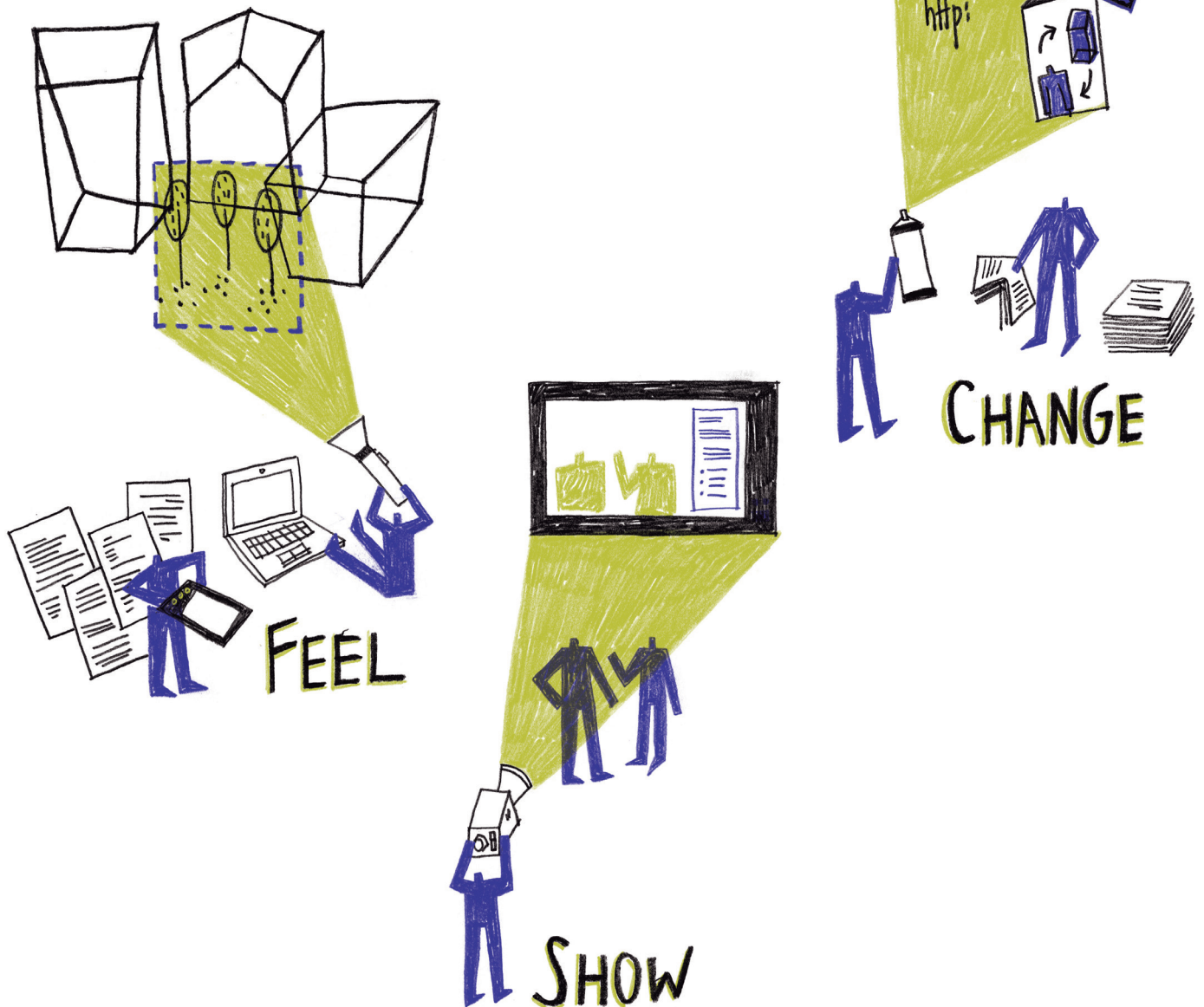


Feel, Show, Change

The **#mediactivism** guide to claiming a right to your city



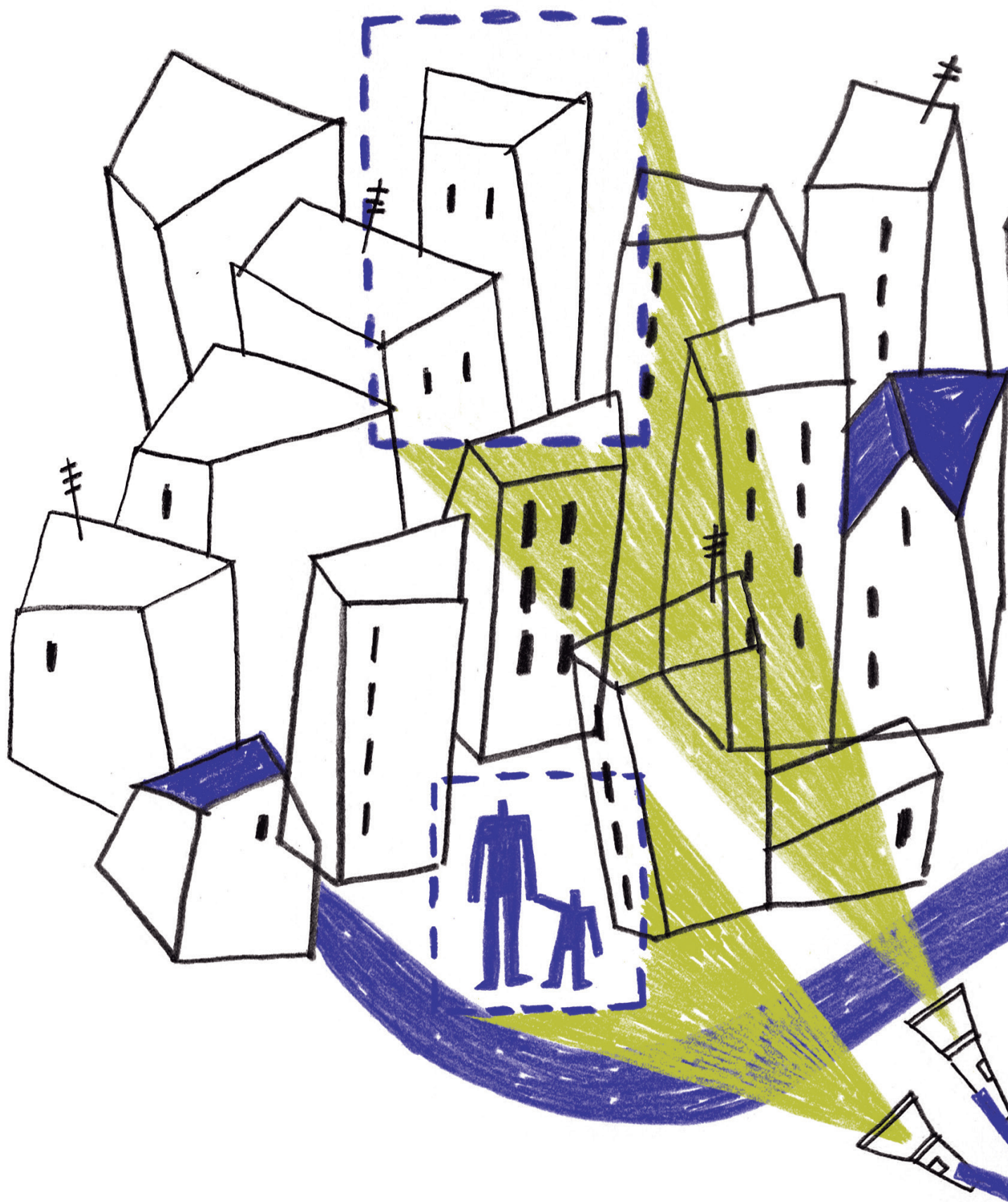
We have a vision for Europe. A continent where all can live, work, dream and express themselves freely, in diversity and harmony. Where we share a sense of belonging based on solidarity, mutual respect between people and with collaborations across borders of all kinds. We believe in the power of culture to achieve this Europe. Culture helps us negotiate ways of living together, build and understand our multiple identities and make Europe our home. We promote a European sentiment through developing and supporting cultural initiatives that let us share, experience and imagine Europe.

culturalfoundation.eu

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mediactivism.eu

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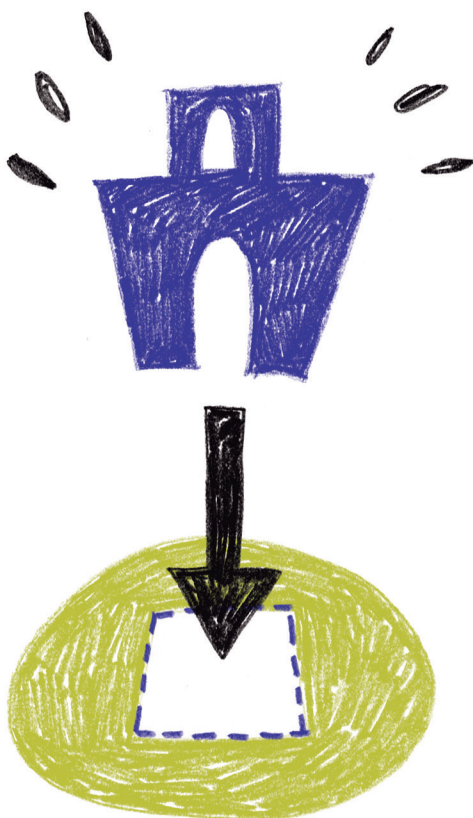
Mediactivism.eu

Mediactivism.eu is a coordination point for projects concerned with media activism that are supported by the European Cultural Foundation. Media activism is a method of activism that puts the distribution of information at the centre of achieving social and political goals.

