectnoah.org

Project Noah is a citizen science platform designed to help people reconnect with the natural world. Launched out of NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program, the project was conceived as an experiment to mobilize crowdsourced input and build a repository of ecological data to assess the health of wildlife around the world. Backed by National Geographic, Project Noah mobilizes a new generation of nature explorers with the ultimate goal of building the go-to-platform for documenting and preserving global biodiversity.

KORUPEDIA

INDONESIA

www.korupedia.org

@KorupediaIND

Korupedia is a Creative Commons, Ushiaidi-powered online encyclopedia that tackles corruption by harnessing the collective input of citizens. Locals report on instances of corruption via sms or email, and in so doing contribute to an up-to-date map that provides a snapshot of bribes occurring across the country (similar efforts are also underway in India, Guyana, Kenya and Zimbawe under the I Paid A Bride platform.) Korupedia then uses the information to understand the role of bribery in public service delivery, and lobbies for more transparent and fair governance procedures.
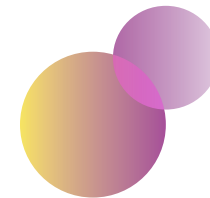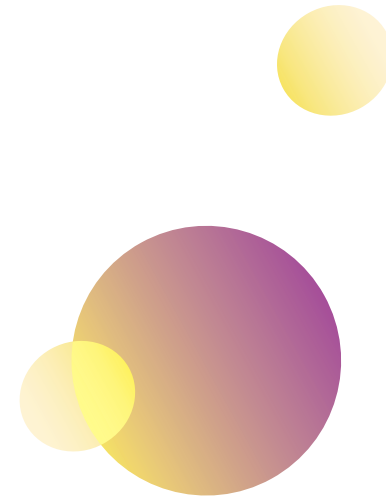
CRISIS MAPPING

INTERNATIONAL

crisimappers.net
@CrisisMappers

The International Network of Crisis Mappers is the largest and most active international community of experts, practitioners, policymakers, technologists, researchers, journalists, scholars, hackers and skilled volunteers engaged at the intersection between humanitarian crisis, technology, and mapping. The network was launched in 2009 by a group of activists who wanted to create a community for the now 5 000+ crisis mappers to document instances of humanitarian abuse, and provide real-time disaster relief support. Members are single individuals or activists affiliated with institutions that include 400 universities, 50 United Nations agencies, dozens of leading technology companies, as well as respected disaster response and recovery organizations.

SOIL KITCHEN

PHILADELPHIA, USA

soilkitchen.org

Soil Kitchen was a temporary, windmill-powered architectural intervention and multi-use space where Philadelphia's residents could go to enjoy free soup in exchange for soil samples from their neighbourhood. The project was designed to create an entry point for further dialogue about the state of contaminants in the soil, and led to the creation of the city's Brownfields Map and Soil Archive. In addition to serving soup and testing soil, the building also served as a hub for learning, providing free workshops on anything from wind turbine construction to soil remediation. Even though the project is now over, Soil Kitchen's format remains an inspiring one for communities to learn from, and serves as the basis for continuing the conversation about the health of the soil in other parts of the world.
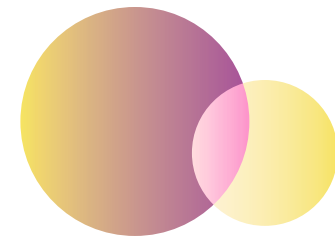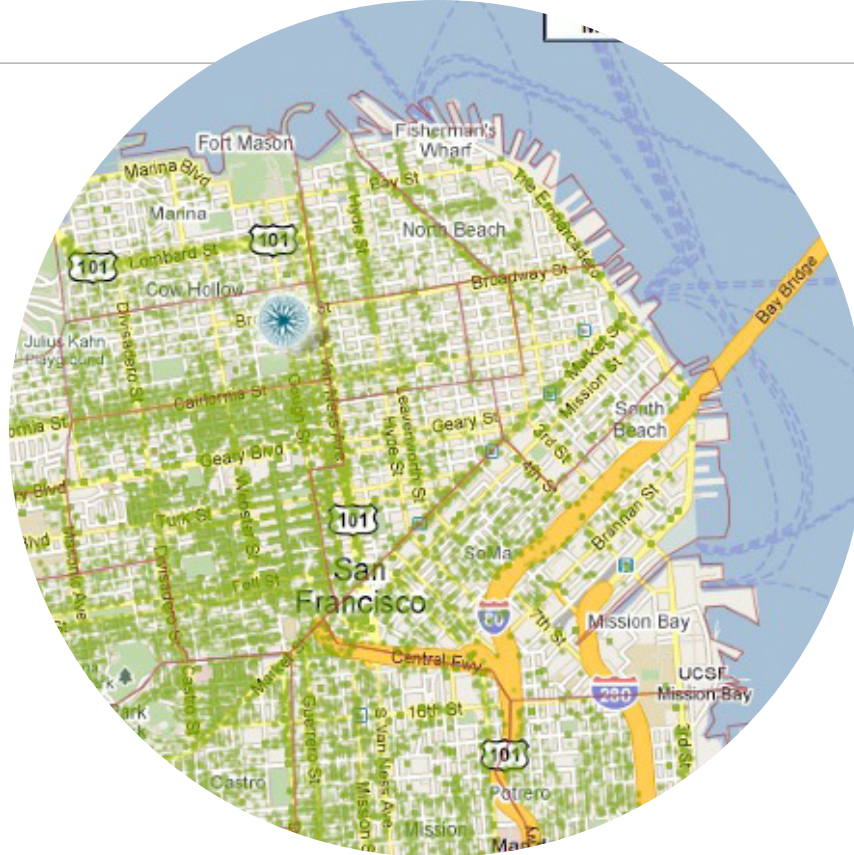
URBAN FOREST MAP

SAN FRANCISCO, USA

urbanforestmap.org

@UrbanForestMap

Knowledge of the urban forest – where the trees are, what species are represented, how old and healthy they are, the distribution of trees geographically – has great value for planners, city foresters, ecologists, and residents. Urban Forest Map is a platform that provides a one-stop repository for tree data, collecting and visualizing information from San Francisco's diverse stakeholders. The project calculates the environmental benefits provided by trees, quantifying how many pounds of air pollutants they are capturing, how many kilowatt-hours of energy they are conserving, and the amount of carbon dioxide they are removing from the atmosphere. With this crowdsourced information Urban Forest Map helps city officials care for trees and involve the general population in the maintenance of the urban canopy.

MAPNIFICENT

AUSTRALIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, FRANCE, GERMANY, HUNGARY, IRELAND, ISRAEL, ITALY, NEW ZEALAND, SPAIN, UK, USA

