





TANJA SIEMS

# **IMPARTING CITY**

## **METHODS AND TOOLS FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING**

Birkhäuser  
Basel

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# FOREWORD

FROM BARBARA CAMPBELL-LANGE

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The growing international awareness of environmental and societal inequities presents us all with a collective challenge and responsibility to act: we need to reduce waste, increase wellbeing, and better cherish our limited resources of people, time and materials. Following Bruno Latour, urban designer and educator Tanja Siems supports an ethos that encourages greater sharing, where we can rally around such ‘matters of concern’ and consider possible ways forward for the design of our environments. Her exemplary work urges us to detect bias, unfurl assumptions and use this information to change our usual methods and processes.

The projects in this book explore modes of engagement that have not only been designed but also tested. They reveal the complexity of our urban context, its formation as a manifold and extraordinary palimpsest of social and physical conditions and constraints, where everything and every decision lies in contingent relation to something or someone else. Siems presses for ‘mediation’, for different kinds of conversations among diverse groups of actants, for dialogues that harness the advantages of virtual as well as physical communication. She suggests different kinds of measures in different kinds of spaces – mechanisms that activate greater inclusion and, above all, increase trust. Combining an unfailing spirit of generosity with practical acumen, her practice endeavours to enfold the overlooked and the less heard. For Siems, recognising varied cultures of experience and expression and acknowledging disparate concerns and agendas is an essential step towards improving our environment.

As part of this transformation and shift towards new forms of collaboration, Siems takes education outside the framework of the university and its institutional spaces. Her methodology of participatory urbanism causes students to improvise spatial settings in the city as stages of inquiry, often working for long stretches of time directly on site. The immediacy of researching real places in real time as participant observers enables students to survey different kinds of opportunities and challenges alongside local citizens, socio-political organisations and authorities. Remarkably the Siems’ team has situated these participatory practices inside exceptional historical buildings such as an abandoned Train Station in Wuppertal, the vacant Birker Bath in Solingen and an old empty radio shop in Remscheid.

International interdisciplinary research projects such as ‘Solar Energy in an Urban Development Context’ have extended this out-of-studio approach. Here Siems’ masters students were able to discuss ideas and experiment onsite during a month-long summer school at Berlin-Adlershof, evolving a

sustainable urban plan for the area. Importantly this collaborative work was embedded with the knowledge of local people as well as insights from a network of experts based in socio-economic as well as creative disciplines.

This direct fieldwork approach allows students to explore urban questions in distinct ways. Siems eschews standardised planning tools, predefined answers and variations of tired typologies. Instead she enables projects that can independently identify issues leading to the co-creation of innovative, locally relevant proposals. Her students are empowered to design their own site-specific design processes, to follow their intuition and to be open to alternative and unusual possibilities. By relying on genuine interest and care for a place, looking closely at what actually exists, engaging directly with people, the resulting projects display a wide spectrum of novel approaches and intelligent propositions.

Siems advocates for a closer connection between pure and applied knowledges, where the valuable speculative adventures of imaginative design can more coherently and effectively respond to the challenges of real clients and budgets. She is committed to interdisciplinary projects in both higher education and the built environment industry. To do this, she aims to create non-hierarchical interfaces and networks where different worlds and different viewpoints can co-exist and intersect, opening up seams of enquiry that enrich and inform decision-making.

Siems encourages us to think otherly, to sidestep ‘business as usual’ and to be mindful, in any project, of its many histories and possible futures while actively operating in the ‘now’. She dares us to ‘design the design’, to reconsider and adapt planning processes in the built environment to make them more fluid, inclusive and adjustable. Conveyed through images, diagrams and texts, the projects in this book demonstrate that her work is continually growing and innovating, offering new approaches and fresh means of cooperation. Yet, beyond this, what gives Siems’ projects a unique ethos of care is her profound understanding of the inevitably incomplete and imperfect nature of participatory and mediating processes. Through her work she gifts us possibilities, sustainable and resilient strategies, unusual methods and inventive tools that inspire all of us to try harder, to collectively find ways, large or small, direct or indirect, to engage, protect and enhance our cultural commons.