In a changing media landscape, the tools for media activists evolve, but what they are trying to do stays the same. Media activists are always trying to tell powerful stories about who has power and what needs to change. Sometimes this activism is more about telling stories; sometimes it's more about opening up bandwidth to tell these stories – sometimes it's both. Media activism seeks to make political change, but by influencing the underlying cultural attitudes and perceptions that make changes in policy more likely. In doing so, it often challenges the media's power structures.

The European Cultural Foundation has been active in supporting young media activists across Europe for more than decade, and works for a media that supports citizenship. The audiovisual legacy of this work is gathered at mediactivism.eu, which holds an archive of 400+ alternative media works created by active citizens, artists and civil society groups from across Europe. This archive includes short films, remixes, mixed media, music videos, social commentaries, animations and artworks that document Europe's most pressing social issues.

The last attempt to gather the methods and approaches of media activists on mediactivism.eu was '**The Displaced in Media Recipe Book**', which examined media activists' approaches to addressing migration issues. This guide, and the project on which it draws, will continue to support The Mediactivism Media Collection and contribute to a broader understanding of what media activism can be.



Introduction

Across Europe cities are under pressure: more people want to live in them and there are more ways to travel to them. If you live in a city, you will have noticed: perhaps new flats are being built that will be unaffordable to local people; maybe the centre of your city has started to feel like a theme park for tourists; you might have noticed that the flat next door is now rented to visitors or owned by far-away investors. For all the upheaval of the pandemic, property prices across Europe have continued to rise.

In all cities the narrative arc is the same: people with less power are replaced by those with more. As this happens, the culture of neighbourhoods changes. For some, this change is rapid, bringing with it repossessions and bulldozers. For others it comes into focus more slowly – one day you rub your eyes and no longer quite recognise the place where you live.

This is an epic story with little drama. Unlike other headline-grabbing stories about imbalances of power – stand-offs at factory gates, mass protests against wars and the construction of walls on borders – there are few symbolic moments, charismatic leaders or pivotal court battles.

Instead, the great rearranging of cities is orchestrated by the obscure details of contracts, statutes and property rights. The first challenge for anyone who wants to affect these issues is to take these fragmented, slow processes and turn them into something that can be *seen*.

This is what media activism is all about – bringing the world into view so that it can be changed. Or as we call it here: *Feel, Show, Change*.

To invoke ‘*a right to the city*’ is media activism in its most elemental form. Of course, nobody has an enforceable right to their city as they do to shelter, clean water or to be lawfully detained. But that’s not the point: using that invented phrase – ‘right to the city’ – is a way of asserting that the city is not just land to be traded.

To invoke a ‘right to the city’ is a call to feel the changes in cities – like the emerging housing crisis, the gradual closing off of public space and growth of urban tourism – and give them a name. That is how this guide begins.

In Part A, we look at displacement in cities around Europe and the new words we have to describe it. These words emerge from researchers in university departments, journalists and grassroots activism. They come from the tensions in cities and the vocabulary needed to describe them.

This guide is the result of a project called ‘Mediactivism’ – two years of practice sharing between eight organisations; Les Têtes de l’Art, Fanzingo, ZEMOS98, Kurziv, Krytyka Polityczna and a coalition of three organisations from Turin: YEPP Italia, Banda Larga and Visionary Days. Each has a background in media making, alternative education and an interest in urban issues. In this first part, we also look at the specific pressures on the six European cities in which they are located.

These organisations work with young people and view the teaching of skills and capacities required to deconstruct and create media as vital to developing young people who are fully able to participate in society. This project has been supported by Erasmus+ because media literacy education is important for citizenship and social inclusion.

In Part B, we share a pedagogical approach developed by these five organisations for supporting media activism on right to the city (known as rtcc) issues. It is organised into three steps: feel, show and change. It draws both on the experience of gathering youthful, international interdisciplinary groups together to work on rtcc issues and on the practices and work of media activists themselves.

Right to the city activists operate in neighbourhoods in specific local conditions, but the forces they address are international. **In Part C** we look at the question of inter-city co-operation between media activists. This looks both at ways to support media activists in different cities to learn from one another and how policy-makers can learn collectively from what they do. This project, which has had to adapt to Covid-19 travel restrictions, has needed to develop new ways to do this.



The final part of this booklet gathers examples of media activism on right to the city issues from across Europe in an A-Z format. This includes a plethora of work from the worlds of research, art-making, film-making and DIY media. In this guide, media activism can be understood both as a specific method and also as a spirit that runs through art making, pop-culture and activism.

Post-Covid cities & the European crisis

This project was conceived and began before the coronavirus pandemic. Like cities themselves it is conceptually caught between the world that we knew and the world that we are to become but cannot yet know. Are European cities facing their greatest crisis of purpose since deindustrialisation? By making cities less attractive places to be, has coronavirus solved rtc issues? Is it all over now? A constantly changing pandemic is not a time for predictions. All we can know now is that cities are not what they were at the beginning of this project. Tourists have stopped going to southern European cities, commercial districts have been mothballed and in some cities, controlling the virus has been used as a pretext for stifling dissent.

The most obvious consequence for the focus of this project was to make the immediate understanding of how the pandemic is reshaping rtc issues an important thematic part of the project. In other words: understanding the civic impact of Covid has become an rtc cause.

For the time being it seems that the pandemic is just another prism through which rtc issues are seen. Long after the pandemic has passed, rtc issues will still have to be addressed as cities try to reduce their carbon emissions and adapt to climate change's unpredictable weather patterns. Both could accelerate displacement in cities, both could create moments to reshape them. Cities will also have to address rtc issues while the values of plural, diverse societies are under political attack – racism, sexism and discrimination all find form in unequal access to housing, space and other urban resources.

And then, of course, this will all happen as the 'European Idea' comes under greater attack from all sides. Rtc issues are a global phenomenon, but they are also bound up in the politics of Europe and the European project. Since the Grand Tour in the 17th century, travel through European cities has helped to form European identities. But what happens when residents of southern European cities feel colonised by digital nomads, Airbnb holiday-makers and mini-breakers from northern Europe? The European Union directs flows of investment, but what happens when the aims of international investors are not to invest in the productive life of cities, but to buy the land on which cities are built? Cities are great repositories of public space – the heart of European democracies and the soul of European democracy – so where does that leave 'the European citizen' if these spaces are transferred to more powerful groups?

Europe's contradictions are alive in rtc issues. Solving Europe's multiple crises means getting involved in Europe's cities.

Part A

Contexts

1. Words for displacement

Sociologists, activists and journalists are creating a new vocabulary to describe the reorganisation of cities. Most of these describe the process of something going *out* and something else coming *in*.

Gentrification

The German-born British sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term ‘Gentrification’ in 1964 to describe the way that lecturers, doctors and other middle-class people were moving into London’s Notting Hill, displacing the original working-class residents to other parts of the city. The word now describes a whole field of academic study, journalistic enquiry and protest that refers to both a cultural and economic transformation taking place across cities in Europe and around the world. Most of the other words in this list are more nuanced ways of characterising aspects of gentrification.

Touristification

The process of redesigning urban space, transferring property and redirecting cultural policy to meet the needs of tourists. This process of *converting* urban space to the needs of tourism is different to ‘over-tourism’, which is more about the overuse of an established tourist attraction. The distinguishing features of touristification are: residential flats being converted to holiday-rentals; often enabled by peer-to-peer holiday rental sites (also known as *airbnbification*); cultural policies promoting a version of a city’s story and heritage that appeals specifically to tourists; districts of cities whose most recognised value is their aesthetic appeal to tourists – as in a theme park; encouraging movie-producers and event organisers to use the city’s architectural heritage as a backdrop for film sets and major sporting events.

Renoviction

The process of being evicted from a rented property on the grounds that the property requires renovations. The word is in wide use in Canada and has spread to European cities such as Stockholm and Berlin. The existence of the term shows that, in cities where there is a housing shortage and prices are high, tenants will always be in a position of weakness no matter how long their tenancies are guaranteed for. Whatever their rights, the lack of alternative accommodation options for tenants (i.e. no public housing, can’t afford to buy) means their rights will always count for less.

Privatisation (of public space)

In this context privatisation refers to the transfer of publicly owned land to private owners and developers. The state is the largest landowner in 80% of European cities. Campaigners across Europe are worried about real estate deals that involve the transfer of land that used to be in public ownership to private hands. Privately owned space concerns campaigners because, although it may accommodate the public, it often does so according to its own rules – restricting the right to protest, rough-sleeping and young people socialising or dressing a certain way.

Labelisation

The process of creating a uniform visual aesthetic for city transport, services and places conveyed on posters, ticket stubs, receipts and bus shelters. Critics of labelisation argue that at best it is a waste of money, at worst a deliberate strategy to make the city attractive to wealthy tourists and non-residents – placing a label on something so that it can be sold.

Festivalisation

When city governments continually apply for designations to have the city recognised as the ‘capital of’ ‘world’s best’ or ‘city of’. As with labelisation, the aim is to communicate the value of the city to people who don’t live in it.

