SPACES OF COMMONING:

URBAN COMMONS IN THE EX-YU REGION

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CON-
TENT:

INTRODUCTION

Faced with increasing inequalities and the inability of the neoliberal state to offer institutional mechanisms for the fulfilment of all people's social and economic rights – alongside the failure of the market to provide the same – the pressure to find alternative modes of production, social relations and forms of organization is overwhelming. The challenges that the TINA (*There is no alternative*) paradigm faces and the opening up of possibilities to imagine non-capitalist societies are always present, as is the danger of the capitalist appropriation of attempts to bring about change. At the same time, it is encouraging to see narratives and practices of resistance emerging, transforming and sustaining, therein promising such possible change.

Over the last few decades, the concept of *the commons* has entered the mainstream as one of the potent political paradigms that has inspired various social actions and political mobilizations across Europe. The very concept, popularized with the 2009 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences awarded to Elinor Ostrom, refers to shared resources and social practices maintained by communities in a sustainable way (Ostrom 1990). Ostrom studied hundreds of cases of collective governance arrangements relating to natural commons such as pastures, fisheries, water resources etc., outside of the imperatives of both the state and the market. Yet, it was Hardin's text "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968) that brought the concept of the commons back into non-academic and academic discussion. His identification of dilemmas of collective action formed Ostrom's point of departure, whose work has later inspired numerous scholars, movements and communities to embrace this discourse. Building on the work of Elinor Ostrom, authors such as Helfrich, Linebaugh, De Angelis, Stavrides, Harvey, and Marcuse have disputed the alleged *tragedy of the commons*. These scholars offer

different positions on how the commons are organized, detailing their histories and the challenges that accompany shared ownership of the means of production within capitalism (Lutz 2015, 101). Today, by looking at a more normative set of criteria that include equality, resilience, social cohesion and social justice, the commons represent a social and cultural shift that is invaluable to the establishment of democracy and just social transformation.

Historically, the term "commons" has been used to denote shared natural common goods such as agricultural fields, grazing lands, forests, pastures, lakes, ponds or irrigation systems that – over a period of several hundred years – were privatized through the act of enclosure. This began as a legal process in the thirteenth century, particularly in England, yet by the end of the nineteenth century, this act had led to the abolition of free access to the agricultural landscape, as well as to the abolition of existing forms of joint ownership over it. The commons, collectively managed by farmers, served for survival, or basic reproduction (wood collecting, hunting, fishing, crop growing, etc.), but at the same time they had a wider social function. As Silvia Federici (2004) states, besides fostering collective decision-making and cooperation, these commons provided the material basis for the flourishing of solidarity and sociability within the local community.

The enclosure, as Marx (1867) debated, presents a key component of primitive accumulation, where the social means of production have been transformed into capital by means of mass dispossession. Some interpretations of Marx's work have brought dispossession within the fold of a broader theory of accumulation by drawing attention to ongoing global enclosures (De Angelis, Harvey, Huws). Moreover, urban scholars appropriated the original formulation of primitive accumulation in order to understand current urban transformation through "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003), which have fundamentally reshaped urban areas across the globe. Harvey (2003) explains that this dispossession happens through neoliberal policies of privatization, financialization, commodification and the new imperialism.

These forms of accumulation have been met with different forms of resistance in which the concept of the commons has revealed its crucial function of reintroducing social justice into the core of political and economic discourse by empowering people to direct action. It is unsurprising to find that the domination of capitalist logic in all spheres of life has inadvertently introduced the idea of a *new commons*, i.e. commons that should be protected or re-appropriated again. Simply put, the new commons signals alarmed reactions to increasing commodification, privatization, and corporatization, untamed globalization, and unresponsive governments (Hess 2008, 3). While early commons studies have explored the ability of communities to collectively manage natural resources (Ostrom 1990), the new commons vary in form from physical resources, to knowledge, the internet and different forms of self-governance, collaboration and collective action.

With the imperative of constant economic growth, cities and their development have become paradigms for the intensive exploitation of resources and accumulation of capital. The decrease in urban public spaces and their privatization, segregation through gentrification and allocation of different construction investments, housing policies – all have transformed city planning, which is often unable to perceive alternative solutions against the overexploitation of urban territory and the increase in inequalities caused by economic crises (Mattei and Quarta 2015). In addition, the commodification of housing

has also produced a situation of constant discrepancies between the level of housing deprivation and available housing space. Entire cities have become sites of urban segregation through different state- and market-led mechanisms. As a response to ongoing processes within neoliberal capitalism, the commons in urban contexts has thus (re) emerged as a potential driver of wider socio-economic transformation.

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The former Yugoslav region also reflects these global tendencies and processes, but with at least two specific features. The first is the fact that neoliberal capitalism on the periphery certainly has its own dynamic within global power relations, resulting in a specific economic position (concerning resource extraction and capital distribution), but also a political position (as a region whose recently established countries are striving to become part of the EU, each at its own pace). Another is the unique collective experience of Yugoslav real socialism that attempted to implement an experimental system of self-management on the level of the entire society. Taking up the challenge of understanding the urban commons in the context of this particular region thus represents an attempt to also recognize how this specific context reflects the concept of the new commons: what are the practices and forms of commons that have emerged in resistance to neoliberal capitalism on the periphery, but also how do these commons communicate with the Yugoslav heritage. One of the most recent and comprehensive research studies on the commons in the region of Eastern Europe was published in 2018 by the Institute for Political Ecology from Zagreb, Croatia. The *Commons in South East Europe* study offers an insightful and comprehensive overview into the theory of the commons in general, but also deals with the specific context of SEE and, finally, offers an analysis of how the theory of the commons corresponds to local practices and struggles, in terms of governance models, relations to the state and market, as well as political discourses. As was the case in recent years with regard to different struggles, we have relied immensely on the knowledge and experience of our friends and activists from other countries in the region, and this study is no exception. Since the SEE study covered a limited territorial range, covering Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Macedonia, we consider the study before you a complementary document that completes the territorial scope covered by looking at Serbia, Kosovo*[1] and Montenegro.

Borrowing part of the title from the inspiring book *Spaces of Commoning: Artistic Research and Utopia of the Everyday* (Baldauf et al. 2016), we too wish to present some of the spatial practices and struggles in our local contexts that have been examples of collective actions that challenge the existing capitalist regime and power relations. In addition, pointing to the former Yugoslav region (rather than the commonly referred to *Balkan region*) in the title of the study, we would like both to retain the legacy of self-management socialism, and also refer to our shared history and the turbulences that particularly shaped our political and economic trajectories, relevant for understanding and interpreting the contemporary commons in this region.

[1]   This designation is without prejudice to positions of status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

The rise of the new commons (Hess, 2008) inspired contemporary debates that have found it useful to distinguish between different subgroups of commons (Hess, 2008; Ostrom and Hess, 2007; Harvey 2012 and others). But what makes these new commons distinct from one another? It could be the context in which commons takes place. For this reason, we dived into various detailed theoretical frameworks to explore and understand different perspectives on what the "urban" in urban commons entails. Contemporary attention paid to urban commons (Harvey 2012, Stavrides 2016) as collective practices with strong physical and social components – collective spaces, housing, urban gardens – is a consequence of the social and economic inequalities present in the urban environment. For example, in a relentlessly neoliberal climate, what we traditionally conceive as public (urban services) is in retreat: public housing is being sold off, public space commodified and privatized, public services cut off due to austerity policies. In this respect, urban commons seem to offer an alternative through which people shape their living space beyond the influence of state or market. Therefore, one of our research objectives is the comprehension of urban commons, its roots, causes and contradictions, as a concept with physical dimensions, and social and political transformation.

This research puts forward the theoretical and interpretive framework that stems from the *critical theory of the commons*, which built further on Ostrom's work and embedded the concept of the commons into a wider socio-economic context. This work then took several political directions. Rather than romanticizing the concept, we seek to substantially rethink and unpack the powerful political paradigm of urban commons, which includes the organization of power relations, decision-making structures and rules about the access, use and control over resources. It requires addressing issues of collectivity, governance, inclusion/exclusion, power and political values and principles. Bearing in mind all serious challenges and questions relating to urban commons, our ambition with this research was not to offer any definite answers to all of them, but to rather give an overview of possible perspectives and frameworks that will spark current and future debates. Namely, providing in-depth understandings of different cases of how urban commons have been protected, emerged, contested or enclosed in the specific political context of the former Yugoslav region was of greater importance to us. Even though practices based on the idea of the commons and urban strug-gles for participative governance had previously existed in these societies, the conceptual framework around the commons offered a new perspective on the mapping and analysis of such practices, with more systematic learning and new possibilities for imagining new models for more democratic, sustainable communities.

As Ulrike Hamman and Ceren Türkmen (2020) precisely put it in their article on urban struggles in Berlin, our collective position is also that of a researcher deeply immersed in urban struggles for the commons. We thus do not strive for full objectivity, but rather draw on our own involvement and knowledge gained through experience of participation in these very struggles and practices, as well as through reflection on the resultant challenges, failures and impacts. In this way, we aim to contribute to a responsible research approach where knowledge is not simply extracted, but is rather shared, amplified and further developed within the communities contributing to the project.

The research team was assembled on the basis of previous cooperation and shared struggles. Iva Čukić, Božena Stojić and Jovana Timotijević from Serbia, Njomza Dragusha and Orbis Rexha from Kosovo, and Sonja Dragović and Tatjana Rajić from Montenegro

formed the core teams for this research, each autonomously selecting the case studies and then collectively discussing them in relation to how we locally understand and interpret the conceptual framework and practical manifestations of the commons. It is, nevertheless, crucial to add that, aside from the researchers, support from friends and fellow activists significantly helped to shape this publication in various ways, effectively meaning that they most certainly ought to be considered co-authors of this publication. Finally, the study was fully supported through a partnership with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which recognized the relevance of the topic and the value that regional collaboration brings to such an endeavour.

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The study is divided into five chapters that give an overview of classical and critical definitions of the commons, as well as the theoretical framework for the urban commons. This is followed by an interpretative perspective through struggles and practices of commoning. The first part offers digested insights into the (urban) commons in general as a kind of set of guidelines, while the second part focuses on the ex-YU context and specific case studies in Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro.

In the first section of the theoretical framework chapter, we looked at the work of Elinor Ostrom and Hardin's inevitable tragedy in order to understand the major challenges inherent to the commons. This section outlines the alleged "tragedy of the commons" and reviews Elinor Ostrom's principles for sustainable governance of the commons, with the purpose of reviewing the tensions arising from her work, especially concerning the debate on governance and the commons. The second section introduces a critical perspective on commons-related thinking. It examines, inter alia, the normative criteria deemed crucial for assessing the commons, namely the progressive values of social justice, democracy and ecological sustainability and gendered equity. These criteria are important when assessing the commons in terms of fair use or access/openness, inclusion/exclusion, or concerns over the disembodied construction of the commons, the collective and the community. The aim of the third section is to readdress the debate over the commons by taking it to the urban domain. Thus, in order to grasp the discourse of urban commons, this section centres the discussion around the role of commoning, which constitutes a new form of collectivity in urban space – the appropriation of urban space, the tension between the *public* and *the commons* and the tension between the commons and capitalism. The interpretative framework of the urban commons takes current global struggles and practices to illustrate the complexity of the discourse and its dimensions. This section represents a wide range of examples from Europe and Latin America, with the aim of demonstrating the variety of struggles and places of commoning, as well as the institutional mechanisms that can be adopted in favour of the urban commons.

The chapter on the former Yugoslav context assembles contributions from all three research teams that offer insights into the specific local contexts and their common history. In the following chapter, we discuss 15 case studies, across the territory of Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro, based on our own involvement and/or conversations with direct actors and other stakeholders in each case, as well as through an analysis of their external communication materials and secondary sources. In these examples we have sought to highlight the main features that fully or partially correspond to the concept of the commons (which is very

much a matter of context), the values they promote and the democratic practice they nurture. Thus, the cases have been analysed as struggles or practices in terms of *context*, *resource*, *community*, *governance* and *strategies,* while in the final sections we have attempted to reflect upon their values, political charge and relation to the commons discourse. Bearing in mind the heterogeneity of the circumstances in which these practices and struggles have emerged, we have collectively agreed on this structure of analysis in order to attempt to bring some of their common features to the light. Through the research exchange and joint efforts, we are interested in showing and identifying cases of the commons that can be seen as social forces and critical voices, as a precondition for building societies that embrace the values of social justice, diversity, trust, solidarity and equality.

The final chapter illustrates similarities and differences between the cases and brings some conclusions to the overall discussion of urban commons in our region. Finally, due to the commitment to contribute to a value shift in our region, and by supporting and disseminating best practices of commoning, we want to expand peer-to-peer collaborations based on mutual trust and respect, and affect the relations between our countries, which we find crucial for the democratization of the former Yugoslav region.

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During the period of writing and preparing this publication, we were constantly haunted by self-reflection and our own repeated questioning of the methods used and the results of our efforts. It seems that such a troublesome process never actually stops, as it exists in the ever-present search for a more radical change. We therefore perceive this publication as merely an overview of this particular moment and context, while our struggles to create and sustain more just spaces and communities – struggles always accompanied by continual reflection – have already surpassed these pages.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Iva Čukić
Jovana Timotijević

WHAT ARE
THE COMMONS?

The key ideas of the commons were outlined by Garrett Hardin and Elinor Ostrom in the second half of the last century. Both these authors focus their work on governance mechanisms and the (over)use of shared resources, albeit from different perspectives. Hardin's article "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968) refers to individualistic exploitation and the over-consumption of the commons, which pave the way for their destruction. "Picture a pasture open to all", Hardin wrote, asking the readers to imagine common pasture, unowned and available to all. As he further explains, it is to be expected that by grazing cattle on a common pasture, the herdsman will only be motivated to increase their individual wealth. Hardin reasoned that a set of rational individuals, free to choose, will act in a way that will inevitably bring about the exhaustion of the commons. Namely, as the demand for the resource overwhelms it, every individual who over-consumes, directly harms others who can no longer enjoy the benefits. The pursuit of self-interest will lead to the overgrazing of pastures, which will inevitably lead to that resource's collapse. In that regard, Hardin uses the word "tragedy" to refer to the dramatic outcome that the commons face in the hands of humankind. Yet this *tragedy* did not rely on any *empirical* analysis; it was rather written as a hypothetical parable that assumed that human societies would act in certain ways (Forsyth and Johnson 2014). Consequently, he suggests either state regulation (public property regulated with respect to the right to enter) or privatization, as reasonable possibilities

(Hardin 1968). His argument contributes to the popular belief that only these two models exist and have ever existed in all human societies. Yet, as with any other concept, the concept of the commons has its historical roots, trajectory and context (Tomašević et al. 2018)– it predates the individual property regime and provides the basis for the organization of society.[1]

The critique of Hardin's work is based on the premise that his position has been widely used as an ideological discourse in favour of neoliberal forces. On the one hand, Hardin places his arguments within an understanding of humanity that is Malthusian in its approach[2] and assumes that the "rational" human is essentially a selfish human (Jacobs 2015). However, a selfish farmer might have an advantage over other farmers in his village, but a village that somehow solved the tragedy of the commons would have a decisive advantage over other villages (Sloan Wilson 2015, 361). Nevertheless, what Hardin described is the behaviour of capitalists operating in a capitalist economy and therefore his arguments are frequently used in pro-capitalist economic theory. In this regard, he states that the tragedy can only be avoided by converting the commons into private property (Hardin 1968):

> We must admit that our legal system of private property plus inheritance is unjust but we put up with it because we are not convinced, at the moment, that anyone has invent ed a better system. The alternative of the commons is too horrifying to contemplate. Injustice is preferable to total ruin.

Hence, Hardin admits that the system is *unjust*, but at the same time it is *too horrifying* to think of alternatives, namely challenging it with a *third approach*[3] would be *too horrifying*. On the topic of this irrefutable justification for privatization, Harvey (2012) takes a different perspective in concluding that what leads to tragedy is not common land, but the *private property* of cattle. If the cattle were *held in common*, then Hardin's metaphor would not work. Yet in analysing his later work, we could say that he was not even referring to the commons in his initial text (Hardin 1985, 90):

> A commons is a resource to which a population has free and *unmanaged* access: it contrasts with private property (access only to the owner) and with socialized property (access to which is controlled by managers appointed by some political unit).

Therefore, by naming them as "unmanaged" resources, Hardin was not in fact describing a commons, but an open-access regime or free-for-all in which there is no community, rules, monitoring of usage or other features typically found in a commons.

Hardin's text has been challenged and criticized by political scientists, economists, sociologists, ecologists and geographers ever since (Tomašević et al. 2018, 34–36). The first

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[1]   More on the historical trajectory, geographical origin and the enclosure of commons can be found at Tomašević et al., "Commons in SEE", 16–28.

[2]   The *Malthusian* Theory of *Population* is a theory of exponential *population* growth and arithmetic food supply growth. See: Malthus, "An essay on the principle of population".

[3]   Conventional solutions typically involve either centralized governmental regulation or privatization of the resource. According to Ostrom (1990), there is a third approach to resolving the problem – resources governed by the community of the resource's users, not by governments or markets.

critique of Hardin's rational individual behaviour came in Ostrom's 1990 book, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Ostrom 1990, 1), which proposed that neither state nor the market can succeed to enable sustainable use of natural resources, and that:

> communities of individuals have relied on institutions resembling neither the state nor the market to govern some resource systems with reasonable degrees of success over long periods of time.

By doing empirical research on hundreds of examples around the world, Ostrom demonstrated that this tragedy need not happen. She points out that the cases where local communities manage mostly natural "common-pool resources" (CPR) can be more efficient, productive and long-lasting than state or market approaches. She defines CPR as a resource for which excluding potential appropriators or limiting the appropriation rights of existing users is difficult but not impossible, while the yield of the resource system is subtractable (Ostrom et al. 1994; in Tomašević et al. 2018, 34). Therefore, CPRs are characterized as resources for which the exclusion of users is difficult (referred to as excludability), and the use of such a resource by one user decreases resource benefits for other users (referred to as subtractability) (Heikkila and Carter 2017). As stated by Hess and Ostrom, those who analyse commons have frequently differentiated between commons as a resource and commons as a property-rights regime. While *common-pool resources*, or shared resource systems, represent forms of economic good that are independent of particular property rights, as Hess and Ostrom (2007, 5) explain, common property represents a "legal regime – a jointly owned legal set of rights". They therefore define commons as a general term (Hess and Ostrom 2007, 4–5):

> *that refers to a resource shared by a group of people.* In a commons, the resource can be small and serve a tiny group (the family refrigerator), it can be community--level (sidewalks, playgrounds, libraries, and so on), or it can extend to international and global levels (deep seas, the atmosphere, the internet and scientific knowledge. The commons can be well bounded (a community park or library); transboundary (the Danube River, migrating wildlife, the internet); or without clear boundaries (knowledge, the ozone layer).

Yet, the resource is just one of the three elements of the commons. Namely, Ostrom's Nobel Prize-winning work was focused on institutional mechanisms and the collective management of natural resources (water, forest, fish, land, air), but many other resources can also be managed as commons, including urban space, knowledge, culture, internet, land, etc. Many scholars and practitioners would agree (Dellenbaugh-Loose, Bollier, Helfrich, Brown, Harvey, De Angelis) that regardless of the resource or context, the commons consist of three constitutive elements in a mutual relationship – **(1) resource; (2) community;** and **(3) governance**. Thus, the commons represents a shared **resource**, co-governed by its **user community** according to the community's **rules and norms** (Bollier 2016). Hence, the collective resource is managed by self-organized social systems under mutually acceptable terms and norms (Brown 2018). In this respect, (collective) resources can be both material

and immaterial: anything that is useful and valuable to humans – **common goods**; self-organized social systems, i.e. communities, are users of common goods who share the same values, norms and needs – **commoners**; and finally, rules and norms representing governance regimes and protocols that are embedded in the practice of **commoning** (see Tomašević et al. 2018, 46–49). Term "commons" thus simultaneously describes a shared resource, a social process, a collective activity and rules of governance.

In order to understand what defines successful commons, Ostrom (1990, 2) developed and applied the *institutional model of analysis*. Analysing the institutions developed in the case studies of commons, she identified that groups are capable of avoiding the tragedy of the commons without requiring top-down regulation, if certain principles are met (Ostrom 1990). Furthermore, she provided guidance on highlighting key insights and effects resulting from local management of common resources. The essential research findings are the eight core design principles in the table below, which she perceives as important conditions for successful common-pool-resource institutions (Ostrom 1990, 90). These principles were later reviewed and generalized (Sloan Wilson et al. 2012) in order to be used as a practical guide for improving the efficacy of many kinds of groups:

PRINCIPLE

Clearly defined boundaries

Congruence between appropriation and provision rules & local conditions

Collective-choice arrangements

Monitoring

Graduated sanctions

Conflict-resolution mechanisms

Minimal recognition of rights to organize

Nested enterprise (*for CPRs that are parts of the larger systems*)

Overview and revision of Ostrom's principle (Wilson et al. 2012)

Individuals or households who have the rights to withdraw resource units from the CPR must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the CPR itself	The identity of the group and the boundaries of the shared resource are clearly delineated
Appropriation rules restricting time, place, technology and/or quantity of resource units are related to local conditions and to provision rules requiring labor, materials and/or money	Members of the group must negotiate a system that rewards members for their contributions. High status or other disproportionate benefits must be earned. Unfair inequality poisons collective efforts
Most individuals affected by the operational rules can participate in modifying the operational rules	Group members must be able to create at least some of their own rules and make their own decisions by consensus. People hate being told what to do but will work hard for group goals that they have agreed upon
Monitors, who actively audit CPR conditions and appropriator behavior, are accountable to the appropriators or are the appropriators	Managing a commons is inherently vulnerable to free-riding and active exploitation. Unless these undermining strategies can be detected at relatively low cost by norm-abiding members of the group, the tragedy of the commons will occur
Appropriators who violate operational rules are likely to be assessed graduated sanctions (depending on the seriousness and context of the offense) by other appropriators, by officials accountable to these appropriators, or by both.	Transgressions need not require heavy-handed punishment, at least initially. Often gossip or a gentle reminder is sufficient, but more severe forms of punishment must also be waiting in the wings for use when necessary
Appropriators and their officials have rapid access to low-cost local arenas to resolve conflicts among appropriators, or between appropriators and officials	It must be possible to resolve conflicts quickly and in ways that are perceived as fair by members of the group
The rights of appropriators to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities	Groups must have the authority to conduct their own affairs. Externally imposed rules are unlikely to be adapted to local circumstances and violate principles
Appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises	Every sphere of activity has an optimal scale. Large scale governance requires finding the optimal scale for each sphere of activity and appropriately coordinating the activities, a concept called polycentric governance. A related concept is subsidiarity, which assigns governance tasks by default to the lowest jurisdiction, unless this is explicitly determined to be ineffective

These principles resulted from the extensive empirical evidence that Ostrom collect-ed, searching for patterns and regularities as to why some commons-related case studies are successful, and why some are not. Nevertheless, these principles were articulated from a scientific perspective. Building upon that, the first German Summer school on the Commons (Bollier and Helfrich 2015, 48–49) approached the commons from the perspective of active commoners and interpreted Ostrom's list as a form of manifesto, as following:

1 As a commoner I clearly understand which resources I need to care for and with whom I share this responsibility. Commons resources are those that we create toge-ther, that we maintain as gifts of nature or whose use has been guaranteed to everyone.

2 We use the commons resources that we create, care for and maintain. We use the means (time, space, technology, and the quantity of a resource) that are available in a given context. As a commoner I am satisfied that there is a fair relationship between my contributions and the benefits I receive.

3 We enter into or modify our own rules and commitments, and every commoner can participate in this process. Our commitments serve to create, maintain and preserve the commons to satisfy our needs.

4 We monitor the respect of these commitments ourselves and sometimes we mandate others whom we trust to help reach this goal. We continually reassess whether our commitments still serve their purpose.

5 We work out appropriate rules for dealing with violations of our commitments. We determine whether and what kinds of sanctions shall be used, depending on the context and severity of a violation.

6 Every commoner can make use of a space and means for conflict resolution. We seek to resolve conflicts among us in an easily accessible and straightforward way.

7 We regulate our own affairs, and external authorities respect that.

8 We realize that every commons is part of a larger whole. Therefore, different institu tions working at different scales are needed to coordinate stewardship and to cooperate with each other.

These eight points reflect the *personal* experiences of commoners themselves. Acknowledging Ostrom's contribution, the authors behind these additional principles were more interested in how to preserve and use the commons from the commoners' perspective. Commoners negotiate their own rules of access and use, responsibilities, ways of resolving conflicts, and penalties for free riders, among other acts that seek to maintain the commons. As for the resources themselves, this can refer to all types of commons, rather than making distinctions between material and non-material, traditional or new commons.

Yet, Dolenec (2013) argues that the theorized examples of collective action lack a political perspective, since Ostrom's critique of the states and markets dichotomy is incomplete. Dolenec points out that this approach does not recognize the broader political and economic context – it rather inspires mostly affirmative action, which remedies some unwanted consequences of capitalist modes of production, but leaves the underlying structure intact. Moreover, Ostrom's work on forms of collective action based on self-organization and self-governing lacks the practical capacity to generate the kinds of political institutions that would embody its economic rationalities (Dolenec 2013). In response, we therefore advance a critical political conception of the commons, outlined in the next section, which affirms progressive values and critically examines the constituent elements of capitalism.

THE POLITICIZATION OF THE COMMONS: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

In recent years, the commons have been investigated from various perspectives,[4] including their social, political and economic dimension (Hardt and Negri 2009; De Angelis 2010; Harvey 2012); particular forms of governance (Ostrom 1990; Bollier and Helfrich 2012); feminist perspectives (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999; Federici 2012); and, more recently, the relationship between the commons and the city (Susser and Tonnelat 2013; Stavrides 2014, 2016; Borch and Kornerberger 2015; Ferguson 2014; Dellenbaugh et al. 2015). Critical scholars have sought to extend the classic theory of the commons to encompass a larger collective political experience that can contribute to progressive social change. In this respect, critical theory is more oriented toward the *transformation of society* rather than *theorizing society* (Tomašević et al. 2018). Expanding the commons theory out to different kinds of resources and perspectives made it appealing to various social movements, as an alternative to increasing enclosure, privatization and the consumption-driven economy. The contemporary enclosure of services, goods and resources led different academic and non-academic discourses to embrace the commons paradigm, around which much current critical commons literature pivots. Thus, this section reviews emerging critical perspectives on the commons and explores its varying interpretations in order to develop a conceptual framework that can be more readily applied within the urban commons' discourse. In so doing, the review highlights a number of implications that result from applying critical theory within the context of the politicization of the commons discourse.

The *enclosure of the commons* and *primitive accumulation*, with reference to the 16th and 17th century (Marx 1990), enabled the development of capitalism, which expelled the peasantry in Europe from the land, and radically transformed society into a "market society" (Polanyi 2001). This act of the birth of a modern capitalist society through *primitive accumulation*, led to *accumulation by dispossession*, which is being guided by processes of privatization,

[4] The subject of commons has generated a vibrant interdisciplinary field articulating theoretical questions usually polarized by domains that may be geographic (e.g., rural and urban commons), scalar (e.g., local to global commons), institutional (e.g., formal and informal commons) and tangible (e.g., material and immaterial commons), more in CEDLA Research, 3.

financialization, the management and manipulation of crises, and state redistribution (Harvey 2004). Economic growth, as a driving force of capitalism, can only be assured by the new dispossession in which the logic of capital extends to ever new domains of society,[5] putting strong pressure on the further enclosure and privatization of services like health, education, water supply, waste disposal, housing, etc. In this respect, the commons, as Mattei states (2010), has to be understood as *a political act of claiming resources in common, through conflict and against commodification, commercialization, privatization and the state enclosure* of resources for the benefit of a few (Tomašević et al. 2018, 14). Thus, contemporary capitalism and state power need to be tackled based on the realities of people's everyday lives (Harvey 2012). It is exactly this spirit that the Zapatistas called for in "The Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle" (Midnight Notes Collective 2009, 12):

> Let's guarantee housing for each other. This means not only a 'No' to evictions, but the reoccupation of houses that have been abandoned, the distribution or occupation of the empty housing stock that lies all around us; the collectively chosen self-reduc tion in rent of the kind that was carried out in Italy in the 1970s; the creation of new housing that would be organized collectively and built ecologically. [...] Let our struggle over housing be a struggle for the reorganization of work reproductive of daily life on a collective basis. Enough of spending time in our solitary cages with trips to the mall as the climax of our sociality [...] Let's struggle in such a way as to disable the mechanisms that perpetuate our exploitation and divisions [...] Let's revive our social imagination after decades of defensive reactions to neoliberal enclosures and determine new consti tutions of the commons.

According to Federici and Caffentzis (2014), if we want to construct an alternative society different from known social forms that have already proven unable to resist the onslaught of capitalist relations against them, the *new commons*[6] have to be the product of our struggle. These commons are animated by a different logic – a logic that stands in notable contrast to the logic of the market and its emphasis on absolute individual rights, profit and constant economic growth. The political economist Massimo De Angelis (2010) points out that they are a means of establishing a new political discourse that builds on and helps to articulate the many existing, often minor struggles and recognizes their power in overcoming capitalist society. Moreover, for fundamental transformations toward a new socially and environmen-

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[5]   The many works on enclosure include those on: the enclosure of ideas (Boyle, 2003a&b; Lessig 2001; May 2000; Poynder 2003); of the public domain (Benkler 1999; E. Lee 2003; Pessach 2003); of culture (Lessig 2004b); of the tradition of open science (Shiva 2002; Kennedy 2001; Triggle 2004); of the academy (Bowers 2006a&b; Bol lier 2002a); enclosure in libraries (Campbell 2005; Kranich 2007); enclosure of the cultural commons (McCann 2002, 2005; Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2004); and enclosure by markets (Bollier 2001; Bollier and Rowe 2006; Rowe 2007). See: Hess, "Mapping the New Commons".

[6]   The current debate on the commons in Europe and globally, centers on "*new commons* such as 'knowledge com mons' (Hess and Ostrom, 2007), 'global commons' (Soroos, 1997), 'social commons', 'intellectual and cultural commons', 'musical commons', 'species commons' and many more (Bollier, 2003; Nonini, 2007), also including 'urban commons' (Harvey, 2012; Blomley, 2008; Susser and Tonnelat, 2013). The 'New Commons' are not nec essarily new per se, but framing collective resources such as knowledge or music as commons is a way of point ing out that these resources used to be or should be owned and managed collectively as a common good", in Hojer Bruun, "Communities and the commons", 154.

tally just system of production, consumption and governance, what is needed is exactly the struggles' unity, which goes beyond single issues, connecting them, without diminishing the significance or value of them (Midnight Notes Collective 2011).

As Nightingale (2019) argues, struggles are important for creating new political communities, but also for disrupting existing ones. For example, if we understand the commons only as a resource shared through collective rules of governance, not directly linked to market or state, then they might not necessarily bring forth the desired, progressive social and political change. In other words, a vacant building that is to be turned into a social community centre, can for example disrupt the homeless people who were using it as a shelter, or the criminal gang who used it for its own purposes. Therefore, critical theory relies on a strong normative dimension for judging the progressive commons. One aspect of this dimension covers the set of criteria that corresponds to progressive values, while another aspect tackles the gender power perspective developed by feminist theorists who have studied the commons.

In this respect, Silke Helfrich (Hopkins 2012) proposes three normative criteria of the commons – *sustainable use, fairness and social control* – as progressive values directly related to material and ecological sustainability, to social justice through fairness and to democracy through social control. Using the example of local water distribution as a commons, Tomašević (2018, 50) elaborates these criteria as follows:

1   *Sustainability* includes three aspects – *material* sustainable use, i.e., using it with care (not damaging the pipes); *financial* sustainability, i.e., covering managing and running costs (of water distribution, in order to renew water-related infrastructures); *ecological* sustainability in the way it prevents overuse and pollution.

2   *Fairness* or fair use relates to the community, in terms of who belongs and who does not: the commons should not necessarily always be open access, but rather fair. In terms of water distribution, this means for example that to prevent overuse, the number of users needs to be limited, but then, all members of the community should have access since water is a basic human right. Fair access is then up for discussion using the means of collective control.

3   *Social or collective control* is, thus, related to the rules for governing the resources. These rules can be both formal and non-formal, but the main point is that – in order to meet the normative criteria of the commons – they need to be designed by the entire community of users.

Another aspect of the normative approach comes from a feminist theory and gender perspective, which sheds light on the everyday practices, social relations and spaces of creativity and social reproduction in which people come together, share and act collectively (Federici 2012; 2019). Feminist engagement in this discourse is particularly important as it interrogates structural forms of social difference such as gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability and other categories. Thus, access to and control of resources intersect with the feminist analysis of gender power relations and difference. The growing body of feminist political ecology refers to

a gender power relation shaped through everyday interaction, where power operates not only among genders (men and women and the genders in between), but also varies by gender, class, race, culture and place in different socio-economic and cultural systems (Clement et al. 2019). In this respect, as Nightingale (2019) states, given political commitments to fostering better ways of living in the world, it is important to ensure that attempts of commoning do not simply produce better access and the sharing of resources among a group of elites, or produce new forms of marginalized others.

URBAN COMMONS

The urban commons[7] discourse evolves from the above-mentioned economic theory of common-pool resources (Ostrom 1990), subsequently applied to the context of the city (Susser and Tonnelat 2013; Harvey 2012). Ostrom's theory and the rules for common-pool resources were developed in primarily localized rural contexts, and so the dense human-made environments of the city brought with them new socio-political contexts for the commons to exist within (Felstead et al. 2019, 4). Susser and Tonnelat (2013) note the conceptualization of *urban commons* in which the "urban" simply designates a location in the (territorially defined) city. Authors put this forward relying on Lefebvre's three rights: "the right to urban everyday life, the right to simultaneity and encounters, and the right to creative activity" (Susser and Tonnelat 2013, 108). The recent revival of the commons in an urban context is linked by Harvey (2013) to:

> The seemingly profound impacts of the recent wave of privatizations, enclosures, spatial controls, policing, and surveillance upon the qualities of urban life in general, and in particular upon the potentiality to build or inhibit new forms of social relations (a new commons) within an urban process influenced if not dominated by capitalist class interests.

According to Mattei and Quarta (2016, 304), over the last few years, cities have been a theatre of political struggles against the privatization of public spaces, evictions and the dissolution of urban welfare. The *neoliberal forms of urbanization* (Brenner et al. 2012) have inevitably been followed by social stratification, making the social costs of this neoliberalization process most visible in the lack of affordable housing and in reduced social and public services. The principle of treating space as a potential or real investment, rather than asserting a basic right to decent shelter or public space endangers not only the reproduction of everyday life in the city, but also *bare life* itself. Examples of such an approach include sales of municipal flats in the time of Margaret Thatcher and the strategy of fully privatizing the

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[7]   Currently, there is a discussion over how problematic the term "urban commons" is in regard to its termino logical and phenomenological limitations. Namely, bearing in mind that it pertains to spatial resources, the prefix "urban" used in this context emphasizes the constructed and rather problematic distinction between the urban, created environment and the natural one. Furthermore, Stavrides (2016) suggests that separating the "natural" from "artificial" commons is redundant, because the focus is more on the principles of sharing, managing and utilizing the resources than on their type, following the principle that the commons implies the activity expressing the relations within society are indivisible from the relations with nature.

housing stock, as in postsocialist Yugoslavia, or the privatization of vast areas of land and accompanying built structures of existing industrial or other publicly owned complexes. Against such a background, cities are becoming new arenas in which people organize and fight for justice, equality and real democracy (Hancox 2015).

The greatest transformative potential lies in understanding entire cities as urban commons: as a resource for people living in them, in line with principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice (Susser and Tonnelat 2013, 110). The establishment of the commons within the urban sphere opened up new understandings of urban collectivities, urban governance, urban transformations, etc. These dimensions become important when discussing the urban domain interpreted through the discourse of commons. In cities, as spaces of political, economic and social inequality, urban commons may have a transformative potential fundamental to sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice. Consequently, urban commons are about much more than just securing access to physical space, but rather about securing people and equitable life in the city (Hojer Bruun 2015). The strength of employing the concept of commons in an urban context to offer people an equitable life will require addressing a range of questions about collectivity, power, diversity, inclusion, exclusion, ownership and so forth.

