



Spaces of Autonomy  
In  
Copenhagen and Madrid

Tina Steiger  
UNICA Euromaster in Urban Studies 4 Cities  
Advisor Miguel Martínez  
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*In the center of Fedora that grey stone metropolis, stands a metal building with a crystal globe in every room. Looking into each globe, you see a blue city, the model of a different Fedora. These are the forms the city could have taken if for one reason or another, it had not become what we see today...*

*...there must be room for both the big stone Fedora and the little Fedoras in glass globes. Not because they are all equally real, but because all are only assumptions. The one contains what is accepted as necessary when it is not yet so; the others, what is imagined as possible and, a moment later, is possible no longer.*  
*- Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities 1972*

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A tribute to the *indignados* of our generation.

Title image source: [www.tiffotos.com/tabacalera-lavapies/](http://www.tiffotos.com/tabacalera-lavapies/)

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## **I . Introduction**

Taking a critical perspective, and based on the writings of Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells, David Harvey and George Katsiaficas we explore the claim to autonomous spaces in the urban realm. From this departure point, case studies of recently claimed, autonomous social centers in Copenhagen and Madrid are examined.

Our aim is to demonstrate the alternative forms of production and exchange that these self-managed spaces are experimenting with. By fostering projects based on participative decision-making, social economics and cultural production, spaces of autonomy are experimenting with local and participative alternatives outside of the state and market.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do autonomous spaces embody the claim to a right to the city?
2. How do autonomous social centers function internally, what kind of organizational structure, economy and production systems have they developed?
3. Can we identify a network of autonomous spaces in cities, how are they connected?
4. What groups of users can we identify in autonomous spaces?
5. What is the role of local autonomous spaces in global flows of urban movements?
6. What are the limits and greatest challenges to spaces of autonomy?

### **Hypothesis**

Autonomous spaces are creating alternative modes of production, fostering spaces for a transformation of the urban meaning. A comparison of Copenhagen and Madrid.

## II . Theory

### Urban Social Movements

Urban movements are social movements through which citizens attempt to achieve control over their urban environment. First identified by Castells, urban social movements are collective and grassroots mobilizations that result in a transformation of the urban structure and *meaning* (Castells 1983; xviii). In his seminal work, the *City and Grassroots*, he defines urban social movements as collective actions mobilizing around demands for collective consumption, cultural identity and political self-management (Castells 1985).

Following the writings of Castells, if we consider social movements as any collective action, self-consciously aimed at changing the social structure, then *urban* movements are those that make demands addressing the use value of urban space, cultural identity, and autonomy. Urban social movements (henceforth USMs) have become diverse in their demands and in the form that their collective actions and mobilizations take while they continue to “propose a new relationship between space and society” (ibid; xiv).

As addressed by Soja’s (1980) socio-spatial dialectic, Castells emphasizes the interaction of space and society, seeing the urban as a product of conflicting social interests and values. Taking the perspective that space is dialectically related to the social structure, the city does not become a materialized mirror image of society, but rather the *urban meaning* becomes an expression of the social structure. By changing the urban meaning, urban movements become the mechanisms for structural change in the urban system. According to Castells, urban social movements are therefore defined by their outcomes, and ability to evoke radical

transformations in the *urban meaning*.

USMs distinguish themselves from ephemeral local pressure groups, NIMBY<sup>1</sup> protests or oppositional collective resident organizations, by having a broader following, longer duration and more articulated demands. In their efforts and mobilizations, USMs articulate meaning and identity, which may lead to cultural transformation (Leontidou 2010). USMs strive towards ‘fundamental changes in power at the urban and societal level (Pickvance 2003).

Rent strikes, squatting, blockades and developing alternative spatial plans are examples of actions specific to urban movements. In order to constitute a movement they must be connected to the society through means of media, professionals, and political parties, while remaining ideologically and organizationally autonomous of the political system (Castells 1985; 322).

For urban mobilizations to be considered a movement, it does not necessarily need overarching goals, or a high degree of organizational unification. To constitute a movement, aims can both be fighting for a new conception of identity (common feature among new social movements) or they can be instrumental mobilizations towards a specific end (Pruijt 2007).

Through the creation of “reactive utopias”, urban social movements materially manifest their visions in the urban fabric, claiming spaces from where they continue to make demands for a city based on use values, autonomous local cultures and decentralized participatory democracy (Mayer 2006; Castells 1985).

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<sup>1</sup> NIMBY acronym for *not in my backyard*.

## New Social Movements

New social movements, is a recognized label for a complex and widely varied set of organizations and struggles, emerging since the late 1960s. Urban social movements are considered to be part of the broader conception of new social movements (hereafter NSMs) centered around 'identity' politics, where the personal becomes political, and whose mobilizations focus on post-material values such as gender relations, environmental protection, migration, peace and international solidarity.

New social movements refer to activities of the whole alternative scene (*Alternativszene*) to include urban tribes, squatters, cooperatives, collectives and alternative forms of organizing around the contradictions of modern urban living (Oloffson 1988). The more radical NSMs have strengthened their movements by means of squatting abandoned buildings and establishing collective spaces of opposition (Martinez 2007).

NSMs have a strong middle class basis, differing from previous models of working-class or nationalist movements, which historically preceded them (Della Porta, Diani 2006). Their base is mostly composed of the middle class, whose social advancement is part of the development of the service economy, compelled by individualization and in search of post-material values (Eder 1985). NSMs emerged in relation to the new and growing social strata of students and employees within the welfare state, making up their activist core and audience, as opposed to the working class base of 'old' social movements. Offe has identified the class structure of NSMs 'threefold', being comprised of the new middle class, elements of the old middle class, and peripheral groups outside of the labour market such as students and unemployed (Offe 1987).

Another 'new' aspect of NSMs is that their demands are non-material and include a focus on rights to participation, to alternative lifestyles, culture, peace and equality (Pickvance 2003, 106). They are distinct in their focus on 'non-institutional' politics and their attempts to craft a

voice that is autonomous of existing bureaucratic structures such as unions, corporations and the state (Offe 1987). NSMs emphasize social change in lifestyle and culture rather than pushing for specific changes in state or and market policies.

As they aim to establish the command of experience over production and power, NSMs call for "the pre-eminence of human experience over state power and capitalist profit" (Castells 1983; 311).

In many academic discourses, a distinguishing characteristic of NSMs is their specialization on a specific issue. Such as for example, nuclear power, gender or the environment. According to Katsiaficas this is a limitation in NSM theorizing, as it reduces movement efforts to 'little more than interest-group politics conducted in non-traditional means'. Accordingly, such compartmentalizing fails to comprehend the overarching sources of protest, theoretically obliterating the possibility of transforming society as a whole (Katsiaficas 2006).

Rather, NSMs can be seen as identity movements seeking to create a new way of life with emphasis on culture and the social, transcending embedded ideologies of older social movements. In the case of autonomous movements, "identity construction becomes a form of enacting freedom to determine one's condition of existence, to create a new category within which to live" (Katsiaficas 2006, 364).

Castells contends that the gap between civil society and the political system is widening because of the rigidity of political parties and their difficulty in being receptive to the immaterial values and demands expressed by new social movements. Therefore we may be witnessing, "a growing tendency towards political tribalism, calling for the abandonment of democratic life and the withdrawal into the wilderness of squatter houses, free communes, and alternative institutions"(Castells 1983; 317).



## Network and Information Society

*“Within contemporary network society, the new zone of conflict for NSMs and urban movements is not the factory or workplace, but within culture, seeking how we can live a life with dignity and meaning” (Stadler 2006).*

Contemporary social movements are able to take advantage of mass communication systems. “They think local, rooted in their society, and act global, confronting the power where the power holders are, in the global networks of power within the communication sphere”(Castells 2007).

By means of new communication networks enabled by ever expanding technologies, urban movements and their localized ‘utopias’ are able to build support networks that reach a global scope.

The Internet has long been seen as a democratizing force, and new communication technologies have enabled unprecedented spontaneous, decentralized and participative forms of mobilizing grassroots actors for a common cause (Blickstein and Hanson 2001; 348). Participants are able to take advantage of new information technologies, bringing about the emergence of e-activism, e-protest and e-movements, as wired activism has become a significant, if not essential repertoire for social movement actors within the new communication landscape (Carty, 2011).

As an alternative and reaction to globalization, activists have forged a type of “grassroots globalization” combining place-based resistance with transnational networking (Juris 2008).

Autonomous spaces such as social centers, become the nexus between the local and global, hubs within global anti-capitalist networks and *space of places* where personal encounters are possible, where face-to face interactions foster the creativity necessary for the emergence of projects, ideas, and mobilizations.

## Urban governance and the ‘creative’ city <sup>2</sup>

*“ in last 50 years culture has taken the initiative in promoting change, and the economy has been geared to meeting these new wants “ (Bell 1972 xxv)*

## Entrepreneurialism

The shift to post-fordist urban policies (Mayer 1994) has been accompanied by a new manner of governing cities, often referred to as a shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism. In a new global order defined by intra-urban competition, local governments are increasingly engaged in gearing local economies and the urban fabric to attract global flows of capital, and more recently the ‘creative class’ (Florida 2002, Peck 200

According to Harvey, one of the principal manners in which cities have become more entrepreneurial, is by introducing new types of urban place for spaces of living, working, producing and consuming. Creating new methods of space and place production, opening new markets, and finding new sources of supply to enhance their competitive advantage. According to Harvey, urban policies today are therefore more defined by risk taking and uncertainty than in previous decades (Harvey 1989).

## ‘Creative’ City Image and Policies

In the current global order of competition, urban marketing and place branding has played an increasingly important role for local policy makers.

Within the entrepreneurial city, urban policy makers have the incentive to use the

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper following terms apply; *postmodern* as reference to society and culture; *post-fordist* to the state, governance; *neoliberal* to the economy and market.

cultural productions created in autonomous spaces to improve their competitive advantage in respect to the spatial division of consumption, which has increasingly emphasized the quality of life and 'creativity'. If the city should appear as an "innovative, exciting, creative place to visit and consume" (Harvey 1989; 9), then autonomous urban spaces provide this creativity, edge and eclecticism which today's cities must exhibit in their competition for attracting the 'creative class' (Florida 2002).

By using images of autonomous cultural spaces such as the Candy Factory in Copenhagen, and CSA Tabacalera, in Madrid, urban policy makers can proliferate a diverse and eclectic image of the city. Harvey points out how this aids in counteracting Simmel's concept of alienation and anomie, which is an inherent problem of modern city life.

The projection of a city image, in which all social groups, from punks to yuppies, can participate in the production of social spaces, creates a sense of social solidarity in an increasingly globalized world.

*"Urban entrepreneurialism here meshes with a search for local identity and, as such, opens up a range of mechanisms for social control."* (Harvey 1989; 14)

Urban policy makers can therefore instrumentalize autonomous spaces as unique, cultural assets which further attract the 'creative class'. Once they become popular, autonomous spaces can become eclectic spaces of cultural consumption for the creative class, in its in constant search for individuality and diversity (Florida 2003).

Urban movements claiming autonomous spaces, have effectively taken advantage of the shift to entrepreneurial and creative city policies, with its emphasis on symbolic capital and cultural production. In this shift we may see local governments becoming more forthcoming towards autonomous groups, as new deregulatory "breeding place", "freezone" and "open" cultural

policies are implemented (Uitermark 2003, Bayliss 2006, Ana). As producers of alternative culture, autonomous projects may find themselves in a position of 'involuntary boosterism' to the creative city, the very policies which movements and critical scholars have criticized for their hidden neoliberal agenda (Peck 2005, Markusen 2005, Novy and Colomb 2011).

## Contemporary urban movements

Within the turn to post-fordist governance has also led to the co-optation of many former urban movements, turning them into service providers of alternative housing, social, cultural, and community services, through which municipalities hope to achieve political vitalization and financial relief (Mayer 1994, 2000).

Contemporary urban social movements have conflictive and contradictory relationships with the more professionalized and formally integrated movements of the past. Nonetheless, today's movements taking a stand on the use value of the city can "also expect to profit from a new culture and institutions of non-hierarchical bargaining systems, forums and round tables" (Mayer 2000; 150).

Within this context, many formerly occupied social centers have become legalized in recent years (Mudu 2004), in their search for stability and within the general crisis of squatting throughout Europe (Martinez 2007; Pruijt 2004).

Nonetheless, there are plenty of examples of legalized autonomous spaces (e.g. *Folketshus*<sup>3</sup> in Copenhagen; *CSA Seco* in Madrid) which prove that by remaining self-managed, spaces and movements which claim them are able to safeguard their autonomy, and avoid co-optation by the state.

Post-modern urban movements are often described as being fragmented, and even contradictory compared to those of the past.

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<sup>3</sup> Folketshus is a self-managed freespace which Squatted in 1971 and then legalized, today remains a dynamic node in network of social movements.

Nonetheless, they have shown resilience in framing their diversity as a positive value (for example the 2009 COP 15 Alter-Summit *KlimaForum* in Copenhagen and 2011 Spanish Revolution *15M* movement in Madrid) as they form unified local resistances to globalization and neoliberal policies (Mayer 2000).

“Unlike former generations of leftist activists, they do not envision a revolutionary seizure of power, but present their action as pragmatic, concrete and gradualist. Led by increasing professional activists and organizers, they translate the impositions of neoliberal globalization to the local and urban context and seek to challenge it, concretely, at every step.” (Mayer 109; 2007).

## Right to the City

### Lefebvre’s *Le droit a la Ville*

The right to the city derives from the desire to change the city. Right to the city has today become a widespread slogan<sup>4</sup>, but the notion first emerged in the wake of the 1968 social movements, and Henri Lefebvre’s writings on cities in *Le droit a la Ville*. The right to the city, to which all urban inhabitants are entitled, means that power relations that underlie the production of urban space are fundamentally challenged.