*Professorin Barbara Campbell-Lange*  
The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL





# INTRODUCTION



# APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS

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Communicating design ideas and processes is one of the most important tasks of creative work. Only through communication can complex tasks be deeply understood and supported sustainably. In no other field than urban design is this task multi-faceted and extremely fascinating. The city itself reflects manifold interactions within our society in its full complexity. Occurrences of everyday life intersect with culture and leisure. Therefore urban space defines our identity and the way we live together, in all its dimensions. Understanding planning, however, is significantly different from this immediate view of the city. Urban design ideas are often developed on the basis of a plan, from an abstract top-down vantage point. On the one hand, this approach contradicts our immediate view in terms of scale and dimensions. On the other hand, urbanity today is defined by the capacity for adaptation and transformation. Hence, the task of a forward-looking urban design is to permit related processes and, at the same time, create reliable framework conditions and circumstances for expressing these developments.

A functional urban fabric always encompasses a balanced mix of interactions – ranging from cultural and social dynamics to a conscious and balanced way of dealing with the immediate environment and its resources. Each of these individual factors requires viewing them as initiators of their respective counterparts. In the context of comprehensive urban planning and design, they cannot function forever in isolation. At the same time, urban transformation processes need to take place faster than in previous decades, since it is also necessary to advance integrative and participatory processes within the planning of cities and their urban life. A diverse set of approaches and strategies exists to implement this in practice. At the Urban Design Institute in Wuppertal we have developed approaches and strategies over recent years and demonstrated their implementation in various applied projects. This handbook is intended to assemble them in the context of an experimental mode of urban research, while offering recommendations for action and impulses for creative collaboration.

Understanding spatial design as a comprehensive texture composed of multi-faceted actors and urban elements requires an approach that avoids standardisation or doctrinal subordination and, instead, responds to each of the existing circumstances in a targeted way. Deliberating on our own approach, we have indeed learned much from Bruno Latour's ideas – ever since he held his first architectural lecture in 1999 at the Architectural Association School of Architecture

in London, where he spoke of Paris and the manifold ways of reading the city. An analytical and networked mode of action as a basic precondition of our work is clearly apparent in many of its aspects. A systematising analytical approach that Latour, for instance, proposes for the examination of environmental changes in Africa's steppe, as described in *Pandora's Hope*, constitutes a decisive example of establishing a basis for any and all large-scale observations. Even if all data and facts are at hand, the systemic deliberation on these data is decisive in order to visualise findings for comparison and application. It is therefore a central task of urban design to display as many interrelations as possible within a seemingly objective totality, in order to identify what Latour describes as “matter of concerns”, or the transformative elements of each specific case. The relevance of Latour's description of the principle of a “circular reference”, according to which things are to be observed simultaneously from multi-faceted points of view, becomes particularly clear in the dimension of urban design-related situations. Latour asks how we can recognise the totality, while also recognising the respective components and smallest elements. When applying this to the city, we can ask the question of how these components and elements can be understood in their totality from a bird's eye perspective and, at the same time, from the viewpoint of the respective urban actors. We need to repeatedly switch between these positions, in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the structures of things and social networks (Latour 2005).

In his current endeavours, Latour invites us to expand this view even further and act responsibly within “Gaia's” all-encompassing orbit. Activities must no longer be isolated compromises. Every form of action is partial to the tenuous situation of a divided environment and, thus, lacks influence on our common and future existence. From the analysis of specificities to a consciousness of divided, comprehensive responsibilities, Latour further inspires us to change our principal point of view and engage in approaches that do not build upon meeting predetermined goals. Instead, the aim is to not lose sight of the big picture. By doing so, it becomes possible to adjust the respective and specific tasks at any time and actively achieve far-reaching improvements.