As mentioned above, Hess and Ostrom (2007) state that commons as a general term refers to a resource shared by a group of people. However, as regards the *urban* commons this is not the only taken-for granted usual definition (Kornberger and Borch 2015). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the concept of urban commons fits differently in globally distinct socio-economic systems, and different uses of this term make it almost impossible to apply one generic definition across all the different existing and emerging urban commons. For critical urban theorists (Brenner et al. 2012; Marcuse 2009) various forms of civic activities are emerging all around the globe, mobilizing in common pursuit of alternatives in opposition to capitalist urban development. Hence, urban commons are about collectively appropriating and regulating the shared concerns of the everyday (Dellenbaugh et al. 2015, 10). Examples of urban commons in recent research demonstrate their emergence in response to privatization and limitations on urban life, tenants in danger of eviction, campaigns against demolition and in support of neighbourhood revitalization, collective governance over resources and the movement against climate change (Felstead et al. 2019). The growing number of urban commons shows that they are at once the product of the city and a producer of urban space. Thus, initiatives that reclaim and/or transform public space, alongside self-organized neighbourhood centres, squats and anti-gentrification struggles triggered by everyday urgent needs, all play an important role in shaping practices of urban commons.

This is not about understanding urban commons as a resource or asset, but as a social practice through a verb – *commoning* (Harvey 2012, 73). Space (as a resource) within the urban commons discourse is both a social product and a prerequisite for social interaction. What makes urban commons is actually a process of space creation that unfolds through the practices of commoning (Stavrides 2016). Harvey writes (2012, 73) that:

> at the heart of the practice of commoning lies the principle that the relation between the social group and that aspect of the environment being treated as a common shall be both collective and non-commodified – off limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations.

There are no commons without incessant activities of commoning, of (re)producing in common. But it is through (re)production in common that communities of producers decide for themselves the norms, values, and measures of things (De Angelis 2007). As Stavrides argues, more than the act or fact of sharing, the existence of grounds for negotiation is the most important (Tan 2015). In this respect, he borrows Linebaugh's (2008) term *commoning* in the context of today's urbanized world. Commoning practices, thus, produce new relations between people and through the set of spatial relations, they create *common space* (Stavrides 2016). Stavrides writes (2016, 83):

> Urban commoning neither simply "happens" in urban space, nor does it simply produce urban space as a commodity to be distributed. Urban commoning treats and estab lishes urban space as a medium through which institutions of commoning take shape.

Urban commons are therefore socially defined, rather than being a resource simply *shared by a group of people*. And, commoning is not only an act of getting involved in a collective practice, but rather a collective struggle to re-appropriate and transform dominant relations. As a contribution to progressive social change, Helfrich links to what Linebaugh (2008) convincingly suggests, through *commoning* (understanding the commons as an activity) as a process that will enable transformation and produce new forms of social life.

Commoning was largely ignored in Hardin's work, where tragedy was inevitable, due to his predominant conceptual individualism. Yet, De Angelis (2007) offers an interesting insight into individualism and ethical choices, and claims that the Western urban environment might be expressed in the following way: capital wants you to eat meat, you must become vegan; capital wants you to earn money, you build a lifestyle without money; capital wants you to compete, you proclaim "solidarity", and so on. Thus, he says, the struggle of this type of disengagement from capital's value practices can only produce, precisely, singular identities, individuals and groups whose value system is predefined as ethical choice. But commoning constitutes a social order that cannot be reduced to a mere aggregation of individuals and preexistent "ethical" values, it seeks out different power positions and the co-production of new systems of values beyond that of capital (De Angelis 2007).·

The editor Francesca Ferguson (2014), in the introduction to her book "Make_Shift City: Renegotiating the Urban Commons", draws on Hardt and Negri (2009) to define the urban commons as shared resources to which people have a claim – a space for political struggle (Huron 2017, 3–4). In that respect, several authors (Harvey, Stavrides, De Angelis, Susser and Tonnelat) portray urban commons as a discourse that arises from the *right to the city* concept that constitutes a social and spatial justice platform in opposition to forms of domination in today's cities (Global Platform for the Right to the City, 2016):

> as the right of *all* inhabitants (present and future; permanent and temporary) to use, occupy, produce, govern and enjoy just, inclusive, safe and sustainable cities, villages and settlements defined as common goods.

This argument is built upon the relation between people and their environment, as *a right to change ourselves by changing the city* (Harvey 2008, 23). As such, urban commons stand as

an alternative to speculation and commodification or as a form of resistance to the enclosing forces of state and capital: unprecedented examples of spatial commons resulting from protest movements, spatial answers to the current refugee crisis, community urban gardening etc. Still, bearing in mind the social inequalities and spatial segregation present in cities, this is also a demand to have the right to *participate* in urban life, from the perspective of the excluded and marginalized (Dellenbaugh et al. 2015). Feminist perspectives remind us to always retain an awareness of our privileges and reflect on how open and accessible the struggles for commons or practices of commoning are, especially to those directly oppressed, to those whose even most immediate needs are not fulfilled: the homeless, the hungry, the imprisoned, those persecuted on gender, religious and racial grounds (Marcuse 2009). The urban commons thus must pursue this right, as it represents a *collective* re-appropriation of urban space, where the city becomes the arena of struggle for *our* housing, public infrastructure, health care, education, parks, waterfronts and so forth.

Through analysing the recent literature on urban commons (Dellenbaugh et. al 2015; Borch and Kornerberger 2015; Ferguson 2014), Huron points out an additional important aspect – the relationship between public space and the urban commons. The tension lies in a question of the relations between property, power and social relations or in the relationship between the urban commons and public urban planning. This body of literature conceptualizes urban public space as collective resources and a form of commons. These resources range from local streets and parks to public spaces and a variety of shared neighbourhood amenities (Foster 2013, 58). Susser and Tonnelat (2013) mainly focus, optimistically, on the public goods, public services and public spaces that could become the commons of tomorrow (Hojer Bruun 2015). Hojer Bruun (2015, 165), draws upon Carol Rose's (1994) distinction between two types of public property to distinguish between the public and the commons. Rose distinguishes between public property owned and managed by a government body, and "public property collectively 'owned' by society at large with claims that are independent of and superior to government" (Huron 2017). Bruun (2015, 165) states that commons challenge liberal-economistic notions of property, because ownership of commons depends not on a single deed holder but on layers of social relations and mutual obligations and there can be varying scales of claims to the commons. Also crucial is Mattei's statement that unlike private and public goods, which are exchanged on the market, the commons are not commodities and therefore cannot be reduced to the language of *ownership* (Mattei 2012, in original: Tomašević et. al 2018, 56)

Yet, for Harvey (2012) it is necessary to retain the sharp distinction between public spaces as a "matter of state power and public administration" on the one hand, and public spaces as urban commons appropriated by means of political action on the other. He argues that, in order to be equal to commons, resources such as water, public spaces, and sanitation services must be re-appropriated by the people by means of political action (Harvey, 2012). For Harvey, this is what makes the crucial difference between public spaces/goods and commons. Public space holds a certain political power in relation to the state, while the commons possess the means for the public's effective social control. In particular since the public spaces are constantly challenged by commodification and usurpation, typically through privatization and enclosure. Harvey (2012) acknowledges that public space can

become an urban commons if a collective – and often political – movement takes ownership of them. Hence, Occupy Wall Street, Gezi Park in Istanbul, the Indignados at Madrid's Puerta del Sol, Syntagma Square in Athens and many others that took place in 2011, are all examples that illustrate this difference. They display vigorous political action, and the constitution of urban commons through the re-appropriation of public space. Harvey (2012, 73) concludes:

> Public spaces and public goods in the city have always been a matter of state power and public administration, and such spaces and goods do not necessarily make a commons. Throughout the history of urbanization, the provision of public spaces and public goods (such as sanitation, public health, education, and the like) by either public or private means has been crucial for capitalist development […] While these public spaces and public goods contribute mightily to the qualities of the commons, it takes political action on the part of citizens and the people to appropriate them or to make them so.

From the perspective of re-appropriating the city, common spaces are the spatial nodes through which the metropolis becomes again the site of politics, where the forms of living together are questioned and potentially transformed (Stavrides 2016, 55). Thus, common space is not a public space, if by public we mean spaces where behaviour is regulated and controlled by authorities (local, regional or national) who create the rules of access, inclusion and exclusion. Stavrides (2016) claims that the common space is a shared space that people shape according to their needs and aspirations. Rules on how it is going to be shared and managed are developed through the process of transforming the space into commons. This makes an important difference between the rules created by an authority overseeing public space and the rules created through collective action.

  In addition, urban commons should be distinguished from private spaces as well. Private spaces are resources signed to individuals or corporations that establish their own rules for governing the resources. It presents the domination of one person or entity over a resource, rather than collectively developed rules of sharing resources and mechanisms of control of any potential accumulation of power. If the rules of commoning are meant to be able to support the sharing of power among the commoners, it creates the conditions for egalitarian sharing and equal distribution. This is particularly so as these rules can be renegotiated through collective agreements and developed in the direction of collective emancipation and equality. In common space, differences meet but are not allowed to fight for potential predominance, and if a common space is a shared space, then its commoners have to learn to give and not only to take (Stavrides 2016). Thus, the emancipatory potentiality of urban commons is both a concrete product of collectively developed rules of sharing and of the crucial means through which these rules take shape and shape those who shape them (Stavrides 2016).

  What is equally important when looking into this subject is to accept that practices of urban commons can and did lead to historically contingent and ambivalent results – the "privatization of commons", commodification or co-optation of the commons (Timotijević 2018). In cases when commons are being *enclosed* by a certain community in a way that this

community wants to keep the resource within its own control and limits,[8] one can speak of "collective private" spaces (Stavrides 2016, 4). Similarly, there are examples in which the common production of space is in fact just a phase in the building of a resource that transforms into a private ownership allowing inclusion of the resource in the real-estate market (in particular, some cooperative housing practices represent such examples). Finally, numerous examples of common spaces to which different public functions are being assigned (such as culture and the arts) could be considered one of the *constitutive inconsistencies* of capitalism – uncommodified resources that permit social reproduction in the interest of capital. In addition, some common spaces produce gentrified neighbourhoods, supporting toxic *urban renewal* strategies, accompanied by gradual limitations of access to members of the local community.

On the one hand, such examples corrupt the concept of the commons and decrease its political and transformative potential. But on the other, they do remind us of the constant urge to (self-)question and critically consider models and practices that promise radical change. It is important, thus, to keep searching for strategies and practices of commoning that are sustainably egalitarian and inclusive. With significant challenges that follow the request for creating alternative structures that resist commodification and strive for the disruption of market mechanisms – "autonomous spaces from which one can re-establish the control over the conditions of reproduction" (Federici and Caffentzis 2014, 101) – the struggle for commons has to be led along and for the wider struggle for radical transformation of the entire capitalist system (Timotijević 2018).

URBAN COMMONS THROUGH PRACTICES AND STRUGGLES

Approaches to urban commons include new ways of space management and use that are continually emerging worldwide. Those practices, on the one hand, are critical of the mechanisms of neoliberal urbanization and their consequences, while on the other, they open the wider social discussion over possible alternatives.

In the following examples, these practices of commoning, which start from their own needs and are based on principles of self-management and direct democracy, can be considered the transformative cells of a radically new society (Bingham-Hall 2016). They seek direct sovereignty and control over spheres of life that matter to them: their cities, neighbourhoods, food, water, land, information, infrastructure, credit and money, social services, and much else (Bollier 2016, 3–4). Urban commons therefore challenge the current urban order and offer the opportunity to appropriate the city and reinvent the space through the emancipating potentialities of sharing. The commoners engage in collective action through the articulation of cooperatives, unions, or other forms of social networks and they involve very different things such as

[8]   In order to additionally "complicate" these considerations, we could turn to David Harvey and his note that not even all forms of enclosure are inherently bad. "Production and enclosure of uncommodified space in an unmercifully commodified world is certainly a desirable thing" (Harvey 2012, 70).

housing, transportation, healthcare, water or energy supply, access to public spaces without segregation, new municipalism, new forms of work and so forth. As we have conceptualized the wide range of dimensions of the urban commons, we will now demonstrate the multiple levels that this suggests, and we will give a brief overview of several references to contemporary perspectives on this phenomenon.

Across European cities there are many initiatives, organizations and networks reclaiming the commons through various institutions, communities and resources. In 2015 in Spain, the PAH[9] housing rights activist Ada Colau was elected mayor of Barcelona, and movements from the squares won local elections across the country on manifestos pledging to radicalize democracy and reclaim collective decision-making. Attempts to reinvent political parties through the discourse of commons and the desire to reclaim democracy emerged in the cities of Spain (Barcelona en Comú, Ahora Madrid, Marea Atlantica, etc.), Italy (Cambiamo Messina dal Basso), Croatia (Zagreb je naš) and many more.[10] These examples are based upon promoting the expansion of commons, returning decision-making powers to citizens, democratizing public institutions and presenting an alternative to fuelling capitalist accumulation.

The recent decades of financial crisis, the increase in commodification processes and austerity politics globally have resulted in the sharp rise of rents and housing prices, foreclosures and increased homelessness among indebted members of the population. In Latin America, where homeownership is increasingly linked to class and race, new movements are springing up and working to fight poverty and inequality by building economic alternatives from below. In Brazilian urban movements and especially in the movements among the homeless, a first step toward the collective production of commons, in and through the city, is the organizing of land occupations (Stavrides 2016, 101). In Europe, the most visible movement that resists evictions is the Spanish PAH born in 2009 as a grassroots response to the ongoing housing emergency. The movement has expanded to 200 branches nationwide, has successfully blocked 1,130 evictions, and has "rehoused" 1,150 people in 30 recuperated buildings (Dellenbaugh et al. 2015, 22). Furthermore, since the "housing problem" involves the financialization of land and housing through transnational networks of financial flows and powers, a growing housing movement in Europe seeks to defend tenants from landlords, with campaigns to stop people being priced out of their homes and arguments made for affordable and adequate housing solutions. The European Action Coalition for the Right to Housing and the City brings together groups and movements of tenants, slum/self-built neighbourhood dwellers, squat residents, victims of inadequate housing, victims of eviction or those affected by indebtedness, as well as professionals and researchers, in order to strengthen this fight to take common action and common positions on European Housing issues.

Speaking of such, in order to overcome the deadlock imposed by both the market and state-produced housing, examples of collectively owned and collectively produced housing projects are also emerging (Čukić et al. 2018). Housing cooperatives appear as an alternative to this hyper-commodification that we are facing. Cooperative organizations that

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9   Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (eng. the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages), the movement of those affected by mortgages across Spain.

10   See: Fearless Cities, fearlesscities.com/en

enact commons principles, such as the Mietshäuser Syndikat (Germany), La Borda (Spain) or FUCVAM (Uruguay) through the commoning of resources and cooperative-based practices of production, which create a close interdependence between a political model of self-governance and an economic model of autonomy (Stavrides 2016). Beyond simply creating a housing commons, the residents also generate new forms of "being-in-common", through living arrangements and engagements with their social environment (Dellenbaugh et al. 2015, 21). Now, bearing in mind the scale of the housing situation, part of the struggle includes joining wider networks beyond the local/national context. Sharing the same structural constraints and similar political contexts, the MOBA Housing Network gathers new cooperative housing initiatives in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. By working together, they are trying to overcome common barriers and make a breakthrough in a new model of cooperative housing in this region.

Commoning appears on various levels of collective actions. Many cities are struggling to regain municipal control over common resources such as water, transportation, housing, public goods and services. During the last decade, the political emergence of the commons movement in Italy (the Water Referendum 2011, the Teatro Valle Occupato 2012, the Acqua Bene Comune Napoli 2012, etc.) has developed a quite sophisticated vision of a possible other path – the *bene comune* (Mattei 2017). The very strong incentive aiding the Italian commons movement was given by the Rodota Commision, which legally formalized the category of the commons, a third type beside private and public property (Marella 2014). Further afield, the municipalist government of the city of Naples embraced an enabling approach toward the commons. Since 2011, this city has been bringing citizens to the centre of its decision-making process and is strengthening participation in political institutions committed to caring for the commons. This approach has led to the recognition and support of several occupations, an introduction to normative and institutional frameworks, and the promotion of the commons' self-governance (Spiagarolo, 2017).

Similar institutional mechanisms were introduced by progressive leftist governments in Ecuador and Bolivia, who drew up new constitutions. The constitutional processes were meant to signal a new beginning after authoritarian regimes and economic exploitation, and both countries have enshrined the concept of *buen vivir*.[11] This concept includes an equilibrium between the living forces of nature and the commonwealth of the community (Prada Alcoreza 2013). Ecuador's constitution postulated the concept of *buen vivir* concept as a body of fundamental rights, which reshaped the entire constitutional system of the country. The rights of the *buen vivir* relate to water, food, a healthy environment, housing, work, social security, education, culture and science, communication and information. Ecuador's constitution put *buen vivir* as a central objective which is not geared toward "having more" and does not see accumulation and growth as its goal, but rather equality, freedom and equal rights (Fatheuer 2011). Through *buen vivir*, the Bolivian constitution aims to challenge the concept of unlimited economic growth and recognize it as a principle guiding state action. It includes

[11]   The term *buen vivir* is often used to indicate a whole array of indigenous notions, and has been actively employed as a guiding principle of movement actions and aspirations in many countries in Latin America. *Buen vivir* understands the creation of community shared worlds as a process that is based on exchanges between people and nature which are not exploitative or aggressive but dialogic and expanding through dialogue (Stavrides 2016, 253).

social solidarity, production (resulting from communal work's interaction), reproduction, and production and work done with respect for and in harmony with nature (Prada Alcoreza 2013). Unfortunately, the 2019 coup emboldened right-wing forces, who gained the opportunity to take power back from a president, administration and people who have been a regional driving force for the advancement of indigenous, environmental, women's and workers' rights. Bolivia has enjoyed one of the most stable economic growth rates in the Americas, between 4% and 5% in 2018, and has succeeded in decreasing poverty among millions of Bolivians, from 59% to 39%, according to official data from the World Bank (Shaw 2019).

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While the above-mentioned examples represent only a brief selection of what is a much more diverse and voluminous pool of commons-based practices and struggles, it is also important to note that these processes are often burdened with challenges and contradictions. Although they could represent emancipatory attempts at enabling long-term social transformation, they can also often be co-opted as well, by taking over the responsibilities of the state (or what is left of the welfare state) and the costs of self-reproduction, or are transformed into new mechanisms for producing profit. This does not imply that such practices should not be supported and experimented with. Rather, it means that it is necessary to always keep a (self-)critical (or, one could even use the provocative, but insightful notions of 'heresy' or 'auto-immunity') position in analysing and understanding various aspects of commoning experiences, in order to guard their political potentiality (Timotijević 2018).

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CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

THE CONTEXT
OF THE FORMER
YUGOSLAV REGION

In the ex-YU region, as a European periphery, it may be argued that accumulation by dispossession has been the driving force of expanding capitalist relations, pushing struggles for the commons to the centre of political mobilization (Dolenec et al. 2013, 2). Yet, actions based on the logic of the commons were present long before its articulation through the contemporary theoretical framework of Ostrom and others. Tomašević (2018, 59–60) offers a brief and insightful overview of commons-related institutions and practices prior to WWII, including the specific form of family *cooperatives,* mainly characteristic of agricultural organizations. However, here we would like to place an emphasis on the postwar period and its unique historical, social and economic organization, which was quite relevant for the concept of commons and which represents a specific collective experience in this particular region.

After World War II, Yugoslavia developed a globally distinct socio-economic system of *self-management socialism* based on both an anti-capitalist and an anti-centralist-state logic. The Yugoslav socialist experiment with self-management emerged after the break with the Soviet Union in 1948 and its centralized model of socialism. It represented a unique existing economic and political system that appeared in contradistinction to both state socialism (with its primacy of public property) and state capitalism (with its primacy of the market and private property), but at the same time it did not completely transgress either of these, thus generating numerous contradictions and challenges.

An important part of this project was the development of the concept of ***socially owned property***, i.e. social ownership of all means of production. Despite already limiting private property and pushing for state property over the means of production and institutionalizing cooperatively owned property in the 1946 Constitution, it was after the split with the Soviet Union (SSSR) that state property changed status and became societal property, in line with the new system of self-management. This specific regime of ownership meant that, at least nominally, all means of production were accessible to the whole of Yugoslav society. The later 1963 Constitution officially declared societal property and self-management as "supreme values in all aspects of social life" (Tomašević et al. 2018, 61). The category of social ownership represented the backbone of the ***self-management*** system. This model, applied

on a uniquely wide scale across the whole of society,[1] was introduced in the Basic Law on the Management of State Economic Enterprises in Workers' Collectives, dating from 1950. Despite being introduced in a top-down fashion by the official ideologues and functionaries of the League of Communists (with Edvard Kardelj, Milovan Djilas and Boris Kidrič the most prominent), self-management initiated the decentralization and dispersion of political power into smaller units (Sekulić 2012, 19) in which workers had the formal possibility to take part in decision-making, but also to improve the deficiencies of the central planning system, which was unable to meet the needs of the people (Unkovski 2014, 9). The self-management model thus offered a rationale for workers' participation as the organizing mechanism of the entire society, as well as for the more just distribution of the nation's wealth. It was institutionalized as an official system with the Constitutional Law, adopted in 1953. Self-management was developed from the *workers' councils* on the level of enterprises, elected by employees through electoral units (in larger enterprises the councils might consist of between 15 and 120 members). The next level would be the *branch associations,* all the way up to the larger *Council of Producers*, which had representatives in parliament (Matković 2018, 32). Besides the political representation, the enterprise's capital was channelled into investment funds oriented toward the different needs of workers and the enterprise itself – toward a *common* interest. This part of the leading League of Communists was an ambiguous one. On the one hand, the whole self-management system was designed so that power could be decentralized and the League could not directly influence workers' councils. Yet on the other hand, in practice its influence was much larger through its power to appoint the enterprise management or through the trade unions as well (Pateman 1972, 92).

The housing policy of the time represents an appropriate illustration of both of these main features of the Yugoslav socialist system, in terms of its production and distribution. The overall goal was socialist and egalitarian – the provision of subsidized housing for Yugoslavia's industrial workers – even though in practice, the system was somewhat more erratic. The cornerstone of the Yugoslav housing policy was the construction of socially owned housing: apartment buildings that were built with enterprises' funds and bank credits and distributed to employees in urban areas of Yugoslavia for use at subsidized prices. For as long as the apartments remained socially owned property, the tenants would have a life-long *right of occupancy*. The new socialist model treated an apartment as a basic worker right and was not considered a commodity, as prescribed in the Regulation on the Management of Residential Buildings in 1953 (Sekulić 2012, 20). For that purpose, a partial nationalization of the existing housing fund was carried out in the cities (1958), while the real-estate city development land markets were abolished. The state, with an internal combination of political will, (newly formed) expert institutions and a financier role (through a budget redistribution) in the first phase of the existence of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, became a dominant, central factor in urban development. The interest of the population, in an ideal-type case, was protected by legislation wherein the formulation of the "right to housing" accented the non-commercial, that is the use (rather than exchange) value of apartments. The right to housing thus effectively

[1]   Carol Pateman writes in her famous book *Participation and Democratic Theory* that Yugoslavia represents an un avoidable subject of analysis in democratic theory for being a unique historical attempt to "introduce industrial democracy on a large scale, covering enterprises of many sizes and types over a whole economy". (Pateman 1972, 88).

meant that society as a whole was responsible for providing housing for all citizens. Furthermore, the Resolution on the Basic Principles of Housing Legislation, passed by the Federal Assembly in 1957, concluded that "the self-managed housing community of citizens living in a housing block or settlement, directly or through their elected representatives manage their basic common everyday social affairs" (Sekulić 2012, 22). The financing of housing was based on principles of solidarity and reciprocity,[2] which meant that aside from the enterprise's fund, a monthly sum was deducted from each salary, which would go straight into a housing fund. In such a way, workers invested collectively in society's housing policy, which in return brought certain rights, as well as obligations. Decisions about the distribution of the apartments were made by the Workers' Council. One downside to the system, however, was that it was unable to provide sufficient numbers of flats for the huge numbers of workers moving to the cities. In addition, the distribution of socially owned apartments was not fully transparently processed. Namely, the distribution process favoured white-collar and skilled workers rather than blue-collar workers (Archer 2018). However, even with an awareness of such problems, the system was based on the presupposition of a common contribution and system of resource ownership that fulfilled people's basic need for housing.

Unfortunately, after the economic reforms of the mid-1960s began, which more explicitly introduced the (impossible) attempt to mix a socialist state and market logic, over time the market elements prevailed and in 1989, self-management was officially denounced, failing under the pressure of efficiency and growth, and considered an "irrational division of work and productivity". While economically unevenly developed and unstable, political tensions between governments in different Yugoslav republics grew into what became a final disintegration process.

After 1990, in most of these soon-to-be-independent states, nationalist forces came to power bringing war conflicts, economic devastation and political and economic transformations. The strong nationalist agendas were accompanied by the restoration of capitalist relations. However, it is important to note that this postsocialist transition represented a "neoliberal turn" from real-socialism to a *periphery* capitalism (Balunović 2019). Namely, in the former Yugoslav region, as a European periphery, it may be argued that "accumulation by dispossession" (to refer to David Harvey) has been the driving force of expanding capitalist relations, in a very condensed manner, to ever new domains of society. The politics of austerity and the accompanying drive for continual privatization and commodification have been jeopardizing public governance both of natural resources such as water and land, and of publicly managed services such as education, healthcare or the media. As all social spheres are pressured into demonstrating their short-term economic value, private ownership has invariably been presented as a superior solution.

Harvey (2011) explains how capitalism in crisis needs a "spatial fix" so surplus capital can finally be invested in physical space where it can secure a satisfying profit rate in order that surplus labour (the unemployed) can be put back inside the production process. Former Yugoslav cities have thus overnight become a spatial framework both for the accumulation

[2]   The Law on Financing of Housing Construction from 1986 states in Article 1 that "Based on the solidarity and reciprocity, organizations of Associated Labour, and other self-managed organizations and communities, as well as society at large, must take action and create opportunities for every man to realize his needs for housing, as well as the fundamental requirements for social security", see: Sekulić 2012, 25.

of new capital and its rent, and for the materialization of surplus capital in the real-estate market. The global financial crisis hit hard on this region, which was so efficiently deindustrialized after socialism and dependent on financial services and real-estate markets. These structural problems, however, cannot be resolved in the European periphery.

Furthermore, these political and economic processes were accompanied by an intensive stigmatization of the socialist period (of course outside of the academy, or rather, outside of the academic left). This was alongside the imposition of a discourse of privatization, deregulation and financialization as the pathway to becoming the "developed West that we have been lagging behind" (Todorova 2005, 145). As a *fast-forward from backwardness*, socialism was presented as a case of being astray, pushing all the well-known stereotypes together that refer to all socialisms as if they are a monolith and an authoritarian, even totalitarian one. In that way, this legacy of self-management and societal property in former Yugoslav societies in fact became a major obstacle to advocating for the entire horizon of contemporary forms of collectivity – collective ownership, production or distribution (Tomašević et al. 2018, 64) (Slovenia seems to be the exception here, with its official United Left Party that openly uses the vocabulary of the socialist system).

Stuck between the condition of being a peripheral capitalist economy amidst growing populist nationalism, the former Yugoslav region continues its turbulent existence. The increasing role of austerity policies and measures, especially after the global crisis, gradually brought about a severe reduction in the welfare state, or what was left of it after the postsocialist period, with a radical shift toward a more market-oriented and market-dependent (de)regulation, followed by the growth of unemployment, brain drain, the rise of xenophobia and other harmful effects on people's lives and societies as a whole, further deepening existing tensions in the region.

However, such urgency has generated practices that will appear as emancipatory, while the concept of commons re-actualized by Ostrom and others that followed, offered not just the conceptual apparatus to articulate what those practices and struggles are, but also legitimized wider public attention to the socialist legacy as well. Movements, organizations, and locally based community initiatives took the role of occupying and creating urgent spaces for providing social services in a context of scarcity, as well as experimenting with different forms of the community-based management of resources and co-production, thus having an increasingly significant role in opening up new perspectives for social and political transformation. In addition, such efforts were achieved through regional cooperation (referencing former Yugoslav societies), which were especially valuable in times of nationalist tendencies. These practices are often perceived within the discourse of the commons (although itself contested), since they *reintroduce* solidarity, equal access, common decision-making, cooperation in production and just distribution. But even more importantly, these practices create new political subjects. It is precisely this kind of subjectification and emancipation process that has undoubtedly, and regardless of the numerous justified ex-post criticism, already been inscribed once in our relatively recent history – during the period of real-socialism in the second half of the 20th century. Even though these above-mentioned actors did not explicitly position themselves in the language of the commons, they initiated a radical critique of the political economy of capitalism, and affirmed principles of direct democracy, participation and solidarity that lie at the heart of commons struggles (Dolenec et al. 2017).

SER-
BIA

After the fall of the socialist regime and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Serbia was largely involved in all of the 1990s conflicts and had an authoritarian nationalist regime, overthrown in 2000, only to then have a government pushing even harder for neoliberal measures and a transition into a country nominally fit to join the EU. During this period marked by a process of "restructuring", *privatization* has been a paradigmatic concept. Private property was promoted as more efficient and less corrupt (when it comes to public enterprises and the means of production) and at the same time more secure (when it comes to housing stock). Privatization started with a programme of macro-economic stabilization in 1989, still within the former Yugoslav state, and was further confirmed through the 1991 Law on Conditions and Procedures of Transforming Societal Property to Other Forms of Property. However, it reached its peak only after 2000, when the Law on Privatization was written, adopted in 2001 (Balunović 2016, 84). Although it was initially planned as a 15-year-long process, it has never actually been completed to this day.

In addition to the enterprises, as in all other former Yugoslav republics, there was a process of the massive privatization of housing stock occurred at a rapid pace mostly during the 90s. Once the government had decided to allow the privatization of socially owned flats, a special section was added to the new Law on Housing passed in 1992, which regulated the buyouts of socially owned flats. This law regulated who had the right to buy out the apartment, and how the price would be calculated (Sekulić 2012, 60). The prices were quite affordable, so with strong propaganda on the importance of private *homeownership*, the response to this opportunity was massive. Unfortunately, this process has only strengthened existing social inequalities, created by the previously mentioned fact that the number of so-

cially built housing units did not suffice for all workers, nor was it equally distributed across classes. The space was no longer perceived as a common resource, but as a potential resource of profit, a commodity to be exchanged and a currency in which one should save their capital. As a final result, Serbia is presently a country with 98% privately owned housing stock. Any kind of housing solutions, other than market-mediated ones and an insignificant number of social housing units, such as a nonprofit housing cooperative, are discouraged as the cooperatives in general are seen as just another profit-based enterprise.

A final layer to the privatization that transformed the urban context of Serbia was the process of land privatization. A measure permitting the extended possibility of private land ownership, which was no longer limited to some actors, has radically influenced and pushed forth Serbia's neoliberal urbanization. Namely, in 2015, Serbia adopted the Law on Conversion of Right to Use to Right to Own, of Construction Property with Compensation (OG RS 64/2015), whose main goal was to "unleash investments in the construction sector". Enabling construction property to be privatized might bring about a short-term increase in the public budget, but it significantly diminishes the possibility of the community, municipality or state influencing the further development of that property. To turn to Samuel Stein (2019, 10) – private control of the land undoubtedly means that "those who possess property, capital and access to power will shape planning priorities" of our cities.

Aside from the spatial resources, privatization has been a common tendency in all aspects of social reproduction – education, industry, health, etc. – slowly destroying the inherited public services and infrastructure of the socialist state. This has structurally changed the production and social relations in Serbia, creating a vast inequality gap and leaving an increased number of citizens deprived from the basic conditions for decent living.

Such a tendency has been followed by a political, or rather policing, strategy coming from the government and its continual centralization of power. Citizens' participation has been either completely removed from the procedures of decision-making (whether in urban planning, adoption of legislation or public budget spending), or is only performed *pro forma*, in order to fulfil the international institutions' demands and standards. In return, a significant number of citizens have lost the agency over time to enter into any forms of collective deliberation or struggle to reclaim the right to the city – right to demand participation in all decisions that directly affect our lives.

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As is the case in the entire region and beyond, the neoliberal measures and the urgency of overcoming the deficiencies of public services in fulfilling the needs of *all* citizens, have produced many resistance practices and struggles that have not only put forward a critique of neoliberal capitalism and deficient democratic mechanisms, but have also articulated demands for radically different production relations, (re)new(ed) democratic institutions and models of social organization.

In Serbia, after 2000, the largest mobilizations on the topic of the commons happened at Belgrade University, the biggest one that gathers students across the entire country (during the period from 2010 to 2014). Insufficient budgetary funds and the exposure of faculties to market competition caused a drastic increase in tuition fees that prevented

members of society's poorer strata from accessing higher education. However, the problem is not only one of direct charges for education, but also of the whole process of commodification, in which knowledge was standardized and directed toward the needs of the market. In this situation, education lost its emancipatory potential and was used only to create an army of qualified individuals and highly adaptive labour power (Stojanović et al. 2013).

Following 2014, another significant mobilization occurred as a reaction to the devastation and privatization of the Belgrade Waterfront, through the initiative Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own (srp. Ne da(vi)mo Beograd). This flagship project aimed to convert hundreds of acres of public land in the city centre into exclusive residential and office spaces, investing public funds in a private investment and offering privileges to a specific investor. The suspension of the legislation, an aggressive investor campaign, the severe violations of the previous tenants' rights to the terrain alongside the plunder of space provoked a reaction by a large crowd of people from different political–ideological positions and backgrounds.

Other instances of creating actual common spatial resources that have produced different social and production relations among users, as well as forms of common governance, have also emerged in recent years through examples of autonomous spaces of resistance to capitalist modes of social reproduction. One of the first occupations was one at Inex Film in 2011. The building of Inex Film was the headquarters of a former film production company, vacant and unused after privatization. A group of local artists, cultural workers and activists, led by the Ministry of Space collective (srp. Ministarstvo prostora), initiated what they called Expedition Inex Film – a process of occupying and commoning this space, in order to create an open space for various cultural events, social practices, an independent art scene, educational programmes for local neighbours, etc. The space was reconstructed and maintained through a common effort by groups of organizations and individuals, up until the end of 2015, when the contributors dispersed in order to form other such spaces and struggles. One of these was triggered by the massive privatization and enclosure of all cinemas in Belgrade in 2014. After a campaign by the Ministry of Space that contextualized this privatization in a larger economic and political framework, a group of activists and students occupied one of the cinema buildings – Cinema Zvezda.[3] This action was coupled with mass media attention and support from different, even international actors. Although many would estimate that the action was not significantly large in number, it should be acknowledged that it brought, or rather subjectivated a broader set of actors and initiatives that further introduced not only new ideas and concepts of the Left, but also created different common resources themselves. Part of the organizations and individuals participating in Inex Film were also involved in the already widely known cultural centre Magacin, another self-managed space in Belgrade. A variety of users (i.e. organizations gathered around the Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia, but also collectives and activists from different fields) democratically run this centre in the Nolit warehouse (Yugoslav Publishing House). With its very dynamic and ambiguous relation to the local authorities, this centre has resisted various conflicts and evictions, developing into an expanding common space with an increasing

[3]   See: www.nytimes.com/2015/01/17/opinion/when-movies-and-markets-clash.html

number of users. Participatory mechanisms such as the Open Calendar, which they have developed over time, represent a powerful tool for other commoners to use in their own contexts.