It is a right to “urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of...moments and places” (Lefebvre 1996). Urban needs are composed of the need for “qualified places, where exchange would not go through exchange value, commerce and profit” (ibid 148). Therefore the core of Lefebvre’s argument is that the use-value of space should be given priority over its economic value; that cities should be for *people, not for*

*profit*.

Right to the city is a moral claim founded on fundamental principles of justice, ethics, and virtue, rather than a legal claim enforceable through judicial processes (Harvey, Marcuse 2009).

In Lefebvre’s sense, right to the city is shifting control of urban production from capital to urban inhabitants themselves (Purcell 2003).

Although many scholars have interpreted the Lefebvrian notion of right to the city as a plea for the transformation of society at large, based on “new humanism, new praxis, another man, that of an urban society” (Lefebvre 1996; 150). In more concrete terms, and in the context of the urban setting, this can be seen as a transformation of “spatial form: the built environment and spatial relations”(Lentidou 2010; 1181). Right to the city calls for a radical change in the production of urban space which is based on exchange value - fundamentally challenging capitalist modes of production.

### Heart’s Desire

David Harvey, on the other hand considers right to the city to include not only equal rights of access, but every inhabitant’s inherent right to change the city according to *our heart’s desire* (Harvey 2003).

Since every inhabitant has different desires and needs, a means of shaping cities according to our heart’s desire in a collective and equal fashion, may be achieved by putting into practice Kastiafika’s *rationality of the heart*<sup>5</sup>.

This is a rationality based on a dialectic of human reason and emotional passions, to which all inhabitants are entitled. If real places in the city are opened up for interactions based on a rationality of the heart, we might achieve Lefebvre’s aim of transforming the entire system, and society at large.

Right to the city can also be seen in more moderate terms, such as ‘negotiating peaceful intercultural co-existence, block by block,

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<sup>4</sup> For example RTTC, U.S. based Right to City Network, Hamburg based Recht auf Stadt, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> This concept will be expanded in subsequent sections.

neighborhood by neighborhood, becoming a central preoccupation of citizens as well as urban professionals and politicians' (Sandercock 2000).

Therefore right to the city does not have to be put into practice by radical means, but can be achieved through negotiation, such as pragmatically negotiating for the right to vacant urban spaces for the social and cultural production, outside of capitalist relations.

### **Right to whose city?**

*“Right to the city is a cry and demand, a cry out of necessity and a demand for something more”* (Marcuse 2009).

Following the argument of Peter Marcuse (2009) it is a renewed right to the most deprived and marginalized inhabitants.

The demand for right to the city is therefore voiced by those those directly oppressed in their material benefits, such as the homeless, the hungry, those persecuted on religious, ethnic or gender grounds; those marginalized and excluded from political participation.

Additionally, the right to the city is a cry by the alienated, culturally deprived and those kept from realizing their creative potential as individuals (Marcuse, Mayer 2009).

In self-managed spaces of autonomy, where the deprived can realize their creative potential, and the excluded are included, urban inhabitants are provided with the means to becoming active participants in molding the city, its spatial fabric, meaning, and practices.

### **Autonomy**

In relation to the *individual*, autonomy can be considered in the line with Rawls as “acting from principles that we would consent to as free and equal rational beings” (Rawls 1971 cited in Böhm et al).

At the *collective* level autonomy is the ‘right to self-government’ particularly in relation to the

state and capitalist economic system.

Whereas the autonomous *project* results from the tension between this collective-individual dichotomy, and involves a group working in common based on cooperation, reciprocity, equality, and freedom in order to create alternative ways of living (Katsiaficas 2006, Pickerell & Chatterton 2006).

Autonomy is striving for self-determination and acting by means of self-organization, spontaneity, and equality. Horizontally organized, social autonomy facilitates discussions and actions by enabling numerous and diverse inputs, whose approval depends on collective consensual agreement. Autonomy is a direct-democratic form of decision making, creating communities governed by participants and not managerial prerogatives, or representative bodies (Katsiaficas 2006).

Autonomous movements therefore organize on the principles of social autonomy, based on mutual aid, collaboration, and direct democracy. Decision-making structures are non-hierarchical, and since there is no belief in strict ideology, internal processes are made by intuition, following what Katsiaficas calls a *rationality of the heart*. This is a rationality based on human reason, dialectically intertwined with passions and emotions. Through this, autonomists believe we can gain back our inner meaning, which has been colonized by the capitalist system (Garland 2007). By adhering to our emotions and simultaneously reason, a society based on equality, free of exploitation can be built.

### **Autonomous Movements**

“the goal of autonomous social movements is the subversion of politics: the decolonization of everyday life and civil society, not the conquest of state power” (Katsiaficas 377).

Autonomous movements in different countries vary greatly, although in Europe they are most notably associated with the *Autonomen* in

Germany, *BZ* in Denmark, and *okupa* in Spain. Similarly, the terms autonomous and anarchist, have different connotations in certain countries<sup>6</sup>, while in others they are interchanged fluidly (e.g. Denmark).

Rooted in the Italian workers movement of the 1970s, it's aim has always been to negate the system and transcend it's power. (Katsiaficas 2006, Holt and Lapenta 2010) Autonomous movements aim to transcend a hierarchically defined world order, and replace it with local collectives based on equality, participation, and direct democracy.

Instead of fighting for an ideology such as the proletariat or the people, autonomists believe in a "politics of the first person", and in this way hope to resist the colonization of everyday life by the power of the market and state institutions (Katsiaficas 2006; 377). Challenging the use-value of urban space is central to the broader autonomous movement.

Since the 1960s autonomous movements have focused on setting up social centers through squatting, to create projects based on direct-democracy, cooperation, and alternative ways of life. Although each space is unique in origin, character, and focus; social centers everywhere are rooted in the autonomous movement (Hodkinson, Chatterton 2006).

Today, the broader autonomous movement includes the social center movement, networks of open source technologies and local alternative economic schemes (LETS) (Katsiaficas 2006, Böhm et al). Due to often loose, ephemeral networks and a defiance of ideology, autonomy is considered part of the general anti-capitalist, alter-globalization 'movement of movements' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006).

## Autonomous spaces

"... spaces where there is a desire to constitute non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity and citizenship, created through a combination of resistance and creation, questioning and challenging of dominant laws and social norms." (Chatterton and Hodkinson 2011).

Autonomous spaces can be seen as *anticipatory spaces*, which "embody in their own shape and forms the values of the society we are striving to build" (Adamovsky cited in Chatterton and Hodkinson 2006; 312).

They are a type of *third place*, between the public and private realm, fostering social cohesion outside of formalized institutions. Oldenburg (1987) claims that these spaces have always existed, but today they are intentionally sought in order to fulfill social needs in an increasingly fragmented society (Oldenburg 1987).

Elements of Lefebvre's *differential space* are reclaimed in autonomous places, where space is created and dominated by it's users from the basis of its given conditions, remaining largely unspecified as to it's functional and economic rationality, allowing for diversity and always open to change (cited in Groth and Corijn 2003).

These spaces are not a product of formal urban planning or market forces, but rather experiment with what Sandercock has called *insurgent urbanism*. A form of urban development in which uncertainty is embraced as a potential of radical openness, nourishing the vision of a more experimental culture, a more tolerant and multifocal one (cited in Groth and Corijn 2003).

In their mere existence autonomous spaces challenge the hegemony of the dominant political-economic system, defined by competitive capital accumulation. In their resistance to the system and simultaneous presence in the *space of places* (Castells 1996), autonomous spaces and projects disclose the

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<sup>6</sup> For example in Italy, see Mudu 2004.

contradictory dynamics between integration and transcendence (Böhm et al 2008; 5).

## Social Centers

*“the social centers aren't ghettos, they are windows - not only into another way to live, disengaged from the state, but also into a new politics of engagement. And yes, it's something beautiful”* (Klein 2001).

## Emergence

The earliest social centers can be traced back to worker associations organized as mutual aid societies, cooperatives and meeting spaces. In Denmark they are known as *folkehuse* while in Spain they have their roots in the *casas populares*<sup>7</sup>. In the wake of 19<sup>th</sup> century socialist movements, these were spaces in which the people self-organized for political, cultural and social activities.

Occupied social centers emerged with the autonomous and squatters movements in the post-1960 wake of new social movements. In Denmark, countercultural movements such as the Children's Liberation Front, *Initiativgruppen* and the squatter movement (BZ) organized to claim vacant buildings to be self-managed by youth (Mikkelsen; 2001). In Spain the emergence of self-managed social centers (*CSA Centros Sociales Autogestionados*) accompanied the *okupa* and autonomous movements of the early 1980s as young people sought spaces to converge in their discontent with the traditional left (Rivero 2010, Martinez 2007).

Many autonomous spaces have in recent years set up hack labs, public computers, and are globally interlinked on *Indymedia* networks (Mudu 2004). Internet platforms have further enabled activists to organize, communicate, and debate via list-servs, social networking site, and blogs. Most projects have websites in which their

project, ideology, and activities are explained. Their Internet presence has made the centers more accessible to international bands, activists and the general public. New forms of communication enable quick mobilizations and non-hierarchical and participatory dispersal of information.

Although social centers differ greatly in their origin, political affiliation, and organizational mode, the movement as a whole can be described as a search for “multi-centered non-hierarchical affiliation networks” (Mudu 2004; 927) towards bottom-up development and a desire to *change the world without taking power* (Holloway 2002).

Nonetheless there are defining characteristics common to social centers throughout Europe, as Mudu found in his examination of the Italian movement.

1. Social centers in Spain and Italy adopt the acronym CSA (*Centro Social Autogestionado*)<sup>8</sup>, while in Denmark they are known by terms such as free, self-managed, user-generated or autonomous spaces (Mikkelsen and Karpantschhoff 2001, various interviews).

2. They self-manage social, political, and cultural events in a horizontal organizational structure, adopting all relevant decisions in meetings open to the general public. These meetings are usually conducted by holding assemblies, and reaching consensus by means of deliberation, as opposed to voting.

3. Social centers are self-financed and do not rely on funds from the state, mainly relying on funds collected by selling low-priced snacks and drinks during events. Volunteers run most social centers, therefore they do not earn regular wages or salaries.

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<sup>7</sup> Both terms translate to ‘People’s House’

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<sup>8</sup> adopt the acronym CSAO if they are occupied social centers.

4. Social centers form nodes in networks of the local alternative scene, and more recently the alter-globalization movements (Mudu 2004).

An alternative city then emerges from a network of cultural communities defined by time and space, politically self-managed towards the maximization of use-value for the local resident. When the efforts of these spaces of autonomy develop into an alternative global vision, they form a counterculture, and consequently an *urban social movement* (Castells 1983; 322).

## Life-worlds of autonomy

### DIY Culture

*Anything to blur lines between party and protest, [...] distinction between action and living*

McKay 1996; 26.

"The DIY movement is about using anything you can get your hands on to shape your own cultural entity: your own version of whatever you think is missing in mainstream culture. You can produce your own *zine*, record an album, publish your own book [...] anyone can be an artist or creator. The point is to get involved" (Spencer 2008).

Another phenomenon that has accompanied autonomous movements in Europe and North America is the adherence to, and reproduction of what has been called a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture. DIY is generally regarded as a concept, but the culture and ethic which has evolved around it is based on self-empowerment and the notion that you can do for yourself the activities normally reserved for realm of capitalist production (Shukaitis et al).

DIY fuses lifestyle with social activism, and is based on direct participation, economy of mutual aid, and a commitment to the non-commodification of art and culture. In this manner, feelings of alienation and nonparticipation, proliferated by capitalist mode

of production are directly addressed and resisted.

DIY as a lifestyle, provides a practical, local, and accessible means of circumventing the power of capitalist structures, by creating substantive alternatives through means of cultural production, undermining exchange-value and replacing it with a value based on social relationships (Shukaitis et al 2007).

As a culture, DIY has also fostered the sub-cultural identities, of various autonomous movements, as it is projected by a style of clothing, principles, and way of life.

Emerging as a recognized cultural movement in the 1990s, MacKay depicts it as 'a combination of inspiring action, idealism, indulgence and creativity'. DIY culture is youth-centered around green radicalism, direct action politics, new musical sounds and experiences, meshing social criticism with cultural creativity in both a utopian gesture and a practical display of resistance.

Movements embodying DIY ethics affirm that the force of example in facilitating cultural change is through living the revolution, blurring the lines between party and protest, between action and living (McKay 26).

A common feature of the DIY culture, are *zines*. These are small, non-commercial, photocopied magazines made by individuals and collectives and often distributed in autonomous spaces and social centers. *Zines* are a means of spreading ideas, news and advice about DIY culture and movements for autonomy.

Another example of DIY ethics in collective projects is Food Not Bombs<sup>9</sup> and self-organized people's kitchens common throughout Scandinavia, Germany and to a lesser extent in southern European countries.

Reclaim the Streets (RTS) and Critical Mass are other socio-political activities which have grown out of DIY culture (Shukaitis et al).

The Internet and technological developments have extended DIY productions to

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<sup>9</sup> Food Not Bombs is a network of loosely organized food distribution networks, especially prevalent throughout the North American and the UK.

film, sound, video and digital mediums, as artists and activists can share and distribute their work in independent and non-commercial manner via online platforms.

A subculture has formed around DIY in many countries of advanced capitalism, as young people and communities seek alternative approaches to mainstream and commercial solutions for fulfilling the tasks of *everyday life*.

## Alternative Economics

Social movements calling for a right to the city, a right to changing its meaning and underlying capitalist relations, have done so by claiming vacant spaces to experiment with alternative economies. In their claim for autonomy, social centers have become spaces in which to put into practice what have been considered *social economies*. Created in opposition to, and outside of an economy of profit, social centers are proving the viability of creating alternative forms of exchange based on reciprocity, collaboration, and mutual-aid.

*“not about recreating traditional public services on the cheap – instead it’s about inventing alternative economic models based on need not profit and respect for the planet”* (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006).

