

IF YOU WON'T, WHO WILL?

Building a Municipal Movement

At the beginning of the year we released our 100 Days of Trump issue, a salvo on how our community could respond to the unbelievable election of Donald J Trump. Some nine months into his (p)Residency we find ourselves relentlessly assaulted by the Orange One's rhetorical actions, moral inactions, and the existential dread that his words cause in the mediaverse.

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Introduction

**BUT
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WITH
IT.**

**WE
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ANYMORE.**

**BECAUSE
HE
REALLY
ISN'T
THE
PROBLEM.**

**THE
PROBLEM
IS
US.**

Trump is a clear manifestation of how rotten we have let the political system become. Trump didn't disenfranchise millions of voters. Trump didn't deregulate all of our industries. Trump didn't invent corporate welfare. Trump didn't allow the media to become a monopoly while abdicating it's role as the fourth estate. But he is doubling down on these efforts and making things worse, everywhere. He is the result of the Right Wing led privatization of public services thats been happening over the last 4o or so years. Trump is the cherry on top of Neoliberalism gone amuck. And he is just the lewdest money grubbing beneficiary of the 1%, gobbling every financial, economic, and cultural advantage they can while we sort through recovery, grasping at turds dropped from their platinum toilets.

As his administration and the DemoPublican Party system continue to devise ways of destroying the facile protections that were put in place to protect the environment, police the banks, and support the rights of workers, we are hunkering down here in The Community of The Future looking for answers and strategies on how we can battle the insanity of this age.

One of these answers came to focus while researching a movement most of us know nothing about. It's called Municipalismo. Or Municipalism.

This movement of movements has sprung up after decades of work done by progressive activists and people looking for alternatives to Top Down governing and the effects of globalization. Their first victory took place in the city of Barcelona, Spain. This movement went Super Local. And their strategy is to take over city governments one at a time. And they did it. And its working. And we think something like Municipalism can work here.

The recipes for taking over a city are out there on the web (and printed here) and can manifest in your local school council or neighborhood alliance or local Democratic Party organization. It's just up to you to be present, to be a part of your local movement, and investigate the potential of this evolved strategy of organizing for political power. And then you can help spread the word and organize others to help assist a progressive takeover of the political system here in Chicago and Cook County.

It makes sense. If we can take over one city at a time we can bring social cultural and economic justice and equality to many more segments of the population. It's not going to be a utopia. Some people will still suck, but at least we can participate in our own local governance and be the change we want to see, one town, one city at a time.

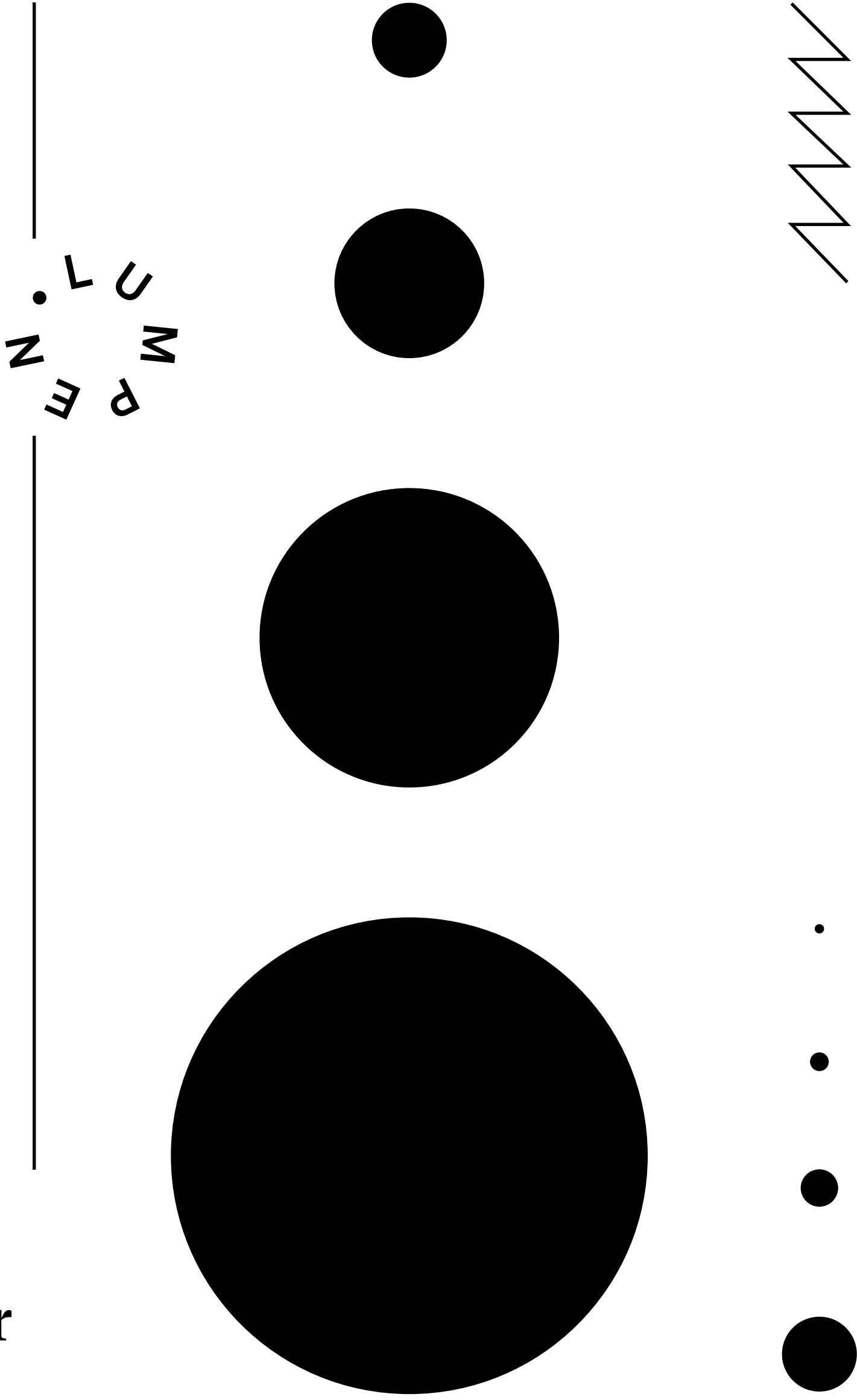
So this issue of Lumpen is dense and by no means comprehensive. It's just an entry point into the ideas of making a Resistance City happen. Perhaps good old fashioned feet on the ground organizing will lead to the progressive Now which will defeat the oligarchic forces crushing this world.

In the meantime, while we engage in our real world person to person social organizing, Lumpen will continue to use every resource we can to network with our allies, amplify their ideas and present stories and inspiration about the hard working people all around us trying to make another world possible. Listen in to our radio station, WLPN-LP 105.5 FM in Chicago. Come to our space and support a fundraiser by a local community group. Help us spread the word by sharing the ideas in this edition of Lumpen Magazine. If you won't, who will?

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How To Do Now

●
Alan
W.
Moore

“A permanent IV drip of absolutely pure bullshit is progressively suppressing the immune system of the American state.”

William Gibson
@GreatDismal, May 11, 2017

In the face of government rot and citizen despair, we’re talking city-building. . . in the sense of building organizational possibility, sites of assembling and production of political imagination. This has been done, time and again, and today it exists already, albeit fragmented and in-cognizant of its fellows. This is the kind of world Chris Carlsson described as coming into being in his 2008 book, *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-lot Gardeners are Inventing the Future Today*.

“What is to be done?”—the classic question of revolutionary politics, of oppressed majorities everywhere when faced with the machinery of power. We don’t have to build the revolutionary party with a steely cold-blooded vanguard as Lenin commanded. Artists are great do-ers. We need to make the little molehills, the tiny initiatives that can grow together as they are to make the new society. We need to network them so that they reinforce each other. And we need to put them at the disposal of political movements to sustain, grow, and inspire them.

A key political question for cities in the USA is how to synergize the forces for change. African-Americans who require racial justice confront not only systemic police violence and incarceration but also historic exclusion from housing, which is ramping up again with the new cycles of gentrification. Young people of all colors face precarious employment, massive loads of debt from education which should have been free, new debt from health care costs, and similar exclusion from affordable housing. All of us are looking at a reversal of the already-minimal efforts to preserve the habitable natural environment. A black-green-red political alliance could rule our cities for the century to come. The question for us all is how to forge it.

The question of taking power, of organizing resistance, and making changes happen is always a conversation. How do we do it? What should we do? “A politics that works begins by listening / A politics that works never stops listening,” says Marc Allen Herbst.

While it is as yet an emerging movement, municipalist ideology has many strains. The deepest is a belief in the efficacy and power of citizens’ assembly. That is at the heart of Murray Bookchin’s conception of libertarian municipalism. It is behind the remarkable electoral success of the Spanish municipalist platforms which came out of the 15M movement. General assembly became the guiding form of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The Zapatistas rely on it in Chiapas. This is a politics based on listening and discussion that can cut across political party lines.

More than an ideology, the citizens’ assembly is a practice. This isn’t some bogus-assed town meeting shit where you see people on stage. Fred Dewey, an artist who worked on neighborhood councils in Los Angeles, holds that assemblies should be preeminent in all governance. He traces this philosophical political tenet in US history—our real exceptionalism—inflected by the

thought of Hannah Arendt. His is a strong voice for face-to-face governance and constructing the “space of appearance.”

I talked with Fred Dewey in Berlin in June. Fred is an absolutist of popular assemblies, as he explains in *The School of Public Life*. That is, he believes in the right not only to meet, but to govern: direct face-to-face democracy. Citizens’ assemblies are the spine of municipalism as Bookchin conceived it. Pull them out and you have invertebrate politics. Yet this is something municipalists who adapt their program to the electoral systems of western democracies simply will not insist upon. But we citizens can. It’s something that really scares power.

Municipalist platforms are also deeply informed by ecology, made urgent by the global climate crisis. Feminism, expressed through an overall governing ethic of care and stewardship for all. Open borders, “no one is illegal,” protection of refugees. Care for the socially excluded and marginalized people. “Historic memory”—redress of old and continuing wrongs inflicted on parts of society.

This ideological mix varies from time to time and place to place. The injustices of historic and present-day white supremacist policing and discrimination in jobs and housing are urgent concerns for African Americans in the USA. Protection of migrants and refugees looms large in Germany and Greece, where the neo-fascists use prejudice to build their movements. Similarly, aggressive deportations of Americans from the USA is a burning issue for Latino/a people there.

NOTES: I have not found many handbooks on doing assemblies. There is “The People’s Assembly Toolkit” published by altotrump.com, an immigrant rights group, just after the election. Outside the intro sheet, the guts of it is in Spanish. There is one on occupation, which the student assembly of Zagreb dared to make in 2011 (“The Occupation Cookbook, or the Model of the Occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb” (PDF online)), in consultation with Russian and Austrian comrades. Which is a great start on making a site for parochial assemblies. But for the neighborhood assembly —“People’s Assembly” on wiki.p2pfoundation.net starts from OWS; and on Wikipedia there is “Popular assembly,” “Not to be confused with citizens’ assembly” —well, good luck on disambiguating that! A U.S. handbook would be golden.

Chaia Heller on Libertarian Municipalism, excerpted directly from a transcription of a video by Oliver Ressler, recorded in Leverett, Massachusetts (2005) (eipcp.net/transversal/0805/heller/en/)...There is a tremendous concern among leftists about what is democracy, what ought it to look like, and what ought it to become. As a social ecologist for me there is the sense that we have the potential to have a direct democracy, which means, that people in cities, towns and villages would gather as citizens in a local town meeting, which you could call a general assembly, or public assembly, or citizens assembly, and it is that body that would be the driving force for policy making in society in general. The idea is that the rule would be by the general populace, on behalf of the general populace, and they would be making policy for the general populace. Libertarian Municipalism is an attempt to formalize that vision of a directly democratic society without turning it into a recipe or blueprint or how do manual, which is I think a very dangerous thing and would drain all the poetry from the vision. The vision of Libertarian Municipalism is intentionally vague in general, because it believes that people themselves in movements have to struggle how to particularize their general principles of non-hierarchy, cooperation, direct democracy, social justice, and ecology. Those are some general principles, and I could add more, or I could take some away. The question is: how do you create a politics, how do you draw out a politics from these general principles? The idea of Libertarian Municipalism is that through the principle of direct participation or the principle of self-determination, we have this notion of people govern themselves, direct

Get up,

stand up.

Stand

up

for

your

rights.

democracy, and how this is different than a representative democracy that you find in a republican democracy that dominates much of the modern world. There you have the idea that the masses are really not capable of managing themselves. What they do is they try to get together and figure out the best person to represent and articulate their hopes and dreams in a way that will come closer to the way in which they like that to happen. We do this through elections that can be at a municipal level or on the state level, and people elect officials who have policy-making power. I cannot emphasize enough the importance that in a representative democracy the representative, who is supposedly acting on behalf of a disempowered constituency, has policy-making power. In a libertarian municipalist vision there would be no representatives. There would be citizens who gather together in the popular assemblies, who speak directly on behalf of themselves. And it is this citizen's assembly that has policy-making power. For administrative purposes, for particular local municipalities to coordinate with other municipalities or part of the confederation, the various groups would empower a delegate, which is very different than a representative. A delegate is very similar to a messenger, the delegate is basically giving the will of the group, the mandate of a group and goes to the confederate council and delivers that mandate. The delegate is always recallable, the delegate has always a limited term or limited engagement, and that role of a delegate is never professionalized. Within a direct democracy of Libertarian Municipalism you would never have professional politicians. You would have again an active general citizenry. This would have revolutionary implications for the way democracy would work. There would not be lobbying to politicians and representatives to present us more accurately. We as citizens would be speaking on behalf of ourselves and would bring our own hopes and dreams and our own understandings of the way things ought to be to the popular assemblies directly ourselves....

From care, from life— Toward a feminized politics

One of the most prominent ideological strains in municipalism in Spain now is feminist. Both mayors of Barcelona and Madrid are women, as are many if not most of their teams. How the feminist line—the “feminization of politics”—plays out in practice is perhaps not so well understood.

The feminization of politics is not, as many (male) US pundits see it, a matter of personal style (the slogan “the personal is political” being here misapplied), nor a new set of virtues to stand in for the decrepit “republican virtues” derived from pre-Caesarian Rome. Rather, the feminization of politics means gender equality in representation and participation, challenging gender roles that structure patriarchy, and finally, a different way of doing politics which centers care and community. As we heard at the “Fearless Cities” conference in Barcelona in May 2017, the Women's March is a movement.

Feminists have long pointed out that the massive amount of labor that sustains human life is unpaid and hidden from the view of economic analysis, just as the common resources extracted from the earth are unreimbursed by corporate capitalism. A key theorist here is Silvia Federici of Wages for Housework and the Zero Work group.

A report from a years-long project called “The Grand Domestic Revolution” (GDR) clearly lays out the

program of valorizing the labors of care, maintenance of community, and upholding of the Ur-democratic principles of the commons, which lie behind a total re-imagining of political life. As a reviewer notes, this is a data-rich, theoretically informed and practically grounded reference book that is encyclopaedic in its approach to its subject.

The GDR was a commission for a biennial of social design undertaken by an art institution. It was a sequential combination of investigative techniques interrogating conditions of daily life, domestic labor, and the economy of reproduction (aka living). The team posited the politicization of everyday life against the post-war capitalist project of commoditizing daily life. The GDR included long-term living in an apartment, action research, reading groups, discussion, and policy groups. And of course they undertook video and photographic projects linking artists and domestic workers, squatters and organizers. Through their work on the “domestic apparatus,” and a “revolutionary home,” the GDR constructed micro-societies for creative research.

The GDR derives from a 100-year-old practice of “material feminism” committed to the quotidian conditions of women, seeking to communalize their daily domestic labor. They critique the “individualized and commodified home” as a new site of extraction for capitalism. Guiding ideas were drawn variously, especially from Bachelard, de Certeau, Lefebvre, Russian Constructivist domestic design, and feminist economics. After a year of work, activity was returned to the gallery with a series of installations and meetings, including a town assembly. Next phases of the project investigated cottage industry, co-housing and communes, personal dynamics of squatted houses, gardens, and plants, again punctuated by town meetings. Also on the menu: feminist political economy, gentrification, radio and public speaking, daycare, bicycling, history of activism for the homeless, housing on the commons (shantytowns), philosophy, and legality of the commons. Thereafter the GDR travelled, performing variously in London and Amsterdam. The book ends in 2014. Is it over?

- roarmag.org
- gdr.cascoprojects.org

Stepping up

Building an effective political platform based on local self-government is a long and complex project. Nothing can beat the effectiveness, the deep political and educational affect of face-to-face assembly. How that can happen in cities around the USA is a burning open tire-fire of a question. Fortunately this generation has social media. The existing forms have been used effectively by political movements around the world and are the subject of intensive research and development. Face-to-face assemblies are considered basic necessities in the development of municipal movements. In Spain they were accomplished through the nationwide 15M movement of encampments. (Occupy Wall Street did not succeed to generate concrete political results from its equally extensive encampments.) The assembly, post-Facetime and in between, has become easier to continue, to permanentize outside of meat time, with the many new digital platforms for organizing which citizen hack-labs have been building.

There are many lessons to learn from movements in other lands, in other political cultures. And lessons to be remembered from our own country, examples which have been willfully forgotten, erased from official US (school-taught) histories, and the daily public news stream: the “first draft of history”.

Municipalism is dangerous to the powers-that-be. Expect resistance.

The pigs have their snouts in the public trough so deep they will be very hard to dislodge. Ever fight a pig for its dinner? Their first thought is how they can add you to the menu. . . . The US political structure is designed to undermine, negate, and finally destroy the kinds of popular power municipalist politics depend upon. Their main tool is preemption. “A local council or municipal government gets its power to pass laws through a law of the national or regional government which specifies what things the town or city may regulate through bylaws. It is therefore a form of delegated legislation” (Wikipedia). Republican-controlled state and federal legislatures are pulling out all the stops to keep cities from governing themselves. The legal and legislative struggles over the sanctuary cities movement are a case in point. That means citizens have to resist. The law will be used against them by a corrupted political regime—as the quote ascribed to many an autocrat has it, “for my friends everything, for my enemies the law.”

This is the challenge that has led many past left movements in Europe to understand themselves as “extra-parliamentary oppositions,” opposed to the grand coalitions that sustain a planet-depleting oppressive system. These are the politics – anarchist and autonomous communist – which support the movement of occupied social centers.

The recent assembly-based US Occupy movement, meeting and camping in common public space, was shut down across the country by coordinated federal action in 2012. This new political phenomenon—in essence an ad hoc extra-parliamentary opposition—was deemed too dangerous to continue. To date, they have not re-Occupied.

Artists have a particular edge in conceiving provocative symbolic defiances of law. Russians are especially adept—from nailing their scrotums to Red Square and sewing shut their lips, to the Voina group nailing shut bureaucratic offices, holding orgies in museums, and publically hanging excluded persons in shopping centers.

American artists have been somewhat more practical. In New York, Not An Alternative built tools for the Occupy movement, and Rueben Kincaid did the same for squatters in Chicago. They have also been effectively symbolic, as in 2005 with Allison Smith's “The Muster.” (This event also served the sure function of all assemblies and campings – networking artists and civic activists.)

Collectively artists can certainly demand more of the cultural institutions they support with their work and patronage. They can demand that they serve democratic functions. This is no radical point of view. As a voice of bureaucratic Europe wrote wheezily: “The artistic community must foster endeavors that contribute to restoring the standing of the public sphere.”

- Get up, stand up. Stand up for your rights.
- decentproject.eu.
 - worldpolicy.org/blog

Tapas de “Municipalismo”— Some Direct Democracy-flavored Ideas

These are some examples of the kinds of things that build popular movements: ways to go, things you can do.

Get a place to meet. . . regularly.

Be welcoming and polite, and keep it clean. This is really important. The self-organized occupied social centers of Europe (CSOAs) have been key to the growth and sustainability of local popular movements. Wherever it is—squatted abandoned public building, public library, bookstore, ratty-assed senior center, or grassy knoll—it's crucial to have a place where people can go to overcome social isolation, conceive and do projects, talk, listen, and make politics. (Most bars are poor places for this. You can't hear with the music. However, they may be good places to organize a riot.)

Work on... Education

An Anti-university / Un Ateneo Libertario
Teachers and professors in state and private schools can mostly only teach what they are allowed to. “The government does not owe the people education for the simple reason that one does not owe the people what it can take for itself. And education is like liberty: it is not given, it is taken.”

- Jacques Ranciere quoted from freeuniversityoflondon.wordpress.com

There's one of these initiatives met in London this summer

- antiuniversity.org

Part Two

They've all got a long (anti) history, as related by artist Jakob Jakobsen at:

- antihistory.org/

From the days when the Catholic Church controlled education, Spanish unions established workers' education centers, called ateneos libertarios. There's dozens in Spain today, listed at:

- 15mpedia.org/wiki/Lista_de_ateneos_libertarios

Emma Goldman set up one in New York in 1911 called the Ferrer Center, or Modern School, named for a Spanish anarchist educator executed by the government. Start one today in your local bookstore or coffee shop. Rope in your local eggheads. Talking, reading, talking, deciding. Who knows what comes next?

Economy

A fair of the solidarity economy / La Feria de la economía solidaria

- laferiamadrid.mercadosocial.net

Freegan? Barter? Local currency? Labor credits? Sustainable power vendors? Whatever you have so far, so big or so small, show it and build it. In Madrid, they have their own in-fair money, called boniatos. Build socialism like they build capitalism—quarter by quarter, annum por annum.

Workers’ Co-ops

There's a new way of doing them—as online platforms, or what Trebor Scholz calls “platform cooperativism.” And lots of places help out with setting them up. You can also start with an existing private business and convert it.

- democracycollaborative.org/sector/worker-cooperatives

A key plank of the Jackson Rising People's Platform to build economic equality in Mississippi holds that city governments should support worker-run co-ops. Read a German foundation's report on Jackson at:

- rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files_mf/kaliakuno_jackson_web.pdf

Social Games

Have a soli-party (solidarity fundraiser for a cause, for prisoners). A Trump Roast. Fiestas and popular celebrations have long been ways of expressing and organizing politically. Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of “popular laughter” and the “carnivalesque” is based on these festive operations since medieval times, and activists have been using this method for a long time. Culture—it’s not just for money anymore. Many games, like Paul Ryan’s “trilectics,” the “yoga of collaboration,” teach collaboration and social solidarity. JoAAP co-founder Robby Herbst is working on this in California.

– newnewgames.org

Direct Political Work—Citizens’ Assemblies

“I said it once before but it bears repeating”—face to face, NOT on Facebook! Sounds better than griping and fuming, pissing and moaning, and sitting still to be “farmed” by corporations and political psy-ops? Use online tools to build your local neighborhood assembly after the meetings and BBQs are over. This, as any municipalist or Bookchinite will tell you, is the first indispensable step to serious political power on the municipal level. (Also makes big trouble for state and federal as well.) Once you’ve got folks on the line face-to-face and door-to-door, try out this e-stuff, designed where they care more about voter cultivation than suppression.

“Technologies for 21st Century democracy: A Europe-wide project developing the next generation of open source, distributed, and privacy-aware tools for direct democracy and economic empowerment.”

D-CENT – Decentralised Citizens Engagement Technologies

– dcentproject.eu

Finally, everything that works is going to be very local.

Emulate

We’ve already done it. We just forgot about it. To start, you don’t need to innovate. Just replicate, replicate, replicate. Nothing new is really new; it’s just re-tooled so it can cut again. Chicago is especially rich: Dil Pickle Club, Experimental Station, Mess Hall, and so much more. Fight amnesia. . . learn about your own pasts. Remember what worked before. It can work again. It’s not imitation, it’s emulation.

As, for example – “Organize Your Own”

A substantial resource for artists’ organizing comes from the recent show in Philadelphia, “Organize Your Own: The Politics and Poetics of Self-Determination Movements” organized by Daniel Tucker, formerly of AREA: Chicago, and Rebecca Zorach. (That publication, both online and in print, is in itself a goldmine of ideas and histories.) New work by contemporary artists and poets responded to archival materials related to the history of white people organizing their own working-class white neighborhoods in Philadelphia (the October 4th Organization) and Chicago (the Young Patriots Organization), in keeping with the mandate from the Black Power movement to “organize your own” community against racism.

Fifty years ago, the members of the Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) made a historic call. Stoakley Carmichael wrote that “one of the most disturbing things about almost all white supporters of the movement has been that they are afraid to go into their own communities—which is where the racism exists—and work to get rid of it. They want to run from Berkeley to tell us what to do in Mississippi; let them look instead at Berkeley. . . Let them go to the suburbs and open up freedom schools for whites.”

– organizeyourown.wordpress.com

Raciones—Bigger Plates to Share for the Municipalist Table

I recently wrote to Noah Fischer, the NYC Occupy Museums activist. He was in Venice for “Dark Matter Games,” a sidebar event to the Venice Biennale, held at the S.a.L.E. Docks, an art space coming out of a wave of 2012 occupations in Italy. I asked Noah what political role he thought was 1) realistic and 2) idealistic/rhetorical/platformistic to demand of US cultural institutions? I asked because in Spain, cultural institutions have played significant roles in support of social movements—opening to them at key moments, enlarging and enlightening them continually.

Cultural institutions in the US are largely private—or at best, “public-private partnerships.” The political interests of the governing class, as embodied in their boards of directors, do not allow their curatorial staffs to support and augment popular movements. This is in fact quite normal for European cultural institutions, most of which are state-supported.

Noah wrote: “Museums—at least the big NYC ones—seem to be schizo these days – the Trumpian days of inequity on steroids—the pure bullshit IV—with one part of the museum representing the 1% and its interests (exclusivity, property, privatization) and other part(s) trying in small ways to ally themselves with social justice movements. I saw this at the Whitney, where it was clear there was some kind of internal war within the institution. Certainly there are people in major institutions who see the need to build democratic culture/space, but I guess that museums in the US, with their interest in criticality but reliance on oligarchy, are sort of set up to permanently house this kind of stalemate. I think it’s important to understand these dynamics before asking things of institutions as if they are unified platforms. Part of the dynamic is that museums play good cop/bad cop with progressive politics—inviting it in, but then denying it and its horizon from the top—we saw that with the Gulf Labor campaign. So maybe the tactical question is: how does one go about asking things from institutions that have multiple intentions?

“Museums are definitely unique as contemporary public institution. Even if they cost twenty-five to get in and are privately funded, they still have that mission of public enrichment—sometimes they still are a little bit out of the pure consumption vortex, which is why I’ve done six years of work to try to light up that spark in them. At the same time, I am not totally sold on a horizon where museums are simply public forums of some kind. Read about the new “Shed” art institution opening with the Hudson Yards in New York – in some ways a flexible public space is the ultimate late capitalist bare art world museum type. Many existing museums have that library-like mission to catalog and preserve their collection, even though that is where they turn conservative and freak out about actions in spaces where multi-million dollar works are hung, I’ve found that most political leverage for activists comes from the fact that museums must honor the logic of ideas inside of art – often radical ideas – to an extent.”

By “enlightening” I mean supporting through their exhibitions and ancillary events that bear directly on themes political, eg the “Perder la forma” exhibition at MACBA at MNCARS, curations by What How & For Whom; “Playground,” also at the two M’s in Spain, and the “Rapto de Europa” conference produced with a political institution, Fundación de los Comunes. All of this generates thought and discussion, and shows wide varieties of tactics useful for movements. Victoria & Albert in London did “Disobedient Objects,” although maybe an exception. In the early ‘00s, “The Potosi Principle,” or “Principio Potosi,” which started in Germany, was pedagogical in seven-league boots. This is just a scattershot sample.

Finally,

everything that works

is going to be

very local.

– medialab-prado.es

The Ribs of Municipalism—City Cultural Agencies

In Madrid, two institutions I know have been especially active in this regard. They are models for the kind of institutions we need all over the States.

Medialab-Prado Madrid

– medialab-prado.es

The phrase “hacking the city” appeared some years ago. Activists used it to describe urban actions that moved along with and against the codes that guide capitalist urban development. Perhaps this was a response to the “smart city” discourse among urban planners and architects around the turn of the century, predicting total digital control in the city of the future. In any case, Medialab Prado in Madrid is indeed hacking the city. In a curious evolution of a ‘70s era media center, this place is now a center of digital culture turned to the ends of participatory governance—the ideal being a transparent direct democracy based in an ideology of the commons.

Medialab does things in their handsome renovated building which other makerspaces and hacklabs do, but the agency also functions as the hub for a varied series of collaborative projects called “labs” and “mesas” that develop ideas, proposals, and plans for projects in the city with citizens themselves.

Funded by the city government, Medialab has been doing this kind of work for many years. With the election of the Ahora Madrid municipalist government they have greatly expanded their labs based in participation. Funded by the new city agency for participation, open government, and transparency, the array of new labs (some old) is dizzying—AvLab, CiCiLab, ParticipaLab, PrototipaLab, DataLab, InCiLab, Lab Lab—with little colored booklets describing each one.

In the new ParticipaLab citizens are invited in to work with technical experts to make collaborative prototypes of citizen institutions. This process “gives autonomy to the people to make their own process. We give the resources to build what they are really going to use for their purposes.” These new projects work on a local level, in the neighborhoods, such as Experimenta Distrito, that works “territorialize Medialab.” The center’s community, however, is global. “The neighborhood is not our audience. It’s difficult to make an activity for the diversity of the neighborhood to come.” So it’s best to let the neighbors, the citizens themselves, do it.

All this line of work has a lineage in a rather

informal project of 2013-14 called Mesa de Ciudadanes—the table of citizens—convened at the Matadero cultural center. A shifting group of people, including activists and architectural collectives, met to discuss new initiatives and several ended up working with Intermediae on neighborhood development projects. Today, Medialab even has a lab around political participation and engagement tailored for kids called “Si te sientes gato” (“if you feel like a cat” – a gato is a third generation Madrileñx). It is part of Decide.Madrid, the city’s online direct democracy initiative.

Medialab is a complex and dynamic institution. It may be best to think of it as a think tank for progressive municipalism, bubbling with ideas and teeming with genially subversive thinkers. It is the institution in Madrid that has perhaps the closest imbrication with the extra-legal social center movement. It has hosted some of the leading personalities from the long history of Madrid occupations. In this it resembles similar agencies in Amsterdam, like the Urban Resort consultancy. But that is another story. What Medialab is all about is ideas.

People working at Medialab now look to Naples, now under a new municipalist government that has been, as the Peer to Peer (P2P) Foundation blog has it, “the first Italian city to establish a ‘Department of the Commons’ and the first to change the municipal statute by inserting the ‘commons’ as one of the interests to be protected and recognised as the functional exercise of fundamental rights of the person.” American readers may be familiar with Peter Linebaugh’s rousing historical excursions on the history of the commons, starting from Magna Carta. Less known is the broadening strain of legal philosophy and activism around the concept. In an American variant, this might include recent victories by Native American water protectors, and the recent acceptance of a nature-as-self-defense plea by environmental activists charged with obstruction.

– alberto-corsin-jimenez.org

– prototyping.es

– thegocblog.com/2012/10/29/defining-the-commons

Intermediae

– intermediae.es

Intermediae began as a city-funded public art commissioning agency, but of a special kind, more open: “a space for the production of artistic projects based on shared experimentation and learning.” Rather than working on a back-office proposal-or-nomination-only basis like most of their kin, Intermediae was already open to pro-

fessionals. They also opened their doors to the Legazpi community around the then still-building Matadero cultural complex in 2007, working projects with their neighbors (like a movie-making factory called Cine Sin Atores, and literary-minded walks: Insurgencias Poeticas).