The model of the Open Calendar is one of the most important elements of the Initiative for the Revitalization of the Former Army Hall (srp. Dom vojske) in Šabac, initiated in 2014 by groups and organizations such as Kombinart, Sportsko dijagnosticki centar Šabac, Svetlost, Asocijacija za Mir, Asocijacija Duga, Vozi Ulice and Društvo Arhitekata Šapca.[4] The idea behind this initiative is to protect the former military space from decay and to adapt it for cultural and social programmes of the future independent youth centre. Although these organizations have created very detailed plans of use and programmes, including the relations between the City of Šabac (owner of the property) and future users in terms of management (civic-public partnership), it still has an unclear status. Unfortunately, in many towns in Serbia, such facilities are mostly abandoned and decaying, even though there have been numerous proposals coming from different citizens initiatives for activating the spaces through cultural activities, like in Valjevo, Vršac, Užice, Kruševac and so on. The reasons for having a great number of abandoned spaces for almost two decades are often non-transparent privatization processes which end (or not) in court, unclear property relations and ownership statuses mostly due to the restitution of property, lack of financial resources or complete absence of political will and engagement.

Another alternative cultural centre that emerged as a child of the collective action impulse moving out from the Inex Film initiative is the Nest (eng. Gnezdo), developed in 2017 in Kruševac, a city in southern Serbia, in a local soccer team's old building. It was collectively reconstructed and repurposed to become a *nest* for the contemporary art and local artistic scene. Led by a citizens' initiative Fakiri sa Juga, this centre functions as an open space that connects creatives from the local community. Unfortunately, as an indicative development in this kind of situation, two years after the establishment of this centre, the local authority and soccer association decided to take over the space for the purposes of association's offices. At present, negotiations between the authorities and the cultural centre, with wide citizen support, are ongoing.

Another example, Street Gallery (srp. Ulična galerija),[5] started as an occupation of a street alley in 2010 by the Ministry of Space collective. It represents a pioneer venture in an attempt to reconstruct and revive a ruined and neglected public space in downtown Belgrade, in order to refurbish it for cultural and artistic purposes of a non-commercial character. With barely negotiated consent from the city authorities, the Street Gallery formally opened in 2012, and eventually became a 24/7 open gallery with a continual programme of exhibition openings, concerts, performances and debates. Not only was the exhibition space open – unlike institutionalized galleries – to critical artistic expressions, and socially and politically engaged topics, but it was also run as a commons. The Street Gallery brought together and articulated positions from both the cultural and social margins. Its purpose surpasses its gallery and cultural function; hence, its fundamental role lies in questioning the possibilities of the existence of such spaces, and – beyond the space – how relationships affect the city's

4   See: www.facebook.com/notes/%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%BE-%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0
       %B2%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%9B/plan-za-revitalizaciju-zgrade-do
       ma-vojske-u-%C5%A1apcu/10153183948610718/

5   See: www.ulicnagalerija.rs

development. This gallery inspired the creation of several similar spaces in Serbia. Thus, the network of street and open galleries has branched out in Novi Pazar, Valjevo, Novi Sad, Smederevo and Šabac.

In an attempt to particularly address the neoliberal transformation of the housing sector, several initiatives have emerged across Serbia. Who Builds the City (srp. Ko gradi grad)[6] has exposed and discussed existing norms and models underlying the housing sector in Serbia and the lack of affordable housing through their work. Aside from being one of the founders of the housing justice movement Joint Action Roof Over Head (presented in detail in this study), they have also since 2012 started the Smarter Building (srp. Pametnija zgrada)[7] initiative which gathered together those interested in creating the first contemporary housing cooperative in Serbia. Through their methodology and activities, the Smarter Building initiative practices and promotes collective planning and responsible investment of resources (both material and immaterial). In recent years, the initiative joined forces with other similar projects and organizations from the Balkans and formed the MOBA Housing European Cooperative Society[8] in an attempt to develop strategies to improve structural conditions for development of cooperative housing in this region.

Another mobilization worth mentioning is one that emerged in Niš, one of the larger cities in the south of Serbia. Authentic bottom-up resistance within the initiative United Movement of Free Tenants occurred in the beginning of 2017, due to high heating utility bills in this town (in some cases the costs were doubled). Around 25 housing associations joined in demanding that the city authorities adjust the costs in line with the tenants' means. The initiative succeeded in mobilizing a great number of citizens in a series of protests and even delegating its members to the board of the municipal enterprise that produced district heating. The struggle over heating costs developed into a local struggle for participation and democratization of the local governance and policies until the present moment.

Although the entire framework of the commons has been recognized by particular (albeit very few) initiatives and organizations as a potent framework that could assist in articulating their needs and aims, only recently has there been a platform established that explicitly focuses on theories and practices of commons through various forms of activities – from the educational programme Studies of Commons, to various research studies on economic democracy and perspectives of commons in local contexts, through to media productions on the subject of commons. The platform Zajedničko.org[9] was established in 2017 by three organization members (Nova Iskra, the Ministry of Space and the Regional Centre for Philosophy and Social Theory), but has since grown in membership and transformed into an open entity with individual members from various fields (digital activism, architecture, political science, philosophy, sociology, geography, etc.). The platform itself is an experimental model of collective organization and participatory management.

These represent only a mere selection of the diverse variety of practices and struggles that should also find their place in a comprehensive mapping of commons, but will not be further analysed in this particular study.

6   See: www.kogradigrad.org
7   See: www.pametnijazgrada.rs/en/home
8   For more information on their activities and achievements visit: moba.coop
9   See: zajednicko.org

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The topic of commons has not been clarified with respect to past practices from before Kosovo's independence in 2008 and what this term means in the postwar period. People's perceptions of public property today seem to be vague and uninformed, whereas the commons represents a rarely deliberated concept. As a territory, Kosovo has been debated since its existence, with the struggle to be accepted as an independent territory inside the Balkans. This process has been centuries long and has left its people exposed to various political and national perceptions of independence. The reclaiming of resources has been a path towards the establishment of an independent nation where 'Albanians' would be settled. The reclaiming of resources (territory) for the creation of the nation-state Kosovo has been a struggle, translated and pursued only via nationalistic means, where Kosovo-Albanians were in demand for their freedom to pursue their right to language, nationality, culture and religion. This process reached its peak with the Kosovo War of 1999, where Kosovo-Albanians decided not to obey the regime of Serbia any more. After the end of the war, the United Nations started a special mission in Kosovo called UNMIK (United Mission in Kosovo), which took on the role of administering Kosovo at that time (Bajrami 2012, 74–75). All the properties and social enterprises fell under this new status quo at that time. In November 1999, UNMIK passed a regulation establishing the Housing and Property Directorate and the Housing and Property Claims Commission. Its main purpose was to clear the property disputes (mostly between civilians) that arose after the war. The main problem, however, was that those institutional mechanisms did not have enough acting power, and the claims that were made were categorized as mostly dangerous (thus evading ethnic tensions) (Vagle and De Medina – Rosales 2006).

Part of the "peacebuilding" process included the development of Kosovo's economy. The method used to repurpose public resources for economic development was *privatization* – a typical neoliberal instrument. The supporting structures never considered any other options that may have been better suited to the situation in Kosovo (Augestad Knudsen 2013, 291), and so socially owned enterprises had to be privatized. With the establishment of the Kosovo Trust Agency (KTA) in 2004, all properties with the "socially owned enterprise" status were delegated to it. The main goal of the KTA was to administer and then privatize those properties. Even though the KTA faced legal problems in verifying the ownership of those properties, it still proceeded with its mission, claiming that only private ownership would offer benefit to Kosovo (Augestad Knudsen 2013, 298).

Its successor's priority – the Privatization Agency of Kosovo (PAK) – was to continue the process of privatization using laws that had been amended by UNMIK and then passed. According to PAK Law (OG RK Law No. 04/L-34), all properties that were under its administration had to be privatized using a more direct approach.[10] According to this law, just as for the KTA, there were two methods: liquidation and spin-off privatization. Liquidation entailed selling the enterprises and its assets, whereas spin-off privatization entailed selling assets, but without selling the entire socially owned enterprise. By selling those enterprises, out of the entire income from privatization, only 20% was allocated to the ex-workers, while 5% would go to the privatization agency.[11] The restriction on operating these enterprises before selling and amortization damaged their values, making them value-less. In the end they were sold cheaply due to mismanagement and corruption (Augestad Knudsen 2013, 299).

With Kosovo going through a process of recovery and institution building, on 17 February 2008 the Assembly of Kosovo followed with a declaration of independence. Thus, Kosovo gained a status of so-called "supervised self-governance" under the European Union, with recognized national symbols and institutions for its governance. This positive ending to Kosovo's process for independence was also achieved through the negligence of many structures toward social and cultural developments that were seen as secondary.

When we look back from the time when the Kosovo War came to an end, up until today, at the establishment of state institutions and other structures that would support it, we can see a long period of struggles to establish forms of connectivity between society, its representatives and its territory. Often in different discourses you can hear arguments that justify negligence regarding public property and public spaces, in particular, in Kosovo in terms of the "public" belonging to the *enemy*,[12] and that still today the public or state institutions do not reflect a sense of common ownership and responsibility for what is not otherwise private, a concept very much strengthened after the Kosovo War. This negligence toward

10   According to the official website of the PAK, up until 2020 there were 104 waves of selling, 1809 assets were sold and 732 841.863 Euros were allocated of which 130 513.659 euros (20%) were given to the ex-workers.

11   For more details regarding the privatization procedures can be found on the official website the Privatization Agency of Kosovo, see: www.pak-ks.org

12   As the period of Yugoslavia is perceived as an occupation of the Kosovo territory, not only that the public/state-owned/official was seen as one of the enemy, but also the public spaces were often the places of police repression and visible ethnic segregation towards Albanian-Kosovars. Hence the relation to the public (space) persists still as problematic and contentious.

public property today in Kosovo is manifested by the public institutions themselves and by the people. With the recovery that followed after the end of the war and with the intervention of international missions, no institutional (local or foreign) process was concerned with the need to establish a sustainable common discourse among citizens and to implement methodologies in which citizens would have been involved in the creation of their own independent institutions, by which we mean better, direct democracy. Most of the people felt incapable of intervening in what was called "state creation", because the actors and the problems were seen, or at least communicated, as being too big to be solved by Kosovo's citizens alone. Political figures became the main focus of the discourse, which switched the importance of the long fight for collective independence to totalitarian approaches to governance, thus excluding the need for deepening the discourse in direction to the need for belonging and citizen involvement.

When we look back in time and reflect today, we can see that citizens of Kosovo are undergoing the same path for reclaiming territory, but now inside of their own country. Speaking from the commons' discourse, Kosovo or initiatives mentioned in this publication mainly face the difficulties of accessibility and the right to *govern* their own spaces; whether they are called public or common. Where the problem lies inside this struggle is underlined into three main dimensions – urgency, legislation and approaches. The state institutions have prioritized the urgency for capital and economic development, creating legislation that denies accessibility and privatize resources, and most importantly the people who have gained their access have not changed their approach – what is not *private* is referred to as 'cultural'.

For the possibility of establishing a safe space to practice commons, there lies the need for legal security, thus Opportunity for All Initiative (alb. Iniciativa Mundësi për krejt) for changing the law on Allocation for Use and Exchange of Municipal Immovable Property started in 2017. After the establishment of the community of Termokiss (presented in detail in this study), hundreds of people and tens of organizations nationwide signed a petition for changing the law on property regulation that was administered by the municipality of Pristina. According to the law at that time, social initiatives and organizations had to compete against businesses for the allocation of municipal (public) property. Based on that law, businesses had many more advantages. The demands of the Opportunity for All Initiative was to change the law, so that social initiatives and organizations may claim property as a separate category, so they will not have to compete with businesses. Also, other demands directed at the municipality included annually publishing a list of all properties available. After making their demands public, the legal procedure started where the legal proposals were made, and on the 25 March 2018 the Law no. 06/L-092 on Allocation For Use And Exchange Of Municipal Immovable Property (OG RK Law no. 06/L-092) was passed. With the new law, most of the demands were attained, and the second phase of drafting a regulation that signifies the procedure that must be taken to claim the municipal property started and is still ongoing. With the new Law on the Use of Municipal Property, the possibilities for social initiatives and organizations have increased enormously.

Many other forms of resources are in dispute in Kosovo, but they are only fought over to protect them from privatization and misuse rather than a need to govern them commonly, but recognizing the fact that aiming for the commons first means recognizing and reclaiming resources to later hopefully also commonly governing them. The urgency

today in Kosovo remains highly relevant toward the protection of natural resources; here to speak we take another example of struggle for natural commons such as the initiative Don't touch our Lumbardh[13] (alb. Mos ma prek Lumbardhin). The initiative was started in Peja/ Peć in February 2019, by citizens of Peja/Peć supported by an organization called ERA Group Kosovo – Environmentally Responsible Action (ERA). Their demands were to stop the building of hydroelectric power stations on the Lumbardhi river flowing on the cities of Peja/Peć and Decan/Dečani. The building of the hydroelectric power stations was approved at Governmental level but opposed even by the municipality of Peja/Peć. It was proposed that the Hydroelectric power stations be built by the Austrian company KelKos-Energy. Hundreds of people opposed the project on 25 February 2019 and gathered on the squares of Peja/Peć for days after they made symbolic gestures by placing water tubes on bridges inside the city. After that protest more than 120 organizations nationwide wrote a letter[14] to the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Strategic Investments, listing all the reasons why they should not allow KelKos to build the hydrocentrals. Whereas, the cases explained in this publication will present us with different stages and aspects of commons' discourse. Nevertheless, the struggle is taking another path, the large privatization in a very short time during the postwar Kosovo created a generation in which resistance is manifested in need for establishment of new narratives of belonging, also under the pressure with Kosovo still remaining as the only territory in Europe with visa restrictions.

In this publication, cases of struggles towards the reclaiming of the public and/or common ground have been presented where culture is the practice of sharing these resources. This publication also presents success stories of reclaimed public space to be further used as commons. We consider all the cases being presented as a reflection of a process that Kosovo has to undergo on a local level to be able to establish spaces of commoning.

13   See: www.facebook.com/mosmapreklumbardhin
14   Full letter available here: kallxo.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Letter-to-the-Inter-Ministerial-Commission-on-Strategic-Investments-with-List-1-1.pdf

MON-
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Despite being inextricably linked with the socialist past of the former Yugoslavia, the notion of the commons in Montenegro today has been primarily shaped by the lived experience of postsocialist transition. The ideas of shared ownership, common management and joint volunteer actions aimed at achieving a common goal might still be associated with socialist history, but they are also becoming increasingly important in articulating new ways of living and working together in our neoliberal present.

The transition process in Montenegro has been painful. The northern region of the country, mostly rural and traditionally underdeveloped, has suffered from deindustrialization, depopulation and environmental degradation. The latter is usually caused by extractive industries and the construction of infrastructure, but has most recently been provoked by the overwhelming number of small hydropower plants that are taking over the northern river streams and disrupting local ways of living and rhythms of agricultural production. Central and coastal regions have also grappled with the loss of industry, with former industrial sites mostly turned into building grounds for residential and commercial uses. The privatization of urban land, and especially the privatization of interests served by urban development policies, have given rise to spatial and social inequalities, the neglect of public space and the destruction of the environment. Spaces, movements and struggles that can be defined as urban commons in Montenegrin cities today can all be traced back to the discontents caused by this appropriation of postsocialist urban space by capitalism, which Golubchikov (2016) calls "the urbanization of transition". Such discontents have, in various forms, been present in Montenegrin society throughout the last three decades, manifest in efforts to oppose the dominant models of development and articulate alternatives. Even when they have not been meticulously

documented and analysed, these efforts, victories and defeats have remained an important point of reference for future acts of common struggle and creativity.

One of the main fronts for civic action has been environmental protection, which might seem odd, considering that in 1991 Montenegro declared itself the first ecological state in the world. This admirable title, however, was compromised whenever it was inconvenient for the government to uphold, or when it was out of line with the demands of neoliberal development. To oppose destructive policies and projects, civic initiatives have consistently stepped up and acted to protect the common interest (Komar 2015). Thus, Tara Canyon was protected from exploitation in 2004; Valdanos Bay was not privatized due to continuous civic opposition from 2008 until 2014; and Beranselo successfully fought off the formation of an illegal landfill site in 2014, after four years of protest (see Baća 2017). By recognizing the value of the common good and bringing communities together to defend it, these struggles showed that victory is possible and paved the way for future action which, as we will see, is increasingly concerned with environmental preservation in urban settings and is critical of the neoliberal urban development model.

The idea of creating common spaces and defending common interests through joint action is important and present in Montenegro, although the theoretical framework of commons is not usually used to define and position certain spatial and social practices vis-à-vis the dominant neoliberal paradigm. The actions are often motivated not by the clearly defined intention to create an alternative way of living and working together, but by the need to have a space for community to meet and act, or by the struggle to protect an important cultural and natural heritage from destruction. An important example of the later is the campaign for the protection of Ulcinj Salina, a former salt factory which, over decades of salt extraction, has become an artificial – but crucial – bird habitat in the Adriatic basin. The factory, along with the surrounding wetland area, was privatized in 2005 in a process which has been contested ever since by local activists and several organizations, CZIP (eng. Center for Protection and Research of Birds) and MANS (eng. Network for Affirmation of the Civic Sector) most prominent among them. This long local struggle against destroying Ulcinj Salina for the sake of developing new private hotels attracted international attention and support from European and global environment protection networks. Finally, in June 2019, the area was declared a natural park. This marked an important victory for nature preservation in Montenegro, and for civic activists who voiced common interest and worked towards this goal for more than a decade.

Protecting the environment in Montenegro often means opposing the dominant narrative of achieving progress through privatization and development of space in accordance with private business interests. Organization KANA / Who if not architect[15] has been active since 2015, with the goal to promote and protect modernist architectural heritage. Over time, this goal expanded to include observation and critical analysis of urban planning processes and results. The organization has led several campaigns for protection of modernist heritage and against dubious planning decisions which jeopardize public space and promote private over public interest. KANA / Who if not architects also has significant publishing activity, which problematizes the ways in which public interest is defined and represented in urban

15   See: www.facebook.com/koakonearhitekt

planning and heritage protection processes. Their work keeps bringing up the important issue of preserving architectural representations of the former self-management system, within which Montenegrin urbanity has largely been formed.

Bringing knowledge about the importance of natural environment to urban communities, into the city and making it practical is the project idea behind Bašta Ekologika,[16] an eco-community garden on the outskirts of Podgorica. It was founded in 2014 as the first urban gardening initiative in Montenegro, and every year it engages 15–20 gardeners working on separate plots, together with their families. Bašta works on numerous and diverse educational projects, including practical elementary school workshops on permaculture. It continues to be an important place to think about – and act to achieve – a better urban future.

Bokobran,[17] an initiative fighting against the destruction of landscape of Boka Bay, was formed in 2017. Boka Bay is a UNESCO protected world heritage site but threatened by the inadequate and overbearing construction activity resulting in ever shrinking and inadequate public spaces, damaged landscape and overall decrease in quality of life. Bokobran offers a platform through which these issues can be discussed, thus joining several other organizations from the Boka Bay area in trying to articulate public interest in the debate on the production of space.

The insistence on the need for spaces free from the pressure of profitability and open for the entire community has led to some promising new projects. One of them is Herceg Novi Youth Center,[18] a city-owned building currently used and jointly managed by a dozen civic society organizations and youth clubs. The Municipality of Herceg Novi pays the utility bills, while organizations using the space take care of the maintenance work. However, the existing arrangement is quite precarious: there is no written agreement between the parties involved, which means this situation could change in an instant.

The case of NGO Center in Kotor differs, as it is regulated by a contract. The Municipality of Kotor allocated an office space to the local civil society organizations in July 2017, and it is still the only local government in Montenegro to do so. The decision was based on the request submitted by ten organizations in need of space for work, and aware that suitable facilities exist, unoccupied and owned by the municipality. Allocated space was renovated in a joint effort – the city replaced the front door and windows, while the organizations invested their own funds, knowledge, volunteer time and energy in refurbishing the place and making it suitable for their work. The contract was signed after the renovation, in December 2018, for a period of two years. Since then, the local government has changed, which poses new challenges for the civic sector of Kotor: to ensure the extension of the contract, its own independent position, as well as good cooperation with the new administration.

Notable work of turning city-owned buildings into active spaces that bring the community together was completed by Cultural Center Punkt,[19] formed in Nikšić in 2015 by a group of young artists and professionals eager to change their city through arts. Their first projects included refurbishing a town house in the city centre – done in collaboration

16   See: www.facebook.com/bastaekologika
17   See: bokobran.me
18   See: www.facebook.com/OmladinskiKulturniCentarHN
19   See: www.facebook.com/KCPUNKT

with its occupants and finished with a unique mural – and turning a derelict army cultural centre into a gallery and concert space. Unfortunately, this cultural centre did not last long after Punkt has brought it back to life – the government decided to tear it down and build a new business and technology centre in its place. Still, it is remembered as a great example of how common devotion and action can alter forgotten city spaces.

Another interesting practice from the north of Montenegro is Summer Tango Camp[20] in Kolašin. Organized since 2013, this month-long event connects civic activists, independent and governmental cultural organizations, municipal and state institutions and local tourism businesses. The aim is to support the largely tourism-based local economy of this small town by creating a welcoming environment where people from all over the world can enjoy learning and dancing tango. The project usually receives modest financial support from the government, but it would not be possible without common effort. Hence, it represents a curious case of developing a communal solution to a problem of economic stagnation in the areas left behind by the dominant economic model.

[20]   See: www.summertangocamp.com

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CASE STUDIES

As mentioned in the introduction, the authors of this research selected and analysed 15 cases which are divided into practices and struggles for the purpose of this study. After being introduced through an immediate context that generated the conditions and motivation for either practice or struggle, the main structure of the case studies was set out in order to present different elements that we find relevant for the commons – for practices this was the resource, community and governance mode (drawing on the tripartite

definition stemming from the work of Elinor Ostrom), while for struggles this structure was modified to include history of the struggles, actors involved in it and its strategies. As we emphasized the importance of the critical understanding of the commons, all the cases have a final section – the conclusion – where we analysed them according to the level of politicization of the focal issues, relation to the commons discourse and normative criteria when assessing commons from a critical theory perspective.

SER-
BIA

Ne da(vi)mo Beograd / Don't let Belgrade d(r)own
(Belgrade)

Novo kulturno naselje / New Cultural Settlement
(Novi Sad)

Odbranimo reke Stare planine / Let's defend the rivers of Stara planina
(Pirot)

Združena akcija Krov nad glavom / Joint Action Roof Over Head
(Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica)

Kulturni centar Magacin / Cultural Centre Magacin
(Belgrade)

STRUGGLE
NE DA(VI)MO BEOGRAD / DON'T LET BELGRADE D(R)OWN

Iva Čukić

HISTORY OF THE STRUGGLE / IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

The development of the Serbian capital, Belgrade, over the previous decade represents the most explicit manifestation of neoliberal policies on the periphery. On the one hand, the imperative of economic growth most obviously translates into a certain amount of fast-paced land development and new constructions in order to accumulate (mostly foreign) capital, yet also acting as a quick fix to the state economy via temporary employment and tax money. While, on the other hand, such development occurs via untransparent and often corrupt procedures where the benefit is solely particular, rather than for the local community or citizens of Belgrade. The long-term damage that such projects produce also includes the (physical or implicit) enclosure of public spaces, the privatization of urban centres and the devastation of common infrastructure.

One of the first mass mobilizations against such developments was the opposition to the Belgrade Waterfront project. The project was first presented in 2012 during an election campaign, followed by a big comeback in the next election campaign in 2014. It was presented in the media as a vision to turn a devastated and neglected – but possessing high potential – part of central Belgrade, the Waterfront, into a 2-million square metre commercial complex consisting

of: hotels, office buildings, luxury apartments, the largest shopping mall in the Balkans and a Dubai-style 200-metre tower. The project *imposed* a new identity on the city and was promoted as a ticket-out-of-crisis to a country in which thousands of people's permanent-housing needs are not met, and where the number of people below the poverty line is increasing daily. This is a city with numerous ghost shopping venues and stores, where even in the central zone of Belgrade shopping and commercial spaces as well as whole buildings are vacant and decaying.

The master plan for the two-million square metre area that was bought back then, was provided by the investor, the Eagle Hills Company from Abu Dhabi, a recently established real-estate firm based in the United Arab Emirates. It was a spin-off company created for the purpose of this and several similar projects in different countries, with a financial plan based on equity and debt financing without property that could serve as a guarantee. This company's legitimacy was never questioned, even though the leaders of the company are known to have been involved in projects that have led to state debt (Abuja, Nigeria), the constant postponement of construction (Erbil Downtown, Kurdistan), the implementation of only a small part of what was originally intended (Crescent Bay, Karachi, Pakistan), and the sale of land (where local government is aware of the sale) that the company does not own (Mohali, India).

It was announced that the investor would invest 3.5 billion dollars. The obligation of the corporate partner would be to construct commercial and residential buildings, but no guarantees on return were provided. Serbia's obligations would include infrastructurally equipping the entire area and providing utility services for the beginning of construction in the area, as well as leasing more than 100 hectares of the most valuable land in Belgrade, suitable for building on, to the private investor.

The proposed solution was impossible to implement while simultaneously respecting Belgrade's urban plans, legislations and laws. So, by going beyond its authority and legally unauthorized to do so, the Serbian government has declared the project to be of national significance. Although the nature of this significance was never explained to the public, the project was fast-tracked as lawful. Instead of changing the investor's proposal in order to comply with the city's recognized needs and the long-term planned developmental path, urban plans and laws were rapidly changed. The City of Belgrade amended the city-planning documents to suit the needs of its corporate partner from the United Arab Emirates, breaching several dozen of its own laws and regulations. For example, as proposed by the investor, the Belgrade Waterfront masterplan conflicted with the General Urban Plan of Belgrade. In order to meet the General Urban Plan's (GUP) regulations, it would have had to have gone through numerous (conceptual) changes. Instead, the GUP was changed.

So, less than six months after the initial contact with the corporate partner, the city government introduced massive changes to its urban planning legislation in order to meet the desires of the potential investor. The supposed urgency to sign the deal with the investor was given as an excuse to rush things and even to implement the Lex specialis (the exceptional law), evicting hundreds of families living on the site, leaving many of them without permanent housing, in order to turn over the waterfront site without any obtained permissions or paperwork, not even obtained afterwards and acting without a single, signed agreement between the legal parties.

The contract between the state of Serbia and the Abu Dhabi based company was

eventually signed more than a year after the project implementation began. The information available from the contract revealed that the previously declared four years required to finish the project were stretched to 30 years so that Eagle Hills could speculate with the land (the first evaluation will be in 25 years), and the 3.5 billion investment then became 150 million euros, while the public investment remains more than a billion dollars' worth of work on clearing and preparing the land (for which the Serbian government even took out a 280 million loan from the investor). The full content of the contract was revealed to the public over five months later, a week before the first foundation stone was laid. Finally, the contract favours the investor by dividing the profit from the whole enterprise into a 68:32 ratio in favour of the foreign investor.

Therefore, instead of a project that was supposed to help the country recover its eco-

nomic strength, the potentially most valuable piece of land was offered under a lease of 99 years for only 150 million euros, and on top of that, after this period of time, the lessee would become the landholder. Besides all this, from the very beginning, the implementation of the project was followed by a strong promotional campaign, including illegal billboards and flags occupying public spaces, and promotional TV shows. Despite the number of violated regulations and laws, the huge amount of public money spent so far, and the fact that more than 200 families were removed or evicted from their houses, parts of the area were demolished and the massive riverside development commenced.

Furthermore, to clear the way for a massive government project, on the night of the parliamentary elections, in April 2016, around 30 masked men, accompanied by bulldozers tore down part of the Savamala district, and

illegally destroyed buildings, storage spaces, etc. on the proposed site of the Belgrade Waterfront. Night guards and random passers-by were tied down and harassed by the masked group of people. Although the citizens called the police and reported the entire case, the police did not react. State officials and the media remained silent about the incident for days. Some days later, the report of the Ombudsman[1] assessed that "it was an organized violation of citizens' rights, coordinated on multiple levels and between several state and non-state actors". The government initially denied any involvement by the city or state institutions in the destruction of the Savamala district, but according to the Serbian prime minister, the mystery of who was behind the night demolitions has been solved: top city officials gave the orders, but they did so out of "pure motives".

INVOLVED ACTORS/ COMMUNITY

The opposition to this project emerged in 2014 as an initiative on the part of two organizations, the Ministry of Space and Who Builds the City, both involved in the subject of urban development. These organizations were composed of a core group, and their first step was to invite people to jointly write down their comments on and objections to the proposed changes to the General Plan of Belgrade. The meeting brought together a hundred citizens, who pooled their expertise and knowledge and made dozens of objections to the General Plan. This action later brought together several organizations and individuals from different domains. The

1 The Serbian Ombudsman represents an independent institution of the Government of Serbia, responsible for investigating and addressing complaints made by citizens against other government institutions.

coalition arrived at the name Inicijativa Ne da(vi)mo Beograd (eng. the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own Initiative), but after a couple of months, it faded away.

Right after the decline of the initial coalition, the protagonists of Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own started gathering people from other local initiatives – architects, urban planners, cultural workers, artists – who supported the initiative in its claims against the privatization of public space, the devastation of the

city and the corrupt system. Since the group grew gradually, it later became a movement specifically founded as a reaction to the imposition of the Belgrade Waterfront project. This informal group had 10–20 people who were committed, able to react very quickly in different situations, and who had experience in organizing and campaigning. It was comprised of people with different profiles and professions, and brought together organizations and individuals interested and

active in the fields of urban development, environmental issues, housing, urban and cultural policies and the fair use of common resources. Depending on the situation, other organizations or individuals with specific expertise were occasionally engaged in the struggle. Almost from the very beginning, the Academy of Architecture of Serbia,[2] a

2   Other professional associations in the field of architecture and urban planning withdrew their support since they thought that the struggle was too political.

professional association engaged in architecture and town planning, supported the movement, which added further legitimacy to the struggle.

Up until the beginning of 2016 the core group was open to newcomers and people who expressed an interest in joining the movement. But, with the rise of public actions, demonstrations and intensified exposure, political pressures and threats increased as well, which led to significant anxieties over opening the core group up to other interested individuals. However, the movement decided to organize operational bodies and working groups, made up of people who wanted to get more involved, but who could not take part in the coordination body. This broader base of almost 100 volunteers never took part in the coordination meetings, but were more significantly included in campaigning, producing media content, preparing for protests, creating a visual identity and being on standby for actions that the coordination body proposed.

The coordination body held weekly meetings, depending on the situation, with sometimes even more frequent meetings (e.g. daily), when decisions had to be made. Besides these meetings, this body communicated through various means, including email groups, Viber or Signal apps or other channels depending on the kind of information and level of urgency. The online communication between the coordination body and other supporters usually went smoothly, but the movement also introduced offline meetings and gatherings, sometimes in the form of assemblies, for specific issues. Although the wider group setting was horizontal, it did not allow those who were not in the coordination/core group to have more leverage in decision-making.

Numerous street actions, institutional struggles and protests grew exponentially over the years, and so did the number of movement supporters. The "breaking point" was the demolitions that occurred in April 2016, on the night of the Serbian general elections. The demolitions sparked large mobilizations and protests demanding the resignation of city officials, and the largest protest in mid-2016 drew an estimated 25,000 people.

STRATEGIES OF STRUGGLE

Over the years, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own used different strategies and tactics depending on their effectiveness, as well as risks and resources. The use of nonviolent action campaigns and resistance featured as the most effective method available in the given circumstances. The movement involved a series of actions and street performances, as well as institutionalized tactics. Humour and creativity served the same purpose (Popović et al. 2017, 371), and all together they mobilized wide popular support.

The first public action of the initiative was to submit objections regarding the implemented changes to the General Plan of Belgrade. Based on the ensuing discussion, 100 citizens, activists and experts composed a text of objections, and over 2,000 filed them in a collective action. During a public review, the Planning Commission rejected most of these complaints, accepting just a few symbolic ones, in a vain attempt to maintain the appearance of a democratic procedure.

Several months later, the activists of the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own (now officially formed and much larger in number) opted

for a different tactic in opposing the Plan for the Area of Specific Use.[3] The movement activists chose not to give legitimacy to a process that was itself illegal. In one of their actions called Operation Lifebelt, the activists were equipped with inflatable armbands and lifebelts. They threw beach balls to one other, and sang songs about Belgrade, all to interrupt the illegal public hearing. Contrary to the activists' expectations, and despite the noise, this interruption did not take place. Instead, those present at the hearing continued their work, the complaints were again rejected, and the hearing was deemed successful. Once again, the total impermeability of the stakeholders to any form of public debate was proven.

The initiative continued to strongly and publicly oppose the project by pointing to and publicizing irregularities in the project's implementation. They utilized as much as possible tools such as the Law on Freedom of Information of Public Importance in order to gain access to and gather documentation. Unintentionally, the initiative's activities exposed the urban planning profession's subservience to the government, which resulted in the collective resignation of the board of the Society of Urbanists under the initiative's pressure. This made public activities that can only be seen as capitulation by the profession. Thus, it managed to shift the public discourse on the project from laudatory to critical.

As any media criticism was banned, the

initiative launched their own newspaper *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd*. In this way it informed the public of these and similar events and uncovered information of great importance, which was otherwise ignored by the mainstream media in which (self-) censorship reigns. However, even the newspaper provoked a response by the city authorities, who often punish initiative members handing out the newspaper on the streets, charging them with the "unauthorized spreading of advertising materials".

In step with the institutional struggle, the initiative organized dozens of events on the streets of Belgrade. The protests, which constantly grew in size, were organized to mark each pompously declared stage of the project. A yellow duck became the memorable visual emblem of these protests, as well as of the initiative and of opposition to the Belgrade Waterfront project more generally. The duck was chosen as a symbol because it keeps floating even when everything else sinks. Moreover, in Serbian slang, the word 'duck' also denotes a trick or deceit, as well as a penis. A large yellow duck (2 x 3m) was planted in front of the Serbian parliament building during the session in which the Lex specialis was passed. This special law, which is not supported by the Constitution, for the first time gave the state the right to expropriate private property in favour of a commercial project such as Belgrade Waterfront.

The movement has organized several protests against the construction of Belgrade Waterfront, but became famous mostly after organizing very large demonstrations with many thousands of people, after the demolitions in April 2016. It organized a series of street demonstrations, each of them gathering from 10 000–30 000 citizens who, through collective walks through the centre of Belgrade, demanded accountability for the inaction of the police officials and the

3   The Plan for the Area of Specific Use (OG RS 7/2015) prepared for the Belgrade Waterfront, is, according to planning law (OG RS 145/2014), created only for non-urban areas of particular importance – mining and coal seams, flooding areas, natural resources, etc. Furthermore, in contrast to the Master Plan of Belgrade as the highest-tier urban plan which can be implemented only by the regulatory plans, this plan is the national spatial plan and its implementation does not include the rounds of public debates and approvals by the actors at the city level, be these the planning commissions or general public (Čukić and Perić 2019).

resignation of the implicated city leaders (especially Mayor), as well as for greater freedom of media and expression (Veselinović 2017). Following this, the protests continued over 2017 pointing out that the new politics and institutions have to be created. In that respect, the political platform Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own was established at the end of 2017 for the local elections shortly after in March 2018. The initiative ran for the elections with a municipalist and commons-based agenda, and managed to get almost 3.5% of the votes in spite of the scarce resources and structural constraints. Despite the successful and massive mobilization of citizens, the 5% threshold was not crossed. Nevertheless, the political platform continued to fight for better living conditions, and against clientelism and corruption in the cities and the state. It continued to pursue its political agendas, creating alliances and networks at national-level politics as well.

Although the construction of Belgrade Waterfront was not prevented, this case was a relevant learning experience and struggle that motivated other struggles against the privatization of public spaces and resources and the violation of the needs of citizens, over the years to come. This was especially the case since the main narrative of the movement's campaign was located in a discourse on citizens' participation in decision-making and their inevitable role in protecting their neighbourhoods and public spaces from different types of usurpation and the exploitation of the city.

