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FEARLESS POLITICS IN ZAGREB

European Urban Studies
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"They want
us lonely,
but they will
find us in
common."

Elena Tarifa, 2021

FOREWORD

TIMMO NILS KRÜGER

Bertolt Brecht was a famous German playwright, poet, and political activist. After being persecuted by the Nazis, he fled into exile. When the Nazis lost the war, he returned to East Berlin and wrote the poem A Realization:

"When I came home / My hair was still not grey / And I was glad. / The difficulties of the mountains lie behind us / Before us lie the difficulties of the plains."

It was through great effort and sacrifices that fascism was defeated. The breakthrough had been achieved, so it was often assumed that from now on emancipatory ideas could guide the formation of a just and free society. But Brecht had sensed early on how difficult it would be to make the visions come true amidst the day-to-day struggles. Lived practice thus became a test of endurance. Comparing the historical situations would be inappropriate. However, the poem sensitises on a metaphorical level to the challenges of municipalist movements after an electoral victory.

In our contemporary situation, we are facing a socio-ecological crisis that affects the basic structures of modern societies. Struggles for social justice and effective climate mitigation can no longer be pursued without questioning hegemonic understandings of progress and freedom. At the same time, (not only) European societies are experiencing a crisis of democracy, as many people no longer feel adequately represented. In their criticism of pluralistic democratic institutions, right-wing authoritarian movements and parties tie in with these crisis phenomena and at the same time exacerbate them. On the other side of the conflict spectrum, social movement actors link the demand for (climate and social) justice with the demand for the expansion and intensification of democracy. In this context, municipalist movements stand out because they pursue both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategies to orient urban infrastructures and institutions towards a common good approach. It is precisely this duality of exercising power through pressure from the streets and through government policy that is a strength of municipalist movements, but it also reinforces internal negotiations on strategies, claims, and expectations. Municipalist movement parties who are in government aim to strengthen democratic elements and establish a new relationship between local politics, social movements, and city dwellers. In our study project we explored the case of Zagreb je NAŠ! (ZjN), which won the local elections in 2021. We examined what strategies and instruments are used to strive for an open, just, and ecological city, which obstacles are encountered in the process and how recent developments are to be understood against the background of the (historically evolved) prevailing conditions.

I would like to thank the Institute for Political Ecology in Zagreb for their support in the preparation of the field trip and also the activists, academics, and politicians from Zagreb who gave us very valuable insights into the history, strategies, and current challenges of ZjN: Mladin Domazet, Karin Doolac, Vedran Horvat, Tomislav Medak, Jelena Miloš, Antun Sevšek, Paul Stubbs, and Eugene Vukovic. Furthermore, I would like to thank Lisa Pontén, who as a student assistant was largely responsible for the truly inspiring programme of our field trip. During the two weeks in Zagreb, we learned so much about local urban planning and local politics – only on this basis could our research really go into depth. I would like to thank Elodie Vittu, who had the idea to do research on ZjN in the first place, as well as Nicolas Goez and Tanja Potezica, who supported me during the field trip. Finally, I would like to thank the students for their motivation to get deeply engaged with the research topic, for the seriousness with which they applied data collection and interpretation methods, for their joy in learning and for the most beautiful football jersey ever. All I want to say is actually: I believe in Pink Burek and in a fearless politics that promotes the transformation towards a society of solidarity.

"If we want to achieve real transformation in the medium and long term, we cannot afford to lose our ability to imagine that transformation through feminism. We are going to work to make this happen because we want to live, fearless, and to participate in politics." (Pérez 2019, 25)

Weimar, July 2023

Timmo Krüger (Instructor of the study project)

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INTRODUCTION

FEARLESS POLITICS IN ZAGREB. MUNICIPALIST MOVEMENTS AND THE
DIFFICULTY OF THE PLAINS

ANA CAROLINA ROTAVA PAIM

"They want us lonely, but they will find us in common" was the slogan of Barcelona en Comú (Barcelona in Common) campaign to municipal elections in Barcelona in 2015 (Elena Tarifa, 2021). A statement against the engines of the capitalist system that keeps pulling people apart. It is also a cry for union and community that summarizes the municipalist movement, which Barcelona en Comú (hereinafter, BeC) ia a part of. And so is the object of this booklet, Zagreb je NAŠ! (Zagreb is ours!).

The municipalist movement is composed by people from different cities around the globe, that gather on the perception that there is a need for more municipal politics. They understand that the local space is propitious for social change (Russell, 2019 apud Sarnow & Tiedemann, 2022), in a response to the neoliberal ways of governing and the crises - socio, economic and ecological - that unfold with it.

Despite the recent interest on the subject, municipalism is not a new concept, as presented by Kate Shea Baird (2021:29), it has happened in diverse contexts before, in a myriad of political configurations. In her view, is up to us to learn from these past municipalist movements and initiatives, in order to improve our world today.

The goals of this new municipalism, presented by the Fearless Cities movement, are to radicalise democracy, feminise politics and provide alternatives to the far right (Pisarello, 2019:8). The current movement do it in the three dimensions: feminisation of politics, concrete actions, not only inside the political arena, but also local initiatives and last, internationalisation of the topic. They recognise that prioritising and looking at local instances should not mean to be reclused and selfish, on the contrary, different cities can learn from shared experiences.

It was with this spirit that we, 15 students from Bauhaus University Weimar, went to Zagreb, capital of Croatia, in April 2023. Wanting to understand the city's transformations under the new municipalist government, we developed this research project under the guidance of doctor Timmo Krüger.

Zagreb was chosen as a case because of the political changes that happened there in the last years. An organisation that emerged from the right to the city movements from the previous decades won places in the parliament in 2017 under the name Zagreb je NAŠ! (hereinafter, ZjN). Being in opposition for four years, in 2021 the political platform decided to run in the municipal election.

They began the changes already there, having women listed as half the candidates, not a usual thing.

The government that came before stayed 20 years in power, in a neoliberal administration that prioritised the economic exploitation of space. The methods employed by the former government regarding urbanisation excluded citizens from the decision-making process and made poor usage of public resources and spaces (Dolenec et al., 2017).

This setup motivated Zagreb's population to vote for change, and I the biggest election in number of voters in the municipal election's history, the green-left coalition, composed by ZjN, Možemo! (We can!, hereinafter M!), Nova Ijevica (The New Left), OraH (Green Alternative Sustainable Development of Croatia), and Za Grad (For City), won. That was the beginning of ZjN's difficulties of the plains: a former opposition platform trying to make the city more democratic and transparent, following

" ZjN's difficulties of the plains: a former opposition platform trying to make the city more democratic and transparent, following the path of the new municipalism.

the path of the new municipalism.

Arriving in Zagreb with this information and some research questions in mind, the reality we noticed diverged from the theory we studied previously. Many changes happened during the field trip until we arrived at the results presented here. Researching and writing about the history while it is unrolling is quite difficult, but we managed to put into this booklet our takes on various aspects of the municipalist movement in Croatia.

In the first chapter *"A New Hope? Ideas and Actions of the Zagreb je NAŠ Government"*, written by Liza Tuneva, she presents a connection between what was hoped for the ZjN government and the reality. She does it with the campaign program and interviews, showing the gap between the plans and the executions and the obstacles encountered by the government on this first two years of term.

Following, we have the second chapter *"Mediators of Local Politics? - Potentials of Participation Within Democracy Through Neighbourhood Councils in Zagreb"*, by Greta Bonnecke, Nora Kemken, and Wiebke Rollmann, in which they explore the potential of the neighbourhood councils (NCs) in Zagreb as tools to enhance democracy. Being the lowest level of self-government, NCs are a bridge between the communities and the municipal government. They developed the research based on Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory to analyse the data collected in the field trip.

The third chapter "Cycling in Zagreb: the Intersections between Zagreb's Cycling Culture and Zagreb je NAŠ"

by Ana Paim, analyses the connections between ZjN and the cycling culture in Zagreb. With data from interviews and observations, the author uses narrative analysis to understand who the players in the game of the city are and what roles they play inside ZjN, the Right to the City movement and the government.

On the fourth chapter *"Defining Commons in Zagreb"*, the group composed by Anna Alayskaya, Jönne Huhnt, Shivani Desai, Sonia Fernandes, and Theresa Münzenberger investigate the concept of urban commons. Exploring whether the researched locations identify as urban commons, the authors break down various aspects of commons in Zagreb and Croatia. The text is divided in parts, each one analysing an aspect of commons.

The last chapter *"Who Cares? (Child)Care in the City of Zagreb"*, is written by Jolien Vandoorne, Polina Medvedeva, Sophie and Viola Majdandzic, delves on ZjN journey to trans-form childcare in Zagreb. Using in-depth qualitative interviews, they uncover the interplay of challenges, realities, visions, and endeavours faced by ZjN. Feministisation of politics is a central theme in this research, as it is a key element of ZjN government.

Although made by groups that researched different aspects of Zagreb's journey towards a municipalist government, this booklet is a product of collective effort. Borrowing BeC slogan we invite you to go, not lonely, but in common with us, to take a look into the development of Zagreb's new municipalist government.

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A NEW HOPE?

IDEAS AND ACTIONS OF THE ZAGREB JE NAŠ! GOVERNMENT

LIZA (ELIZAVETA) TUNEVA

Abstract

ZjN entered the political life in Zagreb with the aim to return the city to its citizens and involve them in politics. After two years since winning the elections in 2021, one can observe a gap between what was promised and what has been achieved. This can be explained by the obstacles mentioned by interview partners during the conducted research. This chapter provides an overview of the general ideas behind ZjN's governance, as presented in their electoral programme, as well as the obstacles that ZjN encountered after winning the elections.

Some Important Remarks

The ZjN platform was founded in 2017 by activists and NGOs working in different spheres in Zagreb. Trying to promote and achieve a green-left agenda, they formed a political party and participated in the local elections in 2017 resulting in having four out of 51 seats in the City Assembly. In 2019, some ZjN members together with other activists and members of other social movements and green-left parties formed the M! political party that would cover the national agenda and give them an opportunity to participate in the national elections (Stubbs 2021; Milan 2022). In 2021, both ZjN and M! were part of the Green Coalition that won the mayor elections and the City Assembly elections in Zagreb gaining 23 seats ("The Green-Left's Road to Victory in Zagreb"

2021). Even though there is a strong link between ZjN and M! (and some of the ZjN members are also members of M!), in the current chapter, I would like to emphasise and discover the local context in Zagreb, hence I will be referring to ZjN and not M! or the Green Coalition when talking about the new government in Zagreb.

Introduction

The research presented in this chapter started as a journey to find out how ideas of municipalism and democracy in general function in Zagreb, how citizens participate in local politics, and if they feel included and heard. However, while carrying out the research I realised that the topic of obstacles and reasons for not achieving expected results is frequently mentioned in different contexts. That is why I decided to focus on this aspect.

More precisely, the main research question is: *What obstacles has the ZjN government encountered after winning the elections in Zagreb?* It might seem as an ambitious research goal, especially taking into account the fact that the new government has been in power for only two years. Nevertheless, I would argue that it is important to reflect on this topic throughout the whole election term. Hence, the current chapter can be regarded as an attempt to provoke a

discussion on challenges of both governance and keeping electoral promises.

The empirical basis of the research includes observations, notes from the conversations and discussions, as well as materials of five qualitative interviews with activists and the ZjN members gathered during the field trip in Zagreb from 1 May to 12 May 2023. The table below presents anonymised information about the interview partners.

List of interview partners

Interview Partner	Role
Interview partner 1	President of the civil society association (not related to ZjN)
Interview partner 2	Vice-president of the civil society association (not related to ZjN)
Interview partner 3	ZjN member, the city level
Interview partner 4	ZjN member, the city level
Interview partner 5	ZjN member, the district level
Paul Stubbs	Researcher, ZjN associate

Source: Authors' own compilation.

The programme of the field trip, prepared in advance, gave us an access to the field (Flick 2009) and was very helpful for planning of observations and setting up interviews. For instance, visiting the 1st of May celebration in the Maksimir park was, in a certain way, an introduction to political life of Zagreb and gave us a chance to observe and talk to both ordinary people and activists. Some of the latter agreed for interviews since the general topic of our study project seemed interesting to them.

For my research, conducting interviews was the most feasible way to get insights about the topic in a limited time. Considering myself an outsider to the context of Zagreb, I was curious and open to what interview partners could share about democracy and citizen participation in their city. It is worth mentioning that the list of interview questions could consist of different topics, since other members of our study group could add their questions. Nevertheless, my general approach was conducting semi-structured focused interviews (Hopf 2004) under the umbrella topic of democracy and democratisation in Zagreb.

Apart from that, the electoral programme of ZjN and the mid-term report were analysed. The language barrier is a valid concern; that is why I should mention that all conversations, discussions, and interviews were held in English, but the documents were machine-translated from Croatian to English using the Google Translate tool.

To analyse the data, I used coding (Thornberg and Charmaz 2014) of interview transcripts in order to find the topics and themes that are related to my research question. During the initial coding, I extracted the topics raised by interview partners, e.g., the importance of the historical context or the difference in global and local perspectives. This helped me to indicate the most frequently mentioned topics and obstacles, but also to see different perceptions of interview partners.

Another method was the framing analysis (Buzogány and Scherhaufer 2022) of the ZjN programme and interview transcripts to determine the way ZjN portraits the main issues that Zagreb faces, but also how these issues can be resolved from the their point of view. Even though it is still my interpretation of available data, this method is helpful to underline and highlight the perspective that ZjN presented to the public, since the way ZjN presents themselves and their values is in focus. More specifically, the most important or general topics are called master frames, which, in turn, can be divided into the following framings: diagnostic (that describes how ZjN formulates the problem), prognostic (that presents solutions to the problem), and motivational (that suggests ideas for motivating the public to support proposed solutions). To find out master frames and more detailed framings, I used results of initial coding and main topics defined in the ZjN's electoral programme. This chapter consists of several parts. The part that follows the introduction is devoted to the context of Croatia which is crucial to understand its local politics. After that, there is an analysis of the ZjN electoral programme and what was achieved by the mid-term period. In the following sections, there is a description of what obstacles and issues were encountered by the new government: different perspectives of being activists and politicians and issues related to trust and effective communication. The next part raises some questions that remained open but might be interesting to reflect on. The conclusion summarises the main arguments of the chapter and introduces some ideas for further research.

A Young Democracy

The Republic of Croatia is a relatively new state that was formed in 1991 after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Being a part of Yugoslavia for 46 years and the following Croatian war of independence has a significant impact on the functioning of state institutes, the involvement of citizens in politics, and the relationships between the state and its citizens in general. This perspective regularly came up in my research:

"It's the first thing, it's young democracy. The second thing is it came from the war. People here had to fight; people died. Although now it's quite in the past, but it's somewhere inside our mind that people fight for democracy to have this kind of system" (Interview partner 5).

There are a lot of research institutes working on the topics related to democracy and democratic transition in the world. One of these institutes is Freedom House which is a US-based non-profit organisation founded in 1941 that conducts research and programmes to support and advocate for democracy and human rights worldwide. According to Freedom House, Croatia is a semi-consolidated democracy which means that it is an electoral democracy with free elections but experiencing some weaknesses in the defence of political rights and civil liberties. Among multiple challenges such as media freedom, government accountability, and independence of institutions, corruption is one of the biggest issues ("Croatia: Nations in Transit 2023 Country Report" 2023).