The program has fluidly adapted to the job of producing spaces of citizen activation throughout Madrid. In 2013 the agency glommed culture money for areas outside the center, and began work on projects of “expanded culture.” They concentrated on barrios in Madrid Sur, Tetuan, and Vallekas, producing civic activation projects with architects’ collectives.

The barrios outside the touristic city center have been historically neglected. They are called the peripheries, and they are “full of voids, and stigmatized places.” In poor neighborhoods it is common that people say “nobody takes care of this.” Working with groups of architects, Intermediae underwrites projects on these disused or neglected pieces of land, like hand-built assembly architecure, popular festivals, skate parks, and community gardens. The projects are organized together with community organizations afterwards take over maintaining the sites afterwards. The intention is for the people to discover that they are the owners of their own public space. They have the right to the city, and to decide how they want to work and live in their surroundings, and to be proud of them. The idea is to “build up the DNA of the civil society.”

Two years ago Intermediae prepared a map—“Los Madriles,” an atlas of neighborhood initiatives. It includes over 100 autonomous projects throughout the city (online at losmadriles.org). They worked with the group Paisaje Transversal, preparing the map through extensive consultations, and open meetings on active citizenship. They understood the cartographic process as an “open conversation,” and the map as “the excuse and work tool to invite participation.”

The name Intermediae evokes Fluxus artist Dick Higgins’ concept of intermedia. And the agency does have a root concern with a continuous mixture of all kinds of art work and cultural enterprise. But they are also ‘intermediate’ in the sense that they continually act between their activist and artist clients and a wide range of government agencies which control cultural activity in the city—state, federal, and city—and the civil servants policing urban space to try to make projects happen, and achieve results which are not in the traditional playbook of a nice concert on a weekend evening.

Like Medialab, Intermediae’s portfolio has expanded considerably since the election of Ahora Madrid. (Under the last right-wing mayoralty, they, like Medialab, were threatened with closure.) They have launched the initiatives Imagina Madrid, Miradores, and Ciudad Distrito. “They are not projects, but programs. We have grown like a monster.”

Thanks to Alejandra Irene De Diego Baciero of Medialab, and Gloria G. Durán of Intermediae for last-minute interviews on the work of their agencies.

These Spanish firms are in themselves extraordinary, practitioners of “ephemeral architecture” around the world. They include Todo por la Praxis, Basurama, and the Spanish/German Zuloark. Many others like them are active internationally: Estudio Teddy Cruz + Forman, Torolab and Raumlabor come to mind. A Goethe Institut project called “We Traders” recently networked a number of these groups in Europe.

I am talking from Madrid. There are many more Europe-an initiatives and projects I have not touched upon—cul-tural agencies like Casco in Utrecht (referenced above), Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and many more. They don’t just valorize high-priced art commodities, instead they continually generate ideas and experiment.

There are also effective baseline initiatives like the German Mietshäuser Syndikat network of mutual financial support for housing cooperative buildings, sus-tainable energy networks, the evolving long-established urban garden allotments, farm-to-city cooperative food networks, co-op ownership and regional associations, and much more. The key thing is to find out about these things, to implement them, and to demand that govern-ments support them.

Non-Institutional Institutions in Spain

Both Intermediae and Medialab were preceded and paralleled by self-organized groups of motivated citi-zens, including many activists, artists, and intellectuals. Together with the extra-legal occupied social centers, which often provided place for their work, these groups were at one time called “monster institutions”—or, as their activities have become more normalized, citizen institutions.

The two institutions I described above were preceded by a number of “freelance” groupings, net-works of activists, artists, and intellectuals coming from the Global Justice movement of the turn of the century. These include the Observatorio Metropolitano (met-ropolitan observatory), the Fundación de los Comunes (foundation for the commons), and La Universidad Nó-mada (the nomad university). Here are rough descrip-tions of their work, drawn from their websites:

Observatorio Metropolitano

— observatoriometropolitano.org
Whoever lives in this city can experience a sensation almost universally shared by all his paisanos: Madrid changes too fast to get its pulse. To its traditional lack of memory (perhaps there are few cities less “traditional”) has been joined a speed of change many judge excessive. A group of militants and investigators gathered around some questions difficult to answer: what kind of city do we inhabit? Why is it so difficult to understand? What policy is possible in a space that is so complex? In the absence of simple conclusions, it was decided to specify these questions in a research program. The Metropolitan Observatory brings together diverse multidisciplinary groups in a space of reflection on the phenomena of this transformation of Madrid, to elaborate militant inves-tigations that provide the knowledge and the political tools to deal with these processes of change. Building a space for communication between militants, techni-cians, and stakeholders, and among small projects (or project embryos) of militant research that are already happening in the city and in social movements.

The Observatorio has published several books, most with the bookstore/publisher Traficantes de Sueños.

Fundación de los Comunes

— fundaciondeloscomunes.net
This is a project of political/critical self-formation for those who want to collectively construct ways of think-ing/acting aimed at transforming reality. We propose discourses and ways of doing capable of democratizing our societies.

It operates as a network with work teams in Madrid, Pamplona, Malaga, Zaragoza, Terrassa, and Barcelona. We are presently organizing courses—open spaces for generating knowledge and opportunities for debate that overflow the classic channels of university discussion, and that value subaltern knowledge. It is about generating proto-institutions, hybrids between university and non-university, which translate in theory the practices of resistance and popular creation.

The Fundación is closely identified with the Malaga social center Casa Invisible.

La Universidad Nómada

— sindominio.net/unomada/
— 15mpedia.org/wiki/Universidad_N%C3%B3mada

The Nomad University arises from the confluence of a series of enormously heterogeneous groups and people without too much passion for unifying. It was born with the idea of becoming a small political laboratory for the collective production of new theoretical paradigms.

Our work methodology involves the creation of forums, spaces, public, and open environments for study, research, discussion and proposal. [We enface] challeng-es and impasses of new movements, resistances, collec-tive anti-capitalist subjectivities.

Today much less active, this grouping included many who were in institutional positions.

— eipcp.net/transversal/0508

Useful Agencies for US Municipalists

The Democracy at Work Institute

The Democracy at Work Institute was created by the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) to ensure that worker cooperative development in economically and socially marginalized communities is adequately supported, effective, and strategically directed. It is the only national organization dedicated to building the field of worker cooperative development. Based in Oak-land, California.

— institute.coop

Fellowship for Intentional Community

Our mission is to support and promote the development of intentional communities and the evolution of coop-erative culture. Maintains online and printed guide, the Intentional Communities Directory.

— ic.org

d-Cent

Technologies for 21st Century democracy: a Europe-wide project developing the next generation of open source, distributed, and privacy-aware tools for direct democ-racy and economic empowerment. American developers are also involved.

— dcentproject.eu

Media: Shareable

A nonprofit news, action and connection hub for the sharing transformation. That is a movement of move-ments emerging from the grassroots up to solve today’s biggest challenges, which old, top-down institutions are failing to address. Behind these failing industrial-age institutions are outmoded beliefs about how the world works—that ordinary people can’t govern themselves directly, that nonstop economic growth leads to wide-spread prosperity, and that more stuff leads to more hap-piness.

— shareable.net

Creative Time Reports

...strives to be a global leader in publishing the unflinch-ing and provocative perspectives of artists on the most challenging issues of our times. (New content discontin-ued; site remains online.)

— creativetimereports.org

Journal of Aesthetics & Protest

The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest is a Los Angeles-based artist collective whose magazine sits at the discurs-ive juncture of fine art, media theory, and anti-authori-tarian activism. Democracy is a good idea.

— joaap.org

Good Old Stuff Online:

Democracy in America: The National Campaign (2008) Creative Time produced this week-long exhibition and convergence center at the Park Avenue Armory in NYC. (Print materials only.) Ongoing: Since this event Creative Time produces a Summit meeting every year. All the brief presentations are archived online. The most recent was produced in Washington, D.C., just before the US elec-tion and entitled “Occupy the Future.” Let’s get on that.

— creativetime.org/summit

Art Work: A National Conversation About Art, Labor, and Economics

Art Work is a newspaper made in 2009 that consists of writings and images from artists, activists, writers, crit-ics, and others on the topic of working within depressed economies and how that impacts artistic process, com-pensation and artistic property.

— artandwork.us

Planet Drum Foundation (San Francisco)

A voice for bioregional sustainability, education and cul-ture. Bioregionalism is a grassroots approach to ecology that emphasizes sustainability, community self-deter-mination and regional self-reliance. A lifelong project of ex-Digger the late Peter Berg. Ecology with politics.

— planetdrum.org

The Wayback Machine

Group Material: Democracy (1988)

A four-month exhibition produced by the Group Material collective. (Print materials only.)

— leftmatrix.com/democracygroupmate-rial.html

If You Lived Here (1989; 2010-12)

Martha Rosler’s multi-part exhibition project at the Dia Art Foundation, New York, February 11, 1989–June 17, 1989. An influential type of artist-activist collabora-tion realized in installation form. There is a catalogue of sorts: If You Lived Here . . . The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism (1991). Rosler and e-flux contin-ued with “If You Lived Here Still...,” an archive project (2010-12), circulating the late 1980s materials in Europe. E-flux also published her series of essays on artist-led genrification: “Culture Class—Art, Creativity, Urbanism” gathered into the book Culture Class (e-flux & Sternberg Press, 2013). Parts of the original show were included in “Not Yet/Aun No” on workers’ photograph at Reina Sofia museum. (Online the best is a picture search to gather the strands of writing on this project.)

Art Workers Coalition (1969-70)

Art Works Coalition (AWC) was an open coalition of artists, filmmakers, writers, critics, and museum staff formed in New York City during the Vietnam War to pressure museums for radical reforms.

+ Open Hearing: a collection of statements from the first public meeting of the Art Workers’ Coalition in 1969 + Documents 1: a collection of correspondence, press, and ephemera surrounding the foundation and rise of the Art Worker’s Coalition.

— primaryinformation.org

Activist art – making trouble

Beautiful Trouble is a book, web toolbox and international network of artist-activist trainers whose mission is to make grassroots movements more creative and more effective.

— beautifultrouble.org

Center for Artistic Activism

is a place to explore, analyze, and strengthen con-nections between social activism and artistic practice. Our goal is to make more creative ac-tivists and more effective artists. We aim to win.

— artisticactivism.org

The Yes Lab

The Yes Lab is devoted to helping progressive organi-zations and activists carry out media-getting creative actions around well-considered goals.

— yeslab.org

Yates McKee’s recent book, *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition* (Verso, 2016) traces the histories of post-Occupy projects in NYC. As with the AWC, 1969-70, this creative activism was by no means restricted to NYC, but reverberated throughout the country. (See also the ensuing discussion of McKee’s book on e-flux conversations.)

Part Five

Briefly to conclude. . . there is in Spain a developed ide-ology and intention, and a well-articulated implementa-tion of ideas common to the left in Europe, which we in the USA are really lacking. We’ve been asleep for far too long, and only now are awakening to the danger. As the pillow is pressed firmly to our faces, we kick and scream and pitch fitfully about. Much as I wish them well, I do not see that the new generation of progressive political operatives can deliver much more than amelioration of rapidly escalating conditions of oppression. It is up to us as “citizen protagonists” to make the revolution.

Or, to back off the cant: A key question is what can be the active citizen’s relation to the emerging politi-cal movements proliferating in all directions designed to reclaim more grassroots-based power in the Democratic party? These formations have definite ideas about how citizens can participate—donate money, knock on doors, etc.—which are not creative, and do not move outside the electoral system.

“Municipalism” for these operatives may be simply a box of strategies they will use in the ways they are accustomed to do. At the Barcelona Fearless Cities meeting, I didn’t see interest among US attendees in citi-zens’ assemblies, listening, “governing by obeying,” or any of that.

A report on the People’s Summit in Chicago in early June, same time as Barcelona, gave a good sense of what the electioneers are up to. But still, as reporter Ethan Young noted of the Chicago meet, “the mobilizing of the thousands of summiteers was based on connec-tions made at the last summit, and from various social

media lists of supporters. This really just scraped the sur-face of potential participants. Many, many more political and social movement projects have been sparked by the election than were represented at the summit. They each barely know the others exist.” This is a good argument for peoples’ assemblies, and “committees of correspon-dence”—if only to get acquainted with ourselves.

I’m revealing my anarchist bias here when I say that I think it’s more effective to do something that en-gages your neighbors and fellow citizens directly—some-thing that speaks to the condition of their lives and their pleasures, than it is to become a soldier for a political party in the system-as-it-is.

I don’t want to pick a fight with hard-working under-funded political organizers who now are coming most effectively from communities of color, from the ranks of the most oppressed. I understand that they don’t have time for artists’ weird dreamy ideas. What this must be about is making sure that the new political move-ments leave generous space for “citizen protagonism,” even if they cannot bring themselves to base their work in it. This conflict is already an issue in the municipal-ist governments in Spain. The relation between govern-ment and social movements becomes vexed as some of the most effective activists “disappear” inside the halls of power. A ground of understanding, and a (relatively) smooth interface between politicals and creatives is go-ing to be one of the big challenges for us going forward.

Any and all constructions of popular power—assertions of a right to govern, as Fred would have it—ac-quire gravity and micro-power just by coming into being and continuing. They influence votes and consequently politicians and policy. If constructed outside of party politics, even more so. And in the course of doing this work, artists and activists must perforce be inventive, and not constrained to any pre-given political routine for its vaunted “effectiveness.” They do politics from in-terest, from desire, and from curiosity—from the seat of the same passions that inform their art (or informe it). In this they enroll in the “school of public life,” learning as much as they give. They increase their store of knowl-edge about how people think and feel and work together.

I am arguing for artists and “cultural workers” to do politics directly—to take on political roles. Not in electoral campaigns so much (although I do not condemn it, I am realistic), but among themselves and their neigh-bors, along the lines of direct democracy.

Good night and good luck.

— politicalcritique.org
— portside.org
— zcomm.org

•LOS MADRILES•

•ATLAS DE INICIATIVAS VECINALES•

Lo que tienes entre tus manos es un mapa de Madrid y sus iniciativas vecinales.

Son miles las vecinas y vecinos que trabajan de forma colectiva para construir una ciudad más habitable, sostenible, inclusiva y participativa. Antes que ellos, otros hicieron lo mismo reivindicando viviendas dignas, calles sin barro, más espacios comunes o servicios básicos. El centenar de espacios que se destacan en este mapa y los que podrán encontrarse en su versión digital muestran la existencia de una ciudad efervescente pero invisibilizada, pero sobre todo, pretenden poner en valor la potencia de una ciudadanía crítica y activa que ha creado nuevos espacios de posibilidad, mediante la autogestión y la participación.

Los mapas sirven para orientarnos a vista de pájaro en un territorio desconocido, en un suelo que, a menudo, pisamos pero no vemos. Los mapas no son tampoco eso solo, sino una herramienta de participación subjetiva que hacemos de él. Entendamos este mapa como una herramienta ágil y editable, que nos permite hacer presentes las cosas que suceden en el suelo, calles y barrios, hacerlos visibles y contar con ellos. ¿Qué te parece? ¿Puedes mejorarlos con tus construcciones?

•QUE ES ESTE MAPA•

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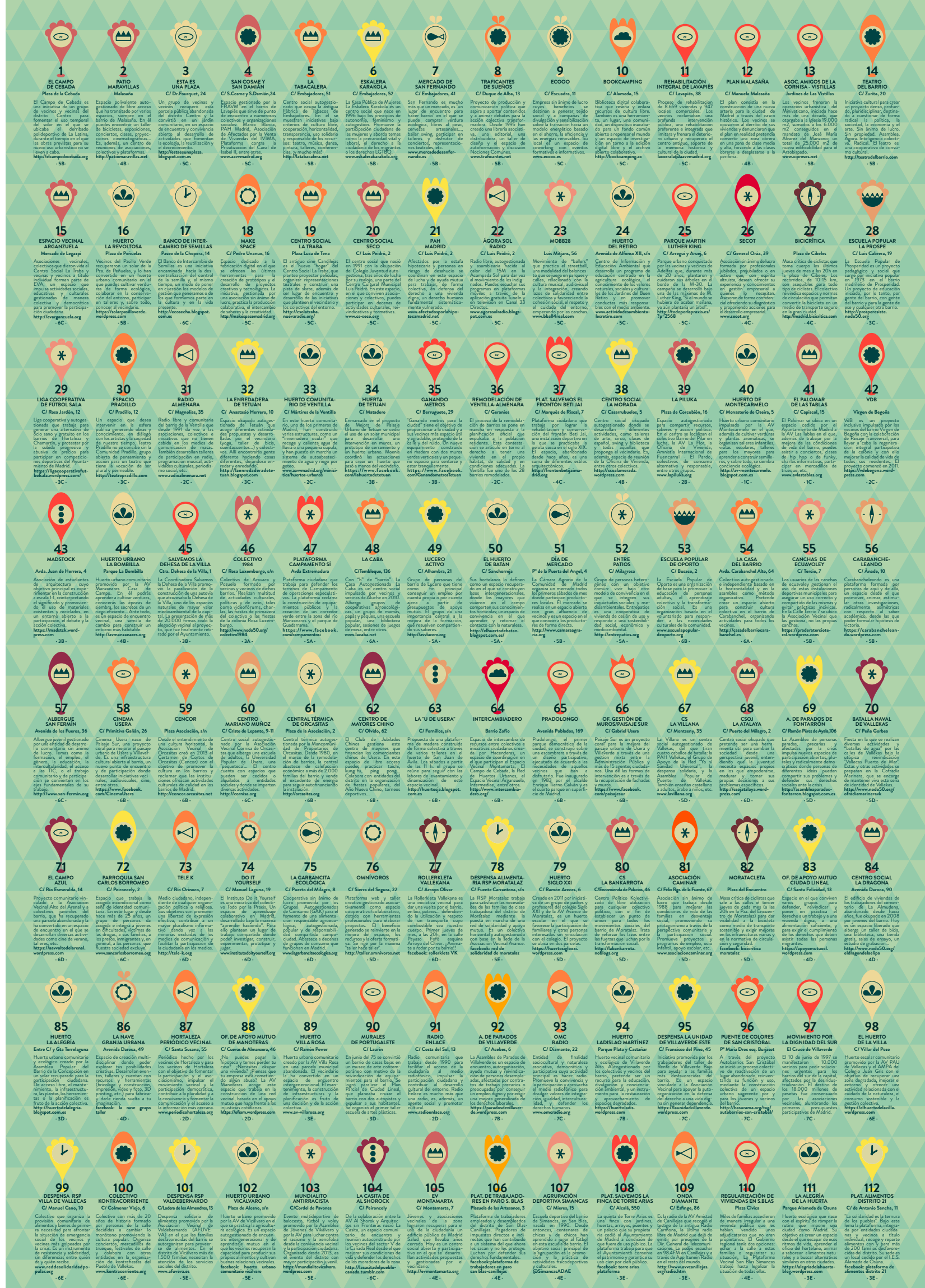
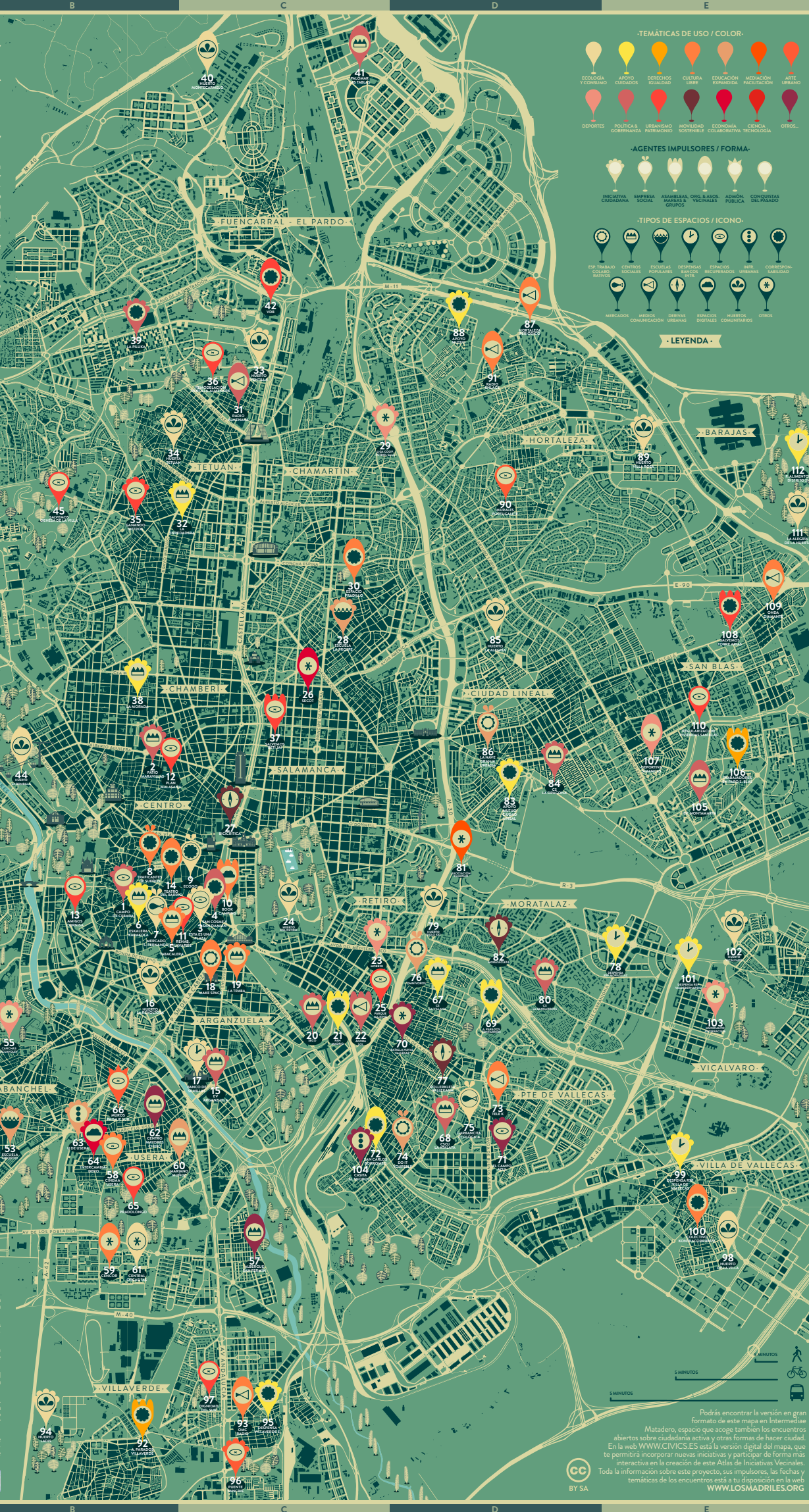
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The Municipalist

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Posted September 2016 on the *European Institute of Progressive Cultural Policy's* e-zine *transversal* (eipcp.net).

Manifesto

The municipalist movement and the question of organization

1

The municipalist movement claims its autonomy vis-à-vis any party or centralized instance, its method of democratic construction, and its roots in the cities and localities in which the municipalist initiatives have grown.

2

Nevertheless, the election lists and municipalist movements are set to forge a politics of diverse alliances, capable of accompanying and pushing the central conflicts that cross the municipal scale: opposition to the law of budgetary stability—the Ley Montoro—, the housing emergency, municipal debt, and the processes of remunicipalization of public/common services—such as water, or the creation of new municipal services, such as power grid operators.

3

A desirable horizon could consist in connecting a network of lists and movements. With view to building this federated network, we recommend supporting the maintenance of autonomous forces and the creation of new communication media that are capable of accompanying these processes, setting the public agenda and elaborating discourses oriented towards the generation of a new social common sense.

4

Municipalism also means imagining strategies for providing resources for promoting a new ecosystem of movements and institutional experiments—a new institutionalality—from the institutions, preserving in turn the autonomous agenda of the respective movements.

Social spaces and centers of citizen management

5

One of the challenges of municipalism lies in gaining social and institutional recognition of the existence and autonomy of the social spaces and centers of citizen management that put the right to the city and democratic participation into effect.

6

From this explicit recognition comes the necessity that the municipalities provide public resources and infrastructures for common use. in accordance with a social agenda that either already occupies and manages spaces, or actively demands the transfer of rights of use of others: new regulations, assignments of rights of use, etc.

7

Spaces of encounter between comrades active on the institutional front and in the movements that manage social spaces should also be generated. The objective is to elaborate a municipalist discourse capable of extending its legitimacy and locating the conflict at the heart of the right to the city.

Social unionism and social rights

8

The dismantling of the welfare state makes social self-organization more and more indispensable with respect to implementing social rights. This is basically what we call social unionism. Facing a horizon of precarization and growing informality, places of work lose centrality as spaces of conflict, and therefore we must imagine new forms of struggle capable of producing rights. It is time to collectively discuss what new forms of union we need.

9

The municipalist movement should be a privileged place for supporting, giving energy to, and accompanying initiatives such as the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH), Yo Sí Sanidad Universal (an action group for universal healthcare), and autonomous eateries, etc, where self-organization is generated from the politicization of collective problems and the creation of structures of mutual help.

10

The neighborhood can be a privileged place for coordinating experiences at the territorial scale, but also for expanding the scale and capacity of the municipalist network. We propose to experiment with forms of social unionism that combine various aspects that are currently separated: living and health, questions of labor or food. We also want to generate shared structures of common communication and of defense.

Work, cooperativism and remunicipalization

11

Maintaining the quality and universality of public services is essential in the battle against neoliberalism and in adequately redefining the public. This is a terrain that allows for experiments of democratization, self-management or co-management. This is why we insist that the municipal movement find common paths for recovering/creating new public services, and for opening processes of conflict capable of activating and supporting the mobilization of city-dwellers.

12

To this end, it makes sense to fuse forces and socialize information generated in different municipalities, where many successful examples of remunicipalization and of the creation of new services are to be found. This includes other tools such as social clauses or legal loopholes that allow for the improvement of the quality of outsourced or subcontracted work, as well as for experiences of transfers of rights of use to labor cooperatives and new models of co-management that we are capable of inventing.

13

We are calling to think about possibilities for coordinated disobedience between different municipalities against the laws restricting economic capacity, laws of indebtedness, or of contracting these local governments: the first hurdle to recovering public/common services.

14

It is necessary to launch lines of action that allow the cooperative fabric to be strengthened in the medium and long run, using the public institutions as privileged partners. The institutions should also support initiatives that are creating cooperatives in trendsetting sectors with the greatest need for investment. This support will be given in respect of the autonomy of the cooperative movement.

The Europe of rebel cities

15

In Italy and other countries, initiatives inspired by the municipalist impulse generated in the Spanish state have come into being. Municipalism and the federation of cities at the European scale must be a privileged space for the construction of a Europe against austerity, but also against racisms and fascisms in full swing in different countries of the continent, such as is evidenced with the human tragedy of the refugees.

16

The municipal governments “of change” have been the first to raise their voices against the intolerable treatment of migrant and refugee persons, and the growing inequality in the EU. But such protest needs to be translated into processes and challenges that are substantive rather than merely rhetorical. In the perspective of this meeting, this is the challenge for a network of political, fiscal, and economic counterpowers of rebel cities and towns—a counterpower that will not understand itself only as a counterpart or counterweight to “true” power, but rather as a new power that transforms power: a constituent power.

17

This counterpower is one of the available paths to unblock the social and political struggles in the European South and to make these forceful with respect to the dynamic of the EU. The municipalist idea is one of the most notable missing chapters in the European drama, stalled by the dialectic between the nation-States and the EU institutions (Eurogroup, Commission, European Council). A network of rebel cities could materially make another Europe, while combating and destroying the Europe of austerity, financial authoritarianism, xenophobia and the opportunity for fascism and war.

Until the next meeting—we will meet again to continue working! Municipalists of the world, unite!

The second MAK took place in Pamplona. Videos in Spanish reflecting on the meeting are on YouTube: see #MakDos, produced by Pamplonauta Iruñea.

“We’re living in extraordinary times that demand brave and creative solutions. If we’re able to imagine a different city, we’ll have the power to transform it”

Ada Colau

HOW TO WIN BACK THE CITY EN COMÚ

GUIDE TO BUILDING A CITIZEN MUNICIPAL PLATFORM



BARCELONAENCOMU.CAT

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning, those of us who participate in Barcelona En Comú were sure that the democratic rebellion in Barcelona wouldn't be just a local phenomenon. We want Barcelona to be the trigger for a citizen revolution in Catalonia, Spain, Southern Europe and beyond.

We know that there are many similar initiatives to our own in other cities that aim to break apart the current political and economic regime from below. Each city will have to find its own way, whether it takes the electoral route or not. Nevertheless, having won the Barcelona elections, we are excited to publish this guide to the philosophy and organization of Barcelona En Comú from our launch to our entry into government. We hope that it will be useful in the construction of citizen platforms that aim to win local elections around the world.



WHY A MUNICIPAL PLATFORM?

Barcelona En Comú didn't come out of nowhere. In the years before its creation, in a context of economic and political crisis in which traditional political institutions were failing to respond to the needs of the people, a multitude of citizen movements mobilized in the city and demonstrated the power of organized citizens to propose and implement solutions.

We took the social networks, We took the streets and We took the squares. However, we found that change was being blocked from above by the institutions. We couldn't allow this. So, we decided that the moment had arrived to take back the institutions and put them at the service of the common good. We decided to win back the city.

However, we found that change was being blocked from above by the institutions. We couldn't allow this. So, we decided that the moment had arrived to take back the institutions and put them at the service of the common good. We decided to win back the city. For us, "winning back the city" is about much more than winning the local elections. It means

putting a new, transparent and participatory model of local government, which is under citizen control, into practice. It also means implementing fair, redistributive and sustainable policies to respond to the economic and political crisis. Our strategy has been to start from below, from what we know best: our streets, our neighbourhoods. The proximity of municipal governments to the people makes them the best opportunity we have to take the change from the streets to the institutions. Cities have always been a place of encounter, of exchange of ideas, of innovation and, when necessary, of revolution. Cities are where democracy was born, and they'll be where we can start to recover it. For more information on the new municipalism in Spain [click here](#).

We took the social networks: <http://peoplewitness.net/twitter-for-activists-how-to-achieve-a-successful-social-networks-campaign>
We took the streets: <http://howtocamp.takethesquare.net/2012/09/05/quick-guide-for-a-revolution-english/>
We took the squares: http://takethesquare.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/round_up_all_languages.pdf
New municipalism in Spain: <http://municipalrecipes.cc/>

HOW IS A WINNING CITIZEN PLATFORM BUILT?

PHASE A: BEFORE THE PUBLIC LAUNCH

DECIDING TO WIN BACK THE CITY AND PRESENTING THE INITIATIVE TO CITIZENS

The first step is to bring together a group of men and women who want to create a citizen platform to build a winning candidacy for the local elections. Each platform should emerge from the social reality of the city, be driven by citizens, rely on the widest possible support and not be led by any political party. It's essential that there is a gender balance in all areas of work from the very beginning. A revolution that isn't feminist isn't worthy of the name.

There should only be one citizen platform in each city. If more than one citizen municipal candidacy is launched, everyone involved should make every possible effort to bring them together around concrete goals and proposals and to cooperate rather than compete in the municipal elections.

In Barcelona, this group nominated a number of spokesmen and women (some of whom willing to stand as candidates) to represent the platform to the citizenry and the media during the initial months. These spokespeople presented the project at an open, public event, inviting citizens and like-minded political forces to join and make it their own. The presentation also saw the publication of a **manifesto** that diagnosed the economic, political and social context of the city and a text of **Principles and Commitments** that summarized the main goals of the platform.

Look the video presentation [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCLxp3IHZTg).