This publication is intended to present multi-faceted approaches that contribute to a better understanding of the urban situation and do justice to the communication and implementation of new planning schemes and developments. In order to convey this understanding to a new generation of

planners and embrace processes of perpetual change, a conversation on teaching, research and practical implementation is essential. The related dynamics are reflected in the principle of teaching as research and simultaneous research as teaching. Based on this principle, planning is not considered something that has been determined in advance, something that is rigidly imparted within teaching. Instead, it becomes a research process of perpetual advancement that simultaneously influences teaching. Research and teaching, from this point of view, are no longer limited to educators and students of architecture and urban design. Even more so, they are intended to include other creative and planning disciplines. In order to yield sustainable effects, the process of teaching and research needs to be perpetuated within professional practice and urban society itself in an enduring way. Only continuous exchange on all levels and between the individuals that actually influence urban space can, as a result, produce a dynamic understanding of the city.

Hence this publication is aimed at all urban stakeholders and participants wishing to develop and realise diverse urban planning strategies. The used and generated methods and tools of participatory processes are visual and graphically presented in this handbook. These methodologies range from an analytical approach to concrete concept strategies and are shown as a realisation of participatory projects in various case studies. An open and creative experiment within a scientific urban testing ground supports the urban mediation process and therefore fully moderates its outcomes.

As a catalogue of methods and applied tools, the book as a guide demonstrates real and directly implementable principles of actions for an exploratory urban research within the design and planning institutions.

### **Cooperative approaches in teaching and research**

Creative work processes as described above are subject to continuous further development. The publication in your hands presents related examples of my applied teaching, research and practice activities, viewed from different perspectives. For years, we have been successfully connecting practice, teaching, and research at the Institute in Wuppertal and at the Architectural Association (AA), as well as our interdisciplinary planning office T2 Spatialwork in London. We deliberate deeply on integrated urban design concepts and the positive impact inter- and transdisciplinary teamwork liaisons can have within planning and design processes. The ways architectural and urban design projects are implemented are an integral part of our teaching courses. As fields of research in a scientific context, they serve to develop comprehensive strategies with a diverse set of involved actors. In a similar sense, scientific methods derived from recent research projects at the institute are put to the test in the context of planning practice.

Creative negotiation and communication between urban elements constitute significant tasks of contemporary urban

planning. From this perspective, mediation describes more than the simple communication of information on urban conditions and needs, or establishing an amicable compromise. More so, the term refers to the creative process within phases of planning and implementation and, thus, itself becomes a central element of the concepts mentioned above. Within the Bachelor and Master programmes modules, the method of communicating and conveying information through mediation and interaction is subject to comprehensive and focused research and testing design or urban strategies within these courses. One significant aim of communication and mediation is to visualise the complex urban design process continuously and intelligibly for all parties involved to see. Most of all, this requires and depends on the open-ended character of the process. For this purpose, again and again, our team asks the following questions within the related teaching modules: how we sustainably integrate mediation as a method in the urban design discipline and urban research in the future? Can we create an interactive urban interface as a medium and surface for communication? Which design-based content can be interweaved with cultural, social, political, ecological, and economic aspects? How can we use these to design future scenarios that are sufficiently flexible and open to sustainably deliberate on all factors relevant to the design process?

### **Research questions and urban design tasks**

In order to meet the complexity and multi-faceted character of urban design assignments, it is necessary to develop different points of origin and approaches for each respective contextual situation. Two major approaches to site-specific assignments and related research and design questions specifically attuned to the object of inquiry are the cornerstones of our work. We will introduce them in the following.

A site-specific approach begins with clearly delineating and defining the object of inquiry or an area under observation. In many cases, scientific institutions or cities and municipalities interested in entering into an academic collaboration specifically indicate which areas are envisioned for research. In most cases, this type of assignment specifies a site intended for planning or particular typologies of built structures. However, the topic of the inquiry itself and the development of a functional programme remain open. As a result, in the context of urban design pedagogy, we find it an interesting and important task to develop such topics on the basis of a specific situation in a comprehensive manner and in cooperation with the students. Within an established open framework, application-oriented method of urban analysis can serve to generate new strategies and propose recommendations for action to the areas which are under consideration.