Beautification

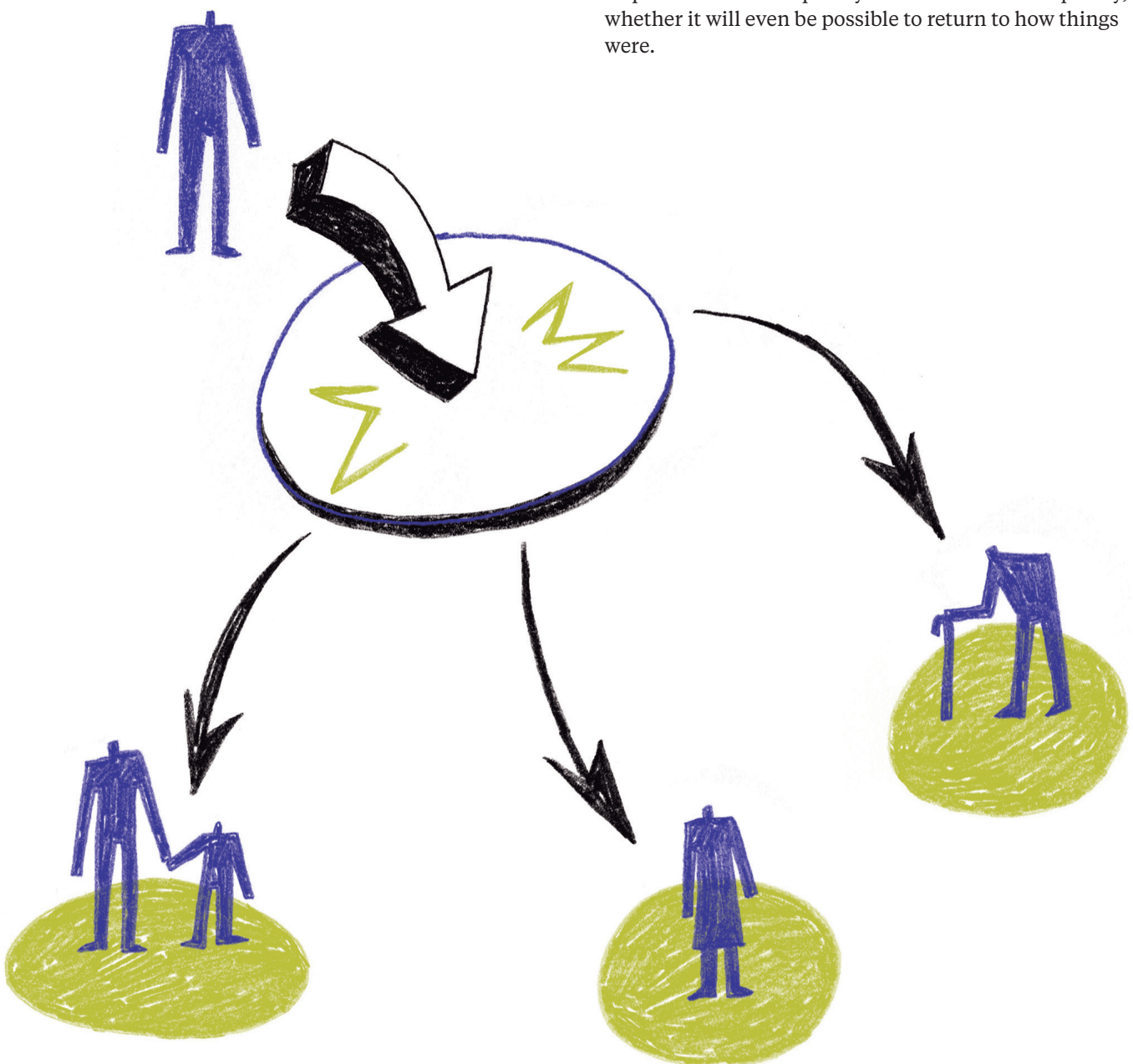
An approach to landscape, architecture and sculpture that conforms the city to a uniform narrow, Instagram-friendly beauty standard. The approach often involves the lighting of bridges at night, the approval of high-rise buildings with shapes that can easily be likened to everyday objects, public art projects that place cutesy objects in public space. The appearance of the city is inoffensive but crowds out the voices of artists and other stories drawing on local heritage.

Churchification

A deliberate strategy by religious groups of all kinds to put places of worship in prominent positions in what were previously secular spaces. Churchification is most controversial in eastern Europe where ideas of secularism and religious faith are still in recovery from their life in the post-war communist sphere of influence.

Normalisation

The process by which, since the pandemic, a new way of city life has been created through new rules, laws and guidelines. In some cities, these measures feel like popular and legitimate initiatives to save lives; in others, the measures feel like political opportunism aiming to preserve space in the city for special interests. However, it seems, normalisation is changing the experience of living in cities: it is unclear if this will be permanent or temporary. And even if it is temporary, whether it will even be possible to return to how things were.



2. The stories of the cities

The forces of displacement are present in each of the cities in which this project is located. These elements combine to create the story of how that city is changing.¹

Seville, Spain

– A city becomes an empty theme park

In 2018, Lonely Planet hailed Seville as the best city to travel to in the world – an acknowledgement that reflects the rapid growth of tourism in the city since the financial crisis 10 years before. Local activists say that more than half of the flats in the city centre are now available on Airbnb. They worry that tourism is crowding out local culture, turning the centre of the city into a theme park. This tourism-focused model of urban development has created new kinds of insecure work – for waiters, cleaners and delivery drivers. Since the pandemic and collapse in tourism, many of these workers have lost their jobs. Covid has exposed the precariousness of their conditions and the city government's failure to develop a 'plan B' for the city's development.

Marseilles, France

– Europe's last ungentrified city

In 2018, two buildings collapsed in Marseille killing eight people. Marseille's citizens worried that their flats would collapse too, blamed the city government which had been warned this could happen. It moved 4,000 people into temporary accommodation. Marseille is one of Europe's last ungentrified cities. Most people who live in the centre are on low incomes. One neighbourhood – La Belle de Mai – is one of the poorest in Europe. In the last decade, the city government pursued policies of encouraging tourists. Campaigners now fear that the need to renovate housing will provide it with the pretext for property deals that shift poor people to the edge of the city. At a time when trust in the city government is low, activists are concerned about the new powers it has to control people's lives in response to the pandemic.

¹ Between 2018, when this project began, and 2021 these cities all changed. These 'stories' were all written in 2020. Partly in response to the issues outlined here Marseille (2020) and Zagreb (2021) elected new mayors.

Botkyrka, Stockholm, Sweden

– Where the politics of inclusion meet real estate prices

Stockholm is one of the most expensive cities in the world. A small glass of beer costs 8 euros. House prices in the centre of the city continue to rise. People leaving the post-Brexit UK are inflating asset prices. Meanwhile minorities, refugees and fringe groups feel increasingly marginalised. Stockholm is one of Europe's most liberal cities and is currently the place where the politics of identity and inclusion collide with a city that is increasingly unaffordable. The municipal government in Botkyrka is exploring ways to resolve some of these tensions (and those exacerbated by the pandemic) in a participatory budgeting initiative.

Warsaw, Poland

– Right to the city in the climate emergency

Warsaw is Poland's national centre for climate strikes and environmental activism. In some ways, Polish city governments have done more to institutionally plan for climate change than the cities of any other European nation. However, all the evidence suggests that both climate change and attempts to address it have the side effect of exacerbating right to the city issues. Close to the city centre, Warsaw has large wetland area – Zakole, which is currently under threat of development. It could be a place to address right to the city issues and climate change at the same time.