Manifesto: <https://guanyembarcelona.cat/lets-win-barcelona/>
Principles and Commitments: <https://guanyembarcelona.cat/es/compromisos/>
Video presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCLxp3IHZTg>

PHASE B: FROM THE LAUNCH TO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

GETTING THE PEOPLE'S ENDORSEMENT

The next step is to collect a certain number of signatures of support (in Barcelona, a city of 1.6 million residents, our goal was to collect 30,000 from June to August 2014), and present the project in public meetings in different neighbourhoods across the city. The aim of the public meetings is both to get the word out about the project and to gather the concerns and proposals of city residents. It is essential to start like this, proving that there are other ways of doing politics - listening, participating, collaborating - from the very beginning.

Video about the neighbourhood meetings:

CROWDSOURCING A CODE OF ETHICS

A citizen platform doesn't just aim to change local policies. It also aims to change the rules of the game and create new ways of doing politics. A key way of achieving this is to draw up, debate, and approve a code of ethics in a public and transparent way.

The code of ethics is a document that defines the practices that those occupying elected and appointed positions in public of ce should carry out in order to ensure a responsible administration that remains in touch with real life. It sets limits on salaries and expenses that guarantee that anyone can get involved in politics but, at the same time, end the privileges that have led political representatives to be out of touch with ordinary citizens. The code of ethics should include efficient financial transparency and accountability mechanisms, as well as mechanisms to involve citizens in public life.

Barcelona En Comú's code of ethics was drawn up based on previous work by political forces involved in the project, a day of in-person debate, and approval via an **online platform**.

Read the Barcelona En Comú code of ethics.



Video about the neighbourhood meetings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTWt2ipXKOY>
Code of ethics proces: http://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/Guanyem-ICV-EUiA-Podemos-Proces-Constituent_0_328267839.html
Code of ethic Barcelona En Comú: <https://guanyembarcelona.cat/es/codigo-etico-gobernar-obedeciendo/>

FINANCING

As a platform, we have a policy of transparency and clear accounting and make all of our income and outgoings public. We've committed not to nance ourselves with bank loans and to base our support on the loans and donations of individuals.

DRAWING UP AN ELECTORAL PROGRAMME “EN COMÚ”

The collective process of putting together our electoral programme began in the summer of 2014 when the different neighbourhood and policy groups of Barcelona En Comú (open to anyone who wanted to participate) carried out diagnoses of their own areas, deepening the re ections of the general manifesto.

Fruit of these first months' work, the policy groups drew up framework documents at the end of 2014. These documents were the basis of the many participatory processes used to draw up the electoral programme.

The initial proposals generated by this work went through two phases of public, open, in-person and online debate and feedback. The first phase allowed for contributions to the initial proposals, and the second allowed participants to prioritize the final list of policy measures.

These processes produced:

A citizen mandate made up of 40 measures in order of the priority given to them by citizens, which formed the core of the Barcelona En Comú electoral programme.

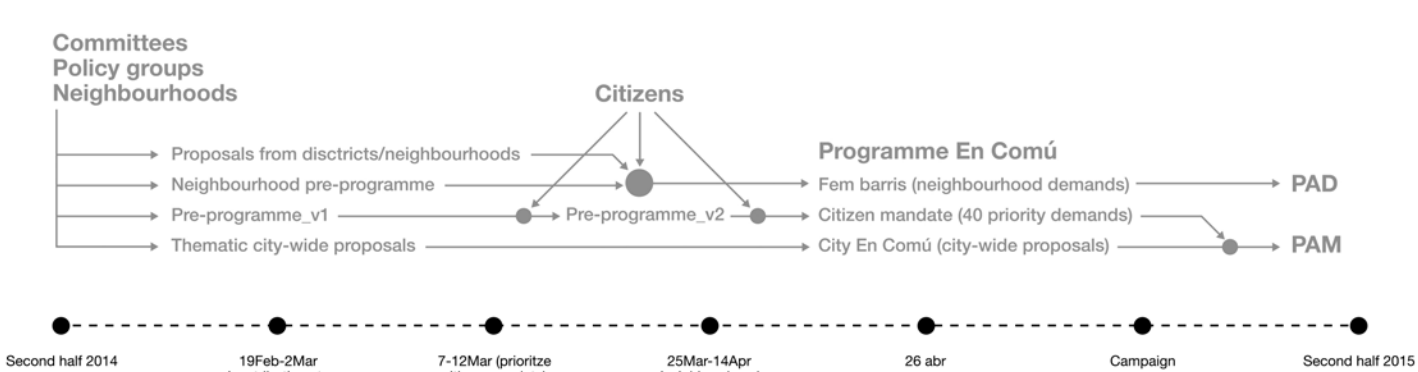
A set of citizen demands for each neighbourhood and district of the city.

City-wide policy proposals on different issues.

The policy groups of Barcelona En Comú carried out the tasks of collecting, summarizing, developing and assessing the feasibility of all proposals made.

Our Programme en Comú is a document that aims to enrich dialogue with citizens. It isn't a set of electoral promises, rather, it's a firm commitment that will guide all of our work in City Hall. This is essential in order for citizens to be able to get enthusiastically involved in political life again. That's why our programme includes implementation and accountability mechanisms.

Diagram of process of development of Barcelona en Comú programme



PUTTING TOGETHER AN ELECTORAL CANDIDACY

Barcelona En Comú isn't a coalition or an alphabet soup of party acronyms. We've shunned traditional party logics and built a new space which, respecting the identity of everyone involved, goes beyond the sum of its parts and is open to people who have never participated in electoral politics before.

Part of the DNA of a citizen platform is that people participate as individuals. There aren't any quotas for the political groups involved. This is what we call 'con uence'. It's a philosophy of collaboration based on shared priorities and concrete goals, not horse-trading between parties. It requires exibility and generosity on all sides, and for everyone to contribute their unique strengths and resources to a project shared by all.

When drawing up the Barcelona En Comú electoral list, we took into account the balance between political forces and activists and gender parity. Thefinal list was made up of both political groups that had already held elected of ce in Barcelona and those which had not.

Guanyem Barcelona: original drivers of the project, made up of many activists and campaigners from social movements

ICV-EUiA: party with councillors in Barcelona City Hall

Podemos: new party without representation in Barcelona City Hall

Procés Constituent: Catalan social movement without representation in Barcelona City Hall

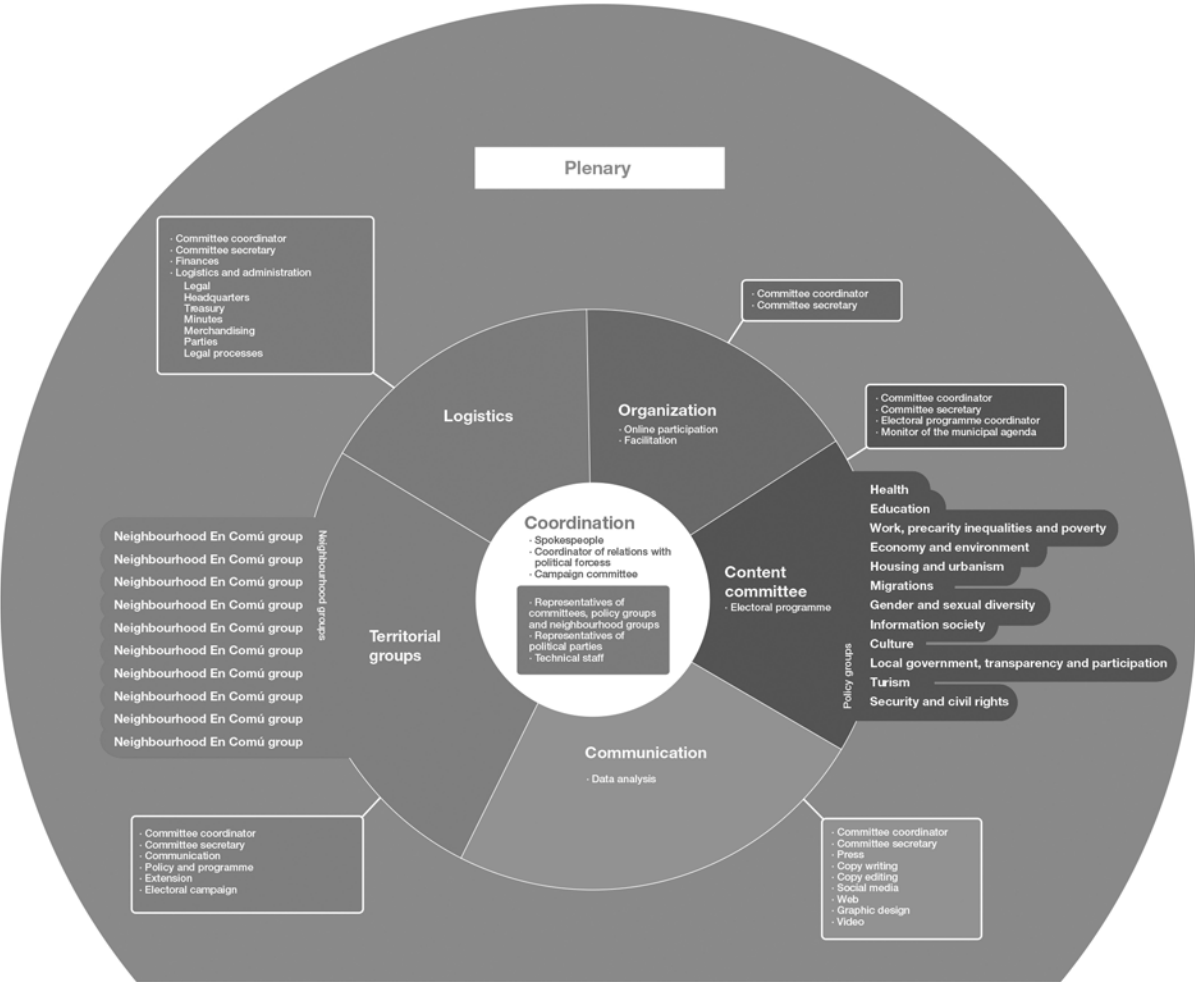
Equo: environmental party without representation in Barcelona City HallPara más

For more information on the elected representatives of Barcelona En Comú: [click here](#).

STRUCTURE OF BARCELONA EN COMÚ DURING PHASE B

Democratic revolution is impossible without the active participation of citizens and proposals designed collectively. The organizational structure in each city will vary according to the context, but it should always be horizontal and transparent, and there must be clear mechanisms to allow people who want to join the project to participate.

We try to seek a balance between horizontality and effectiveness, while maintaining a firm commitment to internal democracy and gender equality. This commitment implies ensuring that everyone feels comfortable in debate and decision-making spaces, that people can combine their activity in the platform with work and caring responsibilities, and that digital tools do not become a barrier to participation due to age or income.



1. TERRITORIAL GROUPS

1.1. NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

These are neighbourhood or district assemblies in which all local residents who wish to can participate. They are represented and connected to the rest of Barcelona En Comú via the Neighbourhood Coordinator, in which two people from each neighbourhood group participate.

The role of Barcelona En Comú neighbourhood groups is to:

Encourage and welcome participation.
Hold workshops and share online participation tools and assist in local residents in their use.

Spread the word about the Barcelona En Comú project by organizing public meetings and distributing communication materials, especially during the election campaign.

Carry out a diagnosis of the situation in the neighbourhood and how it affects local men and women. Create spaces for debate and to draw up proposals.

Make contact with local neighbourhood groups (NGOs, social movements, activists) that can contribute knowledge and experience relating to the neighbourhood, while always respecting the autonomy of such groups.

Coordinate with the Content Committee and Policy Groups

1.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD COORDINATOR

This is the space that facilitates, accompanies and joins up the neighbourhood groups of Barcelona En Comú. It's a space for exchanging ideas and making proposals in order to draw up diagnoses and policies for the electoral programme. It's the bridge that allows ideas and consultations to be communicated between the neighbourhood groups and the Plenary and the coordination team. It is made up of two representatives from each neighbourhood group and a team from the territorial extension sub-committee, which moderates its meetings.

2. TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

These are work groups that carry out the everyday tasks essential to the functioning of the platform. Each committee defines its own size and internal organization. Those who wish to participate in these committees should send a request and attend one of the regular meetings for new collaborators.

Committees active during Phase B of Barcelona En Comú:

Content committee: coordinates the setting up and functioning of the Policy Groups and the drawing up of proposals for the electoral programme.

Communication committee: plans and carries out the communication strategy. Its work areas include: website and server, graphic design, social networks, press, video, streaming, mailing, translation and correction.

Logistics and nance committee: provides logistical support to other spaces, administers the nances of the organization, and organizes legal support.

Cofluence committee: manages relationships with the political forces with which the platform wants to stand for election and works to make this possible.

- Territorial extension: coordinates the platform's activity in neighbourhoods and districts.
- Collaborators: helps people who get in touch requesting to become involved in the project.
- Internal organization: draws up protocols and develops the organizational structure of each phase of the project. Assists in the introduction of online participation mechanisms.

3. COORDINATION

3.1. COORDINATION TEAM

This is the executive space of Barcelona En Comú. It takes urgent, operational decisions and identifies the important, strategic decisions that should be taken in the plenary.

This group is responsible for taking a global view of the process (strategy, roadmap, general calendar, analysis of current affairs, etc.), and for coordinating the rest of the organization. It is made up of the platform's spokespeople and electoral candidates and their support teams, two representatives from each technical committee, one representative of the territorial extension committee and invited members of other spaces. Two people also attend its meetings moderate and take notes.

3.2. PLENARY

This is the most important space for communication and decision-making within Barcelona En Comú, especially in terms of strategic decisions and internal organization. Anyone active in any of the committees or groups of the platform can attend. It meets at least once every two weeks. The plenary can open up decision-making to the entire citizenry by holding online or other forms of citizen consultations.

4. OTHER SPACES AND PROCESSES

4.1. POLICY GROUPS

These are meeting and participation spaces for organizations and individuals active in different policy areas. Their main role is to propose and validate the platform's policy positions, and to assess the issues related to their area and draw up proposals for the election manifesto. Two representatives for each area participate in the Content Committee.

Barcelona En Comú currently has the following policy groups: health; education; work, precarity inequalities and poverty; economy and environment; housing and urbanism; migrations; gender and sexual diversity; information society; culture; local government, transparency and participation; security and civil rights.

4.2. CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Set up and is active during Phase C (the election campaign). Responsible for the day-to-day planning and execution of the election campaign.

4.3 CREATIVE NETWORKS

Barcelona En Comú is supported by a group of artists and designers, the **Movement for the Graphic Liberation of Barcelona**, and a network of cyberactivists, **SomComuns**. These networks diversify the possible ways of participating in the project, and contribute to our communication activity.



MLGB: <https://www.facebook.com/mlgbarcelona>
SomComuns: <https://twitter.com/somcomuns>



Photo by
Jim Newberry

What Is the
Recipe for an
Illustration
About a Recipe
for Municipal
Movement?

If there is anything we can say about this moment, it is that the current spectacle of national politics points to its own spectacle more than ever before. That is why we should turn it off, and tear it down, and demand actual control of our lives and cities from the people who would rather make a dollar for themselves than make our lives something beautiful. The capitalists will never relent to our demands to control our lives. The act of breathing can not be commodified, but rents, square footage, water and power, health care, and votes all can be. So now is the time for a real social anarchy: for rebel cities and citizen power. When so much federal power appears as a farce and a death sentence, people must animate another kind of power: non-representational and conditioned by controlling the sites of our social reproduction (sustenance)!

RH Robert Herbst
Z98 ZEMOS98

While the history of American Insurrection and rage is deep, our actual history of sustained control of power by the grassroots in the two-party states is very, very slim. This is why we can look to the international stage for inspirational ways to switch off the Trumps and turn up the Podemos! In the international context there is a library of stories where people have radically altered their relationships to everyday life and changed the nature of power around them. In the late winter of 2017, comrade Alan Moore hipped me to an illustration coming out of Spain that outlined some very real magic going hard against the American vein to kick the profiteers out of government locally and nationally. The 15M Movement has led to political reform from the grassroots up, fostering winning socialistic parties and other radical civil movements where people demand the right to their cities. The narrative of contemporary Spanish politics tilts strongly against the story of the rise of fascism & isolationism in Western democracies. “What Is The Recipe For A Municipal Movement” is a graphic that explains how Spanish cities have regained control of their government from insiders and businessmen. I tracked down its illustrator María Castelló Solbes who got me in touch with Lucas Tello Pérez of ZEMOS 98, the image producer. We talked over email about the Spanish Municipal Movement, the diagram that illustrates how it came to be, and how Americans might use such a drawing.

An
Interview
with
ZEMOS

●
by
Robert
Herbst

RH Can you provide some background for a foreign reader of the Recipe?

Z98 The 15M in Spain was the awakening of major fragments of society to a different way of understanding politics, unmediated by the traditional political parties. After three years of deep crisis, and with complete lack of faith in political representation, a protest against property law lit the fuse. Thousands of people set up tents in the main squares of their cities and debated in huge assemblies about the main political struggles society faces, in a respectful manner, with an intersectional approach. This produced a deep shift in the mindset and boosted a culture of sharing and building together. ZEMOS98 is a cultural and political collective working from Seville, Spain in local, national, and European projects since 1998. We produced seventeen editions of an underground festival on the independent media landscape, the commons, feminism, informal education, and other issues. We strive for citizen participation in the issues that shape our future. With local councils, we develop participatory processes. We produce media content like the Municipalism graphic and a board game that interprets the present. Like others, the 15M movement turned our collective’s feelings and beliefs upside-down. Since then we’ve turned into a much more politically engaged practice. Our institutional assault on Spain’s government arose three years after the end of the 15M movement. In that period there were massive mobilizations called “the tides.” You could find one for each color—green was about education, white was about public health, and so on. Podemos had great success in the European elections, obtaining five MEPs out of nothing. The social movements started organizing candidacies to take the local governments in different cities. It started in Barcelona, led by Ada Colau (a famous activist who was the spokesperson of the Platform Against the Evictions (the PAH)) and spread to Madrid and other cities. The elections were in Spring 2015. Activists and social movements won some big Spanish cities: Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, A Coruña, Cádiz, and Valencia, among others. Our graphic image of the combo-platter was produced two months before the elections. It tried to summarize some of the movements that inspired, directly and indirectly, the social movements to take back the institutions.

Two years have passed, and these councils are having different grades of success. ZEMOS98 has collaborated with A Coruña, Barcelona, and mainly Madrid in developing culture plans co-designed by the sector and citizens.

RH **How did you develop the categories and specific menu items in this radical meal?**

Z98 The graphic was developed with illustrator María Castelló. We were working on Municipal Recipes, a project representing AND reflecting the emerging processes of assaulting the local institutions. Within that framework we thought the metaphor of the kitchen was an interesting way to portray what we wanted that movement to be: an organic group of people reclaiming the cities, making them more livable, and removing the spotlight from economic exchange, focusing instead on caring for each other, creating communities taking part in politics, and building public space together. The kitchen seemed a nice place to devise such a plan.

We went with that idea and shared the group of collectives and social movements we wanted represented with María Castelló. She did the amazing work of putting the pieces together, adding her thoughts, and developing the beautiful graphic. It happened in a short time, and later we realized we'd left some things out. We've also come to realize that some of those items included shouldn't be there. We still think it's a good tool to start thinking about images and collectives working toward social change in a radical way.

RH **Did the recipe present ideas already popular in Spanish society, or were you promoting ideas not yet seen together?**

Z98 It's more the second option. We're promoting ideas that haven't been viewed together before. Maps are like lists: you can't cover everything, and you can't satisfy everyone. We've received some fair criticism about including the Italian 5 Stars Movement. When we were conceiving the map, their approach to political struggles wasn't clear. After we made the map, it became clear that they aren't exactly left wing on certain issues. Our intention was to visualize some of the social movements we considered as the foundations of the Municipal Movement. After two years there's been less discussion (in media and academic articles) about the concept of "municipal movement." Maybe, and because it succeeded somehow, there isn't a movement anymore but some effective platforms running some of the Spanish cities. For us, as a matter of research, it was really important to look and try to define the roots of all these political struggles. The recipe is a metaphor. The recipe is a sort of a source code that can be improved by others if it is open and shareable.

RH **Please explain the more esoteric items in the recipe like Copylove, Marinaleda, and Metropolitan Observatory.**

Z98 Copylove was non-academic research ZEMOS98 began with Rubén Martínez from La Hidra and Txelu Balboa from Colaborabora. It gathered first-hand experiences looking into the bonds and relationships communities create between agents during the production of common goods. It was very revealing for us in our way of working, because it made us reflect on the relations we were building with each other within the collective, thus changing many of the practices. It made us see caring acts as invisible common good within communities. Bringing this to light is very important to unveil power relations and build better ways of living together. Marinaleda is a council in the region of Seville, in the South of Spain. It's been governed by a local party led by Sánchez Gordillo for around thirty years. It's attempting to build a Communist solution to the problems of their neighbors. They have social housing for all, a cooperative that is in charge of giving strength to the workers, a television managed by the council, etc. Dan Hancox of The Guardian has written several articles and a book about it.

Metropolitan Observa-
tory was a leftist think tank based in Madrid and Barcelona. It was in charge of producing some of the most exciting and interesting theory about the change of those cities, their public spaces, the way their common goods are managed, and how to build alternatives. As you can imagine, most of the activists working in those cities struggled in different social movements. It was one of those initiatives where folks who've gone on to institutionality were involved organizing events and lectures, publishing books, or designing alternative policies for the cities. Not surprisingly, the Metropolitan Observatory doesn't seem to have been producing work since the municipalism movement started in 2014.

RH **Do all elements in the Municipalism graphic work in harmony? Judging by the strength of en Comú, I imagine the movement is robust. I wonder if all of the elements in the graphic contribute to this.**

Z98 This representation simplifies the complexity of what happened and is still happening in Spain. Barcelona and Cataluña are probably the most successful example, not only because Barcelona en Comú won the elections (we should remember they got the 25% of the votes). But there's a history of associationism and cooperation among the civil society actors. That partly explains why the political arena was able to produce such a platform as Barcelona en Comú. That's interesting because it wasn't even a party then. It was an initiative gathering all kind of bodies such as parties, social movements, small unions, NGOs, etc.

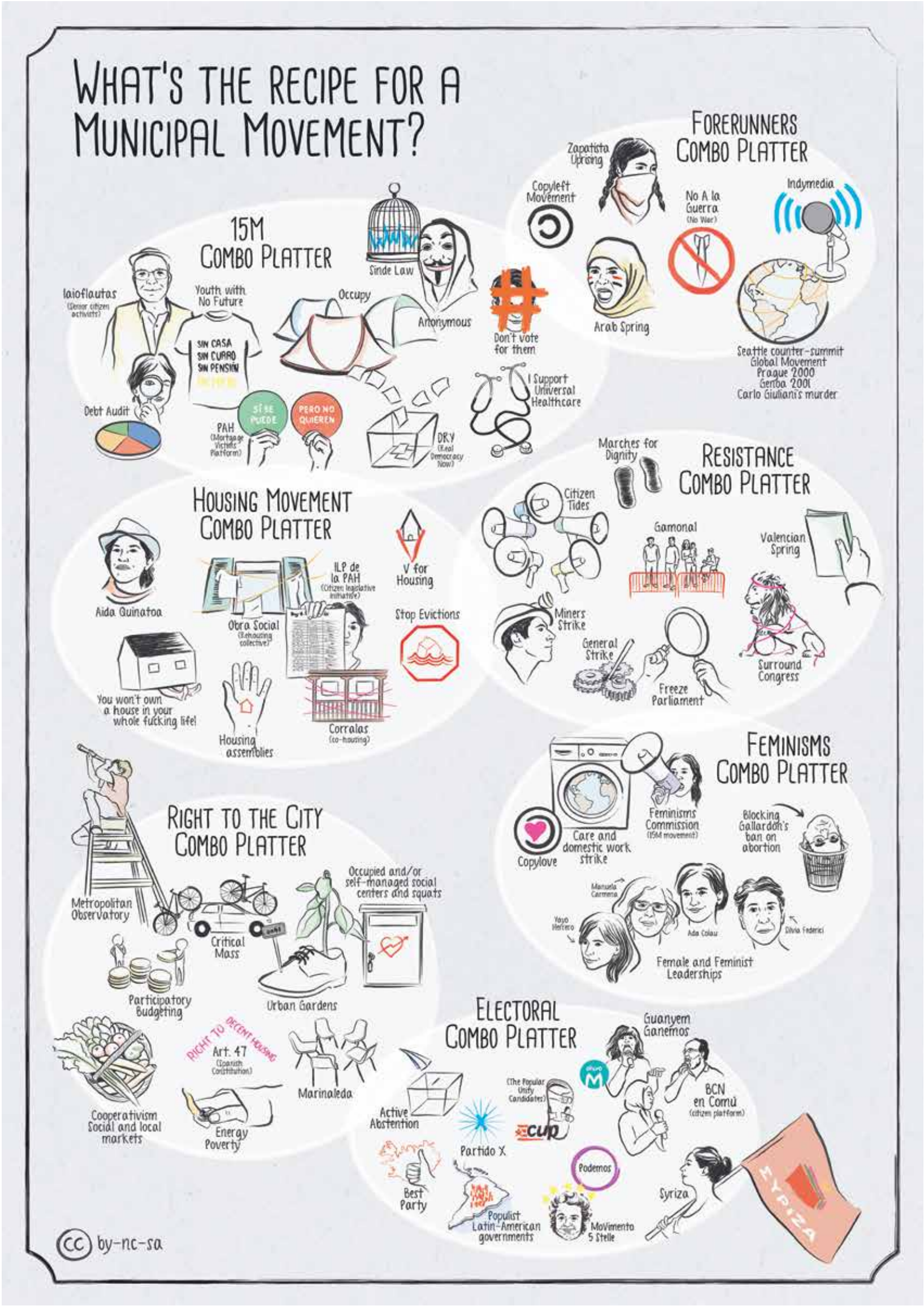
What was robust is the belief that our system needed to be changed. During the 15M, according to some polls, there was 90% of the population supporting the idea that changes had to be introduced in the way parties were working and acting. Parties were representing their own interests, not people's. That explained the rapid growth of Podemos at the national level, especially in the creation of local initiatives. These

strategies weren't created by the same people, there were some huge differences. It's obvious that some political changes can only occur at a national level (protecting the educational system or the health care system, for example). But many activists preferred the municipal context because they felt it was coherent to change things from the bottom, having taken into account the notion of proximity. On the other hand, Podemos created a lot of illusion, but it was an initiative lead mainly by a group of people in Madrid. The 15M acted as a political moment. A lot of people felt the need to be politically involved. Today we aren't sure we can consider the municipal movement as robust. Many of the most important activists got involved in institutional jobs, fulfilling the promise of occupying the institutions and changing them inside. But that also "emptied the streets." So in that sense, taking into account the general precariousness Spain is experiencing, it's really hard to maintain citizens political activity, because in some cases individuals don't even have resources to survive. Right now, and following the metaphor of your question, it seems we need to start a new map. Not exactly explaining how the municipal movement grew up, but to re-start the situation to recover the strength of the social movements.

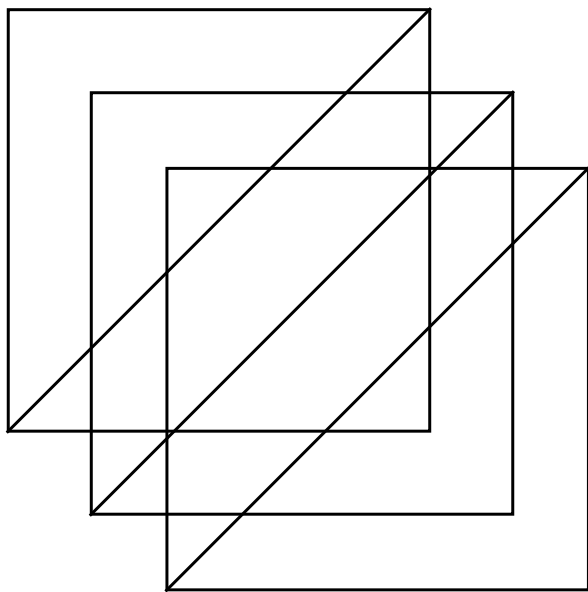
RH **With the results of the 2016 elections in the US, many citizens and municipalities are looking to defend gains made in the last decades. Secession is tempting, but so is the anti-federalism of Spain's democratic Municipal Movement. Do you think your recipe is transferable to other nations?**

Z98 Looking at the example of Cataluña, it's really a complex issue how federalism is conceived in Spain. In Cataluña there's people (and people involved in parties like Esquerra Republicana) who truly believe in the self-determination of people. The interesting thing is that they made an alliance with Nuevo Partido Democrático, a right wing and Catholic party. What happened is that at some point they thought, "OK, we want to be independent too. But once we are out of Spain, from whom are we going to be independent? From the factual powers such as the Troika?" So before asking for the independence of Cataluña, some activists felt there was the need to defend social rights. But that doesn't mean they don't believe in federalism. It means they believe it's a priority to defend citizen rights. In the rest of Spain, it's different. But the Socialist Party, one of the oldest & now traditional center-left wing parties has a tradition of people supporting federalism. So it's not clear how federalism is assumed by the different political actors.

Secondly, we don't think the recipe can be imported to other places—especially not for those with worse economic or social conditions; that'd be neo-colonialism. We do think the idea of having a recipe itself is importable. Sharing practices increases learning processes among peers worldwide. The idea of open source is very powerful and appealing in activism. There aren't magic solutions for our social struggles, but we can all benefit from sharing certain methodologies, actions, and ideas. That's the political lesson we learned. We should share our local recipes for cooking global revolution.



An Artists' Guide to Not Being Complicit with Gentrification



LOS ANGELES — We are Betty Marín, Heather M. O’Brien, and Christina Sanchez Juarez, and we met through organizing work in Los Angeles. Our conversations began in a group called School of Echoes, which operates as an open listening process of community-based research, popular education, and organizing to generate experiments in political action. Beginning in late 2012, the group has brought together organizers, educators, and cultural workers living and working in various communities throughout Los Angeles. School of Echoes is a space for critical reflection on the conditions in working class and poor communities, including (but not limited to) struggles against gentrification and for the human right to housing. In 2015, the group joined with other tenants in struggle to form the Los Angeles Tenants Union / Sindicato de Inquilinos de Los Ángeles. LATU/SILA is a membership-based, tenant-centered movement fighting for the human right to housing for all. LATU/SILA demands truly affordable and safe housing and opposes the dismantling of rent-stabilized apartments. The union organizes against harassment by landlords, mass evictions, and displacement of people from their neighborhoods due to mass rent increases, as well as the repeal of the Ellis Act and Costa-Hawkins Act. LATU/SILA’s mission is to strengthen tenants’ political power through education, advocacy, and direct action.

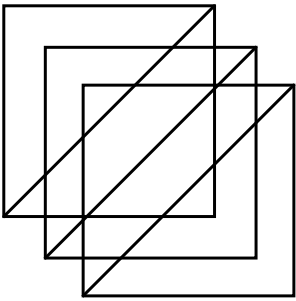
We write in hopes that more artists will finally break with their sense of exceptionalism and consider their roles in gentrification. We recognize that art is an industry with a structural reality that must be acknowledged in order for artists to challenge their complicity in the displacement of long term residents in low-income and working class neighborhoods and fight against this. It’s important that people see the devastating impacts of securing housing in working class and poor neighborhoods, and setting up investment properties posing as art spaces. How can this loyalty to the notion of art as a pure form of positive change be reconsidered, particularly when such sentiment encourages the destructive endeavors of parasitic developers and landlords?

As far as how we see our own position in these debates and struggles, we constantly reckon with and interrogate our personal culpability and contradictions as people who participate in exhibitions and have jobs in the arts, be it in nonprofit educational institutions or otherwise. We hold ourselves

accountable by organizing with our neighbors for the human right to housing.