In the case of a research-oriented approach, this procedure is turned “upside down”. From the very beginning, assignments encompass a clearly defined research and design question, a specific goal or a stipulated guiding idea. A pre-

determined place or design object does not exist when the assignment begins. Instead, the application of methods established on the basis of the research question and the following specification of a site becomes the focus of the assignment. Following this notion, the different methodical approaches are examined, evaluated, and implemented under close consideration of the essential practical requirements.

Neither approach is ever mutually exclusive. Instead, they generate alternating cycles and “feedback loops” that enable proposing sustainable answers to the hypothetical core of the ongoing assignment. To us, it therefore becomes imaginable and desirable that a specific place with its particular socio-economic circumstances provokes the formulation of research questions in the course of the assignment that, in a further step, allow examination in terms of their general applicability. In reverse, a specification of locations within predefined research assignments can also inspire new research questions, or expand and revise the original question.

### **Integrated urban design instruments and tools**

We do not dictate general principles to students in a top-down manner. Instead, we show them planning processes that experience a creative development with real-life projects on their own terms. In particular, this approach is applied to a diverse set of tasks directly aimed at the urban design context – a context in which planners are confronted with actors on many levels and a diverse range of circumstances. Examinations of traditional knowledge on spatial, political, social, ecological, and economic framework conditions, as well as the deliberation on future-oriented, inter- and transdisciplinary theories, are just as necessary as the development of competence in initiating and tolerating comprehensive urban development processes.

The concept of applied types of urban strategies with integrated design and planning approaches is essential to all areas of our academic teaching and scientific research activities. Basic teaching courses introduce historical urban planning theories, guiding images, and principles – not only in terms of theory, but always in parallel with exercises and designs and with attention to comparability. Particularly within the Master’s research study in our institute, design as such is only a partial aspect of student assignments. The urban design-related planning process and its impact on the different urban stakeholders are fundamental to practice-oriented assignments. Such processes always produce results, even when the design itself is still under negotiation. How can we advance such complex interrelations, step by step? Here, the exchange between students and experts, and the introduction of practical knowledge into conceptual work and in the context of existing national and international networks is of particular importance.

Students do not develop their projects in a hypothetical condition of isolation. Instead, they have to actually apply

and justify them, again and again, to experts and in public. An important element of urban design assignments is to communicate each individual design in spatial terms and according to different dimensions and interrelations. From the viewpoint of the urban design discipline, communication that actually conveys these issues needs to be interdisciplinary and enable direct exchange with the public and political actors. This interaction is based on a reciprocal exchange that enables the transformation of the original design concept in a perpetually sustainable way, instead of letting false compromise constrain its relevance.

Former tried and trusted approaches to urban design processes and their implementation are becoming less and less effective, given contemporary challenges. The related problems increasingly require open-ended planning approaches based on creative solutions. Different methods of illustration and communication developed in our institute support the aim of presenting creative solutions envisioned on the basis of related experimental and scientific approaches in a manner that is comprehensible to all.

The process of systematising and structuring a diverse set of information and data is an important element of teaching. For this purpose, we employ didactical and analytical tools that are subject to continuous further development within the design process. Comprehending and evaluating complex urban patterns and structures is a prerequisite for scientific analytical work. It forms a basis for deriving differentiated and integrated design strategies. Multi-dimensional graphic illustration types are particularly suitable for an analytical approach to multi-faceted urban design systems.

Urban and architectural spaces are designed by the use of drawings that serve to define and specify connections and transitions, patterns and principles by use of a diverse set of graphic illustration types. Different dimensions of planning are compiled within the process of drawing and draughting that also result in a form of illustration that no-experts can also understand. An important element in this regard is the development of an urban design matrix. The difference between an urban design analysis and a problem of natural sciences is the ambiguous and often contradictory character of urban systems. A matrix is a tool that serves to filter data and information that appear difficult to compare at a first glance and, by their juxtaposition, can generate new knowledge. As a form of graphic illustration, it is capable of describing confusing terrain through systematising, connecting, and superimposing information that originates in different topical fields. As a result, unexpected opportunities arise and are revealed.