mapnificent.net

Mapnificent is a Google Maps-based service that allows users to filter and search city-specific maps based on criteria that focus on public mobility. This way, the scale and accessibility of a city is measured against the efficiency and availability of public transportation options – for many people the only way to get around the city. Common uses of these map, available in several countries around the world, include finding apartments with the shortest commute time and planning more accessible social gatherings.
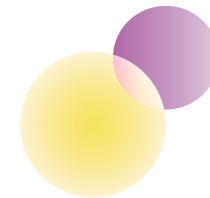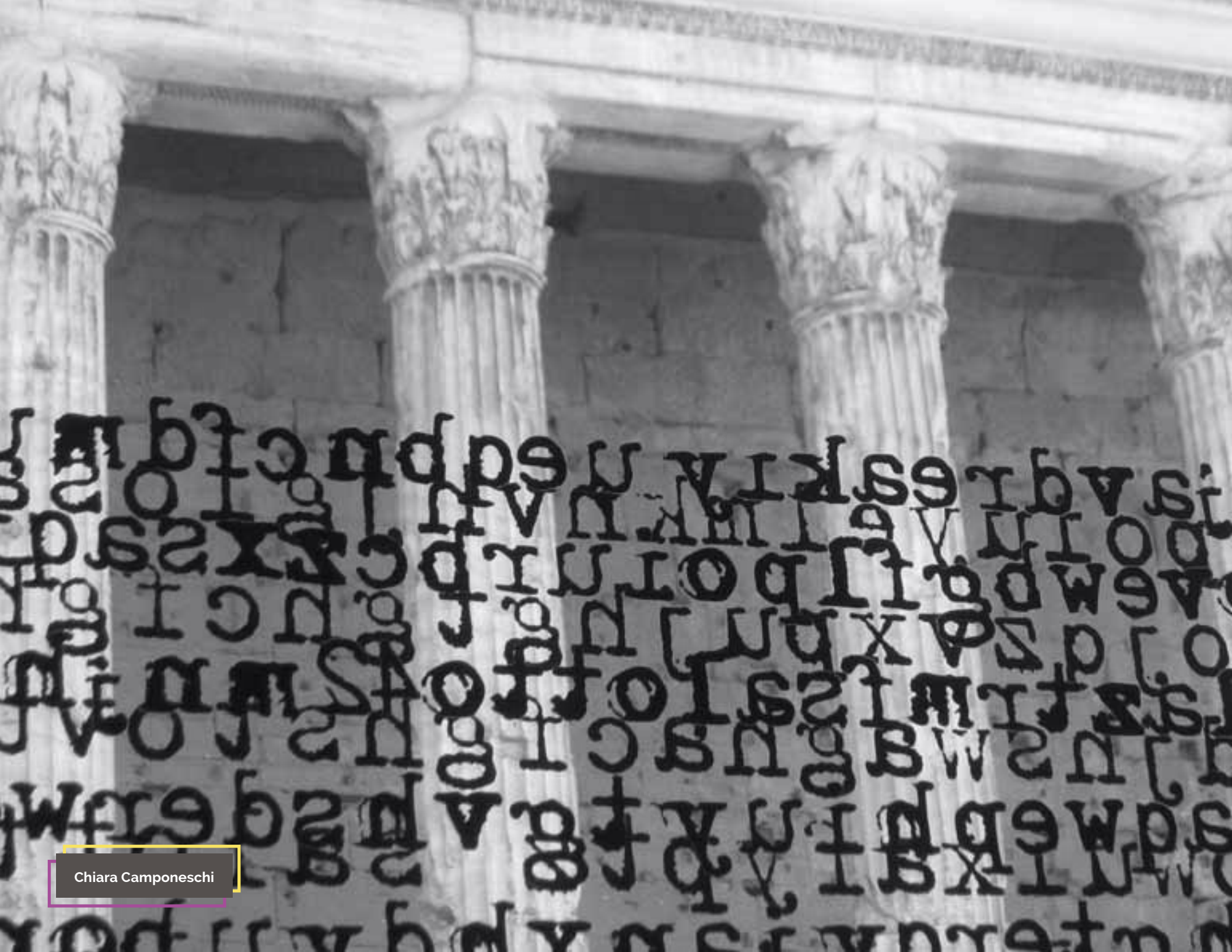
Chiara Camponeschi

PARTICIPATORY URBANISM

CO-DESIGNING NEIGHBOURHOOD TRANSFORMATION

Guest article by Lucinda Hartley

Everyone cares about where they live, but finding meaningful ways to participate in decision making about local neighbourhoods is challenging for many people – particularly youth, the elderly, and the culturally and linguistically diverse.

While large scale planning efforts and major infrastructure projects have moved strides ahead in improving sustainability and livability, in many ways they have failed to deliver meaning and equality.

Melbourne is an Australian city that is repeatedly ranked by *The Economist* as one of the world's most livable cities. Yet it also has very high rates of social exclusion[1]: Over 1 million people are experiencing the social and economic problems caused by lack of infrastructure, insufficient public transport, loneliness and isolation, lack of services and public amenities.

Creating meaningful places in cities such as Melbourne requires a shift in the way we create cities, particularly in finding meaningful ways to engage those who are socially excluded. Public spaces are designed in a top-dow fashion by external consultants and local governments, but what if instead we asked communities to be their own expert?

CoDesign Studio is one of many organisations exploring this approach. As a social enterprise that works with communities, clients and governments, CoDesign's mission is to create participatory approaches to urban revitalisation that generate high social impact and make neighbourhood improvement faster, cheaper, and more fun.

An example is CoDesign's Rapid Urban Revitalisation (RUR) toolkit, which outlines processes and ideas for transforming neighbourhood spaces in a weekend. Using everyday materials such as chalk, chairs, astroturf and plastic bags, communities have the opportunity, often for the first time, to test and prototype ways their neighbourhood can be improved. Rapid Urban Revitalisation projects have immediate physical outcomes, but the interactive process builds long lasting social impact for participants by empowering communities with an understanding of how to influence their neighbourhood and cultivating new social relationships.

By 2050, seven out of ten people in the world will live in a city[2]. With slums becoming the dominant human settlement typology in the world, adapting the profession to consider issues of effective public participation, cross cultural collaboration, and those of the poor and disadvantaged will not be a choice, but a necessity for best practice.

So how can we deliver more with less? The greatest resource we have for creating the cities of the future is citizen-led ideas. This is not in order to address some altruistic notion of 'community', but rather an urgent response to major changes in human settlements.

While the scale of individual projects may be small, the impact of engaged, empowered citizens in transforming communities, public spaces and cities is substantial.

For example, CoDesign had the privilege to work with local leaders in Phnom Penh on a community-led urban upgrading project. Our brief for the project was to design a school and surrounding landscape that would meet a pressing need for children's education. While the brief was amiable, extensive community participation revealed that the problem was not in fact school infrastructure, but major annual flooding. Children (nor indeed anyone) could move around during the wet season, which had a substantial impact on the economic, environmental and social viability of the community. Through a collaborative design process, our team was able to instead design a series of elevated footpaths with subsurface drainage, connecting existing places of education and commerce, and providing a much simpler, cheaper solution to neighbourhood improvement.

In this instance, design was used as a 'process of enablement' where the measure of success of a project is less oriented towards the quality of the aesthetic, and more towards the level of participation and a sense of local ownership. It is these small, rapid and sometimes temporary interventions that will allow us to deliver more outcomes with fewer resources.

Communities everywhere have ideas for how to improve their neighbourhoods. The challenge now is to equip policy makers, local governments, service providers and professionals with tools and processes that enable local citizens to be partners in creating great sustainable places to live.

Lucinda Hartley
Co-founder and CEO, CoDesign Studio

Trained as a landscape architect, Lucinda Hartley spent two years working in slum communities in Vietnam and Cambodia before launching CoDesign Studio, a non-profit social enterprise committed to helping disadvantaged communities implement neighbourhood improvement projects. Lucinda is an elected representative to the UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board, and has recently been listed in The Age Magazine as one of Melbourne's 'Top 100' most influential people.

➡ www.codesignstudio.com.au
🐦 @LucindaHartley

1. Social Exclusion definition and rates are taken from the Brotherhood of St Lawrence Social Exclusion Monitor
www.bsl.org.au/Social-exclusion-monitor

2. UN-Habitat, 2012/13, *State of the World's Cities Report: Prosperity of Cities*, UN-Habitat
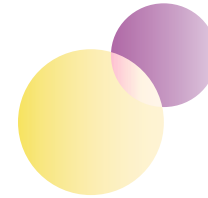
CODESIGN STUDIO

AUSTRALIA

codesignstudio.com.au

@CoDesignStudio

CoDesign Studio is a social enterprise that works with communities, professionals, and service providers to build social inclusion through neighbourhood improvement projects. The organization focuses on participatory approaches to urban revitalization that generate high social impact and accelerate local change. Projects typically include pop-up spaces, renewal of underutilized spaces and community capacity- building, as well as a host of built community and landscape infrastructure projects in Australia and abroad.

10.000 IDEAS

LATIN AMERICA

10.000ideas.com

10.000 ideas is a collaborative civic engagement platform created to allow residents to suggest improvements to their city. With 10.000 ideas, citizens can propose new initiatives and solutions for anything from health to tourism. As an open platform, anyone is invited to contribute and vote on the ideas of others, the most popular of which are selected for evaluation by a set of advisors that then recommend them to city officials who have a say on local urban development. Inspired by the belief that governments alone do not make cities, today the project is active in 20 Latin American urban regions and exists to help residents build they city they want to live in.

OUR CITY FESTIVAL

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

www.ourcityfestival.org

@OurCityFestival

Our City Festival is Cambodia's first and only public festival to focus on urbanism and its influence on contemporary culture. Launched in 2008 by Java Arts, the event was designed to acknowledge the city's accelerated urban change and its impact on Phnom Penh's past, present, and future. Events range from workshops to creative labs that provide a platform for cultivating community and collaborating with institutions that want to support the activation of the urban environment and its people. The latest edition of the festival was conceived as a networked space for negotiating challenges connected to environmental degradation, particularly 2011's flooding and Phnom Penh's vulnerability against this recurring environmental problem.