Besides the obvious economic consequences of corruption on budget, finances, and implementation of different programmes, corruption has a strong impact on the social and political

spheres. The reason is that it undermines citizens' trust in politics and politicians, thereby prevents activists and opposition from involving citizens into the dialogue and changing things:

"In 2015 or maybe a bit earlier [...] we still had this taboo: politicians are corrupt, and as a young person, if you're doing politics, it's somehow gonna make you turn bad, do corrupt things. So, we're also trying to change this stigma" (Interview partner 4).

According to Interview partner 1, Croatia has been experiencing corruption for 30 years; in the ZjN programme and other interviews, it was mentioned that the corruption has been present for 20 years.
Resistance to this system appeared in Zagreb before ZjN was founded. The Right to the city (Pravo na grad) movement got involved in the struggle in 2006 and gradually became the main opposition to neoliberal city transformations, not only in Zagreb, but in Croatia in general (Dolenec, Doolan, and Tomašević 2017). This movement is important because it established the basis for ZjN and gave future ZjN members an opportunity to join activism and local politics:

"Well, in a way we were all members of that movement, so we all grew up from this movement" (Interview partner 5).

What was also important for this movement is the concept of commons and self-governance which reflected the way they organised their activities and promoted values (Tomašević et al. 2018), but I will not go into details about commons because you can read more about this topic in the respective chapter of the booklet. During the first four years of being an institutionalised entity, ZjN was a prominent opposition to the government

addressing citizens' needs and publicly exposing corruption (Sarnow and Tiedemann 2022).

Returning the City to Citizens and Involving Them in Politics

The title of this subchapter refers to the first sentence of the electoral programme: *"We entered political life in 2017 under the slogan Zagreb is OURS! in order to change the way of managing the city, return the city to the citizens and citizens in politics"* ("Program - Možemo! Zagreb Je NAŠ!" 2021). The programme is a key document that summarises and, to some extent, broadcasts the main ideas and goals of ZjN, and how they would be implemented and achieved.
In case of ZjN, it is also quite important to highlight how the programme was created. From December 2020 to April 2021, an active campaign was organised to collect demands and ideas of citizens of Zagreb by local assemblies and via online questionnaire. The answers formed the basis of the 28-points programme. This process showed citizens the possibility of actual participation in city life and being involved in the decision-making processes ("'We Can!' – A New Green-Left Coalition Takes over Croatia's Capital" 2021). At the same time, it might have also misled citizens by giving them the impression that the decision-making and participation processes would always work like that in the future, but I will return to this point later.
What was the main goal? According to the programme, the realisation of the presented vision (which, in fact, has a

time frame of 10 years, till 2030) would transform Zagreb into an open, socially just, and ecologically conscious city of the 21st century which corresponds to the following characteristics:

- Responsible and efficient city management, when resources are appropriately allocated to places where they are needed the most.
- Improved process of citizen participation, including usage of digital tools.
- Development of a green and progressive city across various dimensions: from recovering after the earthquake, solving waste problems, to providing healthy food in schools and kindergartens.

- Fair and affordable city with functioning health care system, including focuses on elderly, disabled people, as well as victims of domestic violence, a gender-balanced distribution of care.
- Developing not only the centre of Zagreb but also other city districts, thereby creating a polycentric city.

By analysing the programme and interviews with ZjN members (Interview partners: 3, 4, 5), I came to the conclusion that the main topics of concern or master frames are corruption and democracy. A lot of ideas and motivations to bring changes to Zagreb and to participate in the elections revolve around them. The table below presents the framings of these master frames.

Master frame	Corruption	Democracy
Diagnostic framing (What is the problem?)	Corruption is a serious issue in Zagreb that prevents the city from being developed and transformed.	There is democracy in Zagreb but it does not function the way it is supposed be.
Prognostic framing (How can the problem be solved?)	There must be strict city management in terms of budget distribution and a transparent system which is comprehensible for ordinary citizens.	There is a need for responsible politicians in charge of Zagreb who implement policies in favour of citizens and not for personal gaining.
Motivational framing (How can the public be motivated to support the solutions proposed?)	When the new government is elected and starts implementing changes, e.g., participatory budgeting and usage of digital tools, citizens would see real changes and be open to cooperate with authorities to make further changes and improvements in the city. A change of government would also facilitate establishing a democratic culture that does not tolerate seeking decisions by bypassing authorised institutions.	By showing citizens that their opinions matter and can influence the way the city is managed and developed. One of the examples is how the ZjN programme was created (described in the beginning of the chapter).

Source: Authors' own compilation.

The parts of the chapter that follow reflect on these framings and discuss issues and obstacles that prevented the ZjN government from fully realising these ideas.

Bringing About the Changes

June 2023 marks the half of the term for which ZjN was elected. To summarise what has been achieved, the party published a mid-term report that highlights the most important results in different fields in their view. Some of the points are the following (Kelemen 2023):

- Making city management more efficient by reducing the number of offices, reorganising the City Administration, and rationalising costs.
- Updating the procedure for citizens' submission of their proposal and ideas to be considered by the City Assembly.
- Launching programmes to set foundations for transition to green energy.
- Introducing a new system of waste collection.
- Renovating public buildings, building new kindergartens and schools.
- Advocating for social rights of broader groups of people.

It is clear that several of these achievements have a strong connection to the ZjN electoral programme. For instance, improving city management and resource allocation for this purpose, moving towards green energy adoption, and building new kindergartens and schools. In this case, the most important question is to what extent these results move Zagreb towards the open, socially just, and ecological city of the 21st century? Is Zagreb "still on track"?

The ZjN members are quite positive with the achieved results:

"I think so far, we're doing a great job in this regard, never in the last 20 years or so were so many schools and kindergartens being built and renovated – this is super efficient how the city is working now on these projects. A new tram line is gonna start construction this year, which also over 20 years not a single meter of tram lines was built. I think these cycling lanes are also getting a new spring, whole new side of the city is now gonna be connected, and it's gonna be work in progress of course, this is gonna take time to finish this, but maybe we will see some changes in 3 years already. And for the past mayor who was in power for 20 years, it felt like the city was never changed, almost always the same, and all these huge fountains all of a sadden or one huge mega project, and everything else would be on the side" (Interview partner 4).

However, not all results are visible to the public (Interview partner 4; field notes from observations) because some changes are happening e.g., inside the City Administration. Nevertheless, attempts are being made to change the style of communication:

"We cut the idea of popularist decision. We communicate to the citizens the things they are" (Interview partner 5).

On the other hand, there is also a critique of the new government, outside of ZjN:

"An interesting case of a green mayor, and his not so successful first years. And green campaign and a lack of results because the system has deeply rooted flaws and things you can't change in one term. So, he'll probably leave behind a very problematic future where the whole green agenda and European goals and climate issues are going to suffer the consequences of ineffective change of governance. Given the circumstances in Croatia, people will be further discouraged to participate in local governance and actions on both national and local level" (Interview partner 2).

Perhaps, the green agenda is one of the most criticised aspects of the ZjN governance. The introduced waste collection system was not quite welcomed by relatively large groups of the citizens (fieldnotes), but there was also a con-

flict related to the construction of the incinerator in one of the districts of Zagreb. In the latter example, the critique of the organisation Građanska inicijativa – Stop spalionici Rebro KBC Zagreb was related to not only the harmful ecological impact of the project, but also to the corruption and shadiness of the whole procedure (Interview partners: 1, 2).

A Different Perspective

It seems that the theory of the political system being a black box, first introduced by David Easton but then revised by other scholars (Ingraham and Donahue 2000), is appropriate to describe what the ZjN members faced when they got access to the inside of the City Administration. According to this theory, an "outsider", meaning a person who does not have access to the internal structure of the system, can see only demands and support that enter the system as inputs on the one side and outputs in form of decisions and actions that the system produces on the other side. What is inside the system and why the outputs are the way they are, is something that is hidden from those who are not part of the system.

The interviews I conducted confirm this idea; it was quite visible that perspectives of activists and politicians are different:

"It's really interesting and frustrating for me in this position because the things which we saw really important from the point of the movement are not so important now when you're somebody in power, because you see a bunch of different problems which you didn't see back then" (Interview partner 5).

It is also related to the fact that social movements and activists select particular issues and topics to mobilise people and make themselves heard. On the contrary, being in power means solving problems that are relevant not only to supporters but to broader groups of citizens, i.e.,

everybody living in the city.

At the same time, having both activist and politician background might be helpful for better communication with citizens and understanding their demands, even though the process of self-identity and being in transition from one role to another one might be challenging (fieldnotes):

"It gives me a very wide angle, a good perspective. I talked to hundreds of people both during my activist campaign and as a district council president, and it's for sure gives me a different perspective [...] And now I know who's on the other side, and I wanna be better to them and try to go sometimes beyond the immediate boundaries of my office to get something done, to fix something" (Interview partner 4).

Another example of the limited knowledge of the inside the system is related to the legislation and existing legal constrains (fieldnotes) that prevent ZjN from achieving their goals:

"What started as a fight for common now became a fight with administration and technical issues of ownership of those public spaces" (Interview partner 5).

Budget distribution on the different state levels is another important aspect (Interview partner 3). For instance, accessibility and timeframe of getting the EU funds can also influence the priorities according to which different programs are implemented (Interview partner 4).

As it was presented in the beginning of the chapter, there are distinct differences between the previous government and the new one. An ambitious electoral programme of ZjN also demonstrates the need and desire for structural changes in Zagreb that would require a lot of time and effort. Hence, an obvious conclusion would be

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that there are numerous changes to be done in the current system in order to prepare it for transformation into a new one, including changes in legislation and city management (fieldnotes).

Perhaps, it was not a coincidence that the vision presented in the ZjN programme encompasses the time period of 10 years. As it was pointed out during multiple interviews, time frame is one of the most important challenges with regard to implementing programmes on the city scale. A common view is that ZjN (or any other party) would need at least two terms (eight years) to make significant visible changes (fieldnotes; Paul Stubbs; Interview partner 3).

Another aspect related to time constrains is a lack of resources, not only financial ones, that was already presented in this chapter, but also human resources. This applies to different levels of city management. Firstly, in the city administration, the new government has not filled in all vacant positions after firing some of the representatives of the previous government (fieldnotes). Hence, they are managing the city being understaffed. At the district level, there are not enough people to process gathered information and move it to the implementation stage (Interview partner 5).

(Dis)trust and (Mis)communication

From the context of Croatia, we learn that there is a deeply rooted lack of trust among citizens towards politics and politicians. It prevents citizens from participating in political life of the city, conveying their demands to authorities, and, as an outcome, bringing changes to the city. When analysing the ZjN governance, another aspect of distrust came up; it is related to the lack of trust of

the new government to the representatives of the old one. On the one hand, it seems logical since the oppositional activists and social movements protested against the old government claiming it being corrupted and not addressing the needs of citizens of Zagreb. At the same time, after winning the elections and entering the City Administration, former activists and representatives of the previous government became colleagues and had to work together in the same system. It is worth noting that I do not claim that there is currently a division of power inside the City Administration – I simply do not possess such knowledge and data. However, it was revealed that ZjN asked external agencies for help with, e.g., some legal expertise (fieldnotes) which might indicate lack of trust in both procedure and/or unbiasedness of results.

Perhaps, an issue with trust can also be linked to different approaches toward city management and development. One of the examples of such clashes of perspectives is the introduction of abortions in the city hospital Sveti Duh in 2022. Providing an access to save abortions means the protection of one of the basic reproductive rights, but this initiative had a strong backlash and critique from the conservative groups in Zagreb (Interview partner 4), as well as the resistance from within institutions (Interview partner 3).

In this regard, it seems that expectations management and effective communication are important elements of maintaining relationships with different stakeholders and groups of people. It is indeed impossible to meet everyone's expectations and handle

every single demand, hence, someone will always be disappointed (Interview partner 4).

The aspect that complicates this is the need for flexibility and constant review of priorities and focuses. For instance, when ZjN participated in the elections in 2021, the most discussed and relevant agenda was related to minorities rights and culture, but two years later the focus was shifted towards social inequality (fieldnotes).

The logical questions would be if it is important to stick to the original agenda and to what extent it is appropriate to change original priorities and goals. In case of ZjN, the issue is also in different understanding of "green left" and "left" by both ZjN and their supporters, as well as citizens (fieldnotes). Perhaps,

"while catching up and fixing mistakes from the previous administration" (Interview partner 4),

there is no or little room left to collectively reflect on the programme, shared values, and changing circumstances.

Can it be a matter of experience in party politics? Naturally, ZjN members are experts from different fields, from political science to HR, etc. However, conducting politics on the city level is a new experience for most of the ZjN members, especially with regard to time frame of implementing changes (fieldnotes). As Paul Stubbs pointed out,

"[a]t first there was this issue about political communication – I don't agree with the argument that administration of Zagreb is not very good at communicating their policies because they're not experienced politicians, the last thing we need in Zagreb is experienced politicians. Because those experienced politicians are either neoliberal or corrupted".

Who Decides and Who Acts

While carrying out research and analysing the data, I came across some questions that are worth mentioning to provoke thoughts and discussion but, unfortunately, remained unanswered. The first question is about the nature of democracy in Zagreb and can be formulated as follows: "Are participatory elements embedded in the representative democracy enough?". I will not go into details explaining different theoretical approaches towards different democratic systems. What I would like to stress is the difference between the procedure of creation of the ZjN's electoral programme and the way it has been implemented.

As it was written in the beginning of the chapter, the creation of the programme was a very participatory process and the programme itself encouraged and highlighted the importance of citizen participation and involvement. Perhaps, it might have created a perception that it would always work this way, and citizens would always be quite involved and welcomed in the decision-making process, which did not turn out this way as we can see from the results:

"There are two bits to this democracy: internally going through decisions with members and sympathisers of the platform, the other is making sure the political decisions are made as democratically as possible. [The idea of having time to collect demands and then time to implement changes – remark from the author] is not my understanding of direct democracy, that's my understanding of liberal democracy. That's a very classical description of liberal democracy which we're not meant to

be reproducing. We were meant to be reproducing the model of participatory democracy. Of course, when decisions are made you don't debate them all over again but my concern is that all of us felt very involved till the moment we won and took over the city, and then really after a year and a half there was little attempt to kind of involve the grassroots of the platform in the decision-making" (Paul Stubbs).

The next question is related to the previous one and concerns the so-called temporality of participation: "How or whether to keep citizens empowered and included?". As it was pointed out during one of the discussions we had in Zagreb, when it comes to collecting citizen's demands and implementing changes to meet them, there is *"temporality of participation"* that divides these two types of activity (fieldnotes). In this sense, it is not entirely clear how and if citizens participate in finding solutions to their problems and in decision-making process in general. From the perspective of the functioning of a municipalist movement, citizens' empowerment is an important element that keeps people motivated and engaged. The case of municipalist movement in Barcelona introduces the phenomenon of overflow (*desborde* in Spanish) which describes self-organised collective spontaneous initiatives in protests of something, e.g., evictions, or in support of the municipalist movement (Rubio-Pueyo 2017). These kinds of initiatives are quite active before the elections because they indicate the most urgent issues important to citizens, but after the elections, this activity is hard to maintain. If ZjN still shares ideas and values of municipalism, then it seems quite important to reflect on the way of revitalising of citizens empowerment.