CONCLUSION

As a reaction to the mass privatization of public and common goods, the exploitation of natural resources, and degradation of social services, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiated a critique of the political economy of capitalism, and affirmed principles of direct democracy, participation and solidarity. The movement carried a highly articulated political message against corruption, right-wing and nationalist politics, actions and groups and in favour of human, civic, minority and migrants' rights, inclusion and participation (Popović et al. 2017, 370).

Although the narrative of the commons was not very explicit at the beginning of political mobilization, claiming the public goods, citizens' rights over it and collective decision-making was clear. Moreover, the discourse of public goods and the inevitable role of the citizens was in the centre of the struggle against the privatization and corrupted local establishment and authorities. Gradually, initiative began to use the slogan *The City is Ours!* (srp. Grad je naš!) which explicitly referred to the notion of commons, affiliating it with collective control over resources, sustainability, fair use and open access.

Over the years, Don't let Belgrade D(r)own positioned itself in a municipalist discourse that includes both the practices of self-government by towns, cities and city-regions – municipalities of different sizes – and any perspective that advocates for such forms of government. It has become a platform with the aim of building a new politics based on principles of wide participation, inclusiveness and openness. Following the examples of other municipalist movements in Europe (e.g. Barcelona en Comú, Cambiamo Messina dal Basso, Zagreb je naš, etc.), the initiative's political agenda includes promoting participatory democracy and returning decision-making powers to citizens, democratizing public institutions, safeguarding quality public services and stopping the privatization of public utilities, resources and infrastructures. In addition, one of the core themes of the initiative's political

agenda is the feminization of politics, which is not only related to having women taking more significant roles of representation and in decision-making processes, but to the ways of doing politics. This approach to politics challenges the masculine top-down dynamic, introduces new forms of leadership, prevents the concentration of executive power, and seeks out alternative collective identities that are powerful and inclusive.

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PRACTICE
NOVO
KULTURNO NASELJE
/
NEW
CULTURAL SETTLEMENT

Iva Čukić

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Novo Naselje[1] (eng. New Settlement), as
its name implies, is the most recently built
part of Novi Sad, Serbia. The neighbour-
hood's development began in 1957, during
the Socialist Yugoslav period, and today's
neighbourhood structure was defined over
the period 1977–1980, a period of mass,
concentrated construction. With almost 40
000 people living in this neighbourhood, this
"city within the city" has mainly housing,
two elementary schools and several pre-
school and other institutions, a lot of green
areas and spaces for outdoor activities, but
no cultural facilities or indoor spaces for
community gatherings. According to Mateša
and Jozić, with all its boulevards, parks, yards
and green spaces, Novo Naselje lacked a
communal space where its residents could go
to watch a film, a play, a concert, attend a lit-
erary event or the opening of an exhibition.

The need for cultural content has been
the topic of conversation since the eighties.
The notion of culture, as stated by Kuč, who
grew up there, was built by the generation

1 The settlement's old name was Novo Naselje, but
it was officially changed to Bistrica in 1992. However, the
inhabitants of the settlement still prefer to use the old name.

he belonged to, by constantly widening the cultural matrix to include: basketball courts, linguistics (slang), organizing cultural events at unusual locations (e.g. bomb shelters), and creating a variety of cultural programmes for the community. The absence of institutionally organized culture brought a new means of expression, which formed a paradox in that a generation without a single local cultural institution engaged in a massive "production of culture" (Kuč 2017, 11).

From the eighties to the present, through a variety of activities that have linked all kinds of art, the like-minded and the not, professionals and amateurs; they all had one thing in common – the creation of a cultural facility for their neighbourhood. The final idea "germinated" in a group of young people from the settlement, and it was named Novo Kulturno Naselje (hereinafter: NKN; eng. New Cultural Settlement). The initiative was created in 2014, born from the neighbourhood's necessity to create content that would bring people closer together.

RESOURCE

NKN's main resource is a meadow where the actual future centre ought to be placed. NKN manages to mobilize the community for joint initiatives and work to reanimate their neighbourhood through culture and art. Therefore, the majority of their activities take place in that open public space. Since it was founded, NKN has organized an impressive number and wide variety of events, programmes and projects, including but not limited to the theatre festival Aplauz Fest, the film festival 21114 (named after Novo Naselje's postcode), which screens local and regional films, the art festival Welcome to the Settlement (srp. Dobro Došli na Naselje), various art and educational workshops and many others. How-

ever, its main mission is to establish a cultural centre in Novo Naselje.

In order to address and draw attention to this resource's necessity, in 2019, together with the Lithuanian theatre director Gildas Aleksa and the Portuguese architect Pedro Cavaco Leitão, NKN explored the local community's needs and created a symbolic simulation of the neighbourhood's future cultural centre – Moving In: The Simulation of Culture Center Novo Naselje. To tackle the discussion, by examining current local cultural processes and similar examples abroad, two examples were presented at the not-yet-existing cultural centre: the best and the worst scenario that could happen with a new building for culture. The worst-case scenario was a cultural centre closed in on itself, oriented towards high art, and ignorant towards the real needs of the community, and the best-case scenario was wrapped around the statement – *What makes a community cultural centre work perfectly? The community*.

The centre was simulated through a human-scale layout, with the distribution of spaces and potential uses marked, constructed on a meadow. Workshops, panel discussions and presentations on the future cultural centre, which NKN has already been doing in the neighbourhood for years, were held in this *Dogville* setting. This led to the creation of the vision for the future centre, based on the local community's very active participation.

During the process of the creating and final shaping of Novi Sad's application for European Capital of Culture 2021, NKN applied with their initiative of forming and constructing a cultural centre in Novo Naselje – and the idea was accepted and included in the official list of projects. Hence, the proposal was considered by the local authorities who announced an open call for the future cultural centre project plan. This call was then

abolished and a new opportunity to renegotiate the status was created recently. As Mateša and Jozić stated, NKN is motivated to pursue its final goal, but at the same time it is very persistent in its communication, insisting that it is this centre that shapes and nourishes the community and prevents its decay.

COMMUNITY

The idea for the cultural centre came from spontaneous gatherings in a local pizzeria in 2009. According to Jozić and Mateša, this space was used to mobilize people around the idea of the cultural centre, and to create a new cultural code based on existing needs and socially-engaging activities. It gathered people together who viewed their community as very personal and who had a very special connection and possessiveness in relation to the neighbourhood in which they grew up and live. According to Nedić (2017), this particularly gave rise to the association NKN and the organization's activities.

The NKN association has a core team of five people who work closely with the established neighbourhood association towards achieving common goals. They bring together inhabitants and local organizations and depending on the activities they gather up to 1000 participants. There are no limitations concerning age or gender, nor discrimination based on disability, class, cultural background, religion or ethnic origin. Additionally, the diversity of the programmes for the community cultural centre, which NKN advocates, allows all generations and needs to be satisfied. In that sense, NKN focuses on community-driven engagement, which requires transparency, a strong commitment and the trust of all those involved.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

Public forums were the main mechanism for debates and community mobilization. They occurred spontaneously in the former local community centre (srp. mesna zajednica) or in the above-mentioned local pizzeria. Forums were publicized through door-to-door or mouth-to mouth communication and depending on the (burning) issues and activities to discuss, they would gather anything from a few people to a few dozen.

Yet, tired of this unstructured and organic approach, the participants began to experiment with clearer forms to achieve the hoped-for results, which entailed researching community attitudes towards the future centre. These forms included mechanisms for posing questions, surveys, the analysis of statistical data and the creation of working and various other groups. One of the key pieces of research on the future cultural centre was conducted both online and offline at various key locations in Novo Naselje. The research included participation on the part of 1174 respondents, of all ages, and the answers unequivocally indicated support for the establishment of the cultural centre (Nešić 2017). The "Moving In" installation was one means of fostering social cohesion and a sense of belonging where various topics were recognized as important to the direction of the future cultural centre. Furthermore, consultations and data gathering on citizens' needs were additionally conducted through four focus groups. These meetings were held separately with the younger generation, the middle-aged generation, as well as with seniors over the age of 60. During these discussions the most relevant topics proved to be: 1) cultural centre programmes; 2) management and organization; 3) sustainability (Baćanović and Kulačin 2017).

The very concept of the cultural centre that imposed itself in all focus groups was the idea of a centre that *belongs to the community*. The question of running the cultural centre and understanding of ownership made it clear that the users are also the "owners" and programme creators. The same principle is to be applied to the management model, which should be regulated through the citizens' association, with a coordinator playing a "manager" role and a managing board that would change annually and help with the promotion and strengthening of various initiatives and programmes (Baćanović and Kulačin 2017).

CONCLUSION

From the very beginning, NKN had a strong sense of belonging to an immediate community, caring for the community and a sense that through collective action, something could be initiated, changed and achieved in that community. The approach taken to reviving the neighbourhood through the development of the cultural community centre co-designed by young people, grown-ups and children, built on the knowledge, skills and needs and showed a dedication to the common good.

The notion of the cultural centre as the urban commons is very present and used to mobilize a great number of people, primarily neighbours. Although the term itself is not communicated in that manner, the discourse of commons is a framework of the action. The narrative found its way through openness, collective action, and the organizational structure that is relatively horizontal (for example, based on forums and neighbourhood meetings). It is noteworthy to mention that inclusion of disadvantaged people, and collaboration and dialogue that NKN fosters

indicate the sensibility and empathy as principle approach. It seeks to emphasize the importance of collective action while constructing emancipatory alternatives.

NKN activities target local communities through cultural and artistic programmes, where the objectives are achieved through the fields of arts and culture, architecture and psychology, the environment and ecology. Its activities raise awareness of and respect for fundamental human rights and freedom. Hence, the important values and principles of their work are: community engagement, mutual trust, solidarity, inclusiveness and peer-to-peer learning.
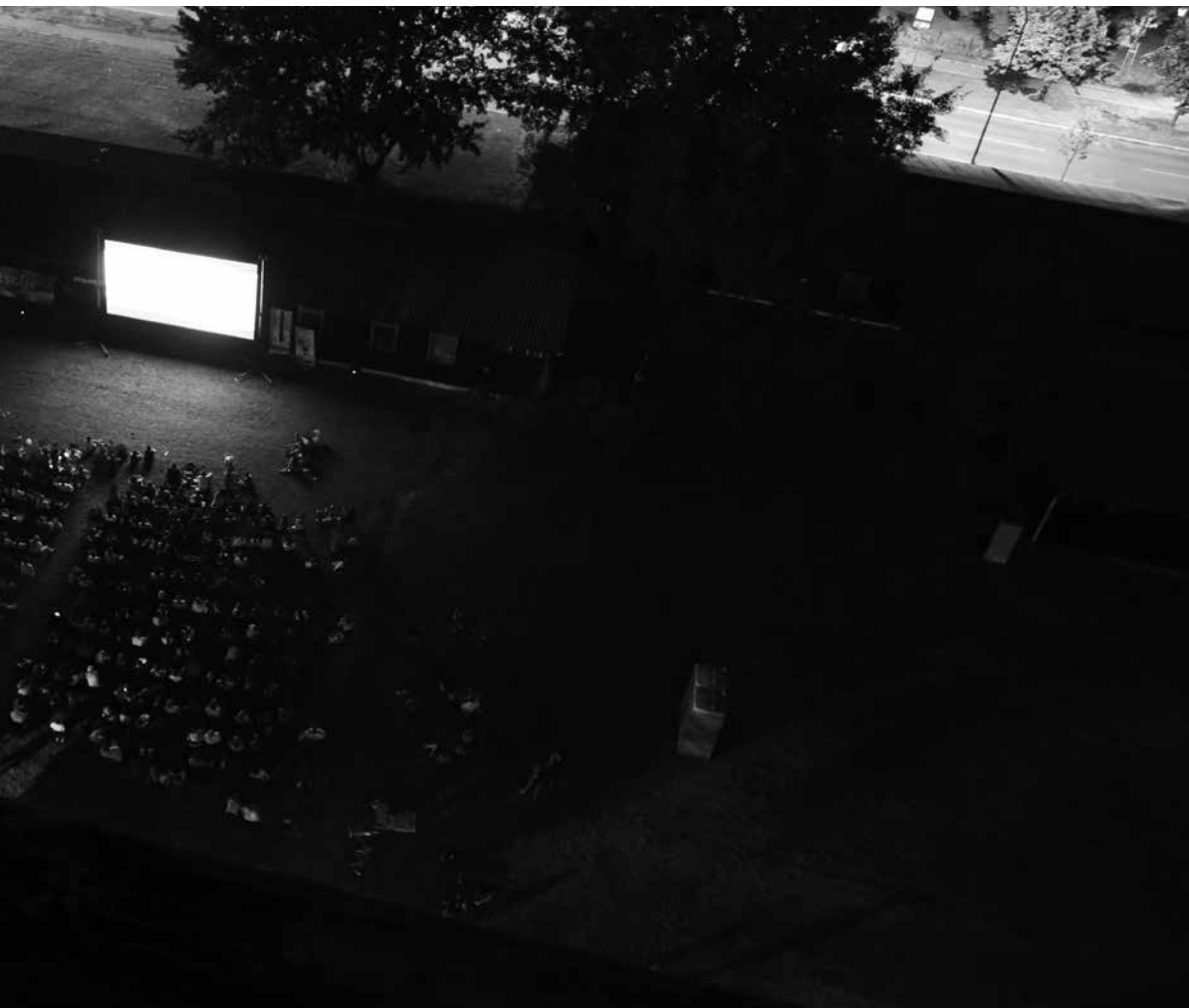
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Novo kulturno naselje /
New Cultural Settlement Archive

STRUGGLE
ODBRANIMO REKE STARE PLANINE
/
LET'S DEFEND THE RIVERS OF STARA PLANINA

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

The devastation of rivers and nature that people have been opposing on the Stara planina mountain range started back in the 1980s. Stara planina is the mountain range that stretches from South-East Serbia across Bulgaria, all the way to the Black Sea. On Serbian territory the mountain has received category one protection as a nature park (srp. Park prirode) since 1997, and it stretches across the territory of three cities (or municipalities): Knjaževac, Pirot and Dimitrovgrad.

The first major construction on the mountain rivers of Stara planina occurred in the 1980s when the hydroelectric power plant Pirot was built on the Visočica river in order to supply the city region of Pirot with electricity, and Zavojsko Lake emerged. As a consequence, several villages became submerged and were destroyed, and the once powerful Visočica river became nothing more than a mountain stream. Likewise, during the 1980s the government started to fund research and the exploration of mountain rivers in Serbia and their potential for building micro hydropower plants (MHP). The result was the adoption of an official "MHP cadaster"[1] in 1987, which emphasized the significant energy potential of small watercourses in both protected and unprotected areas in Serbia. There have been 856

Božena Stojić

locations mapped as potential locations for constructing MHPs, but 90% of them have a technical potential for power below 1 MW.

Later, in 1992, the Serbian government funded a project to construct an 8 km tunnel in order to navigate and redirect another river – Toplodolska river – into Zavojsko Lake as well. The villagers of Temska village organized in 2007 to oppose its construction as they understood the scale of natural devastation as well as the consequences to life in their village were the river to disappear. After the protests, in 2008 the city authorities in Pirot halted the construction of the remaining 6 km of the planned tunnel.

Since Serbia started the EU accession process, and gained the status of potential candidate, it is obliged to align its laws, policies and market with the EU in all sectors. Therefore, as part of that process, within the energy sector Serbia has become a member of the EU Energy Community in 2006, which means that Serbia is obliged to implement the European Union's 20–20–20 climate and energy targets as well as Third EU Energy Package. According to those policies, the Serbian government must assure the security of the energy supply, attract investments in energy infrastructure, improve environmental protections and create a unique regulatory space for energy trade. Since 2015 these policies have been implemented in Serbia via a new Energy Law (OG RS 145/2014 and 95/2018), with accompanying by-laws. Nevertheless, there have been certain obstacles on the path to implementing the above-mentioned EU policies. The national "micro hydropower plants cadaster" is still in force and used, and national as well as regional and local spatial plans are allowing the construction of MHPs at certain locations. However, as well as the laws, there were some issues related to attracting investments in energy infrastructure. Investors did not want

to invest their money in constructing MHPs because of land ownership issues and because of the low cost-effectiveness of MHPs, since they typically produce less than 1 MW of power, which is insignificant in terms of the amount of electricity produced.

In order to solve the mentioned issues, and to set in motion the construction of all planned MHPs the Serbian government adopted regulations that allowed the government to offer subsidies to the investors. Specifically, the government is buying off the presumed annual amount of electricity produced by each investor and their MHP in advance for a higher price than the market price, irrespective of whether the MHP will actually produce it. What is more, the government has guaranteed that it will do so for the first 12 years. This also gives the investors a status as privileged producers of electricity, which offers them a lot of privileges through regulations. The buy off has been accomplished through the public company EPS (Electric Power Industry of Serbia), which means that citizens are the ones who are actually paying for the construction of MHPs in natural areas and the accompanying devastation of nature. Likewise, for the construction of derivative MHPs – the cheapest type of MHP to build – the banks are more than willing to approve and give loans to the investors. Therefore, private investors can easily gain money for their construction, knowing that the investment will be paid off without any risks. In the face of ownership issues that have never been resolved, and with all the above-mentioned circumstances, a whole new space for corruption and malversation has emerged.

There has never been any public discussion over the means of reaching the European Union's 20–20–20 climate and energy targets, even if it were obvious to citizens that constructing 856 MHPs in

natural areas across the country would not be the right way to do it. Namely, the aforementioned type of MHP planned for construction in Serbia – the derivative mini hydro power plant – first requires an intake of water via the accumulation of water in the river course. Then the water is led to the powerhouse by special pipes to a plant located away from the river, where the electricity is produced. The construction of derivative MHPs has had severe consequences on their surroundings. The redirection of rivers by pipes can lead to the draining of underground streams and therefore the rivers, and it also presents a risk of contaminating the drinking water in rivers. Also, the small amount of water left in the riverbed presents a threat for all species of plants and animals living in the river or which are dependent on it. Serbian regulations define the amount of water that needs to be left in a riverbed after the MHP construction as the "biological minimum" – the amount of water that allegedly should be enough for life to survive. Unfortunately, since there are not enough resources in Serbia to inspect the constructions, which have been accompanied by corruption, the amount of water left in the riverbeds is extremely low and below the "biological minimum" so there is a serious threat of extinction for plants and animals living in these ecosystems.

Considering all of the above, and the fact that even if all of the 856 planned MHPs in Serbia are built they would only produce 2% (OG RS 105/2018) of household electricity consumption, it is clear that the government initiative to build MHPs is not so much a means of producing electricity from renewable resources as much as it is a corrupt scheme for individuals to gain profits while devastating nature and the environment. This can also be gleaned from the fact that there are often discrepancies between the construction permits issued by the Ministry of Construction, Traffic, and Infrastructure and national regulations.

After adopting the new Energy Law, in 2016 the Ministry of Mining and Energy saw a new opportunity to continue the construction of the mentioned tunnel that was stopped in 2008 on Stara planina. Once again, the Temska villagers fought against that project. The difference between the protests of 2017 and those of 2007 is the fact that since 2011, the Spatial Plan of the city of Pirot[2] has defined the locations for constructing 58 MHPs in protected areas on Stara planina, where all types of construction are forbidden by law, and people are aware of the meaning of that act. In understanding that MHPs will affect ecosystems and people living in villages on Stara planina, people organized and formed an Association of communal authorities on Stara planina (srp. Savez mesnih zajednica Stare planine).[3] By the time that these protests had grown into the movement Let's Defend the Rivers of Stara planina (srp. Odbranimo reke Stare planine) in 2018, approximately 20 MHP construction projects had been set in motion (either being under construction or in the process of gaining permits for construction), which people were fighting against.

2 Available at the official website of the City of Pirot: www.pirot.rs/index.php/2014-07-10-11-35-49/izgradnja-objekata-2

3 Mesna zajednica is the lowest organizational unit of the communal authority in Serbia and it consists of an organization of citizens who live in the same block, city district, municipal district or settlement, or village. Through this organizational unit, citizens should be able to exercise their right to participate in governing their city or municipality. Therefore, Savez mesnih zajednica Stare planine is an association linking all these organizational units in villages on the territory of Stara planina.

HISTORY OF
THE STRUGGLE

The movement as it is known today emerged at the beginning of summer 2018 when a group of activists and villagers from several villages gathered around the initiative Let's defend Toplodolska river. They fought against the construction of the mentioned 8 km long tunnel, organized protests all around Stara planina and its villages, and collected signatures for submitting the petition to UNESCO, among other activities. These activities were crucial for new members and activists in joining the movement, as well as for the noticeable spread of the movement. Since the villagers of all other villages in Stara planina joined the movement, as well as citizens of the Pirot region, and numerous activists, professionals and nature lovers, the initiative Let's defend Toplodolska river has grown into the regional movement Let's defend the rivers of Stara planina. New members brought new ideas and energy but also integrity, which required the formulation of movements in a more modern, efficient and different way to before.

People understood that the construction of MHPs was becoming a Serbian government trend followed by corruption and schemes devised between investors and politicians aiming to gain profits by illegally appropriating natural common goods. Therefore, at the beginning, the activities were focused on opposing the concept of derivative MHPs while simultaneously attacking the government over their inefficiency in law enforcement in areas where it clearly violated and neglecting the problem by refusing to give media attention to increasingly frequent and open conflicts with investors. In addition, the focus was on addressing the local governments, which were indiscriminately associates of the investors in all areas of construction and did not care about the transparency of the problem.

INVOLVED ACTORS /
COMMUNITY

The activities of the movement are fully transparent and shared through the Facebook group Odbranimo reke Stare planine,[4] which currently numbers 91 000 members. This group represents the main communication channel between the movement members, as well as between the movement and the public. When asked how many members are in the movement and who can become one, the activists of Let's Defend the Rivers of Stara planina answered that activists in the movement are all the people who feel that way. Everyone who participates in actions, protests, educational actions and in providing assistance, is considered a member. Likewise, all Facebook group members who are monitoring legislative and decision-making processes and who share information with the group, or who initiate and take part in discussions, are members. There is no formal membership (nor is the internal organizational structure formal), and anyone interested in supporting the idea of protecting nature and life on Stara planina, which this movement cultivates and around which people are gathered, can be called a member. Therefore, all information about current activities, planned activities and events are publicly shared on the Facebook group, and if someone voluntarily wishes to join the movement they can do so by attending the protests, sharing information on Facebook, offering ideas, helping the movement in tangible and intangible ways, or spreading the information about MHP hazards on all the rivers of Serbia and in the Balkans, and by personally accepting group membership.

Let's Defend the Rivers of Stara planina is not a formal organization and it does not

4   See: www.facebook.com/groups/1925328764350247

have a formal hierarchical internal structure. Activities are managed by a group of 15 members with no hierarchy among that managing team. There are organizational meetings where ideas and objectives are discussed, and by reaching agreement on different ideas, the group directions and action strategies are determined. The Facebook group may be considered the group bulletin on which these decisions are made manifest and the results are presented, and it is the channel through which the members' ideas and suggestions are collected and taken into account.

The community gathered around this movement – or better said, its members – are the greatest resource that the movement has. It has great human resources and professional expertise in all fields. Financial resources are collected through informal crowdfunding campaigns via the Facebook group. Donations are required most often due to certain acute problems relating to the protection of rivers or nature in general, or to organize protests. Therefore, the movement relies solely on its own strengths and organizational skills and is financially supported by donations from Facebook group members and the public.

STRATEGIES OF STRUGGLE

The current problem that the movement is facing is the construction of MHPs on Stara planina, and the primary focus and objective is on fighting to ban that type of construction in both protected and unprotected nature areas. By demonstrating and proving the harmfulness of the whole concept of the MHP, they are also acting across the territory of the entire country, influencing the implementation of and changes to the legislation regulating this area. The following self-imposed directions of action refer to the insistence on compliance with existing laws, rural renewal, eco-tourism developments, safeguarding the professional and human potential that the group possesses, educating young generations about nature in general, and the need for activism as part of a system for keeping the exploitation of nature in check, as well as assisting local communities in implementing their ideas of rural development.

The activities in their strategy has most often been influenced by the current circumstances, i.e., dictated by tactical actions in the field. Essentially, the first and foremost objective of the movement is a ban on the construction of MHPs, since this is a precondition for further progress and the implementation of the following goals related to positioning Stara planina on the tourist map of Serbia, and rural renewal and development – restoring life in the villages.

The activities that the movement has undertaken since its formation is best presented through its accomplished results: (1) bringing the problem of constructing MHPs on mountain rivers to the forefront of media attention; (2) raising awareness of the importance of protecting small mountain rivers; (3) organizing dozens of small and several major environmental protests; (4) waging open opposition to the construction of MHPs; (5) initiating legal proceedings against investors; (6) sending reports to international organizations dedicated to nature protection, as well as to EU political actors in charge of chapters related to respecting ecological norms; (7) engaging in a very lively set of media activities in order to promote the movement's activities and objectives.

Some of the activities that can be singled out as most significant in attaining the above-mentioned results and the movement's objectives are as follows:

Regarding the direct fight against the construction of MHPs, activists organized

dozens of protests in villages on Stara planina, where the population was informed about the damaging effects of MHPs, and spoke out against their construction. Some of these protests were followed by performances, such as the Prayer for the River performance in Temska village, which particularly drew attention to the problem. Likewise, in the Rakita village, a months-long protest was organized against the construction of MHP Zvonce. What drew the most attention to the struggle against the construction of MHPs was the months-long barricade on the bridge in the village of Topli Do in order to prevent the investor from entering the village and starting the construction of a MHP there. Activists and villagers guarded the bridge day and night in shifts. This was an example of extraordinary solidarity and a determination to protect nature and the river at all costs. However, this particular case was also an example of public institutions' lack of responsibility and their involvement and contribution to corrupt procedures of MHP construction. While the investor was at-tempting to enter the village on several occa-sions – accompanied by the police – activists and villagers directly confronted them. These incidents were left unnoticed by national and local governments and their institutions. It was the culmination of a direct fight against the construction of MHPs in protected nature areas on Stara planina that resulted in the lack of a systemic solution to the issue. Eventually, the investor dropped out, which was a small victory, but one that cannot solve the problem of the construction of MHPs in all the planned locations in protected and unprotected nature areas in the country.

The movement also organized several major environmental protests in Pirot and Belgrade, and several protests against private banks that were offering loans to investors for the construction of MHPs.

Also, this movement's activists used every opportunity to address the issue of MHP construction, to demand of public institutions and government that they take responsibility and put an end to corrupt processes of MHP construction by forcing everyone to obey the laws. The activists also conveyed knowledge and information about the disastrous consequences of the MHPs to the public. They took part in various media appearances, forums and conferences in the region.

One of the important directions in which the movement's activities are developing is in establishing collaborations and partnerships with other organizations and institutions on national and international levels. Let's Defend the Rivers of Stara planina has partnered with other similar movements and organizations for protecting rivers and nature from MHP construction in Serbia, BIH and Montenegro, as well as internationally, such as The Right to Water (srp. Pravo na vodu), Riverwatch and Bankwatch. They are also members of the European Water Movement.

The movement intensively collaborates with the academic community in Serbia, with both the University of Belgrade (Faculty of Architecture and Faculty of Forestry) and the University of Niš. The Serbian Academy of Science and Art supports this movement as well. Internationally, the movement has gained support from the UN and several EU institutions.

As a result of all these activities and the movement's overall struggle, in September 2019 the city of Pirot started to develop a new spatial plan that covers the territory of Stara planina. The Pirot city councillors voted to delete all the locations for MHP construction in Stara Planina from the new Pirot spatial plan and to issue a moratorium on the construction of derivative MHPs on the territory of Stara planina. But this Pirot

city decision can be valid and prevent MHP construction only if the Law on Nature Protection changes. Unfortunately, even though the minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection announced that they will pass changes in the law in July 2018, this never happened. Therefore, even if there is an initiative to stop MHP construction at the city level, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure can still issue the construction permits for MHPs as it is within their remit and the Law on Nature Protection still permits it.

CONCLUSION

The Let's Defend the Rivers of Stara planina movement is formed around the need to politicize the issue of the growing national trend to no longer perceive the small mountain rivers as a common resource, but as a potential resource of profit for individuals, followed by the suspension of the legislation. Although they do not define the framework of their activities as practice of commoning, the movement is sharing the ideological framework with the concept of commons. They stand up for changing the laws that regulate nature protection in order for Serbia to have a regulatory framework in place that will prevent corruption and save nature as a common good. They demand that public institutions and the government act responsibly and contribute to that objective. At the core of this proactive movement's activities is advocating for responsible and protective manners of managing rivers and water, which they unquestionably consider as common goods.

While defending the rivers of Stara planina and opposing the construction of MHPs, the movement activists are supporting local communities in villages on Stara planina and collaborating with them and professionals from various fields in developing projects for rural renewal. They are developing concepts for improving the conditions of life in the surrounding settlements which can be highly sustainable and sensitive towards nature. Since the rivers are the source of life for both people and mountain flora and fauna, there is an inevitable need to use and exploit the water, but the movement activists are putting a large effort to develop solutions which can allow communities to develop without threatening or appropriating the river ecosystems.

The shared ideological belief among movement activists and members is that no single individual can appropriate water, river or any common good in order to gain profit while devastating nature. Following that belief, the movement is open towards new members, without discrimination on any ground. In addition, the movement is based on the principle of transparency, as all the information, ideas and discussions are visible and available not just to movement members, but to the general public as well. Additionally, the principle of solidarity is what binds the movement activists, members and communities across Stara planina and Serbia together, in terms of sharing resources and standing together whenever there is a need to directly confront the construction of MHPs, or to organize protests and months-long barricades in the villages.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
BBC, Milan Simonović and ORSP Archive

STRUGGLE
ZDRUŽENA AKCIJA KROV NAD GLAVOM
/
JOINT ACTION ROOF OVER HEAD

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Serbia has the experience of a public policy that treated housing as a right, in the not-so-distant past. Namely, during the socialist Yugoslavia, after WWII, the state was significantly invested in the provision of housing for its workers, whether through the construction of new housing units or through the *nationalization* process (in 1958). The housing units were, either way, socially owned and allocated to workers for their right of indefinite use – such redistribution represented an attempt to establish a higher level of wealth equality among citizens. This not only meant that the tenancy was secured, but also that one could not profit through the housing sector – house was *not* a commodity, but rather a proclaimed right of each citizen. Still, there is no doubt that there were numerous flaws in this mechanism. Firstly, there was an insufficient number of housing units for the vast influx of workers into bigger

cities, which were industrial centres. This was a result of the attempt to rapidly industrialize a postwar country that was economically devastated. In addition, the very distribution of the apartments was biased toward the highly skilled workers involved in enterprise management. Once again, this left the most unprivileged often without a socially owned housing solution and forced them to find alternative (often illegal) ways of securing housing. However, this should still not blur the very fact that housing was perceived and officially exercised as a social responsibility, rather than the individual one, which tailored public housing policies in a radically different and emancipatory manner in the socialist Yugoslavia, than is the case today.

During the 1990s, after Yugoslavia disintegrated and each of its new-born countries, including Serbia, fast-forwarded toward a "more liberal and capitalist" society, the mass privatization of the entire housing stock took place. The privatization was not planned in any way as to potentially control the process of this ownership transfer and wealth distribution, but rather just rushed to shift the social into private property, initiating a process that would lead to a severe housing crisis and deprivation for a large number of citizens over the following decades. To add to the devastating privatization process, Serbia initiated – as part of a common postsocialist "cleansing" process – restitution, in order to repeal the previously conducted nationalization. These two processes – privatization and restitution – have significantly contributed to a context in which a growing number of people have no access to adequate housing conditions, or are struggling to maintain them.[1]

The latest census from 2011 shows that as many as 98% of housing units in Serbia are in private property, whereas less than 2% are publicly owned apartments. With such an immense domination of private property, the market represents the main regulator of the housing sector. At the same time, the promotion of homeownership was persistently introduced through different mechanisms, whether as presenting it as a way to secure one's future, status symbol or a condition to personal freedom. In accordance with the global situation in the housing sector, Serbia too has been characterized by intensive investment in private housing for the purposes of capital accumulation, while the renting sector is unregulated and guided by profit-making – for example, short-term leases are more lucrative, hence the fewer the number of apartments available for long-term rent, including those that provide a housing solution for all who cannot afford to buy their home, either through credit or savings. Legislation related to housing has not thoroughly addressed the situation, while social housing policies have been reduced to a number of ambitious strategic documents and very few actual projects, which, even if built, were turning into segregated ghettos, placed on the far outskirts of cities, far away from the institutional and social infrastructure (schools, cultural centres, medical care centres). Here, social housing tenants have been placed in a position devoid of any assistance towards gaining economic sustainability, and often with utility bills that exceed their social benefits' several times over.

Again, following global trends, the financialization of housing in Serbia also resulted in an increasing number of indebted citizens.

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[1]   As Raquel Rolnik explains in her book *Urban Warfare: Housing Under the Empire of Finance* (2019, 19), "the importance of contexts becomes clear when we examine the reforms of housing systems in different countries

[...] In general terms, there is a move to dismantle social and public housing policies, destabilize security of tenure and convert home into a financial asset".
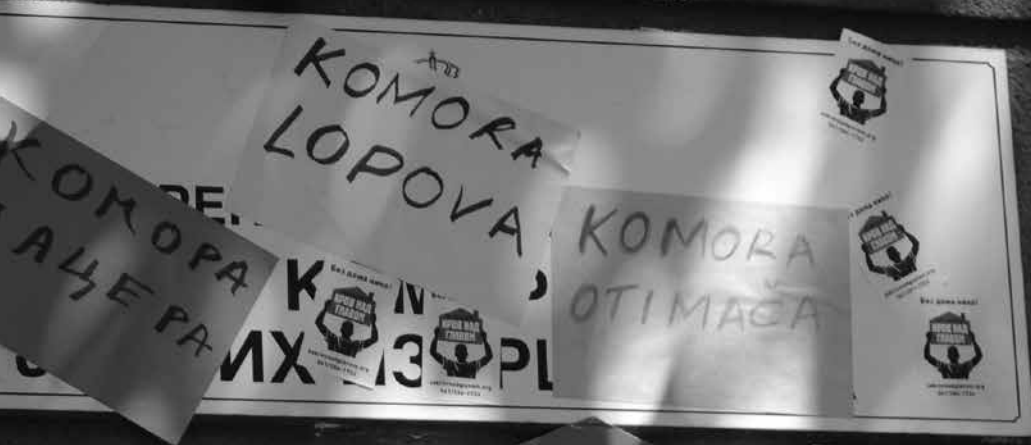
As Iva Marčetić and Ana Vilenica formulated in their *pirate-care syllabus* (2020) on housing struggles, "the easy access to credit has been equated with the right to housing". With extremely volatile working conditions and uncertain jobs, this has, in return, turned many citizens into victims of *mortgaged lives* (Colau et al. 2014). Across Serbia, with an increasing number of people in precarious working conditions, unable to pay off their loans or utility bills, in time face the threat of forced evictions. These evictions have turned out to be another lucrative area that has been heavily corrupted and used as another mechanism for wealth accumulation by those in power. As two members of the initiative, Ana Vilenica and Nemanja Pantović (2019), state, the "*eviction epidemic* started with the privatization of the eviction protocol through a Law on Enforcement and Security in 2011". They further elaborate that these legislative changes have introduced the private bailiffs as a solution to make the enforcement of court verdicts more efficient (as this argument is usually used to support the process of privatization in general). The law thus only intensified the precarity of the already impoverished working class. In turn, such a "new enforcement system provided banks, utility companies, corporations and the wealthy with an additional tool for the dispossession of poor and indebted members of society" (Vilenica et al. 2019).

The procedures accompanying evictions are designed in such a way as to suit the interest of the bailiffs. Namely, bailiffs have the power to decide on the method of debt pay-off, and what often happens is that they choose to do it through an mechanism of auction, even in the cases where the market price of the apartment exceeds the size of the debt even multiple times. The auctions are conducted non-transparently, and since the new amendments to the law in 2019

even electronically,[2] which leaves vast space for corruption. Other than providing police escort to the bailiffs in enforcement of evictions, the government has not developed any mechanisms of protection of the evicted, nor provision of an emergency accommodation. Furthermore, aside from the sub-capacitated temporary shelters for the homeless, the state does not systematically address the question of homelessness in any way but to ignore it. As Vilenica and Pantović (2019) write, in 2017 alone, 3,736 real-estate seizures were carried out according to the Chamber of Bailiffs, while, according to one daily newspaper, more than 3,000 families have been evicted from their apartments over the last seven years. At the same time, there is a great discrepancy between the number of housing units and the need for housing – the vacancy rate is over 14%. Nevertheless, the vast majority of those vacant homes are privately owned and the state does not have any awarding or sanctioning mechanisms that would put these empty units to much needed use.

