

LONGING FOR AUTONOMY

Citizen Professionals Engaging for the Common Good

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PROPOSITIONS

1. The concept of the Citizen Professional (CP) might help address the current lack of recognition that citizens are also professionals who, as such, can contribute to fostering affordable spaces of living, working, and socialising.
2. Shared ownership of buildings empowers civic actors, furthering independence from prevailing economic and political structures.
3. Activism is not merely a matter of opposition or enactment of radical and revolutionary aspirations; it also involves collaboration and service to governmental actors and institutions.
4. The interstices of urban development provide opportunities for citizens to intervene in their neighbourhoods. By collaborating with governmental actors, institutions, and private parties, they demonstrate their ability to challenge the status quo and shape the urban landscape in ways that deviate from established norms.
5. CPs' non-profit neighbourhood spaces serve as venues where individuals from diverse backgrounds can interact and engage in meaningful experiences. However, these autonomous common spaces require structural support to avoid becoming "club goods" accessible only to a select group of informed citizens.
6. CPs' small-scale projects illustrate a hopeful vision of engaging a broader segment of the population and contributing to civic empowerment.
7. Cooperation partners, such as housing corporations and municipalities, often fail to fully acknowledge citizens' competencies. This pushes CPs to professionalise further, aligning them with the ideal of the entrepreneurial citizens—the self-engaged and autonomous subjects of neoliberal urban policies.
8. In these times of economic unrest and ecological threats, the libertarian ideal of the self-reliant citizen asks for a revision that might also alter the power dynamics among different actors and institutions.
9. Common spaces are a key infrastructure to counter the increasing uses of commercialisation, digitalisation, and privatisation of public spaces. Ideally, these (semi) public spaces not only connect with local communities but also function as in-between or intermediary spaces where diverse neighbours and communities can interact. This contributes to long-term resources for accessible and affordable urban infrastructure, housing, and working.
10. CPs have moved beyond the traditional opposition between the state and civil society, instead pursuing strategic collaborations with governmental actors. Thus, autonomy assumes a relational, post-autonomous role: it coexists with, and at times even serves, hegemonic structures while simultaneously challenging the prevailing dominant order.

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ACTIVIST AGENDA, *for Working and Living Together*

1. Dare to fail forward by enacting a possible way of living or doing politics in the future through establishing alternatives in the here and now.
2. Create a counterforce against the dominant capitalist system by sustaining an alternative way of life within the hegemonic structure. The right to public space is not dead – yet.
3. Trust citizens and facilitate more concept allocations within urban planning tenders, impulse laboratories, or International Building Exhibitions (IBA), to foster innovative and pragmatic resolutions for urban challenges.
4. Taking autonomy of one's own life demands courage. Recognise and appreciate the strength, potential, and knowledge of citizens in the places where they live.
5. Establish autonomous spaces for living, working, and socialising to facilitate diverse encounters in the public domain, and extend these interactions to a broader network of people.
6. Counter capitalism by enabling long-term, affordable co-working and living spaces that foster the common good.
7. Subsidise spaces for art, culture, and social initiatives, and facilitate showcase projects for the neighbourhood so they evolve into everyday practices.
8. Dare to think outside the box. Moderate activism is not only bold and inspiring but also caring and sexy.