PUBLIC
DESIGN FESTIVAL

MILAN, ITALY

www.esterni.org

@EsterniOrg

Public Design Festival researches, catalogues, and develops ideas and projects that transform the way people live and think about a city's public spaces. As an annual event, the festival transforms the city of Milan into a hub of civic interventions and installations that attracts public space enthusiasts and artists from all over the world. The brainchild of Esterni, an Italian creative consultancy, the Festival has been exploring the role that public spaces play in creating safe, inclusive, and vibrant cities. Its famous slogan – "in public space we trust" – aptly captures the philosophy that is at the heart of the event: that cities can only change when sustainable design meets the active participation of citizens.
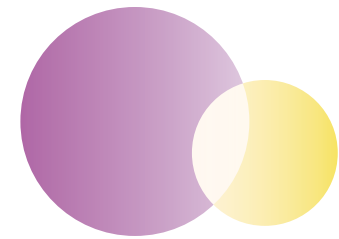
PORTLAND OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT

PORTLAND, USA

www.portlandoregon.gov/oni

@ONIpdx

The Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) works to support and coordinate Portland's "neighbourhood network", a nationally-recognized system made up of 95 local associations and seven district coalition offices located throughout the city. The office provides technical assistance to the volunteer-based neighbourhood associations, community groups, and individual citizen-activists who want to do their part to improve the city's services. While each group is self-governed by citizen-written bylaws, ONI's staff – public involvement and outreach specialists – work with the network to coordinate organizing efforts, train members in leadership skills, create community-building partnerships, and liaise with other City offices to grow the impact of member projects.

KOUNKUEY

HAITI, KENYA, MOROCCO, USA

www.kounkey.org

@Kounkuey

Kounkuey is a Thai word meaning 'to know intimately'. Launched in 2006, the Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) specializes in participatory architecture, engineering, and urban planning. By working collaboratively with impoverished communities from conception through implementation, KDI encourages local participants to advocate for themselves and collaboratively address the major physical, social, and economic challenges they face. Results lead to the creation of low-cost, high-impact built environments that improve daily life and contribute to local capacity-building.
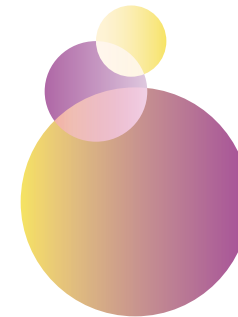
596 ACRES

NEW YORK CITY, USA

596acres.org

In New York City, hundreds of acres of vacant public land are hidden in plain sight behind chain-link fences, concentrated in neighbourhoods that are disproportionately deprived of its beneficial uses. 596 Acres is a volunteer-run effort that is building an online set of free resources to help residents clear the bureaucratic hurdles to community land access. A project of the Fund for the City of New York, 596 Acres makes municipal information available online and on the ground to explain a lot's status and the steps that a community can take to be able to use it. The program is designed to provide education about municipal decision-making processes and the legal support needed for action. Once the groups are able to access local land, the initiative also helps them define their governance structure and advocate for increased participatory decision-making at the city level.

CUIDADE EMERGENTE

SANTIAGO, CHILE

cuidademergente.org

@CuidadEmergente

Ciudad Emergente, "emerging city" in Spanish, is an urban innovation collective that seeks to improve the quality of life in Latin American cities. Founded in 2011, the organization has quickly become the leading specialist in urban tactics and web applications that allow for the collection, dissemination, and coordination of valuable city and community information. Its programs are designed to facilitate the effective communication between decision-makers and civil society, articulating local processes of citizen activism and strengthening the social capital of communities in fun and inclusive ways.
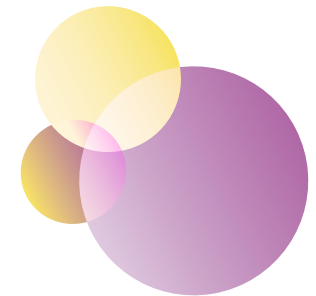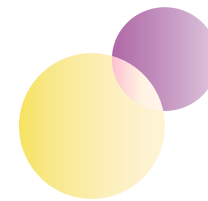
NEIGHBOURHOOD ARTS NETWORK

TORONTO, CANADA

www.neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org

@NANtoronto

The Neighbourhood Arts Network helps artists and community organizations do what they do best: enrich and transform Toronto into a more vibrant, beautiful, and livable city. The network currently represents 350 members across all cultural sectors, and periodically organizes a series of interactive events where artists, art organizations, libraries, business improvement associations, community leaders, educators, and citizens share their visions for enhanced artistic expression in Toronto.

Photo credit: www.flickr.com/photos/trudsog/3442742898

HELLO COMPOST

NEW YORK CITY, USA

www.facebook.com/HelloCompost

@HelloCompost

One of the consequences of eating food that has been shipped from faraway places is that local soil loses many of the nutrients it needs in order to thrive. Composting is a practice that returns precious organic matter to impoverished soils, keeping erosion and weeds at bay. In New York, a city that produces an enormous amount of waste, 35 per cent of what goes in the landfill is organic matter that could be composted. Hello Compost is a service that provides incentives for working class communities to exchange their food scraps for food credits. Created by design students at Parsons, the program provides attractive and odor-blocking compost bags that are brought to Project EATS, a local urban agriculture NGO that weighs them and assigns them a value. This way, Hello Compost hopes to influence behaviour and contribute to the improved health and living conditions of its participants.
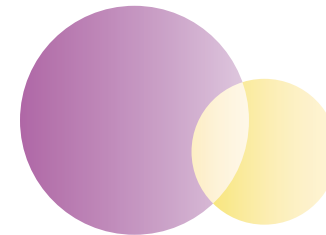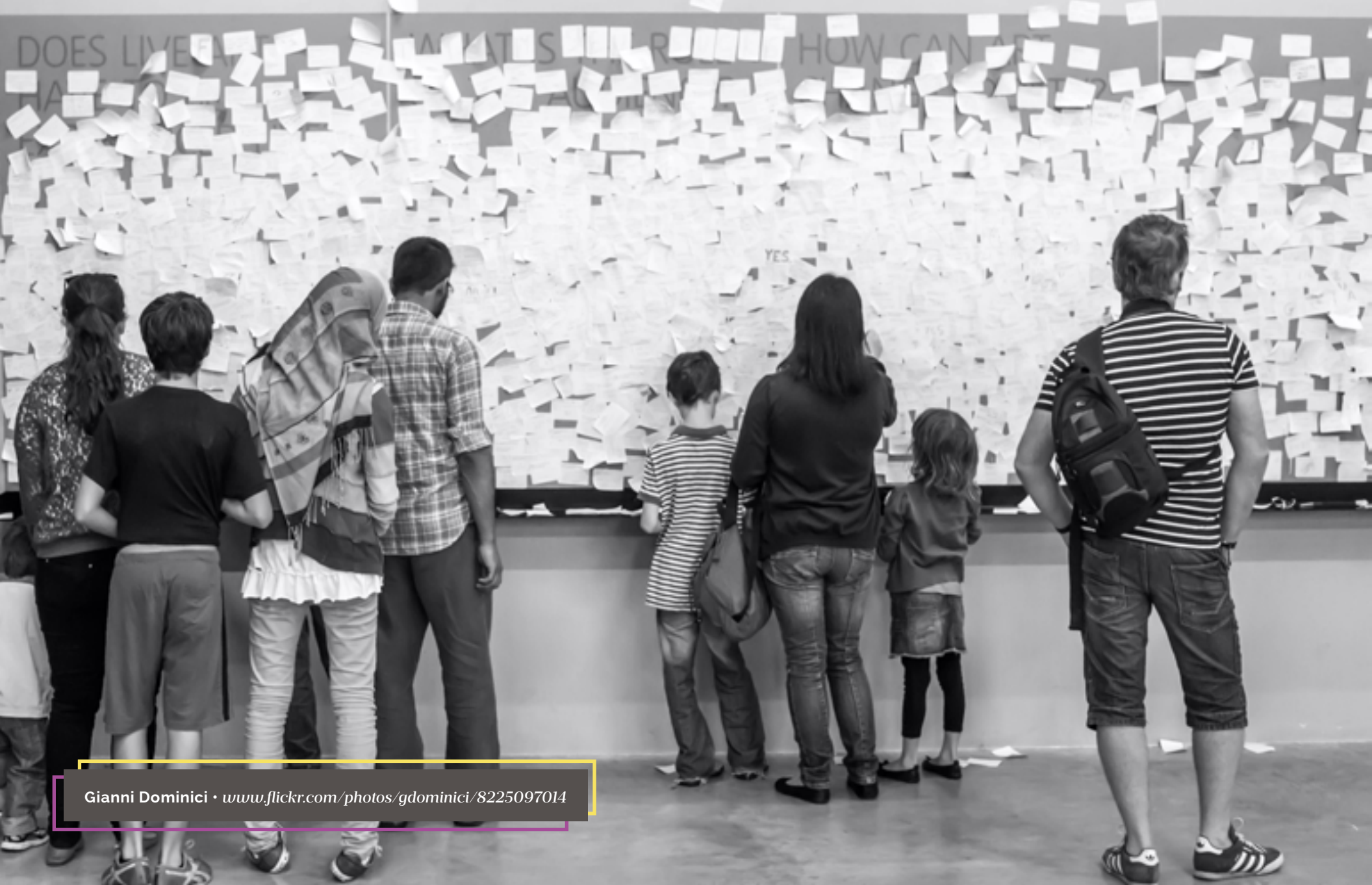
SHARING + JUST ECONOMIES

WE ARE WINNING, JOIN US

Guest article by Neal Gorenflo

One of the most important questions of my life three years ago was, "how can we start a movement for sharing?"