## Social Economy

In their aim to oppose a city based on capital accumulation, autonomous spaces are fostering different forms of what we may call a *social economy*. Discourses about social economy generally define it as those forms of exchange that are outside of the profit-maximizing market economy, as well as the redistributive-economy of the public sphere (Community Development Foundation 1995).

Williams et al. identify four characteristics on which a social economy is based:

1. Not-for profit mechanism (the initiative does not seek to reap profit from its operations)
2. Cooperation and mutual-aid
3. Private in nature, even if there is sometimes public involvement
4. Services of a collective interest are produced and sold to fulfill people’s needs and wants

The economies of self-managed autonomous spaces in Copenhagen and Madrid have developed their unique forms of social economies, as they seek alternatives to the commodification of their urban environments.

## Social Economies in autonomous spaces

Autonomous spaces generally function according to the principles of a social economy put forth by Williams et al.

In the tradition of the social center movement, the spaces function on a non-profit basis, and all money generated is invested back into the project. Therefore the logic of creating cultural productions for the sake of accumulation is undermined.

Since the spaces are self-managed, relations depend on principles of collaboration, mutual-aid and volunteerism<sup>10</sup>. Therefore workshops collaborate and exchange tools, knowledge, and other resources between one another, lessening their dependence on commercialized market. Money as a form of exchange is undermined, as materials are recycled and users are engaged in barter economy.

The economies are private, in the sense that it is not controlled by the public sector, and social centers only receive state funding through subsidies, or on project basis. In order to ensure the highest degree of autonomy, the social centers primarily receive public funding on project basis. Finally, the goods and services that are produced are of a collective interest, to the extent that

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<sup>10</sup> Although in many autonomous social centers, cooperatives have been set up with which participants can earn a living.



everything is produced through means of participation and within the guiding principles of the space.

## LETS

A widespread, and growing example of social economies are Local Economic Trading Schemes (LETS), which provide local communities with forms of exchange outside of the market economy, through the use of time-banks, bartering and even non-commodified fictitious currency (Pacione 1997; Williams et al 2003)

Studies on LETS in the UK found that rather than filling gaps left by the private and public sector, social economies in fact provide members with opportunities to “engage in meaningful and productive activity, develop their human capital and get work done which they could not otherwise afford if they had to pay formally.”

LETS, as spaces of social economy, were not found to be efficient in generating formal employment, or being significant contributors to the GNP. Rather, social economic spaces provided a springboard for inclusion into the formalized labor market by providing individuals with the necessary social, human and network capital. LETS provided complementary forms of livelihood, and acted as mechanisms for social inclusion by providing individuals opportunities for full engagement (Pacione 1997; Williams et al).

## Case Studies

Being aware of the inherent socio-cultural differences of Denmark and Spain; of Nørrebro and Lavapiés, we will explore how new social movements creating spaces of autonomy have emerged and manifest themselves.

The Candy Factory and Tabacalera can be considered *tactics* of broader movements for autonomy, within the municipality’s strategic urban and cultural planning towards a ‘creative

city’. Drawing from writings of de Certeau we consider tactics in a military context, referring to short-term battle planning, in contrast to long-term, less flexible planning as presented by strategic master plans.

“Tactics imply an approach from the weaker place, unable to dictate conditions to an opponent. Instead being compelled to exploit relationships to one’s advantage, by waiting for an opportunity and exploiting it flexibly and quickly”(Haydn 2006; 16).

Activists and cultural producers may be tactically exploiting the urban regime’s shift towards creative city strategy, fostering autonomous spaces from where the very system, which has enabled their existence, can be challenged. The continued survival and evolution of autonomous social centers may be living proof of how urban social movements are fostering viable, self-managed and collective alternatives to the dominant system.

By means of creating autonomous spaces legitimated through the production of culture, these new urban movements are experimenting with new ways of transforming the *urban meaning* (Castells 1983).

### **III . Methodology**

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the emergence and internal dynamics of autonomous social centers, a variety of research methods common to the social sciences are applied.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with involved activists, participant and public officials who were directly involved or familiar with the spaces. The spaces in each city were visited on various occasions and documented with photographs.

Participant observations of assemblies, activities and events contributed to gaining an understanding of the decision-making processes, the dynamics between users and the type of activities occurring in the space.

Local, and national news sources as well as independent media, were researched in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the public discourse, facts and processes surrounding the emergence and activities of the respective movements.

Also Internet sources such as blogs, threads, journals, webpages and list-servs were examined in relation to the case studies.



*Candy Factory. Source Author*

## IV . Case Studies

### Candy Factory, Copenhagen

The *Bolsjefabrikken*, or Candy Factory is an open, user-driven culture house occupying two locations on the northern periphery of the Copenhagen inner city. It defines itself as an autonomously run, non-profit and non-commercial culture house, open to all, and hosting environmental climate justice groups, independent artists and musicians (Bolsjefabrikken Organization).

The name is a remnant from the first factory, which the collective claimed in 2006. Today, the movement (henceforth *Bolsje*) has appropriated two houses located in the area popularly referred to as the *Nord-vest* Copenhagen, on the periphery of the inner city, in which there is an ample stock of empty factories and industrial spaces (for map see Appendix Image 1.1, 1.2).

### Autonomous Movements in Denmark

In Denmark, new social movements (NSMs) arose within the context of an expansive welfare state, emerging as both a rejection and part of a social reorganization accommodating a new middle class and state employees (Oloffson 1985).

Since the student organizing in the late 1960s, Denmark has had a vibrant history of social movements. Autonomous movements first manifested themselves in the squatting of a military base in 1971, which today remains the self-organized Freetown Christiania. Situated on 34 hectares within the city center, it has become home to a self-managed commune of more than 800 people and a countercultural haven for Danish society. Within Christiania, no authority counts, except for that of the ‘Ting’ where decisions are made by the eventual agreement of all through consensus rather than a majority vote. Because of the experience of Christiania, Katsiaficas observed that direct democracy within Danish autonomous movements does not have to be explained, “it is almost second nature--nor is it limited to occasional gatherings of political groups who use it as a formal method of decision-making” (Katsiaficas 2006;182).

### Christiania

Although Christiania’s existence and autonomy have been challenged in recent years by the neoliberal-conservative government’s normalization policies, organized crime circles and a recent loss in the Danish high court forcing the community to buy the previously squatted land, it persists as an autonomous community within the city (Andersen, 2011, Amaroux 2009)<sup>11</sup>.

The living example of Christiania as an alternative functioning society has vital effects on autonomous and urban social movements in Denmark. Within Christiania many people first become active, and have their first experiences of self determined actions. It acts as a safe haven for evicted activists, the socially marginalized, sub-cultural groups and alternative political debates. As a result, the central thrust of the autonomous



<sup>11</sup> The Danish High Court ruled that the community would have to buy the land for ca. 20 million Euro.

movements in Copenhagen has always been the creation of free spaces for everyday life (Katsiaficas 2006).

## BZ<sup>12</sup>

In 1981 youth under the name of *Iniativgruppen* organized and squatted buildings in northern Copenhagen, effectively marking the beginning of a Danish movement for social centers. From these youngsters, Denmark's squatter movement called BZ emerged, mostly active in the Nørrebro district, organizing themselves in demands for self-managed spaces (Scolardt 2006). During this era, social movements and autonomists grew increasingly discontent with the Social Democrats' top-down regeneration schemes, and these tensions often surfaced in violent clashes between police and the autonomous in the neighborhood.

For the most part, the BZ movement dissolved 1994 as a result of new



*BZ Demonstrator. Source : Kanalkobehavn.dk*

movements emerging, strong state repression without concession, and squatting abruptly declined throughout the city (Mikkelsen and Karpantschoff 2001). The autonomous movement had become too militant and isolated by the early 1990s and dissolved for the most part throughout Copenhagen.

Since squatting is subject to strong legal persecution in Denmark, almost all squatted

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<sup>12</sup> BZ is a phonetic abridgement of the Danish word for squatting that has turned into a symbol.

places have either been repressed and evicted, or legalized and institutionalized. Nonetheless, strands of the BZ and autonomous movements remain active by continuing to convene in free spaces throughout the city, creating a Free University<sup>13</sup> and communicating via blogs, communiqués, mass text messages, through a network called *Openhagen*. Although not as present as in the mid 1990s, BZ continues to make itself visible by the emergence of TAZs<sup>14</sup> in the form of ephemeral occupations, pirate parties, raves, parades, and festivities.<sup>15</sup> Since squatting has become nearly impossible, the movement has remained active by reclaiming the public space and abandoned buildings.

## Eviction of Jagtvej 69

The notorious Ungdomshuset at Jagtvej 69 was forcefully evicted in March 2007. One of Copenhagen's largest and historically significant squatted social centers, it was an important meeting space for the youth, autonomous and radical community (Scolardt 2006).

The eviction resulted in weeklong street fights between autonomous youth and the police. Afterwards, the city ceded a different house to the youth on the edge of the city, but the demolition of the historically significant inner city location left a void for grassroots and radical organizing in inner Nørrebro.

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<sup>13</sup> "Copenhagen Free University." *All power to the free universities of the future!* N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk/index1.html>>. Ceased to exist in 2007, but continues activity in the virtual net.

<sup>14</sup> Temporary Autonomous Zones.

<sup>15</sup> the most violent in recent years was at Pirate Party at Hyskenstræde in May of 2009 (Monson 2009; Geist 2009).



Former Ungdomshuset site. Source : Modkraft.dk

As an involved activist, said. “When Jagtvej 69 was evicted, the protests mobilized a lot of the city’s creative forces and people came together in various constellations, ultimately forming the nucleus of the first Candy Factory” (cited in Kjær 2010).

## Global Climate Justice Movement

When the UN’s Global Climate Summit was held in Copenhagen in December 2009, the Candy Factory became an organizing space for international climate activists. Together with other free spaces, such as the People’s House and others throughout Nørrebro and Christiania, it became a local organizing space for international activists of the alternative summit, *Klimaforum*<sup>16</sup>. During the convention, the vast factory space at Ragnildgade provided sleeping, convening and eating spaces for over 2,000 climate activists.

The large number of activists flowing into Copenhagen for the Summit, demonstrated the need for autonomous social centers. The energy brought by the flows of global activists, helped to solidify the Candy Factory as a local node in autonomous networks. The summit introduced many local and international activists to the Candy Factory for the first time (Activist, Benny).

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<sup>16</sup> the alter-globalisation movement associated with the UN’s Climate Change Summit in Decemember of 2009, will henceforth be referred to as *KlimaForum*,

## Candy Factory

In light of these historical processes and declining venues for alternative culture and autonomous organizing, the Candy Factory collective<sup>17</sup> was formed by a group of Copenhagen based artists and activists in 2006. Instead of forcefully occupying and claiming their right to a space by means of squatting, the activists ‘put on nice clothes, drafted a proposal’ and asked permission to use the premises of a former Candy Factory that had been empty for several years (Benny). By mobilizing artists and activists with experience in self-management and social movements, the group was able to find, claim and create a space for alternative cultural production based on direct democracy, collaboration and mutual aid.

## Nørrebro Neighborhood

With a density of 17,777 inhabitants/km, the adjacent Nørrebro Municipality is the most densely populated, socially dynamic and also marginally perceived neighborhood of Copenhagen. This historically working class district has moved toward a more mixed ethnic, social and income profile due to huge urban renewal schemes in the eighties and nineties (Munk 1998). Remnants of former industrial buildings, green grocers, shawarma shops and brick residential buildings therefore visually characterize most of the neighborhood.

## Lærkevej 11

*“It’s like a showroom open to the public, where we can demonstrate how it’s possible to do things differently if you just organize and talk to people”* (Bolsje Activist)

Today, the Candy Factory is located at Lærkevej 11 in the building of a former plumbing company called CG Jensen. The building is privately owned and, since the soil of the ground is contaminated, the property is not safe for residential or commercial development in its

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<sup>17</sup> referred to as *Bolsje*. Individuals associating themselves with the Candy Factory movement.

current state. The property is on the real estate market for 4,500,000Kr<sup>18</sup> but due to the financial crisis, contamination, and the derelict condition of the building the factory has stood vacant for five years.

Therefore, the *Bolsje* have been granted temporary permission to use the space until a suitable buyer is found. The negotiations with the owner are conducted on a personal level. A temporary contract of use was signed, with the stipulation that the collective has to leave the house within one month if a suitable buyer is found (Benny, Kevin).

At this location, there is a wood, metal and bike workshop; ateliers for sewing, screen-printing and painting; media workshop for video, audio and sound productions; a people's kitchen, cinema, organizing spaces, stages, café, free store, library and gallery.

### Ragnhildgade

The second Candy Factory space is about 2 km away located at Ragnhildgade near the Østerbro district. These obsolete industrial buildings are publicly owned by the municipality and were planned for demolition and new housing.

When the city was unable to provide adequate sleeping spaces for the alter-globalization *KlimaForum* activists in 2009, the



*Candy Factory at Ragnhildgade.*  
Source : Politiken.dk

municipality approached the Candy Factory and asked if they could quickly mobilize and create sleeping spaces within the Ragnhildgade buildings. Activists then engaged in

further negotiations with the municipality and signed a temporary contract for using the buildings, until 2013 at a symbolic rent of 8,000DKK<sup>19</sup> per month (Kjære 2011, Benny).

At the Ragnhildgade location, there are two legalized concert halls with the capacity of 700 people, a volunteer-run bar and music-café, music and lighting groups and underground and nationwide television station called Underground Music TV. In addition theater, performance and a kickboxing collectives used by many local youth with migration background (Giebner 2011), have found organizing space here. Since there are no residential buildings directly surrounding the Ragnhildgade, this location allows for amplified sound, hosting larger concerts, parties and events.

The municipality owns the Ragnhildgade buildings; therefore the collective must adhere to legal safety regulations and restrictions imposed by the administration. These include installing a costly fire and emergency warning system, as well as the prohibition of people permanently sleeping in the space. The café/bar continues to be run on a DIY basis, by *Bolsje* volunteers and without an official liquor license (Benny, Kevin).