HISTORY OF THE STRUGGLE

In recent years, previously mentioned manifestations of the housing situation in Serbia have generated proliferation in critical analysis of the official state's approach to housing, as well as the emergence of different housing activist initiatives (some of them mentioned in the contextual overview of Serbia in this publication). Aside from revealing the structural causes of the existing situation in the housing sector, these attempts have also articulated demands for housing justice

2 This further prevents possible actions of protest and confrontation in spaces where auctions were held, against the injustice they produce.

and proposals for alternative approaches to housing in Serbia.

In such circumstances, two initiatives – Who Builds the City and Ignorant Schoolmaster and his Committees[3] (spr. Učitelj neznalica i njegovi komiteti) – organized at the end of 2015 an event named the "So-called Housing Issue",[4] where they gathered all the initiatives and informal groups that were in some form addressing the subject of housing, either through research, policy analysis or struggles for one's own housing rights and conditions. This was the first attempt to open a wider dialogue on housing issues in Serbia and its genealogy and to join forces of various and diverse housing activists and initiatives at the time. As in 2015 and 2016, the new Law on Housing and Building Maintenance was in the process of drafting and adoption, the group was also engaged in the attempt to collectively analyse the proposal, reflect on potential legislative changes and articulate concrete proposals for its modification. As one of the organizers, Ivan Zlatić, recalls, the adoption of this law (without any suggested amendments), in combination with the privatization of the enforcement procedure from 2011, have de facto finalized the perennial process of suspension of the tenants' rights that existed in Yugoslavia and officially announced an "open season of hunting for real-estate" that will hit the poor even worse. However, even though the attempt of the gathered group to influence the law was not successful, the most promising aspect of this endeavour was the collaboration and alliance between diverse actors working towards substantial changes in the housing situation.

For some time afterwards, through various meetings and continual communication, this informal wide front of housing activists came to converge on the particular dimension of the housing question that would soon become an urgency, but that could also have the potential to come under the public spotlight (rather than the critique of the legislation), in a country where the official policy toward housing was to depoliticize it and declare it a matter of investment and economic development and not of public interest or a basic right. Being influenced by a number of international housing movements (such as La PAH) and the current situation in Serbia, they have decided to focus on evictions as the potent field in which one could effectively claim the right to housing, politicize the entire housing situation and attract wider media and public attention, in order to succeed in larger mobilization around housing question. Some of the members have already had experience in defending the workers of the Trudbenik enterprise[5] (which was a victim of one of the notorious privatization processes after 2000) since 2012. These experiences, as members claim, represented a valuable asset of the initiative.

From the spring 2017, when the evictions have escalated, a housing justice organization called the Joint Action Roof Over Head (srp. Združena akcija Krov nad glavom) was formally established.

3   See: novi.uciteljneznalica.org

4   See: www.kogradigrad.org/otvoreni-razgovo-ri/2015-otvorene-razgovore-o-stanovanju

5   Trudbenik represented one of the largest social enterprises involved in construction and building of some of the most significant parts of the public infrastructure in Yugoslavia. After the murky privatization process in 2008 and even the bankruptcy of the new owner company three years after, the court has ruled in favour of the bankrupt company to evict the workers of Trudbenik from their apartments. Ever since 2012, the tenants there have lived in continuous fear of the eviction and their homes were defended on several occasions with the support from the housing activists.

INVOLVED ACTORS / COMMUNITY

At first, the organization functioned on the basis of collective membership, where each of eight founding member-organizations had its delegates within a decision-making body, even though from the very beginning, individuals were also able to join. The function of the founding organizations was to primarily assist the Roof with their own capacities and resources. However, after two years, it became evident that not all of the members contributed equally, while there was an increasing number of individuals that were not members of any particular organization who wanted to join. In addition, the very organization was mature enough to function independently. It was therefore decided, at the 2019 assembly in October, that the organization would change its format to that of an individual membership collective. Of course, there are still members that are simultaneously members of the founding organizations, but they participate as individuals and not as representatives of their organizations.

The Roof currently has three territorial organizations across Serbia – in Belgrade (where it started from and still has the largest membership), Novi Sad and Subotica. The organization counts on the membership's

PAH), that the organization should attempt to motivate and welcome also those who are victims of evictions or who are directly threatened by them, since it would not only contribute to the representativeness of the organization and its programme, but because it would potentially be empowering for these members to have such a supporting solidary network around them. As it turns out, most of them do join the Roof in different capacities. Some of them also take the core responsibilities, some join the direct actions, promotion or fundraising activities for the organization and for the support of others. Zlatić stands in the position that our society is increasingly aware that poverty is not a matter of individual failure, but rather a collective, social, structural problem, and that the "bailiffs could end up on anyone's doors". However, another factor of joining Roof is the availability. People who are in danger of being evicted are almost always simultaneously pressured by various existential problems and are in precarious situations. It is thus understandable that not all of them are able to become permanent members, but are still motivated to occasionally give support to the activities or remain in contact with others who need similar support. Thus, it is undoubtedly that they also contribute to the ever-growing community of solidary support gathering around the Roof.

In relation to the involved community, it is worth mentioning that all the significant efforts of the past three years by the Roof's membership have been undertaken voluntarily. There is an outspoken concern, among some members, including paid positions or similar elements that are more characteristic for the project-based civil society organization, would influence the equal status of all members and potentially also affect or direct the work of the organization in a way that was not freely decided upon by its members,

continual enlargement and welcomes new members from diverse backgrounds that believe that everyone has the right to home. This results in a rather dynamic, heterogeneous but empowering group of people ranging in age, profession and socio-economic status, as well as the level and capacity to participate in work of organization. The adhesive force, however, is their shared resentment over housing injustices that are becoming more obvious by the day, as well as the consistently practiced principles of democratic and inclusive participation in the internal structure and operation of the organization.

From the very beginning, it was envisioned (inspired by the already mentioned La

but rather imposed by other external factors. However, the fact that the immense work of the Roof has up until now been completed through efforts alongside regular work commitments for the majority of the members, has put immense pressure on them and has been challenging for the organization's functioning at times. However, the growing number of members represents one way of dealing with such potential overload. Although the standard or minimum expectation of any member is not precisely defined, the involvement of a greater number of people in comparison with a regular non-governmental organization, allows for the effort to be dispersed to some extent and for every member to choose in what quantity and role he or she wishes to participate. In effect, this results in several types of engagement that have been informally articulated – members who are mostly involved often participate in all of the activities including those focused on the organizational or structural matters and decision-making, mostly divided into various working groups (for media outreach, direct support to individuals and families, organizational matters, fundraisings, etc.); members who are involved in most or occasional actions of the organizations, but are not willing to engage in organizational matters (this group also involves the victims of evictions and their neighbours and friends, when they do engage) and the wider supporting community that shows its support through financial support, social media support, but not or rarely, though direct engagement.

When it comes to gender balance, the membership structure is not possible to determine precisely, because there is currently no formal procedure of "becoming a member" at present, and the dynamic of actions and activities that the Roof is undertaking does result in frequent fluctuations of people who are involved and an increasing number of those who are joining. According to the interviewed members, the initial membership was predominantly male, while at present it is significantly more gender-balanced. This reason for the initial situation is to be traced rather in structural, social and cultural conditions of gender inequality, since the Roof itself pays attention to push for more gender-balanced representation and is giving full support to female members to be more visible. As Isidora Petrović, an active member, illustrated, within internal communication there is without exception an explicit reaction to any discriminatory content even if it is not directed to any particular person or member. In addition, the organizational tasks have never been in any way distributed in a gender-bias manner (giving the female members "caring" tasks, while the male ones take on decision-making or any of the strategic matters).

The majority of decisions are brought at the local level, since the capacities and conditions differ, although there is a continual communication and support among the branches. Strategic decisions are brought by *aktiv* that usually meets every two weeks or more frequently if necessary. While all members can be present and participate in discussion during these meetings, the right to vote is reserved for those activists that are members of at least one of the working groups, hence that are mostly dedicated to the work of the organization – there are no permanent or determined members of any structural body, but rather everyone is invited to participate in the capacity that they could at the time available. Voting is based on the idea of consensus. Although there are official rules, most of the decisions are brought through deliberation with mutual respect and trust and less by the "rule of law" as Zlatić explains. Most strategic decisions are kept for annual

assemblies, but there is a common understanding that the field work affects the decisions and functioning of the Roof in between these assemblies as well. Communication and operational arrangements are completed through organizing a wide mailing list and other communication channels that allow completely open discussion among all its members.

STRATEGIES OF STRUGGLE

According to Zlatić, there are two main strategic positions that have shaped the work of the Roof. Firstly, he explains, in order for the Roof to be credible to all those in fear from the eviction, they need to believe in the dedication of members – "they have to believe that there is something that Roof members are risking as well, whether the arrest or other forms of pressure". The strategy of the initiative was not to create just another group that will uncover the systemic causes of the housing situation. Rather, it is precisely because of the readiness to take the risk of direct action and remain in full solidarity with the victims, that the Roof has succeeded in large mobilization and, nonetheless, in putting housing justice on the political agenda in Serbia. The second one is that the development of the organization, as well as any other strategies that are decided are always in touch with the reality on the ground. Knowledge that stems from a certain particular experience or action is treated as something that needs to be applicable for the following occasions as well – if not, it is in constant modification and selection. "This asks for great intellectual or ethical discipline of each member and the organization as whole, because in political action there is always a danger of *falling in love with your own conclusions* and continuing standing up for them even when they are

obviously wrong or unproductive. The price", says Zlatić, "can be too big".

When it comes to operationalization of such principles, in the past three years, the Roof has carried out a diverse set of actions and activities: direct actions against eviction execution, community organizing, advocacy work, research, awareness campaigns, protests, bank occupations.

The types of activities most effective when it comes to garnering public attention undoubtedly fall into the *direct-action* approach. Anti-eviction actions include physical (although never violent, at least from the side of the Roof) defence against the private bailiffs and police who come to carry out an eviction. In these cases, the number of people who participate is crucial for the action's success. At the same time, these are the actions mostly followed by the media and they therefore communicate a message to a greater number of people. According to their own documentation, in 2018, the Roof has succeeded in defending 27 homes, preventing five auctions from happening, while in 2019, there has been in total 65 actions of defending and 33 families remained in their homes, as a result. Unfortunately, there were also occasions when some members of the Roof were arrested and on one occasion even beaten up.

Simultaneously and in relation to some particular cases of evictions or other activities, the Roof has often organized public protests. One of them, organized in June 2019, represented an attempt to pressure the law makers. It took the form of a public protest with the slogan *No one without a home, a home for all – now!* Another protest that followed was held outside the European Union Delegation headquarters in Serbia, who supported the adoption of the 2019 Law on Enforcement and Security.

However, direct actions and protests do not exhaust the Roof's capacities as an organiza-

tion. This collective has also participated in home improvement, as well as in collecting and distributing different kinds of support for those who are struggling to survive.

In addition, in order to move beyond a defensive strategy, the Roof has been planning to increase its capacity by becoming involved in related research and policy analyses and proposals. In 2018 its members, with assistance from several supportive law experts, have drafted a set of proposals that was supposed to be included in the 2019 Law on Enforcement and Security, which aim to ensure that one's only home has to be excused from the enforcement of eviction, because it would lead to one's state of homelessness. Aside from that main demand, there were also some minor proposals related to the very procedure of enforcement. For example, the law also increased eviction costs in order to discourage resistance, which represents a "clear indication that the state has stood up to protect the bailiffs' and unscrupulous creditors' interests" (Vilenica et al. 2019). The Law was adopted without citizens participation through an "urgent procedure" mode, during the summer of 2019. Not only that the proposed amendments were not adopted, but the Law even went step further to criminalize the solidarity with victims of evictions, by prescribing fines and even prison sentences for the so-called "eviction obstruction". The legislative changes are valid from January 2020, which will affect the actions, but in what way is still to be seen.

Furthermore, the Roof has also delegated its members the task of informing non-governmental organizations involved in housing justice, and has proposed an alternative set of measures for the city of Belgrade's 10-year housing strategy. At this moment, the strategic document has not been published, so it is not yet known how effective this attempt has been.

Since the only source of funding comes from supporters' individual donations, part of the Roof's activities are necessarily dedicated to attracting more members, as well as obtaining enough resources for their basic functioning (the costs mostly relate to the eviction-defence actions, financial support to some of the most vulnerable, and promotional materials). In this vein, there are numerous public fundraising events organized several times each year, while once a month there is an "Open Monday" for all people interested in hearing more about how the Roof functions, or who would like to join.

The range of activities presented here all reflect the organization's operational model. It functions through a set of working groups, each responsible for a certain aspect or set of activities: a group "on the ground" (responsible for communicating with those threatened by eviction and coordinating for the eviction-defence action); a media group (responsible for communication and for informing the wider public about the Roof's activities, as well as all relevant legislative changes and other events relating to the issue of housing justice); a legal-advice group (responsible for offering legal advice to those threatened by eviction, as well as analysis through proposing legislation changes); a fundraising group (responsible for methods and approaches to the collection of financial resources for the basic functioning of the organization). These groups function and communicate separately and offer proposals that are then decided on *aktiv* meetings. Although the internal functioning of the organization does require some further development, it is the urgent nature and frequency of the evictions that prevent the members from allocating time and their capacity to work more on that aspect. However, there is a persistent dedication to the democratic principle of internal governance within the group and continual self-reflection

on how the organization functions, which overcomes the possible inconsistencies in formal structure and procedures.

What is beyond contestation is that due to the accumulated result from all of Roof's activities, the housing question has entered the public space in Serbia and it could hardly be ignored anymore – it has clearly become a collective concern and the inevitable subject in fighting for more just society.

CONCLUSION

From its establishment, the Roof has aimed and succeeded in politicization of the housing question. Its position is explicitly oriented toward revealing the power relations and capitalist conditions that stand behind this *housing condition* (rather than the temporary crisis, as David Madden and Peter Marcuse (2016) would say). Although the concept of commons was never part of their discourse, it has certainly been an ideological framework, in terms of advocating for the de-privatization and decommodification of housing, as well as the promotion of publicly owned resources, including housing as a public infrastructure and right, and pursuit of the common interest.

The syntagma *housing as right* is clearly communicated in all of Roof's announcements and it refers to the unequivocal right of every citizen (regardless of the formal status of citizenship) to have access to adequate housing-conditions and security of tenancy. This right cannot be dependent on the financial possibilities or working status of that citizen.

Aside from their political and activist programme, the Roof actually functions as a commons itself, through implementation of radical democracy in the decision-making process; through treating all of its resources as commons, including the knowledge that is produced throughout the process; and finally, through being radically open as a community itself, pushing for solidarity as its core principle and asset.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Ivana Anđelković and Ana Toader

PRACTICE
KULTURNI CENTAR MAGACIN
/
CULTURAL CENTRE MAGACIN

Iva Čukić

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

As a result of the transition and transformation of the system towards a market economy, many publicly owned spaces have been left unused or abandoned, alongside an absence of urban development policies and policies concerning the use of those spaces. According to the Report of the State Audit Institution, the Republic of Serbia (1) does not yet have a unique and comprehensive real-estate inventory, (2) it has something resembling a real-estate record that still contains information on the real-estate of the autonomous provincial and local self-government units, (3) no users are listed for some of the real estate, (4) no complete information on unused real estate exists, (5) some real estate is registered under the names of administrative and executive authorities that no longer exist or have changed their names[1] (6) pass by-laws in a timely manner to enforce this and prevent and control irregu-

1 According to the report, the following entities are entered in the database: (1) Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth and sports, as two users; (2) Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, as three beneficiaries; (3) Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija, as one beneficiary, even though it is now an Office; (4) Ministry of the diaspora of the Republic of Serbia, which no longer exists; (5) Ministry of National Investment plan, which also no longer exists. More in SAI 2015, 17-18.

larities (SAI 2015). Based on an analysis of the legal framework, related documents and available information, it has been concluded that general guidelines for the activation of spatial resources has been prescribed at the national level, and very little effort has been invested in activating unused space in Serbia (Čukić 2016; Pajović Van Reenen and Veselinović 2015). Certainly, one of the most important reasons is the lack of a single registry, but the inefficiency of the authorities (at different levels) in law enforcement should not be ignored, as well as the lack of clear mechanisms for space activation.

At the same time, numerous organizations and groups are constantly in need of space for various activities and programmes. Civil society organizations, especially in the field of culture, make daily efforts to produce an enviable amount of cultural and social content for the needs of the local community, and at the same time they struggle for basic existential conditions, primarily in the search for financial sustainability, and safe working conditions, which also entails the need for space to prepare and produce their (mostly) nonprofit programmes. Civil society organizations have no infrastructural costs covered, nor do they have continuous incomes, available and affordable spaces or funds for the production of their programmes. However, thanks to their enthusiasm and willingness to work in precarious conditions, they are responsible for much of the cultural offering in many cities in Serbia. Furthermore, on this issue, there is almost no room for dialogue and decision-making regarding the use of space, and very often profit is imposed as the only valid argument and criterion for the use of space. In addition, these processes are marked by a lack of political will, an adequate institutional framework and innovative policies necessary to activate space if its activation does not contribute to the overall

market mantra. The current practice, as well as the legal framework that covers the issue of the management and use of publicly owned spaces, has a pronounced orientation towards commercial interest. According to the research and analysis conducted by the collective Ministry of Space (Pajović Van Reenen and Veselinović 2015), spaces are only available at current rental market rates. Therefore, the civil sector receives exactly the same treatment as the commercial sector, which directly affects its existence.

The only project that was ambitiously launched in 2007, as the first alternative cultural centre in Belgrade, where civil sector associations (later gathered around the Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia[2]) would carry out activities with the support of the City, was a Nolit warehouse at Kraljevića Marka Street in Savamala (Milosavljević 2015). After many years of dialogue between the platform of independent culture The Other Scene and the city authorities, in 2007, the City of Belgrade and the Belgrade Youth Centre went public with the project Magacin in Kraljevića Marka which was to be the first alternative cultural centre to be used and managed by civil sector organizations in the field of culture. It was the space of the former publishing house Nolit of almost 2000 m², which was handed over for free temporary use to the Youth Centre following a decision of the then **mayor,** who later gave parts of the space to six

2   The Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia (srp. Nezavisna kulturna scena Srbije) is a joint platform of organizations, initiatives and individuals in the fields of culture and arts in Serbia. By implementation and exchange of programmes in Serbia and abroad, by activities that build capacities of the Association as well as its members, and by dialogue with decision makers at all levels, the Association aspires to promote the development of innovative and critical art practices, impact cultural policy and other related public policies, contribute to decentralization of culture in Serbia and establish regional cooperation in Southeast Europe. More at: nezavisnakultura.net

organizations free of charge through a public competition. These acts were made in the election campaign, but after the 2008 elections, the new city coalition did not support the initiative, nor even the idea of an independent cultural centre. The level of misunderstanding and lack of support escalated towards the end of 2014, when the Belgrade Youth Centre ordered the organizations in Magacin to move out. The organizations have not left the space but have proposed a new governance model and use for the space. With the introduction of the Open Calendar model, the number of users has increased over the years, but due to the unfulfilled promises of the City, the legal status of Magacin has remained unregulated for more than a decade.

It can be said that the most noticeable resistance to the above-mentioned conditions and problems appeared in the field of independent culture, whose activities re-thematized culture as a conceptual field encompassing various struggles across all spheres of social life, from work and production conditions, through to social rights, defence of public goods, to articulated resistance to the commodification of public services and the character of the public sector. The idea behind creating the centre thus appeared with the ambition of – through current social and cultural practices – initiating a change in the sphere of politics, but also in the sphere of the organizational structures of the institutions themselves, which – through its implementation – was aimed at establishing a new system, a new programme of activity and management. Therefore, the launching of Magacin as a cultural and social centre was a reaction to imposed conditions and patterns and the abandoning of a defensive position that would mean getting used to the imposi-

tion (Čukić and Pekić 2019, 12). It was this need on the part of a large number of organizations for stable work conditions, having appeared on the scene in the previous ten years, that also instigated efforts by the actors themselves to consider alternative models for an institutional framework that could support the altered dynamics of production, which was still of peripheral interest to the dominant cultural policy (Čukić and Pekić 2019, 12).

RESOURCE

The resource of the social and cultural centre Magacin consists of spaces, all owned by the city, located in three different buildings on the same street in Belgrade – (1) Main building, (2) Practice/Workshop, and (3) Ostavinska.

The main building, which was previously storage space for the Nolit publishing house, is the largest and is located at 4 Kraljevića Marka Street. The building covers an area of almost 2000 m², including a basement, two floors and an attic. The attic space is unused and the first floor operates as an educational centre for people with disabilities, therefore not operating as part of Magacin. The remaining ground floor and the basement contains eight separate units, such as, (1) a central space, (2) a coworking space, (3) a meeting room, (4) a dance hall, (5) an illegal cinema, (6) a deaf room, (7) a small scene and (8) the basement. The Central Space is a multifunctional space for different activities, from exhibitions, film screenings and performances, over rehearsals and practice sessions, to debates and presentations. Cowork is the name of the coworking space for office work, but it can be also used for meetings, workshops or other activities. The Meeting Room is an office-type space used for meetings, work, presentations, workshops or reading

rehearsals. The Dance Hall is a space that includes a professional dance floor and is mainly used for dance rehearsals, performances, practice sessions and education. The Illegal Cinema is primarily intended for screenings, but can also be used for rehearsals, exhibitions and performances. The Deaf Room is used for the storage of technical equipment and props that are frequently used, and is not intended for the carrying out of other activities. The Small Scene is the part of the basement space with an improvised dance floor and it is used for theatrical and reading rehearsals, as well as for dance and physical activities that do not require a professional dance floor. The rest of the basement is a combined space for the storage of materials and equipment, but the free space in the basement can also be used for various activities: exhibitions, installations, performances.

Since the number of users has increased with the introduction of the new open calendar model, in 2014–2015, the activities also started to take place in a basement across the courtyard, at 6 Kraljevića Marka Street. Today's Praksa (Workshop), covering an area of 350 m², is an open workshop, equipped with universal tools and machines; it has areas for working with metal, wood, electronics, textiles, printing and cycling. For the sake of both the users' security and the tools, practice is not directly available through the open calendar, but through open days, when the "workshop hosts" are on duty.

In 2016, a contract over the use of the premises at 8 Kraljevića Marka Street, which the Youth Centre had signed with the Goethe Institute in 2013, expired. Since this space was also part of the Magacin Cultural Centre at the time of its establishment, in 2007, the users of Magacin entered it again and it started operating under the name Ostavinska. This space covers an area of 128 m²

and is most often used for exhibitions, but its programmes can include performances, rehearsals, meetings and various talk pragrammes.

COMMUNITY

When the former storage space of the Nolit publishing house opened as an alternative cultural centre for different artistic and cultural practices, the Belgrade Youth Centre was appointed as legal administrator of the space on behalf of the owner (the City of Belgrade) and as the institution that would implement the open call for organizations and make the final selection of future users. Although six organizations were selected after the public competition, the contracts were never signed. In spite of its unregulated legal status, the organizations continued to use the space over the years to come.

The crucial moment of mobilization happened in 2014 when the Youth Center ordered the organizations in Magacin to move out.[3] Those present invited the Association of the Independent Culture Scene of Serbia to join and help prevent the eviction.[4] In an attempt to raise the question of the centre again, a public discussion was organized and the decision was made to open the space up to more users, and to test the open calendar model. As a result, the number of organizations using the space has significantly increased over the past few years, today involving more than 100 organizations and informal groups that use the space over

the course of a year, i.e. about 15 activities a day or more than 4,000 a year.

The Magacin users' community is comprised of numerous organizations and individuals in the field of contemporary culture, but also in areas of wider social significance, such as urban development, environment and sustainable development, human rights, education, media and similar. Many organizations that use the resources are members of the Association of ICSS. All users, regardless of whether they are part of the association or not, act and use the space in Magacin thanks to the open calendar model that allows all users unhindered access to and equal conditions for work and the production of the programmes.

Art organizations, associations, informal art groups and individuals (regardless of age), acting in accordance with Magacin's values and conditions of use can use Magacin's resources not only for working and implementing their programmes in the field of contemporary art and culture, but also for a wider range of social practices. Magacin is available to hundreds of users on a daily basis through the open calendar model, free of charge. The open calendar allows all potential users (no matter whether they have the status of regular or new/occasional users) to have the same rights and conditions to use the space.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

Magacin is governed horizontally through managing bodies such as the Magacin Users' Assembly and the Magacin coordinating body. It also includes operating bodies such as the coordinator, technical maintenance team, PR team and photo documentation team who have been chosen among the regular users. Magacin emphasizes the importance

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3   There was one more attempt of the eviction at the end of 2016, but the rapid action of the users, and big support of numerous cultural workers, public figures and citizens prevented this attempt.

4   Since then, the Association of ICSS has represented Magacin and advocated the status of the Centre as a space of independent culture and sociability through a new model, established after a public debate and based on the open calendar and the resource sharing principle.

of user-run management and cooperation, and its users make collective decisions about it, according to the defined organizational structure and decision-making rules.

Magacin Users' Assembly is the main managing body of Magacin and it consists of all regular users of the premises. The Users' Assembly manages the space and makes decisions regarding Magacin's activities, its development, regular maintenance, conditions of use, collective actions and other topics important for the operation and functioning of Magacin, except for public advocacy and project financing, on which the assembly must agree with the coordinating body. The assembly meets regularly at least once a month, and the assembly sessions are scheduled by the Magacin coordinator. At regular monthly sessions, the Assembly does not require a quorum, but decisions on current issues regarding Magacin's spaces are made by a simple majority vote among the members present. Decisions on strategic topics, introducing innovations into the work of the existing model or those concerning important strategic issues for Magacin, are made at the assembly strategy sessions, where the coordinating body (with a minimum of three members) must be present. At the assembly strategy sessions, decisions are made by a simple majority vote among the members present.

The Magacin Coordinating Body is a body that ensures continual communication between the Magacin Users' Assembly and the Managing Board of the Association of ICSS. The Association of the ICSS represents the Magacin Cultural Centre, participates in projects on behalf of Magacin and ensures the presence of Magacin in other networks and initiatives along with the Assembly of Regular Users, until the legal status of Magacin is resolved. The coordinating body is responsible for the formation and coordination of work groups regarding public advocacy for the status of Magacin and project financing of Magacin's activities and infrastructure.

The regular Users are all the users (organizations and individuals) that use the space regularly, have direct access to the open calendar, officially agree to the conditions of using the space and participate in the work of the Assembly and the maintenance of the space. Regular Users do not have a preemptive right to use Magacin. New and Occasional Users can become regular users if they show an interest in using the space regularly, if they agree to the conditions of use and maintenance of the space, if they act in accordance with the values of Magacin, and if the User's Assembly – at a regular session, after the presentation of a new user and their activities – has no objection to the work of the organization or individual applying for the regular user status.

Working groups, formed by the Magacin Users' Assembly, specifically deal with individual topics at, or spaces of Magacin. Currently, the following working groups exist: Dance Hall Working Group, Ostavinska Working Group, Practice Working Group, Coworking Working Group, Equipment Fund Working Group. Individual working groups meet as needed, deal with the assigned tasks and regularly report to the Users' Assembly about their work.

Operating bodies are all the rotating functions performed by individuals from those among the regular users who apply for the function.

The coordinator is elected at regular monthly sessions of the Users' Assembly. It is a rotating function with a mandate of one month, during which it provides communication and support for new users, coordinates regular users' activities and coordinates the regular monthly sessions of the assembly. The
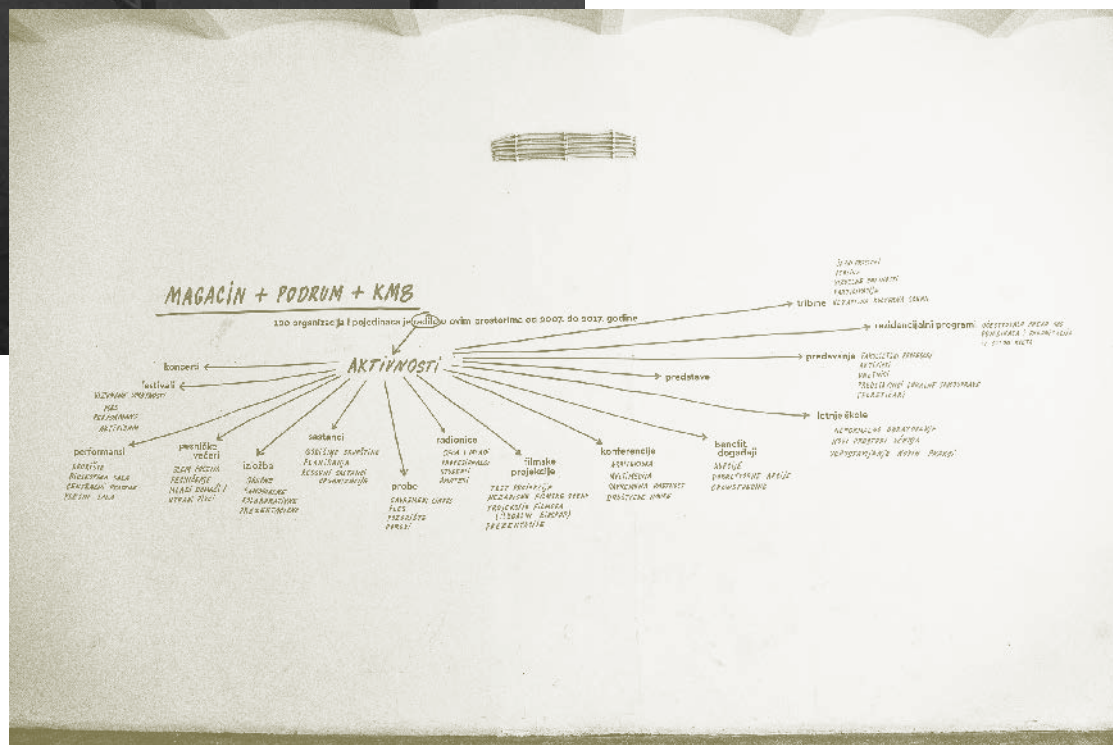
coordinator also performs the function of a treasurer, who manages the space's current finances.

Technical maintenance implies the planning and execution or coordination of work on the maintenance of the space (electricity, water, internet, furniture, equipment, locks, interior partitions and removals, ventilation, heating, etc.). This function is carried out by the Technical Maintenance Team, which delegates a member, each month, to be the Technical Maintenance Coordinator.

The PR Team is responsible for various activities related to Magacin's overall communication with its audience. The Photo Documentation Team photographs important events in Magacin in coordination with the PR Team – public events, work drives and ensures continuity in the documentary photographing of Magacin.

CONCLUSION

Magacin can be seen as a paradigmatic example of urban commons – it is a resource managed by the community of users according to commonly established rules, principles and values. Due to its openness, Magacin is generating increasing interest as a model that has outstanding transformative potential and as a way to respond to demands for greater democracy. Magacin is committed to and respects the principles of participatory decision-making and the transparency of decision-making procedures, rules and processes. Additionally, as members claim, Magacin's Assembly considers that gender equality is a precondition for genuine democracy. In compliance with the gender-sensitive approach, Magacin assemblies have equal or greater representation of women and women are a majority in most of the working groups within this model. But beyond the increasing

presence of women in decision-making, it aims to shatter masculine patterns of hierarchy and homogeneity.

Social change is the basis of Magacin's work and, for this reason, programmes and activities for the benefit of a larger group of people and society as a whole must be nurtured, i.e., Magacin sees the primacy of public good over particular and private interests as the basis of the change necessary for society as a whole. The core values of this space are human freedoms and rights, social diversity, mutual cooperation, solidarity and tolerance, transparency, mutual trust and responsibility.

It is not defined by a rigid programme or curatorial concept, but nourishes and supports a wide range of contemporary creative programmes, as well as socially responsible initiatives that act in the public interest. All the resources are available for various sets of activities if they are based on the values of human freedoms and rights, social diversity, mutual cooperation, solidarity and tolerance, transparency, mutual trust and responsibility. The users' community does not allow any discrimination, abuse or harassment, based on religion, ethnicity or nationality, race, sex, sexual orientation, financial situation, lifestyle, age, disability, political affiliation or state of health. Any inappropriate behaviour towards other members: physical and verbal attacks, intimidation, creating an unpleasant work environment is unacceptable and sanctioned.

Since Magacin is a common resource used by a large number of people and organizations, any "privatization" or misappropriation of one or more spaces is impermissible. All the spaces and activities in Magacin are free of charge for users and audiences, so it is not possible to realize programmes of a commercial character, i.e., fee-paying activities and programmes. Therefore, programmes carried out in Magacin are open to everyone, free of

charge and should be available as widely as possible. However, Magacin's resources cannot be used for religious programmes and meetings organized by associations or other entities that are of a religious character in their primary orientation or that advocate a particular religion. In addition, it cannot be used either by a political party or an organization implementing programmes that promote a political party.

Given the modest resources, Magacin is working on a model that would enable the sharing of time and space in using the resources, maximizing the benefit for all potential users. In this regard, the basic goal of the model is defined as enabling all potential users to have equal conditions of use, equal chances to participate and equality in decision-making. The Magacin Assembly sees the users as partners and seeks to establish and maintain a relationship based on cooperation and mutual trust. In order to ensure horizontal dialogue practices and encourage a partnership role among all the Magacin's users, they regularly meet and consider ways of improving their work or possible irregularities in work.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Dušan Rajić and
Luka Knežević Strika

Conversations with users of Magacin, and in addition, the author is part of the Magacin Assembly.

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KO-
SO-
VO

Kino Lumbardhi / Lumbardhi Cinema
(Prizren)

Kinema Jusuf Gërvalla / Jusuf Gervalla Cinema
(Peja / Peć)

Qendra për komunitet Termokiss / Termokiss Community Centre
(Pristina)

Fshati Korisha / Korisha Village
(Korisha / Koriša)

Parku Kulturor Ali Podrimja / Ali Podrimja Cultural Park
(Gjakova / Djakovica)

PRACTICE
**KINO
LUMBARDHI
/
LUMBARDHI
CINEMA**

Njomza Dragusha
Orbis Rexha

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Lumbardhi Cinema is located in the Historic Centre of Prizren[1] and was built in the 1950s[2] as part of a wave of cinema construction across Yugoslavia. Up until the bombings in 1999, it functioned as a public cinema, mainly managed as a socially owned enterprise (self-management unit). After the war, due to financial and logistical difficulties, the cinema was neglected to the level of deterioration and became an asset to be liquidated by the privatization agency. As a key site of the formation of three generations of filmophiles, memory, gatherings and festivals, it was revived through DokuFest,[3] a film festival that started at Lumbardhi in 2002. After an initiative which saved it from demolition in 2007 (confirmed through the decision made by the mayor at that time), there was another attempt to privatize it in 2014. For the first occasion, initiative managed to gather 8,000 signatures and orchestrated

[1]   Prizren is the second largest city in Kosovo with a history dating back to the 2nd century AD. It still bears traces of the civilizations that have inhabited the region including a Roman castle, Byzantine churches, Ottoman mosques, baths and bridges, as well as residues from occupations by Austro-Hungarians, Bulgarians, and tekkes from different orders. Having survived thanks to the river and the city's mills, agriculture and trade, it was a capital or a central administrative point up until WWII. After WWII, the city experienced a socialist regeneration in its historic core, but still retained its core qualities in comparison to other towns in Kosovo. In the second half of the twentieth century, Prizren flourished through industrialization by opening factories which enabled a high employment rate in the city, and production of goods for local population and export. In regards to cultural activities, the first radio station was founded during the same period as well as the national theater (opened in 1946 but later moved to Pristina, leaving this one as a local theater). The first public cinema Lumbardhi was established in 1952. It was the same time when artistic associations within the Albanian, Bosnian, Roma, Serbian and Turkish communities produced plays, performances and literary activities, and when the first music school in Kosovo also opened in Prizren. By 1986, a festival named Zambaku i Prizrenit started in Prizren, establishing a tradition of festivals that would follow in the postwar years.