### **Spatial implementation through self-initiated urban labs**

The space in which participatory projects are intended to take place needs to be designed creatively. It also needs to allow interaction, with the support of urban design ap-

proaches that are capable of adaptation. In recent years we successfully implemented and demonstrated this in our urban research laboratories. For this purpose, a diverse set of architectural and urban spaces were reconfigured in order to inspire a creative exchange between students, educators, experts, and local actors directly on site.

Examples include our variable labs, which we design and implement in the context of an experimental research and teaching approach. A former swimming pool in the inner city of Solingen offered us the opportunity to generate a creative exchange with all stakeholders on site. This was possible through the adaptive reuse of the existing spatial configuration of the building complex. Based on this spatial change, we were able to advance political and societal discussions on urban transformation. The redesign of a storefront in the centre of Remscheid resulted in the creation of a neutral, yet simultaneously creative space. It allowed the bringing together of local actors and decision makers, newly inspiring them, with a focus on the topics at hand. Within our research endeavours, an inflatable research lab represented water-sensitive city concepts in public space. It supported us in conveying results to different municipalities. The bright and airy structure allowed the creation of spaces that served to discuss these complex topics with experts and laypeople in a different manner than is usually the case.

### **Interdisciplinary frameworks as basis for encounter**

Living labs and participatory events are mostly and directly aimed at a singular topical field and a particular urban design-related, societal situation. Their intention is to find and communicate answers and solutions aimed at the tasks at hand by a targeted use of developed spatial tools and instruments. When such a framework is defined early on, successful communication is often limited or tedious, if opinions have already solidified beforehand. This raises the question how, at the very beginning of the process, all involved parties can enter into a form of agreement that can serve as a true point of origin. This can offer all participants a fresh look at the tasks at hand, from different perspectives and, at the same time, in a comprehensive manner. Such a point of origin needs to become an experience that is broadly understood and can be shared by all partners. This “common ground” needs to be applied and implemented as a starting

point and framework in order to generate sustainable effects. In this context, both thematically and topically, cultural events and projects have proved just how exceptionally successful they can be. Not only can they offer a neutral basis and a shared experience for many different involved actors. They can also take place at the same time as the actual process and complement it, incrementally or cyclically. The publication in your hands illustrates this approach. It does so, to a major degree, by presenting examples of the work of the Interprofessional Studio and its “Master of Fine Arts in Spatial Performance and Design” course, which I co-founded a decade ago at the Architectural Association in London. Projects that have been initiated throughout the years, in collaboration with a cultural centre in Madrid, as well as various cultural institutions in Cologne and London, clearly show how engaging a creative dialogue within gridlocked existing planning structures can promote sustainable effects.

### **Application in building practice**

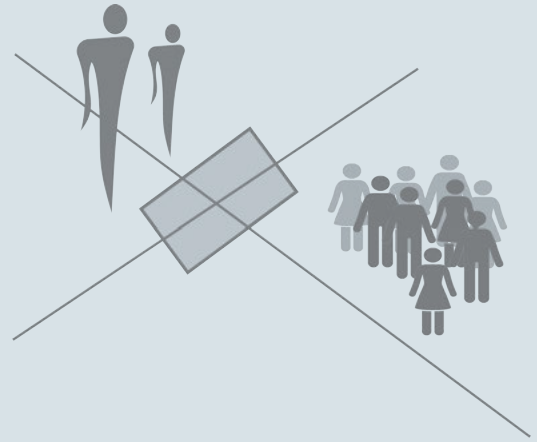
The projects of the respective teaching modules and research projects demonstrated within this publication always refer to real-life scenarios. They shape the related tasks in terms of urban design and society. In a further step, this publication shows how these principles are applied beyond the realm of teaching and research, according to projects of building practice. One major example is the following urban and infrastructural design project in Brussels. Our interdisciplinary planning office, T2 Spatialwork, realised it in close collaboration with the Brussels-based architectural office B612 Architects. Within this multi-faceted urban project, the principles of “planning as communication” by use of mediation tools were employed, as well as the principles of an open design process that allows continuous development through negotiation, facilitated by applied partial projects. Based on the complex political, demographic and organisational situation, this case study clearly indicates the opportunities and, most of all, the potentials of “urban planning through communication”. The realisation project also demonstrates to its observers current limitations in planning practice, which need to be creatively overcome. Against its background, the need for further change in contemporary practice – often perceived as too bureaucratic – and thus, the need for closer ties with teaching and research within practice become obvious.