Zagreb, Croatia

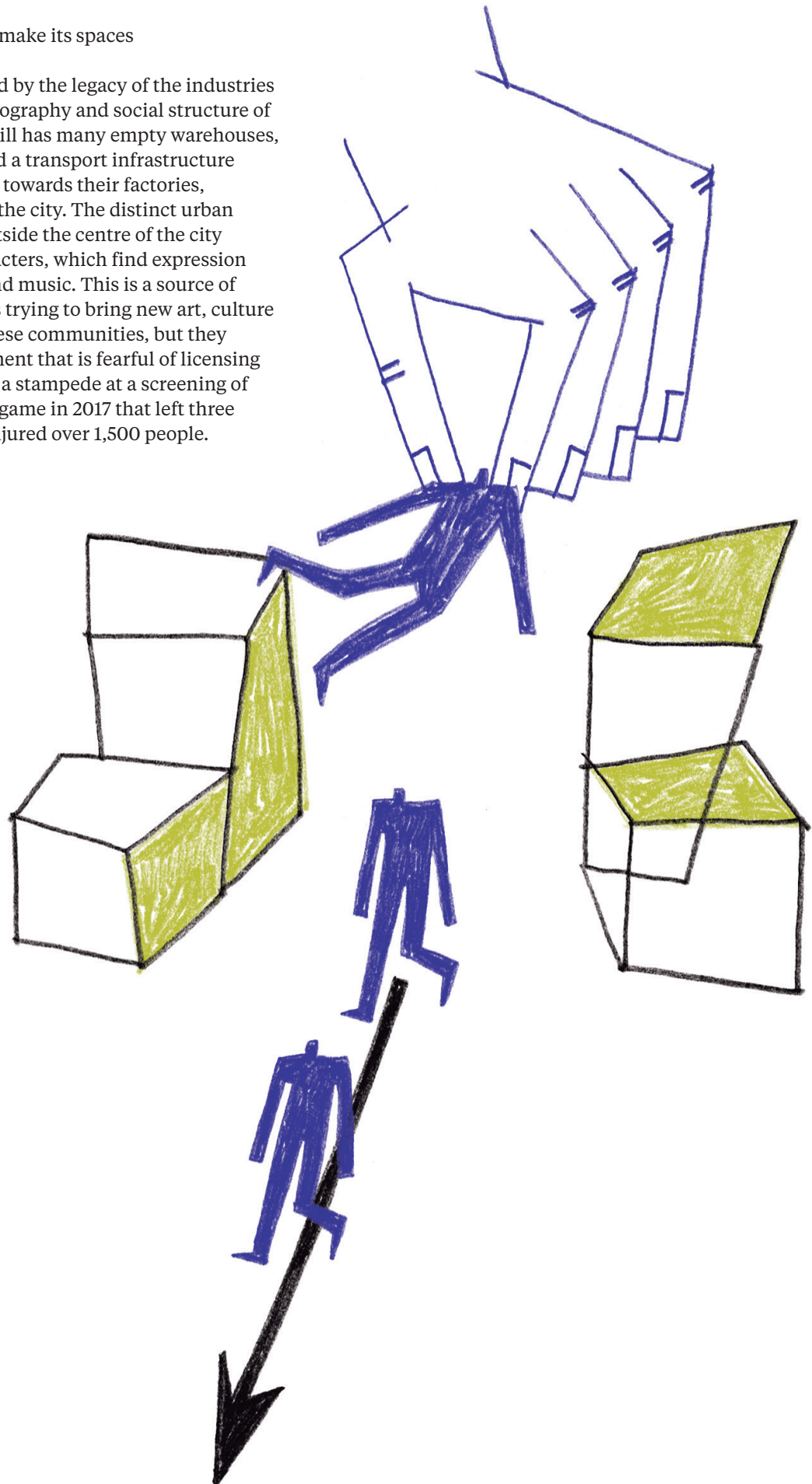
– The mayor and the mega-project

Zagreb is a growing city. Every year more tourists arrive. The Christmas Market is often voted the best in Europe. However, a substantial proportion of the profits from the market go into the hands of four companies favoured by Mayor Milan Bandić. Meanwhile Kino Europa, a much-loved cinema owned by the city council, has closed and may not reopen. The mayor also wants to develop a million square metres of Novi Zagreb in a project known as Zagreb Manhattan. Local activists are opposed to these changes. An earthquake on 22 March 2020 damaged 26,000 buildings and killed one person. Both the earthquake and the measures to reduce the effects of the coronavirus pandemic have exposed the precariousness of tenants in privately rented accommodation.

Turin, Italy

– a city trying to remake its spaces

Turin is still shaped by the legacy of the industries that molded the geography and social structure of the city. The city still has many empty warehouses, and four courts and a transport infrastructure that took residents towards their factories, rather than across the city. The distinct urban zones arranged outside the centre of the city have distinct characters, which find expression in youth culture and music. This is a source of energy for activists trying to bring new art, culture and greenery to these communities, but they face a city government that is fearful of licensing public events after a stampede at a screening of champions league game in 2017 that left three people dead and injured over 1,500 people.



Part B

The mediactivism method

“In evolutionary prehistory consciousness emerged as a side effect of language. Today it is a by-product of the media.”

John Gray, Straw Dogs.

The days of distinct ‘online’ and ‘offline’ worlds are long gone. Active citizenship requires some sort of digital life. Of course, what people say on Twitter has no direct relationship to what those who wield power actually choose to *do*, but making a voice heard requires some knowledge of how to disseminate information and which stories to tell. In some ways, the internet has made citizenship more of a ‘skill to master’ than a ‘right to enjoy’. The only way to deal with that particular problem is through education.

Forms of education that help young people construct and deconstruct media (otherwise known as media literacy) equip young people with the skills and know-how they need to fully participate in society: as the organisations involved in this project see it: *democracy runs on screens*. Societies cannot consider themselves to be inclusive if the skills to intervene are reserved for those who already have cultural and financial capital.

Young people, whose lives are closely connected with their neighbourhoods, connect easily to rtc issues. But anyone who wants to affect rtc issues as a media activist has to intervene in a cycle of words and images that circulate among smart phones, algorithms, television studios and social media platforms, shaping the public perception of rtc issues. This is a system for producing stories that conditions our imagination. It has a thirst for shocking images, attention-grabbing headlines and counterintuitive thinking. It overlooks some stories, misrepresents others and reproduces others endlessly: generally, rtc issues, which are often specific to localities and slow-burning, do not translate well into this system.



In Part B, we will look at a pedagogy for media activism on rtc issues: a resource for teaching and learning about media activism on rtc issues. It draws both on practices in this project and on the work of media activists working on rtc issues around Europe. It is intended to be used by citizenship and media educators, particularly those who work with young people.

Media activists have always been motivated by a desire to say something and a lack of faith in the most powerful parts of the media to say it. This work now also has to happen in a disorientating media landscape disrupted by digital media, which has recast the role of public broadcasters, long-established ideas of 'mainstream' and 'alternative' and diverted advertising revenues.

We hope that the model set out here could be of interest to those concerned with constructing a system of producing and disseminating stories grounded in participation and democratic values.

This section is divided into three stages: *Feel*, a way for an interdisciplinary group to learn to discover and address rtc issues; *Show*, a way to bring some of these realisations to the surface in a project; *Change*, a way to communicate this project so that it stands the best chance of shifting public consciousness.



1. Feel

an interdisciplinary group learns to discover and address right to the city issues.

Time: 3 days

People: 50

Aim: Encounter rtc issues and explore how to raise them

Output: Six 'prototype' projects

Rtc issues emerge slowly and often lie submerged beneath everyday life in the city – for anyone wanting to bring these issues to life, there is a certain amount of feeling around to be done. The *feel* stage responds to this by giving young people time to encounter rtc issues and experimenting with ways to affect them. It takes place intensively over three days and brings together 50 young people from different cultural and geographical backgrounds with skills as film-makers, activists, academics, journalists and political representatives. Some will already be campaigning on rtc issues; others will be affected by them – others will just be curious.

The groups should be divided into groups of eight and given challenges that require them to mock-up 'prototype' ideas for different forms of media activism. This approach puts an emphasis on placing this whole group, who have different forms of knowledge, within a range of shared experiences in which they have to work and think by visiting locations, taking on challenges and listening to experts together. This non-hierarchical approach is a good way to get to the kind of creative thinking and sharing of knowledge that is vital for understanding and tackling rtc issues. After all, these issues and the media itself are both evolving

things – the idea that one person has a monopoly on understanding them is unhelpful. It is also important for ensuring that activism starts from a broad spread of perspectives and interests.

The Feel stage has five overlapping activities.

Prototyping

The centre of the 'Feel' stage is 'prototyping' – mocking-up a form of media that can make a difference to an rtc issue. Each group of eight receives their task at the start of the Feel stage and works on it continuously. The aim of setting the task is not to direct the group to 'delivering' a particular outcome, but to provide parameters within which they can think about how to communicate and what to say: a way of opening up thinking, rather than closing it down. It also has the advantage of reducing the amount of time a group can lose in discussing what to do.

In Zagreb, a group was asked to devise a way of raising awareness about some of the issues that arise from the increase in visitors to the city at Christmas time. In Marseilles, another group was asked to find an alternative way of branding the city. In each case the exercise was asking the group to think



about what form of media to produce, and why, before mocking it up on paper. Many of the prototypes in this process were written and made from paper. Others were hastily pieced together in photoshop – in Seville, one group carved a candle.

Walking

The French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, who first coined the phrase ‘The Right to the City’, was concerned about the incursion of capitalism into all aspects of everyday life. Finding out about processes of displacement in cities (whether their origin lies in *laissez faire* economics, poor governance or corrupt leadership) requires getting up close and personal with the city. Most critics of urban life – from Walter Benjamin to Ben Judah – have incorporated the experience of being face-to-face with the city and its inhabitants, in their writing.

So the *Feel* stage includes a walk around the city. In Zagreb, the group visited a derelict international exhibition centre. In Seville, the group was taken on ‘an anti-touristification’ walking tour designed by two local activists, organised on a Telegram channel.² They visited sites in the city where the increase in tourism was changing the character of the city – rental apartments, coach parks, cafes etc. They also heard alternative histories of specific tourist sites, not usually told to tourists. In Warsaw, the group walked through Zakole wetland, sat in it and quite literally *felt* it.

² See: <https://t.me/SevilleAudioguide>

Encountering

Throughout the *Feel* stage, participants meet visitors with expertise or experiences relevant to addressing their prototyping task. This happens in convivial ways – either by visiting them (in their home or place of work) or by meeting them in a small group, next to the main room where most of the work is taking place. The aim is to create a conversation, preferably with food, rather than an event with a presentation and listeners. In Marseille, participants visited an architecture collective and ate lunch together. In Botkyrka, the group visited representatives of the municipal government to find out about plans for local public spaces.

Mediating

Documenting and communicating the *Feel* stage is important. This is as much about the practical requirement to have a record of what has happened as it is about making sure that learning is happening in an ‘atmosphere of media making’. This does not mean that the session should be constantly broadcast, but rather that, where it fits, there are ‘moments’ that should be shared publicly. We have tried this in several ways: Zagreb used a documenter whose role was to create meme-like combinations of images and words to relay aspects of the discussion on social media; in Seville, Zemos98 filmed a final presentation of the prototypes as an online TV show; in Turin, the group made a short film documenting the event as it happened.