And the last question is "Do district and neighbourhood levels in fact have a voice?".

On the one hand, the system might seem transparent from the city level:

"I think one of the important things we did is we revitalised all of these district councils and neighbourhood councils, and this is giving a voice to a lot of people in their local surroundings" (Interview partner 4),

but at the same time, at the district level, there is not that much enthusiasm regarding the possibility to change things at more local levels:

"things I can do, I can manage, are small, I have political responsibility, but I don't have real responsibility, like I can go to prison if I sign something. And because of that I have a really tight field of making political decisions and making changes in my district" (Interview partner 5).

I do not have enough data in my research to discuss this issue in details, but perhaps, the next chapter can offer some insights since it is devoted to neighbourhood councils and on how this level of self-government functions in Zagreb.

Conclusion

ZjN entered the political life in Zagreb with the aim to return the city to citizens and involve them in politics, which is quite an ambitious, but at the same time noble goal, especially because Croatia is a young democracy. The analysis of the electoral programme and interview transcripts revealed that the most important topics addressed by ZjN are related to corruption and democracy itself. Perhaps it is quite logical due to the history and development of Croatia and Zagreb in particular.

The research presented in the current chapter can be also considered as an

introduction to the following chapters, as it gives an overview of general ideas behind the governance of ZjN, as well as obstacles ZjN encountered after winning the elections in 2021.

When we compare what was promised and what was achieved, there is an obvious gap that can be explained by the obstacles mentioned by interview partners. It seems that the most prominent obstacles are the following:

- Different points of view when being activists and politicians that resulted in ZjN members shifting perspectives and priorities.
- Limited knowledge of the inside of the system of the City Administration, its legal and organisational constrains.
- Lack of time and resources, both financial and human, to implement changes.
- Lack of trust in the society and issues with communication and expectation management.
- Legacy from the previous government that needs to be fixed or adjusted in order to move forward with new ideas and projects.

There are also some remaining questions related to the broader discussion on who should make decisions and take actions. For now, I am leaving these questions open, as I do not have enough data and knowledge to make such conclusions. However, from my perspective, this topic is worth reflecting on and discussing by a broader audience.

I would like to conclude this chapter with some ideas for further research that I stumbled upon during my research.

First of all, during discussions and interviews, it became clear that members of ZjN have such diverse backgrounds, including getting experience abroad, so I think it would be interesting to learn more about profiles of ZjN members to see how their ideas and values were shaped, and how it is related to ideas of municipalism. Building upon that, there is also a topic of transition from being an activist to being a politician. I guess it is not obvious, if after forming an official political party or winning the elections, activists automatically become or identify themselves as politicians. Lastly, there is a twofold interest in studying the transition of ideas of municipalism: on the one hand, how municipalist movements from other cities influenced the one in Zagreb, e.g., Barcelona en Comú, and what are the differences; on the other hand, how ZjN influenced other municipalist movements and political parties in other cities in Croatia.

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2

MEDIATORS OF LOCAL POLITICS?

POTENTIALS OF PARTICIPATION WITHIN DEMOCRACY THROUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS IN ZAGREB

GRETA BONNECKE, NORA KEMKEN & WIEBKE ROLLMANN

Abstract

This chapter explores the potential of neighbourhood councils in Zagreb, focusing on their ability to strengthen democracy and address its crisis. As the lowest level of self-government in Zagreb, neighbourhood councils play a crucial role in bridging the gap between citizens and politics. The research presented in this chapter is the result of gathering empirical data on a two-week field trip to Zagreb, through conducting semistructured interviews with neighbourhood councillors. By applying Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory to the data analysis, it is evident that neighbourhood councils hold significant promise in re-establishing a meaningful connection between citizens and politics. The administrative and political body of the neighbourhood councils offer a great potential to reconnect the citizens with politics if they overcome communicative and structural obstacles. But Zagreb's municipal democracy needs more time and changes in the administrative structures to develop its potentials for participation and to grow into a successful resonance relationship as defined by Rosa.

> The front line of civil society is not between left and right or between religious and secular or ecological and technicist, but between citizens and politics
>
> Rosa 2016, 98, translation N.K.

Introduction

Modern democracy faces a crisis as people feel alienated and unrepresented by the political system and its leaders. This disconnection is evident, with only few exceptions, in consistently low voter turnout, with both voters and non-voters believing that their vote does not matter anyway (Rosa 2016, 97; Ercan and Gagnon 2014). A growing divide between citizens and politics has emerged, raising questions about the origins of this feeling and how to address and overcome it.

An answer to the question of where this feeling results from can be found in Hartmut Rosa's text "Politics without Resonance" (2016). In the text he states that one of the basic constructive ideas of modernity is that people can determine and have the power to shape the social, political, and economic order in which they live and act. Rosa builds on the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Love and Hannah Ahrendt, emphasising the importance of people seeing themselves not merely as passive recipients but as active contributors to society. This reciprocity, Rosa calls it a "resonance relationship", is essential for a fulfilling connection between individuals and the (political) institutions that influence their lives (Rosa 2016, 89).

To overcome the democracy crisis, several movements and organizations have emerged, aiming to address the issues arising from the disconnect between citizens and politics. One such movement organization and political party is "Zagreb je NAŠ" (ZjN) in Croatia's capital city. The goal of this green-left party is to strengthen participatory democracy and to win back citizens' trust in politics. They seek to overcome the corruption and nepotism that have prevailed in Zagreb for the last 20 years and to align their agenda more closely with citizens' interests (Milan 2022, 6). One instrument to do so is to empower neighbourhood councils (NCs), the lowest level of local self-governance.

In our research we wanted to find out what potentials NCs have to reconnect politics with society and to what extent NCs can contribute to address the crisis of democracy in Zagreb. This chapter delves into this research process revolving around our central research question: *What potentials do NCs offer for citizen participation in local politics in Zagreb?* The research has an emphasis on understanding the self-perception of neighbourhood councillors concerning their roles. This examination leads to the following sub-question: How do neighbourhood councillors in Zagreb perceive the concept of NCS within local politics?

In the following, we describe the concept of NCs and their contextualization. Subsequently we describe, justify, and reflect in the research design and empirical case. In the following subchapter we delve into an in-depth examination of Rosa's resonance theory and its application to the context of neighbourhood councils in Zagreb. In the next subchapter we analyse several interview segments. Finally, in the concluding subchapter we consolidate the main findings, address the research questions, and engage in a discussion that contextualises the results within the framework of resonance theory.

Concept and Contextualization of Neighbourhood Councils

The city of Zagreb is divided into several administrative levels (cf. image 1). The mayor and the city assembly represent the city administrative bodies of the City of Zagreb. The City Assembly is the representative body and consist of 51 seats, the mayor and the two deputy mayors are the executive body responsible for overseeing the city's administration and implementing policies. Both bodies are represented by directly elected citizens. They are responsible to the mayor and the city government (City Assembly of the City of Zagreb, n.d., City of Zagreb 2017c).

Bodies of the Municipal Government in Zagreb. *Own illustration.*

On the lower administrative level Zagreb is organised as a local self-government, consisting of 17 city districts (Croatian: gradske četvrt) assemblies and 218 city local board assemblies (cf. image 2). Each has their citizen representatives through whom citizens participate in public work which influences their everyday life in their local communities. The district assemblies act as the higher level of local self-government, overseeing different administrative services and bringing together the neighbourhood councils within their respective districts. Depending on the number of citizens district assemblies have 11 to 19 members, who are directly elected by the citizens of its territory (City of Zagreb 2017a).

NCs, also known as a "mjesni odbor" in Croatian, are the lowest level of the local self-government – closest to the everyday lives of citizens. A NC consists of elected representatives that live in the neighbourhood. The concept is rooted in the belief that residents of a specific neighbourhood are the best experts regarding the unique challenges of the local community.

They are the intermediaries between the local community and the city government and serve as a channel for citizens to voice their concerns, ideas, and preferences regarding various local matters, including urban planning and infrastructure development. The scope of the power and mode of working of a NC is determined by articles 99 and 100 of the statute of Zagreb (Official Gazette of the City of Zagreb 23/16, article 99 & 100). The primary purpose of NCs is to give citizens a platform for direct participation in local decision-making processes within their neighbourhood. The idea is that by actively involving citizens in shaping their neighbourhood, the quality of local self-government and connection to politics improves (City of Zagreb 2017b).
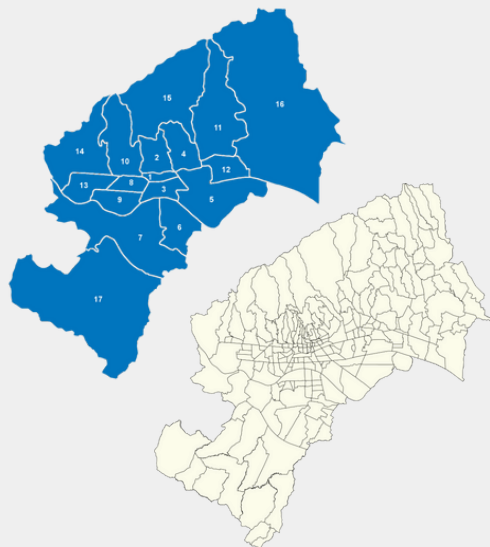
Districts (left) and neighbourhoods (right) of Zagreb

Empirical Work

This subchapter takes a look at our process of research design as well as the methods used for data collection and analysis. Developing the particular research focus for this project was marked by the learnings on the municipalist movement and the political system of the city throughout our field trip to Zagreb as well as continuous review of our approach in resonance with the data we collected.

We engaged with the topic of participation early on in the process of the research design. The framework for the beginning of our field research was built upon a shared interest in the different actors involved in local politics in Zagreb as well as shifts in perspective when activist groups become part of electoral politics.

In order to collect data on citizen participation in local politics we prepared a survey for the first days in Zagreb, that we planned to carry out at different political events in the city. It aimed to find out if, to what degree, and through which instruments people in Zagreb feel heard and what possibilities they have to participate in local politics. After a few iterations and reflection on the number of participants and the kind of data we could get through the survey in the short time we would spend in Zagreb, we decided to change our method of data collection.

Through the input from lectures, talks, and interviews in the first week in Zagreb we got to know the structure and mechanisms of the local political system better and quickly built an interest in the lowest body of the municipal government, NCs.

As the NC is the closest and most immediate body to the citizens of Zagreb, we formulated our research question regarding participation in local politics with a focus on NCs.

To find out how neighbourhood councillors perceive their role and their work regarding citizen participation, we choose to conduct semi-structured interviews. We found this to be the most appropriate method for data collection for the chosen topic and in the limited time frame that was available to us. The neighbourhood councillors, as experts in the field, could provide us with data from their specific perspectives and narrate us through their experiences as neighbourhood councillors. We therefore did person-oriented sampling (Flick 2009, p. 29), meaning we choose the people we talked to based on their shared position. As they all were neighbourhood councillors in Zagreb when the research was conducted, we assume their experiences and concerns are relevant for our research interest and representative of it (ibid.).

To get in contact with neighbourhood councillors we on one hand used a contact we had from our teaching assistant that planned the programme and accompanied the field research in Zagreb. This contact referred us to other neighbourhood councillors and shared our interview request in his communication channels for the neighbourhood councillors. Through that channel two more councillors contacted us and were interested in talking to us. On the other hand, we used the website of the city government, where contacts to all government bodies and their councillors can be found, to contact NCs all over Zagreb with our interview request via email.

Four other councillors responded to these requests and where willing to talk to us. Oriented on our research interest in citizen participation, we developed interview guidelines for semi-structured interviews. Those gave us a loose frame for the interviews, leaving enough freedom for follow-up questions. Based on these guidelines we conducted six narrative interviews (Hopf 2004, p. 206) with seven neighbourhood councillors from different neighbourhoods in Zagreb. We let the interviewees narrate through the topic and their experiences of their work in the NC following the narration quest from our prepared questions and the evolving follow-up questions (ibid.). Afterwards we transcribed the recorded interviews with a focus on the content presented and summarised the contents for a better overview of the mentioned topics.

Within that process we realised that our interviewees rather talked about their perception of the NC and the possibilities this body has as part of the municipal government than their role in contributing to participation within it, which we initially indented to research. Following that we adjusted our question for the data analysis to how neighbourhood councillors in Zagreb perceive the concept of the NC within local politics in Zagreb under the broader question of what potentials the NC offers for citizen participation in local politics in Zagreb.

After the field trip, we were introduced to different methods of data analysis focussing on different qualities the data could offer. From those we selected the most suitable one regarding our research question and the data we collected. We chose to analyse the transcribed interviews with story analysis as elaborated by Feldman et al. (2004). Stories are used to bring across ideas and opinions in the form of time-based narrations. They can be distinguished from simple lists of facts, enumerations or ideas that contain neither a temporal sequence nor a plot (Feldmann et al. 2004, p. 148).

We decided to analyse our interviews based on stories as we researched our interviewees' perception of being a part of a political system (NCs) and how this helps engage with citizens. And as *"individuals often make sense of the world and their place in it through narrative form"* (Feldmann et al. 2004, p. 148), we thought stories to be the best way to work out our interviewees' perspective. *"Through telling their stories, people distil and reflect a particular understanding of social and political relations."* (ibid.). As stories are time-based, they are also a useful tool for analysing processes and therefore for this project. It forms a suitable instrument for data analysis regarding a research topic related to the current crisis of democracy and democratisation processes.

For our analysis we selected all stories from the six interviews that we thought to be relevant towards answering our research question. For those we wrote storylines summarising the main statements the narrators made. In some cases, we utilised enthymemes to uncover underlying meaning from the stories. An enthymeme is *"an incomplete or 'careless' logical inference. (...) an argument or, more formally, a syllogism, one of whose parts is missing"* (Feldmann et. al. 2004, p. 152). Whereby a syllogism is *"a logical inference that demonstrates evidence"* (Krüger. 2020, p. 10) that consists of a major and minor premise leading to a conclusion (ibid.)

where parts of that can stay implicit in a statement. Therefore, the analysis of stories through working out enthymemes enables us as researchers to fill the gaps of incomplete arguments made in the stories we extracted from our data and uncover inherent meaning from it. The following example illustrates all steps and the potential of the analysis if enthymemes are used. For a clear overview the implicit statements are indicated with capital letters.

Analysis Example

Story

"Yeah, it's old and it's ruined. And then we started thinking about: what can we do with that market? And it all started from there. And now it's like the first two years we are thinking. We are now at the end of doing some renovation around this market and then in next two years plan is to do things around the park to make it better. So that's it. The role is basically to be in contact with our citizens. But also have, like your own vision of what is important for the neighbourhood. Because sometimes people don't have time and people would like to see something better but they don't have the time. You know, like, to get deeper into it. And sometimes they think that something is a solution which is not because of some complicated rules about, I don't know, building or whatever, you know. Cities are complicated animals, so you have all these special regulations. And then you have to sit and think, okay, you know. When you take into consideration what the citizens want and what is possible and decide what, what should be the thing that you will insist on."
(interv. 5, story 2)

Storyline

The story is about how the narrator understands the role of a NC. She understands the role as being in contact with the neighbourhood's citizens as well as having an own vision. She describes that they observed problems in their neighbourhood and how they developed solutions to them.