# LEARNING FROM PRACTICE

In cooperation with Theo Lorenz

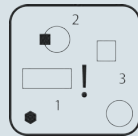
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# Madrid project profile



## Project initiators and cooperation partners

AAIS Interprofessional Studio London, Director: Theo Lorenz  
BUW Wuppertal, Urban Design Institute: Tanja Siems and Rocio Paz  
in cooperation with Matadero Madrid: Pablo Villanueva and Ariadna Cantis



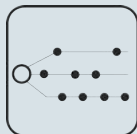
## Important data and facts

Arganzuela, a district of Madrid, covers an area of 6.55 sq km with a population of about 150,000. The site occupied by the cultural centre Matadero encompasses roughly 120,000 sq m. More than 500 individuals from the arts and culture sector are active there. The century-old cattle market is now dedicated to the dissemination, exploration, and creation of cultural projects and offers a diverse range of activities.



## Madrid project profile

Research question and project goal is the integration of the local population in the newly developed cultural centre Matadero in Arganzuela, based on participatory workshops, events and festivals.



## Project timeline

Within a timeframe of three years, nine research project meetings were held, in combination with international festivals, local events, summer schools, and workshops.



# Culture as shared basis for collective action

## “Common Ground”, Matadero Madrid

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In a complex area of creative work, such as urban planning, it is particularly obvious how difficult it is to find a common denominator for everyone involved. This becomes particularly clear when the goal is not simply the lowest common denominator, but instead a result that creates lasting effects. Many ideas that are good in themselves fail not because of the planning or anticipatory elaboration, but because they cannot be communicated to the various groups involved.

For this reason, forms of active participation that include as many actors as possible in the planning process are an important basis for a sustainable urban design practice. Participatory instruments that accompany the entire process in the form of citizens' forums, exhibitions and publications to clarify and explain the various propositions are an integral part of urban planning projects. Such events and actions serve to communicate proposals to all parties involved, through lectures, talks, and comprehensible visualisations. They allow citizens to express their concerns and expectations regarding the proposals, which in the best case will be taken into significant consideration in the further development of the projects.

In addition to these rather passive forms of participation, there are usually more extensive instruments existing for active participation. In particular, surveys and workshops aimed at different planning topics find use here and can ideally serve to actively integrate the range of opinions of different involved groups in the process. The prerequisite for all of these forms of participation is to actually reach the different actors and bring them into a dialogue. So how do you initially manage to awaken their interest in the existing tasks at hand and how can we manage to generate a desire for exchange and consensus?

### Creating a dialogue through transparency

Hardened fronts between actors all too often do not allow for dialogue right from the start. In many cases, an integrated form of educational work, for instance in the context of a forum or workshop alone, is not enough to clarify common interests or goals. Neither mutual interests, nor set goals become clear, since an existing and very basic form of scepticism prevents the establishment of a consensus. Finding this consensus becomes a fundamental component of urban de-

sign practice. It is crucial to build mutual understanding on an equal footing on newly created “neutral ground”. The related work hardly calls for planning new and additional interventions. Instead, the task is to include the totality of existing ideas and initiatives, newly evaluate it, situate it within a specific context and restructure it in temporal terms.

To achieve this, a range of different aspects requires attention. This range extends from deliberations on a specific urban project to far-reaching cultural and social considerations. Aside from examining a specific project, it is important to analyse what earlier alternative developments and historical approaches were existing. This investigative research should include comparable case studies or case stories (action research). Such comparative surveys serve as basis for testing which initiatives, institutions and actors are decisively involved, how great their influence was – or still is – and what their interrelations are.