We are in a moment where the connection between art, real estate, and the displacement of longtime residents is undeniable. How might artists take responsibility for how we alter people’s lives, in terms of the impacts of real estate speculation and gentrification? How do we refuse co-optation and engage locally with our neighbors? How are artists, curators, galleries, and museums complicit with the same finance capital that gentrifies neighborhoods across the globe? We ask all of this as we involve ourselves deeply with tenant rights groups, to listen and learn from political

by Betty Marín, Heather M. O’Brien, and Christina Sanchez Juarez



and social urgencies. We refuse to accept that pointing at problems is enough. Rather, we look to create a collective analysis, to “act our way into thinking” — a phrase borrowed from fellow organizer Leonardo Vilchis of Unión de Vecinos — which we’ve come to understand as the learning process that comes out of collective action, as opposed to relying on and residing only in theory. In this spirit, we share some of the lessons we’ve learned through our organizing and pedagogical work.

1 Becoming involved in housing struggles — especially if we are part of a more “desirable” gentrifying class — is crucial. While deciding to commit to that work is not necessarily easy, a first step can be to understand the history and context you are moving into. If we move to a new block it’s essential to go beyond learning about who already lives there. We have to choose to stand with neighbors who have different needs. While we realize that as artists we contribute to the first wave of gentrification, we can choose to support our neighbors by joining them in demanding housing justice, by protesting unfair rent hikes, lacking repairs, or businesses that don’t serve the needs of long-term residents.

2 As artists, we have to educate ourselves, especially considering that we might have racial, educational, or class privilege compared to our neighbors. We become part of the problem, another domino in the gentrification process, if we as renters don’t know our renters’ rights, or don’t take time to learn our rights and the reality of local conflicts. Abusive landlords operate on the notion that tenants do not know their rights. Learning our rights is the first step to building collective power.

3 It is imperative to understand the need to find other ways of dealing with conflict or safety issues besides calling the police, given who the police serve and who the police jail and kill with impunity. We all have a stake in how our neighborhoods are made safe for everyone, and can choose to do this work without criminalizing the poor and people of color. Most galleries represent a white supremacist capitalist system that is protected by the police. For instance, in the community of Boyle Heights, each time those fighting to hold the galleries accountable for their impact on displacement and gentrification in their neighborhood stage a demonstration, the galleries have called the police, and have even accused the protesters of hate crimes. These accusations paint the galleries as victims while disguising the fact that they are protected by the state.

4 As artists who participate in and support exhibitions, we must interrogate the spaces we choose to enter and work with. We must challenge what we do with our resources and privilege, on both a personal and a socio-political level. Consider for instance, if the spaces we support fail to ask questions about their structural impacts in a particular neighborhood — particularly if they are media-driven, contemporary art spaces. Regardless of their intentions (community engagement, bringing cultural programming to “underserved” populations, etc.) many art spaces ultimately serve as investment projects and property value boosterism for landlords, developers, and realtors. Is it worth supporting an art space when we know that it is currently contributing to or will contribute to someone losing their home?

5 We must choose between prioritizing our own individualistic artistic careers or prioritizing the dismantling of oppressive structures. There are no places without contradiction, nor places where we can be absolved of reinforcing oppressive structures. Instead, we must reorient our priorities so that we can be honest about what we are actually working towards. It takes time to learn how to point at a problem, yet too often we feel the work ends there. When it comes to art, there’s a certain cultural capital gained by criticizing capitalism, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that we are putting anything on the line to dismantle it. In far too many instances, the violence of the status quo is actually protected, guarded, and upheld in smug, self-assured condescension by artists with careers to protect when those who seek to rattle the cage more vigorously violate liberal taboos like “tone” and “unity.” If we get involved in anti-oppression struggles, listen, and are aware of privilege and the differing crises that surround us, it’s difficult to see an individual art career as something worthwhile. We’ve seen many artists with visibility (i.e. artists with gallery representation or those who have received major recognition of their work through awards or grants) who dismiss and criticize the artists and local organizers who choose to stand with the local neighbors of Boyle Heights in the form of social media rants and public media outlets (calling them misguided and naive). How might we tune our listening away from those with powerful art world platforms to those most impacted by gentrification?

6 We must ask about the power of art spaces to decide who is included in the first place. This is a moment of extreme tokenism, one in which exhibition spaces co-opt political movements or artistic identities and pat themselves on the back for their diversification, for their “radical” inclusion. We see this in

museums, where curators invite grassroots organizers to do educational outreach work. Doling out temporary visibility does not decentralize the white ruling class that presides over the art world, in the form of, let’s say, Wall Street bankers sitting on the board of a contemporary art museum. What is an art institution’s intent when they only temporarily feature a social movement in their space?

The struggles against the galleries in Boyle Heights have taught us valuable lessons and we have learned about housing struggles through local organizing with fellow tenants. To us, this work is about building spaces of “intimate solidarity,” a term borrowed from fellow artist in struggle Patricia Vazquez. We’ve come to understand this term as political action that is centered in relationships, love, and care. We realize that the mainstream media has chosen to erase the voices of long-term residents who explicitly and articulately describe the historical and structural analysis behind their resistance. We stand with the long-term residents of Pico Gardens and Aliso Village in Boyle Heights who have made it clear they do not want art galleries in their neighborhood. However this stance is not a refusal of all art. We see art as part of how people struggle and resist in life. Art becomes alienating when entities and individuals refuse to acknowledge their personal and structural impacts that contribute to gentrification. The critical voice of the artist is lost when it’s instrumentalized in processes of displacement.

The debates around these issues have certainly become intense, but they’re nothing compared to the trauma of being evicted from your home of over thirty years. How might we encourage popular education and empowerment without permitting artists and galleries to ride the wave of gentrification, as if absolved from questions of property speculation and skyrocketing rents? What if we see our role as artists as being deeply tied to the health of our neighborhoods?

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RADICAL REFORM AND



THE RIGHT TO THE CITY:



A VIEW

FROM BRAZIL

In 1964, the US helped overthrow democratically elected, center-left president Jango Goulart and install a military dictatorship in Brazil, which lasted for twenty-one years. As the government started arresting and torturing peaceful protesters, several different groups formed and started armed resistance activities. Some, like VAR-Palmares, who's accountant, Dilma Rousseff, ended up being elected president twice, focused on urban guerrilla activities—mainly kidnappings and bank robberies to finance weapons purchases. Meanwhile, the Maoist revolutionaries led by former Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT/Workers Party) national president (and current political prisoner) José Genoino focused on trying to start a peasant-led revolution in the countryside. Neither tactic worked very well. Brazil is a huge country with a highly sophisticated and manipulative media and, as happened in Germany with the Bader Meinhoff group, the press easily turned the public against the urban guerillas by focusing on the family lives of the police, drivers, and bodyguards who died in assassination attempts. They simply ignored the Maoist guerrilla war waging in Araguaia, a remote part of the Amazon region. In the end, the most successful left-led tactic to counter the dictatorship was a series of national strikes, started under the leadership of Luis Lula Inacio da Silva in the industrial suburbs of São Paulo during the late 1970s and early 1980s, which morphed into huge street protests for direct elections called Direitos Já.



●
by
Brian
Mier



Brian Mier is a native Chicagoan and old-school Lumpen who served on the directorate of the Maxwell Street Historic Preservation Coalition during the 1990s and the Brazilian FNRU (Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana/National Urban Reform Forum) from 2007-2012. He currently resides in a self-managed social movement housing project on the periphery of São Paulo.

As alternate political parties to the two allowed by the military (ARENA and MDB) were legalized, the labor unions joined with organic intellectuals and social movements to create a new radical left political party called the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party, or PT), which eventually swung towards the center-left and ended up controlling the presidency for thirteen years, winning four consecutive elections before last year’s coup removed them from power.

Building on the lessons learned from resistance to the Military Dictatorship, the party founders, which included legendary socialist intellectuals like Paulo Freire, Florestan Fernandes and Sergio Buarque da Holanda, capitalized on the new political opening up of the country and opted to focus on radical reform, as opposed to revolution. Building on traditions from Western Marxism, especially the Gramscian strategy of building spaces of counter-hegemony to capitalism within existing expanded state institutions, activists connected to the PT and other left political parties like the Brazilian Communist Party (PC do B) developed a bottom-up strategy for urban reform, based on Henri Lefebvre’s concept of the Right to the City.

The concept of the Right to the City has been watered down over the past decade by agencies like the UN and bourgeois city planners, who tried to change its meaning to signify the mere universal and equitable delivery of city services. But the way the concept is used by activists in Brazil is faithful to Lefebvre’s original idea that it is not merely our right to live in the city and enjoy its benefits, but to transform it in the way that the majority of the people, primarily the urban poor and working class, best see fit—and that this is a right that cannot be realized within a capitalist system. The modern fight for radical urban reform began during the process of drafting the new, post dictatorship constitution of 1988. During this process, the government announced that anyone who could muster one million signatures could create a “people’s” constitutional amendment. Although the declaration seems to have been made for show, and they didn’t really expect anyone to be able to pull it off, a nation-wide coalition of urban reform activists formed and joined with landless rural workers to gather over two million signatures and create two constitutional amendments that are among the most radical national laws in the World. Articles 182 and 183 of the Brazilian constitution declare that the federal government has to prioritize the right to housing, expressed through the social function of property, over the profit motive. This renders common slum-lording practices like land banking, which are used all the time in cities like Chicago, totally illegal. In the countryside, this means that plantation owners cannot own huge tracts of land and do nothing with them. Any landless citizen has the right to homestead on up to twenty hectares of non-productive land and farm it. As a result,

the Movimento de Trabalhadores Sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement/MST) has occupied and legalized small farms for over 300,000 families since 1988. On the urban front, these constitutional amendments give landless city dwellers the right to occupy empty buildings that are behind on their real estate taxes, and to require the Mayor’s office to disappropriate them from their owners, convert them to social housing and hand over the deeds to the squatters. This is no small legal victory. To give an idea, there is a current housing deficit in Brazil of around eight million units, but over five million potential units are available just in abandoned government buildings in downtown areas of cities.

To show why this law is important, I will use an example from Chicago. When University of Illinois decided to expand its campus south of Roosevelt Road, it began buying up historic buildings in the Maxwell Street neighborhood, leaving them vacant and refusing to do any upkeep on them, running behind on tax payments. This was a calculated move to artificially give the appearance of blight to the neighborhood, paving the way for public approval for Mayor Daley using \$500 million of taxpayer money to “clean up” the “blight”, rip down six entire blocks of buildings from the 1800s which represented one of Chicago’s last historic neighborhoods, and replace them with parking lots and government-subsidized cinderblock luxury condos, designed to fall apart in forty years and purchased at government-subsidized prices by clueless suburbanites looking for a place to feel at home in the big city.

If a university tried to do this in Brazil, according to the 1988 constitution, anyone who did not own property could move into the empty buildings, start living in them and pressure the city government to dissappropriate them and convert them into ownership property. If the local population was organized, if there was a strong social movement in that particular city, no Brazilian university would ever be able to get away with anything comparable to what UIC did to Maxwell Street.

DEMOCRACY DEEPENING, POPULAR PARTICIPATION, AND URBAN GOVERNANCE: THE BRAZILIAN VIRTUOUS CYCLE

As the 1988 constitution was ratified and a certain degree of democracy and sovereignty returned to Brazil, the PT and other left political parties won elections in scores of cities across the country. Together with these victories, a radical reformist model of urban governance, which the PT called the Virtuous Cycle, emerged. In Porto Alegre, Olivio Dutra made significant gains towards socialism. In São Paulo, Luiza Erundina appointed Paulo Freire as Education Commissioner and fought for universal, free access to public transportation. According to Erminia Maricatto, who was Erundina’s Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, “The working class and poor city is ignored and forgotten by public policy during the usual governments. We looked at this forgotten, informal and illegal city, lacking in urban services and equipment and understood that this was our priority. We used a term to describe our strategy, ‘inversion of priorities.’” This inversion of priorities focused on neighborhood development over the downtown business district and in some ways was comparable to what American urban planners call “equity or equitable” urban governance, a key component of the “Progressive City” model that was implemented in cities like Chicago under Mayor Harold Washington and, on a smaller scale, Burlington, Vermont, under Bernie Sanders. But in Brazil, base level direct democracy was pushed further. It is important to note that many of the innovative policies that were developed under PT and other left Mayoral administrations were not created in a top-down fashion. In many cases, organizations associated with the FNRU created a mulch-pronged attack, combining road closures with burning tires, camping out in front of city halls and government ministries, lawsuits, and public academic criticism, all to force mayors to go farther left than they had originally planned. Nevertheless, studies conducted on these policies show that they have been more successful under sympathetic municipal governments and, unfortunately, conservative administrations have come up with all kinds of ways to water them down and ignore them.

THE NATIONAL URBAN REFORM FORUM

During the signature gathering process for constitutional amendments 182 and 183, new alliances were built on a nationwide level, and dovetailing on the success of the initiative, a group called the Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana sprung up. It was made up of urban social movements, professional groups such as the national Social Workers Association, prominent leftist urban planners like Raquel Rolnik and Arlete Moises, unions, and progressive Brazilian NGOs like FASE. For twenty-five years it was the main actor for urban reform on the national level, and during the early days of its existence it had a big influence on building the Brazilian left model of urban governance. Today FNRU has over 100 affiliated labor unions, poor people’s social movements, professional associations, NGOs, and academic institutions, representing nearly one million people, and it makes all of its decisions through consensus of its twenty-six directors.



The following are a few examples of tools used in the Brazilian Virtuous Cycle model of city government:

+ SOCIAL HOUSING BASED ON OWNERSHIP AS OPPOSED TO FREE OR SUBSIDIZED RENTS

University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson coined the term “the underclass” to describe the millions of Americans who seem permanently trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty with no apparent way to get out. Although one of the most effective ways to rise out of poverty is through property ownership, and the US government has spent billions of dollars subsidizing housing ownership for the white middle class through efforts like the GI Bill of 1944, public housing policy for the poor is based on rent subsidies. The Brazilian approach to public housing is based on ownership, and there are several different policies that fostered this, at least until last year’s coup.

+ THE PARTICIPATORY MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

According to the 2001 Statute of the City, which regulates articles 182 and 183 of the Brazilian constitution, all towns with populations of twenty thousand or more have to create a participatory development plan to orient the annual budget for a period of ten years. Meaningful public participation is mandated by law in the form of public debates, hearings, and democratic assemblies and by allowing “people’s legal initiatives” in which any budget line can be altered through a petition as long, as it doesn’t shrink the size of certain federally mandated disbursements for areas like Health and Education.

The largest truly participatory development plan in US urban history was Harold Washington’s Chicago Works Together Development Plan of 1984. At the time Chicago had a population of around three million people, and hundreds of planners spent months holding meetings in public school buildings in every neighborhood in the city to deliberate the city’s development strategy. The results led to significant innovations such as an industrial retention strategy, which penalized manufacturers who received tax benefits in exchange for opening up shop in Chicago that tried to close down and move overseas.

The largest participatory development plan ever facilitated in the world, was ratified in São Paulo in 2014 under PT party mayor Fernando Haddad. There, a one year cycle of neighborhood planning meetings resulted in a plan for the twelve million residents of São Paulo that among other things, prioritizes public transportation over private, and pedestrian and bicycle traffic over the automobile. Although the law mandates Brazilian cities to facilitate participatory development plans, a lot of city governments simply ignore the law or invent mechanisms to shorten the participatory planning process, to the point that it becomes symbolic. As in the case of many progressive urban governance policies in Brazil, a sympathetic mayor is fundamental. Nevertheless, there are scores of examples of innovative participatory development plans in effect, ratified by city mayors who are from the PT or other left leaning political parties in Brazil. The lesson learned in this case is that the law is not enough when it comes to challenging capitalist real estate hegemony over the city. Without a strong base level opposition on the streets, the courts and in the city councils, an unsympathetic mayor can ignore just about any law that he wants.

+ PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Participatory budgeting is the most influential Brazilian public policy innovation of the last fifty years. Since its original development, caused by people’s pressure on socialist city governments in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul during the late 1980s, it’s been implemented in fifteen hundred cities all over the world, including forty-six in the US and Canada—even a few wards in Chicago try to facilitate it. How does it work? City governments turn over a percentage of their investment budget for the public to decide on. Every year, a series of budget meetings is held in one public building, usually a school, in every neighborhood. An attendance average is taken, and for each ten people who show up, the group gets to elect one voluntary delegate. The delegates hold an assembly where budget priorities are established, money is allocated, and construction contracts are awarded from the pool of companies that bid on them. Although investment usually only represents about ten percent of the average Brazilian city budget, and usually less than half of this amount is deliberated on by the public, projects that are implemented through participatory budgeting continually prove to be more cost-effective and a better fit for the needs of local residents, as opposed to traditional public works. At its best, participatory budgeting shrinks the size and power of the local government by turning decision-making over public spending directly to the people. In this sense, it deepens local democracy by increasing people’s deliberative power over their government. But it is not the magic pill that some of its northern advocates claim it to be. It is important to remember that participatory budgeting only opens deliberative power over a city’s investment budget, not its entire budget. In Brazil, the investment budget averages around ten percent of the total budget, but even in best cases, the amount opened up for public deliberation averages around three percent of the total budget. Studies have shown that in Brazil, participatory budgeting works best in mid-sized cities of one hundred-to-three hundred thousand people.



+ PEOPLE’S FORUMS

One of the key components of Brazilian left city government is the Popular Forum (or People’s Forum). There are scores of examples of different popular forums with different characteristics, but to give a brief overview, the city government, typically acting on pressure from below, makes a decision to open the management of one policy area to the people. Two examples of people’s forums in São Paulo were the Homeless Forum and the Immigrants Forum, which operated under PT Party Mayor Fernando Haddad from 2012-2016. In both cases the Mayor opened up most of his budget for these two policy areas for public deliberation and control through democratic citizen forums. Members of those population groups were invited to public meetings across the city. There, they elected voluntary delegates who represented and regularly reported back, who were invited to create policy and budgetary priorities for the government’s budget allocated specifically to benefit their population groups. The largest example of a people’s forum in Brazil is the National Ministry of the City’s council system. When Lula was elected in late 2002, the FNRU immediately began pressuring him through nationwide negotiations and protests, to cede full democratic control over the national urban budget. As a response, he created the National Ministry of the Cities and nominated socialist former Porto Alegre Mayor Olívio Dutra to head it. Together with his assistant minister, former São Paulo planning commissioner Erminia Maricato, Dutra created a nationwide system of municipal and state democratic, voluntary councils, which elected delegates representing specific segments of society such as unions, social movements, businessmen, academic institutions, professional associations, and NGOs. It was set up so that unions and social movements had an absolute majority, guaranteeing at least fifty-one percent representation by the working class. Every two years, thousands of voluntary delegates came from across Brazil to meet in Brasília at a national cities’ conference, to vote on new urban policies and budgets and to elect voluntary councilors, who would travel to Brasília every three months in the interim between Cities Conference to make policy decisions.

I was a member of the FNRU national directorate from 2007-2012 and served as a delegate at three different National Cities’ Conferences. As an immigrant to Brazil, I could not believe that I was sitting there in Brasília actually voting on laws. Two highlights were when Lula came to the conference to sign our new one-billion-dollar package for self-managed social movement housing construction, and when we passed a national urban sanitation policy which prohibited privatizations. Another highlight happened during a plenary session, when someone ran into the convention center auditorium and yelled that the military police were outside trying to kick out the street vendors who had been selling us food and beer all week and to confiscate their merchandise. I will never forget the look on those police officers’ faces when a thousand primarily black, working class social movement and union activists poured out, cre-

ated a protective circle around the vendors, and started yelling “the people, united, will never be defeated.” Needless to say, the police packed up and left under a shower of heckling, and vending activity continued that week.

Unfortunately, the same Gramscian ideology of building spaces of counter-hegemony to capitalism that swept the PT party into power seemed to be easily manipulated into justification for collaborating with scumbags, contributing to the demise of many of these progressive polices in the name of governability. On the national level the PT party never had more than twenty-two percent of the seats in Congress and the Senate, forcing Lula to enter into coalition with all kinds of corrupt parties, including those run by former political enemies, in order to get anything done. His main priority was to end the hunger crisis, generate jobs and eliminate poverty—and he succeeded, moving thirty-five million people above the poverty line. But he made a lot of sacrifices in achieving that goal. One of them was PT’s historic demand for radical urban reform. Instead of focusing on conversion of empty buildings in city centers to social housing, he allocated tens of billions of dollars of subsidies to the construction industry and the national mortgage bank to create over a million housing units on the city periphery. This ended up creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in the construction sector, but the end result was housing that primarily ended up in the hands of the lower middle and middle class—which already had a housing surplus, doing little to address Brazil’s housing deficit for the poor. After two years of innovative policy development at the Ministry of the Cities, Lula relieved Olívio Dutra of his command and turned it into a negotiating tool with his coalition partners. From 2005 forwards, the National Cities Ministry was run one conservative politician after another, who did his best to ignore the delegate and council systems directives. To add insult to injury, when a \$100 billion dollar growth acceleration package was announced to preemptively buffer Brazil from the World sub prime mortgage crisis, it completely bypassed the National Cities Ministry altogether and was implemented without any popular participation.

During the thirteen years of PT presidencies, which culminated in last year’s coup d’etat, the social movements and unions were often stuck protesting against certain policies made by a government that they also supported. In some cases this weakened their radical image and caused them to lose support from alienated youth. The lack of young people’s enthusiasm for urban reform was exacerbated by Popes John Paul II and Bento’s isolation and persecution of the liberation theology movement. The liberation theology priests and nuns did incredible political formation organizing in the Brazilian slums, and when their activities were curtailed, a huge knowledge vacuum of young people emerged. The space that was formerly filled by radical Catholics and Marxist priests and nuns among the urban poor is now occupied by evangelical churches of prosperity, neo-fascist police groupies and militias, and apolitical drug trafficking organizations. A non-stop barrage of conservative propaganda memes spammed across the social networks, often funded by US-friendly Brazilian political parties and American businessmen such as the Koch Brothers. When you add the fact that unions suffered huge declines over the last thirty years due to automation, resistance to the Coup government as it dismantles decades of progressive advances in urban governance, health, education, and labor rights has been seriously compromised.

Today, with an aging membership, the social movements and unions are under full-blown attack from the US-backed and illegitimate coup government. But on April 28, 2017, we fought back. Thirty-five million people participated in a general strike. Social movement activists and union members closed off thousands of streets in hundreds of cities across the country with burning tires at exactly the same time during the morning rush hour. I joined the MST and the Central de Movimentos Populares to shut down Avenida 23 de Maio in São Paulo.

When Mayor Washington died in 1987, he harbored the end of progressive city governance in Chicago. But his ideas did not die. The Brazilian Virtuous cycle model of urban governance may be in decline, but hopefully the lessons learned can be used to inspire new initiatives in other cities around the world.

If you love your city and have solidarity for the less fortunate, occupy a vacant building. Demand to have a voice in the planning process, fight slum-lording, burn tires, close off roads, and demand your right to see the budget, to change the budget, and to change the city in the way that you and your neighbors feel best suits your needs instead of the needs of the elite. Fight for a city that places people’s interests above those of banks and real estate companies. Look for allies. Show solidarity, and do what you can to turn your local environment into a rebel city.



then the World!

First the City,

For this issue of *Lumpen Magazine*, we turn a critical and hopeful eye to the concept of Municipalismo, taking cues from its successes in both organizing for and gaining power. Drawing from our experiences as architects involved in political and union organizing, we break down the lessons we can learn from Municipalismo, as well how we might expand each of them to build a movement so strongly rooted in local communities that its branches can reach out internationally.

Changes in political economy always indelibly transform the infrastructure of a city. These transformations are spurred by the requirements of exchange, which present themselves as rational and self-evident needs on the micro-scale. The contemporary city illustrates the effects of neoliberalism with itinerant spaces of deep poverty, mass consumption, and ultra-luxury. The disparities visible from neighborhood to neighborhood are a kind of perverse symbiosis bracketed in the urban and architectural “fallout of modernity” architect Rem Koolhaas has termed “Junkspace,” a concept as slippery as what it seeks to describe. In essence, the term is a reference to the way the wonders of human achievement are endlessly emptied of their potential and turned into the consumable, chintzy, stuff that makes up our environment and spaces. Junkspace isn’t necessarily the intentional result of a concerted project of capitalism but rather the precipitate of a set of naturalized ideological pressures. This precipitate has real effects. Junkspace, born of neoliberal market-fetishization, presents the world as endlessly plastic, making the deep and adherent relational ties central to political organizing nearly impossible to constitute. In a shallow recognizance of this problem, recent years have seen many knee-jerk attempts to create Junkspace alternatives that are friendly to development. Projects like the Highline and the 606 Trail attempt to bring a kind of “slowness” and “intentionality” to spaces otherwise associated with the industry, while on a smaller scale things like “parklets” lazily attempt to transform everyday practical spaces (parking spots, in this case) into something else, with the promise of a different social experience.

But we know that capitalism is an inherently alienating world order: no cutesy bench with succulent planters can undo that. Rather than encouraging and fostering interpersonal relationships, capitalismo splinters them, because it requires each individual to focus on her own survival in a system inherently ordered to exploit her. It’s no surprise that community-based organizing, which bears the promise of reconstituting community ties broken by capitalist hegemony, is emotionally compelling to so many, especially those living in urban centers. Municipalismo emerged as a form of community-based organizing, and proposes that we can rebuild our capacity to fight back by limiting the scope of our work to the borders of cities. By taking advantage of existing institutions—churches, community centers and neighborhood associations—and the interpersonal relationships therein, Municipalismo builds networks of participatory community power, held together by strong bonds of cultural affinity and solidarity. Through this process, spaces of opposition are defined and reproduced at the scale of the neighborhood.

The premise on which Municipalismo operates—that in order to pose a real challenge to existing systems of power, citizens can organize on the basis of the relationships and structures that already dictate their day-to-day lives—is neither foreign nor new. In fact, many of the tactics that make this kind of organizing possible are the same ones that union and community organizers have used for decades in the U.S. and worldwide. The key difference, and this is both the draw of Municipalismo but

also its potential weakness, is that the scope of organizing is limited to the confines of the city, effectively characterizing the city itself as an alternative space free from the confines of the market or negative political tendencies and ideologies.

But there is no outside. It is not possible to separate the city from the extraction of resources and systems of exchange at the regional and global scale, even if those do converge in downtowns. This entanglement has made the work of reconstituting social relationships particularly difficult. Many of these relationships have suffered a kind of bubblegum effect—stretched from their origin beyond recognition but stuck to it nonetheless. Increasingly, the block-party has given way to the competition of keeping-up-with-the-Joneses. Other relationships have shriveled and withered—maybe you’ve stopped seeing your bus driver because you’ve started ride-sharing to work. But if we’re going to do the work of building democracy, we have to find these relationships in the places and spaces where they surge: in the workplace, at the corner store, between two strangers sharing a table in a coffee shop because it was next to the power outlet.

One must start somewhere. Using the city as the delimiting factor to organizing—minimizing the scale of the fight—brings these interpersonal relationships into clearer focus at the same time that it makes the goal of a seat in the local government seem winnable. Having a visible finish line makes it easier to get started. But aside from organizing within its geographical confines, how can Municipalismo and other localist movements engage with the physical, lived space of the city?

Left activists have long tried to counter the hegemony of capitalist space (which is to say, all space) by attempting to denaturalize it. In recent memory, this has meant the Temporary Autonomous Zones of anarchist philosophy and the seizing of space during the Occupy movement, as well as the mass protests that subsumed cities as part of the anti-globalization movement and in the immediate aftermath of Trump. In any of these instances, exactly what levers of power are being pushed remain unclear. The endgame seems to be the creation of a space separate enough from the everyday horrors of living in a society premised on extreme inequity—a shining city on the hill separate from the horrors of capital—a city so bright its light will draw the masses to its example.

It’s precisely this emphasis on performativity and spectacle that limits the success of these movements to a generalized cultural awareness and normalization of dissent. This is meaningful but ultimately not transformative in and of itself. The configuration of space in the capitalist city tends towards exactly this kind of performance and is equally accommodating of spectacle, be it a billboard or a protest—left, right, or otherwise. In more concrete terms, the central business districts of cities across the world are symbols of all the things we might stand against—politicians who don’t work for the interest of the people, the offices of bankers and other agents of the bourgeoisie—and therefore they might seem like the proper place to mount a resistance. However, given the advancement of technology, the actual economic function politicians and bankers have (coordinating and siphoning dollars from a system of global trade and extraction) has very little to do with place—or at least the place of steel and glass towers that are the symbols par-excellence of neoliberalism.

As Matt Taibbi has said, finance capital is a “vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money.” Its tentacles extend into workplaces, city councils, and communities everywhere. For the left, these are the places where we can build power and stem the suck of resources upward. These are precisely the sites where our activities as workers and citizens intersect with broad and opaque systems of power. For this reason, Municipalismo offers a better strategy relative to the recent paradigm of performativity in the left, by translating the will of the masses into a reclamation of the right to the city through winning political power. While there are still limits to what left local governance can achieve (see the history of the Milwaukee Sewer Socialists), local power can effectively stymie elite interests and become an important stepping stone towards building a movement capable of winning a truly emancipatory society and economy—not least because it prepares us, the people, to govern even more broadly.

Beyond this kind of rehearsal of governance, what can Municipalist movements do once they win a place in local government? This is where we see the potential for localist movements to take a cue from workplace and union organizing. The difference between workplace organizing and Municipalist community organizing lies in their end-goals. While the former always leverages labor power to win specific, material gains—a contract renegotia-

tion to demand a raise, for example—the latter focuses the potential of organized communities to win local government elections. In other words, Municipalismo often takes the seizing of formalized power as the end rather than the means.

The reason that it’s often easier for localist movements to win seats in government (symbolic power) rather than to win material demands for their constituents (real power) is that they organize people based on bonds that surge in the spaces of cultural performance we’ve previously described—places where people of like minds get together to act out this like-mindedness. But while the people there are undoubtedly and importantly like-minded in their ideology, they might not be as attuned to the material conditions that bind them in the same way that workers on a factory floor (or in an office, for that matter) are. In spaces where people go for bread (the stuff that keeps us alive) or roses (the stuff that keeps us happy), it becomes much easier for people to see the ways in which capital denies both as well as the particular possibility of organizing to win something back by making real demands.

For many localist movements, there are no clear material wins—neither bread nor roses to be had. Rather, the wins are ephemeral—building community ties and a semblance of political power. While these are not insignificant, they do not constitute a truly revolutionary change in the order of things. In order to bring people of all kinds into the fold, any movement needs to clearly elucidate how power, once it is had, will be used to changing lives materially. In real terms this means rewriting local laws and codes to favor the majority over monied interests. Things like TIF districts in Chicago can be rewritten and retooled to provide resources to underserved communities, instead of being blank checks to developers seeking to put up another cheaply built mixed-use development sold on for a quick profit before the project literally falls apart.

Likewise, by shifting the emphasis of localism from away from creating a urban-scale world-apart onto an analysis of the ways in which cities are physically entangled in global economic networks (as scholars like Saskia Sassen have argued) it becomes possible to see how activists can hit elites where it hurts and thus build leverage to make more demands. In other words, activists can use the many tools at their disposal—city regulations, workplace strikes and union contracts, community pressure groups—to impact the flow of global trade routed through cities.

Consider that a significant percentage of this country’s freight travels by rail through Chicago city limits; oil tankers rumbling overtop of viaducts is a common sight on Chicago’s South and West Sides. The fact that hundreds of millions of dollars of crude oil coming from the far-away territory of the West roll freely above the rooftops of some of this country’s most systemically disadvantaged neighborhoods is an affront. It is easy to see how a coalition of community activists, environmentalists, local politicians properly representing the people’s interests, and the exploited workers operating these machines could emerge to win a greater piece of the pie by demanding excise taxes on hazardous goods traveling through the city or some similar mechanism.