Reflecting

The *Feel* stage, especially if condensed into a three-day period, is intensive work and needs time for reflection. The group will need to be gathered at the end of each day to reflect on what is going well and what isn’t so that the process can be adjusted. It is important that participants have a sense of being part of a collective enquiry, rather than being bound up in the production of their own prototype. All groups used a reporter-reflector, whose role it was to note and recount what had happened at the end of each day.



2. Show

learning in the real world

Time:	8 months
Numbers:	25
Aim:	To raise a local right to the city issue
Output:	A form of media (e.g. website, film, podcast, digital map)

In the second stage of our method – *Show* – the aim is to gather the most engaged participants and support them to work together on a piece of media activism. In our project this group is roughly half the size of the group in the *Feel* stage and maintains the same mix of skills and perspectives among the participants.

Over an eight-month period, this stage has seen the following projects take shape. Many of these began before the Covid-19 pandemic and have had to adjust and adapt to the new reality. They show the breadth of activity that could be considered media activism – see also in the Appendix for an A-Z of media activism methods.

In Seville, **ZEMOS98** worked with the Jartura Collective to create PATIO, a digital platform bringing together testimonies from people all over the city. The project started out as an attempt to document the conditions of people who are casually employed in the tourism sector. However, after the pandemic and the collapse of tourism, the project was adjusted to become more about bringing out the voices of people throughout the city, during a time of crisis. The platform gathered and mapped 72 video testimonies from ordinary people living all over the city. It was a response to the lack of opportunities Seville citizens have to affect or influence the official ‘narrative’ of their city and their desire to speak during a period of social upheaval.

In Warsaw, **Krytyka Polityczna** worked with a collective of young artists to document Zakole – which, as already mentioned, is a wetland habitat near the centre of Warsaw that is threatened by development. Through film, art and social media platforms, the project seeks to raise awareness about the wetland and its fragile ecosystem. Rather than presenting the wetland as a green public space that all citizens should have access to, the work foregrounds the rights of animals and living things to their habitat. The project is taking place at a time when the city government will make important decisions about the future of Zakole: who owns it and what can be built on it.

In Zagreb, **Kurziv** worked with students to make a series of podcasts, films and articles discussing rtic issues for Kulturpunkt, an independently funded media platform. Topics covered included: the conditions of private renters; city culture and tourism; the role of citizens in public decision making; the lack of consultation in new housing developments; and the effect of an earthquake in March 2020. The articles were arranged in an educational online game, built using the ‘Twine’ platform, which introduces right to the city issues in Zagreb. In May 2021, towards the end of the project, a new political coalition rooted in rtic issues took control of the municipal government in Zagreb.

In Botkyrka, **Fanzingo** created a summer school event for young people from their local community to learn about rtic issues, particularly housing. They were supported to make a series of films exploring housing, health, freedom, safety and an edition of a magazine on the theme of ‘Right to the City Issues’. Local publicity for the films and support from the municipal authority led to the group building and maintaining a community garden over the following summer while documenting the process in a series of films.

In Marseilles, **Les Têtes de l’Art** worked with local activists to create a satirical website – L’Office du Rienrism (The office of Nothingism) – which drew attention to the issues of poor housing, surveillance and air pollution in France’s second city. The website was supported by social media channels and a public discussion series, organised on Zoom. L’Office du Rienrism used the visual language of the city government’s brand identity to communicate that ‘The Office of Nothingism’ is an attempt to insert citizens into the city’s official narrative. As in Zagreb, towards the end of the project, a new mayor at the head of a new green-left coalition was elected to the city government.

In **Turin**, *YEPP Italia*, *Banda Larga* and *Visionary Days* – three organisations involved in community culture in the city’s outer-lying districts – worked on several interventions. ‘*Mind the trap*’ supported young makers of a subgenre of drill street-music to express their relationship to public spaces in the city for a community radio station. ‘*The right to the (green) city*’ created a social media campaign promoting the benefits of a model for converting derelict urban space for community gardens. ‘Tales of past events’ helped young people make a film looking at the history of community-led events in Turin’s public spaces.

The projects were all responses informed by the unique character of the organisations involved and the social circumstances of the cities in which they took place. However, there were some common lessons drawn from this approach.

Get to know other people with similar concerns

In each case, take some time to research and contact writers, residents and other activists interested in the same issues. Meeting them will ensure that the action does not duplicate what has already been done, making it more likely that the action contributes to things they are trying to achieve.

Identify a good name

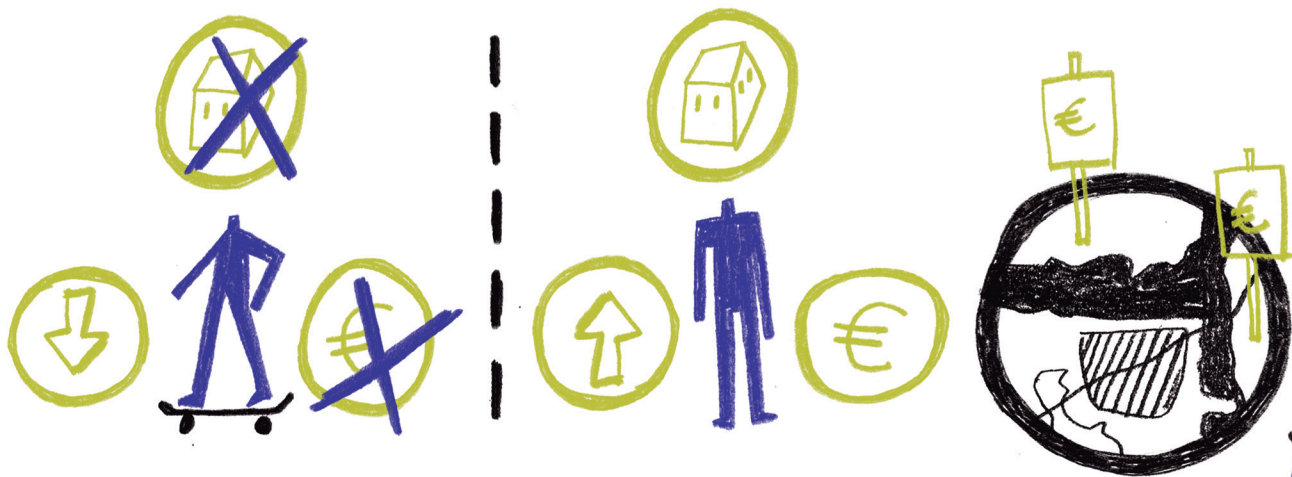
A name for a project is important. ZEMOS98 have designed their own method for naming a project. They start by generating a list of five concepts that define a project. They think it helps to think about what a project is practically achieving, what its values are and the benefits to those participating. Then, in relation to each of the five concepts, they think of ten names – in each case, five that are straightforward, five that are more abstract. Then they discuss the merits of each name in relation to the following five questions: does the name reflect the tone of the project? Does it cover enough aspects of the project? Will it connect with key audiences? They also think it’s useful to check that the name does not have problematic meanings and suggest checking urbandictionary.com and wordsafety.com as well as checking if the domain is available.

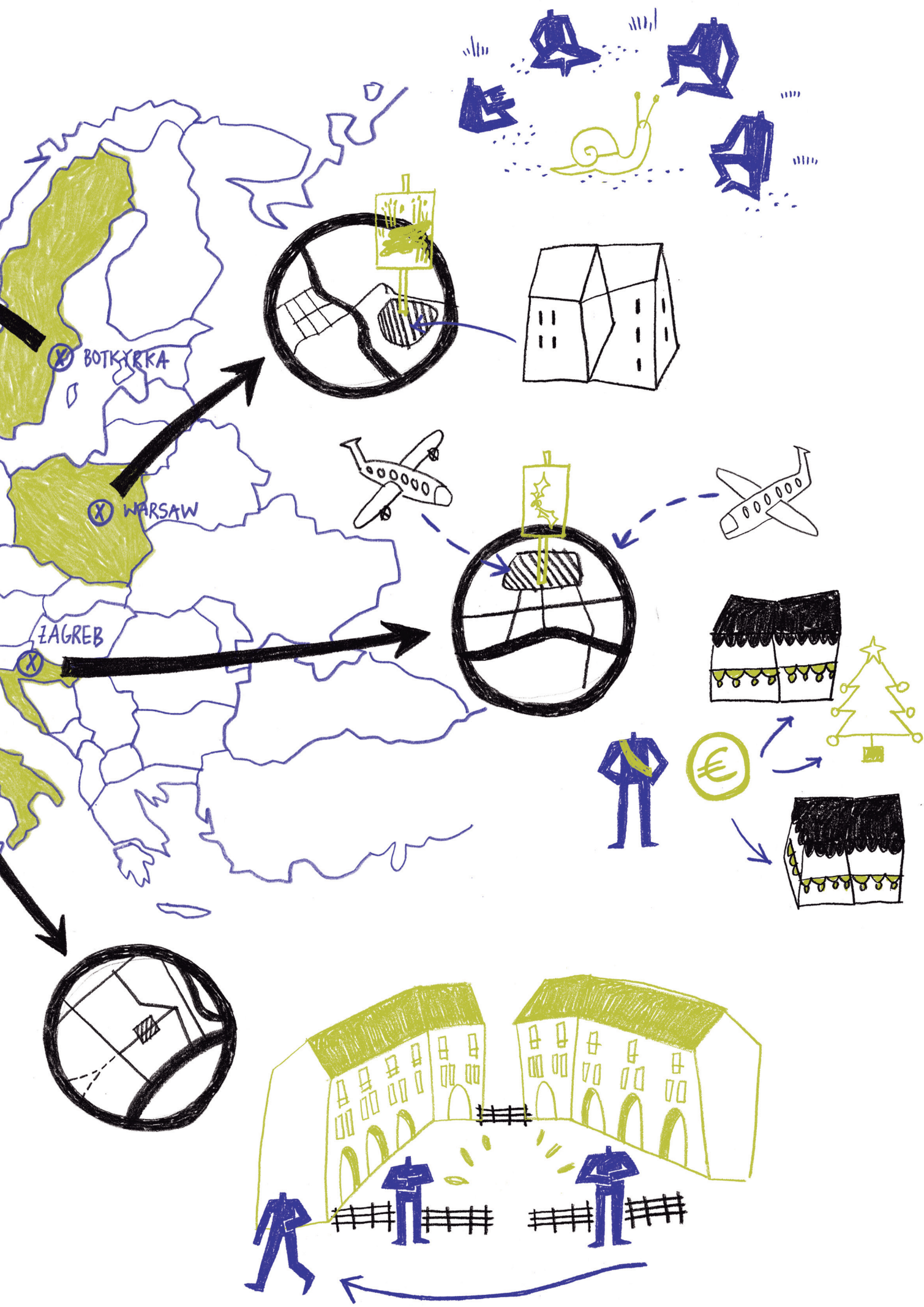
A shared way of collecting and storing information