Based on how initiatives, for instance political groups or associations, are enmeshed with local actors and institutions – such as cultural facilities, restaurants, businesses – particularities within the area under planning become apparent. Furthermore, they can be directly integrated in the planning process. In many cases it is of particular importance to go further in this regard. This becomes clear when the task is to approach groups that are not directly embedded within the professional process. However, they may be decisively impacted by the developments taking place. The sustainable success of a project often specifically depends on including these groups.

In this context, it is necessary to broadly interpret the idea of a developmental task. In any social context, many activities take place that are often merely considered an add-on or even trivial. But it is precisely the basic element of the urban way of life as a result of long and ongoing processes that demonstrates their impact across generations and demographic groups. The fear of losing these aspects of culture and heritage repeatedly results in resistance against renewal. If we succeed in proactively identifying and integrating these aspects of culture based on their shared character from the very beginning of a process, then we have made the first step in formulating shared goals.

However, the related approaches are not suitable as generic, off-the-shelf solutions. Thus, each individual project requires newly discovering and decoding them. To choose



Opening event, Matadero Madrid cultural centre



Matadero Madrid photographic workshop with local actors

this path forward, an urban perspective of the task at hand and the related multi-faceted urban design tools and instruments is essential. For this purpose, the areas under research should be embedded in a precisely specified framework in combination with further connective elements. Then we can create a new basis for our work, together.

### Creating a shared framework

In order to transfer this approach into the realm of application, we consider events or festivals as suitable formats. Such festivals thrive on the interaction and simultaneity of manifold ideas, rather than demonstrating a singular and self-contained approach. The connecting framework of individual initiatives that are embedded in the process itself can be extraordinarily diverse. Such frameworks can encompass comprehensive and, as a result, much more independent procedures with regard to formal and topical orientation than the actual subject matter, strongly connected to the process.

This independence yields a certain degree of neutrality. Culture, in all its manifestations, is particularly suitable as a vehicle for mediation. Events that embrace artistic, performative, yet also culinary elements as a shared basis appear to be particularly successful in this regard. Such productive approaches support the development of far-reaching research questions, methodologies and tools, based on multi-dimensional, yet specific case studies. By creating a neutral point of origin, further topical fields can be accessed that otherwise are overlooked or incorrectly evaluated in terms of their relevance within the urban design process.

This method of performative spatial work beyond the actual tasks of planning is a decisive basis for the work of the Interprofessional Studio (AAIS) at the Architectural Association in London. The “Master of Fine Arts in Spatial Performance and Design” was co-developed by Theo Lorenz and me with the aim of actually implementing applied projects

that have a sustainable impact on the involved creative networks. This impactable effect is intended to encompass the involved projects as well, thus expanding the definitions of architecture, urban design, and art in a sustainable and evident manner. The projects developed within this studio are particularly suited to exemplify and illustrate the principle behind “common ground” as an element of a design process. In recent years we have established a sustainable symbiosis between the work conducted at the Interprofessional Studio at the Architectural Association and the Urban Design Institute at the University of Wuppertal. Identifying and testing new methodical approaches and topical fields of application within the interweaved, performative mode of work at the AAIS contributes to further independent steps undertaken by the Institute in Wuppertal. These result in rephrasing research questions aimed at generally applicable principles of urban design. Within applied projects, they are once more and collaboratively tested and evaluated.

### Participatory workshops with local actors and the cultural centre

The multi-faceted and repeated cooperation with Matadero in Madrid, most of all, descriptively documents the expanded opportunities this mode of work offers. Matadero Madrid is one of the largest European cultural institutions. It was opened in 2011 on the site of a former industrial meat processing facility, far away from the cultural establishments of the inner city. From the very beginning, this adaptive reuse project, located within a historically developed demographic context where cultural life was seemingly absent, faced the risk of gentrification processes. At the same time, it also offered the potential for new and future developments.

The collaboration with the Matadero Madrid began even before the site was actually open to the public. First, in cooperation with the Interprofessional Studio in London, we