[2]   The open-air part was added to the building in 1966.

[3]   See: dokufest.com

a campaign against the demolition to build a new city parking lot. For the second, the campaign for the cinema's revival led by EC Ma Ndryshe,[4] DokuFest and the Network of Cultural Organizations – RrOK,[5] had again a successful ending – Lumbardhi Cinema was taken off the privatization list and was deemed a cultural heritage site, thanks to the cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Regional Centre for Cultural Heritage. In 2015, representatives of the organizations and RrOK established the Lumbardhi Foundation, continued their advocacy work, by claiming its public value, adapting the space, running the programmes and building a sustainable future for this institution. Additionally, the cinema became a meeting place for diverse groups by hosting over 500 public events by Lumbardhi and more than a hundred by other parties.

RESOURCE

Today, Lumbardhi includes both indoor and outdoor cinema with the following spaces under its management and administration: an indoor multipurpose hall (300 m²), garden cinema, kitchen, café and multi-use space (800 m²), a public workspace (40 m²), office space (30 m²), projection room (20 m²), balcony (70 m²), and basement (100 m² – unusable). During the last five years, the Lumbardhi Foundation in cooperation with Cultural Heritage without Borders Kosovo (CHwB) have led the space's revitalization, which was done simultaneously to an analysis and a participatory process that determined the functional needs, heritage values and the management model for the building.

The needs of the users have been identified through testing the space, interviews, conversations, workshops and many other forms. Local community groups, organizations and individuals have channels through which to directly approach the team and address their needs/requests, and gain access to the space. When budgets or sponsorship are available, or when there are additional services, rental fees are applied and users financially contribute to the space's maintenance. Over 50% of the events are initiated by informal groups, grassroots initiatives or other types of unsponsored arts, heritage or youth activities hosted free of charge.

Lumbardhi is currently undergoing a phase of revitalization of the building which reduced the frequency of events, yet the final phase is planned for 2021 with the ambition to return to its full capacity for the 70th anniversary in 2022. This infrastructure endeavour is managed through the "Renovation committee" that includes representatives of CHwB Kosovo, Lumbardhi, DokuFest (as RrOK representatives), the Regional Network of Cultural Heritage and the Municipality of Prizren.

COMMUNITY

The collective memory of the space has numerous attachments to it. It has brought together 700 citizens on a daily basis. From the first kisses of many, to meeting their partners, memories of entering illegally from the roof, to New Year's Eve celebrations and lotteries, stories of complaining to projectionists and soundman, playing film soundtracks in Shadervan in the absence of music, to concerts of Yugoslav and Turkish stars and punk bands, and many others illustrate the story of a site with which generations of citizens related to the city and to each other, while seeing the

4   See: www.ecmandryshe.org
5   See: dokufest.com/2014/intiative-for-protection-of-lumbardhi-cinema/

cities of the world for the very first time at this site. Also today, Lumbardhi cherishes multiple groups of users and a diversity of publics. From high school pupils who visit the café after school, to the neighbourhood community coming to meetings, to tourists, students, professionals and citizens of varying age groups who attend the screenings, talks and performances, Lumbardhi has a broad community of users also due to its hosting over 80 activities – including festivals, and many other types of gatherings – annually by local cultural organizations, artists and musicians and nonprofits. Beyond this, a team consisting of the staff members, a board and group of associates of close to 30 people are supporting the development of the organization and its infrastructure. The site hosts over 30 000 visitors annually.

Commitment to foster participation, engagement and collective learning, open new ways to manage available resources. Namely, the financial resources are accessible to full-time staff members, contributing artists, service providers, interns, researchers and associates, volunteers, etc. An executive committee (including the director, research and programme associate, project manager, finance manager and operations manager) makes the main decisions and work distribution related to finance, administration and operations. Staff members and different teams are engaged in collective activities and discussions. A fluid programme team of five develops the diverse programme directions which empower participation of many collaborators to contribute to the programme design, but also other individuals or groups who are interested in participating in Lumbardhi. The use of the space is directed on by the operations manager, who also develops strategies for participation of interested groups. In exceptional cases, the executive committee or the director is advised to give

an opinion. In case of disagreement over the use and accessibility of the space, the parties may come together in order to seek clarification. Moreover, Lumbardhi has mechanisms to help conflict resolution among its users and other intervening parties. Depending on the situation, this is achieved mainly through conversations in order to understand the reasons, address legitimate arguments and solve the conflict. Additionally, their policy and ethical code defines how complaints should be filed or various situations addressed. In the cases of conflict, both the public and users can contact the organization directly, while the employees may approach the staff member in charge relations, as well as the board itself.

The organization's board oversees the work flow and monitors processes of equal participation and community representation, which reports to local- and central-level institutions as well as to funding bodies related to the work financed by them. The organization is administratively and financially audited externally and the organization's overall operation and usage is monitored by the Privatization Agency of Kosovo, the Regional Center for Cultural Heritage and the Municipality of Prizren.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

The Lumbardhi Foundation administers the cinema and it is governed by a board of five people, who appoint the director and approve the proposed reports, plans, budgets, strategies and policies for the space and the organization at quarterly meetings. They also support the director and the team in different aspects pertaining to local relations, programming, infrastructure, organizational development, fundraising, community engagement, etc.

The organization currently runs the space on the basis of an agreement extended annually with the Privatization Agency of Kosovo. Its ownership is currently being transferred to the Municipality of Prizren and then its usage will be organized for the next 20 years as decided in the management plan.

The Cinema's Management Plan is a document that is being devised through the facilitation of Lumbardhi Foundation, with the participation of stakeholders such as the Municipality of Prizren, the Ministry of Culture, the Council for Cultural Heritage for the Historic Centre of Prizren, the Regional Centre for Cultural Heritage, Autostrada Biennale, CHwB Kosovo, DokuFest, EC Ma Ndryshe and RrOK. The plan will define the function, terms, heritage values, use, development and principles of the site, while setting the grounds also for its governance and the accountability of the long-term user, the Lumbardhi Foundation. While the main plans, the long-term plans and the management are completed through participatory processes with stakeholder and community involvement, the testing and extensive research, financial and operational decisions are made within the organization.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, the existence of Lumbardhi is still at risk, and therefore defending and keeping the space remains their priority. The completion of the legal process, attaining financial sustainability and improvement of working conditions are the key focuses for this moment. The way in which Lumbardhi still needs to work towards being considered as commons is mostly concerning their governing structure, which at the moment does not allow the decision-making of a broader community. However, it current-

ly helps in achieving a common goal. The vision of establishing the institution as a learning machine and a common resource that contributes to the collective learning, sharing and development of an ethical, healthy and dynamic environment. Through its activities, Lumbardhi is committed to community engagement and participation, but as for most of the spaces in Kosovo, this engagement is fostered through activities and events in which people can express their needs. Yet the difference will be notable once the community around Lumbardhi Cinema gets involved, not only in defining the pro-

gramme, in management of the cinema.

From its beginnings, Lumbardhi has not been promoted through the discourse of the commons, yet they are experimenting with developing and advancing their practices of pooling and sharing resources. Still the place is transforming with its people and if they continue in this direction, it could be considered a common resource in the future. Finally, the most notable perspective in the context of studying commons on the example of Lumbardhi cinema is reflected through the demand of reclaiming the cinema and its value for the wider community.

SOURCES

Conversations with Ares Shporta, member of the initiative.

PRACTICE
KINEMA JUSUF GËRVALLA / JUSUF GERVALLA CINEMA

Njomza Dragusha
Orbis Rexha

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Jusuf Gërvalla Cinema is situated near the city centre of Peja/Peć,[1] close to the Istref Begolli theatre and beside the Lumbardhi river that streams from the Rugova Valley and divides the city in two. It was built in 1955 with funding from the Workers' trade union for the purpose of creating a cultural space for the city, to screen films and serve as a meeting point for city's inhabitants. From its construction until 1998, it served as the main focal point of joint cultural activities, including the latest film screening, film discussions, music concerts, live theatre and a socializing hub. The cinema was left in ruins after the war, but in 2001, the Municipality renovated it with the financial help of Italian donors. Despite operating officially, the cinema's activities were infrequent, with scarce film screenings, occasional meetings or commemorative events hosted.

In 2010, a group of young art activists started the Anibar International Animation

[1] The city is known by two names: Peja in Albanian and Peć in Serbian. It is the third city of Kosovo, and it is inhabited by almost one hundred thousand people. The majority of the people have an Albanian ethnic background. Minorities are Serbians, Bosniaks, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. More at: www.kosovo-info.com/kosovo-cities/peja

Festival for boosting city's cultural scene. During the seven days of the festival, thousands of people visited the city, hundreds of movies were shown, and numerous workshops and other activities were held. Since the festival was the only cultural initiative in the city, the team behind Anibar attempted to take on and occupy the cinema in order to create an all-year-round programme. With support and efforts from the country's entire cultural scene, the organization initiated a dialogue with the Municipality of Peja/Peć to develop a programme and revitalize the building, which is also listed as a historical monument on the National Culture Heritage list. In December 2016, the city leased the building to Anibar and the community behind it for a 15 year period. In postwar Kosovo, almost all state-owned property, including some monuments of cultural heritage, have been privatized and often demolished or repurposed as supermarkets or parking lots. Therefore, based on previous experiences in other cities, the community of cultural organizations decided to run a continual cultural programme in the cinema already from March 2016. This has included screenings of films, discussions and concerts followed by updates in the form of discussions on the situation in order to mobilize and gain support from citizens of Peja/Peć.

Despite the lease, in March 2017, the Privatization Agency of Kosovo started the liquidation process[2] of the cinema.[3] As this procedure often ends with the building becoming privatized and subsequently destroyed, this sparked outrage among the independent cultural scene which built into a nationwide initiative named Kino për

Qytetin! (eng. A Cinema for the City) for the protection of the only cinema in the city. The initiative mobilized the citizens through a petition opposing the cinema's privatization. More than 6000 citizens from Peja/Peć signed the petition, 100 organizations from civil society supported the initiative and the national and regional media covered it.

The *#kinemaperqytetin* initiative revolved around the idea of collective memory and touched upon a matter that many citizens were concerned with – the privatization of

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2   Liquidation is the first stage in the privatization and regardless of whether the process is completed, it can still take months, maybe even years, until cinema gets reused.
3   The cinema is located in a very central location where the businesses development opportunities are quite high.

public spaces. However, up until the opposition by the cultural scene, no one had taken a role in opposing the Privatization Agency of Kosovo on this level. It started as a form of opposition in order to protect the building, and it revolved around the idea of collective memory and its preservation.[4] The results of

4   The Jusuf Gërvalla Cinema was one of those public spaces to which the citizens could relate their experiences. It did not just represent a building, it represented their first film in a cinema, first kiss, first common activity, first show, first concert and so on.

this successful campaign froze the privatization process through a decision of the court.

As the initiative grew, it highlighted other aspects and contributed to citizens' empowerment in terms to oppose instances in which the public spaces were being threatened in general. This is why in August 2016, another initiative commenced called Reclaim the City! came through the Anibar International Animation Festival. This initiative aimed to spread the understanding that public space in Kosovo has endured various negative setbacks that

have caused a disconnection with respect to the local community and citizens. Thus, it was a call to reclaim the city from this suppressed state. Government regulations and the private sector have been the force behind an ongoing city development and its power distribution in decision-making. Therefore, as a collective of people who started Anibar ten years ago, they were determined to claim that public space belongs to the public.

The initiative was a response to an elite group of actors who brought about the disintegration of public space, and worse: this elite group injected a sense of obliviousness and a lack of productivity. Fighting against it by reclaiming the space, initiative was an important step for mobilizing residents and the public for a further development of the Anibar community and its space. It began with articulating the demands for the revitalization of public space and citizens succeeded in taking over the only cinema. Reclaim the City! fights for democratic values in public space and this achievement empowered the community to remain active in claiming the spaces and fostering the activation of abandoned ones. Having identified ways to reclaim the city, this community believes that it will revive what has been deactivated for too long – fresher knowledge and useful practices to embrace the fragrance of diverse cultures – without excluding the memory, the local narrative and what the city needs in order to remain constantly in motion – its people. Since 2016, Anibar has worked on re-establishing the Jusuf Gërvalla Cinema as city's cultural space with dedicated efforts in its renovation and preservation, in order to better promote its cultural legacy to the local and national community.

RESOURCE

Cinema Jusuf Gërvalla is the only cinema in the city of Peja/Peć, thus offering the single venue for the film screening in the city. Apart from screening films, there are other functions for what the space is utilized for. In recent years the cinema has become a symbol of resistance where alternative culture and social dialogue occur. The building covers an area of 731 m^2 and is divided into several spaces that include the main hall, projection room, balcony on the second floor, office space, lobby and toilets. The main hall hosts a number of activities from performances, film screenings, concerts, discussions, etc. In addition to the cinema's main building, there is also an annex of 80 m^2 where the different workshops take place.

COMMUNITY

Anibar[5] was founded in 2010 as an organization of passionate activists, which encourages young people to express their ideas and to discuss important social subjects pertinent to the youth of Kosovo. Anibar's mission is to commit itself to breaking civic apathy through cultural activism.

During the year, the local cinemagoers (mostly young people and families) attend screenings of documentary films and artistic films. In addition, the music community attends the choral concerts performed by the local choir and artists from Kosovo and the wider region. The panel discussions organized in the cinema are usually attended mainly by members of citizen associations and usually

5   In 2018, Anibar was selected for the Startup Support Program: Trans Europe Halles (TEH). This is a network of more than 100 cultural centers in revitalized buildings and public spaces across Europe.

younger people who are interested in social development topics.

During the Anibar Festival that takes place in summer, the structure of the community that uses the space shifts from the local to the international community. The festival gathers not only the local community of Peja/Peć but also a nationally spread community of different ages. The younger generation attends workshops, the regional community comes to attend regional workshops for young professionals (i.e., film critics), the mid-age community attends the film screenings, presentations and so forth. The international community consists of filmmakers, directors, animators and presenters who usually have a specific role in the festival and attend the festival events. During the previous editions of the festival, different themes have been addressed, including gender equality, utilization of public spaces, migration and global warming.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

Anibar is an association with a membership, and the member assembly is the decision-making body. The members of Anibar are various activists from Peja/Peć and other cities. The organization also has an advisory board with no decision-making rights – it only advises management on everyday operations.

Through its recent updated strategy, Anibar has adapted three areas of activities. These include civic education, economic development and film production, with sub-programme in the development and management of passive public spaces to create institutional knowledge and good practices of governance, and to revitalize them. The balance between the activities of each programme allows Anibar to be active throughout the whole year, delivering and implementing the organization's mission continually.

Yet, there are still challenges in terms of having no clear ownership status for the venue and no accountability from the local and national cultural policy makers to allow funding for such invitations. These challenges certainly define the future development, but there is a continual commitment of turning the mindset of the local community in regards to claiming the city spaces and empowering them to create new collective common spaces.

CONCLUSION

Currently, there is a model of governance in place mainly based on the one that the Anibar as an institution uses. However, in the future there is a need for the cinema as a centre to have its own model of governance. Through a common initiative with other organizations in Kosovo, Anibar has started a project that promotes public–civic partnership – where they claim this approach to become a model for the Jusuf Gërvalla Cinema in the future.

As many other initiatives in Kosovo, Anibar and Jusuf Gervalla cinema represent a struggle to *reclaim public space as a common space*, through numerous events and by addressing the issue of accessibility to spaces. Even though the difference between public space and common space is not yet comprehensively discussed in the context of Kosovo, certainly the first step remains the struggle to *reclaim* spaces from further privatization. Having this in mind, both Anibar and Jusuf Gervalla cinema, could be connected to the logic of the commons in this specific context, yet the initiative still needs to reflect upon it, specially in terms of its governing model and openness. The governing structure is currently represented through Anbar as an organization which holds the power of decision-making, but it can adapt and introduce mechanisms

of collective decision-making and distributed power of all the members involved. In terms of its openness, it is currently reflected only through mainly cultural programmes and educational activities for wider public, therefore Anbar and Jusuf Gervalla should consider new ways of community involvement. Authors of these lines believe that great potential lies in the initiatives Anibar and Jusuf Gervall cinema in regards to commons. The first steps are done through social mobilization to reclaim the space; therefore, the efforts and further development has to include engagement of wider community and distribution of decision-making among all actors involved.

SOURCES

Conversations with Ares Shporta,
member of the initiative.

PRACTICE

QENDRA PËR KOMUNITET TERMOKISS / TERMOKISS COMMUNITY CENTRE

SPACES OF COMMONING:
URBAN COMMONS IN THE EX-YU REGION

Njomza Dragusha
Orbis Rexha

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Having a long history of development through oriental and socialist times to today's modern rapid development of Pristina, its urban contemporary forms, one understands the need to reflect upon the importance of transmitting the concept of a metropolitan city, which it wishes to identify as. Struggling to conform to its social needs, to cherish diversity and free access to its spaces, with many reasons underlying this, the city also includes a political and cultural need for rapid progress. At the present moment, Pristina is confronted with a high flow of internal migration.

On the basis of statistics from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics taken in 2011, Pristina has a population of 186 651 inhabitants, but there is no consensus on population figures due to internal migration by people who are not registered in Pristina but who do reside there. These internal migrations are caused by the high demand of students and other professionals joining the University of Pristina (the largest public university in Kosovo with 45 000 students), as well as due to the highly concentrated market economy

and international missions that provide work to people across Kosovo. Internal migration in Pristina is visible also through urban forms the city is assuming, whereby one can easily see that the institutions were not 'able' to facilitate this rapid change and demand an organized process – rather it was the private market and other corrupted structures that benefited from these changes.

Therefore, today Pristina and its urban form represents a perfect reflection of the social, cultural and economic struggles of Kosovo as a new country. When we speak about the urban form, it is noteworthy to say that Pristina also lacks proper registration of its urban infrastructure and development plans for its use. According to the study undertaken by Krenare Juniku and Donald Alimi (2014), the city has 140 abandoned and underused sites. At the same time, among the main instruments the Municipality of Pristina has at its disposal for achieving the quality of life are capital investments in infrastructure.[1] For example, their webpage is currently promoting five investment plans, justified by the idea of improving citizens' quality of life, through offering qualitative services and opportunities for economic development. Only one of these five development plans has the aim of the revitalization and revival of an underused site dedicated for public use, that of the Olympic swimming pool located at the Palace of Youth and Sports. Other abandoned and underused sites are not part of the Municipality of Pristina's current plans. There are various reasons why the Municipality struggles to meet social demands and its infrastructural investments through revitalization of unused sites as resources and through social or cultural development, main three of which

are: (1) these policies are decided on at a central level, where the Central Government or the Privatization Agency of Kosovo have the main say about how these infrastructures are regulated, with very limited options for the local people of Pristina to intervene, (2) the complex historic situation of many sites that do not have clear ownership situation and (3) policies that treat the use of infrastructure as a priority for economic benefit, but do not necessarily reflect social or cultural needs. All of these aspects are relevant for the development of the Termokiss community centre.

RESOURCE

Termokiss represents a community-run centre in Pristina based on the need to create space for exchange, reflection and bringing about change. It is located between two neighbourhoods, Dardania and Emshir, with around 3000 m² property in use, with 288 m² being used as a building and the rest being its garden. The building where Termokiss Community Center is located is of indeterminate age, but we know that it could have been constructed during the late 80s or early 90s, as part of the brutalist movement in architecture during Yugoslavia. The building project was initiated by the heating company known as Termokos, but it was never finished due to the start of the conflicts between Yugoslavia and Kosovo, remaining unfinished with only four of its concrete walls.

As an initiative, Termokiss started with the project called Toestand Mache Prishtina, organized in 2016 as a collaboration with different individuals from Pristina, Toestand[2] (Belgium) and Info Quartier Mache (Switzer-

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1   More at: www.investment.prishtinaonline.com   2   See: toestand.be

land). Pristina has a long tradition of initiatives undertaken as a means of using abandoned sites, some of these projects still exist, such as Klubi i Boksit revitalization of Stacion – Center for Contemporary Art, yet some others were temporary interventions, such as Prishtine Mon Amour and Baushtelle Balkan Temple. With a community of people from Pristina who were part of some of these temporary interventions, the desire to establish a centre that would facilitate their social needs became more concrete when the collaboration between the organizations Toestand and InfoQuartier Mache began. The idea was to activate and revitalize the abandoned public property through a collaboration between the Municipality of Pristina and the future community who will use it. In this respect, we may say that the Termokiss Community Centre represents the continuation of an attempt to establish a balanced relationship between citizens and institutions in terms of usage of resources.

Following the start of the Toestand Mache Prishtina project, the building for the future centre was selected through a research process that lasted six months. Through this research, people of Pristina were asked about their needs and potential infrastructures that could facilitate these needs. More than 90% of the interviewees wished particularly for the Termokos building to be used. All the interviewees had a vision for this place, requiring its revitalization, while for the citizens of the Dardania and Emshir neighbourhoods it was crucial that this building would be in use, otherwise it became a scary place that one passes by, reflecting negligence on all levels. However, interviewees also showed restraint towards it in terms of the possibility of realizing this project. Therefore, the aim of realization became a symbolic act for the citizens of Pristina to gain their trust regarding inclusivity of public spaces, as spaces that

belong to them, with the institutions to facilitate their needs and not the other way around. In this regard, after the research, it was clear that the Termokos building was the space with the most potential, which would reflect a common choice from the citizens of Pristina.

Subsequently, following this decision, the proposal and the request for the use of the building was sent to the Municipality of Pristina in 2015. The proposal was welcomed with open doors on the level of considering its potential, although during the process of discussion with the Municipality in regards to the possibility of this building becoming a social or a communal project, the idea has been challenged. This challenge has come, on the one hand, from the limitations of the existing policies, while on the other, the negotiation process was not facilitated with political will on the part of the officials involved at the municipality level. The reason why this "political will" was so important is precisely due to the policies that permit and/or coordinate access to public property. The Law on Allocation for the Use of Municipal Property claimed the protection of the "public interest" as its main principle in regards to the provision of public property to third parties. Furthermore, the regulation (OG RK Law no. 04/L-144, articles 3, 5) provided to facilitate this process and regulate the criteria defining "public interest", proscribes economic interest as the primary principle. In addition, in the process of giving a certain space to a third party the main criteria is the highest price offered in the public auction. Having these legal considerations in mind, it is only the political will that could permit access to public properties to collaborative practices or other social and/or cultural long-term sustainable initiatives. This process of negotiations with the Municipality ended two days before the start of the project, when the officials at that time decided to hand over the building

for *temporary* use lasting only ten days for the project Toestand Mache Prishtina, but they did not agree on the idea of realizing a project that would entail complete construction during a process-driven practice of collective involvement.

During the first phase of the project, which lasted for ten days, more than 60 people came together to make this process happen, despite the fact that building was officially allowed for use for 10 days only, the idea for a long-term project had never changed. The people involved were aware that this was a momentum to be used to raise awareness of the legal risks surrounding the project's longevity. During the period of these 10 days, more than 60 people worked constantly with recycled materials to make this project happen and to demonstrate to the citizens of Pristina the need to come together and claim their resources. At the centre's 'opening event' and after the completion of the first phase of the revitalization, hundreds of people gathered to support the initiative. At this point, both the authorities and the citizens recognized the community's need to establish a long-term project. Although the project continued without a certain future, there was no more direct pressure to leave the venue in 10 days. This struggle continued through weekly open gatherings where citizens of Pristina were invited to come together and participate in the process of planning of the building's further revitalization, as well as of the creation of a structure in which the internal group would work, in order to establish a long-term legal frame for the project to continue. Dozens of people gathered once a week to discuss the future of the project through open discussions that triggered people from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to come together and organize various fundraising activities. Finally, with the support of hundreds of participants, the agreement with the Municipality was

reached in May 2017. This agreement regulated the use of the space as a common space under a horizontal governing structure where the Municipality would have to be involved in the process.

Today, the Termokiss building has a fully functional space with 200 m² for multifunctional use, a second floor built with a working space and library, toilets, bar and kitchen, storage room and a, outdoor space conceptualized as an urban garden, as well as a sports field and children's garden. All other facilities and features needed for the organization of different events such as concerts, workshops, screenings, games or other activities are provided inside the space.

COMMUNITY

It is rather difficult to write about this case study, while treating the community and the governing model as two separate things, because the governing model comes as a reflection of its members and broader community. We thus believe that these two remain connected aspects when process-driven methodologies and practices are used to facilitate a certain community.

Bearing in mind that Termokiss' initial resources only consisted of four concrete walls, a lot of work and voluntary dedication was therefore needed to convert this building into a functional space. Such process started simultaneously alongside all other necessary processes, such as the creation of an identity behind the collective, as well as adopting principles and priorities to allow the space to communicate with other groups that would work with or around the community.

Through a process of open public discussions that lasted for three months, the space emerged with a name, concept and demands. Termokiss declared that it wishes to become

a space where the processes organize around the idea of reflection of the community behind it, be it its needs, skills, emergencies or other forms in which the present context might manifest. With all those who joined the project from the beginning and those who joined later, it was decided that the main entity leading the project would be the collective known as the Termokiss Community, while its structure of organizing would be horizontal. With this concept, the collective started to fundraise financial resources and work on different practices that would bring people together to help in the process. The first fundraising event was held in October 2016 – a six-hour-long concert organized together with the artistic community of Pristina – bringing artists of different generations together and other groups who had helped to make this event happen. The event managed to bring as many as 700 people together, who were willing to help fund the space. This event also represented the first significant step toward demonstrating the need of the wider community for this place to become fully functional and legalized.

After this event, many other private and public entities in Pristina and outside came to either support the space through funding or voluntary work. At this point, the process for the creation of a legal framework in collaboration with the Municipality started more intensively. However, for the agreement to be reached, the Termokiss Community had to be registered as a non-governmental organization, which implied a certain hierarchy. However unwillingly, the collective ended up registered as an organization named RRITU. Within the governing structure of the Termokiss Community, this was solved in such a way as to make the registered organization only one of the bodies of the entire community, but not its main governing structure. Within this non-governmental organization statute, it is explicitly formulated that the community and the governing platform compose the decision-making body organized under the already determined principles and

structures, while the organization itself represents the medium regulating the relationship between the community and the Municipality. An agreement – form of the civic-public partnership – with the Municipality of Pristina was finally reached, determining that the building and the green space around it will be handed over to be managed by the Termokiss community, while all of its running costs (water, electricity, heating and waste-drainage) will be covered by the Municipality. The agreement also includes a structured collaboration scheme between two parties. No infrastructural investments came directly from the Municipality, but the community managed to gather, through other sources, investments that would make the building fully functional in around a period of one year, and to this day they still invest in making this public space functional without direct institutional help.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

The governing model of Termokiss emerged as a result from the infrastructural needs of the community. The needs have constantly been reflected upon, while skills are not the only criteria to determine the roles of its members. Moreover, as roles are considered a chance to grow and not necessarily only provide the needed knowledge, duties are considered a process as well. The absence of Termokiss members that were equipped with any kind of "expert knowledge" helped establish this approach to the internal structure – a context for inclusive solutions and continual reflection and change of working methods and distribution of roles.

In the absence of resources, at Termokiss nothing was considered weed or waste, because there was a whole new building to be

reconstructed and it needed a collective effort from all sides to be involved and empowered. It is a dynamic structure as needs are developing, allowing for the (re)construction of the community to be participatory and evolving. Diverse members took part, from those who liked only a particular process and wanted to contribute to it, to others who wanted to leave for someone new to join and cherish its development. Thus, the community of Termokiss created itself as the entity that could embrace members who were able to belong, but also those who would only like to explore, share, shape and then move on.

In its present form, the Termokiss Community has a governing model called the Termokiss Platform. The platform is divided up into the Termokiss Community and Termokiss Space. The people who are part of the Termokiss Community are responsible for decision-making as well as for the space, while Termokiss Space, on the other hand, serves as a facilitator of different events and needs of everyone outside the community.

Termokiss Community is organized into five pillars and four of them are known as the working groups: 1) Community Organizing, 2) Space Organizing, 3) Administration and 4) Gardening; leaving the whole community as the fifth entity. Everyone inside the community is known as a Community Member, while those who have particular tasks assigned are the Community Organizer, Space Organizer, Gardener and Administrator. The decision-making is organized on a weekly basis, with the community members meeting every Wednesday to either report, assign tasks or vote on decisions that need to be taken. Decisions are made using a *one member – one vote* principle, with a simple majority required. In an inclusive environment in a setting such as a weekly meeting, every member has to give their opinion regarding the proposal or decision in question, while in the

case there is a need to discuss disagreements, the community has to provide the space, time and methodologies required, until consensus is reached.

The working groups of Termokiss are responsible for performing the tasks appointed by the community and also have to work on monitoring the progress, as well as on reporting to the community. The community as a whole also bears the role of the monitoring mechanism. The distribution of tasks and roles is organized for a period of two to three years. New people joining Termokiss have the possibility of learning from others with more experience, to experiment, to shape and to eventually take on the paid position if they choose to do so. Upon receiving the paid positions, which has to be approved by the community vote, the appointed members are obliged to implement their working tasks, as well as to, simultaneously, assist in the process of welcoming new community members that will take over their roles. In reflection upon these processes and procedures, Termokiss can be seen as a school, the only difference being that at the Termokiss the learning and making of one's future fully depends on one's own decisions.

The Community Organizers at Termokiss are the members responsible mainly for social relations and communication. They are a contact point for all community members and are responsible for keeping the community together by ensuring there is a satisfactory level of internal communication and transparency – they work to maximize the power and participation of the members by working with them, and not for them; they ensure healthy communications with the neighbourhood and advancement of its interests; they research and develop methods that will ensure a cohesive community, and they are the organizers of weekly meetings with the community, as well as of the monthly open public meetings. The

Community Organizer represents the balancing role inside the community of members with different responsibilities, knowledge and skills, thus helping the process of sharing and decision-making through cherishing the membership's diversity and helping to create equity across the power of voices among the community members.

The Space Organizers at Termokiss are responsible for the facilitation of activities. This includes infrastructural needs and the hosting of other groups and their demands. They are the people responsible for providing the practical means for the community to develop. As facilitators they take care that resources are distributed among many people and that Termokiss could guarantee open access to its entire infrastructure. They take care that the place provides tools and materials for different activities that reflect the needs of participants and their practices. They develop and provide an open calendar of events to the people who would like to use the space, followed by ensuring that the place and the infrastructure is provided for free to all the participants interested in using it.

The administration, as a working group, takes care of all the tasks of reporting and communicating between parties with whom Termokiss has a working relation. They take care of applications and official agreements via which Termokiss regulates its daily work. The team also has to develop frameworks in which the community members are guaranteed legal security and recognition. One of the main research practices in which this team is engaged is in employing methods through which Termokiss gains financial support and through which this support is fairly distributed, through techniques of teaching skills to all community members and involving them in defining, writing and further shaping its strategic goals and plans.

The Gardening Group takes care of the
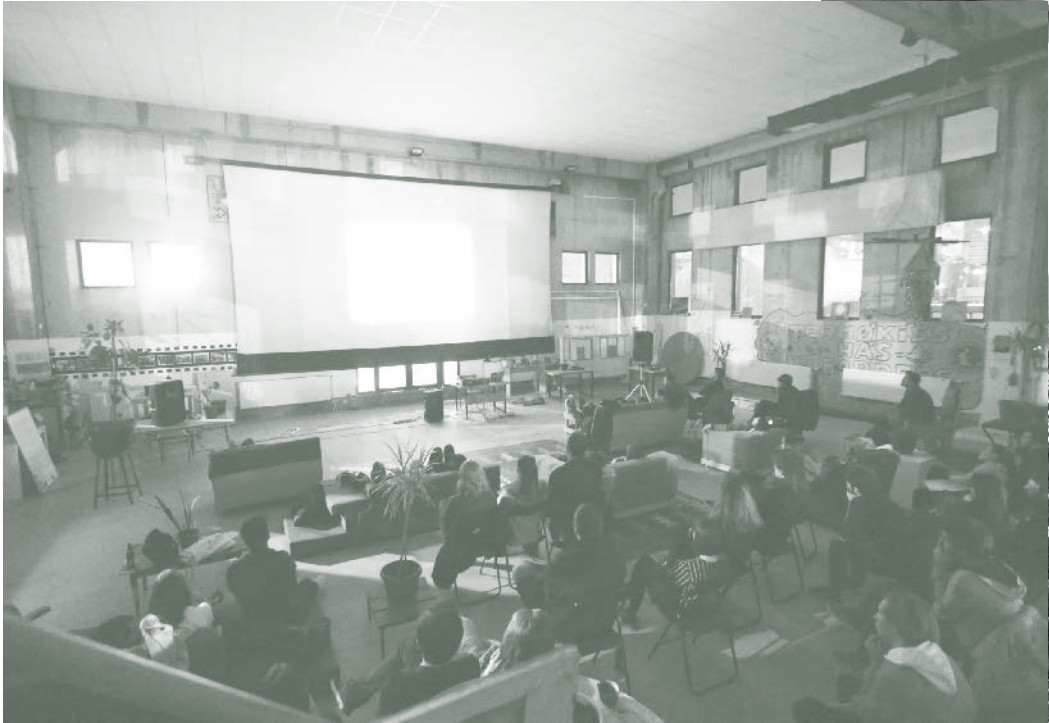
entire outside space and the plants inside the building. They try to use the garden as an open space to involve people in temporary and seasonal activities. Much of their work is concentrated on the involvement of neighbours who lack a proper garden.

Other members of Termokiss are also included as the club members. The club platform was set up with the idea of allowing open and more experimental approaches and groups inside or outside Termokiss. After the community members, the club members are the

second most present participants at Termokiss. While the working groups at Termokiss work on a daily basis to organize tasks around the community, inside the membership of Termokiss there is a need to create particular groups in which specific ideas are developed, and these groups are known as *the club*s. Today, Termokiss counts 21 clubs that come from different disciplines and groups of people. The idea of establishing the club platform emerged from the demands of different participants who wanted to work with different practices

and concepts to bring people together, but also from the need to use the Termokiss infrastructure to develop more experimental approaches to their own disciplines. The process of creating a club is possible in two ways: (1) by presenting concrete needs at the weekly meeting where at least one person from the group has to demonstrate that there are people interested in developing work around this interest, and (2) through open calls organized from the side of Termokiss. On a regular six-month basis, Termokiss fundraises and gives funding to different clubs coming from community members or the public, allowing them the full access to its infrastructure, knowledge and connections for them to develop faster and become independent, either by using public infrastructure or other forms that would help the city of Pristina increase its diversity. The method by which Termokiss organizes this process has no specific criteria – each of these interested groups simply has to define together the matters of urgency in society today and justify their methodologies

through which they wish to address these social needs.

When speaking of the public who uses the Termokiss infrastructure, there is no specific or single term that identifies these individuals or groups. The Termokiss space and community is available upon any request coming from outside, be it in any form, as long as it is in accordance with the values and principles of the community. Up until today, the Termokiss space and infrastructure has been used by hundreds of groups or individuals to organize their activities.

CONCLUSION

Termokiss Community Centre has started as an initiative in need to find alternative forms of inclusivity and education. Since people involved in this initiative strived to be identified as a community, this approach has led them towards finding practices and methodologies close to the discourse of commons. From the start of the initiative, Termokiss has worked and used the approach of 'inventing the social', inviting the public through different forms, recognizing them as crucial actors in shaping its form, structure and governance. The initiative has also used different experimental formats to explore the context and the social needs of the surrounding community in order to adapt to it, develop together with it and be governed by it. Therefore, its whole operating structure has been defined by that community during long processes and discussions, allowing its own members to determine decision-making mechanisms and methodologies of governing. What has come out of this process is a horizontal decision-making structure, using different methods to achieve full participation of all its members and not concentrating power in only one of its mechanisms.