In order to win, these groups would have to organize, coalesce their power, and leverage it through strikes and occupation, as well as apply the Municipalist strategy of putting people with the interests of the community in power. While such an action would necessarily have to be orchestrated at the scale of and within the physical confines of the city, its impact would surely reach outside of its physical borders. This is where we see the poten-

tial for left organizers everywhere to expand on Municipalismo’s playbook. If we pay increased attention to both the physical conditions of the city as well as to the more abstract ways in which cities are connected to global economic networks, we can organize within them to both seize formalized power and leverage the power already present in workplaces and communities, to get real, material wins for people in cities and beyond.

In spite of Trump’s election, or perhaps because of it, the newly resurgent left is in a position to accomplish all of these things. We have the ability now for the first time in decades to transcend performativity and Junkspace to go on the offensive. We can think—and win—global, even as we build local.

●
by
Mariana D’Aprile
and
Keefer Dunn

THE RE-CON-STRUC-TION OF DEMOC-RACY IN AMERI-CA

The national election campaigns in the United States have proven to be both more and less consequential than could have been imagined at its outset. On the one hand, what many imagined would merely present a well-rehearsed conflict between the centrist and reactionary wings of the elite neoliberal consensus has instead proven wildly unpredictable—both uncloaked white resentment (Trump) and the glimmerings of a social democratic alternative (Sanders) have managed unprecedentedly prominent access to the national public sphere. But on the other, the effective options on the ballot in November remain quite narrowly constrained, and divorced from any substantial popular input into policymaking and national priorities beyond facile identifications with what are essentially media personalities.

Yet across the United States, activists and communities are engaging on the local level in a multitude of ways with the urgent task of democracy’s reinvention. These grassroots efforts inside and outside of the electoral process, while fragmentary and incomplete, are nevertheless building the institutional basis and ideological frameworks necessary for a renewed American democracy. Whether they will be sufficient remains to be seen.

THE CONTEXT

Democracy in America has from its inception been grounded in its abnegation—the constitutive exclusion of certain human beings from the position of legitimate political subjects, most notably, the enslaved Black population, whose status in the first American century remained that of property. (The Black historian Gerald Horne has gone as far to suggest that the American war of independence itself was in no small part an effort to preserve this system of institutionalized and profitable white supremacy against the rising threat of abolition in the metropole.[1]) Democracy in America thus begins properly not with the Revolution, but with Reconstruction—the brief interregnum after the American Civil War in which the collective actions of the formerly enslaved population in the South was able, however briefly, to begin to sketch the institutions of freedom and self-governance.[2] In the historical light of Reconstruction and its undoing through paramilitary and state violence, American democracy is revealed to be not a simple and steady progressive march towards the inclusion of more and more subjects within the sphere of the political, but a project of continuing struggle.

Regardless of the ultimate quality of America’s formal democratic institutions as mechanisms for effective self-governance, formal exclusion from the political process for communities of color continues. The effects of partisan gerrymandering, for instance, while no means unique to the United States, are far too often drawn along the

colorline, severely diluting the potential impact of Black voters on the political process. 2.2 million Black Americans, nearly 1 in 13, are denied the vote due to felony convictions[3], as are the estimated 11 million undocumented Latino immigrants that provide a low-wage workforce and a convenient scapegoat for white working class anxieties about capitalism. Puerto Rico, with over 3.5 million people, remains a colony, neither an independent nation nor a state capable of voting, and now under the neoliberal governance of an appointed “financial oversight board” following its debt crisis. Even the capital city of the country—with more residents than the US states of Vermont and Wyoming—is formally excluded from the federal legislative process, in no small part, one suspects, because it is nearly 50% Black. Even considering simply the number of Black and Brown residents of the United States who are officially disenfranchised, unable to vote in national elections due to colonial or criminalized status, one arrives at a total of 17 million, or roughly equal to the entire population of the Netherlands—and this does not count those disenfranchised by gerrymandering or racist attempts to limit poll access through measures like “Voter ID” requirements.

Even were this formal exclusion to be undone, the prospects for effective “real” democracy remain slim within the current apparatus of state power. The presidential election every four years is the closest analog to a national plebiscite—and indeed, made possible Obama’s two terms, despite the overwhelmingly retrograde balance of power in the state and national legislatures. But the current national electoral process, which formally began nearly two years before the election with the announcement of the Ted Cruz candidacy in March of 2015, is less an effective expression of popular will and more of a multi-billion dollar spectacle of legitimization. With an

arcane system of arbitrary inherited rules in the primary competitions, together with its endemic corporate sponsorship and wealthy patronage, not to mention breathless and vapid media coverage filled with empty discussions of strategy and players, the election resembles nothing more than the televised sporting events which occupy the very same arenas, facilitating (profitable) mass identification with one’s “team” rather than any meaningful popular participation in self-governance. The demand to “get money out of politics,” associated with the campaign to overturn the “Citizens United” Supreme Court decision, which affirmed the constitutional right of corporate “persons” to spend unlimited amounts of money in the political process, is certainly a noble one. But whether there is anything left of American politics as currently constituted once the money has been removed remains unclear.

What the Trump campaign has shown is that the agency of this system of media-amplified affects and identifications exceeds even the control of the elite class which presided over its birth. Unchecked xenophobia and what Carol Anderson has aptly named as white rage[4] circulate within the “resonance machine” that connects the politics of resentment to its media avatars.[5] An organized class response is unlikely: unions—the traditional basis for articulating working class demands within the political arena, and achieving concrete rather than phantasmagoric gains—are at a historic nadir, especially in the private sector, where only 6.6% of workers belong to a union, down from a peak of just over a third in the mid-1950s.[6] Public sector unions, which retain effective density in many jurisdictions, are nonetheless under attack at the state level through legislation which is intended to hobble them politically by eliminating their ability to collect dues from the workers they bargain on behalf of. Indeed, it was very likely only the death of right-wing Justice Antonin Scalia, resulting in a deadlocked court in the Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association case, that prevented the evisceration of public sector unions nationwide.

All this unfolds in a context of unprecedented levels of discontent with the basic institutions of the American economy, especially among rising generations who understand that the escalator of post-WWII prosperity and rising expectations has stalled or slipped backward. A recent Harvard University survey of young adults between ages 18 and 29 found that 51 percent of respondents refused to endorse capitalism.[7] But as Nancy Fraser notes, “legitimation deficit is not the same as legitimization crisis.”[8] American democracy is wracked by dysfunction, reaction, and rooted in an economic and political system whose deep structural inequities are increasingly manifest—but there is little sense that some great tide of renewal is gathering momentum as a consequence.

●
by
John
Duda

BENEATH THE SURFACE, HOWEVER, ONE CAN SEE THE GLIMMERS OF POSSIBILITY FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES.

Consider the remarkable—and ultimately tragic—story of Chokwe Lumumba’s mayoral campaign in Jackson, Mississippi, deep in the American South—a “right-to-work”[9] state with weak unions, little traditional left infrastructure, and deep structural inequality. Nevertheless, in 2013, Chokwe Lumumba—an unapologetic partisan for Black liberation and anticapitalism—was able to win the popular vote and become the city’s mayor, despite fierce opposition from the local elite. While the promise of Lumumba’s victory more or less vanished with his untimely death by heart failure only eight months into his term of office, it presents a useful lens with which to understand the form that the reconstruction of American democracy might take in the present historical moment.

Jackson, Mississippi is by no means a stranger to radical struggle. As Akinyele Umoja amply chronicles,[10] the area around Jackson was an epicentre for extremely militant attempts to self-organize for the autonomy of black communities, including an effort by the Republic of New Afrika—with which Lumumba was affiliated—to build towards secession from the United States. This militant and more-often-than-not armed resistance to the racist status quo in the deep South was met with violent counter-reactions from the state along with its paramilitary allies. Ultimately, the legacy of these tumultuous years was a situation where local veterans of these struggles—among them the late Chokwe Lumumba—would be both deeply embedded in their community and ready and willing to advance a program of systemic transformation adapted to the local context, in which municipal power and economic development resources were to be redeployed to address the needs of the (largely Black) working class in ways that emphasized self-determination and direct democracy, and unapologetically derived from a deep engagement with radical politics. As a lawyer, for instance, Lumumba defended Black revolutionary Assata Shakur, who remains in exile in Cuba. Running on this personal history and political agenda, Lumumba would win first a seat in the local city council, then the mayorship, with few

This piece was written before the November 2016 US election, and originally appeared as “La démocratie en construction aux États-Unis” in La Pensée n°388. My intent in writing the piece was to highlight, for a non-US audience, some of the underlying dynamics and promising developments obscured by the sound and fury of the then in-progress presidential campaigns. I’m posting the English version here; I think the recent election of Chokwe Antar Lumumba to the mayor’s office in Jackson, the victory of DSA’s khalid kamau in South Fulton, GA, and Larry Krasner’s win in the Philadelphia primary for District Attorney validates at least some of the analysis.

financial resources. He managed this with the support of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement[11], a national network founded in Jackson in 1993, whose Jackson chapter provided the organization necessary to knock on every door in the city during the crucial primary election (like most majority Black cities in the United States, the Democratic primary in Jackson is for all intents and purposes the general election).

What made the victory in Jackson possible? Why is it significant for understanding the possibilities for the reconstruction of democracy in America? And what does its undoing suggest about the obstacles facing this project?

First and foremost, Jackson shows that the reconstruction of democracy in America is ultimately inseparable from the question of racial justice. In a nation which is still structured along the fault lines carved by its settler and slaveholding past, no matter how populist the economic program, no real progress is possible without specific remedies addressing the persistent effects of this legacy.[12] At the same time, racial justice cannot be mere inclusion, but requires for its realization systemic transformation, a recognition, as Martin Luther King put in his final years, that racial “justice” that leaves capitalism intact is “integrating into a burning house.” If majority Black communities in America are to become truly democratic in their mode of governance, it’s important to note that the content of this self-governance—or to use a better word—autonomy—is not simply demographic representation in the halls of power. The trajectory of Baltimore, for instance, shows this quite clearly—it was an African-American woman in the mayor’s office and a majority black city council that presided over the firm commitment to neoliberal austerity and repressive policing that led to the murder of Freddie Gray and the subsequent uprising in 2015.[13] Moreover, focusing on the connections between the project of racial justice and the need for systemic economic transformation (or at least a challenge to deeply entrenched neoliberal tendencies) is not just a correct analysis of the situation, it’s also strategic. While much has been made of the political consequences of the projected demographic transition of the United States to a “majority-minority” country around 2040,[14] it has also been pointed out that a movement capable of combining progressive economic policy with a racial justice agenda in effect already has an electoral majority in 2016.[15] In the long period between the exit from the Great Depression via tentative steps toward social democracy and the ascendancy of neoliberal policy, the white working class was, to a large extent, incorporated and invested in the project of American capitalism—the so called “middle class.” As the conditions of possibility for the existence of this middle class continue to disintegrate, new allegiances are becoming possible:

the electoral victory in Jackson showed the radical possibilities emerging beneath the shifting tectonic plates of a system in slow, grinding crisis.

When, as in Jackson, these faultlines are troubled, a kind of radical interruption becomes possible, in which the supposedly inviolable limits to what can be claimed in the name of democracy crumble. Most dramatically in the US, this kind of interruption has been supplied by Occupy Wall Street (2011–2012) and Black Lives Matter (2014—present). While the possibility of spontaneously organized reclamation of public space to express popular dissent is no doubt a properly global one, the specific effects of these manifestations in the US have been to desediment an incredibly ossified and narrowly constrained discursive and political situation, opening up possibilities to recognize and name economic and racial inequality that were simply not effectively present beforehand. Chokwe Lumumba’s victory in Jackson—along with the surprisingly successful presidential primary campaign of “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders within the Democratic party, and the election of Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant to the city council of Seattle—demonstrates that this kind of radical interruption is also possible at the level of electoral politics in the United States, where, for the first time in decades, the idea of “socialism” is no longer prohibited from the public sphere. These ideological breakthroughs can have lasting effects—Sawant played a key role in the groundbreaking success of the union-led campaign for a \$15/hr minimum wage in Seattle, which is now being replicated across the country, and Sanders’ mass rallies during the primary no doubt pushed Hillary Clinton farther to the left than she would otherwise have positioned her campaign. But these ruptures in the street and on the ballot, driven by charisma or contingency, function in part because of, rather than despite, their extraordinariness—as if their implausibility itself inoculates them against the return of the real. The death of Chokwe Lumumba eight months into his mayoral term shows how fragile these democratic exceptions can be—despite a wave of enthusiasm for his victory that continued to grow during the course of his administration, even from business interests in Jackson, who were apparently surprised that a candidate running on a radical left platform could also be capable of effective governance, his supporters (including his son Chokwe Antar Lumumba) were unable to hold onto the mayor’s seat in the special election called after his passing, and the momentum that propelled his campaign into city hall more or less dissipated, although there have remained encouraging, if smaller-scale efforts at the grassroots to continue to enact the radical economic vision of cooperative self-determination advanced by Lumumba while in office. [It’s possible I was too pessimistic here—it took just one electoral cycle for Chokwe Antar Lumumba to

LESSONS FROM JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

win a decisive mayoral victory!]

Other attempts to “catch lightning in a bottle” have also demonstrated the clear limits facing the democratic project. Democracy may be capable of surprise interruptions of the continuum of normal politics, but these moments of promise remain fleeting and singular.

Hence, the necessity for a kind of radical pragmatism. The reality of the party structure and the prevalence of non-parliamentary governance in the United States severely mitigates against the development of third parties. Exceptions can be found—like Gayle McLaughlin, who successfully ran in 2006 on the Green Party ticket for the mayor’s office in Richmond, California, a small city of 100,000 on the outskirts of the San Francisco Bay Area. McLaughlin, backed by a strong community organizing effort that built a bridge between Greens, left-leaning Democrats, and community-based organizations, was able to use the mayor’s office to challenge both the multinational Chevron, whose Richmond refinery presents severe health risks to the local Richmond community, as well as the mortgage industry—McLaughlin’s government was the first of just a few municipalities in the US to attempt to force write-downs on the mortgages of “underwater” homes by using the legal authority of the city to take these home in the name of the public interest. But the experience of Richmond is very much an exception, and the path to reconstructed and reinforced democratic governance, in the current American historical moment, lies largely in and through the Democratic party, despite all the contradictions this entails. Had Chokwe Lumumba run as a Green, or as an independent socialist, his campaign would have likely been an irrelevant rhetorical exercise. Instead, popular mobilization within and through the organ of establishment politics was capable of delivering control—albeit brief—over the municipal government, to an anti-capitalist and revolutionary.

Beyond the remarkable success realized by the Sanders campaign in what essentially amounted to a national campaign creating space for left economic populism in and through the Democratic Party, the experience of the Working Families Party testifies to the possibilities unlocked by pragmatic tactical accommodation to electoral reality. Founded in 1998, the WFP rose to prominence in the state of New York by exploiting a quirk in the state’s election law, so-called “fusion voting,” in which candidates for office can appear as the candidate for multiple parties on the same ballot, with the consequence that ballot access and electoral impact can be built by conditional left support of Democratic candidates. Candidates run both as Democrats and as belonging to the WFP, and the votes on both ballot lines are combined, with the effect that the process of building a left mandate can begin even when it is not sufficiently strong to elect a candidate by itself. The strategy, which invites at every step the constant threat of either collapse into establishment accommodation or radical irrelevance, is by no means an easy or stable one—but it may be the only one capable of laying the foundations for democratic governance. In New York, for instance, the WFP’s careful and methodical organizing has facilitated the formation of a powerful

progressive caucus within the New York City Council, and did much to help elect its current progressive mayor, Bill De Blasio, who despite many unavoidable contradictions, is nevertheless a vast improvement over his reactionary or plutocratic predecessors. Furthermore, in practice, the Working Families Party’s success is not entirely due to the peculiarities of fusion voting that allow for quasi-parliamentary ballot strategies. As evidenced by its slow but accelerating spread to other states, it also owes much to its ability to provide a pipeline of left candidates able to govern credibly and effectively, and to provide those candidates with the key support in on the ground canvassing that wins elections.[16] As in Jackson, restoring the possibility for a left electoral politics at the local level doesn’t so much take the form of displacing the institutionalized elite Democratic party, but in engaging in a kind of intensive popular organizing within and alongside that party that uses its own dominant position against it, filling the hollow bones of machine politics with radical content. Despite setbacks, the profile and quasi-party status of WFP continues to solidify—in the current national electoral cycle, for instance, both WFP and Moveon, a closely allied national advocacy organization, held membership votes that decisively swung for Sanders, both helping legitimate his unsuccessful but important challenge to the party establishment, and at the same time multiplying the sites of direct popular participation in a primary process designed to impede such democracy.

The temporal articulation of these efforts to recover and strengthen the democratic possibility in America is thus twofold: punctuated and unpredictable interruptions of the status quo, alongside the gradual advance of careful groundwork, sometimes coinciding as in Jackson, sometimes merely resonating with each other, as in the echoes of Occupy that animated the Sanders campaign.[17] But this rhythm of counterpower, of organization and interruption, is ultimately insufficient without a third element: the recognition that democracy is impossible to renew, build, or sustain over the long haul unless we begin to undo the systemic drivers that mitigate against its emergence. It is not enough to momentarily call the current system into question, or to slowly build power within it on its own terms—a real democracy in the US means both undoing the extraordinary influence of corporate wealth at every levels of governance, and undoing the persistent systemic mechanisms of white supremacy. The meaning of power—not just who holds it, but also how they do so—needs to be transformed.

The organizers in Jackson knew this well. Their victory—however fragile and ephemeral—was made possible by a clear, explicit, and public articulation of a radical political alternative. Despite new interest in left critique, in most progressive campaigns, any ultimately revolutionary or anticapitalist ambitions are buried deep down to avoid the damage of redbaiting or to present an acceptably mainstream profile. For instance, Sanders insisted studiously that his ‘socialism’ involved no collective or public ownership of the economy whatsoever. But the organizers of the victory in Mississippi spelled out, in clear detail, the Jackson (or “Jackson-Kush”) Plan documenting

the strategy and aims of an effort aiming far beyond social democracy.[18] The three components of the plan all insisted on the need for people’s power: beyond a slate of political candidates capable of winning local office, the plan called for a network of people’s assemblies and the development of a solidarity economy capable of institutionalizing the gains made in a durable, self-sustaining, and autonomous form—a network of cooperatively-owned businesses grounded in working class communities of color. Rather than doing good work on important issues and hoping someday that this work would activate enough people to translate, via some to-be-determined mechanism, into progressive political power, MXGM set out quite clearly to transform the meaning of power in Jackson at the same time that they were organizing to win elections.

While the organizers in Jackson recognized that “we cannot afford to ignore the power of the state,”[19] they also understood the necessity of building power outside of it. The reconstruction and construction of democracy does not merely mean more inclusive electoral victories, but the broad, popular, and participatory activation of community power. Thus—inspired by elements of Venezuela’s Bolivarian revolution—the Jackson-Kush plan insisted on a parallel structure of standing community assemblies in addition to the cadre running for electoral offices. This community assembly structure and the Lumumba campaign itself was deliberately broader than MXGM, with its narrower focus on Black self-determination. Even in a city where the population is nearly 80% Black, the self-activity of an autonomous Black movement, while necessary, was not sufficient. The larger movement structures it catalyzed were built in such a way as to be capable of claiming not just to represent the interests of the black community, but the interests of the city as a whole. This kind of articulation made it possible to build strategic alliances with Jackson’s growing Latino population, another community of color with its own specific relationship to the neoliberal state, not to mention progressive whites, with access to key strategic resources. By focusing on building popular power in way that recognized that this power would need to do more than contesting injustice—that it would actually need to prefigure a mode of democratic governance—the campaign of Chokwe Lumumba was able to challenge neoliberalism’s hegemony at the municipal level, successfully contesting the ways in which “common sense” was produced, to the extent that a candidate who refused to renounce a revolutionary program of socialism and black liberation could be seen as an acceptable and intelligible candidate to run the city.

The economic content of this organizing strategy again turned on a renewed conception of democracy, mobilizing a radical project of cooperative economics to be supported by municipal policy. In part, this drew on the reinvigoration of a deep historical tradition of cooperatively enterprise grounded in the long movement for Black civil rights.[20] But perhaps contrary to expectations, elements of this program are increasingly commonplace in American cities in 2016. The Evergreen network of worker cooperatives, with initial capital raised from pub-

lic and nonprofit sources, has been established in Cleveland, Ohio to connect the procurement needs of large universities and hospitals to new democratically owned firms based in disinvested communities of color. New York City under De Blasio, as well as Madison, Wisconsin, have shifted millions of dollars into the promotion of the legal and financial ecosystem for worker cooperative development. Community land trusts, which tame inhumane speculation and gentrification in the real estate market by subordinating property rights to community control and permanent affordability, are at the forefront of strategies for a transformative solution to the deepening national housing crisis, still far from resolved after the 2007–2008 crisis. Small scale participatory budgeting has been introduced in cities like Boston, Chicago, and Greensboro, North Carolina—and along with it, the notion of directly democratic decision making as a new normal for public policy. These exciting small-scale developments are taking place against a backdrop of a less overtly political, but much larger, collective economic sector organized around democratized ownership in the United States—over 10 million Americans, for instance, work at employee-owned firms. Cooperatively organized credit unions have over \$1 trillion in assets, and together with the even larger cooperative farm credit system had \$2.25 trillion in assets in 2013—more than any Wall Street bank except JP Morgan Chase, which held \$2.29 trillion.

The vision that Chokwe Lumumba was able to win on in Jackson was one in which these kinds of anti-capitalist economic formations are connected to a grassroots mobilization for racial equity, and knitted together into a truly systemic alternative. His movement observed that efforts to restore and build democracy in the political sphere will founder without transforming the economic basis in the direction of democracy as well. The wager is that by institutionalizing left gains in autonomous institutions controlled directly by the community, these gains can be insulated from inevitable political reversals, and can slowly shift the terrain by displacing corporate power from the economy, while building the capacities of communities for effective self-governance.[21] Piecemeal changes to the economic basis on which politics rests and the institutional framework in which it unfolds can slowly work to accelerate the pace of the long construction of democracy. National People’s Action (now a part of People’s Action, an even larger network of left organizing projects across the US) articulated this strategy as follows:

Structural reforms are the stepping-stones on our pathways of Structural Transformation that will ultimately change our economy. They are changes to laws, policies, and rules that change power relations, structurally, by giving power to people, and/or taking power away from corporations and the 1 %. Thinking in this way is a breakthrough, because, in addition to winning campaigns that improve people’s lives and build our organizations, we are now focused on changing the landscape upon which the next set of fights take place.[22]

Chokwe Lumumba’s unpredictable and tragic death, and the disarray it threw the community forces supporting him into, forestalled the plan for democratic self-deter-

mination his election was supposed to inaugurate. But the strategy was sound—build popular power to win elections, and use those electoral victories to shift the economic terrain in favor of the communities in which that power was grounded. Wherever possible, use public resources—policy, investment, and spending—to drive the community economy, not to amplify the power of the corporate one.[23] Govern as if capitalism did not have a real future, and in so doing, undermine the vestigial ideologies that cling to its unconditional preservation in the face of overwhelming evidence of its dysfunction.

Whether the MXGM cadre and their allies in Jackson will be able to effectively regroup to fully realize Lumumba’s dream is an open question. [Again, I should have been

more optimistic!] Nevertheless, the brief opening towards historical hope in this small city in Mississippi illuminated for the future the fundamental strategies for a movement for the construction of real democracy in the United States. Such a movement must take hold where it can, borrowing for the long haul in and through the husks of civil institutions hollowed out by neoliberalism and seizing upon the moments of systemic interruption in which new ideological possibilities emerge, however briefly. Above all, it must dare to take its dreams of a world beyond capitalism and white supremacy seriously.

Thanks to the participants in the “How to Take Over Your City” reading group at the Baltimore Free School for all the discussions that fed into this article!

Notes

- [1] Gerald Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).
- [2] The classic accounts of the Reconstruction period are W.E.B. Du Bois’ magisterial *Black Reconstruction* and Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction*. David Roediger’s *Seizing Freedom: Slave Emancipation and Liberty for All* (New York: Verso, 2015) offers a useful account of the centrality of the abolition struggle to the possibility of an American radical politics in general.
- [3] “Felony Disenfranchisement: A Primer” <http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/felony-disenfranchisement-a-primer/> . Angela Behrens and Christopher Uggen, writing for the *American Journal of Sociology* in 2003, trace the origin of felony disenfranchisement in the United States to efforts to roll back Reconstruction.
- [4] Carol Anderson, “Ferguson isn’t about black rage against cops. It’s white rage against progress,” *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ferguson-wasnt-black-rage-against-cops-it-was-white-rage-against-progress/2014/08/29/3055e3f4-2d75-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33_story.html.
- [5] On the “resonance machine,” see William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
- [6] Despite overall weakness in terms of overall density, there are some bright spots in an otherwise dismal landscape for unions, especially when looking at mobilization at the city, rather than workplace, level. In addition to the numerous and growing local union-efforts around raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr, the Chicago Teachers Union, grounded in robust rank and file participation and a vision of educational equity that goes beyond narrow professional self-interest, would have likely in 2015 seen its president Karen Lewis elected mayor of Chicago over consummate Democratic neoliberal Rahm Emanuel had she not had to bow out of the race due to health issues.
- [7] Max Ehrenfreud, “A majority of millennials now reject capitalism,” *Washington Post*, April 26, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/work/wp/2016/04/26/a-majority-of-millennials-now-reject-capitalism-poll-shows/>.
- [8] Nancy Fraser, “Legitimation Crisis? On the Political Contradictions of Financialized Capitalism,” *Critical Historical Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2015).
- [9] So called “right-to-work” laws, prevalent in the US South, are designed to undermine the power of unions by making collective bargaining agreements that mandate union membership or dues payments by all workers in a workplace illegal.

- [10] Umoja, Akinyele Omowale. We will shoot back: Armed resistance in the Mississippi freedom movement. NYU Press, 2013.
- [11] At a national level, MXGM laid some of the key foundations for the systemic perspective on extrajudicial state killings of Black people that would emerge in #BlackLivesMatter with its 2013 report “Operation Ghetto Storm,” which highlighted the tragic fact that a Black man is killed, on average, once every 28 hours by law enforcement in the US . See <https://mxgm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Operation-Ghetto-Storm.pdf>.
- [12] For a very clear analysis of how the project of antiblackness has continued to shape policy and economic inequality into the present day, see Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case For Reparations,” June 2014, *The Atlantic*.
- [13] In his valuable essay “Austerity, Neoliberalism, and Black Communities” Lester Spence argues that, in the context of the “ongoing neoliberalization of black politics,” we need to “analyze the machinery created to resolve the black power dilemma—how do blacks govern themselves in the wake of the civil rights movement and the absence of a sufficiently powerful contemporary political movement? In a context where support for what we think of as ‘the public’ is waning, what are the techniques blacks use to get black people to be literally ‘self-determined’? How might these techniques change over time? To what extent do they increase intra-racial inequality?” (Souls, July-December 2012, pp. 155–156, <<http://krieger.jhu.edu/arrighi/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2014/03/The-Neoliberal-Turn-in-Black-Politics.pdf>>)
- [14] See for instance Ruy Teixeira, William H. Frey, and Robert Griffin, *States of Change: The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate, 1974–2060* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2015).
- [15] Phillips, Steve, Brown is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority (New York: The New Press, 2016).
- [16] Harold Meyerson, “Dan Cantor’s Machine,” *The American Prospect*, January 6, 2014, <http://prospect.org/article/dan-cantors-machine>.
- [17] For an exploration of the tension between these two temporal modes of the political, see John Duda, “Where was the Social Forum in Occupy?” in *We Are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012).
- [18] “The Jackson Plan: A Struggle for Self-Determination” 2012. 9 Jun. 2014 <<http://mxgm.org/the-jackson-plan-a-struggle-for-self-determination-participatory-democracy-and-economic-justice/>>

- [19] “The Jackson Plan: A Struggle for Self-Determination”
- [20] See Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), who notes that the historical legibility of this movement was hampered by the need to decrease the visibility of Black community enterprise, due to omnipresent threats of state and paramilitary violence and confiscation.
- [21] On displacement, see Gar Alperovitz, “Neither Revolution Nor Reform: A New Strategy for the Left,” *Dissent*, Fall 2011.
- [22] National People’s Action, “Long-term Agenda to the New Economy,” 2012, http://npa-us.org/files/long_term_agenda_0.pdf.
- [23] Austerity, of course, hits American cities dominated by entrenched poverty particularly hard—without the federal government’s ability to create money, and often dependent on politically hostile state-level governments for much of their resources, these cities, dependent for the most part on the bond market for capital investment, have little room to maneuver in shifting the dynamics of the economy. Nevertheless, there are considerable resources these cities can deploy effectively that are budget-neutral: a shift in municipal purchasing to local cooperatives, as Chokwe Lumumba envisioned it, would function as the kernel of a sort of import substitution strategy for planning the local economy in alignment with democratic economic outcomes.

Kali Akuno at plenaryEdit

by
Alan
W.
Moore

The following is excerpted from Kali Akuno’s remarks in Barcelona at the “Fearless Cities” meeting in June 2017. Akuno is an activist with Cooperation Jackson, the municipalist platform in Jackson, Mississippi.

One of the things I wanted to highlight, particularly in the present era—there’s a phrase that we use in Jackson: the Syriza trap. And the Syriza trap is thinking that our forces, left and progressive forces, can manage the contradictions of capitalism. And do so in such a way that we can take this state, this edifice that exists, and transform it for our own needs without actually transforming society. We say in Jackson that that’s a false premise, and I think history bears that out. First and foremost we have to start transforming society from the bottom up in a participatory [manner. . .]. Everywhere, in every continent and every country, when you look at great transformative experiments it comes from the bottom up, it doesn’t come from the top down. And what we’ve seen time and again, particularly in the last 40 to 50 years—the welfare state has been undermined, almost virtually destroyed in almost every single country. The United States never really had one. But here in Europe, we’ve been seeing its gradual steady demise. And what’s being put in its place is the capture of the state by the neoliberal order, either imposed internally by those who are trying to take more profit from us, me and you and everybody in our communities, or imposed externally by the IMF, the World Bank, and institutions like that.

So these are some of the contexts in what we are struggling in, in building a new platform, in building a new model, which for us starts in part with the municipal platform. From our argumentation, and I think it’s very similar with most of you, that’s a place where you can have direct contact with your neighbor, direct contact with people in your neighborhood, and you can find out what are their interests, what are their hopes and desires and dreams, what are their fears. And together you can figure out how to organize for what you want and how to counter, and not be subject to the things that you fear, for whatever reason, be it rational or irrational. And if there’s certain notions that you might have to confront, even within your local community—racism, sexism, xenophobia—it’s more on the local level. I would argue that you can struggle with your neighbor to overcome those particular aspects of their beliefs, and to cre-

ate a practice which will enable them to be open to new people, new communities. So there’s something for us to build upon and look at on the base, on the bottom of that municipal piece.