This was the key question that the SHIFT Foundation, consultant Will Watman, and my friends at Free Range Graphics asked when developing the plan for what became Shareable Magazine. With that question as a spur, I did a massive amount of research.

After weeks of digging, what I began to see was that there was already a huge, unnamed, unrecognized global movement for sharing well underway, and rapidly accelerating. What I saw was a movement of movements, a collection of innovations as diverse as the people from around the globe bringing them to life. The innovations include free and open source software (FOSS), all the open movements inspired by FOSS, collaborative consumption, the commons movement, the solidarity economy, car sharing, bike sharing, co-housing, co-working, hackerspaces, participatory budgeting, public banking, gov 2.0, and much more.

While the innovations I "discovered" are distinct and often don't share the same culture, they do share one overarching goal - to democratize the creation, access to, and management of vital resources whether material or immaterial. They are all meant to empower individuals and

communities. While highly centralized legacy institutions are failing to serve and are losing credibility, all of these are on the rise to fill in the gaps. I clearly saw a new order emerging, an order that we at Shareable and others now call the sharing economy.

What I learned later is the magnitude of these shifts. For instance, democratically owned and managed cooperatives employ more people than multinational corporations. There are over 200 000 open source software projects. That most of the Internet runs on open source software enabling trillions of dollars of commerce. That a majority of people live in cities, have a cell phone, and are under 25 -- a setup for revolt or a riot of sharing or both. That all of the many things that we share is the goose that lays the golden eggs. No commons, no market.

This research was both humbling and inspiring. I realized we had the wrong question. At a personal level, I realized that I was mostly blind to the economic empowerment already available to me. While I had made a lot of progress in ridding myself of the toxic values of consumer culture, I still lived inside a scarcity-based personal narrative.

I also came away completely inspired. The very thing we need to happen was happening. This was deep systemic change. A path for higher quality of life for more people

on radically less resource consumption was unfolding. Life could be a triumph amid crisis. What I saw was more profound and beautiful than anything I could have imagined. This is the spiritual fuel that keeps me going today.

These realizations pointed the way to how Shareable could make a difference. Because a sharing movement was already underway, we could raise awareness of it and accelerate its development. We could also help connect the dots between disparate movements and innovations to reactivate an ancient story knitted deeply in our collective conscience - that our fates are tied and that to continue as a species we must work together. There is no other story or way out of the crises we face.

Finally, we needed to bring this down to earth by telling emotionally engaging stories from the personal perspective, and not merely offer descriptions of what is happening. We knew even then that millions of people need a new, empowering narrative for their lives and for society as a whole. We don't just suffer from discredited legacy institutions, but also an obsolete cultural narrative that revolves around competition (the man who dies with the most toys wins, keeping up with the Jones, climbing the corporate ladder, etc.). The new meta-narrative can be summed up simply enough, and is one that wisdom traditions throughout the world affirm -- prosperity through sharing.

This is why I'm honoured to introduce this section of Enabling City. Shareable and Enabling City share the same intention here - to point to the significance of these innovations, to tell their story, and to inspire you. I hope reading them will lead you to action. I believe this is the most important movement on the planet today. And therefore I believe the most important thing you can do now is to start participating in it today. We are winning, join us.

Neal Gorenflo
Co-Founder and Publisher, Shareable Magazine

Neal Gorenflo is the Co-Founder and Publisher of Shareable Magazine. As a former Fortune 500 strategist, Neal is perhaps an unlikely voice for sharing. An epiphany in 2004 inspired him to leave the corporate world to help people share, and he has since worked with organizations like Sitra and numerous sharing startups to do precisely that.

➡ www.shareable.net
🐦 @Gorenflo

BESÖK EN BANK

MALMÖ, SWEDEN
besokenbank.wordpress.com

Besök en bank, which means "visit a bank" in Swedish, is a banking reform network located in Malmö, Sweden. Through creative urban walks and interventions, the group invites people to rethink their relationship with conventional banks, educating them about the inner workings of interest rates and debt, and what it means for social welfare when governments divert funds to save banks from defaulting. The group is known nationally for its provoking actions targeting major commercial banks. During one of them, participants dressed like janitorial staff and set out to clean the storefront windows of a busy bank, generating widespread media attention and creating a powerful image for transparency and equity in the banking system. Besök en bank also organizes regular QR walks where stickers are placed in strategic locations like ATMs and City Hall for passersby to find. QR codes re-direct to the group's website, where short educational videos can be accessed through smartphone devices.
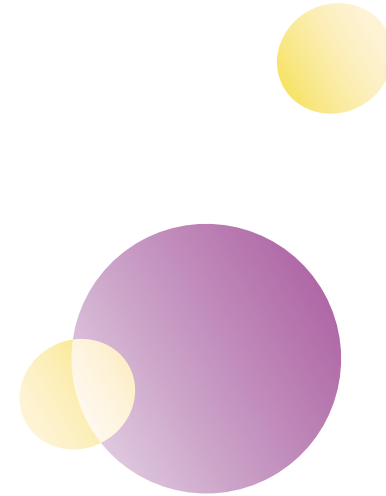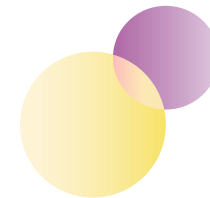
FAIRPHONE

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

www.fairphone.com

@FairPhone

Smartphones are an important fixture of our day-to-day lives, but we know very little about how they are made. By shedding light on the problematic aspects of current manufacturing practices, Fairphone wants to be a practical starting point for telling the story of how our economy functions. As the world's first fair trade and open source smartphone, Fairphone sources conflict-free minerals to ensure that the raw materials that are needed to produce our devices do not fund illegal armed forces. The product is also designed to be durable and recyclable, meaning that it will not need to be replaced frequently and flood landfills with dangerous e-waste. Launched in 2013, Fairphone was received with remarkable enthusiasm, proving that the time for ethical smartphones has definitely come.
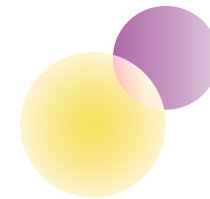
CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT KHAZANA

INDIA

butterflieschildrights.org/children-s-collectives.html

@Butterflies_in

Butterflies is a registered voluntary organization that works with street children in Delhi to equip them with the skills they need to break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty. The Children Development Khazana, the first of its kind for the rural poor, is a savings bank that is run on co-operative principles and is administered by the children themselves. The project was conceived as a space to teach working youth about saving and the banking system, helping them plan for the future by allowing them to earn an interest on their deposits. Today, the project is operational in 120 branches in South Asia, working in Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan.

HAPINOY

PHILIPPINES

www.hapinoy.com

@Hapinoy

The Philippines are home to over 800 000 sari-sari stores, small home shops that are the country's biggest local trade channel and are often a family's main source of income. Hapinoy is a network of nanays (mothers) that works to develop highly-skilled and empowered micro entrepreneurs. Through Hapinoy, mothers can access the capital they need to run a sari-sari and provide hard-to-access products like over-the counter medicine, solar-powered products, and mobile devices. Hapinoy also provides training and technical support so that nanays have the business and leadership skills they need in order to run a sustainable activity and have a positive impact on their community.
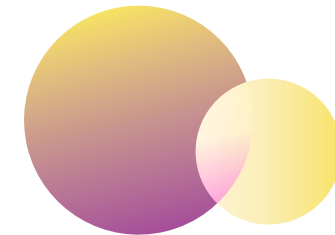
EAT WITH

ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, FRANCE, GERMANY, ISRAEL, ITALY, NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL, SPAIN, UK, USA

www.eatwith.com

@EatWith

Eat With is a social networking site where hungry locals can join or share meals with strangers. It's a creative space for fashioning a DIY pop-up kitchen, cooking class, or shared restaurant adventure. Already affectionately known as the Airbnb of food, Eat With events are springing up in cities from Buenos Aires to Berlin, helping members make new friends and discover new cultures in a fun and tasty way.