She explains why it is sometimes difficult for citizens to bring in solutions, as they do not have time to get deeper into the topics. The narrator states that cities are very complex and it takes a lot of time and effort to understand the regulations. She states that considering the complexity of what is possible and what is wanted by the citizens is what they base their decisions on.

Enthymeme 1

Major premise

Citizens sometimes do not have enough capacity to get deep into complex topics that need a lot of time to be understood.

Minor premise

The topics neighbourhood councillors work on are complex and need a lot of time to be understood.

Conclusion

Therefore, citizens sometimes do not have enough capacity to get deep into topics neighbourhood councillors work on.

Enthymeme 2
    Major premise
YOU HAVE TO GET DEEP INTO
TOPICS IN ORDER TO BRING IN
INFORMED IDEAS.
    Minor premise
Citizens sometimes cannot get deep into
topics neighbourhood councillors work
on.
    Conclusion
Therefore, citizens sometimes cannot
contribute informed ideas to topics
neighbourhood councillors work on.

Enthymeme 3
    Major premise
IF CITIZENS CANNOT CONTRI-
BUTE INFORMED IDEAS TO TO-
PICS NEIGHBOURHOOD COUN-
CILLORS WORK ON, THEIR INTE-
RESTS NEED TO BE MEDIATED.
    Minor premise
Citizens sometimes cannot contribute
informed ideas on topics neighbourhood
councillors work on.
    Conclusion
Therefore, citizens' interests sometimes
need to be mediated when it comes to
topics neighbourhood councillors work
on.

To make further sense of the data and
work towards answering our research
question, we grouped the stories and
enthymemes regarding same or similar
topics, went through them together and
developed our main findings (Willig 2014,
p. 136). Six of these findings were analysed
in relation to the data collected building
the base for our conclusion to answer our
research question.
The process of data analysis and interpre-
tation also demonstrated the limitations

of story analysis regarding our research
topic and question. We realised that story
analysis alone is not a sufficient method
for this research. Many of our inter-
viewees described ideas and wishes for
improvement in their daily work or the
municipal government. These were often
outlined as lists instead of stories of cases.
Therefore, many of the main statements
cannot be found in stories and fall out of
our initial analysis frame. We therefore
decided to use the statements, that gave
us important insights regarding our
research question, like the other results of
our data analysis. We grouped them
regarding same or similar topics and used
them, in addition to our story analysis, to
formulate our main findings.
Our method of collecting data is also
limited by the fact that we conducted all
our interviews in English with only non-
English native speakers. The interviewee
therefore could not express some corre-
lations as they maybe would have in their
first language. Due to the limited time we
spent in Zagreb and the political ideals
behind the platform, we were also only
able to interview presidents and vice
presidents of NCs that are part of the
governing party ZjN, which also limits the
perspective we got on the topic in some
ways.

The following table presents all the stories
we identified from the six interviews and
identified as relevant regarding our re-
search questions. It gives an overview of
the topic discussed that will be referred to
again in the analysis subchapter.

Source	Main message
Interv. 1, story 1	About work as neighbourhood councillor, problems and frustration with the work and cooperation with the city services.
Interv. 1, story 2	Complain about (outdated) structures and how they make the job unpractical and difficult to align with daily obligations.
Interv. 1, story 3	It is positive that NCs are in charge of small areas since that makes it easy for neighbourhood councillors to be familiar with the neighbourhood and well connected.
Interv. 1, story 4	The work as neighbourhood councillor is something they do besides their own job. This means that they (mostly) have to do the job outside of regular working hours, which then again may lead to problems in communication with other instances they have to work with.
Interv. 1, story 5	About limited powers of NCs in decision-making and executing decisions.
Interv. 1, story 6	Story about difficulties with the cooperation of city services. Interviewed person says that it sometimes feels like the city services make fun of the neighbourhood councillors.
Interv. 1, story 7	Tells that the system is only slowly changing and that she guesses that some city employees do not want to adapt to the increased workload.
Interv. 1, story 8	Story about old structures and how they are still favoured by some people in the system.
Interv. 1, story 9	Story about old structures and how they still influence the work.
Interv. 1, story 10	Growing trust because there has been successful change to something better. In this case, it is about the improved garbage system.
Interv. 1, story 11	Limited power of NCs. Even if they filled out all the documents, they cannot get through with what they have decided on because higher instances hinder them.
Interv. 1, story 12	It is difficult to reach citizens within the neighbourhood because they do not really have a contact data base and that they have to go from door to door if they want to inform people about burning issues.
Interv. 2, story 1	The story is about reasons for lack of participatory decision-making within local governance in Zagreb.

Source	Main Message
Interv. 2, story 2	About how party internal organisation of the councillor and communication works.
Interv. 2, story 3	About which actions are possible in the scope of the NC.
Interv. 2, story 4	About limitations to the work of the NC imposed by higher administrative bodies.
Interv. 2, story 5	About the different reasons and agendas of why citizens have to bring in ideas and proposals at the NC and how that relates to the actual needs of the neighbourhood.
Interv. 2, story 6	About the development of councillor education and thematic groups over the years and the narrator's perspective on how much has been achieved since ZjN got into power.
Interv. 2, story 7	Describes potentials of the NC following the change in government and the possibilities neighbourhood councillors have through direct contact with the citizens.
Interv. 3, story 1	States how much support of the district council influences the work of the NC.
Interv. 3, story 2	About how much power the NC has to make immediate decisions regarding their neighbourhood.
Interv. 3, story 3	About how the legacy of decisions of the former legislation influences the work of the NC and how those can be changed.
Interv. 3, story 4	Describes how citizens get in contact with the NC and which possibilities these channels open up.
Interv. 3, story 5	Illustrates how citizens navigate participating in local politics and what the NC can offer them.
Interv. 4, story 1	About the reachability of neighbourhood councillors for citizens.
Interv. 4, story 2	Entails the necessity of the approval of city services for public interventions by NCs.
Interv. 4, story 3	Depicts the difficulty of having different parties ruling at the local and national level, respectively, for public interventions by NCs.
Interv. 4, story 4	Demonstrates how the NC succeeded in implementing citizens' proposals despite resistances from other institutions and legal difficulties.
Interv. 5, story 1	Unravels the evolvement of the political structure and institutional levels in Zagreb.
Interv. 5, story 2	Pictures citizens' involvement in politics through NCs and explains why it can be difficult.

Source	Main Message
Interv. 5, story 3	Sets out how NCs get things done, what some obstacles to that are and what is helpful to them.
Interv. 5, story 4	Describes the different communication channels between NCs and citizens which are or are not used by NCs and their evaluation.
Interv. 5, story 5	Sketches the relations between the NC and city services, as well as the attitudes that neighbourhood councillors can have towards their job.
Interv. 5, story 6	Illustrates the relations between the neighbourhoods in a quarter as well as the relation between neighbourhood level and district level.
Interv. 5, story 7	Tells about municipal policemen and how they would ideally do their job.
Interv. 5, story 8	Comprises the advantages for neighbourhoods of having NCs.
Interv. 6, story 1	Limited powers of NCs. Decisions sometimes will not go through higher instances and NCs sometimes have to wait long to get financial resources.
Interv. 6, story 2	Other neighbourhood councils (in contrast to the council president) do only come to the meeting to get their money. (Shows frustration.)
Interv. 6, story 3	About difficulties with money and how the old debt is a problem for the new government and that they do not have enough people with the right mindset to bring about some serious changes.
Interv. 6, story 4	Talks about his frustration with the work, that he got less enthusiastic over the last years because he does not see changes happening or the ones that are happening are very slow.
Interv. 6, story 5	Talks about the way communication is structured today and that it is not well. He perceives it as a waste of time and suggests communicating only over the phone or email. He also talks about a Facebook group which works well as a mode of communication.
Interv. 6, story 6	About how slow things are and that coordinative meeting with other NCs and the district councils do not make sense. He is very frustrated and does not see any reason to do more work.

Theoretical Background: Resonance Theory by Hartmut Rosa

This subchapter presents the theoretical framework in which our research is embedded. We will explain from what angle we looked at participation and present the resonance theory of Hartmut Rosa. As we looked for the potentials of citizen participation, it is important to state what is needed for participation in the first place. We chose this theory, as it explains best under which conditions real participation can work and in which circumstances alienation and lack of mutual understanding can occur.

For this, it is first necessary to clarify how we define citizen participation. Based on the definition by Blühdorn and Butzlaff, participation is a *"constitutive element of democratic politics; enhancing the opportunities for and quality of citizen participation is widely perceived as the hallmark of democratisation; and for democratic systems, participation is the most important source of legitimacy. Yet, depending on its understanding, the expansion of participation does not only entail a promise of democratic empowerment, but may also be perceived as a threat"* (Blühdorn and Butzlaff 2020, 370).

The last part of the quote refers to the fact that participation cannot always deliver what it promises, as there are ever higher expectations of it. It is also dangerous if, for example, more participation gives extreme right-wing opinions a stronger hearing (ibid., 371). But how can participation be generated? To theoretically embed our research project and understand the deeper preconditions for participation, we are oriented towards Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory. According to our understanding of actual participation (com-pared to fake participation that can be observed in Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein 1969)), a resonance relationship between citizens and politics is needed to enable genuine exchange between them and participation of citizens in politics.

The resonance theory by Hartmut Rosa aims to explain why being heard and involved as well as feeling part of society is important for a functioning democracy. He also describes how a resonance relationship works (Rosa 2019). The sociologist understands resonance as a relation between the subject and the world, in which both come in touch with and transform each other, and which is a mutual relation (ibid., 164). The subject needs to be "closed" enough to have its own voice, but "open" enough to be affected by others (ibid., 181). Politicians should articulate their own understanding and idea of the common good and advocate for it, but also must be receptive to counter proposals, arguments, and objections (ibid.). This is only possible through responsiveness. On the other hand, citizens should not only listen passively to politicians but bring in their voice. Representation needs to be reciprocal. Multiple voices and diversity are essential, and there must be not only harmony, but also dissent and conflict (Rosa 2016, 91). The author argues that citizen committees would lead to a broader diversity of voices, more audibility, experiences, understanding of others and the transformation of opinions (Rosa 2019, 179-180). Politics must hold this diversity together and provide space for all groups. In contrast to a functioning resonance relationship, Rosa describes "alienation" as a form of indifferent or r hostile relation between subject and world (ibid., 172).

Rosa indicates four characteristics of the resonance relation. The first one is the willingness or ability to be affected by others (Rosa 2019, 164). It means having something to say as well as listening to each other (ibid.). Next, he mentions bringing in the voice in a responsive way and, thus, experience self-efficacy (ibid., 164-165). Third, it comes to a transformation of involved voices (ibid., 165-166). This happens through a dialogical process of mutual appropriation. For this, it is not necessary to share the same values but to get engaged with each other. A condition for this is the willingness of the community and its members to a substantial transformation (ibid., 166). As fourth criteria, Rosa refers to the principle of unavailability of resonance and openness of results (ibid.). There are no clear output criteria of resonance, and this moment of unavailability means that there can be no guarantee of successful resonance relationships. Resonance cannot be forced. This possibility of a failure is what makes resonance relationships so valuable.

Moreover, the collective generation of resonance has a "world-creating quality" (Rosa 2016, 92). Participation is not just something that happens on a rational level, and it is not just about comprehending politics, but it is about emotions and the possibility of shaping politics (ibid., 92-93). However, in this context it is important to acknowledge that a so-called "resonance longing" (ibid., 93) can lead to populism and other extremist forms. Rosa gives German fascism as an example (Rosa 2016, 93-94). Even though participation and being-in-the-world were promised there, the ideoogy was based on exclusion, alienation from the world, and understanding the world as repulsive.

Instead of empathy and diversity, there was a hostile attitude towards everything non-identical. From within the "oasis," no response relationship to the world is possible; instead, only echo chambers were created, i.e., places where the same voices always resound. However, one's own voice can neither be heard in those echo chambers, as every dynamic is extinguished.

Moreover, current (social) media could also be seen as providing such echo chambers. Waves of outrage which burst out in those places would also not contribute to more resonance, and self-amplification of voices also occurs. The waves of resonance run "into the void", they do not become audible in the right places, and often advance violence (Rosa 2016, 99-100).

The "resonance longing" is, nevertheless, essential for democracy. Especially when the political sphere is perceived as mute and unresponsive, it is important for social movements to demand more resonance (Rosa 2016, 95-96). However, this can only succeed if self-efficacy per se is not called into question in the process and people feel that they are not being heard by politics anyway (ibid., 97-98). Another problem is that democracy is too slow for the rapidly changing social relations, as democratic will formation and decision-making take more time in a more diverse society (ibid., 97). On top of that, dissatisfied citizens do not see themselves confronted with alienated politicians, but rather with a fossilised system and feel that their own role is impotent (ibid., 99).

Rosa emphasises that the political sphere as a sphere of resonance remains an essential place for avoiding alienation, at

the same time being a place characterised by a resonance deficit (Rosa 2016, 100). Rosa's theory shows the problems that capitalism and an accelerated world have brought. However, it also has limitations; the concept of resonance ultimately remains ambiguous and elusive. Moreover, power relations are hardly considered in his analysis, so Rosa does not address what contribution power holders make to alienation.

Analysis of Main Findings

In the upcoming subchapter, we will delve into the analysis of our data. As outlined in the subchapter about the empirical work, we identified relevant stories from the interviews and extracted main findings from them. Subsequently, we will elaborate on six of these main findings, subjecting them to thorough examination and interpretation through the lens of Rosa's resonance theory. The first two main findings deal with problems regarding the structure of the work of neighbourhood councillors and the expectations projected onto them and their work. The third and fourth finding work out external and structural limitations to the work of the NCs, and the last two point towards possibilities within the concept of the NCs and their work since the new government was elected in 2021.

Expectations vs. Reality of Neighbourhood Councillors

"I think the root is here. We are a democratic society and people, I think, find democracy like, okay, so I can do whatever I want." (interv. 3, ll. 385/86)

One repeatedly mentioned hindrance in their work in contact with the citizens that our interviewees stated is the gap between expectations and reality. Thereby referring to the expectations of citizens towards the city government and the NCs as their direct contact for sharing ideas and criticism. This often diverges from what is possible in the reality of the framework of local politics and the scope of the NC. Based on that we developed our first main finding: <u>The way citizen participation is carried out by neighbourhood councillors differs from the way citizens imagine it, which sometimes leads to discontent on both sides.</u>

There are different reasons mentioned for this discrepancy between expectations and reality. As illustrated in the subchapter of our empirical framework, interviewee 5, for example, pointed out the differences in understanding the complex issues of the city.

"...The role is basically to be in contact with our citizens. But also have, like your own vision of what is important for the neighbourhood. Because sometimes people don't have time and people// People would like to see something better but they don't have the time. You know, like, to get deeper into it. And sometimes they think that something is a solution which is not because of some complicated rules about, I don't know, building or whatever, you know. Cities are complicated animals, so you have all this special regulations. And then you have to sit and think, okay, you know. When you take into consideration what the citizens want and what is possible and decide what, what should be the thing that you will insist on." (interv. 5, story 2)

This neighbourhood councillor stated that the lack of depth of understanding complex issues of the city from the citizens' side, who have less capacity and resources to get into the topics, can lead to frustration. As neighbourhood councillors have a more comprehensive understanding of the discussed topic and need to include the boundaries set by the reality of municipal politics into their decision making, citizens' wishes, and ideas will not always get implemented. This can leave them with the perception that their ideas or critique was not considered in the process.