*Municipality owned Ragnhildgade Buildings*  
Source: Politiken.dk

<sup>18</sup> Ca. 603,500 Eur

<sup>19</sup> about 1,070 Euros.



## Visual Appearance and Aesthetics

### To the outside...

The different rooms, and physical structures that both locations provide, have enabled the *Bolsje* to experiment with a diverse range of independent cultural productions by residents of the neighborhood, and Copenhagen at large. Since the Lærkevej location is in a residential neighborhood, low-key and interactive projects such as gallery events, bike workshops, garden initiatives and a people's kitchen are possible.

The Ragnhildgade site, on the other hand, located in a more peripheral, industrial area allows for larger events, concerts and parties. Having access to these different spaces allows the movement to engage in, and realize a diverse range of independent and underground cultural projects.

The Candy Factory makes an effort to be open and inviting to the surrounding neighborhood, as they aim to transform a previously private property into a social commons. As one activist said, "We have a kind of rule, if you see someone that is confused, smile and ask if they want to be shown around. We try to be positive to as many people as possible. It's very important to be open" (Benny).



The main entrance displays signs inviting passersby and explaining what the

space and its activities are about. Through the eclectically ornamented fence, the former factory and yard are visible to the street and the surrounding neighborhood. From the 5 storey residential buildings, neighbors can see the activities going on in the garden and patio.

A second, and more obscure, entrance is through the *Galleri Stald*<sup>20</sup>, used as a non-profit exhibition space, open to the Candy collectives and any other non-commercial artists. This entrance was built with the intention of luring more traditional gallery visitors and 'normal' people to explore the grounds. The gallery attempts to create a link between the public spaces of the sidewalk and the inner garden of the Candy Factory.



Once inside the yard, bright graffiti murals, a boat leaning against the entrance door, wooden structures, gardens and mounds of bicycle parts convey a post-apocalyptic atmosphere, a world that appears to be in a constant state of de- and reconstruction. A graffiti mural across the main building boldly reads *Bolsjefabrikken*, and was painted by a graffiti collective visiting during the *KlimaForum*. The mural and other graffiti works become urban ornaments, adorning the otherwise stark façade. This gives a lasting validity to the actions of the climate activists, embedding them in the memory of the city.

### ... from within

Once inside the house, dirty floors, lingering smells of beer and stale vegetarian food, tagged walls and toilets convey the feeling that it is a space where the formalities of Danish society

<sup>20</sup> Stall Gallery

have been abandoned. Most of the objects are used and donated; a mismatch of chairs, stools, sofas and painting materials are arranged in the rooms and workshops. This mixture of provisional fixtures, colorful graffiti and piles of random useable objects create a homey atmosphere of social experimentation.

As well as being odes to free expression, the *Bolsje* are aware that graffiti and heaps of objects in the yard may ignite fear and objection from the surrounding neighborhood. The topic of becoming exclusive and antagonistic towards the surrounding community is a common discussion within the social center movement, as they can often become closed communities within the urban fabric and turn into exclusive ‘ghettos’ around fairly homogenous class, race and cultural identities (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006). The *Bolsje* often discuss this, and make an effort to make the Candy Factory a friendly and open space.

At a closer look, there is an order to the seeming chaos, as the spaces and their functions emerge organically out of the collaboration of different individuals. Brightly covered signs give directions and information about the actives occurring behind the doors, such as the Gestalt Cartel, Kitchen or Café. Chairs are cozily and practically arranged to accommodate visitors, concerts and events, and the yard is kept tidy by the activists<sup>21</sup>.

### **Candy Factory Users Bolsje Activists**

*“Most of us here are, young people experimenting with art...”* (Martin and Bodil)

The initial Candy Factory movement consisted of a group of 20-40 artists, activists, craftsmen and local youth mostly between the ages of 18-35. Generally, this core group of

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<sup>21</sup> during a break in the general assembly, everyone cleans the yard for example.

people continues to be the ‘active’ users of the space and we will therefore call them *Bolsje* activists. Most of these people are key-holders and regular workshop users. Most *Bolsje* attend the monthly general assemblies in order to take part in the direction and decision-making of the space. Also these users tend to spend most of their free time at the Candy Factory and associate themselves with this *urban tribe*.

Most activists are Danish and come from a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds. About half the active users can be considered peripheral participants in the labor market, such as being either university students<sup>22</sup>, unemployed or working informally. While the other half are skilled laborers, cultural producers or working in the public sector.

A strong sense of community and familiarity prevails among the *Bolsje* activists, and everyone greets each other by first name. As with many autonomist and non-hierarchical groups, ties are based on mutual trust and personal relations. Therefore the Candy Factory has become a ‘second home’ for many activists, where they spend most of their free time and have formed strong social and friendship ties.

As one activist said, “For me, it’s a second home...others use it as a cultural house; they go in, make their music and then they go home. That’s okay, you can be here on different levels” (Kevin).



*Bathroom in Candy Factory*  
Source: Author

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<sup>22</sup> Denmark has an extensive student financial support system (SU), in which costs of living re covered throughout the duration of the studies. This enables many students to vest time into volunteer projects/activities, which are not lucrative.



## General Users

General users of the Candy Factory are those who are not key-holders or do not actively participate in the decision-making of the space. Instead, these are participants that mostly use the space for alternative, independent and low-cost entertainment, sociality and services.

The general users of the space are for the mostly youth, between the ages of 18-15. The general users come from diverse and social, economic and ethnic backgrounds and include all ages. Students, local youngsters, activists, international travelers, homeless and men with migration background who live nearby are patrons of the weekly peoples kitchen.



Screenprinted poster made by CF collective Source: Author

The independent music, cinemas and parties attract many youngsters and international travelers associated with the alternative scene. Interviews showed that these groups used the space mainly for low cost entertainment, sociability and alternative consumption. Many users are conscious consumers, saying they prefer to spend money on beer for non-profit organizations whose philosophy they support, rather than commercial venues (Spanish Students).

## Node in Network of Autonomous Movements

Like many autonomous social centers, the Candy Factory is a node in a wider network of anti-capitalist social movements.

### Local networks for autonomy

The space is strongly connected to a project called the Floating City, a more radical environmental faction of the same movement, appropriating spaces in Copenhagen's South Harbor industrial district. This collective is building a sustainable floating city in an abandoned warehouse, and there persists a strong exchange of tools, knowledge and people with the Candy Factory (Various Interviews).

As a node within the wider Copenhagen autonomous movement network, it becomes an organizing point of informal Reclaim the Street (RTC), pirate parties, festivities and raves<sup>23</sup>. Also, the space acts as a distribution point for a Copenhagen-wide activist zine called DIT<sup>24</sup>.

The Candy Factory enabled and facilitated a local initiative called Hippieness2400, working towards building community gardens in the

<sup>23</sup> Street parties have become common tools for network of autonomous movements to draw attention to the gentrification and commercialization of Copenhagen inner city. One of the most violent and largest was Hyskenstræde 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Do It Together.

surrounding neighborhood. The presence of the Candy Factory has therefore enabled the grassroots regeneration of public spaces in the Nørrebro. (Various Interviews).

### **Global Local Nexus**

As a local node in global movements, the Bolsjes housed, fed and provided workshop spaces for 2,000 activists during the COP 15 Climate Summit in December 2009. The space became a local node and meeting place in the global environmental justice movement, organizing the Alternative *KlimaForum* in Copenhagen.

For the past three years, the Candy Factory has hosted Lady Fest in Copenhagen, a not-for-profit grassroots movement celebrating “DIY feminist arts and activism” (Patke 2011). This global-gender festival has been organized in cities worldwide since 2000.

Similar to the manner in which social centers throughout Italy and Spain act as local nodes in global social movements, actively challenging the increasing neoliberalization of cities, the Candy Factory has become a node and meeting place in a network of local and global movements for autonomy.

### **Autonomy by Self-Management**

*“We try to have as few rules as possible, to encourage people meeting on a personal level.”*  
(Kevin)

The Candy Factory is a user-generated autonomous culture house, adhering to principles of direct democracy, cooperation, and mutual aid. The *Bolsjes* have termed this the ‘*Do-It-Together*’ philosophy, which is a form of DIY culture placing emphasis on mutual aid and collectivity (Andersen 2010). The collective is formally organized as an association of volunteers, and managed along principles of “unity, equality and freedom in the pursuit of creative expression.” (Bolsjefabrikken Organisaition).

The structure of the organization is flat, such that all major decisions are reached during the monthly assembly. Two permanent groups exist, the economics and booking groups. The economics group collects and pays the monthly utility costs, while the booking group is responsible for outreach, responding to requests from local and international artists and activists. In order to address specific issues, ephemeral working groups are formed during the assembly.

Although the Candy Factory is not an explicitly political space, the self-managed and horizontal governing structure, aiming for direct democracy through participation, is reflective of movements for autonomy. As one collective member said,

*“It’s not like the house is political although many find ideas of anarchy attractive”*



(Interview Bodil and Martin).

### **Assembly**

Within a flat governing structure, all major decisions are made by reaching consensus during a monthly general assembly. Attendance ranges from 15-60 people, and the meetings usually last around three hours. These meetings are open to everyone, and at least one member from every workshop is expected to attend in order to discuss upcoming events and general problems. During the general assembly, the different workshops contribute money for the common utility costs to ensure a degree of transparency in finances.

Setting an agenda and naming two facilitators, one to take minutes and the other to mediate the discussions, organize the assembly. Hand motions allow for everyone to voice their opinion, without interrupting the speaker. Those attending the assembly seem to be familiar with the meaning of the hand motions, which are used



to signal comments such as agreement,

disagreement or blocking consensus.

The decision-making structure is flat, and everyone attending the monthly meeting is expected to vest patience and time into deliberations in order to reach a collective agreement by means of consensus. Following in the tradition of Christiania's *Ting*, everyone must agree on a proposal before it can be approved. Reaching agreement by consensus is a participatory model to avoid the frustration and dissatisfaction the minority can feel after a majority decision (Svanholm).

After the assembly, minutes are sent out via a list-serve as a review for those unable to attend the meeting. In order to ensure that meetings are open to non-Danish participants, the assemblies are held in English when foreigners are present. This is prevalent throughout most of the Candy Factory, in which many signs are in Danish and English to accommodate international travelers and activists (Johannesen 2011).

### Independent Workshops

All other decisions are made on a personal level within the collectives working in the different workshops. This allows for the greatest degree of autonomy among the individual workshops, following in the autonomist tradition



Café-Bar Source: Author

of decentralized organizing. Therefore, each workshop holds its own meeting and decides how to raise the

1,000 KR to contribute to the common fund for utility costs

Every workshop is also required to open its space to the public since the house wants to avoid becoming an inward-looking social center, or an association of closed ateliers. Some workshops, such as the bike workshop, have regular opening hours in which tools and advice are made available to the public. This ensures



Ateliers . Source: Author

that the artists and craftsmen share their knowledge with the public and interact with the community. Other workshops have their activities and meeting dates posted on a calendar at the info point, allowing visitors and interested members from the community to become engaged.

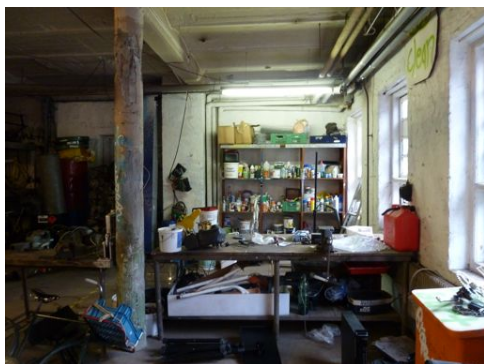
### Self-Finance

The Candy Factory strives to remain independent from the state. Therefore, the association receives no direct subsidies or financial benefits. This has forced the collective to become resourceful in finding means of auto-financing and fundraising. Although the Municipal Government has offered to buy the Lærkvej location, the movement wants to remain independent from the state in their search for autonomy. As one activist said. "Once you're under the municipality it kills all spontaneity"(Benny).

Pooling money from the individual workshops, which independently decide how to raise funds, pays for utility costs necessary to

maintain water and electricity in the building. Each workshop contributes 1,000KR per month, independently deciding how these funds are raised.

Most workshops are organized so that each key-holder contributes 100KR every month. Often workshops will host benefit parties or organize festivals in order to raise money for their activities or the common fund.



*Rode Hammer Bike Workshop*  
Source: Author

The biggest revenue for the common fund is the sale of beverages in the café during events, concerts and after movie<sup>25</sup> showings.

A collective within the factory has formed to run the café; otherwise, members from other collectives may run the café to raise money during benefit events. Some workshops ask for voluntary donations in return for offering services. For example, the weekly people's kitchen asks for a donation in order to buy staples necessary for cooking. Also, the Røde Hammer has a donation box, in which users can voluntarily make a donation for using tools and supplies in the bike workshop.

### State Subsidies on Project Basis

On various occasions, individuals in the different collectives apply for state funds on a project basis. Often, collectives have received funding from the Local Councils of Nørrebro and Bisbebjerg, as well as the Municipality of

<sup>25</sup> Especially during the cold, long winter months the cinema becomes a popular venue.

Copenhagen to build projects in the local neighborhood<sup>26</sup>.

Since most users are youth, many workshops have made use of a municipal youth fund called Snabslanten<sup>27</sup>. *Snabslanten* is a unique bureaucratic funding tool in Denmark, enabled by the extensive Danish welfare state. This municipal fund supports alternative, independent and non-commercial initiatives by providing easily accessible funds of up to 10,000KR<sup>28</sup>. The entrance barrier to applying for and accessing the funds are very low, enabling youth and DIY activists with little or no experience in grant applications to obtain funds.