We are still part of a switch that’s been going on since 1994. And this is an experiment with new forms of organizing to overcome many of our own mistakes of the past, particularly left mistakes of the past. A lot of us started thinking about new ways of practicing democracy, first and foremost from the Zapatista experiment in 1994. And from that we’ve seen—in Europe, in Latin America, and a little bit in North America—constant experiments of us trying, sometimes failing, but trying again, and getting better at it at each go-around. How do we lift people up from the bottom? How do we practice broad democratic practices transforming society from below? And how do we not only use elections, like we did in Jackson, to not only be in control of the government, but to use that as a platform of opening up so that when Antar [Mayor of Jackson, Chokwe Antar Lumumba] says, “When I become mayor you become mayor”—that that is a genuine democratic practice that is emerging from the struggles from below. This is what we would argue is how we fit in to the new municipal platform that’s really being built. This is critical when we look at the nation state as it exists almost everywhere—it’s an old edifice which is increasingly becoming anti-democratic almost everywhere. And it’s got structures inherent to it that actually confine communities and make them subject to national democratic wills, which are more and more—as we experience in the United States and I think here in Europe—more and more right wing, more and more fascist at each turn.

But there’s a critical piece: There are more people now on the planet Earth who lives in cities than live in rural areas. This is a relatively new human phenomenon. And it’s one that I would argue works in our benefit. But we have to organize ourselves in our communities from the ground up to counter the forces of capital, which want to dictate to us, either via tourism or financializing everything, so that we can’t afford it or are subject to it. Being in cities, and arguing and building solidarity between cities, we constitute this new majority that can supersede these old structures—if we stand in community and solidarity with each other. I think this conference is one of the beginnings of such a practice, and I look forward to working with all of you on working on a municipal platform that will ultimately transform the globe, and transform the future for our children and our grandchildren. Because we want them to live in a world much better than what we inherited, and it’s our responsibility with the ecological crisis to make sure that we are doing the things in the here and now that make sure that there is a world that they are actually inheriting. So the future is really in our hands. Let’s seize it.

Transcribed from “Ciutats sense por. Plenari de cloenda: municipalisme internacional,” a video recording on the YouTube channel of Barcelona En Comú. Lightly edited by Moore.



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Photos by
Jim Newberry



Updates from the Streets

●
by
John
McKim

Municipalism is about neighbors organizing neighborhoods. The concrete context for the struggle is in the streets of our communities. Because municipalism provides a critical alternative to a shared condition of broken, institutionalized, corporatized, racist, elitist democracies around the world, it is an international undertaking as well. This piece is an effort to think both about the particular municipalist efforts in cities across the USA, and to put them in conversation so we can see this growing national momentum and learn tactically from each other. We are not alone!

This update has been written in conversation with local activists in each city, but the entries are my own account of their activities. There are likely accidental omissions and misrepresentations, so please let me know so I can correct them for the next update. In addition, because of time and other constraints, this is not a comprehensive review of municipalist efforts across the country. I've added a few links at the bottom of this article that shed some light on what's been going on in a few of the cities I was unable to reach. Finally, my writing of this article coincided with the international municipalist summit, Fearless Cities (<http://fearlesscities.com/>), which happened June 9-11, 2017. Many people I talked to expected to learn a lot about strategy and organizing moving forward, and anticipate new energy and growth in building municipalism in the USA. The next update will be of interest. Please get in touch and send updates (john.kim@gmx.com), so we can include them in the next article.

New York City, New York

I corresponded with a group organizing around municipalism in New York City (NYC), where there's a lot of activity happening. The group has been working with organizers in Barcelona affiliated with Barcelona en Comú and others around the USA, to draft an open-source document on how to build a decentralized municipalist network for the USA, learning from municipalist experiments around the world. They've produced a compelling first draft of the document, "Municipalism in the USA," and are currently seeking feedback on it (<http://bit.ly/MunicipalismUSA>). The next version will be shared online at the beginning of 2018. With this document they hope to open a conversation with others around the country taking and customizing it for their own specific context and municipality. The hope is that all the different versions become the basis for a network of conversation and exchange on municipalist strategy in the USA.

In addition to their work on the municipalism document, the NYC group has also launched Nociones Comunes, a series of collaborative educational seminars around municipalism in collaboration with Common Notions, a radical publishing site. These seminars on municipalist strategy are focused on building organizational and research capacity through participatory learning, and created especially for women and people of color. The first of these seminars, "Municipalism 101," ran this past June. "Municipalism 2.0" will begin this Fall. "Queering Politics," a series on feminizing politics and related topics, will begin March 2018.

To find out more about the NYC group's activities, visit Nociones Comunes(bit.ly/NocionesComu) or email nocionescomunescnyc@gmail.com.

To join the NYC municipalism mailing list, sign up at: bit.ly/ContactUsLink

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

I spoke with Jack Rabbit, who has been involved in organizing in Northeast Philadelphia around commons-based democratic reform and direct democracy. He prefers the term "Real Democracy" to municipalism, and in consideration of this, I continue to use the term throughout this section.

The Philadelphia group has been going for six months. They've been organizing regular public meetings for people interested in Real Democracy. They have also been meeting weekly with various organizations around the city, such as Neighborhood Networks (a grassroots social and economic justice organization) and Philly Democratic Socialists that might benefit from being involved in and organizing around Real Democracy. Jack looks forward to two events that will enable the group to grow its outreach and organizing capacities: the international municipalist summit on June 9-11 in Barcelona, in which a number of US municipalist activists will be involved, and the completion of a US statement of principles for municipalism. (Note: see the NYC update for more info on this.) Both will create new opportunities for sharing core ideas and theories that inform Real Democracy, provide a basis for regular meetings and assemblies, and create a stronger sense of coherence and direction to this work.

Finally, Jack was deeply involved in the Occupy movement and acknowledges that his interest in Real Democracy is an outgrowth of this earlier work. During his work with Occupy, he came to recognize limitations in its radically decentralized approach to political organization and understand the power held by electoral politics. What's most exciting about Real Democracy is that it poses the possibility of exercising political power in a way that holds it fully accountable to the people, which is ultimately where such power originates.

To find out more about the Philadelphia group, visit Win the City (www.winthecity.us) or contact Jack Rabbit directly (Jackrabbit@winthecity.us).

Twin Cities, Minnesota

We've been organizing in the Twin Cities since early 2017, and to date we've hosted a couple public meetings on municipalism. During these gatherings, we were lucky to have Alan W. Moore and Fernando Canteli De Castro in conversation, to introduce us to municipalist activities internationally. For the moment, our energies are focused on developing a strategy for a version of municipalism relevant to the Twin Cities, and increasing our capacity and outreach efforts, initially through monthly meetings, workshops, and convivial get-togethers. In addition, we're in search of funding and grant opportunities to pull together a regional and/or international conference on municipalism, focused on workshoping and researching its application to the Twin Cities and the USA. (Our collaboration with this magazine is part of these regional efforts.) We're hoping to organize this conference by late 2018-2019. We recently received a small grant to help fund regular meetings and host future visitors on the municipalism and the commons. Appropriate to our optimism surrounding these efforts, we had our last meeting at a local space called "The Future!"

To find out more about or join the Twin Cities group, visit Beyond Repair (thisisbeyondrepair.com)—a website specific to this group is still forthcoming. More about the Future: thefuturempls.com.

Other Cities

In Richmond, California; Jackson, Mississippi; Austin, Texas; and other cities there are other exciting municipalist developments. I didn't have an opportunity to include those in this update. I hope to for the next one. Instead, here's a few recent articles on what's been going on in these and other cities:

inthesetimes.com/article/20100/jackson-mississippi-radical-mayoral-candidate-chokwe-lumumba

www.thenation.com/article/a-progressive-electoral-wave-is-sweeping-the-country/

inthesetimes.com/working/entry/19796/richmond_california_shows_how_progressives_can_win

csmonitor.com/World/2017/0608/Can-direct-democracy-reenergize-West-s-disillusioned-voters

What Does a Real Sanctuary City Look Like?

●
by
Jerry
Boyle

As the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants kicks in, the subject of "sanctuary cities" is much discussed on both right and left. But remember: the subject is merely a concept—there is no agreed definition, legal or otherwise, of what constitutes a sanctuary city.

Republicans denounce sanctuary cities as violent urban enclaves run by outlaw Democratic regimes that flout and obstruct enforcement of federal immigration laws to support a voting base of criminals. Democrats, in contrast, laud themselves for providing refuge to persecuted immigrants seeking nothing more than a chance to achieve the American Dream.

Both definitions are peddling propaganda. The Republicans are using draconian immigration enforcement to Make America White Again. And the Democrats are selling phony sanctuary schemes that sound nice to voters sympathetic to the cause, but are so riddled with exceptions as to be virtually useless.

Chicago provides a perfect example of this dynamic. On the one hand, Trump is so universally reviled here that's he now afraid to return to the town that humiliated him by forcing him to cancel his 2016 campaign rally here. So he continuously vents his rage at Chicago and threatens to cut off federal funds to the city. On the other, we have Rahm Emanuel, an ostensibly Democratic Mayor who, in his prior incarnations as a Washington power broker, advised Democratic Presidents to adopt tough immigration policies, hopefully neutralizing the sanctuary with swing voters. Now a national disgrace, Rahm pretends to be a friend to immigrants—but only because his voting base has shrunk in an immigrant town where Trump's xenophobia is politically toxic. Rahm's commitment to immigrants is pure spin, a cynical charade designed to fool his voters. People are being deported every day because of Rahm Emanuel's covert connivance with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the federal agency with principal responsibility for immigration enforcement.

The ambiguity embedded in the term "sanctuary city" leaves both sides plenty of room for equivocation and disingenuity, so we need to get back to basics.

Sanctuary: A Place to Hide

**Can you give me sanctuary?
I must find a place to hide
A place for me to hide.**
– The Doors

Sanctuary is an ecclesiastical term with an ancient history. Derived from the Latin, it literally means "a place holding the sacred," but generally it's used to refer to a church, temple, mosque, etc. In the West, sanctuaries were, legally, solely within the jurisdiction of clerical authority, which trumped all civil authority. But although the legal distinction was eliminated centuries ago, the concept is so embedded in the culture that to this day, civil authorities are extremely reluctant to enter a religious institution to make an arrest—for one, the optics are terrible. Recent examples of this include celebrated cases of immigrants avoiding deportation by holing up in Chicago churches, as well as the masses of protesters who slept in church basements for the duration of the NATO Summit in 2012—there is no safer space than the sanctuary of a religious institution.

Chicago's Welcoming City Ordinance: A Soft Parade for Rahm

**Can you find me soft asylum?
I can't make it anymore
The Man is at the door.**
– The Doors

The Chicago Welcoming City Ordinance ostensibly commits to non-cooperation by city agencies in the enforcement of immigration laws. But excepted from the ordinance are those convicted of felonies, those charged with certain crimes, and those stigmatized as allegedly belonging to gangs. There is no meaningful enforcement mechanism, and immigrants are left to the tender mercies of the infamously violent, racist, and unaccountable Chicago Police Department, which acts with effective impunity.

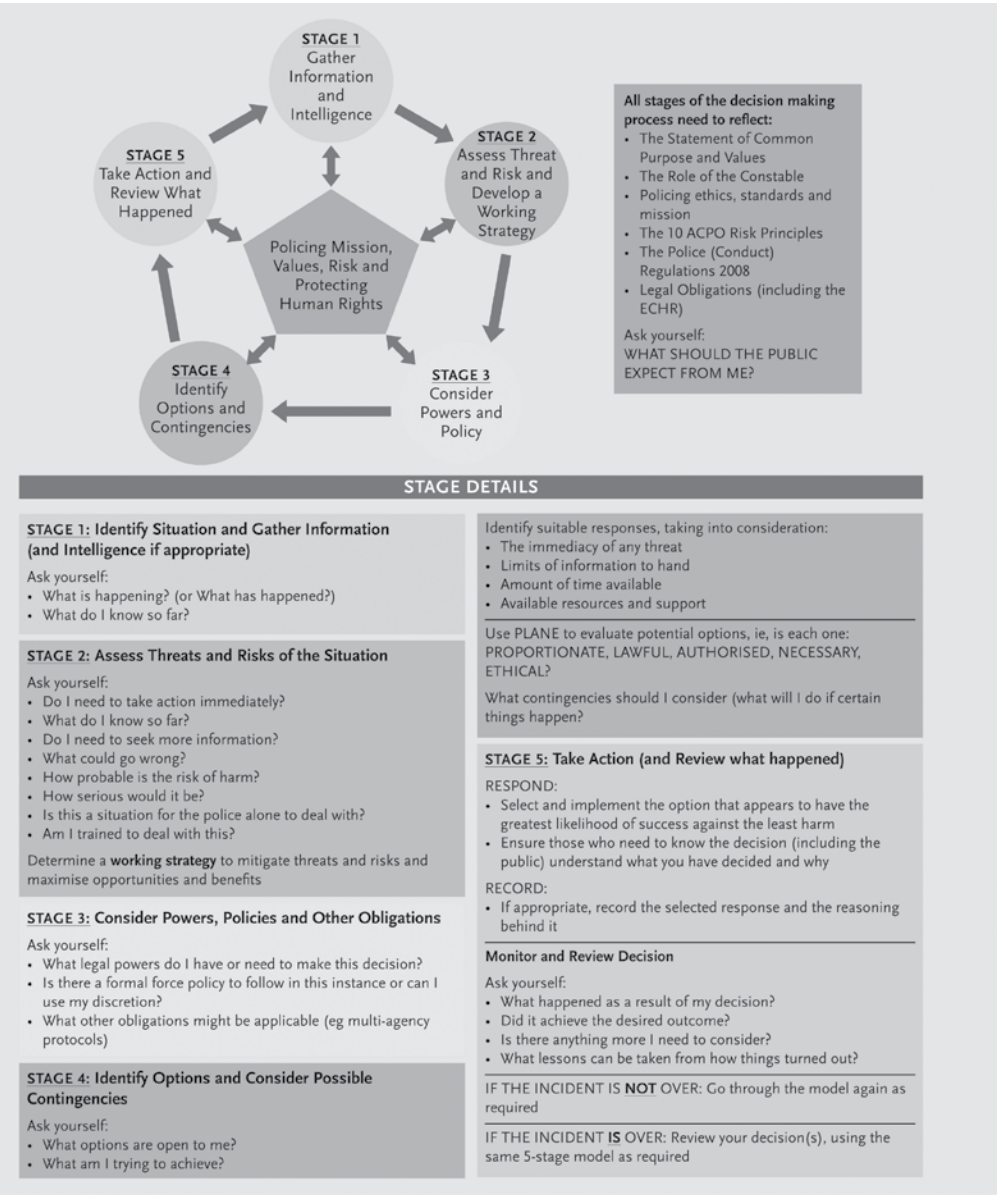
Any Chicago police officer can place an immigrant at risk of deportation merely by choosing to arrest them for a crime, whether or not a crime was committed. And hundreds of thousands of Chicago residents are, rightly or wrongly, identified as gang members or "strategic subjects" in the massive surveillance databases maintained at Homan Square, Chicago's infamous Black Site, which are shared with federal authorities. Any immigrant picked up on a bad rap on at the whim of a dirty cop can be summarily whisked away and deported by ICE—before their first court date.

Coupled with Rahm's mass incarceration strategy, which sweeps people off the streets on pretexts, ICE serves as just another means by which Rahm can rid himself of people who are not included in his vision for a city of white, affluent consumers for the bankers he serves.

Chicago's Peelers

A real sanctuary city would begin with a new concept of policing. First, it's important to remember that the Chicago Police Department was not founded to fight crime—quite the contrary. The Chicago Police Department was founded to persecute immigrants. In the nineteenth century, Chicago elected a bigoted Know-Nothing Mayor who attacked immigrants. When the immigrants rebelled (in the so-called "Lager Beer Riots"), monied interests insisted that the city adopt a professional force of uniformed officers modeled on the British police, which were founded for the very same purpose—to put down civil disturbances by persecuted Irish Catholic immigrants.

Current Chicago police policy still follows a paramilitary model, with cops as warriors waging a counter-insurgency campaign against groups that pose a political threat to established power. In the wake of the notorious police misconduct scandals that destroyed his



career, Rahm now trumpets his commitment to “reform” in a desperate effort to recover some measure of political credibility. But like every such initiative ever undertaken by him, Rahm’s promises of police reform are a teasing illusion, a munificent bequest in a pauper’s will. His reforms are tweaks, adopting minor tactical changes that pay only lip service to remedying particular techniques that generated bad headlines. Our police are still paramilitary warriors waging a counter-insurgency campaign.

There is a better way. In the wake of civil disturbances in London in 2011, the British adopted a new model for policing, and replaced the Warrior Model with a Guardian Model. Whereas the Warrior Model focuses on control, with cops always escalating the use of force one step ahead of citizens, the Guardian Model emphasizes alternatives to force—

de-escalation, with police officers focusing on working with communities to find alternatives to violence for solving problems. The contrast is illustrated by the graphic representations of the models:

But the Guardian Model is not just some fantasy from overseas. It has been adopted by a number of American jurisdictions, and it’s recognized as the best practice by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), considered the premier private sector consultant by most responsible law enforcement executives.

Rahm Emanuel: The Devil in the White City

Rahm Emanuel made a conscious and deliberate decision to maintain the Warrior Model because he is committed to control and neutralize potential political threats by mass incarceration. His strategy is nothing less than genocidal—deprive Black and Brown communities of resources, and then wage low-intensity warfare on those communities to intern them en masse or induce them to move somewhere else. It is no accident that the vast bulk of Chicago’s population loss in recent years has consisted of Black citizens (who first came here as refugees from the Jim Crow South), and that the other immigrant populations are kept under the heel of an oppressive force, thus ensuring their swelling numbers never amount to a meaningful political threat. Rahm is White Flight’s Revenge, driving gentrification in a neo-colonial campaign of ethnic cleansing. There is no sincere commitment to reform on the fifth floor of City Hall. We have to look elsewhere.

Hope Lives in the City of Neighborhoods

When the government fails, we have no choice but to return to our roots: to our communities. They are the ultimate source of political power. It’s up to us to make Chicago a real sanctuary city. And that work is being done every day by the people and the organizations they form in their neighborhoods, where bonds of trust and kinship tie us to a common purpose.

In the long run, campaigns to resist mass incarceration—which would ultimately eliminate police and prisons—have the answer. Again, abolition is the ultimate goal. But in the mean time, we can work, in meaningful ways, to limit the damage inflicted by the state apparatus. And to some extent, we already have. We replaced a fascist State’s Attorney with Kim Foxx, a reformer who’s taken meaningful steps to frustrate the police department’s mass incarceration strategies. Foxx just declines to prosecute many petty offenses, minor property crimes, and absurd parole violations, and she does that because community groups campaigned for years to defeat her fascist predecessor. Politicians pay attention when a fascist takes a fall. Similar campaigns led to the election of a County Board President committed to reducing the inmate population at the infamous Cook County Jail, a massive internment camp for innocent people who don’t have the money to make bail. Supporting legislation to decriminalize innocuous behavior and mitigate or abolish cash bail, will help to keep our people on the streets where we need them.

And now, with Trump ramping up his assault on immigrants, community groups are organizing to resist. Sure, the big money NGOs do useful work, but it’s the small, hyper-local groups in every neighborhood which form the backbone of the resistance. Leadership must come from those most threatened by the oppression. And more secure allies should take their direction from them.

We already know how to do it. On March 12, 2016, Donald Trump brought his parade of horrors here—to the UIC Pavilion: on the campus of our most diverse university, in the center of this immigrant town. Groups from every community in the city, led by those targeted by Trump’s politics of hate, descended on that building and drove that bigot out of town merely by showing up and speaking out forcefully. The action at UIC is the template for our resistance.

Trump’s not afraid of Rahm Emanuel. They get along fine. He’s not afraid of our Governor, a fellow finance capitalist. But Trump’s afraid of us. And we keep him afraid by working with churches and NGOs in our neighborhoods, forming immigrant support networks; joining Black Lives Matter protests; marching with women, LGBTQs, scientists, and others resisting Trump’s assaults on us; and counter-protesting hate groups that attack our people. For those who can’t take to the streets, there is plenty of work online, where opinions are formed, policy is shaped, and street actions are organized. And those of us with cash to spare can focus our donations on local groups doing the work on the ground here—as opposed to national NGOs which, although they do useful work, are not our first line of defense.

Sanctuary: Keeping Chicago Trump-Free

Trump needs to be shown that he can’t come back here, and that if he sends in his thugs, they will be met with massive, persistent resistance by people in every neighborhood.

Although we must force Rahm to adopt meaningful police reform and adopt a meaningful Welcoming City Ordinance, with no exceptions and real enforcement mechanisms, it is up to us to make Chicago a real Sanctuary City. Every one of us can help by refusing to participate, adopting Bartleby’s passive-aggressive motto: “I prefer not to.” The simple expedient of not calling 911 will keep our people out of the maw of the criminal injustice system, which also serves as a pipeline to deportation. Solving our problems ourselves, with the help of our neighbors, is always preferable to siccing a gang of armed, racist thugs in blue uniforms on our neighbors. Don’t dial 911. Put down the damn phone, and go talk to your neighbors.

The law will not protect us. We will protect ourselves. Churches no longer have de jure sanctuary status, but they have de facto sanctuary status because the authorities fear provoking the wrath of we the people by attacking them. We have to make each and every neighborhood a de facto sanctuary for those threatened by the Trump regime. We have our work cut out for us.



These are regularly scheduled programs on Lumpen Radio, WLPN-LP 105.5 FM and streamed on lumpenradio.com. We continue to incubate new shows and have plans for LIVE broadcasts from locations all over Chicago, so for the most up to date schedule always check:

lumpenradio.com

Weather, traffic, news and sports are provided by WLPN-LP six times a day. Regularly broadcast on the 20s, between 7-8 am and 4-6 pm, WLPN-LP’s news desk also provides urgent traffic bulletins and major news updates when warranted. Producer Jamie Trecker oversees Lumpen Radio’s news desk.

M O N D A Y S

ASMR Interlude with Vanilla Whispers

Airs: Monday–Friday at 6:56AM

Start your day with Vanilla Whispers as she presents a relaxing daily dose of ASMR.

Weekday Wind Up

Airs: Monday–Friday from 7-8AM

Lumpen Djs provide the soundtrack to your morning commute with Weather, traffic, news and sports updates on the 20’s.

Democracy Now

Airs: Monday–Friday from 8-9AM

Independent news program features those affected by world events and U.S. policy. With hosts Amy Goodman; Juan Gonzalez; and Nermeen Shaikh.

The Eighties Hour with Reuben Kincaid & Simon From Across the Sea

Airs: Monday–Friday from 9-10AM

The Eighties Hour is a rebroadcast of the music that complemented an age of disruptive technologies, new economies, right wing politics, and MTV. This is the soundtrack to the Beginning of the End Days.

Vapor Radio

Airs: Monday–Friday from 10-11AM

Don’t Panic! Sometimes it’s easier when you let the machines decide.

Spontaneous Vegetation with Nance Klehm

Airs: 1st Mondays from 11AM-Noon

Join Nance Klehm for long format conversations with folks who find the cracks, break up the compaction, remediate the contamination and leave the soil (metaphorically or literally) better for us all. Nance Klehm cultivates and forages medicinals and edibles, keeps bees, chickens and quail, co-runs a seed bank and composting cooperative and stewards 50 acres in the driftless region. She is

the Director of Social Ecologies which works internationally on wastestream revisioning and reallocation, soil contamination and fertility, and agroecological practices. socialecologies.net

Labor Express Radio with Jerry Mead-Lucero

Airs: 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Mondays from 11AM-Noon

Rebroadcast of Labor Express Radio. New Episodes Air Sundays from 8-9PM.

Star Creature Summer Mix Vibes

Airs: Mondays from Noon-2PM

Hyper curated mix sessions from local and international DJ talent. Jacuzzi optional.

General Anesthesia with DJ Nolan

Airs: Mondays from 2-4PM

A general (but not vague) conglomeration of new music from independent artists. Some jazz, too.

Planet CatieO with Catie Olson + Friends

Airs: 1st & 3rd Mondays from 4-6PM

DJ CatieO spins a wide range of eclectic and energetic tunes including psych rock, garage rock, soul, funk, disco and electronic tunes. DJ CatieO presents unexpected tunes and multiple musical genres to create a memorable soundscape for the listener.

catieolson.com
spiderbug.org
floorlengthandtux.com

The Isms Show with Betty Heredia

Airs: 2nd & 4th Mondays from 4-6PM

Beats and vibes from the past, present, and future.

bibliokleptomania.tumblr.com

Out of Vogue with Alice McGorty and guest DJs

Airs: 1st & 3rd Mondays from 6-8PM

Bi-monthly broadcast radio show in Chicago focusing on punk rock including rare records, scene reports, news, interviews, and special interest pieces.

facebook.com/outofvogueradio

The Ponderers with Sandra Trevino & Stephanie Manriquez

Airs: 2nd & 4th Mondays from 6-8PM

The Ponderers explore female-fronted alternative sounds from around the globe. Featured guest interviews highlight music, art and culture.

[@theponderers](https://t.me/theponderers)

Gozamos.com/theponderers

Post Modern Talking with Bobby Conn and DJ LeDeuce

Airs: Mondays from 8-10PM

Tune in and hear what happens when our culture implodes and all that’s left is a bunch of vinyl, some microphones and a dollar store sampler.

facebook.com/wlpnpostmoderntalking
mixcloud.com/robert-conn2/

Release the Hounds with DJ Lidia Vomito

Airs: 1st & 3rd Mondays from 10PM-Midnight

All you Rockers, Metalheads, Punks, and Horror Hounds!! If you love Rockin’ Riffs, then you came to the right place. A real Horror show, I tell ya!.... Oh dear, they’re coming to get you Barbara! and your little dog too! heheheh..Turn the knob up to 11, Bark at the Moon and Headbang the night away!

REGULARLY SCHEDULED
PROGRAMS
WLPN 105.5FM
& LUMPENRADIO.COM

The Metal Show
with Vivian

Airs: 2nd & 4th Mondays from 10PM-Midnight

Hosted by former Thin Lizzy roadie Vivian, the Metal Show airs the best in local and international metal with an emphasis on the emerging underground. Viv's motto is that he plays all kinds of music on his show, as long as it's metal.

Screams of Combat with El Cardenal de Aztlan

Airs: Mondays at Midnight

Join the Cardenal de Aztlan for his re-occurring midnight chronicles exploring the intersection of sports, combat, and MesoAmerican myth & history.

TUESDAYS

ASMR Interlude
with Vanilla Whispers

Weekday
Wind Up

Democracy
Now

The Eighties Hour
with Reuben Kincaid & Simon
From Across the Sea

Vapor Radio

See: MONDAYS for details

Tech Scene Chicago with
Host Melanie Adcock

Airs: Tuesdays from 11AM-Noon

Rebroadcast of Tech Scene Chicago. New episodes air live first and third Fridays from 1-2PM

Star Creature Summer Mix
Vibes

Airs: Tuesdays from Noon-2PM

Hyper curated mix sessions from local and international DJ talent. Jacuzzi optional.

Down and Outbound with
Daniel Van Duerm

Airs: Tuesdays from 2-4PM

Down and Outbound offers up experimental jazz and non-jazz music most of which comes from Chicago.
mixcloud.com/danny-van-duerm

Radio Free Bridgeport with
John Daley and Friends

Airs: Tuesdays from 4-6PM

A talk show with guests hailing from the worlds of food, music, art, social change and politics. Not necessarily in that order.
[@radiobridgeport](https://radiobridgeport)
facebook.com/radiobridgeport

Bel_Air Presents with Todd
Carter

Airs: Tuesdays from 6-8PM

Music from Chicago and beyond. A variety of studio and live musical tracks with the occasional special guest.
mixcloud.com/belairsound

(((SONORAMA))) with Charly
Garcia, Edgar Baca and Mar-
lowe Baca

Airs: Tuesdays from 8-10PM

Take a trip through Latin America's vinyl past circa 1950s and on. Get ready for hard hitting cumbias, eccentric pop, garage rock and tropical sounds with a few surprises here and there.
sonoramachicago.com

The Butter Hours with Scott
Bufis and Eric Streichert

Airs:1st & 3rd Tuesdays from 10PM-Midnight

Hi brow, lo brow, hi fi, lo fi, everything in between and love all ways in every direction.
twotonecomix.com
mixcloud.com/eric-streichert
mixcloud.com/scott-bufis

Slice of Pie with Henk Bakker

Airs: 2nd & 4th Tuesdays from 10PM-Midnight

A blended mix of sounds, songs, sing and some on the rocks. Looking for the alley-oop in music. Henk Bakker is a mid career professional escape artist looking for a way in.

WEDNES -
DAYS

ASMR Interlude
with Vanilla Whispers

Weekday
Wind Up

Democracy
Now

The Eighties Hour
with Reuben Kincaid & Simon
From Across the Sea

Vapor Radio

See: MONDAYS for details

Bad at Sports Center with
hosts Brian Andrews, Dana
Bassett, Richard Holland,
Duncan MacKenzie, and
Ryan Peter Miller

Airs: Wednesdays from 11am-Noon

Irreverent and irrepressible, the local crew from Bad at Sports provide an hour of intrigue and mystery as they try to solve real art problems such as... "Is this the right red?" or "What did she mean by this gesture?" or "Why does it sometimes feel like I hate art (even when it is shiny)?" And yes... THERE WILL BE GUESTS! badatsports.com is the midwest's leading site for arts journalism and contemporary art punditry. Boldly, it can be said that they are truly the providers of care for the wounded art soul and contemporary art worlder. In short, they are the strangest of artists and joke makers, surreal meaning hunters and philosophical provocateurs. Theirs is a quest of true horror... For what is art? Will we know it when we see it? And does it want to be known?

Star Creature Summer Mix
Vibes

Airs: Wednesdays from Noon-2PM

Hyper curated mix sessions from local and international DJ talent. Jacuzzi optional.

THE NEW AGE OF JAZZ
with Hampton

Airs: Wednesdays from 2-4PM

The New Age of Jazz superbly mixes classic cool with contemporary standards and futuristic stylings for a unique hybrid of America's native music.

Country, My Way with
Lawrence Peters

Airs: Wednesdays from 4-6PM

Underplayed classics, and small-label gems, spanning all eras of honky tonk, bluegrass, outlaw, countrypolitan, western swing, country soul/funk. Stubbornly curated by Chicago's country-est mofo: singer & songwriter Lawrence Peters.
lawrencepeters.com
mixcloud.com/lawrence-peters2/

Divisive with Hosts
Leah Gipson and
Craig Harshaw

Airs: 3rd Wednesdays from 6-8PM

Divisive is a two-hour monthly broadcast on Lumpen Radio created by Leah Gipson and Craig Harshaw that explores controversial issues related to cultural work, activism and social life. The Merriam Webster dictionary definition of the word Divisive is “causing a lot of disagreement between people and causing them to separate into different groups”. The new show centers difficult and divisive conversations as central to all struggles for human liberation and environmental sanity. Democratic conversations are inherently ridden with discord and disagreement. It is time to stop hiding our heads in the sands of banality and false consensus. It is time to become divisive.