The complexity of topics also leads to obstacles that neighbourhood councillors need to work around, which prolongs many processes. Because of that things do not happen as fast as citizens expected (cf. interv. 5, story 3).

Another reason for the contrast between expectations of citizens and reality we worked out is that citizens' ideas and proposals on issues of the neighbourhood are heavily guided by personal preferences or perspectives (cf. interv. 2, ll. 746 – 750). If these are not compatible with the actual immediate needs of the neighbourhood or the city, they will often be not fulfilled, not giving citizens the outcome they wanted and expected from bringing in their ideas.

Another circumstance that leads to similarly frustrating results for citizens and therefore also for the work of the neighbourhood councillor was stated by interviewee 2. He pointed out that participatory decision-making that is carried out in a "dysfunctional system would probably make more trouble than good" (interv. 2, story 1, ll. 146/47). By that this neighbourhood councillor refers to the city services that are not capable of fulfilling their assigned basic functions at the moment. They therefore could not serve apparent outcomes of participatory decision-making at the moment, making participatory decision-making seem as generally not functional and only fuelling citizens' distrust in the governmental bodies, including the NCs (cf. interv. 2, story 1). The activist and politician Tomislav Medak also stated that ZjN was careful to implement new forms of participation to not have "fake" participation, meaning that the people in charge would not be able to deliver what was promised in the participation process (cf. field notes, ll. 189-190). Instead, time for implementation and the establishment of structures is needed, afterwards, forms like participatory budgeting would be introduced for which a special task group would be created (cf. ibid., ll. 170-174). He also stated that "capacity is really crucial in holding power" (ibid., l. 195).

These examples show that a diverging understanding of what is possible in governing a city hinders functioning resonance. It leads to misunderstandings on the side of the citizens that do not feel like their participation was recognised or considered when outcomes contradict their wishes or expectations. In these cases, citizens do not feel like they could bring in their voices in a responsive way, therefore cannot experience self-efficacy.

Job Condition of Neighbourhood Councillors

We observed a discrepancy between what is expected from neighbourhood councillors and what the conditions of the job are. It is important to point out that the job of the neighbourhood councillor is

performed on a voluntary basis and councillors only receive an expense allowance for their work. Many of the councillors therefore have a full-time job and do the work for the council in their spare time, so they do not have a lot of time for their tasks (cf. interv. 6, l. 459). One of the interviewees highlighted that it is impractical for the council members having to meet at a certain time in a certain place, instead of having phone or online meetings (cf. interv. 1, story 2). As a consequence of having to do the job in their free time, it is often not possible for them to reach other instances they have to work with, like city services (cf. interv. 1, story 4). All these factors contribute to the second main finding: <u>The way the job of a neighbourhood councillor is structured today makes it hard to fulfil the job satisfyingly.</u>

But those constraints are not the only reasons why it is hard to get the job done in a desired way. Neighbourhood councillors only get a very short training. They do not learn the best way to get the job done and what the procedures for interventions in public space are. Some interviewees stated that, in cities or countries with larger institutional units, it is more common that professionals are in charge (cf. interv. 1 story 3; interv. 5 story 1). In the cooperation with the city services, their non-professional position is especially evident when neighbourhood councillors are not able to draw on certain knowledge and do not receive support from the city services, which can make their work very difficult (cf. interv. 1, story 6). One interviewee phrased it this way:

"[You] knew who to call and the person would then order the services to perform a certain work." (interv. 1, ll. 343-348)

It is described as very important to know the right people. Regarding the knowledge and experience sharing, some progress in neighbourhood councillors' training can be observed since almost two years that ZjN came into power. From ad hoc training they managed to conduct systematic training.

"[Because] some people are like, wow, what's they're not doing anything. I'm amazed how much has been done, amazed. In any case, like so now, after things have been a bit stabilised, I guess I can see like we're now we have like all these, we have educations for like counsellors often." (interv. 2, ll. 801-836)

Changes happen only very slowly, and implementations are always postponed (cf. interv. 6, story 4). Also, new priorities in conducting politics have not been set, which means that corruption and personal favours still play an important role. This makes it again harder for new neighbourhood councillors to find good solutions (cf. interv. 1, story 9). Some interviewees said that if city services did their job correctly, neighbourhood councillors would have less or easier work (cf. interv. 5, story 5). One interviewee also stated that it is a lot of work because she makes it a lot of work, meaning that it was her choice to work that much (cf. interv. 5, story 5). Another interviewee stated he does "the minimum", and that "nobody's asking [...] to do more" (interv. 6, l.153). So, the exact job conditions depend not only on external factors, but also on their own

understanding of the job that neighbourood councillors themselves have.

The difficulty to get in touch with citizens is also a part of the structure that makes the job of neighbourhood councillors hard to fulfil. Councillors talked about how they went from door to door to inform citizens about the new way of waste disposal in Zagreb (cf. interv. 1, story 12). Some modes of contact are also seen as a waste of time, as they are very ineffective (cf. interv. 6, story 5). Instead, more digital modes such as Facebook are proposed (ibid.). Although in Rosa's theory it is seen as likely that online media platforms might turn into echo chambers, in case of our research it seems like a solution to make more resonance possible. Citizens could interact better with neighbourhood councillors. A reason for the communication issues and resonance problems in general might be that the resonance partner is not clear. Because of the difficult position of the NC within the institutional structure in Zagreb, it is not clear who the responsible resonance partner for citizens really is, and this restricts an efficient and official communication and does not lead to a good resonance relation. Official ways of communication are often inefficient, but other ways are also not possible (due to a lack of time, legal constraints, etc.).

One factor that makes the councillor's job easier is if their party has a majority in the district council (cf. interv. 3, ll. 76-82). This often ensures that the neighbourhood receives a sufficient share of the budget and that proposals are accepted. There is then no need to "fight" for every proposal (cf. interv. 5, story 6). It is also very advantageous if the neighbourhoods in a district get along well and do not have

to fight over the budget. Like-minded and well-meaning district presidents have a very positive influence on the work of the NCs (cf. interv. 3, ll. 76-82, interv. 5, story 6). However, this is not always the case, and implementations often do not happen in an appropriate amount of time (cf. interv. 6, story 6).

The way neighbourhood councillors do the job is not the way it was intended when the institutional body was created (cf. interv. 5, story 1). This is also one of the main reasons why it is such a difficult job. Neighbourhood councillors have the difficult task now to transform this old structure and embed it in a new, more democratic system (cf. interv. 5, story 5). The relationship between neighbourhood councillors and city service employees can be seen as a non-functioning resonant relationship. The relationship is hardened, rigid, and manipulative. The background of the corrupt system can be seen as one side of the fossilised relationship that citizens and neighbourhoods have to take as given. Often neighbourhood councillors experience neither self-efficacy nor responsiveness, for example, when they do not have enough time to do their tasks or bring in proposals which get ignored by district councillors or city services (cf. interv. 4, story 1, 2).

Outdated Structures

Another obstacle frequently cited as hindering the neighbourhood councillors in their work is the presence of outdated structures. In numerous interviews, the previous government's policies, and the systems they established were consistently highlighted as problematic. The negative aspects encompass the

bureaucratic structures and the methods of operation, as well as the way of working of personnel from the previous administration who continue to be employed by the city. The main finding drawn from these observations is that elements of the <u>'Old structures, including existing employees and a way of working, in city services restrict the potential of neighbourhood councils to implement decisions, leading to constant frustration with the work in the NC.'</u>

Examples for bureaucratic structures and the way of working which make the job as neighbourhood councillor difficult are mentioned in interview 1. The interviewee highlighted that due to old structures they are required to convene in person for every decision-making process. They are not allowed to use more convenient methods such as voting over the phone or via email. As a result, this can become problematic for the councillors, as they all have other commitments, and finding a suitable time to meet in person can be exceedingly difficult (cf. interv. 1, story 2). Additionally, some councillors complained that the job consists of too much paperwork and that the system is too slow (cf. interv. 1, l. 273, interv. 2, story 2). Furthermore, the office opening hours of the NC are not being used well by citizens. Some neighbourhood councillors said that they rather sit out the mandatory opening hours because most citizens reach out to them via email. This means that the current mandatory opening hour structure is not an efficient instrument to increase citizen participation (cf. interv. 4, story 4; interv. 6, ll. 287 - 299).

The way of working under the previous government was marked by corruption and nepotism. This led to the fact that people did not follow administrative chains of command, but simply directly communicated with people they knew from higher instances. As a result, individuals often bypassed official administrative channels and directly interacted with acquaintances in higher positions, creating incomprehensible structures. This practice favoured those with influential connections. Given that the previous government held power for two decades, this disregard for official structures and nepotism became deeply ingrained in the working culture and is still favoured by those benefiting from it and is hard to break which is frustrating (cf. interv. 1 story 8 & 9). Some neighbourhood councillors agreed that the unofficial way can be more efficient in some cases but claimed that this approach is inherently unjust as it provides preferential treatment to those with better personal resources, leaving others at a disadvantage. They try to implement a working structure following the chain of command but are not entirely successful and also have to fight slow processes which is frustrating (cf. interv. 6, story 2, 3, 4, 6). Another reason pointed out by some neighbourhood councillors why the old structures are still favoured by some people is that they mean less work.

According to one interviewed councillor, their contact person in city services mentioned that since the new government came into power, the workload for city services has increased. It is speculated that some employees in city services are unwilling to assist because it inconveniences them, leading to additional

work, and they resist adapting to the changes brought about by the new government (cf. interv. 1, story 7).

In general, there has been significant criticism directed towards the city services' personnel which was hired by the previous government. The neighbourhood councillors complaint about the poor collaboration between them and the city services and the little support they experience from them. An impressive case is stated in interview 1, where the interviewee narrates a story in which a fellow neighbourhood councillor approached the city services asking for help to solve a problem. After presenting the citizens' concerns the city services just said it cannot be done and were unwilling to help to find a solution. Afterwards the neighbourhood councillor did research on her own and stumbled upon a document which contained a solution to the problem. When she presented a specific solution to the city services they agreed to help. The neighbourhood councillor who told the story presented this just as one example where city services knew the solution and were just unwilling to help. The councillor expresses her frustration, feeling that at times, city services seem to mock the neighbourhood councillors, an attitude she strongly opposes. She firmly believed that city services should "work together hand in hand" (interv. 1, story 6) with the neighbourhood councillors, fostering a collaborative approach, which, unfortunately, is not the current reality (cf. interv. 1, story 6 & 7).

These examples illustrate how outdated structures exert detrimental influences on the work of neighbourhood councillors. While the degree of frustration varies across interviews, it is evident that all councillors recognise the issues stemming from these old structures and aspire for improvement. When examining this key finding through the lens of Rosa's resonance theory, we arrive at a result similar to the previous main finding: the existing bureaucratic and city service structures exhibit a poorly functioning relationship with neighbourhood councillors and their envisioned way of working. Instead of fostering a cooperative relationship, the prevailing sentiment of frustration runs counter to the expected dynamics of a well-functioning resonance.

Limited Powers of NCs

The fourth main finding derived from the interviews conducted is about the limited powers of NCs within the current political system. The finding reads as follows: <u>Neighbourhood councillors are limited in implementing citizen wishes because the institutional body of the NC does not have enough authority in the government of the city.</u>

In almost every interview, neighbourhood councillors expressed the difficulties they face due to their limited powers, often leading to feelings of frustration. It is crucial to recognise that the responsibilities of neighbourhood councillors primarily revolve around interventions in public spaces (cf. interv. 1, story 11 & ll. 444 – 450; interv. 6, ll. 49 – 51). They themselves claim that the decisions they make are only on small changes (cf. interv. 6, l. 38 – 40) and do not include significant decisions on structural political topics – *"all such things are decided upon*

higher instances" (cf. interv.1, story 5) and in many cases they "*are unable to make decisions [that are] affecting*" (interv. 1, ll. 447 – 450). Some even perceive themselves as powerless (cf. interv. 3, ll. 307 – 308).

NCs are limited in their work by higher administrative bodies. If a resolution is adopted by the NC, they must forward it to the district council, the next higher governing body, for their approval. Once approved, these resolutions are then handed over to the city services, who are mostly responsible for their execution. On occasion, the implementation of decisions runs smoothly under the administration of the new government in power (cf. interv. 2, story 7), especially when ZjN also holds the majority in the district council (cf. interv.1, story 5; interv. 3, story 1; interv. 6, story 9). However, certain resolutions made by the NCs encounter significant challenges and delays in the implementation process (cf. interv. 2, story 4; interv. 3, story 2; interv. 4, story 2). Interviewees cited instances where they had to wait for more than a year to see progress (cf. interv. 1, story 5 & 11; interv. 6, story 6).

Due to the current statute and the inherent limited powers of NCs, neighbourhood councillors cannot decide on things on their own or accelerate the process which they perceive as challenging in their work (cf. interv. 2, story 4; interv. 3, story 2; interv. 5, story 1; interv. 6, story 1). This is not only a challenge in the decision making, but also because NCs do not have sufficient financial resources (cf. interv. 4, story 2; interv. 5, story 3; interv. 6, story 9).

Some neighbourhood councillors perceive the limitations of the NC as so chall-

enging that they propose reducing the number of NCs or even eliminating the NCs altogether and retaining only the district councils (cf. interv. 5, story 3; interv. 6, ll. 85 – 89 & 92 - 115). They think that having two levels of local self-government makes little sense because district councils possess only slightly more power than NCs, yet they are consistently burdened with addressing decisions and requests from NCs and making decisions on those matters as well. According to one neighbourhood councillor, reducing the number of NCs would offer a significant advantage as it would reduce the city's expenditure on them, allowing the funds to be allocated to more beneficial endeavours (cf. interv. 6, ll. 92 – 102 & 588 - 594). This point is of particular interest since Tomislav Medak, one of the founders of ZjN, also proposes to limit the amount of NCs (cf. annex III, l. 163).

Moreover, due to data protection regulations, neighbourhood councillors are not granted access to contact lists of citizens in their neighbourhood. As a result, they are unable to reach out to the residents via simple email communication and are compelled to visit each household in person, which is a time-consuming undertaking (cf. interv. 1, story 12).

As evident from this analysis, the work of neighbourhood councillors is significantly restrained by the limited powers of the NCs within the current system. When assessing this constraint through the lens of resonance theory, it becomes evident that the relationship between neighbourhood councillors and the existing structural framework is not functioning optimally, particularly in light of the frustration it causes for the councillors and the diminished effectiveness of their work.