The principles according to which Termokiss organizes itself have been designed through interactive processes, but are also constantly under collective evaluation and contestation, to be modified if they no longer represent the position of the community. These principles include dedication to development of shared values; sensitivity and inclusiveness; sincere and open communication base on respect and trust, education as permanent process integrated in all the activities of the centre; sustainability in structure, programme and community building; attention to accessibility (not only physical); empowerment of all members; self-reflection as continual process; and responsibility of all members to the community and one another. Based on these principles, there is also a set of regulations that reflect the more operational relations between members, resources and other bodies in contact with the Termokiss Community Centre.

The possibility to influence the entire structure of the community centre gives its members a sense of collective ownership, accompanied with the responsibility. This, in return, means that the entire structure as well as its governing model have certain flexibility, in order to allow for members to truly participate and affect how the centre functions. This also contributes to sustainability, in a way that no governing model is perceived as the ultimate one, as every member has a mandate of 3 years in the managing structure.

However, what remains a struggle at this moment for the Termokiss Community Centre is, primarily, financial sustainability, followed by the need to transfer to a long-term contract for the management of the space with the Municipality of Pristina. This points to a high level of dependence on the existing structures established within the wider context of Kosovo. When speaking

about self-sustainability, Termokiss neither wants to be institutionalized nor privatized. This means that members do not want Termokiss to become a place where people need to pay or contribute to it financially in order to be part of it, nor for it to have financial support from one institution only. They are trying to find a system where this could be balanced out.

Today, Termokiss Community Centre is functioning under the existing fundraising possibilities in Kosovo, which exposes community members to precarity and restricts them in reaching their full effect in society and their context. Namely, none of the funding opportunities in Kosovo provides a funding that guarantees sustainability to this community, thereby not recognizing its relevance and importance of an experimental

governance model and resource management. It is thus important to have in mind the fact that Termokiss operates in a context where the commons are not promoted or protected, and the legislation itself does not recognize this approach when it comes to collective ownership of the resource or its working structure and methodology. The community of Termokiss is thus always exposed to working under the restriction of the existing legal frame imposing short-term accessibility to their resource, and in this regard endangering their base of activity. Nevertheless, their own initiative Mundësi për Krejt in collaboration with many other organizations and initiatives in Kosovo are going through a struggle to achieve a more sustainable legal framework for such initiatives to take place.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Termokiss Community Centre Archive

PRACTICE
FSHATI KORISHA / KORISHA VILLAGE

Njomza Dragusha
Orbis Rexha

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Korisha is a settlement in the northern part of the Municipality of Prizren. It is known for its natural beauty, its Bronze Age site situated on the eastern slope of the horse-saddle-shaped hill near the Korisha ancient castle and its underground water source named Vrella. The settlement has approximately 6000 registered inhabitants, with around 35% having migrated to the West due to economic or political reasons. During the Kosovo War, the settlement and 80% of its infrastructure was destroyed with only 10% of existing houses still in acceptable condition for living. After this period, the settle-ment needed substantial infrastructure to become a suitable place for people to return to and for its resources to be maintained. While many places in Kosovo took years to recover from these losses, what made Korisha a specific example[1] and one that is relevant for this study is its ability to self-organize around its natural and human resources and to rebuild its infrastructure without relying much on the municipality's assistance.

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1   In addition, Korisha is considered to be the most ecological settlement of Prizren, due to its self-organization around waste collection, maintenance of green areas and cleaning of water supply lines. See: www.instituti-gap.org/documents/7607_organizedcommunities.pdf

RESOURCE

In this example the resource in focus is the entire territory of the settlement, but more precisely, its infrastructure – school, roads, sewage and other installations – that were built as a common resource between institutions and the locals, with additional support from foreign-aid sources.

Another major resource of Korisha is its water resources, especially an underground source known as Vrella, around which the inhabitants have always organized and still manage a self-organized system of water distribution. It has been claimed by local state institutions, but there has been resistance from the Korisha inhabitants, who have demanded the authority to organize this resource and its distribution. The self-organized system that the inhabitants have established even regulates a *fair* distribution of water based on the natural features and capacity of the very resource – for example, houses at a lower altitude in the village have to use less water during a certain period of time so that the houses at a higher altitude can be supplied equally. However, it has to be said, that for such sustainable and fair access to the resource, there has been no proper support from the institutions, neither local nor central.

COMMUNITY

When meeting the people of Korisha, their stories always focus on the necessity of *coming together*. However, this surpasses the concept of traditional gathering that is often seen in smaller settlements. It is rather a matter of pushing towards a need to organize collective economies and resources in times of high-level institutionalization. Such a need to come together and organize resources was particularly essential after the war in Kosovo, when the inhabitants of Korisha decided to come together and fundamentally rebuild their settlement.

It was necessary to start planning from scratch, facing the challenge of how the settlement would be reconstructed and through which means this would be possible, as well as how life would be organized. Due to a large number of its inhabitants having migrated, major investments were and still are coming from the diaspora. This has significantly supported the local economy, in which a lot of the current inhabitants work within their small enterprises and retail stores.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

While Korisha is officially under the administration of the Municipality of Prizren, it also has its own self-organized governing structure (much like the municipality one) – a village assembly; a committee for finances; and four regular workers who care for the maintenance of the settlement (GAP 2017, 6).

The assembly's membership is based on the representative model and is thus decided by the inhabitants. The assembly is comprised of 13 inhabitants who work on a voluntary basis (their mandate is four years), regulating participatory decision-making processes in Korisha. The assembly meets regularly, on a weekly basis, when they take into consideration the requests and proposals from the inhabitants. None of the assembly members have the authority to reject or not take into consideration the given proposals. Rather, they only facilitate procedures of organizing and deciding on the collective matters. Aside from that, each of the assembly members has individual responsibilities for the management of a particular sector such as health, education, infrastructure etc. In the assembly,

in order for decisions to be made, a majority or consensus has to be reached.

Korisha also has its own budget and finances through a *collective fund,* where each house in the settlement contributes with 3 euros per month, while people in the diaspora pay monthly contributions of 36 euros. This effectively means that the village gathers, invests and manages its own budget of around 30 000 euros per year. In matters of organizing finances, the village has a group of three people who coordinate the distribution of local fund resources. The reason for having such a group emerged from the need for transparency and trust.

Budget outlays include numerous fulfilments of inhabitants' needs – from support to families that cannot self-sustain, to a working group of four people who are responsible for the daily maintenance of the settlement (as the institutional support for that was not available).

The criteria for people to join the working team are based on the economic needs of its inhabitants – those who need financial support are those who can work at and for the settlement. One of their assignments is also the collection of waste. After the sorting of the waste by the inhabitants, the rest would be picked up by a company appointed from the Municipality of Prizren. Another responsibility of the workers' group is the water maintenance and supply, where they monitor and regulate the entire system. Other daily and seasonal activities are organized collectively by all inhabitants, e.g. wheat harvesting.

The level of involvement of the Municipality of Prizren is determined by the Korisha inhabitants.[2] Under such self-organized

2 As an example, when the village roads were named by the Municipality of Prizren without the consent of the inhabitants, the road names were rejected by the Korisha assembly and prevented the implementation of the municipality's decision.

methodologies the inhabitants of the village expect institutional involvement to proceed through communication and practices which would follow and correspond to the needs and the will of the inhabitants.

CONCLUSION

Out of the urgent need to rebuild the community of Korisha, after the Kosovo War, in circumstances of an absence of institutional support, this settlement's inhabitants demonstrated the potential of a collective effort and management to not only fulfil the concrete basic needs of the community members, but to also establish an economically and socially sustainable system through self-organization. The common infrastructure that they have built included not only built structures, but also a set of governing and operational mechanisms that are democratic and participative.

Their partial autonomy from the municipality and its institutions also allowed them to be more responsive to the needs of inhabitants. When asked about such relation to the municipality, they offered two arguments: first, the long bureaucratic institutional procedures do not always correlate with the urgency of a certain emergency or struggle in the settlement; and second, the investment in institutions does not return a fair deal compared with what the inhabitants contribute, i.e. only 20% of the tax money raised from the inhabitants will return to the settlement in terms of investments. Although the community of Korisha recognizes the importance of the local and state institutions that organize around citizens' social needs, inhabitants still firmly believe that their system of self-organizing and principles it is based on, lead to a structure that prioritizes the fair distribution of capital among the community members.

The example of Korisha corresponds significantly to the tripartite concept of the commons. There is a community of inhabitants who have not only collectively produced, but are also maintaining their common infrastructure. Their model of *commoning* includes the governing system and principles that has also resulted from their collective agreement. One might say that the representative approach to governing is still not fully participative, but the principles of decision-making that are set in Korisha do ensure a high level of inclusivity of other inhabitants and disperse the authority and power beyond the local assembly and across the entire community.

The longevity of this model has to be attributed to the approach of sustainability that Korisha inhabitants use to manage and use their resources, always careful of the risk of exhaustion and with the idea of generations ahead that should also have access to them.

What we have not been able to detect in this example is the issue of the inclusion of women inside the governing structures, which we do find problematic. This is inevitably also a reflection of the wider culture and context of Kosovo, which does not promote opportunities for female representatives and decision-makers as a crucial condition in reaching a fair distribution of resources and power. This subject, then, remains as something that we hope the Korisha community would be able to take into consideration, in order to fully realize the idea of inclusivity and empowerment of *all* community members.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Korisha Village Archive

PRACTICE
PARKU KULTUROR ALI PODRIMJA
/
ALI PODRIMJA CULTURAL PARK

Njomza Dragusha
Orbis Rexha

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Gjakova/Djakovica[1] is one of Kosovo's main municipalities, located in the south-western part of Kosovo with around 120 000 inhabitants. It developed most significantly during the Ottoman occupation[2] and continued developing during Yugoslavia, when it became one of the cities with the most factories and industrial investments, providing work for the majority of its population. Gjakova/Djakovica is also known for being a multiethnic city and for cultivating diversity among its citizens.

Unfortunately, the recent turbulent times – following the beginning of the war in Kosovo – severely affected Gjakova/Djakovica as it was one of the cities that resisted the most. The city was heavily destroyed and many of the buildings needed to be reconstructed or fundamentally rebuilt. Part of the official mechanism in this process of reconstructing was the privatization of many of the city's resources, thus affecting multiple

[1]　　The city is known by two names: Gjakova in Albanian and Djakovica in Serbian.
[2]　　In this period Gjakova/Djakovica became a trading center between Shkodra and Istanbul, while the Hadum Mosque was a well-known marketplace.

aspects of urban life. As a result, the city today has only a few places where spontaneous collective gathering is possible (one such example is the Old Bazar as a commons space), outside of those provided for pure consumerism. Such a strategy from the authorities has brought about a situation in which social life was no longer possible outside of these privatized spaces.

Against such a background, it seems that Gjakova/Djakovica was waiting for a new generation to react and initiate new transformative movements, especially in the cultural field. It was obvious that the city was missing spaces where gatherings could take place as forms of collective exchange between citizens. In particular, for as much as 28 years, Gjakova/Djakovica was missing a cinema. It took a group of young enthusiasts to come together and change that by creating the first open cinema in city.

RESOURCE

The need to establish a public cinema in the city represented a significant trigger to start a broader conversation on reclaiming other public resources. It started with the idea of reclaiming the public park Ali Podrimja by several friends, which they proposed to the Municipality of Gjakova/Djakovica as the outdoor cinema concept, in order to get permission to access the park.

The location of the park surrounding the square was easily accessible from anywhere in the city. It is close to the Education Directorate in Gjakova/Djakovica and to the musical school Prenk Jakova. The park was part of the municipality's investment in an attempt to revive that part of the city. However, as often happens, they did so without approaching the community and working with it, and the infrastructure alone would not achieve the

revival. Therefore, the park ended up as a neglected space that no one was using. The municipality was thus ready to offer the young group permission, but it was only for use over the limited period of three months.

As for the equipment needed to transform the park into an open-air cinema, it was clear that the city authorities would not provide this, so the initiative started an online campaign in order to fundraise for the technical infrastructure. Not only did they succeed in that endeavour, but in only one month they were able to provide the city with an entire plan for a sustainable open-air cinema, which also included the refurbishment of all existing features in the park that were not functional at the time, as well as investment in seating and toilets. After three years, the entire space with its infrastructure continues to exist and is only used during the warmer part of the year.

COMMUNITY

The group of a few friends that started the initiative to establish a municipal cinema as a way of reviving the public park and creating an ever-needed space for open, non-consumer culture, founded the non-governmental organization Ali Podrimja and it took three years to motivate others to join the initiative and take part in activities and decision-making. This community currently has around 55 active members. Their contribution is based on voluntary work, because it is still impossible to find sufficient funds to support the core of the organization.

The initial idea of a cinema continued to grow into a local community demand to organize diverse activities in this space, reflecting the long-lasting urge for such a space. Increasing numbers of people have joined over time through use of the space for different

activities, although the evening screenings still remain dominant and the flagship activity of the space. In 2018 alone, they were able to organize around 60 events in four months during spring and summer.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

The organization Ali Podrimja is responsible for establishing and maintaining communication with the Municipality of Gjakova/ Djakovica. Unfortunately, as with every project implemented in public space in Kosovo, this one too is affected by existing national policies that disable a certain long-term sustainability for this initiative (at least on a legal basis). Therefore, the format of this civic–public partnership renews on an annual basis. Permission to use the space is granted for each year, through a formal agreement between the Ali Podrimja community and the municipality.

However, the community has claimed autonomy in decision-making. Namely, the municipal authorities have no power over determining how the community distributes duties among members or decides on the particular programme. Nevertheless, it is obligated to cover the expenses for water consumption on site.

The principles through which Ali Podrimja internally organizes its work align with the need for empowerment and the inclusion of the community in activities that enable socialization, education and inclusion, where these are embodied in community service initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Similarly to the initiatives Lubardhi Cinema and Anibar, the Ali Podrimja Park contributes

to the contemporary struggle for accessibility to public spaces in Kosovo, thus using their programme as a practice of gathering people around a certain space and engaging them so as to be actively involved in its use and maintenance. However, it still remains the most precarious initiative among the Kosovo cases presented in this publication, due to their short-term contracts that allow them to use the space. Their efforts are thus very much oriented towards reaching a more sustainable model for the park.

The Ali Podrimja initiative has succeeded in creating a devoted community of people who are willing to work voluntarily towards opening the space to the wider Gjakova/Djakovica public. It serves as a stimulating arena for those participating and willing to express and share their skills and knowledge, gathering people regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality or other social categories. It is an open space to interact and collaborate with diverse individuals and groups.

However, once it reaches a more sustainable solution for its functioning, the initiative certainly needs to work more on developing its governing model that would strengthen its position as a *space of commoning*. What is promising is that even through the temporary use of this park, the community is solid and persistent, which can only motivate the initiative to work harder towards more sustainability. From a long-term perspective, the Ali Podrimja initiative has proven to be potent in triggering more commons-based practices in Gjakova/Djakovica and politicizing the question of accessibility to public spaces and of public infrastructure in general.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Ali Podrimja Cultural Park Archive

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Conversations with Ednor Hoti, member of the initiative.

MON
TE
NE
GRO

Atelje Stari Grad / Open Art Studio
(Budva)

Mediteranski vrt / Mediteranean Garden
(Podgorica)

Selo Gornja Lastva & udruženje Napredak /
Gornja Lastva village & the Association Napredak
(Tivat)

Inicijativa 100 000 stabala / The 100 000 Trees Initiative
(Podgorica)

Čempres revolucija / Cypress Revolution
(Bar)

PRACTICE
ATELJE
STARI GRAD
/
ART STUDIO
OLD TOWN

Tatjana Rajić
Sonja Dragović

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

For years, fine artists in Budva have been faced with a problem common to almost all the cities in the region: a lack of adequate workspaces. In the overall social climate, which harbours no willingness to create a more comprehensive, efficient and concrete strategy for the development of cultural activities, artists were left to their own devices. This is in stark contrast with the approach of the former socialist system – in the period prior to the 1990s, Budva (like all other municipalities in the former Yugoslavia) had better infrastructure in the cultural field, and the work of artists was often supported by allotting collectively owned workspaces to individuals and creative collectives. Particular to Budva's old town, a number of artists from different republics of the former country had their own studios here. However, the importance of putting arts and culture above the imperatives of profit faded after the socio-economic changes of the 1990s, and these autonomous artistic spaces stood no chance before the demand for spaces to house more lucrative, tourism-oriented businesses. Today, Budva – with a permanent population of around 20 000 residents – is considered to be the centre of Montenegrin tourism economy, welcoming more than 100 000 visitors a day during the peak of the summer season (Total Montenegro News 2018).

The six artists of Budva have been struggling for years to afford adequate working conditions. Confident in the idea that the town should have a space where fine art can be created and presented, where artists can get together with their audience and let others into their creative process, they have managed to acquire a decaying building in the centre of the Old Town and transform it into an Art Studio Old Town. With this, they have established independent artistic space and a creative presence in the middle of a town which has been shaped by mass tourism and seasonal, standardized demand for fast entertainment. Art Studio Old Town thus became a local place of encounter and difference, much needed in an environment increasingly defined by a string of "non-places" (Augé 1995).

RESOURCE

Art Studio Old Town was set up in Budva three years ago, in the heart of the old town. The group of six local artists came before the local government with the initiative to transform the publicly owned building, and their plea was successful: rather than using the space to rent it out for another café or a restaurant, the municipal government decided to put it under the artists' management. This arrangement, however, is still temporary:

there are no guarantees for how long the space will be permitted to keep the current use.

Over a timespan of roughly two months, this group of local artists, using their own funding and individual donations, managed to restore the place and to put the studio itself and the adjoining square, with a surface of 180 m², into operation. The artists themselves are responsible for taking care of and maintaining the space, while the municipality covers the infrastructural and utility costs.

COMMUNITY

The idea behind the Art Studio Old Town entailed a transparent and interactive relationship with a wider community. Initially, the six artists were, as most artists are, focused on obtaining adequate individual, separate, independent studios. Since this was not possible at the time, and a group, collective concept was available to them – combining a working space and an additional interactive component in which visitors could freely observe the birth of a work of art in vivo – it was regarded as an acceptable, although not ideal solution. However, the efforts to bring the idea of a collective studio to life were also a learning process of how to work together, how to involve the community, how to create a space welcoming both the first-door neighbours and the overseas tourists and how to integrate all of that into one's artistic practice. By working to establish the studio and open it up towards the wider community, this group of artists established their own common practice.

During the three years in which the Art Studio Old Town has been active, the work of this informal artists' group has attracted the attention of diverse audiences who come there out of curiosity and a desire for new experiences, recognizing the difference in what this place offers compared to other places and of-

ferings in Budva. The Art Studio has become a distinctive point of cultural diversity, a place offering visitors not the profane contents of standardized souvenir production but functioning as a spot that expands and enriches cultural horizons. Amid the hasty exchanges of instant experiences that characterize contemporary mass tourism, the Art Studio is an opportunity to slow down and immerse oneself in local stories and colours. Here, in the square in the summer, or in the studio when it gets colder, one can meet artists engrossed in their work, talk to them, discuss how an artwork is created (or art in general), what the life in this town used to be like, and what it is like today. This type of exchange can be – and often is – an interesting part of a tourist route. However, it proves to be even more important for the local community, prompted to search for a meaning and rootedness in a time of ever-accelerating changes in global flows.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

The decisions about the work of the Art Studio are made jointly, by the six members of the collective. Their artistic visions and approaches to work differ, but they share the devotion to the shared practice and the welcoming space they are creating together. They emphasize the importance of support from the neighbourhood, which comes from the local business owners, as well as residents. The day-to-day maintenance and management of space is the artists' responsibility, while the infrastructural and utility costs are covered by the municipality.

Although the Art Studio Old Town was opened with the support from the local municipal authorities, who recognized the relevance, the importance and the potential of such space and practice, its formal and

legal status has not been defined yet. Due to a series of procedural issues, political changes, legal ambiguities and – particularly – the lack of a precise cultural strategy at the general and local level, the survival and future of the studio is still in question. The artists emphasize the need for adopting a cultural strategy, in which the position of the studio among the local institutions would be clearly defined, and the possibilities for cooperation with other actors in the sphere of culture and arts more pronounced. It is important to establish an institutional environment which supports practicing art in different forms and through different organizational structures – individual resilience and perseverance are important, but ultimately precarious and unsustainable basis for a robust cultural production.

CONCLUSION

The practice of Open Art Studio is important, as it points towards the ways in which artistic communities can organize and advocate for better work conditions at a time when arts are pushed to the margins of the cultural strategies, which are turning towards the cultural industries – towards support for cultural production that can be easily commodified and monetized. By establishing a practice which prioritizes artistic freedom and connection with the local community, while still responding to some of the market demands of a heavily-touristified local economy of Budva, this group of artists tries to find a solution and underline the need for better institutional framework in support of the arts. The discourse of commons is not used in this effort, but the emergence and the strengthening of a community – artistic, neighbourly – through the common practice of creating, managing and enjoying the space of the Art Studio Old Town is evident. In this practice, Budva found a piece of "free territory", bordered by a row of boutiques, cafés, bars, and souvenir shops: an extraterritorial zone where artists attained their own freedom together, alongside the freedom of others. This is how the idea behind this artists' group and the Open Art Studio comes to fruition: in expanding and promoting the work of artistic groups, associations, and individuals; in supporting free artists to find common ground for cooperation with each other and with other social actors; in promoting artistic expression and mutual aid, and in elevating these ideals to a broader social relevance.

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Art Studio Old Town Archive

PRACTICE
MEDITERANSKI VRT
/
MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN

Tatjana Rajić
Sonja Dragović

The Mediterranean Garden is the result of the civic action for protection of Gorica Hill, the park forest at the heart of the Montenegrin capital. The action started in 2012 when the local government announced the intention to build, within the framework of the city's strategic plan, a tunnel through the area. This was perceived as a major environmental threat by a group of activists, who stood up against the decision through a series of petitions, protests and actions, with broad support from the community. The project was halted, but the movement created in this struggle persisted and became, through constant and coordinated effort, the chief caretaker of the Gorica Hill.

After defeating the threat of constructing a tunnel through the park, a group of citizens who would later establish an organization – the Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers – embarked on a project of the gradual restoration of this unique natural resource. One of the initiators of the initiative, a history and geography professor Zoran Bojović, brought together a group of volunteers and together they took up the task of restoring the hill's neglected greenery. The task called for devoted presence and significant amount of work: since 2014, 200 actions of clearing and afforesting the area have been carried out, with the participation of over 3.000 citizens so far.

The creation of the Mediterranean Garden, started in 2015, was a logical extension of these efforts. The project started with the idea to create a place within the forest park where education and ecology could be combined. Danijela Stešević PhD,[1] part of whose research focuses on Gorica

1   Associate professor at the at the Department of Biology, University of Montenegro

Hill (Stešević et al., 2014), has had significant influence in formulating and implementing the idea of the Mediterranean Garden. For this endeavour, a biologically neglected area of about 3.000m² was selected, on a hillside near the entrance and just below the main pathway of the park. Before approaching the local government, the Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers developed and sketched the project idea and found the initial funding. When the capital city was finally approached in 2016, the idea got the green light and the construction of the Mediterranean Garden commenced. It was built mostly by voluntary work, from the material found in the forest and recycled. Around 1.000 plant species, of mainly Mediterranean aromatic plants, were planted. When walking past this area today, one can smell a wonderful aroma. That very moment is a victory in itself.

The project is far from done: the existing garden fulfils just one third of the space planned for this purpose. The Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers intends to complete the rest over the next few years, while building its own capacities and the sustainable management model in the process.

RESOURCE

The resource created through this practice of commoning is the Mediterranean Garden; however, it is inseparable from the area of Gorica Hill, where the garden is placed – an area whose position and importance for the citizens of Podgorica have inspired the entire movement. Gorica Hill is the most popular park in Podgorica, situated in the very centre of Montenegro's capital city. It is also the largest forest park in Montenegro. It is a home to 460 plant species – 14 of those are protected, and eight are of international importance (Green Home, 2008). Because of its dynamic relief, the hill is also attractive for various forms of recreation. Podgorica, the

capital city, was named after Gorica Hill, which adds to the hill's symbolic significance.

Like many common and public spaces inherited from the Yugoslavian period, Gorica suffered a grim fate of destruction, pollution and neglect over the last three decades. The surface of the hill's green cover was reduced by 40% since the late 1990s, due to the excessive construction and unregulated urbanization. Today the park forest of Gorica covers nearly 100ha, which have not been properly cared for by the responsible public enterprise, the City Greenery.[2] All of this contributed to the decision, made by a group of Gorica admirers, to continue fighting for this park even after it was no longer in danger of immediate destruction through tunnel construction. That decision led to a transformation, of which Mediterranean Garden is the evidence.

Mediterranean Garden is situated on a hillside, close to the entrance to the park. The old janitorial premises are renovated and used as the office, adjoining the "green classroom" – meeting space and presentation area now improvised under the old bridge. The fence around the garden was built by the local government, while the garden itself is constructed and maintained by the association, through voluntary work and private donations.

COMMUNITY

The Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers was formed through protesting the local government's idea for an infrastructural project – a tunnel – which would jeopardize the park. When the protest succeeded, the activists decided to continue their work on making Gorica Hill a better place by orga-

nizing public gatherings every Sunday, during which they would clean a certain part of the park, or remove the old wood and plan the new saplings. Mostly, however, the strategy of thinning the existing forest vegetation has been pursued, meaning that there is usually no need to plant new trees, because this approach enables the forest to renew itself on its own, gradually and naturally.

After the first actions were carried out with focus on restoring biodiversity, the goal was expanded to include renewing the infrastructure, street furniture and lighting. By this time, a few other, similar organizations, whose main goal is to inspire and involve citizens in the actions of caring for their environment, started participating and helping with the work. The association also used social networks to promote their ideas and activities,[3] and they reached many groups interested in offering assistance. Today, the association actively co-operates with eco groups, pensioners, student clubs, etc. Some of the biggest actions organized so far gathered around 200 volunteers. Primary and high school teachers bring students to Gorica for practical teaching. In addition, the private sector occasionally gives donations, or helps to mend the existing and build the new street furniture.

The work and the results achieved through this successful organizing were also acknowledged by the municipal government, which now supports the association and its actions. The association is not concerned that the capital city might jeopardize or call into question their protection and conservation project – they have defined their work, their rights and responsibilities through a contract with the local government. If, however, any unexpected and unwelcome changes do occur, they are ready to go back to protesting.

2 More info at the official website of the City Greenery: zelenilodoo.me

3 The Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/362117843880088/

GOVERNANCE MODEL

As for its inner organization, the Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers has a core of several constantly active members. "Gorica is a living story that attracts people", they say at the association. In addition to the lack of any hierarchical structure (all members participate in making joint decisions on everything, on an equal footing), in this organization they have no desire for self-promotion and advertising. They define their work as a regular expression of their civic identity – a regular action of a group of responsible and conscientious citizens.

The relationship between the association and the local government is regulated by a five-year contract defining their role in the treatment and care for the park. The association hopes the contract will be extended, since they do not have the intention of abandoning their work – on the contrary, they are working on expanding the garden and developing a multitude of new plans.

One of these plans refers to the souvenir production, for which the existing organic waste would be used. The association is also pursuing the idea of employing 1–2 people, who would take care of the Mediterranean Garden and related social and educational activities. The association also works on completing the documentation necessary to request a higher level of protection for Gorica Hill, i.e. its status as a nature park.

The Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers sees the future of Gorica Hill as a beloved, authentic park, with improved public facilities and general access, and with foundations based upon the principles of sustainability, self-sufficiency and circular economy.

CONCLUSION

The case of the Mediterranean Garden illustrates the power of a devoted civic action. Although Gorica Hill was neglected by the governing institutions for a long time – and, through this neglect, almost brought to a point of irreversible devastation – it has been recuperated through communal effort. This effort resulted in a new and improved public space for all citizens in Podgorica, but it was also constitutive for a wide alliance of individuals and organizations who now work together to nurture and protect the park. This happened not through the official governing structures, but in spite of them – in spite of their strategic plan for the area. The Association of Gorica Hill and Nature Admirers gave a practical example of how good, responsible governance over a common resource could function.

The association believes that the concept of the Mediterranean Garden, as an approach to restoration of micro-devastated sites, can be applied everywhere, and finds the example of the Marjan Forest Park in Split inspiring: from an informal association they have grown into a public institution for the Marjan Forest Park management. This association aspires to a similar goal, and underlines the fact that many other publicly owned common resources in Montenegro would benefit from such an approach – by taking direct action, citizens would become more aware of the need to preserve the environment, and their faith in the power of civic activism would be reaffirmed. In addition to promoting the commoning approach, this stance is illustrative of the low level of confidence in the existing democratic institutions, which are seemingly unable to truly engage the citizens and earn their trust. The citizens might be able to take the institutions back – but first, the Mediterranean Garden seems to teach us – they need to do the work of carrying for what is important through the autonomous, direct action.

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Mediterranean Garden Archive

PRACTICE
SELO GORNJA LASTVA & UDRUŽENJE NAPREDAK / GORNJA LASTVA VILLAGE & THE ASSOCIATION NAPREDAK

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

The case of the Village of Gornja Lastva shows us how a persistent and collaborative communal effort, spanning over the period of several decades, makes it possible to sustain the present and imagine the future of a place left behind by the dominant socio-economic trends. It might be difficult to imagine how an old, picturesque village, situated a stone's throw away from the Adriatic Sea coast, can become quite desolate in the era of ever-growing interest in expanding tourist accommodation along the Montenegrin shores. However, that is precisely the case: what we have here is an entire village, made up of stone houses and adorned with the ancient olive trees, but without a permanent economic activity that would sustain it – moreover, with a total of one permanent resident. The community that cares for it is, however, much wider, and it has been working diligently to ensure this wonderful place is not merely

Tatjana Rajić
Sonja Dragović
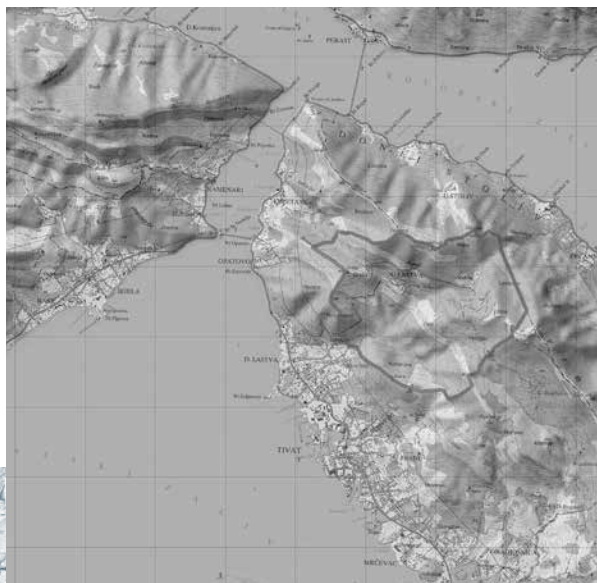
sustained, but also buzzing with ideas and projects through which a new life is being carefully crafted, at the intersection of traditional agriculture and sustainable tourism.

RESOURCE

The Village of Gornja Lastva is a part of the Tivat Municipality, located just three kilometres from the city which is one of the focal points of the Boka Bay. In the times of Yugoslavia Tivat used to be known for its shipyard, which has been turned into a luxury marina over the last decade. The village is situated at 300 metres above sea level, in Tivat's hinterland, on the slopes of the hill Vrmac. It has existed since at least the 14th century, when the first known written sources mentioning Gornja Lastva originated. The main economic activity at the time was agriculture, with wine, oil and wheat as the main products. The villagers also engaged in seafaring and craftsmanship; archives note the works of blacksmiths (Lisavac et al. 2015). The first church was built 600 years ago at the same spot where it stands today, occupying the central position in the village and affording a view of the entire Bay of Tivat. The village used to have one wheat mill and seven olive mills, one of which was built in the church yard and is still functioning today. The school was opened in 1845, and it got its own building in 1887 (Lisavac et al. 2015). Changes in the local way of life came with industrialization: at the beginning of the XX century shipbuilding and construction works grew in significance, and cultural life bloomed. Electricity was introduced in 1948 and car roads paved in 1974. However, by this time the village was already being slowly deserted – the lure of the new jobs in the booming industries of Yugoslavian era was too strong. The school was closed in 1963. The final blow came with the earthquake of 1979, after which Gornja Lastva never regained the permanent residents (Lisavac et al. 2015). However, it was not completely abandoned: families still took care of their old properties and used them for holiday getaways.

The long history of Gornja Lastva, the beauty of its landscape and the proximity to urban centres contributed to a sustained local interest in bringing the village back to life. In 1974 some of the former residents formed the Association of Friends of Gornja Lastva, through which they aimed to organize the necessary work of carrying for the physical integrity of the village, as well as for its cultural heritage. Between 1986 and 1988, the local government developed the Urban Planning Project for the Revitalization of Gornja Lastva, along with a complete geodetic survey which covered around 50 houses. As in most Mediterranean villages, the houses in Gornja Lastva are built of stone, which in this area is red and plate-like in form. Thanks to this natural characteristic, it did not require any further shaping and was therefore also suitable for the construction of roofs. The village landscape is characterized by the so-called dry-stone boundary walls, the construction of which has been completed to a high skill level. The masons of Gornja Lastva were well-known and respected not only in their homeland – their skill, experience and knowledge reached as far as to Asia Minor, where many of them travelled in search for work. The village also has some elements of urbanization, as evidenced by rainwater drainage channels on both sides of its pathways and, in some places, water stoppers, where soil carried in by big torrents from higher valleys was collected and brought back. Gornja Lastva was always a meeting ground for the urban and the rural, and its unique landscape still attests to this today.

COMMUNITY

The Association of Friends of Gornja Lastva was officially formed in 1974, although it has been active in a less formal manner for more than a century. In 1999, they changed the name to The Cultural Heritage Association Napredak – Gornja Lastva (hereinafter: The Association Napredak). Association, which is a registered non-governmental organization, consists of 15 core members and many more supporters who have become scattered all around the world in recent decades, but who continue their commitment to working together to protect and care for the cultural-heritage area of Gornja Lastva. Their work lies at the intersection between community organizing, expert research, and physical intervention and fosters unique cultural and scientific production while preserving the traditional landscape. Most of the active association members are connected to the village through personal family histories, and they still live in the vicinity of Gornja Lastva, in the Boka Bay area. They are professionally engaged in a number of different fields, and they usually take up the activities of the Association Napredak on a voluntary basis.

The association is headquartered in the village itself, in a former school building. After the school closure in the 1960s the building became a local cultural centre, owned and managed by the Municipality of Tivat. Today the Association Napredak has the rights to use the building, secured by the contract renewed every five years. By becoming the heart of the association's operations, the building also became the symbol of an approach to cherishing the local nature and history which is fundamentally different to the one reliant on over-tourism and resource exploitation. Through this approach the Village of Gornja Lastva, although it has no permanent population, becomes an important space of learning, exchange and imagining different futures. While the Association Napredak is independent in setting its goals and forming its programmes, it keeps close relationship with the local government of Tivat, which is responsible for maintaining the public infrastructure, such as the roads and streetlights. There is a certain symbiotic relationship between the municipal services and the Association Napredak: the former keeps the lights in Gornja Lastva on, while the later makes sure there's something to see. Without the work of the Association Napredak, the village would fall into decline – like many other villages around the world in our age of unhinged urban expansion.