Idiot Business with
DJ Blanketforts

Airs: 1st Wednesdays from 7-8PM

Idiot Business brings you experimentalelectronictechnojunglerockhiphopcomedynoise and more. Lovingly curated by Mike Esposito (DJ Blanketforts), the show currently takes the form of a remote operation beamed to you from the sunny hills of LA... please enjoy!
mixcloud.com/blanketforts

Q.C. with
King Hippo

Airs: 1st & 3rd Wednesdays from 8-10PM

Q.C. is for listeners who are interested in how soul, jazz, r&b, funk and hip-hop are shaping new underground music from around the world. Listeners will also enjoy interviews, guest-mixes and in-studio performances by potent new artists.
mixcloud.com/KingHippo

InbetweenRadio/Stations
with DJ Mykol &
Glenn Russell

Airs: 2nd & 4th Wednesdays from 7-10PM

Each show features, Music news, and interviews with guests who perform a live DJ set, and a mind bending experimental freestyle turntable jam from the Hosts.
@inbetweenradio
instagram.com/inbetweenradiostations
mixcloud.com/InbetweenRadioStations/

Night Time
with Chris Hefner

Airs: Every Wednesday from 10PM-Midnight

Chris Hefner is a filmmaker, visual artist and musician in Chicago. Every week on his program he will play several of his favorite experimental and nocturnal records for you, at night.
cmhefner.com

The Radiant Cesspool
with Host Jill Lloyd Flanagan

Airs: 2nd Wednesdays at Midnight

An investigation into what it means to be transfeminine for me and other artists, I talk to artists that inspire me and the people who make up the rich patchwork of transfeminine identity. Jill Lloyd Flanagan is a musician and performance artist who plays in Forced into Femininity and Gula Gila.
mixcloud.com/RadiantCesspool

THURSDAYS

ASMR Interlude
with Vanilla Whispers

Weekday
Wind Up

Democracy
Now

The Eighties Hour
with Reuben Kincaid & Simon
From Across the Sea

Vapor Radio

See: MONDAYS for details

Eye 94 with host Jeremy
Kitchen and Mike Sack

Airs: Thursdays from 11AM-Noon

Rebroadcast of Eye 94. New episodes air live Sundays at 10AM.

Mashed Potato Time
with DJ Karin

Airs: Thursdays from 12-2PM

Mashed Potato Tlme is all about the glory days of the recording culture that left us with stacks and stacks of forgotten 45s. Karin dusts off her favorite '50s & '60s singles for an all-vinyl show filled with carefree soul grooves, early R&B movers, dance crazes that never were, and scuzzy garage gems.

News From The Service
Entrance with
host Mario Smith

Airs: Thursdays from 4-6PM

News From the Service Entrance features the famous and infamous, newsmakers and musicians, commentary and listener interaction everything you can handle in the middle of the day and then some.

Attention Deficit Radio with
Sergio Rodriguez Jr.

Airs: 1st & 3rd Thursdays from 4-6PM

ADR brings you a multi-genre show that is constantly changing and bringing the grooves. Listen and you might find your new favorite artist.

Bi-Lengua Radio
with DJ Osvaldo

Airs: 2nd Thursdays from 4-6PM

Bi-Lengua radio bridges the cultural gap with themed episodes that explore the collision of culture. Expect an eclectic tour of music in English and Spanish.

The Mutant Hit Parade with
Lawrence Peters

Airs: 4thThursdays from 4-6PM

The Mutant Hit Parade is a selection of classic power-pop and rock that would have been big hits had only anyone given it a chance. Lawrence Peters does.

SKERD TO DANCE
with Jimmy Kaps

Airs: 1st & 3rd Thursdays from 6-8PM

Skerd To Dance is a live dance radio show mixed by Jimmy Kaps that features guest DJ sets from friends and idols alike.
[@skerdtodance](https://skerdtodance.com)
mixcloud.com/skerdtodance

Ruido with
Gabriel Feijoo

Airs: 2nd Thursdays from 6-8PM

Rudio digs deep into the roots of Latin American Psychedelia and follows its aesthetic, cultural, spiritual and political evolution into Post-Punk.

The #Feelgoodmovement
with DJ Greg #Feelgood

Airs: 4th Thursdays from 6-8PM

DJ Greg #Feelgood brings you two hours of #feelgoodmusic. Join us on the 4th Thursday of the month to hear Rap, Hip-Hop, R &B, and Soul classics & deep cuts.
comefeelgood.com

Beer Temple Insiders
Roundtable with Chris Quinn

Airs: Thursdays from 8-10PM

Owner of The Beer Temple, Chris Quinn, sits down with craft beer insiders to discuss the topics that matter most to them. Each week features different guests sharing their insights on different topics and giving you a insider's view of the evolving craft beer scene.

Star Creature Radio with Tim
Zawada & A Rotating Cast of
Boogie Munsters

Airs: First and Third Thursdays from 10PM - Midnight

Tim Zawada and the Boogie Munsters crew spin vinyl selections highlighting the alternative funk scene during the era after disco but before house music... Boogie, Garage, Rare Groove, Modern Soul... with a strong focus on current new releases in the various electronic funk subgenres. The show highlights rare and overlooked vintage records alongside the contemporary labels and producers influenced by this era.
facebook.com/boogiemunsters
starcreature.bandcamp.com

FUTURE PAST MUSIC with
DJ'S RIKSHAW & LEDEUCE

Airs: Fourth Thursdays from 10PM-Midnight

Short show Bio: These humanoid DJ's combine their decades worth of mutant musical knowledge in order to broadcast a distress signal from the future featuring cold wave, dark wave, + new wave transmissions.

F R I D A Y S

ASMR Interlude with Vanilla Whispers

Weekday Wind Up

Democracy Now

The Eighties Hour with Reuben Kincaid & Simon From Across the Sea

Vapor Radio

See: MONDAYS for details

Hitting Left with the Klonsky Brothers

Airs: Fridays from 11AM-Noon

An hour-long, weekly radio show featuring long-time political and education activists, the Klonsky Bros. They, along with their weekly special guests, review the latest happenings in the world of politics, media and culture, challenging the political establishment and hitting from the left side of the plate.

Tech Scene Chicago with Host Melanie Adcock

Airs: 1st & 3rd Fridays from 1-2PM

with Rebroadcasts on Second and Fourth Fridays 1-2PM and Tuesdays from 11AM to Noon.

Created by Tech Month Chicago, and brought to you by listeners like you, Tech Scene Chicago focuses on what's trending in the local tech community, technology-related events in and around Chicago, and how you can infiltrate and become part of the scene.

mixcloud.com/melanie-a-adcock

21st Century Crate Digger with Steve Molnar

Airs: 4th Fridays from 2-4PM

Sourced from vinyl, digital, and streaming formats, 21st Century Crate Digger is a program dedicated to the discovery and curation of obscure genres, regions, and time periods of music. With an affinity for analog synthesizers, fuzz pedals, soul harmonies, and funk grooves, each episode plays tracks stemming from a singular theme.

Rush Hour Reggae with DJ RikShaw

Airs: 3rd Fridays from from 4-6PM

RikShaw spins reggae rarities and classics. Mixed in a unique and entertaining style for your commute.

Que Hora Son Chi? with AfroQbano & Mos

Airs: 2nd & 4th Fridays from 4-6PM

Que horas Son Chi? is a monthly broadcast exploring both vintage and modern afro-latin rooted sounds. QHS Chi also features a special guest program featuring prominent local musicians and DJs

afroqbano.com

mixcloud.com/djafroqbano

Lumpen Week in Review

Airs: Fridays from 6-7PM

Lumpen Week in Review is the show that covers the past week of news, happenings and programs presented on Lumpen Radio. Each week we present a sampling of news, programs and interviews with guests that were featured on the station.

S A T U R D A Y S

Bad at Sports Center

Airs: Saturdays from 10-11AM

Rebroadcast of Bad at Sports Center. New episodes air Wednesdays from 11AM-Noon.

Wattz Up! with Yollocalli Arts Reach Youth

Airs: Saturdays from 12-1PM

Yollocalli youth share their favorite jams in this milkshake playlist.From ska to jpop tune in to hear a curated music hour direct from the Little Village neighborhood.

yollocalli.org

souncloud.com/yollocalli

Buildings On Air with Keefer Dunn

Airs: 1st Saturdays 2-4PM

Buildings on Air is a show that demystifies architecture through wild speculation, good conversation, a healthy dose of left perspective, and lots of skepticism about the 'power of design.' Each show features guests from the many different facets of the architecture world in Chicago and beyond.

The Don't Call Me Sweetheart! Show with Stephen Sonneveld and Andrew Gregory Krzak

Airs: 2nd & 4th Saturdays from 2-4pm

Award-winning creators present equal parts satire, drama, humor and pathos via radio plays, interviews, field recordings and the occasional song. This is the sound of Pop Rocks spiraling down your ear canal and lodging in your brain, something dialed in halfway between an SOS signal from the Bermuda Triangle and a love poem written on the wind.

hardtopronounce.com/radio

Steppin' Out Radio with Ben Fasman

Airs: 3rd Saturdays 2-4PM

From Sade to Slayer, Handel to Hedzolleh Sounds, Goblin to Ghostface. This show is for music fans that organize their music beyond the ones and zeros. A show for people for whom music is a central role. Soulful tunes regardless of genre. Guest DJs of all genres, interviews, live mixes, performances and jokes about your mama. All killer no filler. Come ride with us.

BeerDownload with Steve Mastny & Matt Arata

Airs: Every Saturday from 4-5PM

BeerDownload is the only show that pits beers head to head in a tournament style competition to find out which beer reigns supreme. Beer-Download also features interviews and news from the beer industry.

beerdownload.com

mixcloud.com/steve-mastny

POP PUNK PIZZA PARTY with Hosts Dave Roche and Brad Adita

Airs: 3rd Saturdays from 5-6PM

Chow down all around the pop punk pizza pie. Every 3rd Saturday, this party's-a-popping with the freshest crop of hits from around the world topped with pop punk classics that never get crusty.

poppunk.com

Lumpen Week in Review

Airs: Saturdays 6-7PM

Lumpen Week in Review is the show that covers the past week of news, happenings and programs presented on Lumpen Radio. Each week we present a sampling of news, programs and interviews with guests that were featured on the station.

S U N D A Y S

Contratiempo

Airs: Sundays from 9-10AM

Contratiempo is Lumpen Radio's arts, literature and cultural interrogation program, presented in Spanish. The sister program to the popular news-magazine.

Eye 94 with hosts Jeremy Kitchen, Mike Sack and Jamie Trecker

Airs: Sundays 10-11AM

Eye 94 is Lumpen radio's books and literature show, taking a decidedly non-academic look at the books of the day. Featuring interviews with authors, publishers and avid readers, Eye 94 is a show for people who love reading.

This is Hell! with host Chuck Mertz

Airs: Sundays 11AM-12PM

This is Hell! is a weekly radio interview show broadcast without the virtue of money or the vice of political agenda. Every Saturday morning, your bitter, blind, broke, gap-toothed host Chuck Mertz works off his hangover talking to the journalists, authors and activists working to make this world a slightly less hellish place

Sonic Sassafras with DJ Regina M. Torres

Airs: 1st Sundays from 12-2PM

The Sonic Sassafras Show is: multi-genre, highbrow, lowbrow, oftentimes freeform musical goo, with guests and performances, too. Come hungry for healthy servings of punk, post-punk, garage, no wave, new wave, electronic, dance, pop, psychedelia, experimental, ska, avant garde, classic jazz, and other delicacies from anywhere in the universe and from whatever century.

Sunday Vinyl Club with Kevin Hsia

Airs: 3rd Sundays 12-2PM

Sunday Record Club is a show about records—the music, and the collectors and DJs playing them. Special guests will join in-studio to dig deep on a genre, sharing the most beloved records from their collection. No frills and no fillers, it's just about playing great records on a Sunday.

Foreign Accents with MTZ & Josh Fox

Airs: Fourth Sundays from 12-2PM

An all vinyl mix of music ranging from early electronic to soundtracks and secret gems.

Da Dunny Show with Paulie Think

Airs: Sundays from 2-3PM

Join Paulie Think and guests every Sunday from talking about topics from music to skating to Chee-cago and playing plenty of DIY indie English and Spanish music. With surprise cameos by Union Tim too! Don't sleep on it DUNNY!

Who Gives a Shhhh with Host Matt Muchowski

Airs: 1st & 3rd Sundays 3-5PM

What do you do when you realize that no one cares what you do? Join host Matt Muchowski as he leads discussion of politics, music, art, life, and culture. The only radio show that will interview elected officials and then play songs by Napalm Death, the only radio show that will debate the existence of free will, and then play Vaporwave.

Feel Flows with Edwin Menacho

Airs: 2nd Sundays 3-5PM

An exploration of older and current music focused mostly on Ambient, House, and New Age instrumental tracks. Groovy and enlightened.

Music for Life with DJ Merrick Brown

Airs: 4th Sundays 3-5PM

Music for Life. A showcase of the best new underground sounds from around the globe, especially music that draws inspiration from soul, jazz, afro, latin and beyond. This show highlights modern innovators, up-and-coming artists/labels as well as reissues and other rare groove selections. Hosted by veteran club DJ and collector Merrick Brown, it is a mix-show with perspective, plus occasional interviews and guest-mixes from local players and international taste-makers.

Paid Time Off with Andrew Joseph and Laura Caringella

Airs: 1st & 3rd Sundays from 5-7PM

DJs Laura and Andrew play the smooth, all-vinyl sounds of boogie, modern soul, and soft rock. The vibes are just right for relaxing, dancing, and romancing.

mixcloud.com/andrew-joseph4/

Beats Own with Roland Potions

Airs: 4th Sundays from 5-7PM

BEATS OWN focuses on Chicago sound creators, electronic music, experimental, left-field, ambient, and most often, BEATS.

Hitting Left with the Klonsky Brothers

Airs: Sundays 7-8PM

Rebroadcast of Hitting Left. New episodes air live Fridays from 11AM-noon.

Labor Express Radio with Jerry Mead-Lucero

Airs: Sundays from 8-9PM

Labor Express Radio is a weekly labor news and current affairs radio program. It is Chicago's only English-language radio program devoted to issues related to the labor movement. News for working people by working people.

Lumpen Week in Review

Airs: Sundays 9-10PM

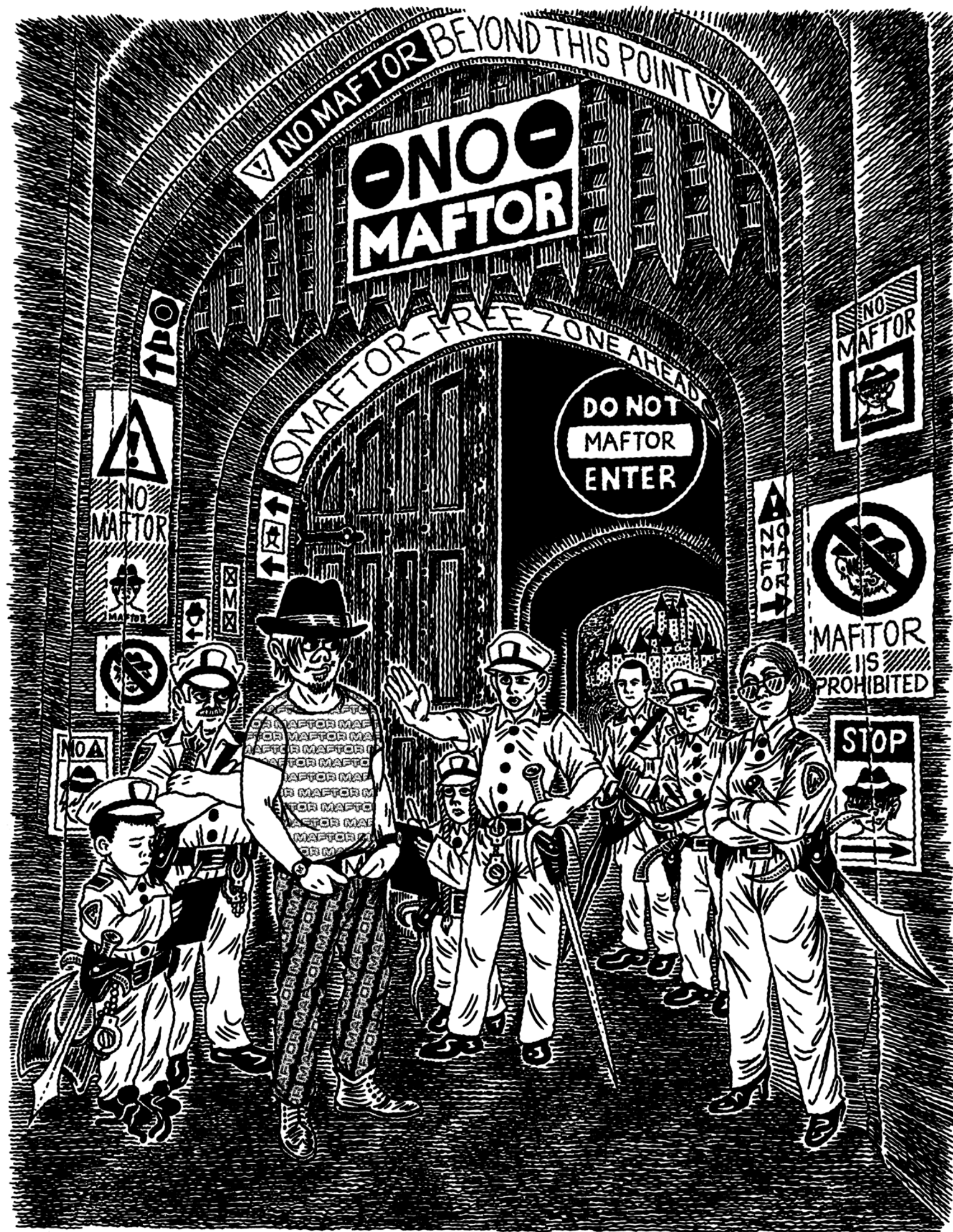
Lumpen Week in Review is the show that covers the past week of news, happenings and programs presented on Lumpen Radio. Each week we present a sampling of news, programs and interviews with guests that were featured on the station.

What Day Is It? with Paul Nixon

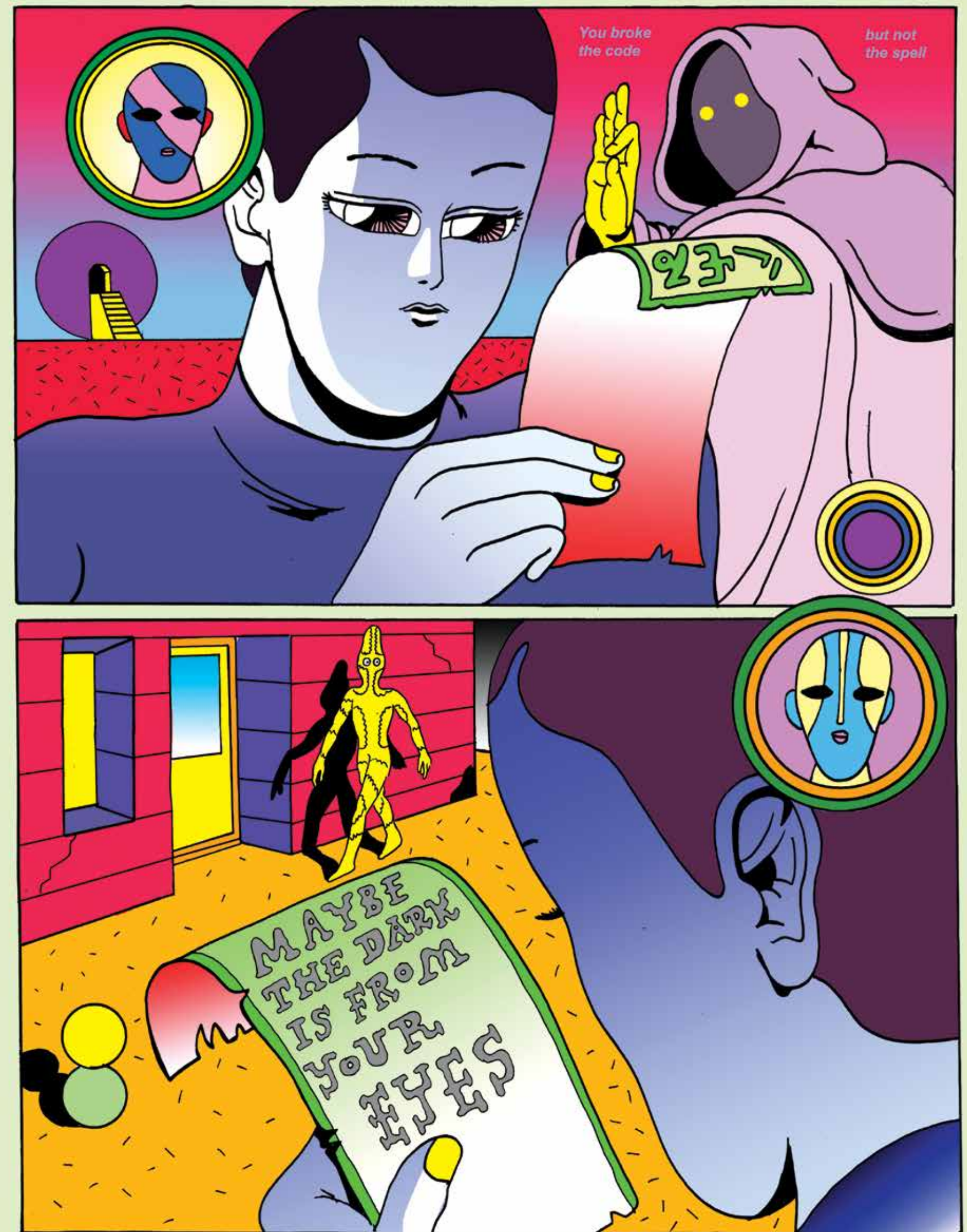
Airs: Sundays from 10PM - Midnight

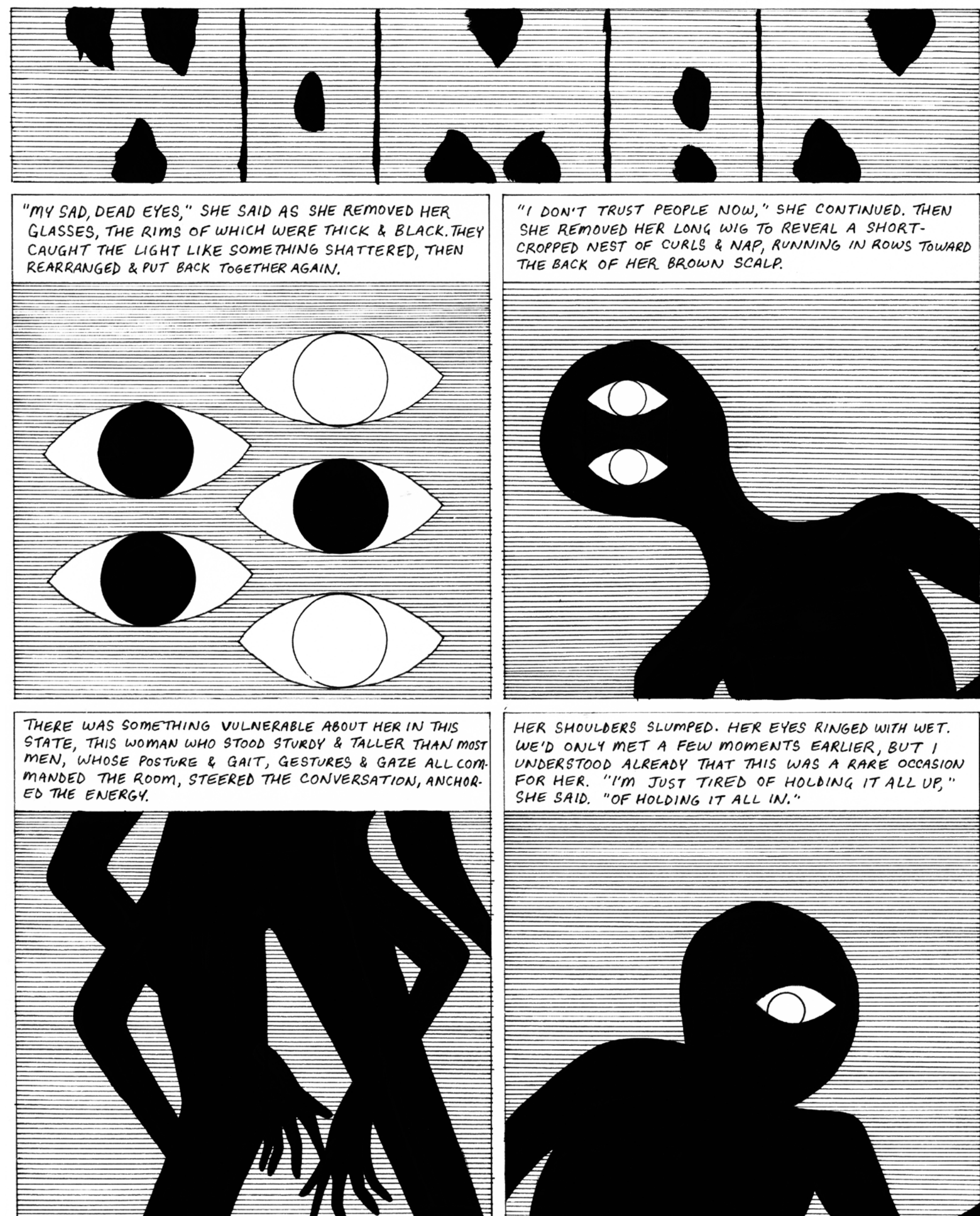
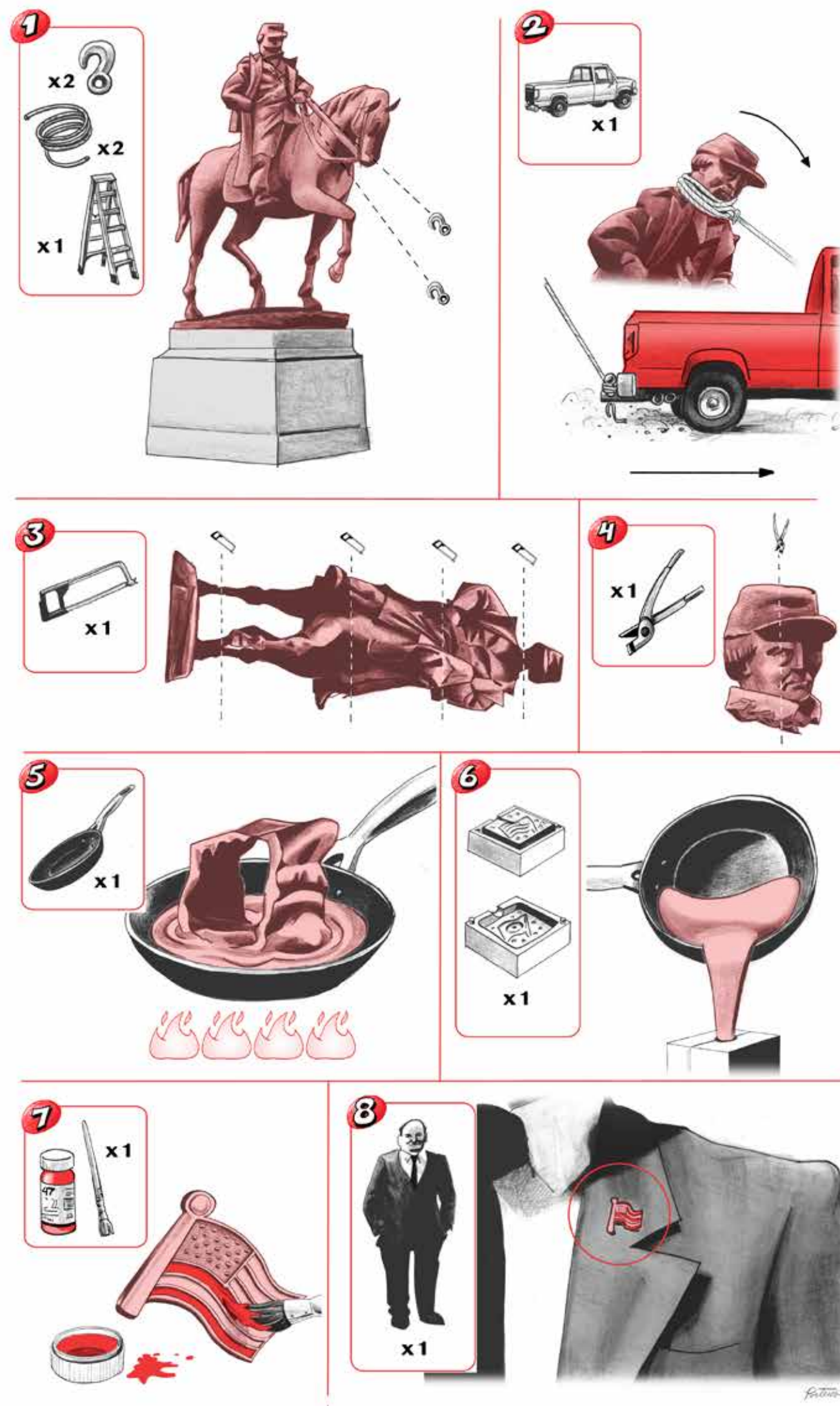
A mishmash of freaky sounds to warp your brain!