SCHOLARMATCH

USA

scholarmatch.org

@ScholarMatch

ScholarMatch is a crowdfunding platform that connects under-resourced students with donors who can help them go to university. With student loans at an all-time high, ScholarMatch offers free support services to university-bound students and their families, ensuring that they are knowledgeable of the admission process and able to access available financial aid. Founded in 2010 by award-winning author and philanthropist Dave Eggers, the platform has already matched 98 eligible students with $275 000 in university scholarships, and continues to provide an avenue for donors to invest in tomorrow's generation.
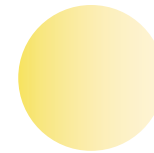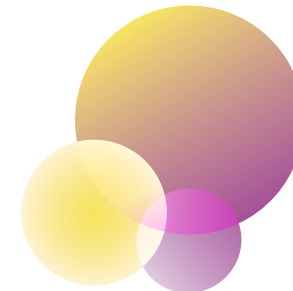
TRIBE WANTED

ITALY, SIERRA LEONE

tribewanted.com

@TribeWanted

For the last six years – on an island in Fiji, a beach in Sierra Leone, and now in the Umbrian hills of Italy – Tribe Wanted has been working to develop sustainable and cooperatively-owned ethical tourism destinations built entirely from the ground-up. So far, the project has generated $1.5 million in revenues and is now managing an ambitious fundraising process to expand its co-op model and build new sustainable communities around the world.

FON

INTERNATIONAL

corp.fon.com

@FON

Fon is a network of members who share a bit of their home WiFi and in turn get free access to millions of other Fon hotspots around the world. All that is required is a Fon router that creates a private signal for personal use, and a shared one for other members and visitors to access the network. Together, Fon Spots create a crowdsourced network – the largest wifi network in the world – where everyone who contributes connects for free. There are no monthly fees, only the desire to share an important resource with others.
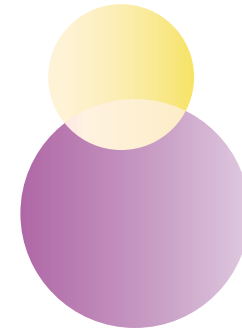
KLÄDOTEKET

MALMÖ, SWEDEN

kladoteket.se

@Kladoteket

Do you buy your clothes at thrift stores but find that you still own too many? Kladoteket believes that a desire to express a 'wearable identity' doesn't have to involve the unsustainable consumption of excess clothing. As a clothing library, the project blends a concern for the environment with the desire to democratize fashion, making clothes more affordable and enjoyable. Patrons pay a small membership fee and in return are able to borrow fine garments for several different kinds of occasions – from everyday use to more elegant functions.

LA COCINA

SAN FRANCISCO, USA

www.lacocina.sf

@LaCocinaSF

La Cocina was born out of a belief that a community of change agents, given the right resources, can create self-sufficient businesses that benefit themselves, their families, their community, and the whole city. The organization's mission is to cultivate low-income food entrepreneurs as they formalize and grow their businesses. The space provides affordable commercial kitchen space, industry-specific technical assistance, and access to market opportunities that help entrepreneurs – women of colour and newcomers in particular – gain financial security by doing what they love to do: making and sharing good food.

137

Avoiding
CROWDFUNDING FATIGUE

Here are some guidelines to help keep crowdfunding an appropriate civic engagement tool

Use the visibility of a project to encourage civic literacy

From community pools to underground parks, the interest in civic crowdfunding has revitalized a stagnant conversation about the state and changing use of infrastructure in cities. But rather than ending at the fundraising side of a project, what if campaigns were simultaneously used to educate about civic literacy? What if the momentum generated by a particular project was leveraged to teach about permits, zoning regulations, and municipal decision-making?

Launched in 2009, Kickstarter has revolutionized the way projects and products are brought to market. Since then, the combination of crowdfunding and urbanism has brought new energy to the question of how we fund and run cities, inspiring initiatives like the first-ever crowdfunded bridge in Rotterdam and the YIMBY (yes in my backyard) movement.

Civic crowdfunding – the direct funding of public projects by citizens – can give visibility to local needs, mobilize place-based action, and encourage self-confidence. But is the same mechanism for funding a music record appropriate for financing a piece of urban infrastructure? And how much can we realistically contribute before reaching crowdfunding fatigue?

Leverage a successful campaign to start a conversation about municipal finance

Crowdfunding platforms can turn any project into an instant sensation, raising impressive amounts of money in just a short period of time. Urban development, on the other hand, is far from immediate. How does the culture of an online platform mesh with the timing of regulators and urban planners? How can a successfully funded project spark a conversation about designing municipal funding mechanisms that keep up with our times? And can participatory budgeting ensure that citizens are not paying twice (once through taxes and twice through crowdfunding) for the delivery of services?

Widen the impact of crowdfunding by creating opportunities for mentorship

The communities that are the most in need of crowdfunding are often the ones who are least able to make the most of it. Who will fund less appealing (though important) projects that do not fall under the latest urban trends? How can smaller cities compete with "cool" destinations that attract the majority of donations?

Provide opportunities for involvement beyond money

Crowdfunding is most powerful when used in support of other strategies for place-based creative problem-solving. A more holistic approach to local activism is key in shifting the emphasis away from desiring and 'consuming' a project to creating a more knowledgeable citizen base. How will donors remain involved during the slower phases of an urban development? For those who wish to lend a hand, to what extent can the local (and sometimes global) community have a say in the way the funded project unfolds post-campaign? How will conflict be mediated?

What happens to those who do not have the skills to edit a video or create compelling copy? Successful campaigners and municipal institutions can encourage civic creativity by providing opportunities for mentorship, creative capacity-building, and the sharing of success strategies.

CIVIC INNOVATION
extending the invitations of government 2.0

"What would society look like if we felt about government the way we feel about our iPhones?"

Jennifer Pahlka, founder, Code for America

Government 2.0 is an effort to embed a framework of diffused leadership into the day-to-day operations of institutions, harnessing the existing potential of the public sector to diffuse the capacity for innovation to a much broader base. In the past, open governance efforts tended to be the product of individual vision, the outcome of isolated leaders who spearheaded new initiatives within their own departments while often facing enormous pressure to prove themselves and legitimize their approach. Today, governments from Australia to Finland are more receptive to the idea of the public sector as a catalyst for civic innovation, increasingly opening in-house 'change labs' that have the mandate to spur cross-agency interaction and initiate a dialogue with diverse constituents.

Progressing toward wider civic engagement entails facilitating a far-reaching cultural shift that targets all areas of open governance, from making information accessible (and usable) to promoting collaboration; from diagnosing problems differently to experimenting with coproduction. Building a more responsive and transparent government hinges on the recognition that the public sector is a national resource that can encourage creativity – and that anyone, not just business or government, can contribute to the process.

In 2009, the Australian Government 2.0 Taskforce released a detailed set of recommendations for "getting on with Government 2.0." Their approach was informed by the belief that effective engagement with citizens occurs not just by inviting it, because invitations now abound, but by demonstrating a genuine appreciation for public contributions[1]. As a result, the Australian Public Sector subsequently released an *Innovation Action Plan* detailing the country's agenda to weave a culture of openness within the public administration[2]. A central tenet of the country's model is the usable, machine-readable and Creative Commons-licensed access to information. With free access to information like the census, national statistics, public archives, and scientific reports, the Government now ensures that the enormous amount of data that is produced daily in the country is safeguarded by an administration that commits to becoming its custodian rather than its by default (for-profit) licensor.

Similar efforts come from San Francisco where, shortly after the election of Mayor Edwin Lee, the city established the position of Chief Innovation Officer to create a new kind of government interface. Reminiscent of what the New York Times called the "Mayor's Geek Squad"[3] in New York City, in just a short period of time San Francisco's Office of Civic Innovation has prototyped, launched, and opened an impressive set of services aimed at connecting "community problem-solvers" with formal institutions. Programs include the flagship portal ImproveSF.com,

1. Government of Australia, *Engage: Getting on With Government 2.0, Report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce*, p. 28

2. Find it here: bit.ly/1biBNxm

3. Feuer, A. The Mayor's Geek Squad, *New York Times*, March 23, 2013. nyti.ms/16SYRvc

the establishment of Living Innovation Zones, as well as an impressive array of open source and crowdsourced initiatives enabled by these platforms.

"Cities are like living machines, and government is like writing the code that governs how a city operates"[4], writes the Office in its first annual report *A Start-Up Called Government*. Through the work of an Open Data Coordinator who promotes and establishes common open data standards (a position with promising potential not just in San Francisco), the Office of Civic Innovation is working to change the often tortured relationship between government and constituents, providing the avenues to build trust and improve everyday life. Surprisingly for some, the Office is also frugal – with a modest annual budget, its programs are low-cost, high-impact resources with large-scale public benefit. In just over a year, for example, the Office has facilitated the launch of Sustainable Communities Indicators to inform the work of HopeSF (an initiative to rebuild San Francisco's distressed public housing sites), it supported events like the Food Justice Service Design Jam, and has provided a complete library of the operational permits and licenses that are needed to open a business in San Francisco.

When citizen needs and aspirations are encouraged and supported, the results are dynamic initiatives that reinvigorate public imagination and the social fabric. Guided by the question: "How else is it possible to innovate beyond technology?", both the Australian and the San Franciscan models demonstrate quite well that civic innovation is not just about smartphones or the online world, but that technology is a means for providing flexible, citizen-centric tools for meaningful (*offline*) involvement.