The group will need a shared way of collecting and sharing pictures, notes and important dates. Since Covid-19, the visual collaboration platform *Miro* has become an important way for groups to share information with one another (see more in Part C). *Miro* enables a disparate group of people to fix information to a virtual whiteboard and crucially provides an accessible record of a discussion that can be returned to.

Less experienced people are in the creative roles

It is important that young people are in roles that enable them to try things they haven’t before. As far as possible, the youngest, least experienced people should be drawing on the experience of the most experienced people in the group to develop their own ideas (rather than the other way around).





3. Change

changing minds about right to the city issues

Time:	1-3 evenings
Numbers:	100
Aim:	Change how people think about right to the city issues
Output:	A public gathering

For media activists, change is about changing minds. This means affecting the views of three audiences in three distinct ways: *supporting* those already concerned about rttc issues; *raising awareness* in those sympathetic to, but unaware of rttc issues; *persuading* those unsympathetic to the needs of people affected by rttc issues. The focus of the *Change* stage is about creating a live event in which media works can be seen, which give them the greatest chance of changing minds. In our project, the focus of this was a local gathering for local activists, media-makers and policy-makers concerned about rttc issues. In some cases, this event took place over the course of one evening; in others, it took place over three days. They used the following principles.

Identify a policy agenda

Policy is always in a state of becoming. It is important to identify an area of policy under development that the event can influence or critique. In Botkyrka, Fanzingo framed their event to contribute to the local municipality's sustainability plan.

Appeal across the divisions that displacement creates

In cities, where people lead quite separate lives, rttc issues can easily be dismissed as 'someone else's problem' – especially when rttc issues themselves recast citizens on one side of a divide, as majority or minority, renters or owners, incomers or locals. When trying to reach out to an audience, rttc media activism needs to avoid reinforcing these divides by pitching one side against the other. One approach is to frame the city as something that needs to be 'saved'. Another is to use humour and beautiful imagery prominently. In Warsaw, the artists working with Krytyka Polityczna emphasised the beauty of the wetland habitat in their communication. In Zagreb, Kurziv used the aspiration to create 'a more caring city' to encourage different people to attend the meeting.

Work with the 'mainstream' media as well as other activists

Media activism is often a necessary response to the failure of mainstream media to cover an issue properly. But all media activism needs to shift what the dominant voices in media are talking about. All the groups in this project tried to attract the attention of mainstream news organisations through routine press-work – writing press releases and contacting journalists interested in urban issues.

Signpost and support other related work

When showcasing media works, it can be important to promote and share all the other research, art and media work about the same issue. This means signposting those works online or displaying them at a public viewing.

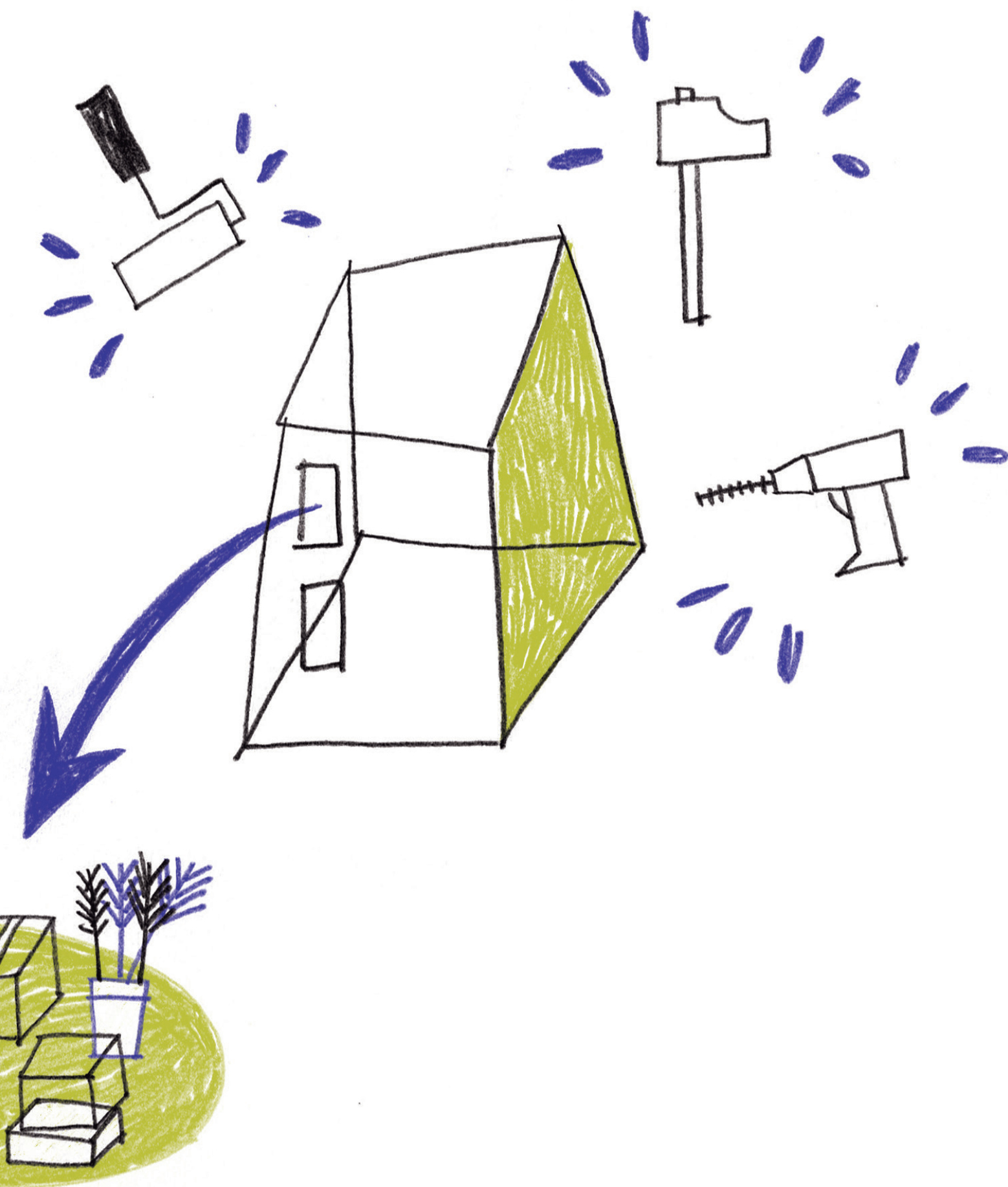
Leave the sequel open

It is good if media activism doesn't end. Rttc media activism often involves making displacement in the city visible – making maps, recording how space is used, photographing and documenting space. These are persuasive in two ways – firstly because they surface something that has previously not been visible; secondly because they provide a new benchmark for the health of the city. Reproducing the same map a year later is a powerful way to frame how a city's health should be measured. Showing how the city is evolving makes changing minds more likely.

Archive

Change can also happen in the future through how the present is remembered. It is important to leave media works in the places where they can be noticed: leaving a media work on a social media platform is not the same as archiving it. Works can be given to local libraries, museums or galleries where they can be found by researchers and activists in the future. Media works can also be committed to the **mediactivism.eu** media collection where they can be viewed by researchers and – if you specify – used in other media works.





Part C

Working across Europe, from home

Learning to be a media activist on rtic issues is enriched by learning from people in other cities in other parts of the world. This can help media activists improve and refine what they do on a practical level and understand rtic issues better. It is also important because connecting media activists is an important part of creating a rival system of information distribution, challenging some of the systemic problems in media. The restrictions on travel introduced in 2020 have forced the participants in this project to find new ways of working together, internationally, without leaving home. Here are some of the approaches used in this project to bring media activists together across Europe.

1. Good Zooms

When face-to-face meeting is no longer possible, the only way to work together is through meetings organised via digital conferencing tools. We have found that the coordination and curation of these meetings is important if they are to be productive and informative. Zoom meetings are harder to chair, harder to concentrate in and can easily produce misunderstandings and unnecessary conflict. They are particularly harder for groups where only a small minority of participants are talking in their first language. Here are a few rules for better meetings between international groups like ours.