Resonance Through Physical Closeness and Familiarity

The fifth main finding is the following: The physical closeness and familiarity with the area allow neighbourhood councillors to have a good overview of the neighbourhood and to build a close relation with the citizens. Although interviewees often complained about the problematic and unclear structure of the political system which NCs are part of, and even complained about the institutional level of neighbourhoods in general (cf. interv. 5, story 1), a lot of councillors were fond of the fact that NCs are very close to the everyday life of the neighbourhood's citizens. They therefore know what is needed and what the exact problems are (cf. interv. 1, story 3; interv. 5, story 8). Councillors are able to weigh up what is good for their neighbourhood and can argue in favour of the neighbourhood in case of conflicting interests. This is what happened, for example, in a conflict concerning the use of a square in one of the neighbourhoods (cf. interv. 3, story 3). Since there is a high risk of flooding in that neighbourhood, the councillors did not want to place a church there but preferred to build a park. Even though this went against the wishes of some people and there was a lot of pressure on the councillors, they were able to prevail and advocate for a place that is good and beneficial for the whole community.

It can be very useful when neighbourhood councillors have their own vision for a neighbourhood, as they often know what changes can get implemented and which cannot (cf. interv. 5, story 2). This is, however, also based on the councillor's knowledge and thus, can be very limited.

Still, *"when you have some problems, no one will look into them as well as you will. You know. And the person who is really involved, the person who is really in this neighbourhood, they will be the ones who know, who will try to find out the most. Not always. It's not ideal, but// And they all know in everyday life, what something means to them, you know, so."* (interv. 5, ll. 534-538).

As NCs are physically close to the neighbourhood and councillors most times live in their neighbourhood, it can be very effective if they take matters into their own hands, come up with some ideas for change and to invest money in. Through the budget available to NCs, it is possible to organise different events or some public interventions. However, resources are very limited (cf. interv. 6, ll. 153-171). This does not provide the opportunity for a change from the bottom, but at least the chance to get some urgent things done.

"Yeah, and it's something that really should be done. It's really ugly and it's possible. [...] It was reachable." (interv. 5, ll. 419-420)

"Ugly" here refers to a ruined plateau of a market in the neighbourhood that the NC was able to reconstruct. A close relation with citizens becomes visible when neighbourhood councillors share, for example, their phone numbers publicly. This makes it possible for neighbourhood councillors to react very immediately (cf. interv. 3, story 4). If councillors are also physically present in their neighbourhood, for example, if they take walks with their dogs in the parks, it enables in-person-encounters as well a observations of the neighbourhood's con-

ditions and discoveries of issues. This proximity to citizens becomes even more important as one interviewee highlighted how *"everyone is behind their computer"* (interv. 5, ll. 527). The concept of a NC *"can bring people together"* (ibid., ll. 531).

It can also be advantageous if neighbourhood councillors speak openly about their position in front of citizens, as those most times get interested and open up. They can help citizens with day-to-day issues and connect them with the right institution (cf. interv. 3, story 5).

Almost all interview partners rated the proximity and familiarity with the neighbourhood as very positive and a great advantage in carrying out the work. It becomes clear how important one's own voice and the inclusion of this in the resonance relationship is. At the same time, according to Rosa, it should always be kept in mind that one's own view must not be too rigid and prominent. In contrast to the neighbourhood councillors' opinions, other opinions must also always be heard, even if the proposed solutions may not always seem feasible. In the direct and reactive relationship between councillors and citizens, both are in a relationship of response to each other. The neighbourhood councillors, through their connection to the neighbourhood, create a sense of being in the world that cannot be achieved by those responsible at higher levels.

Gaining Trust Through Action

The neighbourhood councillors we talked to also mentioned many examples from their work where ideas and proposals by citizens have been successfully implemented. Citizens recognising these

positive changes in the neighbourhood and the city leads to growing trust in the city government, in the NCs, as well as in the neighbourhood councillors specifically. Based on that, we concluded that: Following visible, positive changes over the last two years, trust in NCs (and the city government) is growing.

Interviewee 1 for example pointed towards immediate changes in the way the NCs are led since ZjN won the municipal election and how that changes citizens' attitudes towards the NCs.

"I think so, yes. Because people more, we see that more people come to the our neighbourhood council. And these same people comment that in the previous mandate, of the previous Council, they did not have this opportunity." (interv. 1, ll. 393 – 396)

Similarly, interviewee 2 reported that people are very surprised when they get a response to their emails by NCs now, as that has not been the case during the former mandates (cf. interv. 2, ll. 266 – 271). Both statements show that the higher presence and the commitment of the neighbourhood councillors to the citizens of their neighbourhood get recognised. This visible improvement of the reachability of the council can eventually lead to enhanced trust into the council by the citizens.

Positive changes regarding the everyday life in Zagreb are also pointed out as steps towards regaining trust from the citizens in the local government, including the NCs.

"So yes, that's a small change and there are some things which are not on the level of the lo-

cal council, but at the level of the whole city which are at first very, so for instance, the new system of garbage collection when it was introduced, it was enormous, enormous, you know, opposition at all levels. (...) I didn't know what how it happened, but there were enormous quantities of garbage everywhere. I think that there were people who were cleaning their attics because the whole town was really littered by. And then it somehow disappeared and now it's relative, it's still not perfect of course, but it's so much better, and there are no longer those rubbish bins everywhere, which used to be and it's still not completely aligned everywhere, but it's actually functioning and people realize that they are not, because there was a huge opposition in paying for the bags to collect garbage, you know it was like you know. How this would be enormous, so expensive, etcetera. And then they realise that it's not, it's roughly the same amount that they're if or cheaper, you know." (interv. 1, story 10)

This example shows how even a critically viewed change for the whole city can improve trust in local politics in the long run. The outcome proves to solve everyday problems of the citizens of Zagreb giving them tangible evidence for what kind of change is possible. This has been the general notion when the neighbourhood councillors reported on projects they were able to implement (cf. interv. 2, story 6; interv. 3, story 3; inter. 5, story 3).

The examples mentioned show that if positive changes can be perceived by citizens, for example by improving their daily life or the possibilities to reach the NC, the effort of the NC gets noticed, proving it as trustworthy. Related to Hartmut Rosa's theory, one can conclude that this points towards the possibility of well-functioning resonance. Through functioning communication channels for the citizens as well as the experience of a positive outcome of making yourself heard, they experience self-efficacy. If this development continues to bring visible changes to citizens lives and therefore build up citizens trust in local politics, resonance could grow parallel.

In that regard, the concept of the NC is a very promising way for citizens to participate in local politics. It offers a low-threshold opportunity to discuss issues concerning the public space and infrastructure of the neighbourhood. If carried out successfully, it can have a positive impact on the life of the citizens in the neighbourhood and in some cases in the whole city.

Conclusion

In response to the democracy crisis in Zagreb and Croatia, the municipalist movement organization ZjN has emerged, seeking to address the disconnection between citizens and politics. The party's goal of strengthening participatory democracy, facilitating citizen involvement in decision-making and restoring trust in politics aligns with empowering NCs. Even though the concept of the NCs was not invented by the municipalist movement organization, it has great potential to be used in a municipal sense, since NCs, as the lowest level of self-government, play a crucial role in bridging the gap between citizens and politics.

This chapter has discussed the current state of chances and challenges of NCs in Zagreb and tried to find out in how far a resonance relation between NCs, neighbourhood councillors, citizens, and politi-

cal institutions exists. The analysis sheds light on the challenges and opportunities faced by neighbourhood councillors within the current political system. Through the examination of interview data, six main findings were identified, each providing valuable insights into the functioning of NCs in Zagreb.

The first main finding revealed that a gap between the expectations of citizens towards neighbourhood councillors and the reality of the framework of local politics exists. That disparity often leads to discontent on both sides, as citizens' ideas and criticisms may not always align with what is feasible within the existing system. This disconnection hampers the realisation of a well-functioning resonant dynamic between neighbourhood councillors and citizens. The second main finding addressed the structural limitations of the job of neighbourhood councillors, which is performed on a voluntary basis with limited resources and time. The lack of specific training and support from city services further exacerbates the challenges faced by neighbourhood councillors, making it hard for them to fulfil their role effectively.

The third main finding highlighted the presence of outdated structures, bureaucratic procedures, and previous government policies, which hinder the implementation of decisions by NCs. The reliance on unofficial channels of communication and resistance to change from some people from the previous government create frustrating obstacles for neighbourhood councillors. The fourth main finding emphasised the limited powers of NCs within the current political system. Neighbourhood councillors are often constrained in implementing ci-

tizen wishes due to higher administrative bodies' decisions, leading to feelings of powerlessness and frustration.

The fifth main finding highlighted the significance of physical closeness and familiarity with the neighbourhood in fostering a good overview of local issues and building a close relationship with citizens. The proximity allows neighbourhood councillors to advocate for the neighbourhood effectively, making a positive impact on the community. The sixth main finding indicated that trust in NCs and the city government is growing due to visible and positive changes in the past two years, since ZjN won the municipal elections. Implementing citizens' ideas successfully has contributed to a regained sense of trust in local politics and neighbourhood councillors.

Overall, the analysis reveals the complexity of the work of neighbourhood councillors in Zagreb and the various factors that influence their effectiveness in representing citizens' interests.

Following the analysis, the research question What potentials do neighbourhood councils offer for citizen participation in local politics in Zagreb? can be answered as followed: Despite facing challenges arising from limited powers, outdated structures, and misaligned expectations, neighbourhood councillors have the potential to make a positive impact on citizens' lives and improve the resonance between citizens and the local government. By applying Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory to the data analysis, it is evident that neighbourhood councils hold significant promise in re-establishing a meaningful connection between citizens and politics. NCs and their councillors play a vital role in (re)connecting politics

with citizens and might help to address the democratic crisis in Zagreb if they overcome communicative and structural obstacles.

The response to the sub question "How do neighbourhood councillors in Zagreb perceive the concept of neighbourhood councils within local politics?" needs to be approached with subjectivity due to the varying perspectives among neighbourhood councillors. During the interviews, it became evident that different neighbourhood councillors hold distinct perceptions of their roles and have different aspirations of their job. Some neighbourhood councillors display a strong enthusiasm for the position. Despite acknowledging the challenges of dedicating more time than initially anticipated and the difficulty of balancing it with other responsibilities, some councillors remain genuinely excited about their role and express genuine support for the concept of neighbourhood councils. While in several other interviews, the interviewees were really frustrated, only did the "bare minimum", or suggested to decrease the number of NCs.

In conclusion, the concept of NCs presents a promising avenue for citizen participation in local politics. But Zagreb's municipal democracy needs more time and changes in the administrative structures to develop its full potential for citizen participation and to grow into a successful resonance relationship as defined by Rosa.

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Jelena Milos, also from ZjN, explained to us why decision-making processes need so much time and how ZjN tries to introduce a new political culture through which communication gets changed, too. The journalist Paul Stubbs provided a critical view on the achievements of ZjN as well as the level of citizen participation. The professor Karin Doolan from the University of Zadar gave us an insight into her experiences with participation within ZjN and the obstacles she has encountered so far. The generosity and expertise of one and all have enriched this study in innumerable ways.

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CYCLING IN ZAGREB

THE INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN ZAGREB'S CYCLING
CULTURE AND ZAGREB JE NAŠ!

ANA CAROLINA ROTAVA PAIM

Abstract

In this article, I present the results of the research I conducted about the cycling culture in Zagreb and its connections with *Zagreb je NAŠ!* (Zagreb is ours!). With bicycles as a starting point, I illustrate how these two elements of the city intersect through ZjN history, their challenges, and obstacles towards a bike-friendly city. I used Narrative Analysis to understand who the players in the game of the city are and how they face each other. By answering the question of what the role of cycling culture inside ZjN is, I tell a part of its history. The voices I heard to tell it are from those who make it happen, from the previous Right to the City movements, to the municipalist government.

Introduction

"We will expand the tram network, build bicycle highways and reduce traffic jams" stated the green-left coalition in their program for Zagreb's 2021 municipal elections, under the topic "Green and Developed". After two years of being in power, those three points are not yet visible in the city.

As Zagreb je NAŠ! (from now on ZjN), is a political platform that emerged from a social movement that fights for the right to the city, I was curious to see what this government did in the physical space of the city. As I came to know, the obstacles towards making changes could not be overcome on the first two years of the term. Because of that, there is not many visible changes yet.

There are exceptions: a new waste collection system and some meters of bicycle lanes. Although the waste collection system caused a big commotion among the population, the bicycle lanes seemed more attractive and interesting to me. Bicycles and the culture around cycling appeared to be a recurrent theme on the lectures (1), and conversations with locals on site, so I decided to focus on this topic.

To make a connection between physical changes in Zagreb, bicycles, the new municipalist government of ZjN and turn it into a research topic, I decided to investigate the connection between cyclists and ZjN. I want to figure out *which role the cycling culture played in Zagreb je NAŠ! and how this relationship has changed since ZjN is in power?*

To answer this question, I interviewed members of the government, individuals from the community and of the cycling culture. I also used observations and photography to identify the research theme and produce a critical map illustrating the conditions to cycle in Zagreb's centre, the *Donji Grad* neighbourhood.

This text is divided into three parts: methodologies, theoretical grounding, and data analysis. First, I will explain the methodologies employed in the development of my research. Then, in the second, I present the theories on which I grounded my findings, justifying the use of the term cycling culture for Zagreb's case and the connections between cycling cultures and social movements. This chapter also contains the ideas from the Fearless Cities group on mobility and cycling.

Last, I present my data analysis in four parts, each one representing one type of data. The first part comprises the ZjN's views on the topic of cycling, that I drew from their election program. Then, I show how the ideas from the program were transferred to the indications to the new General Urban Plan, which is currently under development. Next, I analyse the interviews looking for oppositions, one element of the Narrative Analysis methodology. The final element of this chapter is an ethnographic narrative of a bicycle ride through *Donji Grad*, and the map produced afterwards. In the end, I summarize my findings and conclusions.

1. Methodologies

The idea for this research came to be on site. After almost a week of intense learning about ZjN, as an organisation, the political platform of the same name and the national party *Možemo!* combined with an exploration of Zagreb, I was still curious to see how this new government made visible changes in the city. During the anti-fascist event (2), an important element became clear to me: the politicians, the members of ZjN and the general population, came cycling to the Sava riverbank. There I could see the recurrent

theme in the lecture with experts, the observations and an interview made during that week: bicycles. With that in mind, it became easier for me to find a research question, which turned out to be "Which role the cycling culture played in Zagreb je NAŠ! and how this relationship has changed since ZjN is in power?"

One of the methods chosen to answer the question was interviews with people involved in the government, both on municipal and district level, people from the movement and people inside Zagreb's cycling culture. It resulted in five interviews, with questions elaborated by me that produced content to make this research possible. The interviews were conducted in English.

The two interviews with the members of the government had been previously arranged in partnership with my colleague Elizaveta Tuneva, that signs the text "New Hope? Ideas and actions of Zagreb je NAŠ! government" in this booklet. The interview with the worker from the bicycle workshop was done by the colleagues that wrote the chapter "Defining commons in Zagreb", Anna Alayskaya, Shivani Desai, Sonia Fernandes, Jönne Huhnt and Theresa Münzenberger.

The interview with the architect from the movement was done with two colleagues from the Universidad de Barcelona, Eloi Ribas Massonis and Xavier Roura who were researching housing in Zagreb. This interview led me to, in a snowball effect to my last interviewee: the president of the *Sindikat Biciklista* (Cyclists Union, from here on, SB). I conducted it on my own, but included questions from other col-

leagues from Barcelona who were researching mobility in Zagreb, Qoing Huang, Arnau Valls Rodriguez and Xuran Zhou.