Since these funds only enable non-commercial projects, no single organization or person can reap a profit. Instead of getting paid, the collectives use the funds to purchase tools and supplies, for specific projects (such as public space interventions). When the project has been carried out, the tools are then kept for public use in the Candy Factory. This is how the wood workshop has assembled an array of power tools, the bike workshop bike parts and screen-printing workshop color and other materials.

### Alternative Economics Social Economics

While trying to find ways to remain independent of the state, the Candy Factory experiments with alternative forms of exchange internally. Alternative economics are most notably put into practice by recycling and reuse of waste that is generated in the city.



<sup>26</sup> Done mostly through Detours, the architecture collective, of which many are active in the Candy Factory.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.snabslanten.dk/>

<sup>28</sup> about 1,300 Eur.

This is done by dumpster supermarket dumpsters, construction sites, and curbside bulk trash. *Dumpster diving*, or what is called *reciclar* in Spain, and *kontainern* in Germany is the act of entering dumpsters and recovering usable objects (e.g. food, furniture, clothes, etc.). By means of dumpster diving and collecting food donations, the weekly people's kitchen is stalked. Rescuing building materials from construction sites, and recycling bicycles and parts in the bike workshop also contribute to the economy of the space.

Everyone in the Candy Factory works on a volunteer basis; therefore, all money generated in the space is funneled back into the common fund of the space.

All works on display for sale in the gallery are sold not-for-profit, only covering the costs of materials. In the spirit of DIY culture, artwork is not used for commercial reproduction and resale; thus the factory has become a production site and showcase for independent and underground expression (Johannesen 2011).

The Bolsje have opened the factory for experimenting with an economy based on collectivity and mutual aid. By working together, sharing skills and knowledge, production is not driven by competition, but instead by collaboration. This has enabled the space to provide alternative forms of consumption, not based on money, but on personal interaction. The Candy Factory not only offers low-cost activities, but the space engages individuals to experiment with alternative forms of exchange outside of the market economy.

### ***Folke Køkken*** <sup>29</sup>

A regular and popularly visited event in the Candy Factory is the people's kitchen (*Folke Køkken*) held every Friday. This event is organized by the kitchen collective and provides a warm meal for approximately 50-70 people every week. The meals are always vegetarian and mostly vegan. As one activist said, "Not because of politics or animal rights," but food is vegan in

<sup>29</sup> People's Kitchen; for additional images see Appendix Images 1.3.



order to be inclusive to those who choose such a lifestyle (Kevin). Offering vegetarian food proliferates and reproduces a sustainable and ethically sound food culture, proliferating values of autonomy.

By asking for donations, the kitchen can cover utility costs and buy staples such as soap, salt, sugar and new cooking tools. Most of the food is obtained by dumpster diving from supermarkets or asking donations of bakeries and local grocery stores. Therefore the Bolsje never know what they will find, and the menu always becomes a spontaneous, DIY recipe of what excess the city's dumpsters and grocery stores have to offer.

By redistributing food that would otherwise go to waste, the Candy Factory acts as a space of recycling and redistribution in the city. By recovering food<sup>30</sup> the Bolsje redefine urban waste and use it as a weapon against a consumer society, and the capitalist system at large.

Effectively, food is brought back to its original use-value, while its exchange value is undermined (Shukaitis et al 2007; 50). In this sense, the Folke Køkken becomes an alternative space of exchange, enabled by the excess of consumer society, functioning outside of the market economy.

<sup>30</sup> in the case of other workshops, different materials from the urban environment are recovered, e.g. furniture, pallets, construction materials, etc)

As an alternative to a restaurant or café, patrons become actively engaged in the preparation and distribution of food. Everyone eats at shared tables and is encouraged to clean up. Food preparation is done on a DIY basis, and state-imposed sanitation laws for those preparing food are not upheld. Instead, the kitchen collective determines rules and organization of the kitchen. Since no problems have arisen to date concerning, for example, spoiled food, the project demonstrates the viability of autonomously serving food that would otherwise be thrown away. When problems regarding sanitation or cleaning arise, the best collective solutions are sought.



## La Tabacalera de Lavapiés, Madrid

“Tabacalera como experimento social”<sup>31</sup>

The *Centro Social Autogestionado La Tabacalera*<sup>32</sup> is a self-managed social center located in a former tobacco factory of Lavapiés, in Madrid. Situated at c/Embajadores 53 between the Lavapiés and Embajadores neighborhoods, the massive building sits along the southern part of the inner city. The factory covers an area of 32,000m<sup>2</sup>, of which 8,000m<sup>2</sup> have temporarily been ceded for self-management to a diverse network of artists, activists and local citizens. After almost a decade of being vacant, it's doors were opened in June 2010 to the public for a self-managed, socio-cultural experiment (for Map see Appendix Images 2.1,2.1).

### Neighborhood

Lavapiés is a neighborhood in the Embajadores District. As a historically working class neighborhood, the area remains one of Madrid's most socially dynamic but also marginal inner city districts.

With almost 50% of the residents having a foreign nationality, diverse immigrant communities have formed since the 1990s, most notably Ecuadorians and Moroccans, as well as Chinese, Senegalese, Peruvians and Bangladeshis (Plan de Barrio 2010; 7). Accordingly, the commercial character of the neighborhood reflects this social structure, with many call shops, wholesale retailers, ethnic food stores and green grocers.

Also active in the neighborhood has been the Spanish squatter (*okupa*) movement, which began in the mid 1980s, and has since provided

social and cultural services while openly criticizing the established order.

Additionally younger residents, such as students, artists and ‘creative’ professionals associated with the music and theater scene, have been moving to Lavapiés in recent years. Being attracted by the lower real estate prices, central location, multi-cultural nightlife and distinct character of the neighborhood (Orueta 2006).

### Autonomous Movements in Spain

Anarchist organizing in Spain goes back to the Spanish civil war, and provides social movements in Spain with a historical context for autonomous organizing. In contrast to Danish social movements, which emerged under an expansive welfare state, Spain was under a dictatorship until 1972 resulting in a ‘weak’ civil society, informal economies, and strong urban squatter movements. As opposed to northern Europe, where alternative cultures surfaced and changed societies, alternative cultures in Spain were sustained underground for a long period under the Franco dictatorship (Lentidou 2009). Therefore, current urban movements in Spain are strongly rooted in a history of self-organizing, and resisting authoritarian regimes.

### Antigua Fabrica de Tabacos

Along the southern edge of the neighborhood is the *Antigua Fabrica de Tabacco*<sup>33</sup>. The factory was constructed in 1793 and due to its architectural distinction, is today placed under monument protection. As one of three state owned Tobacco factories in Spain, it was privatized and bought by *Altadis* in 1997, and ceased its production by 2000 (Jaoquin 2010).

The factory was the economic engine of the Lavapiés, employing up to 4,000 female *cigarrera* workers. But in addition to its

<sup>31</sup> Tabacalera, a social experiment

<sup>32</sup> henceforth, Tabacalera.

<sup>33</sup> Former Tobacco Factory.

economic importance, the factory became a place from which important social, political and civic ties were made. Therefore, the factory remains of historical and cultural significance to the people and collective memory of Lavapiés (Ana).

After the factory closed down in 1998, the building was ceded to the central government's Ministry of Treasury and then designated to the Ministry of Culture, Department of *Bellas Artes*.

The Ministry had plans to fill the vast factory space with two museums, making a Center for Visual Arts (*Centro Nacional de Artes Visuales*). This was planned as a 'star-architecture' project and part of a broader strategy to continue the cultural axis of museums along the southern boarder of Madrid Center. The Tabacalera would connect the cultural axis to Lavapiés spanning from the Thyssen, Prado and the Reina Sofia museums.

Neighborhood movements opposed these plans, as an additional museum displaying 'high culture' would cater to upper and middle class consumption and the city's tourism industry, rather than the needs of local inhabitants (Orueta 2007).

### **Tabacalera a Debate**

The first claim to the empty factory space was made by the *Red de Lavapiés*<sup>34</sup>, a neighborhood network that formed by the end of the 1990s demanding local participation in regeneration projects. They wanted to use the factory as public space for social initiatives (Corcuera 2011). This network grew throughout the early 2000s and was composed of an unconventionally diverse association of local actors, driven by the traditional neighborhood association La Corrala as well as squatters from El Laboratorio, various local NGOs, artists and academics (Orueta 2007;189).

The *Red de Lavapiés* used imaginative and creative tactics for raising awareness about the use of vacant buildings, such as installing temporary

exhibits and videos, painting murals and giving tours of derelict buildings.

In 2004, after the successive eviction of one of the most important and vibrant squatted social centers, Laboratorio 3<sup>35</sup>, there was a void in the neighborhood for large spaces and grassroots self-organizing.

This is when the discussions about future uses of the Tabacalera intensified with people from the *Red de Lavapiés* along with involved artists and the *okupa* network<sup>36</sup> who ultimately joined together in the *Tabacalera a Debate*<sup>37</sup>.

***“Porque la imaginación de Lavapiés vuela sin permiso”***<sup>38</sup>

Drawing on the experience, memory and knowledge from the Laboratorio, the network didn't advocate for a specific project, but called for a self-managed center in which the process would determine the outcome. In which citizens could become active participants in the molding of their city (Red de Lavapiés 2004; 3). Nonetheless, tensions continued between the more radically minded participants of the *okupa* movement and those willing to cooperate with the ministry for the sake of gaining permission to the self-management of the space.

The Ministry of Culture<sup>39</sup> mentioned the Tabacalera as a force for neighborhood revitalization, as the greatest 'cultural, social and economic profitability' in a report published in 2004 (Red de Lavapiés 2004). Without specifying

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<sup>34</sup> *Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés*: Network of Lavapiés collectives.

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<sup>35</sup> According to Orueta and personal conversations the Laboratorios were social centers which did not only serve as reference points for the squatter movement, but for the entire associative movement of the district and Madrid t large. They were a major focus point for social activity and very dynamic in their operations.

<sup>36</sup> Specifically squatters involved in Laboratorios and CSOA Patio Maravillas

<sup>37</sup> Debating the Tabacalera Network

<sup>38</sup> Because the imagination of Lavapiés flows even without permission.

<sup>39</sup> Central government was under a socialist government (PSOE).





who would profit from this regeneration or in which manner.

## Hijo de la Crisis<sup>40</sup>

Often the self-managed project Tabacalera has been called a “child of the crisis” (Claramonte, Ana). Since the project was developed in the wake of both the global economic crisis<sup>41</sup> and a crisis in the model of managing culture.

The financial crisis has had devastating effects on unemployment levels in Spain, as youth unemployment reached the highest rate in the EU with 46% in July of 2011<sup>42</sup> (Eurostat July 2011). Especially many young and educated people, as well as those in the artistic and public sector are left unemployed and facing an uncertain future.

In Madrid, culture is traditionally managed in a top-down manner. Art is usually exhibited and represented in spaces of wealth and opulence, while it’s actual production remains precarious and insecure.

In this model, the place where culture is displayed takes precedence over the kind of culture and how it is produced (Tabacalera y Institucion). This model also fits the original plans for the former Tobacco Factory. The architectural plans for the Ministry’s *Museo de Artes Visuales* included a multi-million Euro LED screen, which would cover the southern end of the building. Not only does this seem as an unnecessary expense, but this would have altered the basic structure of the building, breaking with its organic functioning and destroying its historical significance (Ana).

In light of the financial crisis, the Ministry lacked funds for the costly façade, and thereupon the entire museum couldn’t be realized. This is

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<sup>40</sup> Child of the crisis.

<sup>41</sup> Referring to the 2008 global financial crisis, beginning with the bursting of the U.S. mortgage bubble, and the subsequent bankruptcies of countries across the globe, most notably Island, Greece and Spain. Henceforth referred to as the *financial crisis*.

<sup>42</sup> This applies to youth between the ages of 15 and 24.

typical of the model of managing culture in Madrid, where the container in which art is displayed become more important than the actual culture inside (Ana, Jordi).

Within the context of this crisis, the Ministry approached artists who had been part of the Tabacalera a Debate. Asking if they wanted to install a temporary photo exhibit about the neighborhood movement. Instead of an exhibit, the group insisted on a self-managed center, and the Ministry agreed to cede the building temporarily until February 2011. By drawing on the support and knowledge of the social movements and networks that had been involved in the *Red de Lavapiés* and *Tabacalera a Debate*, the space was then opened to a diverse and heterogeneous group of locals.

The building was ceded under the Ministry’s new program of *Cultura Abierta*<sup>43</sup>. In this program the state opened empty public buildings to cultural activities and develops cultural projects such as museums more sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood (Ana).

The cession occurred in pragmatic negotiations with the ministry in a three-step process. First the inside was inspected and examined by a small group of people involved in the *Tabacalera a Debate*; in the second phase, the internal design was addressed. The group included architects who installed electricity and water, as the building was prepared for adaptive reuse and opened to the public for self-management in June 2010 (Ana, Ecosystema Urbano).

## Spaces of Cultural Production

### To the outside...

The entrance to the Tabacalera is through a massive side door, formerly used by the female *cigarrera* workers. Most of the time, security guards financed by the ministry stand at the door, or inside the entrance hall. Along the edge of the building, a scaffolding put up by the Ministry

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<sup>43</sup> Open Culture.



continues to give the self managed project a temporary, and under construction

feeling. .

The factory and its courtyards are surrounded by a high wall, a relic of the original factory structure. Therefore, from the busy Embajadores roundabout, only a colorful graffiti mural depicting a woman<sup>44</sup>, hint at the experimental activities taking place inside.

From the outside, the building is simple in form, with huge windows and entrances, which formerly enabled thousands of cigarrera workers to enter, and today allows for crowds of locals, activists and cultural consumers.