Bring the neighbourhood.

Try and bring something from your neighbourhood into the meeting. We miss being in other places, so it's nice to see where people are. Ice-breakers might include bringing maps, pictures or sounds from neighbourhoods – these can be a good way to start the meeting.

The chair shouldn't have to do everything.

The chair's role is to keep the conversation going and make sure that all voices are heard – other people in the group should take on the roles of note-taking, time-keeping, energising and reflecting. The more these roles can be shared, the better the meeting will work.

Walk & talk.

If it's a long call, break into smaller groups and go for a walk. Walking and talking works particularly well for problem-solving, brainstorming and questions without clear or obvious answers.

Do something together.

If it's a long call, try and find a way of doing something together that is not work. We have tried cooking lunch, singing karaoke and listening to music.

Finish with everyone saying what they are going to do next

The end of a conference call can feel like jumping out of an airplane. It's important that everyone feels purposeful – try and have a round at the end where everybody says what they will do next.

2. Miro Labs

Miro is an 'online visual collaboration platform' (essentially a whiteboard) that can be simultaneously edited by a group of people. It is useful for group planning, reflecting and brainstorming – the sort of group discussions that take place on organisational away days. A facilitator can create a structure for a conversation, and then multiple participants can contribute their ideas and knowledge as sticky notes, links, jpegs etc. The platform provides a useful way for members of an international network to work together.

Miro Labs were a useful process for us to document what happened in the project and share it in a common way. In *Miro*, we created a template timeline, based on the ‘feel & show’ stages of the process outlined in the previous section. This enabled us to share with one another what we were doing and when. Each partner’s timeline was then used as the basis for an international presentation on Zoom. The meetings were a way for each partner to present their work to the other partners (and guests from their networks) and – with the assistance of Zoom rooms and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats grid on *Miro* – a discussion about how to build on and increase the impact of the work, locally and internationally.

In a final meeting of all the partners’ organisations and associated networks, we looked for common themes in their work, to help decide how they could inform the two international meeting formats outlined below.

3. European Hackcamp

The European Hackcamp was a way to use some of the methodological processes used in the ‘Feel’ stage of the project to bring together an international group to reflect on the central themes raised by media activists during the project. This event would previously have been held in a city, but because of the pandemic, the meeting took place on a combination of Zoom, WhatsApp and *Miro*.

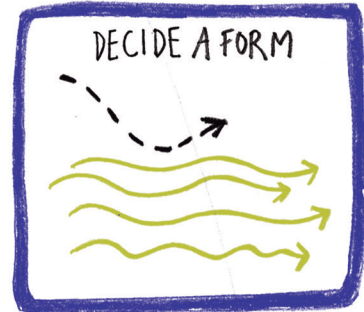
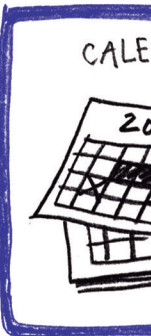
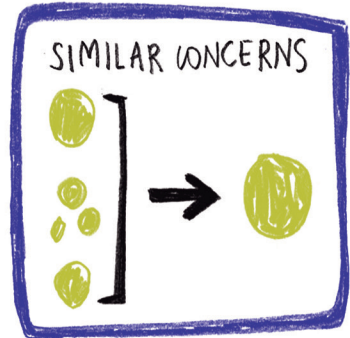
The European Hackcamp brought together 40 participants to work in interdisciplinary groups for three consecutive mornings on prototypes that help to raise the profile of rtic issues in Europe. The participants were organised into five groups – the groups worked on a map of an imaginary city built on principles of care; another was tasked with creating a board game based on rtic issues and another worked on a new model for networked European media. As in the ‘Feel’ stage, this ‘making-focused’ method was designed to help participants think differently and learn from one another about rtic issues and also to create practical outputs to raise the collective profile of the Mediactivism project.

The groups were selected to blend the skills of designers with policy-makers, researchers and activists. They worked together for three mornings, under the guidance of a facilitator. On the final Friday, there was a public presentation of the work of the different groups.

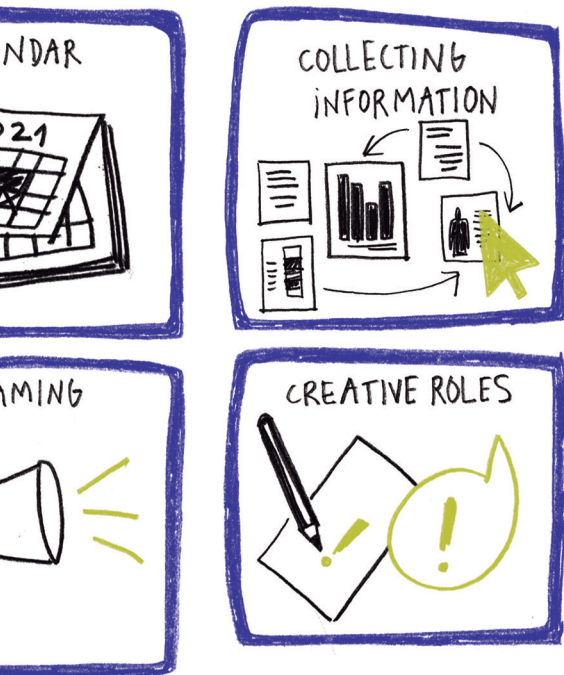
FEEL

ACTIVITIES

SHOW

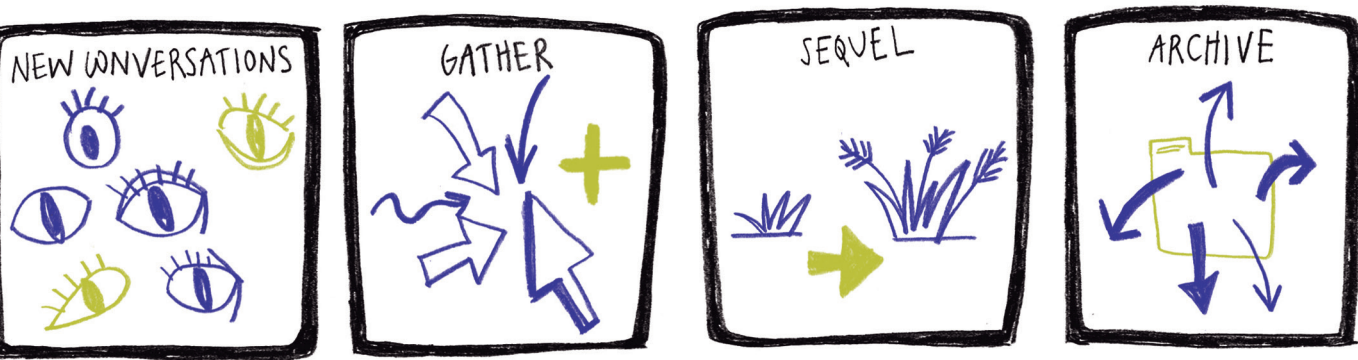


PATTERNS



CHANGE

GUIDELINES



Appendix:

An A-Z of methods of Right to the City Media Activism

There are many forms of media-activism on rttc issues. In a world where anything in the physical environment can be photographed and shared, media activism does not necessarily have to involve making films and videos. It's more about having an awareness of how to insert an idea within flows of information and attention. Here is an A-Z of different approaches that influenced this project. We have included forms of media and forms of protest that have a particularly symbolic, expressive aspect.

Audiovisual source code

A collage of moving images identifying the origin of ideas, emotions and attitudes in audiovisual culture. Here is Lisbon-based [Left Hand Rotation](#)'s audio visual source code exploring the use of gentrification in film-making.

Board games

Board games can be a good way of introducing ways of thinking about the world. Monopoly offers a particularly competitive, ruthless view of urban life. Board games like [Commonspoly](#) offer an alternative way of organising urban life.

Critical mass

Critical mass is a form of direct action protest that challenges city authorities to make better provision for cyclists. On an assigned day, cyclists ride together through the city taking control of streets that are usually dominated by cars. Some of the biggest [Critical Mass](#) rides anywhere in the world have taken place in Budapest – the largest attracting nearly 100,000 riders in 2013.

Documentaries

Most of Europe's big cities have their own micro-genres of local film-making, telling the story of communities threatened by development, touristification or privatisation. See, Eduardo Chibás' [Bye Bye Barcelona](#) (Barcelona, 2015), Tomasz Knittel [Universam Grochów](#) (Warsaw, 2018) Zed Nelson's [The Street](#) (London, 2019) and Paulo Abreu's [Alis Ubbo](#) (Lisbon, 2018).

FEEling thE Earth

In increasingly squeezed cities green spaces and care for them have become a way of expressing a different set of values. See [urbanallotments.eu](#) for a full review of guerilla gardening initiatives and community gardens around Europe.

Guerilla messaging

Forms of 'guerilla' messaging that dramatically appear on buildings and street furniture are often a feature of campaigns for the right to the city. The recent [campaign opposing the redevelopment of Leith Walk](#) in Edinburgh used [light projections](#) and [yarn bombing](#).

playing the Hero

In June 2021, during a protest, environmentalist Jane da Mosto rowed a wooden boat close to the moving bows of a huge cruise ship in the Venice lagoon. Michele Gallucci, a local photographer, took a [photo](#) that subsequently appeared in national newspapers around the world – helping to raise the profile of the cause and triggered the eventual banning of cruise ships by the Italian government weeks later.