Policy enablers: Innovation as a collective process

While we are still far from a total 'civic innovation revolution', there are encouraging signals emerging from progressive local governments in cities that have embraced a 'culture of openness' with enthusiasm and vision. What these efforts highlight is that innovation is not exclusively the domain of private companies or entrepreneurial individuals – civil servants and civil society are not to be underestimated either.

"What matters is not whether government is big or small, but how it operates: whether it promotes liberty and the right to criticise; whether it encourages public services to engage with voluntary and community organisations; whether it is open or closed."
Geoff Mulgan and Phoebe Griffith, Investing in Social Growth

For example, "how many people know that the algorithm that led to Google's success was funded by a Science Foundation grant?"[5], asks Mariana Mazzucato. Her book, *Entrepreneurial State*, documents telling instances of governments acting as catalysts and lead investors in innovation development. As Mazzucato notes, examining the role that government can (and already does) play in supporting important breakthroughs forces the debate to go beyond the idea of the state as 'rescuer' to Big Business to one that actively funds those very phases of the process that the private sector is too risk-averse to participate in. While her main focus is on industrial policy – with examples coming primarily from controversial fields like nanotechnology and pharmaceutical research – Mazzucato herself acknowledges the important part that this expanded role could play in supporting even those innovations that do not necessarily lead to economy-wide

4. The San Francisco Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation (2013) *A Start-Up Called Government: Our First Year in Retrospect*, p.6.

5. Mazzucato, M. (2011) *The Entrepreneurial State*. London: Demos, p.19
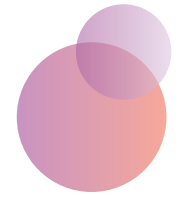
growth but that nevertheless have an impact on society. Expanded to the service design realm, this could mean creating a networked infrastructure of institutional agents working to support, invest in, and mobilize resources for the pressing challenges of our time: renewable energy, appropriate waste disposal, relational welfare, affordable housing, and more.

"Cultural change is at the heart of Government 2.0 and more important than the development of policy or the technical challenges of adopting new technologies."
Government of Australia, Engage Report

Non-profit organizations, too, have been doing their part to make sure that the promise of open governance goes beyond the invitation to contribute to a genuine opportunity to have a say. Sunlight Foundation works to increase transparency and accountability in the United States government, and in the process is joined by similar efforts from India to Italy. The organization's Sunlight Academy provides training on how to unlock and leverage the power of data; its Political Party Time program tracks the fundraising efforts (and ties) of politicians in the country; and its Sunlight Grants accelerate the creation of similar tools by providing funding that ranges from $5 000-10 000 per idea.

Universities can do much to foster a culture of civic imagination as well. Many of them embrace action research and participatory methods to replace the usual 'researcher'/'researched' relationship with a more collaborative, iterative one. Many still could open up their resources and facilities to launch 'maker labs' or on-campus student incubators. They could also support student-run events like unconferences and hackathons, and investigate

6. Bauwens, M. (2012) "Evolving towards a Partner State in an Ethical Economy" in *Towards Peer Production in Public Services: Cases from Finland*, A. Botero et al., eds. Helsinki: Aalto University, p. 41

opportunities for the open sharing of knowledge through online and Creative Commons licenses.

Understanding innovation as a collective process means operating from the point of view of abundance instead of scarcity, recognizing the creative problem-solving potential of all actors and creating the conditions for this collective potential to thrive. Like Fairphone (p. 129), the abundance paradigm insists that the very infrastructure an innovation relies on – more explicitly, the values and basic premises behind it – matter. Transitioning to a culture of openness is about demanding a reciprocal relationship between institutions and constituents, one where national governments are encouraging and mentoring all levels of government to champion civic innovation, and where the operational structure of these institutions reflects the very principles they wish to espouse.

Co-production: Think globally, act municipally

Intimately linked to this culture shift is the recognition that communities can and should have an active role in renewing themselves, in articulating what collective well-being means to them locally, and in prototyping collaborative solutions that meet complex societal challenges. With cuts to public spending and increased strains on residents, however, the current assumption is that value is created in the private sphere by for-profit companies, with civil society seen as no more than a 'leftover' category. In the words of peer-to-peer expert Michael Bauwens, "this is recognized in our derivative language for civil society, where we call them non-profit or non-governmental organizations."[6]

Design thinking, on the other hand, can be an entry point into a more holistic way of creating value. Design skills are increasingly sought to contribute to an understanding

142

of what is often called the 'architecture of the problem', or gearing our thinking towards integrated service by introducing complexity and uncertainty into the inquiry process. This process is based on the assumption that things are always not linear, and that to understand them requires an open mind and the ability to experiment with different perspectives. In fact, uncertainty is key not only in generating a solution, but in the steps that precede its identification as well.

For years, the Helsinki Design Lab was at the forefront of a generation of hybrid organizations working to facilitate the encounter of the design and public policy worlds. By championing a user-led approach, the Lab borrowed from the methods of social movements and participatory research to advance what they referred to as 'applied optimism' – in other words, "the possibilities of design as a government capability."[7] Since then, innovation labs and hubs have been proliferating worldwide, pushing the boundaries of the type (and quantity) of social policies that can be experimented with, and equipping public administrators with the skills they need to more successfully 'update' their governance models and engage with their constituents.

When design thinking meets public engagement, the result is what is often referred to as codesign, or coproduction. Originally coined by Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom, the term describes the reciprocal relationship that is formed when 'ordinary' citizens are involved in the production of public services[8]. So far, encouraging breakthroughs have been made in the coproduction of services in the domains of health care, elderly care, and unemployment, to name only a few (see The Circle Movement on p. 90).

What makes coproduction so promising is precisely what Christian Bason, director of Danish innovation unit MindLab (see Volume 1), calls "professional empathy"[9], an opportunity for public managers to leverage design tools to see for themselves the effects that their policy outcomes have in practice. As they have a chance to directly experience them, civil servants start rethinking the very idea of how value is created, understanding what users need, what is best for them, and what might encourage the emergence of a culture of prevention and care. This doesn't mean that experimentation is always appropriate or that is should always be the way to go, but it can be helpful in loosening up the belief that policies are always complete rather than "perfectible."[10]

Supporting community needs: Challenges and aspirations

Despite the promise and the enthusiasm, however, Bason asks a fundamental question: "is there such a thing as too much reciprocity? Will citizens revolt and demand that they just 'receive' services for their tax dollars?"[11]

If communities are expected or encouraged to take a more active role, then it is fundamental to understand that community organizing itself is a complex activity that requires investments of time and money. If institutions are serious about shifting to a new paradigm, then they must also realize that new paradigms require new systems. From the way community efforts are counted and supported to the way projects are financed, there are rules, regulations, metrics and mechanisms that need to be re-hauled to be consistent with this change. Perhaps it would be more appropriate, then, to advocate for what researcher Victor Pestoff terms 'co-governance', a process that leaves room for input beyond end-of-project consultations and that officially enshrines the right to participate into the fabric of the institutions themselves.[12] A first attempt comes
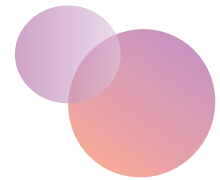
7. Boyer et al. (2012) *In Studio: Recipes for systemic change.* Helsinki: Helsinki Design Lab/Sitra, p. 45

8. For more on Elinor Ostrom's work, see Arizona State University's Creative Commons textbook Sustaining the Commons: bit.ly/15BtoUJ

9. See: Bason, C. (2010) *Leading Public Sector Innovation: Co-Creating for a Better Society,* Bristol: Policy Press.

10. Christiansen, J. And L. Bunt (2012) *Innovations in Policy: Allowing for Creativity, Social Complexity and Uncertainty in Public Governance,* London: NESTA/MindLab, p. 19 bit.ly/1fybBRg

11. Ibid., p. 13

12. Pestoff, V. (2012) "Innovations in Public Services: Co-Production and New Public Governance in Europe" in *Towards Peer Production in Public Services: Cases from Finland,* A. Botero et al., eds. Helsinki: Aalto University, p. 18

"The emerging pattern of innovation in cities is then an open and distributed one – an ecology rather than a pipeline."
Simon and Sophia Parker, Unlocking Innovation: Why Citizens Hold the Key to Public Service Reform

from Rosario, in Argentina, where the municipality has recently declared itself a "Human Rights City" and has formally committed to greater openness, transparency and accountability. In Europe, Paris, Lyon and Turin are only a handful of cities that have drafted a Charter of Citizen Participation to officially recognize the right to be directly involved in local democracy[13].