The coat of arms of the Tabacalera displays a dog playing a flute, what in Spanish is called *Perroflauta*. What was previously a colloquial term has been adopted by the *Fundación de Español Urgente*, which defines it as “a young person, projecting a carefree appearance, and may identify themselves as a modern hippie”(Llado 2011). It is a term used to connote an urban tribe, those associated with the alternative scene and squatters involve in the *okupa* movement. The term can have derogatory connotations, but in the wake of Spain’s *15M* movement, it was increasingly used to refer to idealistic youth advocating for a more participatory democracy.



The banner under the coat of arms reads *Quien la Propone se la Come*<sup>45</sup> encouraging everyone to use the

<sup>44</sup> sprayed by Spanish street artist Bastardilla.

<sup>45</sup> If you propose to do something, you should do it.

Tabacalera as a space of active engagement, rather than passive consumption.

### ...from within

Of the 32,000m<sup>2</sup> building, about 8,000m<sup>2</sup> have been ceded to the CSA for self-management.

Through a participative process, and by maintaining the structure of the building, the factory spaces have adopted new functions. The spaces ceded for self-management include the first floor, two enclosed courtyards, a cellar and outdoor patios. Due to the vast size, a great variety of cultural activities are possible. The space is so large and the activities so diverse, that a permanent info point at the entrance provides visitors with a map of how to navigate the space, and information about current projects and activities (For map see Appendix Image 2.3, 2.4).

On the first floor, former administrative offices are used by workshops such as foreign language, literature and writing groups. Other spaces have been more permanently designated for a kindergarten, archives and a library with more than 3,000 books.

The inner courtyard has been turned into a garden- a green and quiet oasis. The southern wing has been appropriated for a café, kitchen, cafeteria, free store and sewing workshop. The largest covered space is the Nave Central, a multi-use space whose acoustics and stage allow for large concerts, performances and projections.

Passing through the Nave Central of the first floor, the Tabacalera extends into a cellar. Here various rooms accommodate mostly audio and visual workshops and exhibition spaces, such as the AfroTemplo, an urban art and sound workshop called El Keller, and a community supported agriculture distribution point.



Nave Central Source: Author



*Exhibition and gallery spaces in cellar.*  
Source: Author

The outdoor patio space enables activities such as cinemas, performances and plots for urban agriculture. In this area, other enclosed spaces have been designated to workshops and collectives who have built an indoor skate park<sup>46</sup>, music practice rooms, a bicycle workshop and *Tabacanal*, a video collective. A high wall encircling the patio gives a feeling of safety and secrecy to the busy intersection outside, while remaining a public space, safe from the state or police.

Forming the eastern side of the patio, the performance and theater space *Molino Rojo*<sup>47</sup> encompasses two large practice areas enabling for workshops such as Kung Fu, Yoga, Capoeira,



*Patio and Garden.*  
Source: Author

Contemporary and Traditional dance as well as various

theater groups. Adjacent, an even larger space called the *Nave Trapecio*<sup>48</sup> is appropriated by construction, architecture and sculpture artists. The space accommodates painting, recycling, wood and metal workshops.

## Tabacalera Users Core Activists

*“it’s dynamic and in constant process, that’s why the Tabacalera from June 2010 is not the same as the Tabacalera of 2011” (Marivi).*

A core group of approximately 50-60 activists takes part in coordinating assemblies, and up to 80 people participate during general assemblies called for special purposes. A



*Tabacanal and Gallery Keller*  
Source: Author

majority of these active users are between the ages of 30 and 60, seem to be employed in the public sector, cultural industries or are self-employed. The core group of activists, is noticeably older than those in the Candy Factory, and a minority have prior experience in the okupa movement. Most active organizers also reside in the surrounding neighborhood or Lavapies.

Although the composition of those involved is constantly changing, the majority of the active users (after one year of the project’s existence) come from the cultural industries, or are independent artists and academics. Since the coordinating assembly is held in Spanish, all active users are Spanish-speakers and appear to be of Spanish or Latin American background.

<sup>46</sup> The only free indoor skate park in of Madrid.

<sup>47</sup> Red Windmill.

<sup>48</sup> Trapeze Warehouse

Due to the high rate of unemployment among Spanish youth, many engaged in the Tabacalera are unemployed but skilled people. Some of these have university degrees, are self-employed artists or skilled laborers. As an artist and member of the café collective said, when he lost his job, he moved into the center to be closer to the Tabacalera and dedicate his time to the project (Jesus).



*Bike workshop.  
Source: Author*

### Active Users

About 200 *active users* take part in workshops and collectives on a weekly basis. This group of users varies, including people coming from all walks of life, social and ethnic backgrounds. Young children and mothers use the library and kindergarten, while the elderly attend dance workshops, foreigners and immigrants the language workshops, and youngsters the skate park. Students and young artists take part in the urban art workshops, make videos for the *Tabacanal* and form bands in the practice rooms. As an open space appropriated by the neighborhood, the active users are reflective of the social character of the surrounding area.

One group of regular and visible users are (primarily male) immigrants from the neighborhood. The space has become a point of sociality, where they do not have to spend money nor have the fear of inquiry or harassment by authorities. The Tabacalera workshops have emerged *for* them, such as free language course

and solidarity immigration actions. On the other hand, the space has allowed immigrants to take initiative and create projects *by* themselves, demonstrated by the vibrant presence of the *Templo Afro*<sup>49</sup>.

Although Spanish is the primary language spoken in the center, artists, activists and visitors of all nationalities, ranging from Scandinavia, the Americas, Africa and Australia actively participate and use the space (Marivi).

### Visitors and Tourists

Due to its vast size and the unique nature of the project, several thousand ‘general users’ visit the Tabacalera during larger events. These are people from all ethnic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, intrigued by the alternative scene. These users may not actively take part in workshops, but by visiting and consuming the space, they contribute to its continuation.

### Space of (autonomous) flows

Activists from a Madrid wide network continue to use the Tabacalera for workshops, solidarity events, discussions and entertainment. Although criticisms persist from the more radical *okupa* movement, the Tabacalera continues to be a node within a wider social movement network in the neighborhood and Madrid at large. Most notably, the Tabacalera is connected to social centers in the surrounding Lavapiés neighborhood. Most notably it is connected to spaces such as *Embaja 35*, *CSA Eskalera Karakola* and the *CSOA Casablanca*. Networks of mutual aid and collaboration also reach to other autonomous spaces in Madrid, such as the *CSOA Patio Maravillas* and *CSA Seco*.

The Tabacalera is also strongly connected to a similar project in Malaga, called the *Casa Invisible*. By means of financial support<sup>50</sup>,

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<sup>49</sup> African Temple, is a collective organizing drum workshops, concerts and jam sessions.

<sup>50</sup> The Tabacalera has lent portions of a ministry’s grant to the Casa Invisible.

exchange of ideas, information and activists, the two centers support each other.

The global phenomenon Critical Mass which has been considered the “heat core” (Moore 2010) of Madrid autonomous centers, connects the spaces by means of their bicycle collectives. The Tabacalera, along with other social centers, has often become the destination of these monthly rides.



Structure built by Tabacalera architecture collective.  
Source: El Mundo.

## 15M<sup>51</sup> Spanish Revolution 2011

### Global Local Nexus

Leading up to the 15M demonstration organized under the banner of Democracia Real Ya!, the Tabacalera acted as an organizing space, and its website provided updates and information about the demonstrations. The Tabacalera was especially connected to the 15M Movement through the architecture collective *Autoconstrucción arquitectura de la Necesidad*<sup>52</sup> and the television collective *Tabacanal*<sup>53</sup>. During

<sup>51</sup> For 15M Manifest See Appendix 2.

<sup>52</sup> Self-managed architecture out of necessity collective.

<sup>53</sup> Autoconstrucción was active in building the first permanent constructions which enabled the lasting occupation at Porta de Sol. Tabacanal filmed, recorded and were active in creating the committee of audiovisuales, one of the permanent committees collecting materials during the *Acampada Sol*.

the *Acampada de Sol*<sup>54</sup>, which lasted from 15 March 2011 until 12 June 2011 the Tabacalera became an important support point, from which materials and tools were brought to the hundreds of demonstrators occupying Porta de Sol. Although the CSA Tabacalera, as a social center was not present at the demonstration and subsequent acampada, many collectives and activists in the spaces were active in the commissions which were established in the encampment (Marivi, Ana).

The large, 515m<sup>2</sup> space of the Nave Central, the main entrance hall of the Tabacalera, enabled international press conferences for the movement. In this sense, the Tabacalera provided the local support structure enabling the global echo of the *indignados*<sup>55</sup>.

After the consensual dispersal from the Porta de Sol, and the break-up of the camp, the 4,000



*Acampada de Sol*.  
Source: Author

books which had been donated and collected in the provisional library of the *Encampada*, were brought to the *Biblioteka* of the Tabacalera (Becares 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Occupation/encampment of Porta de Sol.

<sup>55</sup> Term coined by Stefan Hessel; those taking part and mobilizing in the 15M movement, occupying the heart of Madrid, Porta de Sol from 15.5.2011 until 12.06.2011.

As an involved activist said,

*“centers like the Tabacalera that aren’t political have normalized the participatory processes we saw in Sol, as previously non-political people are more like to take part in the Tabacalera than occupied social centers” (Ana).*



## Organizational Framework

Following the principles of many self-managed social centers (Centros Sociales Autogestionados), the Tabacalera adheres to principles of self-management, collaboration and Copyleft. Within this framework, the center ensures that all activities, workshops and events are free of charge.

### Self Management : *Autogestion*<sup>56</sup>

The Tabacalera’s internal organization adheres to a similar model of autonomous and horizontal decision-making found in many squatted centers.

Decisions about the management are made during the weekly coordinating assembly, which is generally attended by one participant of every workshop. Symbolically the assembly meets in the former boss office of the factory, still carrying the title ‘*Jefe*’<sup>57</sup>. The assembly is open to everyone, and major decisions about shifts (turnos) and collective responsibilities, conflicts between workshops, and interactions with the Ministry are discussed.

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<sup>56</sup> Self-Management.

<sup>57</sup> Boss.

Decisions are made in a horizontal, participative manner. Due to the building’s vast size, and sheer number of daily users<sup>58</sup>, the Tabacalera is constantly experimenting with how to provide the best conditions for a ‘collective intelligence’ to emerge. Self-management empowers individuals and ensures that only those activities are realized for which there is initiative, and demand; without the intervention of the state or market.

Participants from the coordination assembly are currently negotiating with the ministry for future uses of the factory. There are discussions of organizing the independent collectives into a federation, then having a representative body negotiate with the ministry about the future of it’s management (Jordi).



In order to ensure that everyone is informed and can participate, news is disseminated through mailing lists, and events are uploaded to the center’s general website. Individual workshops have their own blogs linked to the general site, allowing accessible and decentralized discussion forums. Internet communication allows for flexibility in the uses of the rooms, enabling information about spontaneous events to be disseminated quickly and easily. An activity board in the entrance hall informs users of the times for workshops and general announcements.

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<sup>58</sup> Estimated to have 200 users per day (Ana).



## Independent Workshops

Individual workshops (*Talleres*) hold their own meetings, and when they want to use the concert hall or plan larger events, the proposal is made to the general assembly, and consensus is sought. Through this model, the organization aims to make decisions as decentralized and participatory as possible.

For many of those involved, the Tabacalera is the first experience of participating in a self-managed project. Since many lack previous experience in social movements and autonomous organizing, communication about the values and tasks for the autonomous functioning of the space, are done on an individual level. A lot of effort is therefore put into day-to-day personal relations (Ana).

A working group dedicated to the topic of self-management exists to engage in critical reflections about the biggest challenges and solutions to the autonomous management of such a large space. In this workshop, active participants from the more political social center and *okupa* movements offer their insight and advice (Ana, Tabacalera).

## Collaboration and Mutual Aid

*“Sol@ no puedes, con amig@s si”*<sup>59</sup>

The second principle by which the Tabacalera functions is collaboration and mutual aid. Signs in the entrance hall encourage people to collaborate with activities necessary for the proper functioning of the space. Instead of relying on money, the space and its activities can be consumed through personal engagement. Mutual aid refers to “the voluntary exchange of goods and services for the mutual benefit of members of a given society” (Clever 2011).

The functioning of the Tabacalera relies on the collaboration of individuals such as taking the responsibility to sweep, clean, and take turns working at the bar (*turnos*). Members from every

workshop are on a rotating schedule for working at the bar, cleaning and standing at the information point. By taking turns for the responsibilities of maintaining the collective space, the project continues to exist.

The tendencies in traditional models of cultural production are that artists first present a project, then ask for funds or resources in order to individually pursue and complete their work. In other cases, they may enter a competition to get contracted or funding. Traditional cultural institutions put emphasis on identifying and then isolating cultural creators (Ana, Jordi).

In the Tabacalera, artists and cultural producers carry out projects by means of collaboration and mutual aid. In order to have a space to produce and display their work, artists have to compromise and communicate with others in their collectives.

By means of mutual-aid between workshops within the Tabacalera, materials, tools and knowledge is exchanged, therefore enabling independence from outside contractors and state support.

This collaboration allows for independent, unmediated and non-commercial cultural production, which does not depend on state institutions or the ability to profitably sell and market one’s work.

## Copyleft

The third principle to which the Tabacalera adhered is Copyleft. This is the practice of using copyright laws to offer “programs, cultural productions and other works free and requiring that all modified and extended versions of the works are free as well” (GNU Project).

The Tabacalera makes use of the guidelines established by the non-profit organization Creative Commons (CC) to ensure that all creative productions (e.g. software, art,

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<sup>59</sup> Alone you can’t do it, with friends you can!

culture and science) are protected under a Share-Alike license. This ensures that creators are accredited for their work, while permitting others to copy, distribute, build upon and use their work freely as long as the new product also adheres to Copyleft<sup>60</sup> (Creative Commons). This means cultural productions within the Tabacalera must adhere to CC-BY-SA copyright restrictions.