The activities that bring people to Gornja Lastva are numerous – concerts, exhibitions, crafts workshops – and always aimed at strengthening the link between this micro-community and its wider surroundings: the Montenegrin riviera, and the entire Adriatic coast. Rooted in the history, geography and landscape of this area, the programmes organized by the Association Napredak explore the ideas for alternative ways of understanding the potentials of the seacoast, and work to pave the way for the revival of the village – the return of permanent residents. To this end, the most significant and ambitious part of the association's care for the village is the development of an urban and architectural project, which has been drafted by the Municipality of Tivat as an official document. The intention was to use this plan to halt the increasingly prevalent chaotic construction of apartment buildings, which pose a growing threat to Gornja Lastva and similar places in Boka Bay. To increase the awareness of this problem amongst future experts and to find solutions through joint work, six student workshops were organized during the

2002–2007 period, in cooperation with educational and cultural institutions such as Faculty of Architecture Paris Val de Seine from Paris and Cetinje Biennale. The activities completed during these workshops (Nikolić and Lapinte 2011), attended by the students from the Balkan region and from France, were also intended to provide some guidance for the reconstruction and restoration of activities that once existed in the village. This was followed by the projects Heritage – Driver of Development,[1] Agriscape[2] and New-Old Olive Groves[3] (mne. Novi-stari maslinici) aimed at the complete restoration of the landscape in the Vrmac area. All these projects have resulted in fresh insights, applicable knowledge and published research on how to start and improve the local agricultural production, and how to integrate it into economic flows and cultural landscapes of the Adriatic coast (see: Kovačić et al. 2015; Kapetanović et al. 2018; Strikić 2019). This makes them highly relevant far beyond the immediate context of the Village of Gornja Lastva, especially at the time when the topics of alternatives to capitalist growth, local production of food and greater resilience of local communities are becoming increasingly important.

The Association Napredak develops their work and disseminates its results through a network it has established with a range of organizations, institutions and individuals concerned with sustainable spatial and cultural development. They are especially proud of the new, younger generation of locals eager to participate in their work and contribute to the activities. The association raises funds for their work through local and international grant competitions and partnerships, as well as through tourism services[4] (e.g. offering guided tours of the area, postcards, maps, brochures, etc.). The continuous care for the space they use pays off – since it came into their care, the village cultural centre was greatly improved. The roof was fixed, and an attic built, doubling the space of the interior. The centre now also comprises a restaurant, a multipurpose room for various events, a classroom for students, a pantry and outdoor furniture used in summertime. The space is available for anyone to use, as long as it is in coordination with the association and in line with their values. It has been the site for many activities that made the Village of Gornja Lastva quite famous in recent years: jazz concerts, dawn concerts, photo exhibitions, performances of church and *a capella* singing, landscape days, etc. In 2019, the 45th Lastva Fest was held here. Attendance at all these events is always large. These gatherings, facilitated by the Association Napredak, are what keeps the village on a cultural map – and in the mental maps – of the Boka Bay.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

As the Association Napredak has taken on a wide range of activities aimed at improving the conditions for living in the village of Gornja Lastva, it is in constant dialogue with various stakeholders that influence and shape this space. Following the contract with the Municipality of Tivat, the association manages the local cultural centre of Gornja Lastva. It also manages the upkeep of the last

[1]   More about this project: www.bastina.me
[2]   Agriscape – Restoration of the traditional agricultural landscape for sustainable agriculture; more about the project: www.agriscape.org
[3]   More about this in: Alković, Ćazim. 2019. *Djevičansko maslinovo ulje: kako ga prepoznati, čuvati i konzumirati.* Tivat: Kulturno zavičajno udruženje "Napredak" Gornja Lastva.

[4]   Tourism office of Tivat promotes the programs in Gornja Lastva, see: tivat.travel/veceras-blues-u-gornjoj-lastvi/

remaining olive mill, which the church ceded without a formal agreement, as the association has an excellent relationship with the parish office. Cooperation with other civic organizations from the Boka Bay area is also good, to which various jointly realized projects can attest.[5]

Overall, the association enjoys broad support and the trust of the community. It is important to clarify here that *the community* consists of people who no longer reside in the village, but still have the sense of belonging and the need to care for its natural and cultural resources. Some of them still live in the Boka Bay area, some of them live overseas, but they all stay connected through shared devotion to their old village. This community manifests every time the association organizes a new programme in the village, and dozens (or even hundreds) of people turn up for the event. The community also takes part in shaping the activities of the association by participating in them, by proposing new programmes and by helping with the current workload. Anyone who wants to engage in the work of the association can do so, as long as they are committed and responsible. The decisions in the association are reached through consensus, and in line with the overall goal to keep improving the conditions for living and for sustainable agricultural and cultural production in the village.

5   For example, the cooperation with mountaineering associations resulted in obtaining funds from the Ministry of Tourism to produce and publish the maps of hiking trails and paths in the area.

CONCLUSION

The case of the Village of Gornja Lastva and the Association Napredak is the example of a long-term communal commitment to a spatial resource, here used as a living laboratory for discovering the past and planning for the future. In a context that promotes and rewards fast and unregulated urbanization and real-estate financialization, working together to promote and protect the potentials of natural environment and sustainable development is a decisively political act. The Association Napredak provides educational opportunities and the events where the wider community of Boka Bay can meet and enjoy the cultural landscape of Gornja Lastva, as well as a chance for visitors and tourists to get to know this place. But the association also actively works on restoring olive production, creates architectural and planning solutions for the village, and advocates for progressive policies of spatial development through knowledge creation and promotion

(IPOP 2015; Bouche-Florin 2016). Thanks to their persistence and their support for independent scholarly work, spanning for more than 45 years, the cultural and agricultural heritage of Boka Bay is much better known to us today. It forms a solid basis for thinking about the next steps, in this volatile time when the local resilience seems to be of utmost importance.

Although the Association Napredak does not define their practice as commons, the Village of Gornja Lastva is indeed studied, governed and developed as a common spatial resource, by a community which was constituted and defined in relation to this resource. It shows how transformative the relation between people and their environment can be – to paraphrase Harvey (2008), how people can change themselves by changing *the village*. The Association Napredak set out to save and improve their traditional living environment, and in the process, became an advocate for a substantially different model of spatial development along the Montenegrin coast.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Marija Nikolić, Anđelko Stjepčević and Gornja Lastva Village Archive

PRACTICE
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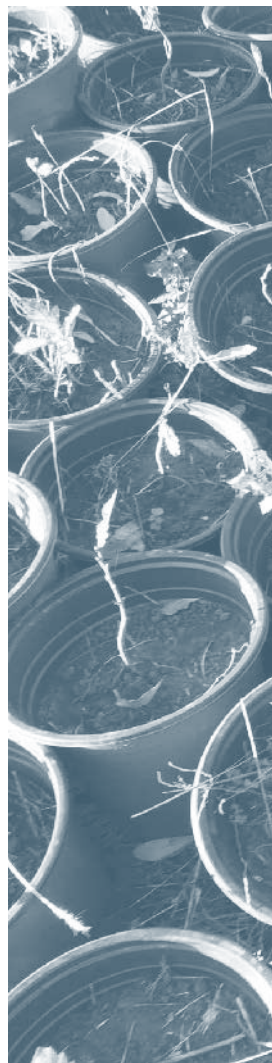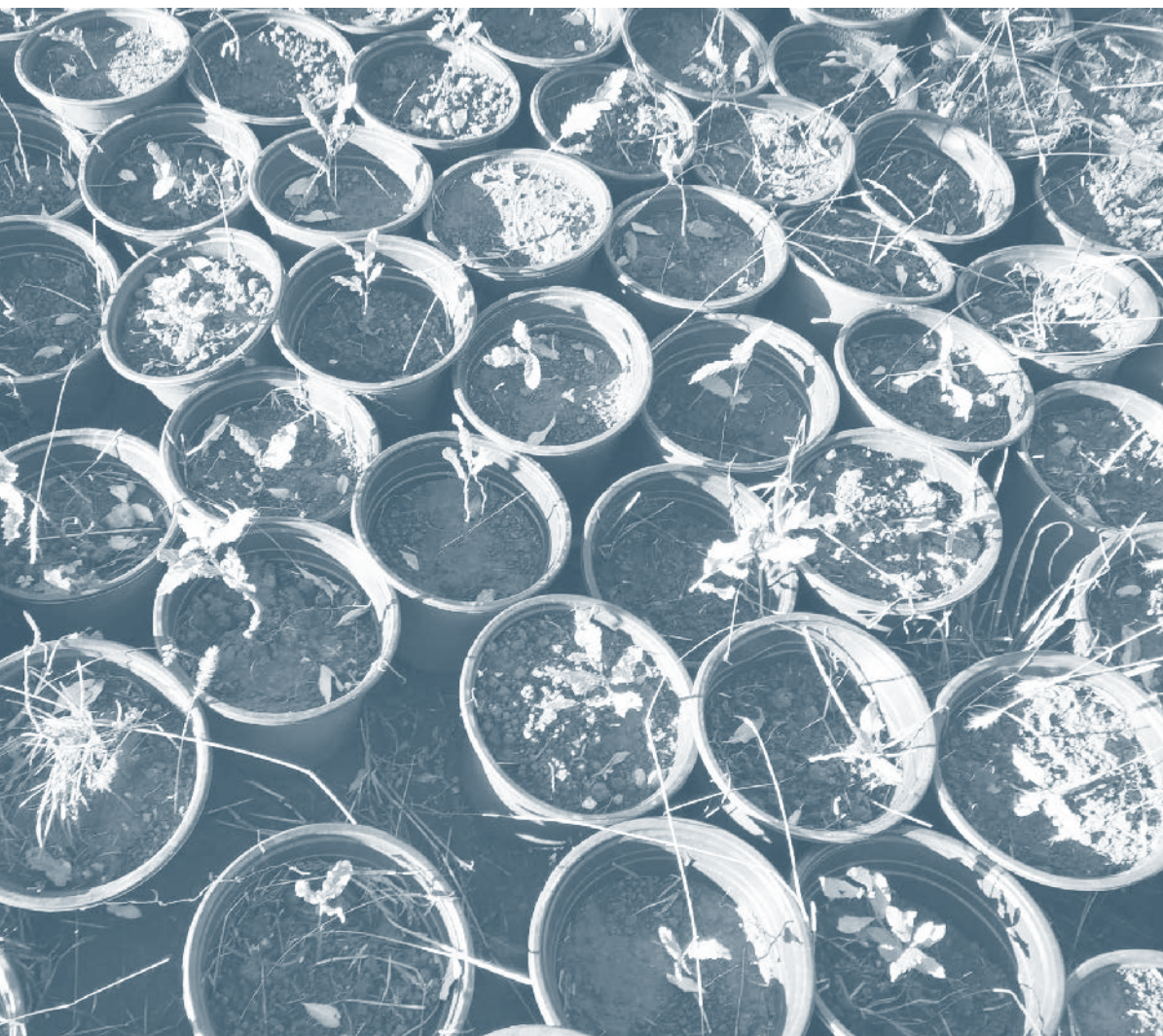
IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Over the last three decades, the green spaces of Podgorica have been shrinking. The main causes for this are rapid urbanization and forest fires. According to general urban plans from 1990 and 2012, during this period the built-up areas expanded from 36.3% to 42.9% of the city's territory. The number of summer forest fires in 2017 was 28% higher than in 2016, which, according to the city protection services' reports, was mainly due to changing climate conditions. The extent of the loss of

Sonja Dragović

improving the quality of the living environment by planting a large number of trees over a short period of time. Initially, the plan proposed that the local government should introduce a new ecological tax for the businesses with the biggest negative environmental impact. The resulting revenue, collected in monthly instalments, would be used by city services to buy and plant 100 000 tree seedlings over the course of two years. The action would continue in other parts of Montenegro as well, until all urban and suburban greenery reaches satisfactory levels. The initiative based this suggestion on the Environmental Law, which includes the "polluter pays" principle. The government of Podgorica, however, was not enthusiastic about the plan: they complimented the effort but decided not to support it institutionally. At that point, KOD decided that the plan would continue independently of municipal structures. The 100 000 Trees initiative became a civic campaign that, over the following months, managed to raise enough money and volunteer support to buy, plant and regularly water nearly 1400 trees and to establish an oak tree nursery garden in Podgorica.

RESOURCE

The initiative 100 000 Trees started with the idea of creating, rather than preserving, a common resource: it set out to plant 100 000 new trees in Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro. This action was instigated in September 2018 by the civic movement KOD[1] active in Podgorica since 2017. KOD describes itself as a group of individuals with diverse

trees and green spaces was presented in the European Capital Greenness Evaluation (Gärtner 2017): out of 43 analysed European capitals, Podgorica ranked 31st, which was the lowest ranking among capital cities in the Balkans. Since this city used to carry the unofficial title of "the greenest capital of Yugoslavia" only a few decades before, the new ranking came as a sombre warning that something had to be done.

The 100 000 Trees initiative was a call to action envisioned by a civic organization KOD, aiming at countering the lack of greenery in Podgorica's new residential blocks and at

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1   The literal meaning of the word KOD is Code; however, the movement often uses the string of these three letters as an acronym for various slogans they promote, such as *Konkretno, odgovorno, dostojanstveno* (eng. Concretely, responsibly, with dignity), *Krenimo od drveća* (eng. Let's start with trees) or *Ka opštem dobru* (eng. Towards the Common Good).

professional backgrounds (law, economics, biology, engineering…) who believe in good governance and government institutions, but who are also aware of the current system's shortcomings. Hence, KOD aims to improve the system by setting up initiatives to highlight the flaws and push for change. They sum this up in their slogan: *(Re)action to Reality*.

KOD activities mostly consist of producing analysis of various current issues and policies and proposing models for solutions. They have so far focused on issues such as systemic corruption and local governance, but also landfill management, housing policy and environmental damage caused by mini-hydroelectric plants. Their findings, ideas, proposals and actions are usually presented in a neat, social media-friendly format of short, shareable videos.[2] It appears that their work has so far been oriented mostly toward producing and sharing knowledge about problems that will be solved only if more citizens understand how they are shaped by the political choices and decisions of elected decision-makers. The 100 000 Trees initiative emerged from this work.

COMMUNITY

From the moment it started as a non-institutional project, the initiative relied heavily on community support. The idea was promoted mainly through social media. People were invited to contribute by donating small amounts of money or tree seedlings from their own production, by taking up the planting work, or by collecting acorns for the future nursery garden. Everyone who wanted to take part, could: over a period of one year (fall 2018 – fall 2019) more than 300 people were in some way involved in the initiative.

2   One such video, promoting a tree planting action: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZJRTSy29b4

During the first months of planting, which were the final months of 2018, the initiative collected more than €4,000 from citizens and businesses and spent it on seedlings and planting tools; all the accounting was regularly published via KOD's website. The organization placed a significant emphasis on transparency and made sure the action reports, purchase receipts and financial statements were easily accessible to the public, so that those who supported the initiative knew exactly where their money went. Tree seedlings cost between €0.5 and €35 apiece, and many were donated by nursery gardens as a gesture of support.

Even though areas lacking greenery are abundant in Podgorica, at first it was a challenge to find the right locations for planting. The initiative reached out to the municipal services responsible for maintaining the public greenery and asked for instructions on where to plant, as well as for maps of underground electrical and water installations. The city responded by admitting they do not have such information and are unable to provide it. Hence, the initiative relied on the available urban plans and focused on planting in the green areas defined by those plans, and in neighbourhood locations proposed by citizens who joined the initiative. In every planting location local people were indispensable, also because they knew the terrain well and could suggest where to dig a hole and plant a tree without the risk of cutting underground electrical cables or damaging water pipes. In this way, community cooperation managed to overcome the flaws of the local administration and information systems.

In March 2019, after a successful planting season, the initiative established its oak tree nursery garden. This idea was present from the start, since one of the challenges in greening the city of Podgorica was an insufficient amount of locally produced seedlings – espe-

cially for regenerating urban parks and sub-urban forests. Starting a nursery was made possible by an organized action to collect 20 000 acorns, in which schoolchildren also took part. Another necessary element – the land – was obtained with the help of a citizen who showed his support for the initiative by allowing 300 m² of his property to be used for the nursery experiment. Of the 20 000 acorns collected, 10 000 were viable – and around 70% of those have grown into seedlings, to be planted on the hill slopes around Podgorica over the following planting season.

The initiative also cooperates with other civic actions: last winter they supported the Cypress Revolution, a local struggle to protect an old cypress park in the coastal city of Bar from destruction planned by municipal government. In the end, the revolution did not save the cypresses, but it sent an important message about the need for continual civic action advocating for common interests. To show support, 100 000 Trees donated 15 seedlings to the community of Bar and planted them together with local activists.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

The initiative appears to be open to everyone who wants to get involved – and who is accepting of the various ways in which people want to participate. Many contact the organization with an idea for planting location, willing to help with planting but unable to invest more than their labour; the initiative then procures the seedlings and organizes a planting action. Neighbourhood associations reach out, offering to buy the seedlings and plant together with the initiative, but they need advice in choosing the right sorts of trees. Creative interventions also happen.[3] People who own private forests have reached out to donate seedlings; sellers of tools and fertilizers support the effort with

[3]   For example, the painter Miloš Radunović raised €250 for the initiative on his own, by creating a separate campaign called 100 Drawings for 100 Trees. Radunović sold his drawings at a symbolic price of €5 and donated half of the money to the initiative, which accepted the gesture gladly and planned to have one planting action funded entirely by this single donation.

donations in kind; even the construction of a "drop-by-drop" watering system for the nursery garden was a joint effort that ended up costing only €150. Such a positive communal response started on social networks – via KOD's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages, through which people got in touch to offer help and support. The conversation then moved to arranging a joint action where people met in person and worked together, while social media often remained the main communication channel between the core organizing team and the initiative's supporters. The supporters are the ones who decide on the extent to which they want to be involved, and whether they want to just help with specific activities or become part of the organizing team.

The overall success of the initiative seems to be related to the way in which the community that has been growing around it is able to come together and organize quickly and effectively. This proved to be true during the summer of 2019, when the initiative's main task was to regularly water the trees planted last fall (the city services did not take up this task). In some instances, this proved to be difficult because the water was not easily accessible. People from the neighbourhoods where the trees were planted stepped in to help, by either bringing water from their own apartments or coming up with alternative solutions, like finding a local café willing to keep an eye – and a sprinkle of water – on the youngest additions to the neighbourhood alley. Communal actions of the 100 000 Trees initiative, no matter if they entail planting, watering, or maintaining the nursery garden, are always an opportunity for people to meet each other and come up with new ways of improving this campaign or collaborating in some other way. The measurable results of the work done so far inspire people to get involved and contribute.

CONCLUSION

The 100 000 Trees initiative grew at the intersection of eco activism and practical criticism over the way in which the government handles current environmental challenges. By providing a framework for communal planting actions, the initiative showed that people care

for common spaces enough to invest time and money into making them better. The openness and transparency of the process, especially of its financial structure, has surely contributed to its success.

The civic movement KOD, which leads and promotes the initiative, often emphasizes the "common good" in its promotional materials and the analysis they produce. Here, "common good" is presented as diametrically opposed to the current Montenegrin model of governance, which often appears distant and disconnected from citizens' everyday worries and struggles. Hence, advocating for the common good acquires the meaning of advocating for a different, better way of organizing society – and the 100 000 Trees initiative becomes an example of the change that is possible when people get organized to build and care for something together.

The fact that the local government of Podgorica decided not to support the initial suggestion proposed by this initiative might be a result of several factors: inexperience in engaging with community initiatives, the complexities of involving citizens in the standard operation of city services, an unwillingness to introduce the new eco-tax into the municipal system, KOD's open criticism of the local administration's work, etc. It is considerably less clear why, after the citizens have successfully planted almost 1400 trees, municipal institutions still refuse to collaborate. Their attitude certainly contributes to the way in which the initiative is now perceived: as a practical critique of the system, and a swift grassroots response to slow institutional processes concerning environmental protection and climate change.

The initiative is now expanding across Montenegro, with the hope of engaging in better cooperation with other local governments. After approaching every city administration with suggestions to jointly organize planting actions, they received seven positive responses and are currently developing plans for the next steps. Meanwhile, the action in Podgorica is continuing, and the nursery garden is growing. "Podgorica lacks not 100 000 trees, but a million trees!" – activists from the initiative declare, as they get ready for a new planting season.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
KOD Archive

STRUGGLE
ČEMPRES REVOLUCIJA / CYPRESS REVOLUTION

Toward the end of 2018, citizens of the Montenegrin port city of Bar organized themselves and demanded that the local government and the Ministry of Education stop the construction of a kindergarten. This perhaps sounds like an unlikely story of urban activism. Nevertheless, it is true: a Bar community decisively opposed the building of a kindergarten in place of a centrally located, almost 100-year-old cypress park. The Cypress Revolution followed, which showed that organized resistance against flawed decision-making processes and dubious spatial planning practices in Montenegro is possible – and it gave an important lesson on the perils of ignoring citizens and sacrificing public spaces in the city-building process.

The fact that the planned construction of a kindergarten would be a threat to the beloved cypress park became obvious to the general public only when the immediate start of construction works was announced. The ceremony of laying the foundation stone was held on 15 October 2018 with the mayor of Bar and the minister of education both in attendance. The kindergarten project was part of a larger scheme for the improvement of preschool facilities in Montenegro, supported by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), and involving both the local and the state authorities. The event unfolded in a celebratory fashion and without any mention of the fact that the cypress park, which occupied the future construction area, would have to be cut down for this kindergarten to be built. However, this was obviously the case, as the new facility was to be located in the schoolyard of the two schools in central Bar: a schoolyard dotted with old and tall cypresses, which left no place to build

anything, let alone a kindergarten big enough to accommodate 400 children. Before the foundation stone was laid, a group of high school students started asking for an explanation, asserting that they would not permit the destruction of the park, which they perceived as inseparable from their schoolyard.

Over the following days the broader community began organizing in support of the cause: some local teachers, journalists, architects and lawyers became involved in planning the next steps together with the students and their parents. A Facebook group devoted to stopping the construction in the school backyard grew fast, gathering a couple of thousand members in just a few days.[1] The group was used for sharing information on further activities with the wider Montenegrin public and to gather more support. The community was trying to understand the reasons behind the decision to remove the park and build on that location, and it sought to find the most effective way to stop this from happening.

Since the project was justified by the authorities as "part of the adopted urban plan", the activists took a closer look at the existing planning documents and found that the idea of putting a kindergarten in the schoolyard that was already occupied by the cypress park first appeared in the 1994 plan, where it was one of three possible locations for the new facility. At that time the entire area looked different – there were fewer residential buildings, and the schoolyard extended to the other side, beyond the park. Over the last two-and-a-half decades almost a dozen new buildings were added to this part of town; the schoolyard shrank and two out of three possible kindergarten locations were rezoned for other purposes. The only one left – the cypress

park – now had to take on a construction much larger than originally planned, since many more people in need of childcare came to live in the neighbourhood. None of this changed the urban plans: the kindergarten was placed in this location in the renewed 2005 plan, and again in 2009. This information was not secret, but it was also never properly publicized. The way in which public participation in spatial planning in Montenegro usually works – insufficient promotion of opportunities for public consultations, materials illegible to the non-expert audience, the withholding of important facts – assures that spatial plans remain enigmatic to anyone who is not professionally involved in crafting them. Hence, a detailed spatial plan such as this, with far-reaching consequences for the entire city, could easily be made, while the overwhelming majority of citizens remains completely unaware of its consequences until the very last moment – that is, until the bulldozers arrive and almost nothing can be done to stop the process or change its course (Vujošević and Dragović 2019).

Other potential kindergarten locations were rezoned so that new, private residential or mixed-use developments could be constructed instead. Such a change of plans suggests that the municipal government might have decided to use the public park as a building ground for a public facility, while leaving the other locations free for a lucrative private investment. On the one hand, this decision damages the public interest in at least three ways: the park is lost, the schoolyard is irrevocably damaged, and the kindergarten is squeezed into an inadequate location. On the other hand, the private investor who gets to build a residential development in the centrally located plot originally intended for a kindergarten can almost certainly count on a favourable return on their investment. Hence, the spatial planning process prioritizes pri-

1   Let's Stop the Construction of a Kindergarten in the Schoolyard Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/560944297651309

vate profits over public interests, all the while keeping the public in the dark. The Cypress Revolution was a means for the citizens of Bar to protest this mode of governing.

INVOLVED ACTORS / COMMUNITY

The Cypress Revolution was carried out by a diverse group of people, who worked together to protect the common good – the public park and the schoolyard – and to assert their own right to participate in the processes of urban planning and city build-

ing. The protest was started by high school students, who were soon joined by professors, parents, artists, professionals in the fields of law, architecture, ecology and numerous citizens who, through this struggle, became activists for the first time. The coordinating body consisted of 10–20 people who engaged in continual online communication and who took on organizing duties in line with their specific skillset. People could freely leave and enter this group, and they did, depending on the time and effort they were able to invest in different stages of the process. The wider group, whose members organized most of the fieldwork, night patrols and daily protests,

had around 100 participants. The widest support community, connected through the Facebook group Let's Stop the Construction of a Kindergarten in the Schoolyard (mne. Zaustavimo gradnju vrtića u dvorištu Gimnazije/Ekonomske) amassed more than 3,000 members and attracted people from all over Montenegro who wanted to show their support and be informed about the course of the struggle in Bar.

STRATEGIES OF STRUGGLE

Even though the public disapproval of the upcoming construction works became apparent immediately after the works were announced, the project was not halted. The first attempt to cut the cypress trees down was stopped by a human wall, which the

the park be protected and for the new kindergarten to be built elsewhere. More than 3,000 citizens of Bar signed it during the first weekend of action. Then, in order to demonstrate the significance this park holds for all citizens of Bar, activists turned the protest into a festival called About Cypress Trees and People. For the entire first week of November, the cypress park and the small amphitheatre at its centre became a lively stage hosting all kinds of collaboratively created events, from lectures to art workshops, from music performances to yoga classes. The amount of effort put into the action persuaded the local parliament of Bar to vote on the petition. However, on 15 November, the parliament decided to dismiss the vote and continue with the works. Activists continued to fight by keeping an eye on the park (so that they could react promptly if the trees were threatened), by examining the urban planning procedures that allowed this to happen, and by appealing to state institutions.

An official, institutional response was nonexistent until after the park had been destroyed: workers arrived before dawn on 17 January, during the school winter break, and started felling the trees. No further explanation was given for this sudden intervention, which the citizens and schoolchildren of Bar experienced as an attack on their living space. The action was supervised by the local police, stopping any activists who came after hearing the saws from trying to interfere. Television reports of children standing behind the construction site fence and crying were sent around the region. No official statement followed, neither regarding the number of trees cut nor the destination to which the wood was taken afterwards. According to the activists, 91 out of 127 trees in the park were cut down.

At this point, it appeared that all was lost. However, activists refused to accept defeat and continued to protest the construction

students formed. Students also guarded the park during the night, organizing in shifts that ended at dawn, before it was time to go to school. These gatherings then became a set for young local performers, and the night patrols were often accompanied by live music.

The works were announced at the beginning of the week: by the end of the week a petition had been prepared, demanding that

and demand a new, more suitable location for the kindergarten to be found. Over the following days, the amphitheatre – the traditional students' meeting place, the site of the About Cypress Trees and People festival – was also demolished, while the protests at the fence of the destroyed park continued. The "cypress graveyard", which is what the students named their schoolyard, i.e. the prospective construction site, was now constantly being guarded by a private security force.

In order to channel public dissatisfaction in the most productive way, activists started organizing mass, peaceful Sunday protest walks in the city centre. More people joined every week, often coming from other parts of Montenegro to express their solidarity and support: the number of protesters reached several thousand. Besides wanting the construction project to be stopped and the future kindergarten to be moved to a more appropriate location, the protesters demanded the schoolyard be reconstructed and that those responsible for destroying the park bear the consequences. Between the Sundays, activists continued to peacefully protest at the construction site and the local police continued in their efforts to remove them. During one of these protests in mid--February, a violent reaction by the police force led to several protesters' being injured. The next day, the prime minister of Montenegro issued a statement saying that "we do not want to build kindergartens by using police force". With this, the project was finally abandoned.

The result, after four months of struggle, was the loss of a treasured park, the loss of the cypress wood (valuable material whose final destination remains unknown), a ruined schoolyard and a stalled process in obtaining an urgently needed preschool facility. On a positive note, citizens succeeded in preserving the space of the public park and in pressuring the authorities into finding another plot for the kindergarten construction. The

most valuable achievement, however, is that citizens came together and worked for a common goal, outside of existing structures and institutions, and they emerged victorious.

CONCLUSION

In losing its park, Bar suffered terrible damage – and this damage directly resulted from the flawed spatial planning procedures and practices, designed to promote private over the public interest. Over the course of four months of activists' struggle in Bar, local and state authorities had several opportunities to ameliorate the situation, yet they failed at every turn. After the activists submitted a petition to the local parliament, their demands were denied with 14 votes in support of them, seven against and 13 abstentions. After the activists had pointed out the flaws in the 2009 spatial plan, the kindergarten project documentation and the building permit, they received no reply. After the activists pointed out the lack of an official record regarding the cypress park and the lack of a professional assessment of the quality and value of this greenery, there was no reaction. The works moved forward and the park was destroyed, although all these questions were opened through institutional channels and still await a resolution. Months of peaceful protests passed with no reaction, until people trying to protect their space and their right to participate in decision-making processes got hurt. This is an important illustration of the limits of an institutional approach to struggle, and of the lengths to which the government authorities may be willing to go in trying to protect private interests at the expense of the public good.

During the protests, activists repeatedly criticized how the local and state authorities made decisions about the city's spatial

development and how they managed the public space, public services and public goods. The Cypress Revolution participants defined their struggle as one aiming for better, more inclusive, responsible and just governance. After the protests ended, they continued their work by supporting activists fighting against illegal construction works in the Durmitor National Park, and by organizing a cleaning action in the lake town of Virpazar. They also continued imagining what the future might be for the ruined schoolyard: local architects involved in the initiative prepared two suggestions for the new design and presented them to the public via social media, asking for feedback and encouraging discussion. The resulting conversation, despite it being carried out outside of the regular spatial planning and design procedures, was a vast improvement on the usual public participation routine. In addition, it clearly demonstrated a lasting commitment to imagining and creating a new common space upon the old ruins.

The initiative's efforts have been recognized locally, regionally and even globally. The activists received two prizes, for ethics in public communication from the Montenegrin Media Institute and for civic activism from the independent daily newspaper *Vijesti*. They presented their work at the Fearless Cities conference in Belgrade and at the Participation in Environmental Issues conference in Ljubljana. In addition to sharing their story and learning from others, the initiative plans further activities: a new edition of the About Cypress Trees and People Festival will be organized in 2020, with a special spotlight on the use and management of public spaces. In the meantime, activists are monitoring the works in their own schoolyard in Bar, in which they want to participate alongside municipal and state institutions by providing a participatory framework for making any future design and management decisions.

There has been some progress: in October 2019, a year after the decision to cut the park became apparent, several government officials came to the schoolyard and planted new cypress trees. There is still a long way to go in terms of accepting responsibility for the damage done and devising a way of governing that does not exclude or ignore the citizens. Nevertheless, the Cypress Revolution has already shown that organized public actions can change the results of closed and inadequate decision-making processes. The next challenge is to reimagine and improve upon the process itself, so that more spatially and socially just cities can be produced.

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The countries in the former Yugoslav region have gone through a transitional period consisting of a restoration of capitalism and a dismissal of the socialist self-management experience. In the spirit of the characteristic *discontinuity* common for this part of Europe, these countries have crossed over from the paradigm of *brotherhood and unity* to the market-led reproduction of society with specific features of the periphery, very much dependent on wider global economic and political relations.

In such a specific context, the case studies presented in this publication illustrate the growing number of citizen-led groups and initiatives in the former Yugoslav region that through self-organization create new narratives and paradigms for desired social transformation. They are either fighting against the dominating mode of commodification and privatization of various spheres of social reproduction, or they are themselves involved in communities that can offer other ways of producing, using and governing resources.

When it comes to urban policies, development has for some time now been tailored to satisfy the interests of individuals concerned only with profiting from their investment as well as the inherent urge of capital to expand, rather than directly supporting development of common resources and contributing to public interest. It has become clear, therefore, that *building* (in both a physical and political sense) a more just society for everyone must rely on increasingly direct bottom-up action. This has become manifest through a series of struggles for the de-commodification of public land and resources (such as the case of the Lumbardhi Cinema or the struggles against the Belgrade Waterfront or against the building of private mini hydro-plants on the Stara planina mountain) or claiming housing as a right against the exclusively market-led housing distribution (such as with the initiative Roof Over Heads),

or with practices that have created common spaces that are democratically governed (such as Magacin Cultural Centre and Termokiss social centre) or, finally, practices that establish and sustain a commons infrastructure that defies laws of interest and economic growth (such as the water distribution system in Korisha settlement or the 100 000 Trees initiative in Podgorica). Only a selection of such examples has been presented here. Regardless of whether the urban commons have been gained through citizen-led struggles or through a set of arrangements within a local authority (through the models of so-called public–civic partnerships), these cases show that communal bonds, common vision and relationships defined by trust, solidarity and care keep such projects running. New communication channels and technologies, such as social media, have also proven to be important for spreading the message, keeping in touch with supporters and inviting more people to join various activities, thus helping to strengthen the community and promote the idea behind the commons.

Although few of these groups are acquainted with the contemporary discourse of the commons, and they do not necessarily explicitly frame their struggles and practices within it, they do, however, demonstrate the values of solidarity, equal and fair access and sustainability, which correspond to the normative criteria that Silke Helfrich, among others, proposed within the commons critical theory (mentioned in the "Theoretical framework" section of this publication).

In addition, although the commons might not be the focal, self-identifying concept within these emerging practices, one common observation in all the contexts covered by this study is that the notion of commons is, in fact, increasing its presence in public discourse, gradually replacing the notion of the *public* good. We assume that this transformation is happening due to continual practices of the enclosure of public space, and generally public resources, as part of the neoliberal paradigm of urban development. By recognizing that the *public* is certainly in crisis, the *commons* is more frequently used instead, in order to emphasize the communal, democratic right to use or govern certain spatial resources.

When exploring the ways in which the specific context of the Yugoslav self-management experience in recent history influences the contemporary practices and struggles based on the logic of the commons, we were surprised at how implicit this relationship is. Aside from the very few initiatives that have been developing a strong politicization strategy and have thus positioned themselves openly on the left of the political spectrum, others have not identified with the historical self-management model. Rather, they find their own practices of democratic governance and self-management to result from an organic development of bottom-up

initiatives and solidarity groups. Bearing in mind the persistent institutional efforts over the past decades to denounce the socialist period of Yugoslavia, such a position was very much predictable.

Finally, what we perceive as the most significant political potential of these struggles and practices is twofold. First, by addressing everyday experiences and citizens' needs, these urban commons have politicized the spheres of our social reproduction that have not been conventionally perceived and treated as political. By connecting cultural needs, use of public space or housing to the notion of *rights,* as well as to models of governing or ownership, these cases have opened new fronts within the fight for more radical political change. Furthermore, what has been officially strategically treated as economic inevitability towards an overall improved living conditions – such as growth of investments or massive privatization of production and services – and thus depoliticized, has been through these practices re-questioned and opened to deliberation. And secondly – and even more importantly – by mobilizing a wide range of people who are not necessarily interested in conventional politics, as well as those who are existentially forced to focus on their own survival rather than on the political affairs of the entire society, these examples have created new political subjects and have awakened wider agency in the struggle for a more just redistribution of resources and different system of production and social relations.

By *occupying* urban space in order to advocate for common interests, and by proposing – and often delivering – better solutions concerning how these spaces should be used and governed, these communities have provided a new framework for community engagement in the ex-YU region. Moreover, they have often created a ripple-effect by mobilizing and motivating other communities to modify and apply their model (or initiative) as a struggle or practice of their own. This showed that change is possible outside of the realm of traditional partisan politics, and they have brought effective political engagement into the streets of our cities and settlements.

Finally, as a reply to the very legitimate question that David Harvey often poses, of the limited potential and scope of commons-based local practices, we believe that these cases with their diverse resources and strategies and in spite forced compromises and uncertain perspectives, still persistently demonstrate that potential. In the globalized world where forces of commodification and capital expansion mercilessly invade our societies, bottom-up resistance, however local, does *intrude* and can also multiply, and internationally join forces with other struggles so as to become a commoning infrastructure that could counterforce capitalism.

SPACES OF COMMONING:
URBAN COMMONS IN THE EX-YU REGION