Even despite these examples, however, today's emphasis on scaling up does not sufficiently take into account the very 'structural' issues that need to be addressed before systems innovation can occur. For one, it is important to find ways to remunerate, or at least more concretely support, community involvement. Coproduction is not volunteering, and ongoing commitment cannot be expected without recognizing the vast amount of resources that citizens invest in the project. With more and more essential services being devolved or left in the hands of the so-called Big Society, it is imperative to create a strong, healthy, and fair process that does not lead to burnout amongst participants.

Co-governance also entails finding a balance between sharing power with communities and not 'abandoning' them when their projects seem to be going well. In *Control Shift*, Max Wind-Cowie argues that local authorities should always have a role – even if that role changes over time – to make sure that there is a comparable service level across areas and not "postcode lotteries"[14] where more successful neighbourhoods are the ones who get serviced. As Bauwens also argues, "this is needed, because just as

the Invisible Hand of the market is a myth, so would be an invisible hand of the commons. Commoners tend to care about 'their' commons."[15] A social investment state would instead enable the creation of value by its citizens by protecting the infrastructure of cooperation that is the whole of society.

Equally important is the championing of diversity, both in terms of people and process. Who defines the mandate of a project and its governance? Are wellbeing, resilience, and inclusion actively valued and tracked by institutions? Is there an understanding of what makes certain communities more prone to successful collaboration than others? If evaluations reveal any gaps, how – and by whom – are they addressed? If these questions are hard to answer, the communities themselves will be hard to support.

With coproduction and creative problem-solving on the rise, the next challenge will be extending the invitation of open governance even to those who cannot (or think they cannot) create. Today, creative individuals are sought after and rewarded for their skills, but cooperation and design thinking are still not formally taught in the majority of academic and professional training programs. This is why it is not enough for service design to create spaces for change but, as Andrea Cornwall puts it, to provide "spaces that can be changed."[16]

What would the world be like if civil servants were invited to take charge of their inspiration, and created the conditions for others to do the same?
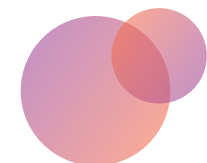
13. See bit.ly/16SZlvL

14. Wind-Cowie, M. (2013) *Control Shift*. London: Demos, p. 36

15. Bauwens, M. (2012) "Evolving towards a Partner State in an Ethical Economy" in *Towards Peer Production in Public Services: Cases from Finland*, A. Botero et al., eds. Helsinki: Aalto University, p. 38

16. Cornwall, A. (2008) *Democratising Engagement: What the UK Can Learn From International Experience*. London: Demos, p. 37 bit.ly/18zkRgm

Quotes, in order of appearance

Pahlka, Jennifer. CX: *Citizen Experience*, Code for America blog. August 24, 2012: c4a.me/14SrHOF

Mulgan, G. and P. Griffith (2010) Investing in Social Growth: Can The Big Society Be More Than a Slogan? London: Young Foundation, p. 6

Government of Australia, *Engage: Getting on With Government 2.0, Report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce*, p. 28

Parker, S. and S. Parker (2007) *Unlocking Innovation: Why Citizens Hold the Key to Public Service Reform*, London: Demos, p. 94

THE SCHOOL OF *civic creativity*

Collaboration is hard. It is time-consuming, often frustrating, and it requires skills we are rarely taught in school or encouraged to develop at work. So if collaboration is increasingly part of our problem-solving process, how can we formalize opportunities to learn the skills that make us better participants?

Imagine a space that allowed you to take stock of the resources already available to you, that encouraged you to take action by developing new competencies, and that positioned itself as a hub for your ideas to take root and lead to long-lasting change.

A cross between a folk school and a design lab, The School of Civic Creativity is a proposal to extend creative thinking skills to a broader base – regardless of age, background, or training. The term 'school' is not used to convey images of rigid schedules or authoritative teaching, but rather to capture the very enthusiasm and joy that characterize processes of life-long discovery and learning.

The School of Civic Creativity can be a permanent 'open learning' space funded by municipalities, an entirely self-directed community effort, or a joint collaboration between the two. The guidelines below are only the beginning – feel free to adapt or adopt them according to your needs.

Take Stock

LEARN The ability to cooperate effectively requires a high degree of emotional intelligence and empathy. Learn about non-violent communication, conflict resolution, and facilitation – these skills will enable you to be a better listener, a more patient collaborator, and a resource to those around you.

LEAD Join or create a reading group to better understand the issues that are important to you (some examples: urban theory, municipal governance, ethical finance.) Invite guests to share their expertise through Trade School-like events, or support the learning experience with the guidance of resources like Open Culture and Academic Earth.

LAUNCH Join forces with local universities and think-tanks to design participatory research frameworks to document challenges and opportunities in your area, map existing grant and partnership possibilities, and develop a place-based action plan in support of your goals.

Take Action

TRANSLATE The ability to create a shared language is essential to foster mutual understanding and bridge inter-sectoral gaps. Organize events like a National Day of Civic Hacking or 'unconferences' to translate complex information into new services, or develop interactive resources to make research and policy findings accessible to all, non-experts included.

TRAIN Share your skills with others – teach or join low-cost community courses that transfer creative skills to others in the community. Particularly relevant are digital literacy skills like social media networking and web development, design thinking and intercultural dialogue, as well as project management, campaigning, and community organizing.

TRANSFORM Unleash the power of local culture by transforming everyday spaces into hubs of creative re-invention – turn libraries into maker labs, organize idea festivals, launch innovator in residence programs, or design interactive public art projects to encourage (in)formal learning and community exchange.

Take Root

CHAMPION Promoting civic creativity requires champions who understand its potential and work to create the conditions for it to thrive. Explore a co-production agenda and educate about city systems to design 'enabling' frameworks that support community pioneers and embed creative capacity-building into the decision-making process.

CO-PRODUCE Work with municipal representatives to curate a repository of best practices for shared learning, and investigate new funding mechanisms that better reflect community values and impact. Consider a 'project twinning' program to link different groups working to advance the same goals, or open up the problem-solving process by launching (inter)national design competitions.

CONNECT For collaborative initiatives to take root, resources like the School of Civic Creativity require accessible, permanent space and dedicated programming. Make it fun! Think of these spaces as diverse, multi-purpose centres that double as 'social cafés', 'creativity labs', and as anchor points for inter-generational and inter-sectoral mentoring.

To get you started:

Enabling City Volume 1 – Participation chapter
www.enablingcity.com/read

Social and Emotional Learning Across the Globe
casel.org/policyadvocacy/selacrosstheglobe

Policies for Shareable Cities: A Sharing Economy Policy Primer for Urban Leaders
bit.ly/1ctn1DG

IDEO Human Centered Design toolkit
bit.ly/19gSs0C

Art of Hosting
www.artofhosting.org/resources/reading-list

Story-based Strategy Charts
bit.ly/18NP6kV

Effective Groups video series
bit.ly/19yxM0b

...and reading list:
bit.ly/GM25KY

Service Design Repository
desis.parsons.edu/repository

Service Design Toolkit
www.servicedesigntoolkit.org/templates

Collective Action Toolkit
www.frogdesign.com/collective-action-toolkit

Common Cause Report
bit.ly/1goKsOC

Conflict Resolution Network
www.crnhq.org/pages.php?pID=7

Community Economies Collective
www.communityeconomies.org/Home

Social Business Model Canvas
bit.ly/17llVSw

CONCLUSION
the power of naming

"Names matter; language matters; truth matters."

Rebecca Solnit

In a 2012 piece published by Harper's Magazine, Christopher Ketcham details the surprising history of one of the most famous board games of all time: Monopoly. Officially created in 1933 by a man named Charles Darrow, the tale of how Monopoly came to be is incredibly interesting and full of unexpected details.

The story begins with Henry George, a 19th century political economist who observed the ascent of the American industry with keen interest. Intrigued by what seemed to him like a paradox – that as capital accumulated, more and more people entered poverty– George set out to study the conditions that lead to inequality. This inquiry led him to cities – "where the ownership of a little patch of ground is a fortune"[1] – and eventually to private land ownership, a practice he believed should be corrected with members of society acting collectively as "the general landlord."

In 1906, persuaded by George's message, an actress named Lizzie Magie decided to create a resource by the name of The Landlord's Game to raise awareness about the value of shared resources through play. Magie's invention consisted of a board game divided into blocks

delineating a particular property, like a railroad or a public utility, and a set of rules designed to teach about "the destructive principle" of monopolies. Just like present-day Monopoly, competitors were meant to incur ruinous debt and lose all their property to a single monopolist, with one major exception – players could vote in favour of cooperation and pool their resources into a common pot.