All work produced in the Tabacalera is therefore attributed to the original author, and any resulting works that builds upon or alters Tabacalera productions must be distributed under the same or similar license (Creative Commons). There are no specific restrictions on the commercial use and distribution of works, to ensure that radio, music, and writings to be projected in local venues that may be commercial. Within this production system songs, paintings or photos have to be marketed under the guise of Copyleft and therefore distributed with an open license.

Adhering to Copyleft has supported mutual-aid and inspiration among artists and cultural producers, as they can build on one another's work without legal repercussions. This effectively allows artists to retain rights to their work, while encouraging the proliferation of open-source productions.

The space is therefore an experiment of how collaboration, rather than competition; open source rather than copyright, and horizontal structures of organization rather than hierarchical ones can foster creativity and a participative culture.

## State Subsidies

Although the Tabacalera doesn't rely on steady funding from the Ministry, the project has received grant of 15,000EUR. With this grant, supplies were purchased, and a significant portion of the money was lent to Casa Invisible, a similar project in Malaga (Marivi; Jordi). The Tabacalera can therefore autonomously decide how to

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<sup>60</sup> In the case of the Tabacalera, the license actually allows for commercial redistribution, as long as the author is cited.

allocate and redistribute state funds. As long as the space is able to generate adequate funds for its own functioning, future state grants will be lent to other self-managed social projects in need.<sup>61</sup>

The Ministry indirectly subsidizes the project by covering all utility costs, as well as major structural repairs on the building itself. Additionally, the Ministry finances the security guards, who guard the entrance and outside patios when the center is open to the public.

## Economic Experimentation

*“Apostamos por un consumo no monetarizado, consciente y antagónico a los modos de relación y producción social imperantes”* – Sign in entrance Hall<sup>62</sup>

### *Economía del Común*<sup>63</sup>

The Tabacalera experiments with alternative forms of exchange and production creating a social economy, which they have termed *economía del común*. This form of exchange prioritizes people and recycled resources, while not opposing the use of money. The pillars of this social economy are based on participation and collective decision making, while promoting reuse, recycling and exchange.

Within this scheme, the generation of money is linked to alternative forms of production such as the recycling of furniture, making clothing by means of the screen-printing or sewing



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<sup>62</sup> We believe in consumption not based on money, conscious and antagonistic to the prevailing modes of exchange and social production.

<sup>63</sup> Communal Economics.



workshops, and selling socially responsible, local and environmentally sustainable products<sup>64</sup>. Although the payment through money is not completely excluded, no lucrative forms of exchange are allowed in the space.

Also when furniture, bicycles or artwork is sold it should be done within local networks, directly and without intermediary profiteers. This fosters an alternative economic circuit in the local territory based on personal exchange (Economías Alternativas).

The wood, metal and construction workshops in the *Nave Trapecio*, for example, depend on donations, recycled items and trash for most of their building materials. Also most tools and equipment are donated by individuals or acquired from public institutions or schools.

Individual workshops have to be in accordance with the guiding principles of the center; therefore, workshops and their activities cannot be run for profit. Forms of fundraising can vary, as long as they do not undermine the common economic logic of the space. Preference is given to those collectives that have no resources to generate money (e.g., Spanish language group) and those fundraising initiatives, which proliferate the social economy.

### Cafeteria<sup>65</sup>

In practice, the main generator of money for the common fund of the Tabacalera is the cafeteria. Within this collective, which operate daily; fair trade coffee, beer and home-made pastries are sold at relatively low prices and all profits are funneled into the common fund.

In the evening, between 6pm and 11pm, the cafeteria is run by means of collaborative shifts (*turnos*), in which members from every

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<sup>64</sup> Such as organic, fair trade and locally produced beverages and foods.

<sup>65</sup> Since the Tabacalera is a social experiment in constant process, many of the organizational structures are fluid, constantly adapting and changing. Therefore specificities on organizing may have been different in the past and subject to change in the future.

collective sign up to volunteer a certain number of hours. This allows workshops to generate money and continue to offer services and activities to the community for free. The money from the cafeteria also covers communal operating and production costs such as audio equipment, cleaning material, web hosting, printing of articles, posters and pamphlets (Economías Alternativas).

### Tienda Gratuita<sup>66</sup>

The only permanent store in the Tabacalera is the *Tienda Gratuita*, which directly engages people with the idea of a gift economy. In the Free Store, everyone can bring items (mostly clothes, shoes and accessories) they no longer need or want, and take whatever they find use for.



A board of instructions explains the concept, as people are often surprised that they can simply *take* something without paying for it. By stating that only clean and functional items should be brought, the board wants to avoid the store turning into a trash dump. Also, everyone is encouraged to sort, hang or fold things they bring. If not, members from the adjacent sewing workshop take the responsibility of keeping the items organized and the store tidy.

The store acts as a space of re-valuation, outside of the prevailing market economy, in which commodities are given a new use-value without the exchange of money. Whereas retro and secondhand shops revalorize old clothing by making them fashionable, the Free Store actively engages users to partake in resistance to capitalist modes of exchange (Leyshon 2003).

Source: [latabacalera.net](http://latabacalera.net)

The Free Store therefore becomes a mechanism of recycling and redistributing the excess of

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<sup>66</sup> Free Store.

prevailing consumer society, while transcending power relations of the giver and receiver inherent in charity shops.



*Free Store in CSA Tabacalera. Source: Author*

## V. Analysis and Conclusions

*“Traces of human protest and alternative projects can be recognized in the spatial forms and meaning of cities” (Castells 318; 1983).*



Autonomous spaces like the Candy Factory and Tabacalera have become materialized forms of an “aesthetic revulsion against the results of the existing order” (Marcuse 2009; 190).

Both Nørrebro and Lavapiés are marginal, socially dynamic, ethnically diverse, and historically working class inner-city neighborhoods, in which clusters of self-managed spaces have emerged. Therefore both neighborhoods, in their respective cities have been associated with a strong presence of autonomous movements.

### Today’s Crisis

Lefebvre’s *Le Droit a La Ville* developed out of the crisis of the welfare state and the fordist-mode of production. In the context of today’s global financial crisis, which has left an entire generation facing rising unemployment, insecurity, housing foreclosures and the regression of public services especially in education and pensions (Marcuse 2010; 189) new movements are emerging claiming a right to the city.

It is always difficult to predict the agents of change in times of crisis, but in the context of

urban regimes shifting towards ‘creative’ city policies and citizens faced with a global financial crisis, grassroots resistance may come from politicized cultural producers, such as those of the Tabacalera and Candy Factory. As Harvey says

“Cultural producers are waking up to the nature of the problems we face and in the same way that the 1960s art schools were centers of political radicalism, we may find this re-emergence today” (Harvey cited in Weissbrot 2011).

### Right to the City

By means of pragmatic negotiation, these self-managed spaces continue to challenge a city based on exchange value, by claiming buildings abandoned by capital and regenerating them back into non-commercial and autonomous spaces of culture, politics and sociality.

As discussed, Lefebvre’s Right to the City calls for a shift in the production of cities, so that a place’s use value has precedence over its exchange value. By actively appropriating urban space without paying a rent, the function of private property is transcended to meet social needs, rather than servicing global or extra-local capital (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006).

The Bolsjes are claiming these rights and challenging the exchange value of urban space in Nørrebro. Having learned from the Christianitter, and filling a vacuum left by the demolition of the notorious Ungdomshuset 69 in 2007, the Candy Factory movement is claiming this right by temporarily appropriating a factory without paying rent, even if they are not squatting per se.

The Tabacalera also employs the right to the city by challenging the use value of urban space in Lavapiés, and opening opportunities for molding the city to our heart’s desire. Instead of a *Museo Nacional de Arte Visuales*, which would meet the consumption needs of tourists, the upper middle class and contribute to Madrid’s competitive position in offering the amenities of a ‘creative’ city, an urban movement of diverse local actors has appropriated the space.

The Candy Factory and Tabacalera are

examples of urban social movements making claims to vacant urban spaces, and appropriating them for the commons on a temporary basis. Through bottom-up initiatives, autonomous practices based on direct democracy, DIY culture and alternative economics are experimented with, and re-produced. Both spaces have become social processes manifesting themselves in space, constantly finding new ways of changing the urban structure and opening spaces for molding the city ‘according to our heart’s desire’.

### Institutionalization

“..last thing we want is to be under the municipality. Once you’re under the municipality it kills all spontaneity” (Benny).

According to Castells, institutionalization comes at the cost of losing the identity of a movement (Castells 1985), since no institution, defined by formal rules, coercion and duration can truly reflect and preserve the effervescence, creativity, challenges and utopianism of rising movements (Alberoni cited in Martinez 2011). The institutionalization of movements often implies an increase in their degree of formalization, coercion and imposition of rules (Martinez, 2010).

But as Kate Shaw concludes in her analysis of places of alternative culture, the alternative scene and their places can be institutionalized, without risking a diffusion of their challenge or diluting their “bohemia frisson”(Shaw 2005), depending on the degree of flexibility with which institutions allow the alternative actors. This is what we may be witnessing in the Tabacalera, a phenomenon Pruijt has called ‘flexible institutionalization’ (Pruijt 2004b). While Martinez (2011) regards legalized social centers, which maintain their vitality and oppositional edge, as practicing *autonomous forms of institutionalization*.

Activists at the Candy Factory consider institutionalization a threat, since it inhibits and puts restrictions on the otherwise spontaneous nature with which projects, ideas and activities

occur (Benny, Kevin). Therefore they have started a campaign under the name of *Mulligør*<sup>67</sup>, to raise 5 million DKK<sup>68</sup> in order to buy the Lærkevej house by means of an independent foundation, and therefore safeguard their autonomy from the state and market (Kjær 2011). At the Ragnhildgade location, the Bolsje may be proving the viability of *autonomous institutionalization*, as the municipality has only intervened in the case of installing fire alarms, and ensured the buildings are safe for use.

“Legal spaces have more control over their own destiny and use of resources. Far from being in competition with each other, squatted and legal places in the same locale are in fact deeply interconnected and interdependent, feeding off and supporting each other as part of the same political network” (Chatterton and Hodkinsons 2006; 312).

### Permanence

A major discussions in temporarily appropriated spaces, such as the Candy Factory and Tabacalera is that of being kicked out, or having to leave within a short amount of time. Appropriating space on a temporary basis, on the one hand restrains actors from making costly investments, but on the other hand, provides an environment of urgency, spontaneity, and DIY solutions which have defined much of the creativity emanating both from the Candy Factory and Tabacalera.

As an involved Bolsje activist explained, “We have a contract saying that we are non-permanent. Always been the drive that we have to leave the building in one month. So if you have an idea of making something, you have to do it now! Gives the place a certain environment. Way things are made, some people would probably shake their heads, and say what the fuck? I think that’s one of the charming things” (Benny).

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<sup>67</sup> Enable it!

<sup>68</sup> Ca. 670,000 EUR

## Affecting Urban Policies

According to interviews with active Bolsje participants and members of the Amager Local Council, the activities and success of the Candy Factory movement has impacted municipal legislation. According to Danish national law, public buildings cannot be sold below market value, even if no buyer or activity is found (Koefeld-Melson).

The activities and success demonstrated by the self-management of the Candy Factory influenced municipal legislation, on the temporary uses of buildings. Therefore, the alternative vision of the Bolsje may have influenced the formal city planning. As a result, the industrial spaces at Ragnhildgade were ceded to activists for self-management. With the creation of task force for temporary-use, the municipality now allows public buildings to be leased below market value, under temporary conditions (Koefeld-Melson).

This may be part of a larger process that Copenhagen has undergone in recent years in shifting towards a 'creative' city (Florida, 2004). The Copenhagen area has made a strong shift towards what has been termed *creative* or *experience economies*, with more than 16% of the metropolitan region's total employment in GDP being generated by creative industries<sup>69</sup>(Evans 2009).

The municipality's commissioned report on "Copenhagen as a Creative City", calls for an overall deregulation strategy and creation of 'free zones' exempt from the usual planning system. This is done with the aim of creating incubators where creative industries can flourish (Bayliss, 2007).

By also generating culture, urban social movements such as the Candy Factory have been able to take advantage of these changes in planning. This has enabled them to take advantage

of more freedoms and deregulation of public real estate at the Ragnhildgade location.

In doing so, the movement is able to create autonomous communities based on direct democracy, alternative economics and independent cultural productions. By taking advantage of greater flexibility in land-use and renting of public buildings, artistic sectors of the autonomous and squatter movements may flourish.

## Criticisms

Taking advantage of the shift to creative policies has also spurred criticism towards the movement, and governing institutions, as can be seen in the case of the Tabacalera.

The ministry, which was under the socialist government (PSOE) during the time of cession, has on its part been criticized for ceding the Tabacalera to be self-managed. Critics claimed that it was ceded due to personal contacts and friends who were active in the movement, and ministry.

While involved users claim it was due to the agency of the director of the *Direccion de Bellas Artes*, who had previous experiences with self-managed social centers, and was therefore more sensitive to autonomous organizing (Ana).

Today, the Tabacalera is continuing its negotiations with the Ministry, hoping to sign a 5-year contract in order to assure their stay with the predicted change to a conservative government in the next elections. Representatives from the ministry have said that even if the factory is renovated and a museum realized in one part of the former factory, ways will be sought that rehabilitation would "not affect the self-managed social center" (Vara 2011).

The Tabacalera as an autonomous space has been criticized for 'selling out' to the state and institutions by other social centers and the more radical okupa movement. These critique is made

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<sup>69</sup> Creative City Industries include Fashion, visual arts, music, books, theatre, radio/TV, print media, architecture, design, film/video, advertising, edutainment, content production, events, cultural institutions, tourism, toys/amusement and sport industries

obvious by a Tabacalera banner on which ‘Vendidas!’ had been graffitied.<sup>70</sup>

This critique may reflect the fear from the okupa movement that self-management may be instrumentalizes them for regeneration in times of crisis. By accepting the cession from the ministry, the Tabacalera legitimizes the state’s power and is therefore not truly autonomous. Negotiations with the state recognize leadership, leadership is what self-management and autonomous movements seek to transcend. More radical factions of the okupa movement therefore view the Tabacalera with skepticism, as it emerged as a result of negotiations with the central state.