I did the interviews in a semi-structured way and have the consents for content usage signed by the sources. A semi-structured interview is composed by a group of questions or themes to be asked by the interviewer, allowing the interviewee to answer and elaborate on topics and the interviewer to ask more, as the interview develops (Maxwell, 2013). This method allowed me to have space for new observations by the interviewees and to focus on the context and revelation of a process.

The questions varied, the ones asked to members of the government were broader, ranging from topics like democracy and right to city to more specific ones on mobility and cycling culture. For the other sources, the questions were focusing on the cycling culture and the spatial changes in the city after the beginning of ZjN's government. That diversity happened not only due to the fact that I was not conducting the interviews alone and the questions aligned with the other researchers' themes, but also because I defined of the research theme during the data collection.

In Table 1 I present the interviewees' roles and the aliases attributed to them. I based the aliases on chess pieces and their capacity of moving on the table in the game of the city.

For the interview analysis, I used the Narrative Analysis methodology based on Feldman and colleagues (2004), since I am working with different sources, each one telling stories with their own perception of how history unroll itself. These stories indicate several oppositions, and they help to understand the dynamics between the Zagreb's cycling culture and ZjN.

Narrative Analysis is an interpretative methodology that makes use of stories told by individuals to understand what is relevant to them and what part they want to tell and what not (Feldman et al, 2004). Stories, in this context, are an element of a narrative, a sequential order, narrating events, experiences or actions with a plot that sums it up in a meaningful way (Czarniawska 1998; Franzosi 1998 apud Feldman et al, 2004).

Narratives are relevant because the way the interviewee tells the story, the explicit and the implicit elements, the words chosen and the emphasis, all represent the narrator's perspective on what they are telling and the relevance of it to them. I have chosen to use Narrative Analysis because it puts the individual in the centre, allowing the interviewee to tell something in their own way and leaving to the interviewer to interpret the stories later in the analysis part.

Role	Chess piece name
City Government (municipal level)	King
City Government (district level)	Bishop
Architect from the movement	Rook
Cyclist's Association	Knight
Bicycle Workshop	Pawn

Table 1: Interviewees aliases.

From the various elements this methodology recognizes in narratives, I have decided to look for oppositions, because they were the most recurrent one. Oppositions in a narrative can be understood as explicit or implicit elements that the narrator uses to convince us of their story or making it more interesting to the interlocutor. It should not be approached from a perspective of good versus bad, but as elements with opposite characteristics (Feldman et al, 2004).

The analysis of implicit narratives helps to identify the oppositions between the actors in these stories. In this research, they reveal the roles the actors play in the city and in some cases, the movements *Pravo na Grad* (Right to the City), ZjN and the cycling culture.

The last part of my research is composed of an ethnographic report of a cycling ride in the *Donji Grad* and a critical map of this ride and the area, focusing on the presence or lack of signalization, obstacles, and the wideness of bicycle lanes. In between the ride description I present excerpts of the interviews, that validate my observations with the views from locals.

The documents and information available on Zagreb's website used in this research were translated using Google Translator. The quality of translations form Croatian to English provided by the tool were proofed, back in Zagreb, by the colleagues' form Zadar university, native Croatian speakers, which participated on this project with us.

2. Theoretical Grounding

To figure out the intersections between Zagreb's Cycling Culture and ZjN, it is relevant to understand what a cycling culture is, how it connects with social movements and, in this case, ZjN and the new-municipalism.

According to Cox (2015), cycling culture is an umbrella term to cover the practices, actions, and behaviours of a group of cyclists. Cyclists in this case would be defined by those who ride cycles, and, although they are not an unitarian mass – because the practice, the use and even the vehicle vary – they behave similarly and face the same struggles, what makes them recognisable as a group.

This way, cycling can be considered a culture, or a subculture, because it is related to a particular way of life (Williams,1976 apud Cox, 2015). Cycling can be considered a subculture, because, according to Gelder (2005 apud Cox, 2015), a subculture is a non-normative way, in this case, of locomotion. So, if the normative way of moving in a city is by private motorized vehicles, Cox states that:

> "(...) in all but a few specific territories and times, cycling in Europe can therefore be understood as a sub-cultural activity in as much as it stands outside the mainstream "normative" practices of society (Cox, 2015:29).

Based on these considerations, I posit that the cycling culture in Zagreb is a marginalized one, because it challenges the normativity of using motorized vehicles. Being a marginalized group, the cyclists in Zagreb have different perspectives of the city, and its usage, than the ones in the centre, which will be the municipal government and other actors with power to decide on transport and mobility in Zagreb.

Since 2021, with the arrival of ZjN to power, the cyclists are part of the municipal working group on cycling and mobility. Thus, they are represented within the group with decision making power about mobility in Zagreb.

The relationship between social movements and cycling cultures is a common theme. Usually, the two groups agree on related topics. According to Carlsson (2007), the cycling subculture stands for localism, more humanized behaviour, reuse and recycling habits and a healthy urban environment. Cycling movements themselves, embedded in transportation justice ones, are aligned with broader social justice movements, like Right to the City (Golub, 2016). This can be observed also in Zagreb, as the cyclists were part of the *Pravo na Grad* (Right to the City), a movement that originated ZjN.

The group of values that cycling cultures stand for can be encountered in the new municipalist movement, which ZjN is also part of. The Fearless Cities manual for a global municipalist movement is a book written by participants of several municipalist movements around the world. In it they try to establish common goals, actions, and practices to achieve a global municipalist movement. In the chapter about mobility and pollution, signed by

Reimer and colleagues (2019), there is a manifesto with actions that could be taken by governments to improve mobility and reduce pollution.

Among the points indicated by them are more general topics, as standing up to the car lobby and prioritising pedestrians. Some points are more design focused, as reducing the amount of public space dedicated to private vehicles and creating exclusive public transport lanes. They even suggest some more policy-oriented points, such as penalisation of high-emission vehicle usage and charging of carbon emitting vehicles that enter city centres. Regarding bicycles, the authors propose the increase of cycling through the creation, extension, or improvement of bicycle lanes as well as the provision of public bicycle sharing systems (Reimer et al., 2019).

In Zagreb, the issues pointed out by the municipalist movement could be found in ZjN election program and on the indications for the new General Urban Plan. In the following section I will explain what those documents are and how they relate to the concepts presented above.

3. Data Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyse the data collected during and after the field. On site I collected five interviews and did an ethnographic ride with a rented bicycle through *Donji Grad*. I also had access to the indications to the new General Urban Plan, which is being currently elaborated.

On top of that, I also investigated the election program of the green-left coal-

ition, composed of ZjN, *Možemo! Nova Ijevica* (The New Left), OraH (Green Alternative Sustainable Development of Croatia) (3), and *Za Grad* (For City). I did that to understand if they expressed concerns about mobility and cycling infrastructure before becoming government. I will first examine the two documents, then the interviews and later the ethnographic part.

3.1 Election Program

During the election campaign of ZjN and the green-left coalition for the city assembly and the mayor's office, a district-based program, written with the communities, was launched. The document (4) is structured in 18 points considered as priorities for the government by the political platform ZjN. These topics vary from traditional campaign themes like housing, education, and healthcare, to Zagreb specific ones, such as the reconstruction after the earthquake and local self-government. It also specifies the needs and demands of each neighbourhood.

One of the priorities listed was traffic and the topics approached follow the indications of the Fearless Cities manifesto. They propose, for example, an integrated traffic system, which would allow passengers to use all the modals available in Zagreb under one tariff. They also suggest improvement of the rail transport system in the city.

Regarding cycling, they propose the construction of a network of bicycle lanes, acknowledging also in the document, that the existing system is not viable. Connected to that, on the topic about pedestrian infrastructure, they claim that wrongly marked bicycle paths take up

space on sidewalks (Možemo, 2021).

In the program, the political platform proposes improvements to the road infrastructure and the parking system too, indicating that even though they consider alternatives to the motorized vehicles, they still give attention to the majority of Zagreb's population needs.

3.2 Zagreb's New General Urban Plan

In April 2023, the municipal government of Zagreb, together with planners, architects, the national government, and members of the community released a document that sets the rules on how Zagreb's General Urban Plan should be reviewed in the coming two years. This document follows principles and present goals towards including amendments in the existent plan which are more coherent with the current state of the city (City of Zagreb, 2023).

The text reflects the position of the current administration, including topics such as the preservation of green spaces within the city limits, the need for changes to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and the preservation and conservation of historic and cultural traditions and sites. The tone of the legal document also transpires the values and principles from the municipalist movement, including in its body the list of organs and groups that proposed amendments and also acknowledging the proposals they have already received from them to make this new General Urban Plan.

On the topic of mobility, the goal established is the same as in Zagreb's Spatial Plan: to improve the urban environment and communication systems

especially public transport (City of Zagreb, 2023: 2). This goal is translated into two main objectives: first, to maintain and improve the transport network through the development of a sustainable urban mobility system. They propose that this would be done by changing from road-based traffic to a complete network of cycling infrastructure. The second objective is to review the current regulations that determine garage space and the creation of criteria for developing bicycle parking space.

The inclusion of those two points in the General Urban Plan reflects that cycling is a valid topic to the current municipal government, as indicated in the Fearless Cities manifesto. This shows that the government considers it a valid option towards a more sustainable Zagreb. In the next section, I will present the insights I gained from the interviews.

3.3 Biking politics: the challenges of the cycling culture in Zagreb

To obtain the information presented here, I have analysed five interviews, which structure and conditions were reported in the "Methodologies" chapter. I have chosen to use Narrative Analysis, an interpretative methodology that makes use of stories told by individuals to understand what is relevant to them and what part they want to tell and what not (Feldman et al, 2004).

I have decided to look for oppositions because they were the most recurrent narrative element. This presence of various oppositions on telling the story of the connections between ZjN and cycling culture, reinforces what I have posited earlier, that the cyclists are a marginalised group in Zagreb's society. Those oppositions could be identified by words and expressions used by the interviewees and, in some cases, by implicit elements in their narratives.

While transcribing and reading the interviews, I found some recurrent oppositions. They are presented here in four subchapters, with excerpts from the interviews that validate them along with my reflections on it. Some are broader, representing the dynamics and characteristics of cycling culture in general, others are specific to the Zagreb situation.

Cars x Pedestrians x Cyclists

This opposition appeared explicit on the Rook interview, when asked whether the takeover of the government by ZjN has changed the relationship to the cycling culture:

(...) there's this still fight between, drivers, pedestrians, and people on bikes to sort of prevail. Because let's say in, in New Zagreb where streets are very wide and you have bike lanes and every car has six or seven lanes, everything is fine. But, uh, in the old city it's either or. You, you can either have a bike lane or parking or never enough sidewalks (Rook, May 2023).

Here the interviewee presents that there is not enough space for pedestrians, cyclists, and cars in the old parts of the city. So, the opposition presents itself not in the form of direct conflict, but because of spatial conditions.

Each member of this opposition perceives actions towards the other group as their loss, both in the spatiality of the city and in the symbolic plane. That is

reported also by the Pawn, when asked about whether the bicycle lanes proposed by the new government covered the needs of the city:

(...) because every time you want to do something, you want to do a cycling path, you need to in the city. You need to kick somebody else out. So, the biggest problem has always been the parking space and so the people living in the center or using the like businesses that operate in the center, they want to have, they're really, they really react vigorously when the, and we thought of anger, when the parking space is being taken away (Pawn, May 2023).

The fight in Zagreb, even though it is not physical in terms of violence, is physical in the demand for space inside the city. This lack of space to accommodate all the means of transportation could be seen as one of the reasons why the government has not acted enough, on the perspective of cyclists, to implement cycling infrastructure, which leads to the next opposition.

City government X Cyclists

This opposition can be found not only in Zagreb but also in other contexts and places where the normative way of locomotion is by motorized vehicles (Carlsson, 2004; Cox, 2015). It is implicit in the story that the Knight told when asked about the relationship between the SB, as a representative of cyclists, and the government:

I think the direction is much better, but not many things happened yet. So, in two years, there's only one new bike lane of 500 meters, and this pedestrian zone of also 500 meters is the only new pedestrian zone. Now, I can't tell if there's, if that's a lack of political will or whether that's because of the old administration, which is still in the (sic) inside the city offices. So, all the workers, planners, are the same ones as they were with the last government. So, it's going very slowly, but the direction is better (Knight, May 2023).

Here, we can also see the concern about why not much has changed and a speculation on the reasons for that: blaming the old personnel from the city hall. Another reason is pointed out by the Pawn, the fear of popular reaction:

(...) concerning the new city government. Of what they have done until now, it has been better in that sense than what was done by the previous government. But there, in my opinion, there should be more of that. And like they're going too slowly. And they're going too slowly, I think, because they're afraid (...) in my opinion not good (sic) because they somehow wanted to please everybody. And this cannot be done (...) they need to be clear with the fact, they need to accept the fact, that not everyone will be satisfied (Pawn, May 2023).

The fear presented here could be read as either a fear of losing the popular approval or a fear of losing the next election. As Zagreb is a democracy, parties depend both on popular approval and in votes to be elected. That is something that also needs to be accounted for when the government is choosing priorities. In the interview with Bishop, he told a story about the ranking of those priorities and the internal organisation of the government:

We had a meeting yesterday and there was a lot of talking about traffic, the idea is to make difference in the next two years because when we came to power we were doing with surviving. It's funny you have like a heart that's dying and everybody saying, "oh look you have a rash on your skin, you have a wrinkle, you're too fat, you're too skinny". Okay, but we're dealing with heart problems (Bishop, May 2023).

In a way, the members of the government acknowledge that they are not able to meet the expectations of cyclists, a group they are also a part of.

There are other demands now, they had a *heart problem* on their hands, but they are hoping to deal with the other issues for the rest of the term. They even have plans to improve the cycling infrastructure. The King mentioned in his interview the intent to put the public bicycle sharing system to use by the city government employees.

These intentions show a connection between the municipalist movement guidelines, the intentions of the ZjN as a political platform and as government too. But the gap between what is intended and what could really be done now is big for several reasons. The interviewees from the government present the issue of more pressing demands, lack of funds to accomplish everything and the personnel issue. Either there is a lack of it or the inherited personnel from the past terms disagree with the positions of the current government.

Even with all these issues, the cyclists recognise the slight improvement. They attribute that to the current government having the same values as them, as tells the Knight:

(…) as the new mayor is also former activist and environmentally conscious and rides his bike to work. Of course, our, our relationships improved. We are part now of a "Zagreb cycling unit". A working group from the city government, Z-D-C-U. So, we get an opportunity to, to share our ideas, to give our, our commentaries on some plans about cycling in the city (Knight, May 2023).

Although they face some divergences on how planning for cycling infrastructure should be done in Zagreb, the cyclists understand the difficulties the government have, and the government laments that they could not do much yet because

of all the things they have to re-organise. This leads to the next opposition, the inherited problems from the former government and the will of doing more by the current one.

Former government X Current government

Zagreb's administration prior to 2021 ruled for 20 years and performed a neoliberal administration that prioritised the economic exploitation of space. The methods employed by the former government regarding urbanisation excluded citizens from the decision-making process and made poor usage of public resources and spaces (Dolenec et al., 2017). The King presents some interesting insights on how the image of the city has been before ZjN's government:

(…) it felt like the city was never changed, almost always the same, and all these huge fountains all of a sudden or one huge mega project, and everything else would be on the side (King, May 2023).