Magie's game spread quickly across the United States, played in various communities under different names: Monopoly, Finance, Auction. As Ketcham writes: "Shared freely as an invention in the public domain, as much a part of the cultural commons as chess or checkers, The Landlord's Game was, in effect, the property of anyone who learned how to play it." The game traveled to campuses like Harvard, Princeton and Columbia, eventually leaving universities and arriving in the South, from where it slowly made its way back to the East Coast. In the process, the option to cooperate was gradually lost (as Ketcham writes: "redistribution was not nearly as entertaining as ruining one another"!) and the use of the name Monopoly was eventually consolidated.

Once back on the Eastern seaboard, Charles Darrow came across the game and, with the help of Parker Brothers, patented Monopoly in 1935. The game went on to sell 2 million copies in its first two years of existence, and is now

1. Read the full story here: Ketcham, C. (2012) "Monopoly is Theft." *Harper's Magazine*. October 19, 2012: bit.ly/18dHbxc

played by 1 billion people from 111 countries. "[Darrow's] only innovation", reflects Ketcham, "seems to have been to claim the mantle of sole inventor. He would soon be assumed into the pantheon of American heroes of commerce."

Monopoly's history, which has many other plot twists worth reading about, is fascinating because it is more than an ironic turn of events. What is particularly relevant in the story of how a free game about collective property turned into a profitable copyrighted product is the importance of naming things by their true name. "Before being monopolized by a single person working in tandem with a corporation", writes Ketcham, "Monopoly had in fact been "invented" by many people (...) The game that today stresses the ruthlessness of the individual and defines victory as the impoverishment of others was the product of communal labour."

In the age of viral marketing campaigns and collective short-term memory, naming and safeguarding the values behind the contributions of collaborative efforts is a practice that concerns today's social movements quite closely.

Like many of the initiatives featured in this book, the fight for resilience, for the commons, for the right to the city, is also a fight to carve out spaces to articulate new meaning and to reclaim compromised, watered down ones. It is a fight to keep digging deeper – beyond the fashionable, the hyped, and the 'sexy' – to arrive at the complex, hard, and time-consuming issues at the heart of genuine transformation. In Volume 1 of Enabling City, Melissa Mean was quoted saying that "there is a mismatch between the language of economic innovation – with its constant references to openness and distribution – and the essentially closed nature of much policy-making and governance in most of today's major cities."[2] Moving forward, it is precisely this openness and this distribution

that will need to be maintained – not through a slogan or gadget, but truly, through deliberation.

Ingenuity and creativity are cited extensively in both this Volume and the previous one as essential to the process of genuine empowerment. Admittedly, this may seem simplistic, but it precisely the power of the two that allows us to find alternative avenues for describing, reclaiming, and sharing what is meaningful to us. Accepting pre-made definitions of what shapes our everyday erodes our ability to think and act for ourselves, contributing to a poverty of imagination that is behind many of the issues faced by our society today. The initiatives featured in this book, on the other hand, are the efforts of countless individuals who took a chance on their ideas, trusted their intuition that things could be done differently, and in the process inspired a movement. They prove that aspiring to an ideal future is an important exercise, but that living – and investing – in the present is a far more rewarding one.
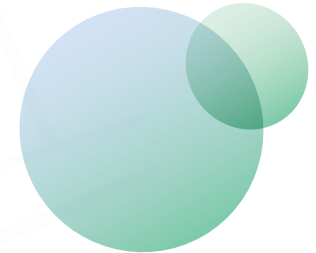
2. Mean, M. (2007) "Chapter 6: Urban Innovation and the Power of Mass Imagination" in *Unlocking Innovation: Why Citizens Hold the Key to Public Service Reform*. Parker, S. and S. Parker, eds., London, UK: Demos, p. 95

Quote:

Solnit, R. (2012) "Against the Destruction of the World and the Climate by Greed" *The Nation*. October 29, 2012: bit.ly/16zuiAi

YOUR

imagination

MATTERS

About Enabling City

Enabling City is an organization that works to advance social innovation as a form of active citizenship, particularly in the areas of urban sustainability and participatory governance.

At Enabling City, we believe access to inspiration is important. We strive to creatively respond to today's most pressing issues by harnessing community imagination as a tool of social transformation. Our work sparks new ways of thinking about participation, encouraging experts and enthusiasts alike to generate engaging insights that lead to positive change.

Research:

We produce rigorous but imaginative research that uncovers new creative possibilities and turns theory into action.

Consult:

We work with a diverse range of dedicated changemakers (researchers, creative communities, planners, progressive institutions and social entrepreneurs) to make cities more liveable, inclusive and resilient.

Design:

We develop emerging conceptual frameworks and action tools that stimulate public engagement, foster a culture of co-creation and openness, and dynamically re-imagine the 'enabling' potential of cities.

Amplify:

We accelerate the reach of 'place-based creative problem-solving' by sharing promising ideas and initiatives that strengthen and support networks of community-powered change.
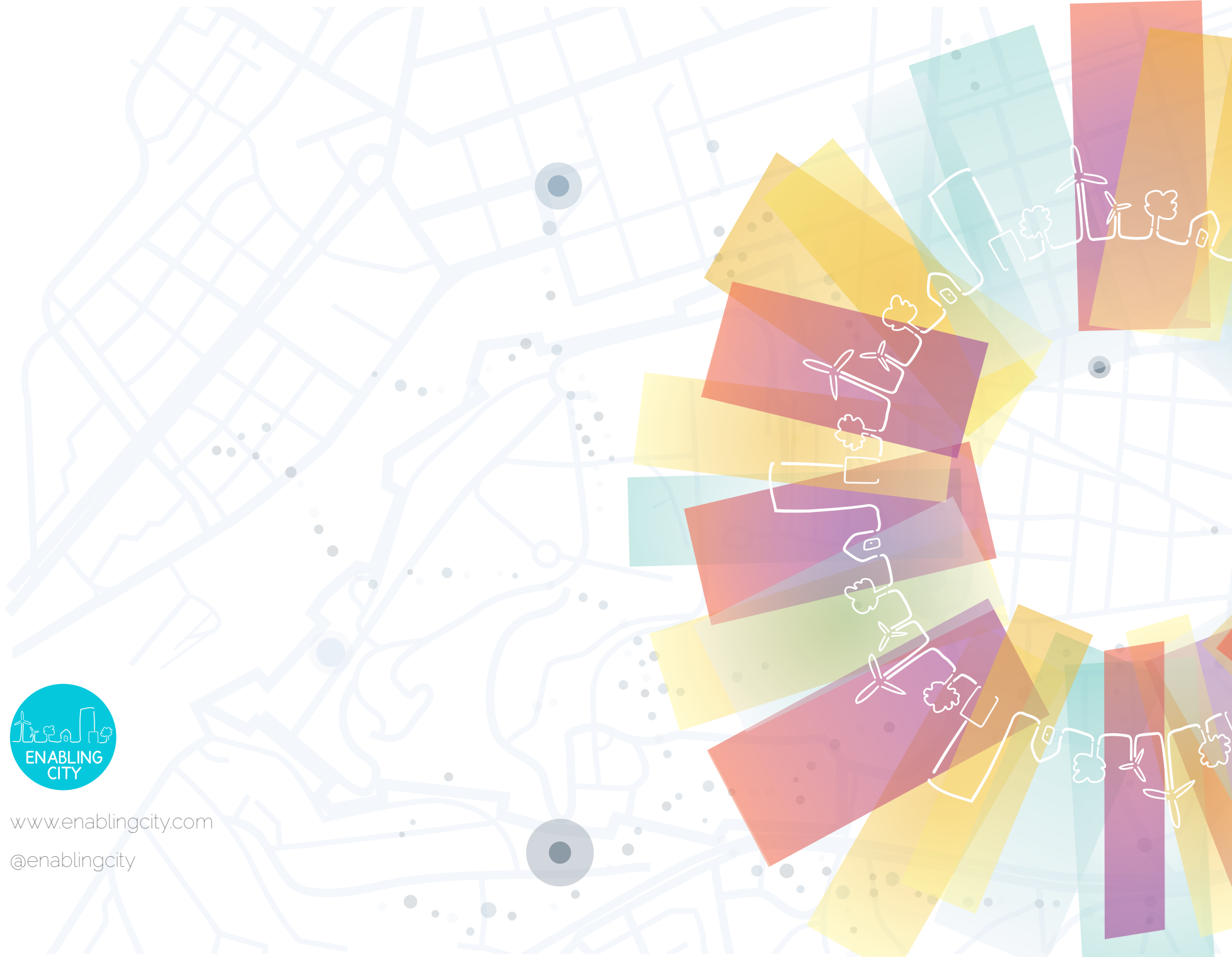
Connect:

We help individuals and institutions test new ideas, scale impact, and find trusted collaborators who share their passion.

Stay in touch!

To find out more about Enabling City or grab a copy of Volume 1, visit us at enablingcity.com

To keep track of our latest updates, follow us on Twitter (@EnablingCity) or find us on Vimeo (vimeo.com/enablingcity)