Since many of the activities generated in the space are in the form of spectacles, the space has become a site for cultural consumption, rather than political critique. Therefore, rather than fighting the gentrification process which has already ensued throughout Lavapiés, it may be a further promoter, as it offers amenities which attract artists and the ‘creative class’.

Within the context of two crises, the Ministry of Culture temporarily ceded the Tabacalera, the autonomous space has been considered an institutional cession in times of crisis, rather than a victory for an urban social movement (Tabacalera y La Institucion, Ana).

Another strong point of critique, is the presence of security guards, which are paid for and kept by the ministry. As an activist in the Lavapiés okupa movement said, “the last time I went to the Tabacalera for a concert I had to open my backpack for the security guards [...] I don’t like the idea of a social center with security guards” (Daniela).

According to activists in the Tabacalera, the security guards are subject to the discussions of the general assembly, and therefore don’t impede on the self-management of the space. In fact, due to it’s large size, one activist said they are grateful for the security guards in order to handle the masses (Ana, Jordi). Security guards take the role of bouncers during large events,



parties and concerts when several

hundred people may be inside the Tabacalera. But by wearing uniforms, they differentiate themselves from other activists and users, and embody the state control within the space.

On the other hand, if activists say they work well with the presence of the guards, then this may represent the limit to self-managing a space of this size. As the topic of guards does not seem to be on the agenda in discussions with the ministry, their continued presence may demonstrate new forms of *autonomous institutionalization*.

Treading the line between autonomy and state-support, the Tabacalera and Candy Factory may present an experiment in the encounter between institutions and the social, between the state and autonomy (Tabacalera y la Institucion).

### Self-Management

Another observation, that was made in both self-managed spaces, were the challenges to horizontal and non-hierarchical decision making. Natural leaders seem to emerge within assemblies and working groups of both spaces. This may be due to some individual’s stronger sense of charisma or because they have vested more time into the space and its projects. Despite this phenomenon, emphasis is put on horizontality and everyone is encouraged to participate, be heard, and conflicts are resolved on a personal level (Kevin).

Both the Tabacalera and Candy Factory make efforts to transcend gender disparities inherent in mainstream society, but men continued to dominate in both autonomous spaces. Especially in the assembly of the Tabacalera, men spoke more and were more present in guiding the course of discussion, than women. This continues to be a problem inherent in autonomous spaces such as social centers (Mudu 2004).

<sup>70</sup> Sell outs!

## ‘New’ autonomous movements

Throughout this paper, my aim has been to identify *what kind* of urban movements have appropriated spaces of autonomy, or if these are even movements to speak of? Perhaps they are rather spaces appropriated by urban tribes (Maffesoli 1996) bound in search for a common lifestyle, but lacking binding ideology? Perhaps autonomous social centers are spatial manifestations of post-modern movements “seeking maximum instantaneous pleasure through social diversity, partying and a nomadic lifestyle, all tinged with vague ideology of anti-capitalism” (Martínez 2007).

The movements I have described, may in fact be a new movement of *artivists*<sup>71</sup> seeking to change the world through participative cultural production by appropriating vacant urban space for social laboratories of autonomy.

As I hope this investigation has demonstrated, self managed social centers are fostering local and viable alternatives to systemic crisis of capitalism we are confronted with today. As the Candy Factory and Tabacalera demonstrate, people everywhere are organizing themselves in autonomous groups, based on horizontality, cooperation and mutual-aid; with the aim of changing the *urban meaning*.

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<sup>71</sup> term combining ‘art’ and ‘activist’ used to describe those pushing for social, political or environmental change by utilizing their creative communication ability in ways of artistic activity.

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## **Interviews**

### **Copenhagen, Denmark.**

Asgar. Personal Interview. 18 March 2011. Nord-vest, Copenhagen.

Benny. Personal Interview. 18 March 2011. Nord-vest, Copenhagen.

Bodil and Martin. Group Interview. 18 March 2011. Nørrebro, Copenhagen.

Kevin. Personal interview. 1 December 2010. Nørrebro, Copenhagen.

Koefeld-Melson, Jesper. 21 March 2011. Amagar, Copenhagen.

Morten. Personal Interview. 23 March 2011. Nørrebro, Copenhagen.

Spanish Students. Group interview. 7 December 2010. Nørrebro, Copenhagen

### **Madrid, Spain.**

Ana. Personal Interview. 26 June 2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.

Daniela. Personal Interview. 10 June 2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.

Jordi Claramonte. Personal Interview. 20 June 2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.

Marivi. In-depth Interview. 2+ hours. 1 June 2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.

Osuna, Manuel. Personal Interview. 29 June 2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.

Javi. Personal Interview. 24 June 2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.

Jesus. Personal Interview. 28 June 2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.

## Appendix

### Images 1: Candy Factory

#### 1.1. Both Candy Factory locations in greater Copenhagen



#### 1.2. Candy Factory Larkevej, in residential Nord-vest Quarter.



Source: google.earth.com



**1.3. Candy Factory kitchen where weekly meals are prepared with food that has been *dumpstered*.**



Source: Author.

## Images 2 : CSA Tabacalera, Lavapiés

### 2.1 Tabacalera in inner city Madrid

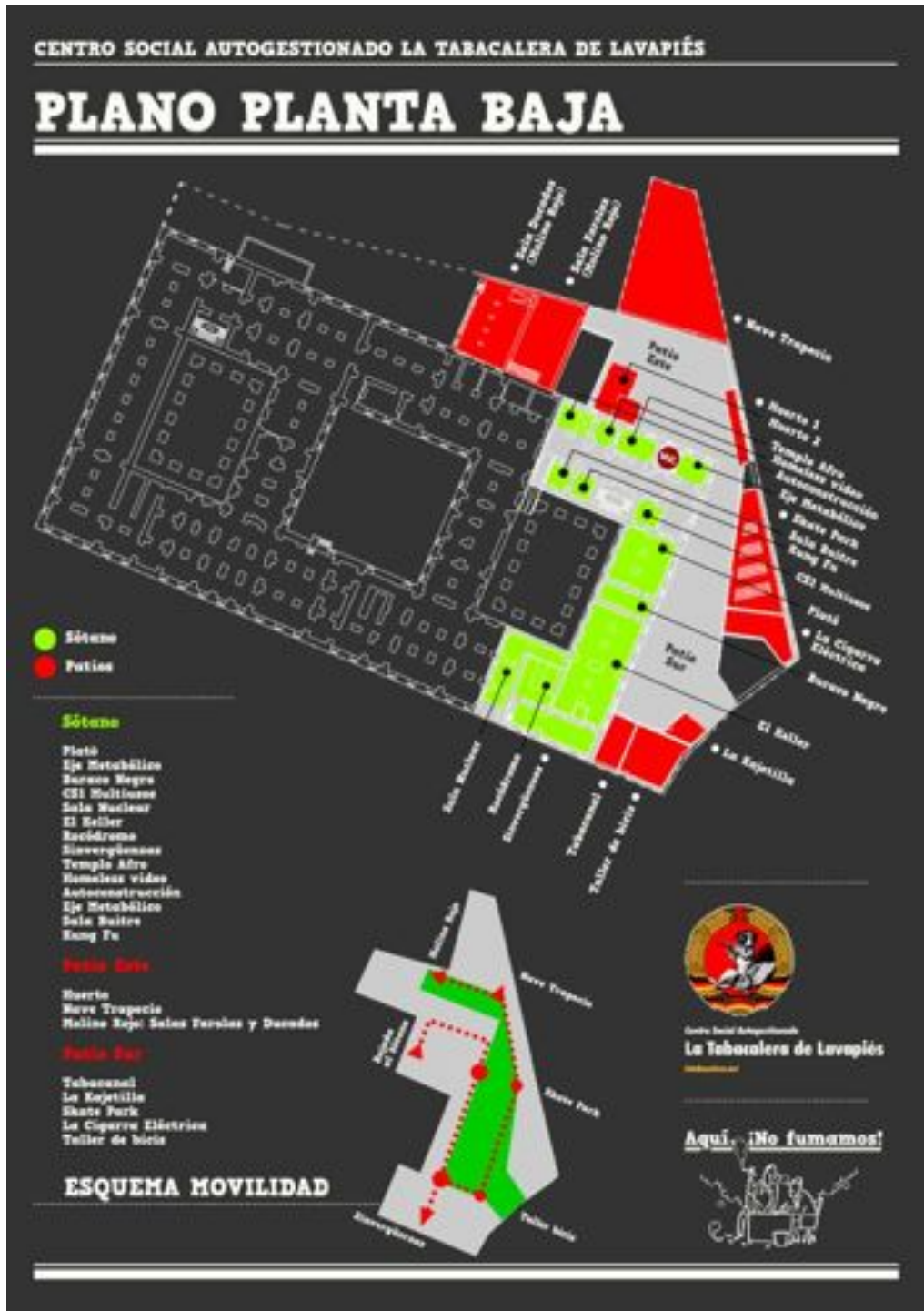


Map 2.2 : Location of Tabacalera, between Lavapiés and Embajadores Districts





## 2.4. Ground Floor and Activity Space



source: latabacalera.net

## 2.5. 15 Manifesto of 15 M Movement

### Manifesto 15M

We are ordinary people. We are like you: people, who get up every morning to study, work or find a job, people who have family and friends. People, who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around us.

Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice.

This situation has become normal, a daily suffering, without hope. But if we join forces, we can change it. It's time to change things, time to build a better society together. Therefore, we strongly argue that:

- The priorities of any advanced society must be equality, progress, solidarity, freedom of culture, sustainability and development, welfare and people's happiness.
- These are inalienable truths that we should abide by in our society: the right to housing, employment, culture, health, education, political participation, free personal development, and consumer rights for a healthy and happy life.
- The current status of our government and economic system does not take care of these rights, and in many ways is an obstacle to human progress.
- Democracy belongs to the people (demos = people, krátos = government) which means that government is made of every one of us. However, in Spain most of the political class does not even listen to us. Politicians should be bringing our voice to the institutions, facilitating the political participation of citizens through direct channels that provide the greatest benefit to the wider society, not to get rich and prosper at our expense, attending only to the dictatorship of major economic powers and holding them in power through a bipartidism headed by the immovable acronym PP & PSOE.
- Lust for power and its accumulation in only a few; create inequality, tension and injustice, which leads to violence, which we reject. The obsolete and unnatural economic model fuels the social machinery in a growing spiral that consumes itself by enriching a few and sends into poverty the rest. Until the collapse.
- The will and purpose of the current system is the accumulation of money, not regarding efficiency and the welfare of society. Wasting resources, destroying the planet, creating unemployment and unhappy consumers.
- Citizens are the gears of a machine designed to enrich a minority which does not regard our needs. We are anonymous, but without us none of this would exist, because we move the world.
- If as a society we learn to not trust our future to an abstract economy, which never returns benefits for the most, we can eliminate the abuse that we are all suffering.
- We need an ethical revolution. Instead of placing money above human beings, we shall put it back to our service. We are people, not products. I am not a product of what I buy, why I buy and who I buy from.

For all of the above, I am outraged.

I think I can change it.

I think I can help.

I know that together we can. I think I can help.

I know that together we can.

## Interviews <sup>72</sup>

Public Officials	Activists	General Users
Candy Factory, Copenhagen	2.) Benny. In-depth Personal Interview. 2+ hours. 18 March 2011. Nord-vest, Copenhagen.	4.) Morten. Personal Interview. 23 March 2011. Nørrebro, Copenhagen.
	CF Founding member, engaged activist, Detours Collective.	Engaged participant. Café collective, bike workshop. Anrcho syndicalist. Previously active in Berlin scene. Works for public RR.
5.) Jesper Koefeld-Melson 21 March 2011. Amager, Copenhagen	3.)Bodil and Martin. In-depth Group Interview. 2+ hours. 18 March 2011. Nørrebro, Copenhagen.	7.) Spanish Students. Group interview. 7 December 2010. Nørrebro, Copenhagen
Co-Founder of Givrum, and Glimt. Representative of Amager-Vest Local Council.	Non-political, engaged, lived at CF, sewing, screenprinting workshop “info people”	
	6.) Kevin. Personal interview. In-depth interview. 1 December 2010. Nørrebro, Copenhagen.	1.) Asgar. Personal Interview. 18 March 2011. Nord-vest, Copenhagen.
	Involved activist, Detours collective.	Youthhouse activist, partakes in general assembly of CF.

Public Officials

Activists

General Users

<sup>72</sup> Only typed interviews from Copenhagen are included, since they were conducted in English. For audio files of Interviews conducted in Madrid, please contact author.

Tabacalera, Madrid	Jesus. Personal Interview. 28.6.2011. Lavapies, Madrid.	Javi. Personal Interview. 24.6.2011. Lavapapies, Madrid.
Manuel Osuna. Personal Interview. 29.6.2011. Lavapies, Madrid.	Artist working in café collective, unemployed, moved into city be to be near T. Ana Sanchez. Personal Interview. 28.6.2011. Lavapies, Madrid.	Bank employee, indignado uses T for alternative consumption. Daniela. Personal Interview. 1.10.2011. Lavapapies, Madrid.
President of Neighborhood Association, <i>Corralla</i> .  Wanted to have publicly funded initiatives such as senior center, youthcenter in T. Conflictive relationship CSA.	Involved activist in self-management collective. Represented T in relations with Casa Invisible.  Marivi. In-depth Interview. 2+ hours. 1.6.2011. Lavapies, Madrid.	Student active in the okupa movement. General user of Tabacalera.
	Involved activist, participates in Molino Rojo, press correspondence. Jordi Claramonte. Personal Interview. 20.6.2011. Lavapiés, Madrid.	
	Involved coordinating assembly, philosophy professor, negotiating with ministry.	