Interactive web docs

These can provide multi-dimensional ways of conveying what is going on in cities. [Field Trip](#), made in 2020, covers the changing ways Berliners value the Tempelhof Field.

culture-Jamming

The act of publicly subverting, appropriating and satirising the visual language of corporations, governments, developers and other sources of urban authority. Airbnb is a regular target across Europe – for example, in [posters](#) designed by the neighbourhood group [Grezi](#) Athens, or [these ones](#) also aimed at Airbnb's presence in Berlin. Ryanair has also been targeted in [posters](#) protesting about over-tourism in the Canary Islands.

Learning online

Courses organised on Zoom like those run by the [Global Platform for the Right to the City](#), which aim to introduce people around the world to 'Right to the City' initiatives and situate them within emerging policy.

Manual Making

Digital guides and physical pamphlets are an important way to support those affected by rtic issues and those working to tackle them – for example, this [University College London](#)-published guide for activist groups wanting to initiate community-centred regeneration in London or this [‘Regeneration Cheat Sheet’](#) also aimed at London-based activists. This [women’s guide to Zagreb](#) is a way of demonstrating the lack of presence of women in public spaces in Croatia’s capital city.

baNner making

The simplest form of media-making remains one of the best. Community organisers ‘Training for change’ provide some useful instructions for making a [banner](#) here.

make an Observatory

In recent years, activists and researchers have set up ‘Observatories’ to document and understand urban issues. The word observatory might appeal because it suggests that, like stars, cities are interconnected and affected by slowly moving processes that come slowly into view. In Spain alone, there’s the [Observatory for the Anthropology of Urban Conflict](#), [The Observatory for the right to the city](#) and the [Municipalism Observatory](#).

Push

[Push](#) is a new documentary directed by the Swedish film-maker Frederik Gertten, which follows the United Nations Special Rapporteur as she documents the housing crisis in Europe and around the world. The film is the most ambitious attempt to make a film about right to the city issues. It has been followed up by the [Pushback podcast](#) and the [Shift movement](#) – ‘the global movement to secure the right to housing’.

Right to the city

Activists across Europe (particularly in the centre and the east) have adopted this phrase – which intuitively makes sense and belongs to an extensive academic discourse – for protest groups and civil society organisations: See [Pavo No Grad](#) in Zagreb, [Dreptul la Oraş](#) in Timisoara, [Prawo do Miasta](#) in Poznań and [A Város Mindenkié](#) in Budapest.

Street art and graffiti

The urban wall is the natural medium for commentary about taking control of the city.

Tours

Walking tours of cities, like this [one organised via Telegram by Zemos98](#) or those offered by [HackneyTours](#), can be a way of introducing the untold story of a neighbourhood, which challenges the dominant narrative.

Independent Journalism

Writing has a huge contribution to make to the understanding of Right to the City issues. For example, [this series of articles](#) published by [Kulturpunkt.hr](#), in conjunction with the Mediactivism initiative.

data Visualisation

Initiatives that gather and map data in ways that reveal processes of displacement in cities. Maps like [30,000kms’ maps of touristification](#) in Madrid and Manon Vergerio’s maps [of the ‘future gentrification risk’ of the 2024 Olympics in Paris](#).

Wikis

Indexing useful information helps to increase the visibility of useful information rendered less visible in feeds and search results. [Participedia](#) is a library of democratic innovations, many of which take place at the level of the city.

eXpropriation referendum

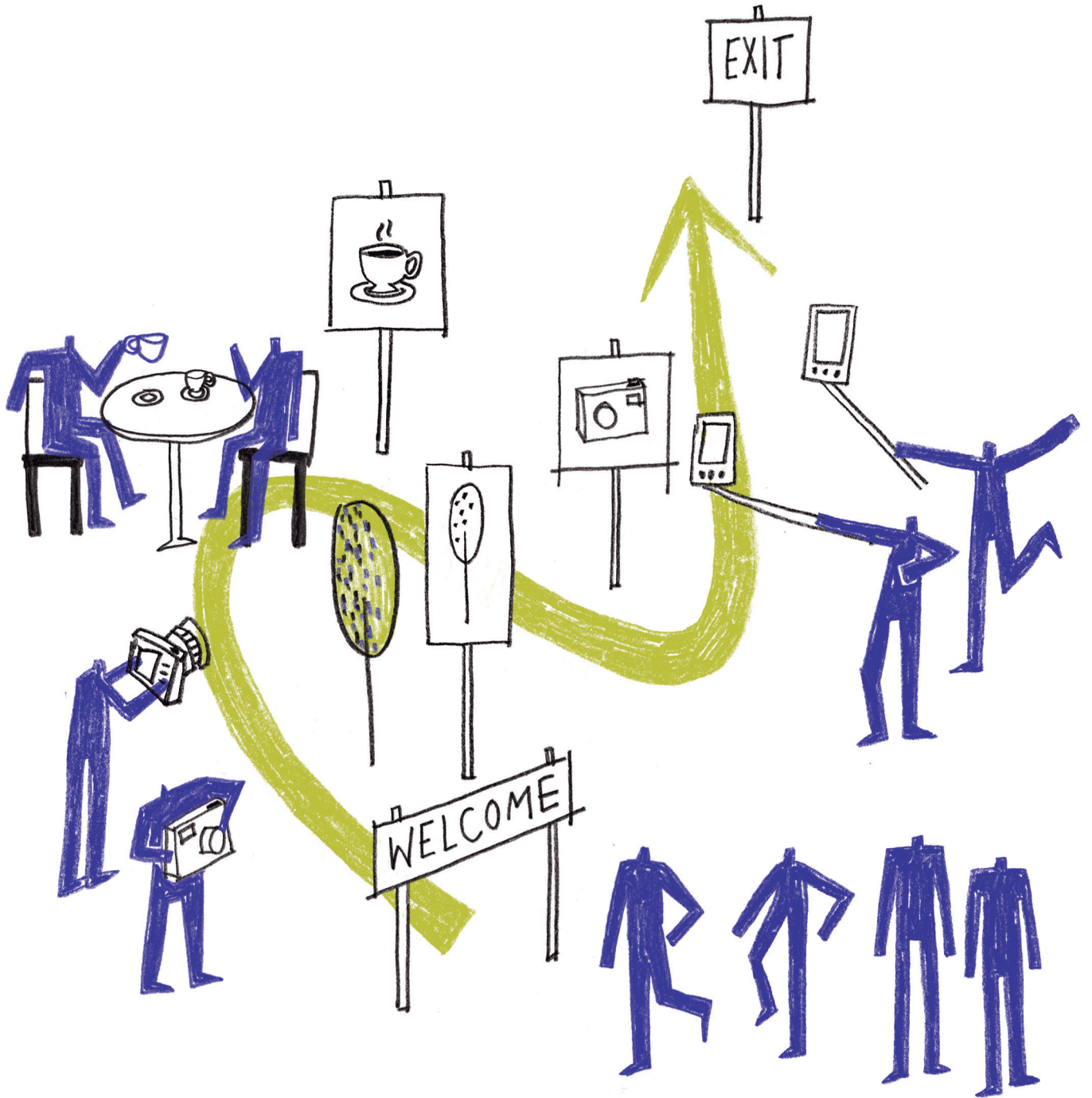
[Campaign in Berlin](#) for the portfolios of the biggest landlords to be brought into public ownership. The campaign has made striking and consistent use of a yellow and purple colour scheme.

Youth centred media

Rtic issues are felt by young people who depend on public space for their social lives but are often viewed with hostility by older groups. Youth-oriented media projects like [Fanzingo](#) and [Boulegue TV](#), which support films, music and podcasts that stem directly from young people’s experiences, are a powerful way to raise rtic issues.

Zagreb je NAŠ

Green-left party, part of the Možemo coalition, which effectively campaigned and won control of Zagreb. The campaign was built on years of organising, but also made use of [highly effective publicity stunts](#).



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The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

MEDIACTIVISM

FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

This publication has been published in the framework of MediActivism, a project supported by Erasmus+ and carried out in partnership by: ZEMOS98, Krytyka Polityczna, Fanzingo, Kurziv, Les Têtes de l'Art and the European Cultural Foundation.

The participation of YEPP Italia, Banda Larga and Visionary days is supported by Compagnia di San Paolo.



krytyka polityczna



ZEMOS98



VISIONARY



FANZINGO



Media activists tell powerful stories about who has power and what needs to change. They make videos, documentaries, blogs and banners. They write, they edit, they project. Sometimes this activism is more about telling stories; sometimes it's more about opening up bandwidth to tell these stories – sometimes it's both. In a constantly shifting European media environment, media activism is always evolving.

This is a guide to media activism that affects 'right to the city issues' - gentrification, touristification, renovation and the multiple processes at work in cities across Europe which displace people from the cities in which they live. The first challenge for anyone who wants to affect these fragmented, slow processes – often facilitated by obscure policies, contractual details and property rights – is to turn them into something that can be seen.

Gathering the practices and experiences of six organisations curious about media and cities, located in six cities across Europe, the guide sets out a method to do just this. Based on three stages - Feel, Show and Change - it gathers practical know-how, useful examples and on-the-ground experience from across Europe.

Cities are unlikely to emerge unchanged from the pandemic but the underlying pressures on them are unlikely to go away. There is an urgent need to bring them into focus.

culturalfoundation.eu