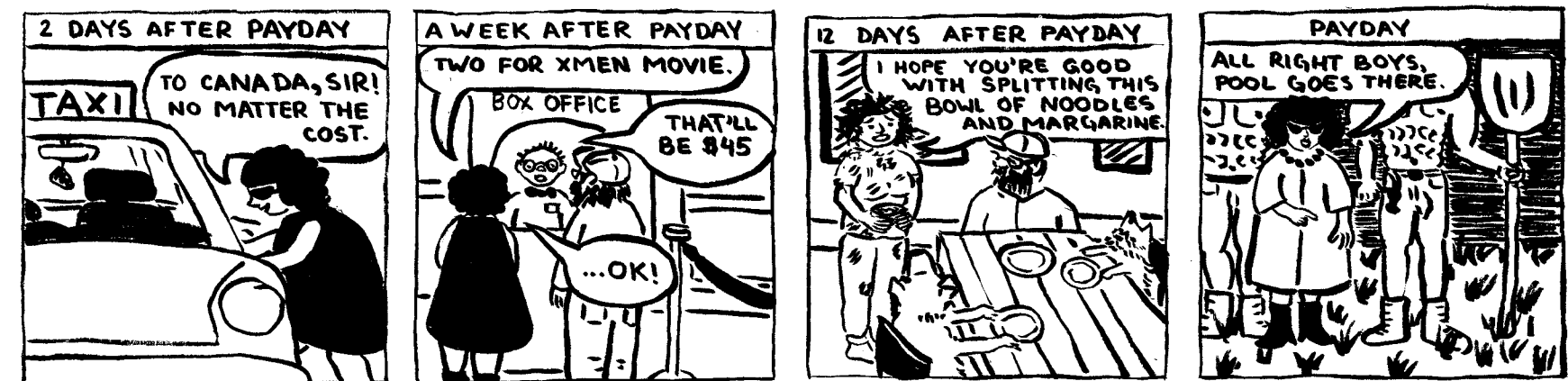




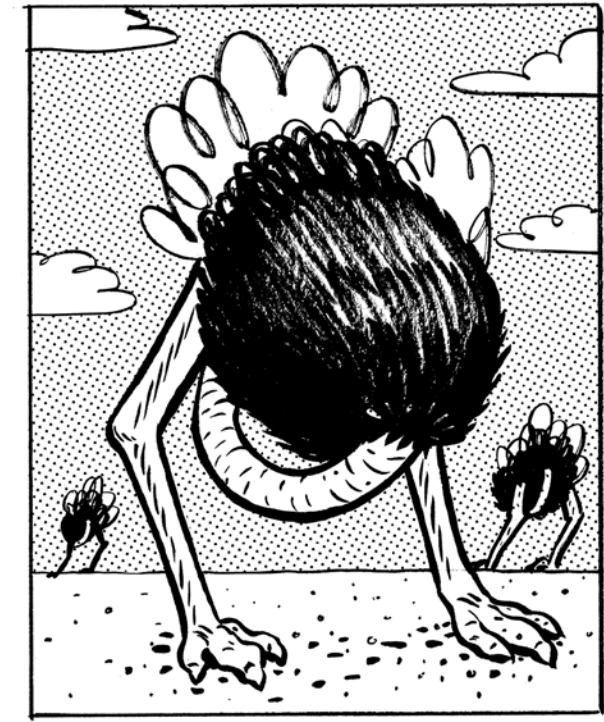
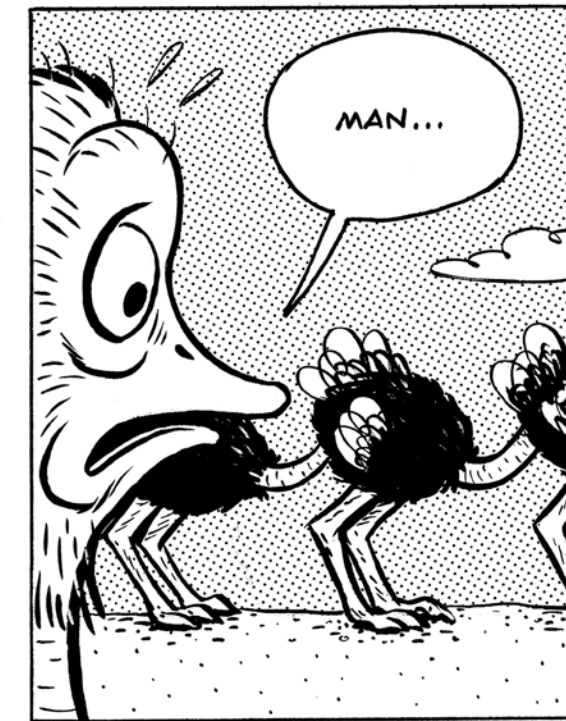
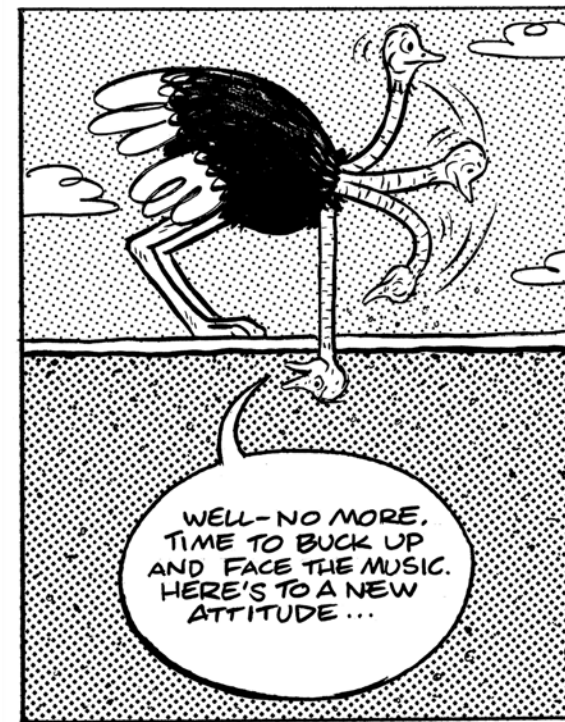
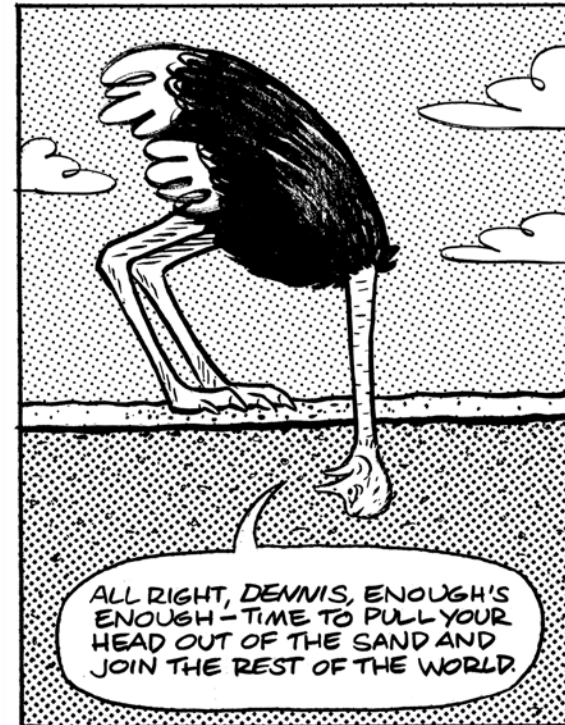
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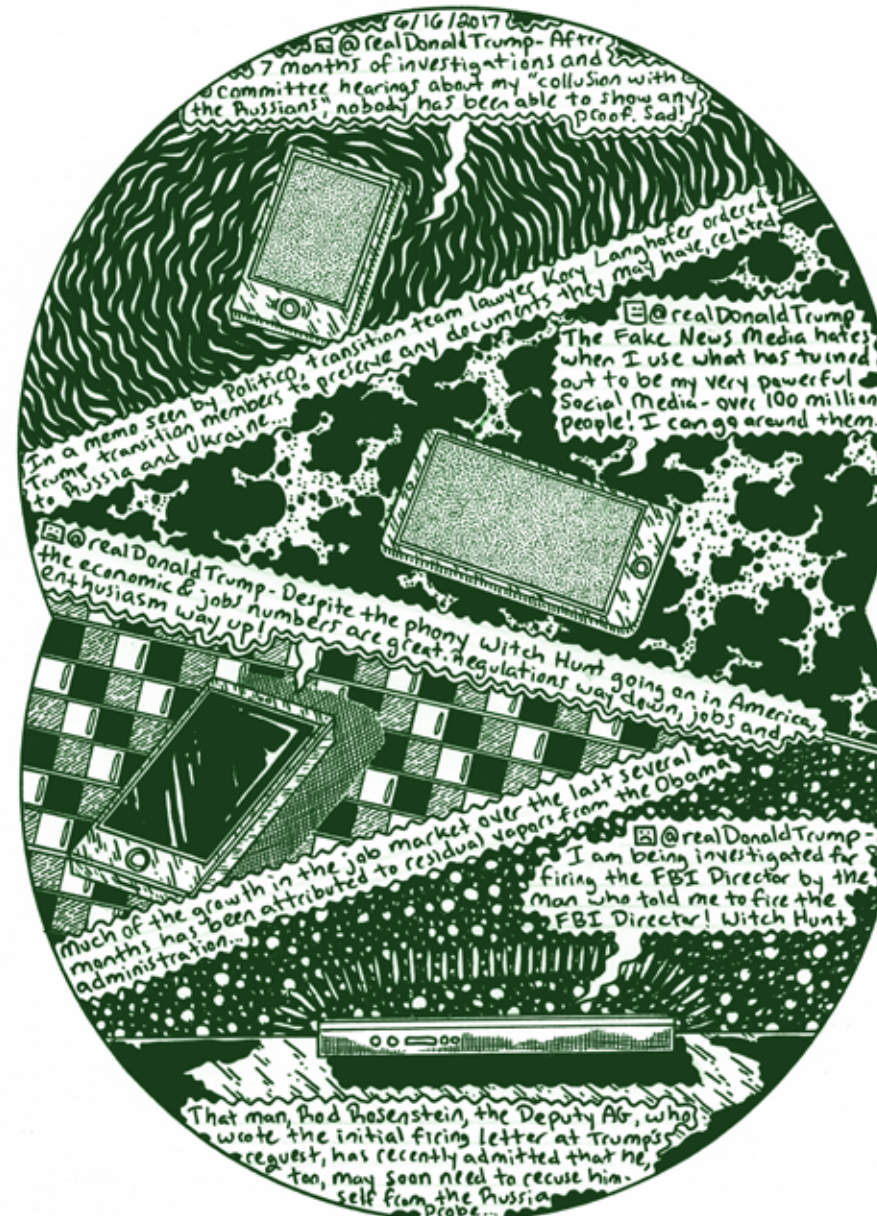


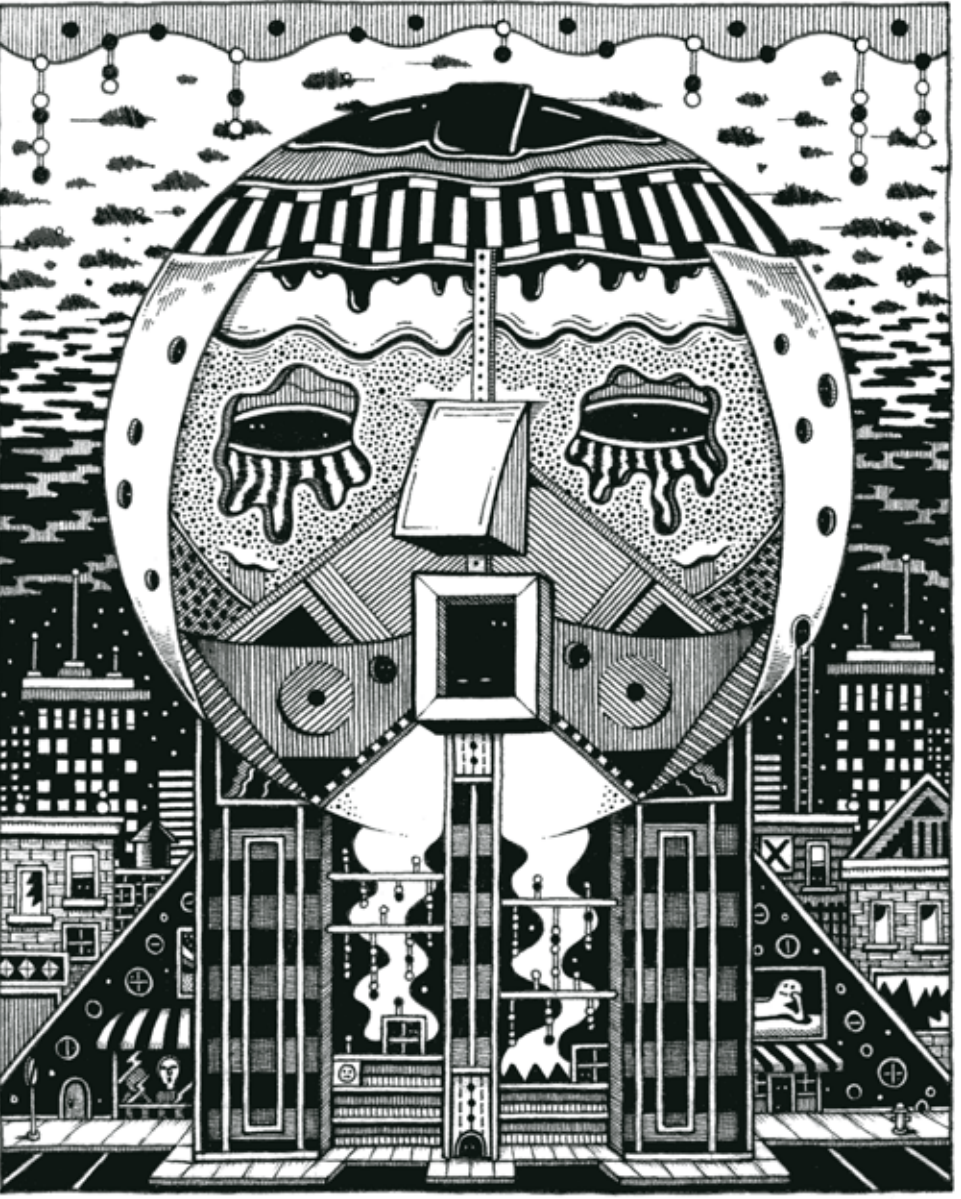


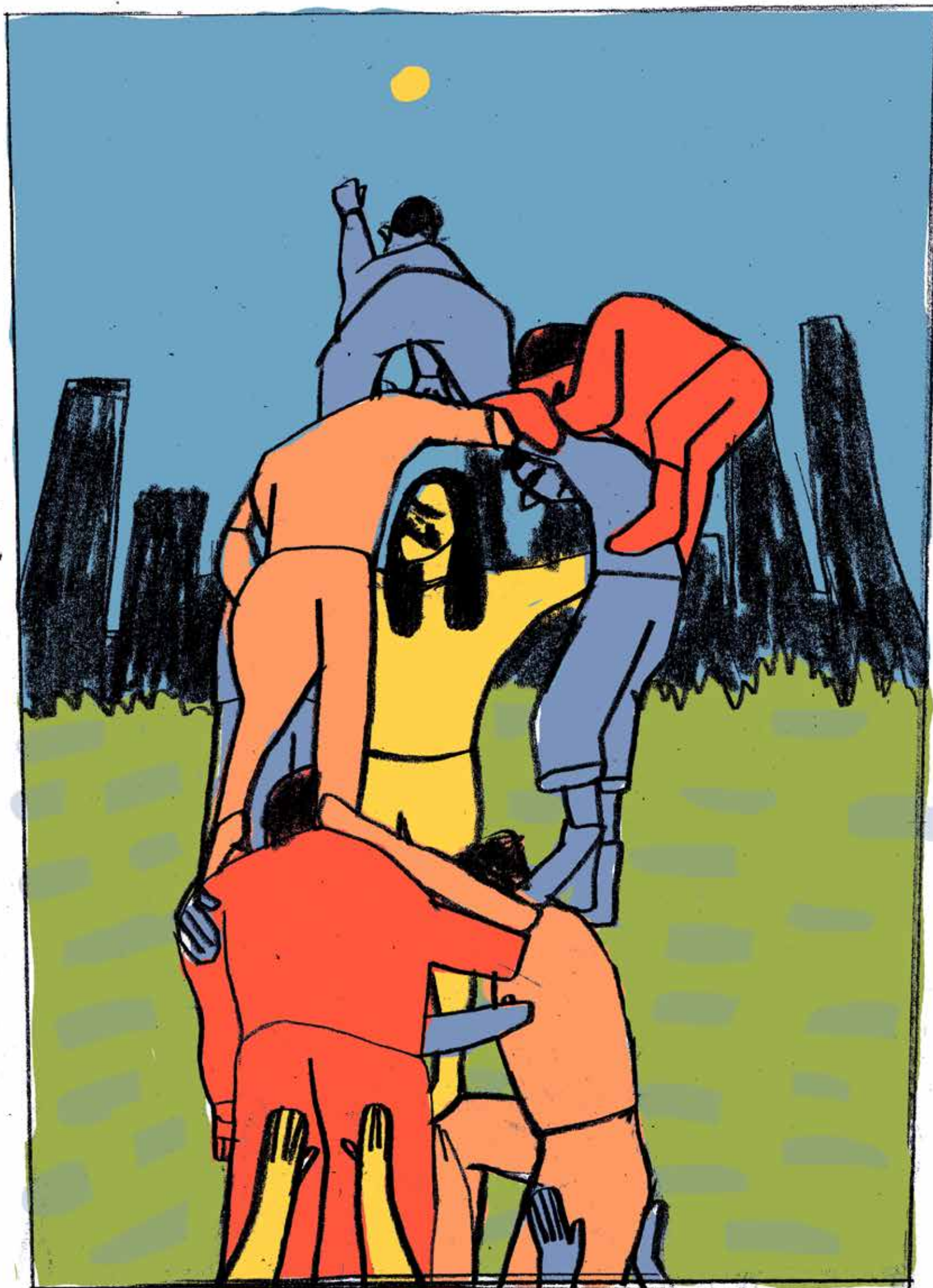


A WALK IN THE DARK









STRENGTH THROUGH UNITY



22XIII 5/10

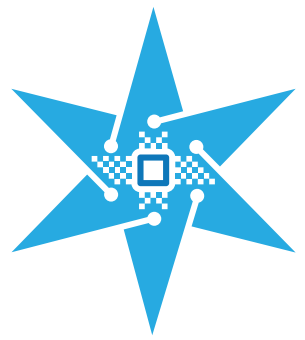
Things I wish I could EAT without having to go to the hospital



Sarah Leitten 2017



6/16/17 Beatty

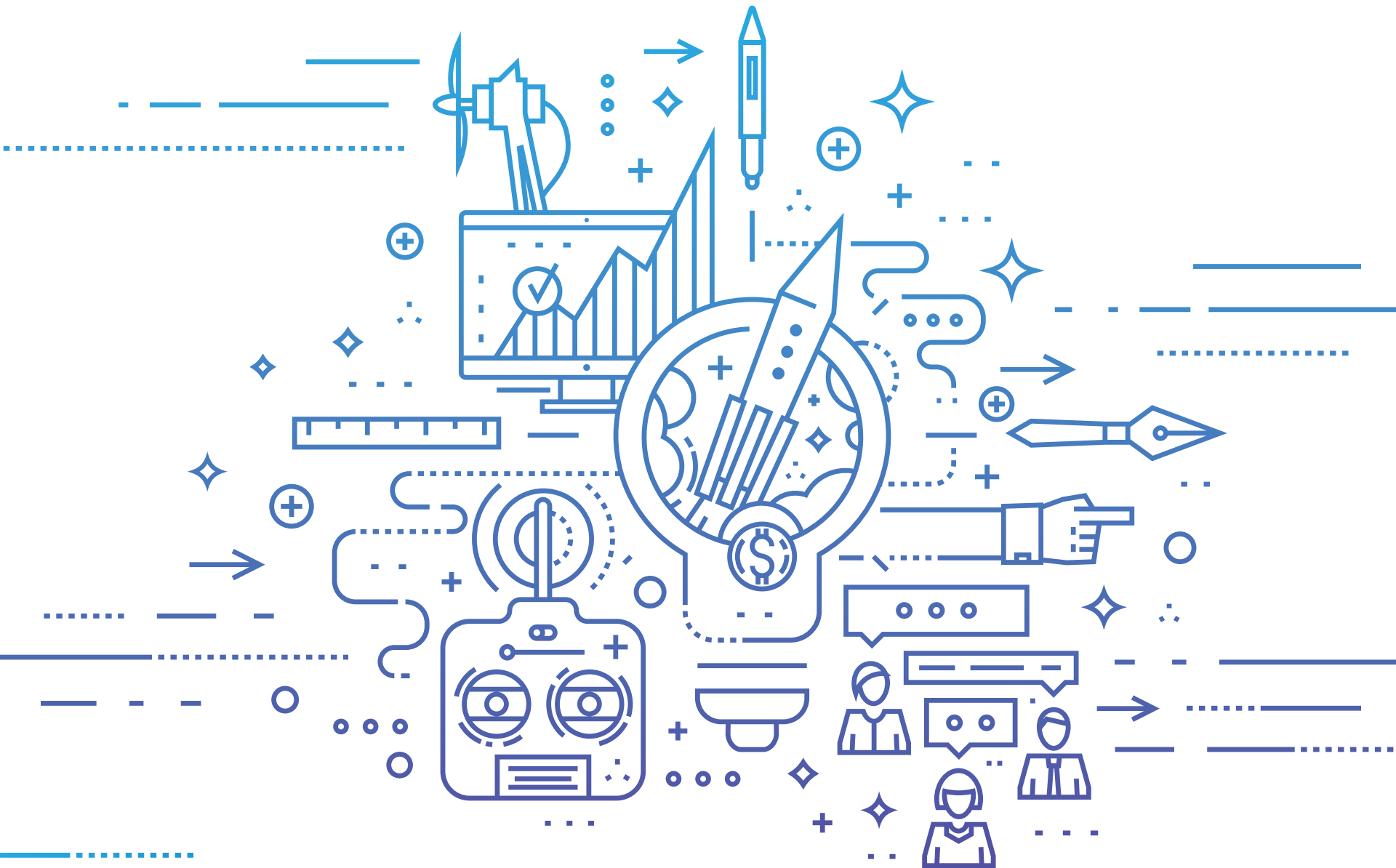


TECH MONTH CHICAGO

SEPTEMBER 2017

Tech Month Chicago
is proudly partnered with

LUMEN Radio



TECHMONTHCHICAGO.COM
#TMC2017

 /TechMonth

 @techmonthchicago

 @techmonth

JOIN US FOR A FULL MONTH OF TECH-CESSIBILITY!

View our online calendar to
find family and kid friendly
events, workshops, job training,
and lectures to attend.

ALL SEPTEMBER IN CHICAGOLAND

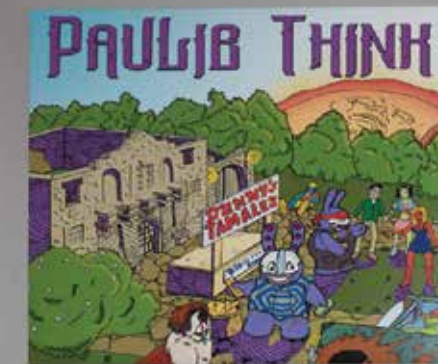


All 3 Reckless Records Locations
Logan Hardware Records
Bucket o' Blood
Lauries Planet of Sound
Permanent Records

Shuga Records
Gramophone Records
Pinwheel Records
Record Breakers
606 Records

CHICAGO RECORD STORE LOCATIONS

PAULIE THINK "DUNNY'S TAMALES" ABSOLUTELY NOT "ERRORS"



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THE CELL PHONES "NO"

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THE 7 DEADLY CHICAGO SINS



DO312 PARKING LOT, 2354 N MILWAUKEE AVENUE • SUN 27TH AUG • 2-8PM

THE RIGHT NOW - GANT-MAN (TEKLIFE) - MYKELE DEVILLE - ABSOLUTELY NOT
MUSIC BY TRUSTY CHORDS DJs & DJ GLORIFIED JUKEBOX (JEREMY SCHEUCH)

HOSTED BY DOM BROWN | BURLESQUE BY RED LIGHT SPECIAL

SUPPORTED BY
DO312
WHAT TO DO IN CHICAGO

DEEP EDDY
VODKA



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So Fight Back and tell Trump to Fuck Off. Support the Chicago Art Scene.

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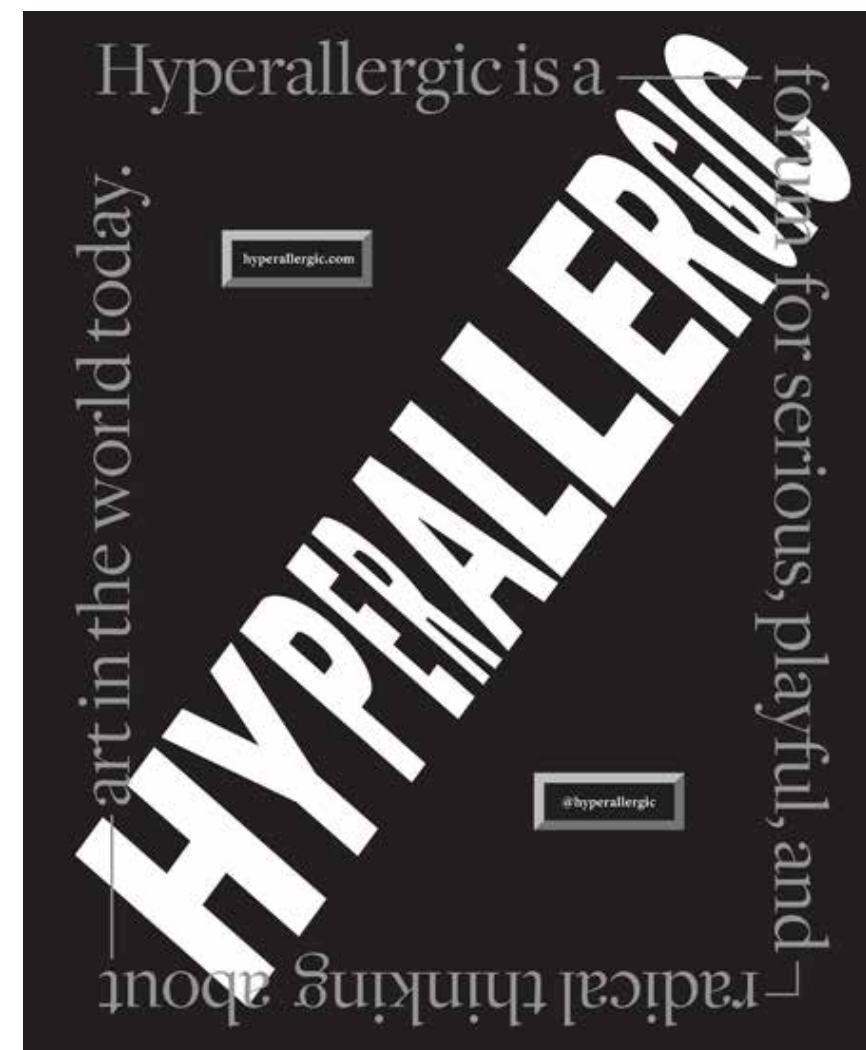
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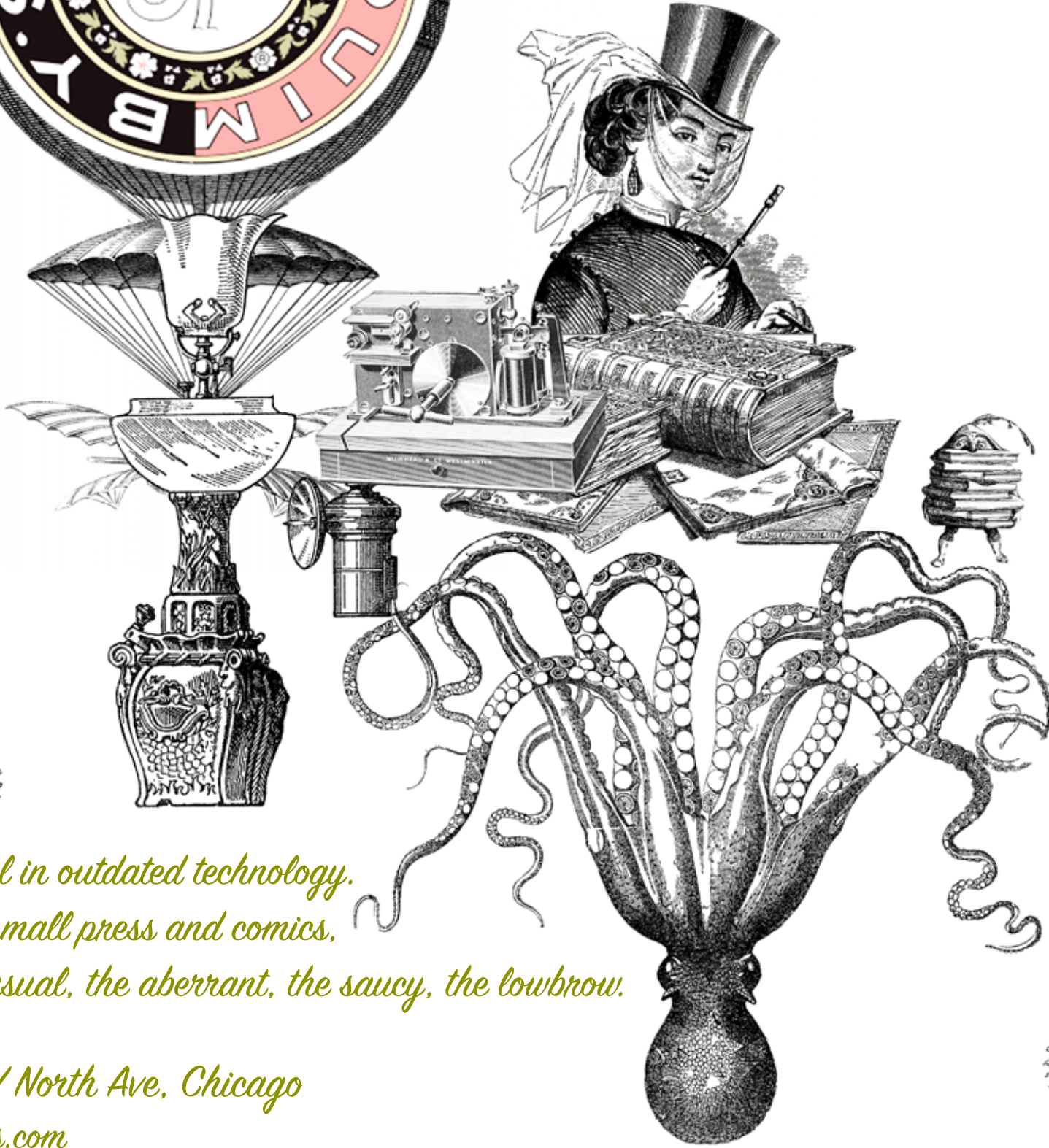

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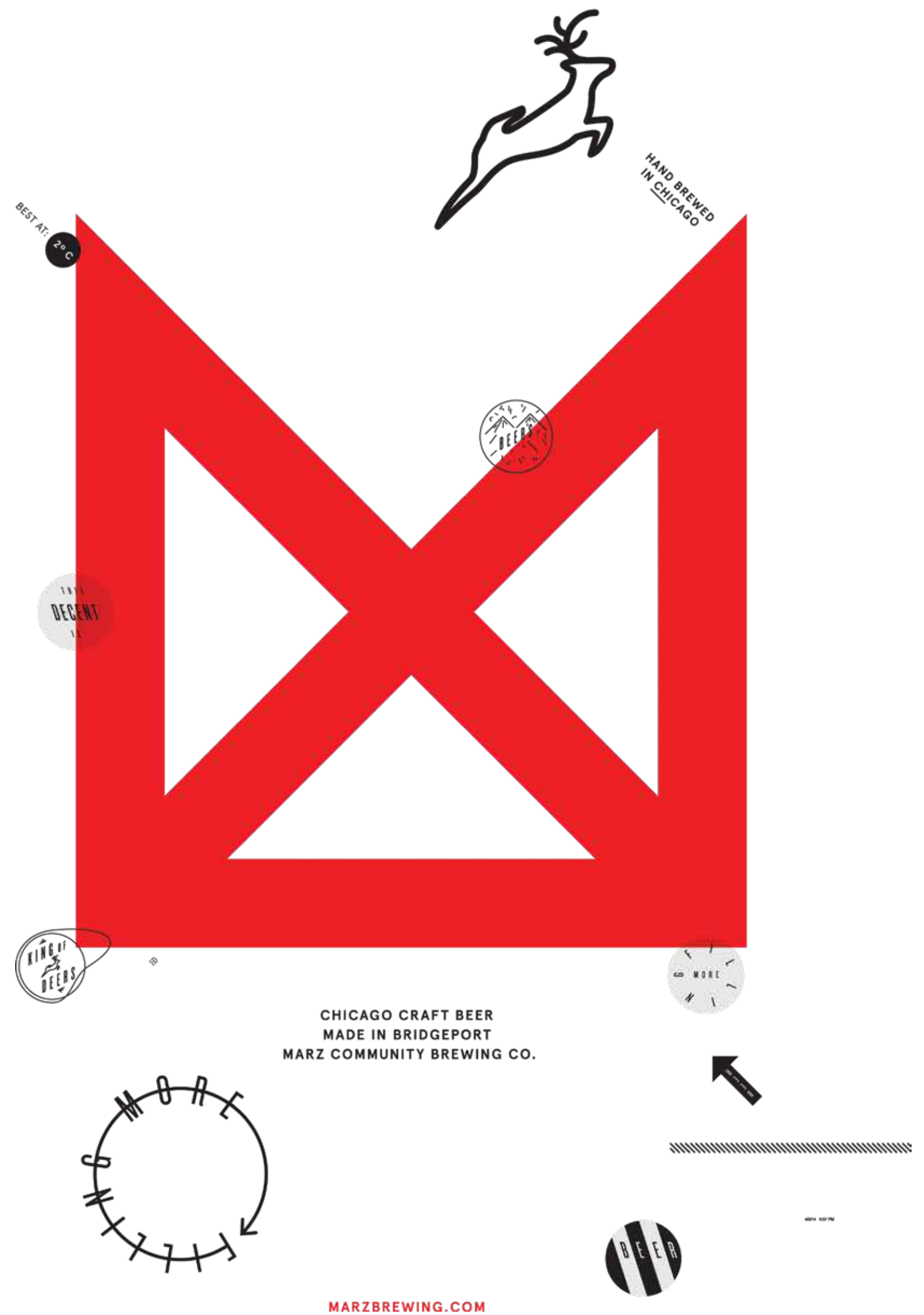




Quimby's Bookstore

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