Learning about these conditions beforehand, I was not surprised when Pawn told that the current cycling infrastructure, made mostly by the previous government, did not attend the demands of the cycling population:

(…) the previous city government was making cycling paths. There was, like, on paper, you would say they have built like many kilometres of cycling paths, but they're like, they're so badly, badly done like, they're unconnected bet-ween themselves. You have like, really little room to ride. And so, it is almost as if they're not here (Pawn, May 2023).

The cycling paths and lanes inherited by the ZjN government were planned by the experts and technicians hired by

the previous administration. This is one reason why they are still being constructed following old plans. Changing personnel, especially in the public sector, is not an easy thing to do, as analyses Pawn:

" I would say that those that were employed in these expert bodies were the people whom the previous mayor and his people liked (…). You cannot kick them out, you know, so it is not, or you cannot employ it, you cannot employ in one year as many experts that that this guy employed in 20 years, so you need to somehow work with them if you, if you want to implement some kind of sensible, meaningful solutions (Pawn, May 2023).

Despite that, there are some new bicycle lanes being built by the new government, by transferring space from cars to bicycles. Which provoked even more the opposition between drivers and cyclists, as tells the Knight:

They rebuilt the lake, the road around the Jarun Lake, which removed a lot of parking space and made it, primarily, for cyclists and they said in a year it's going to be completely close to personal vehicles. Ahn, but yeah, we've been consulted about those things, like that lake or, some, through Zagreb community mostly, and some of those things were also partly our ideas, yeah, that they took into consideration, which is nice and, well, logical to do (Knight, May 2023).

What is being said here is that there is more room for cyclists now to make decisions regarding their needs. They have been validated and recognised by the government as a relevant piece in the game of the city, which, for the Knight is the logical way of doing it: hearing who uses the space prior to modifying it.

Both the Knight and the Rook reported a popular commotion around the Jarun Lake's new bicycle path because the drivers see it as removing space from them and consider it not necessary. The perception from SB, the main representative of Zagreb's cyclists, is somewhat different, they see potential for an expansion of the culture:

I think the critical mass exists already and if we build like, quality infrastructure. We don't have to build, we just have can reallocate street space and I think there, there, there's going to be a large wave of people riding bikes because, as I said, the city is mostly flat, there's no wind, rain is seldom so, I think a lot of people would go. Not that I think, we have some. We talk to a lot of people, and we have a lot of feedback from the community and a lot of people who would ride if the conditions were better (Knight, May 2023).

In a car centric society as the Croatian one, the existence of an engaged cycling community disturbs the normativity. The conjunction of having a green-left government, good weather and geographic conditions for cycling

and an existent critical mass could lead to a pivoting to a more sustainable mobility system in Zagreb.

The last opposition is about the characteristics of how to cycle in Zagreb and where to do it.

Ride on sidewalks X Ride on the road

This opposition is a classic one in the cycling culture, and in Zagreb it is clear how the cyclists I interviewed feel about it. Even though Zagreb's traffic regulations state that cyclists should ride on the sidewalk, unless the contrary is indicated, all the cycling interviewees – King, Bishop, Knight, and Pawn – made clear that their position is pro riding on the road. And it has been an issue for a long time, as tells the King in this story about relevant places for *Za Grad* and ZjN in the city:

(...) I was also involved with this (sic) hackathons in attempts to open up some data to use data that's already publicly available, bicycle accident's locations and trying to analyse which roads where the most unsafe in the city to improve them first (King, May 2023).

Safety is a relevant topic in the discussion of where a cyclist in the city should ride. One argument pro riding on sidewalks is that cyclists are safer there, while defenders of riding on the road justify that it is safer for them and for the pedestrians. One issue though, could be the hostility from drivers toward cyclists on the street, as remembers the Pawn about how it was before the cyclists had to go to sidewalks:

"Although you, were, is not really nice, and good, and polite to use the bicycle in the paths where people walk like, so at that time it was basically only solution. Because I remember, at that day, it's like if you would go on a road with the bike, people would honk really piss*d off. What are you doing here? Move out to the side (Pawn, May 2023).

By this story we can take that his position is that riding on the sidewalk is *wrong*, while riding among cars was *complicated*. The rideability of the city should also be accounted here, because among issues of space for cars or vehicles there is the fear of having to ride with cars, which can be a huge impediment for new cyclists to try and go on the road. This opposition inside the culture could become a point of rupture, because more experienced and confident cyclists, that ride on the streets, can create a non-welcoming environment for newcomers. When asked about the cycling culture in Zagreb, the Bishop answered:

if you consider cyclists as people who use bikes, they are not real cyclists, we don't have this cycling culture. People who ride on pedestrians' walkways. I watched them and they are like *mimics someone quivering* it's really crazy (Bishop, May 2023).

There is no right or wrong when considering this opposition of where a cyclist should ride. What is possible is to provide solutions and alternatives to accommodate all the parts of traffic in the most appropriate way. The solution presented currently for the old city, the *Donji Grad* does not serve well pe-destrians, cars, or cyclists, as I will report next.

3.4 Practical approach: a ride through *Donji Grad*
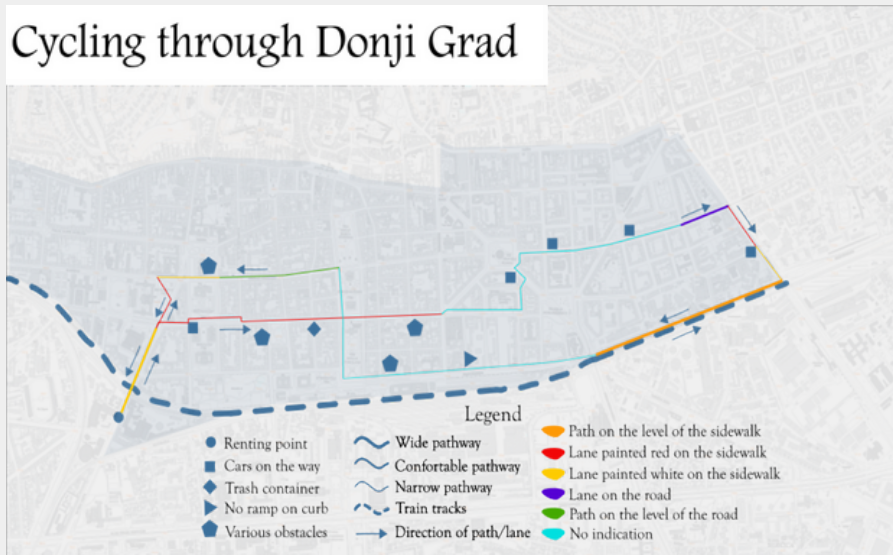

Figure 1: Map illustrating the impressions and observations of the ride through *Donji Grad*. Made by the author based on city map available in https://geoportal.zagreb.hr/Karta

After much hearing, looking, and researching on the cycling lanes and the bicycle sharing systems distributed in Zagreb's central area, I have decided to take a more practical approach to analyse the cycling lanes grid and rent a bicycle.

The *Donji Grad* area presents diverse types of bicycle rental spaces, going from local shops, focusing on renting from tourists to delivery workers, passing by electric models, rent with helmet and locker included, to even a shop specialized in vintage models. Another option is a multinational company, with different rental points in the central area, lower prices, and more vehicles available. Because of that availability and easiness to access, pay and use, I have chosen this option.

What is promoted as simple, in the solar powered information boards (figure 2) at the rental points, turned out to be an intricate process. I started by download-

ing the app through a QR code, from one of these boards, previously to the Saturday I planned to do the trip. The app requires a location to be selected from a drop-down menu with dozens of European cities. It is not clear if the city is the one you want to ride the bicycle or where you are coming from, which can be confusing for the user.

Figure 2: Bike renting station on Savska Cesta street. Photo taken by the author.

Regarding payment, either you register a credit card or use the wallet option of your smartphone. Per se an excluding process, if you do not have a smartphone or an international credit card. Once you manage to do all these steps, the next one would be going to a rental point with vehicles available as indicated in the app's map, scan a bicycle, and release it from the parking spot. But that is not as easy or accessible either, because the lock that holds the bicycle on the front is deactivated from a place in the back of the vehicle, what can lead to confusion about

how to do it.

The price is 0,66 € per 30 minutes, starting the minute you remove the bicycle from the parking spot. The bicycles themselves are quite ergonomic and adaptable to the users' necessities, and even have a basket in the front where you can put your belongings safely, tying them with rubber bands.

I began my journey through Donji Grad in front of Nikola Tesla Museum, on Savska Cesta street, the western limit of the neighbourhood. From there it was easy to ride North, through a place with wide sidewalks and even two-hand bicycle lanes. In many places along the route, the lanes were not painted red or have yellow signalization, which indicates use.

When I reached the corner with the Farkaša Vukotinovića street, I turned right, in direction to the more central area. I could just ride on this side of the street for a block because the sidewalk on the next one was blocked by a fence protecting a construction site. It was at this point that I encountered two other bikers who seemed to be riding for leisure, as opposed to the others I have seen before, who seemed to be using the bicycle as a mean of locomotion.

I observed that cyclists who used the vehicle for locomotion did not use a special outfit, most did not use helmets or other protection equipment, rode more confidently and when crossing the streets on crosswalks, would do it by pulling the bike, not riding it. The cyclists doing it as sport or for fun rode slowly, respecting more the indicated bicycle lanes, but quivering and not pushing the vehicles when crossing at traffic lights.

This observation connects with what the

Bishop said – and mimic - in his interview regarding the three types of cyclists:

(...) you can say it like this. This is level *mimics with hand a low level* of someone who realized yesterday I was driving to work, stuck in the traffic and I take cycle today and this I do it three times a year. I'm here "oh what should I do, I don't know to change gear in cycle." And then you have people here *mimics with hand a slightly higher level* who drive commuting all the time and recreational cyclists. And you have cyclofascists who you know ... this all... here *mimics with hand a way higher level* are the people who you should consider. But they are not all kind (sic) of people. Yet (Bishop, May 2023).

Being this general may be too harsh, but from the observations during my Saturday ride and the other days walking around the city I perceived it similarly. Especially on weekends, the number of "low and medium level" cyclists increase. The municipality of Zagreb itself offers, via its tourism department, guided biking tours focusing on specific aspects of the

city. These groups can be identified by the quivering and uncertainty on how to navigate the city by bike.

Continuing my ride, I passed by Marka Marulica square and crossed the street again to be able to take one of the narrowest cycling lanes in Centar: a sidewalk of less than 1,5 meters wide that contains a red stripe of more or less 70 centimetres. It also shares, in some points, space with the front of parked cars (see figures 3 and 4), construction scaffolds, and even with the recently implemented city waste system, that proposes smaller and mobile containers, big waste disposal containers (figure 5).

Figure 4: Narrow bicycle lane and construction scaffold. Photo taken by the author.

This need to share space with pedestrians instead of with cars is also mentioned by the Bishop on an etymological level, who points it out as a problem for all the parts involved, but also gives a solution:

Figure 3: Construction site blocks the passage on the sidewalk across the street. Photo taken by the author.

Figure 5: Garbage disposal container on the corner of a bicycle lane. Photo taken by the author.

We're afraid to drive on roads. In cycling community, you have two sides: we have to share the road, the road is for... in Croatian we say *kolnik* (5) – and *kolnik* comes from the word *kola*, it is car, and *kolo* – it's wheel. So that's the place for wheels, okay? *laughs* and I'm all for it. I believe if you put more bikes on the road, the cars will slow down, and everything will slow down, and everything will be okay. There will be problems in one period in the beginning. Biologically they will come into the same community of things with wheels (Bishop, May 2023).

Curiously enough, this conflict also appeared in the interview with the Rook, when questioned about whether the rise of ZjN to power changed the biking culture in the city, as presented in the previous chapter under the *Cars x Pedestrians x Cyclists* opposition.

The ride on this street lasted for about three blocks: the bike lane and any signal of continuity to the north or the south, ended in Sheraton hotel (Figure 6). There, I dismounted and rolled my vehicle to the other corner to better understand the situation and recalculate my route. I was still

at least five blocks away from *Heinzelova* street, the eastern limit of *Donji Grad*, and there was no signalling on the streets or sidewalks authorizing me to ride the bicycle.

Despite that, I continued, on the sidewalk across from Sheraton, disputing space with pedestrians. When I came to the surrounding area of Žrtava Fašizma square, another obstacle not faced before occupied the sidewalk: a man delivering beverages to a bar, with his truck partially parked there too (Figure 7).

As I moved more to the east, closer to residential areas with small commercial spaces and less attractive to tourists, this became more frequent. The traditional users of these spaces did not give space for a cyclist to pass: the elderly, the baby carts, the beer boxes, the mail carriers. All occupied the sidewalk with me and occasional delivery people that were also riding bicycles there.

Figure 6: End of the bicycle lane in the corner of Sheraton hotel. Photo taken by the author.

Figure 7: Cargo vehicle parked on the sidewalk for delivery. Photo taken by the author.

As I moved more to the east, closer to residential areas with small commercial spaces and less attractive to tourists, this became more frequent. The traditional users of these spaces did not give space for a cyclist to pass: the elderly, the baby carts, the beer boxes, the mail carriers. All occupied the sidewalk with me and occasional delivery people that were also riding bicycles there.

Arriving at *kralja Zvonimira* street, a big avenue, another additional challenge, cars were parked, legally, half on the sidewalk, half on the street (see figure 8). As pointed out by the Knight, people who have cars need parking spaces, and it is more practical to have them in front or near where they live. When another alternative is given, but not considering this aspect, people will not change easily:

"And, but of course you have to <u>have to give them alternatives</u>, so they're used to parking their car in front of the house and going to the shop with it. You have to give them, when you remove the parking you have to put their bike racks, maybe organize the cargo bike sharing scheme and, and make public transport more, more viable. Which is not good (Knight, May 2023).

Figure 8: Cars legally parked on the sidewalk. Photo taken by the author.

Figure 9: Riding with cars on the street, as indicated. Photo taken by the author.

On the same road, something different appeared: a sign indicating that bicycles should ride on the street, between the curb and cars (figure 9). Because the avenue is large, it fitted comfortably two car lanes and another one for bicycles, and the cars with which I shared the street were respectful and did not drive too closely.

After waiting on the traffic light, I turned right, entering Heinzelova street, the eastern extreme of the central area: a huge avenue, with three car lanes, a central green separation, three car lanes on the other direction and wide sidewalks on both sides. Here, despite the available area, the cycling lane goes up the sidewalk again.

This corroborates with what the Knight points out when answering about the biggest demands of the cyclists in Zagreb:

Second step would be of course, doing some street space reallocation in some multi lane streets. So, stop, to stop painting lanes on the sidewalk, but to take some space from the motorized vehicles (Knight, May 2023).

On this passage, the Knight lists some of the demands that he and the SB consider important for the better cycling in Zagreb. His statement about the usage of roads for cycling lanes aligns with the narrative of the Bishop on why all the vehicles that have wheels should go on the same lane. The opposition between bicycles and motorized vehicles is present here once more.

But the law which is in act now moves cycling from the road and put them on pedestrians. And pedestrian's pathway is too narrow. And now we have this problem that you have still more space for cars, really small place for bikes and small place for pedestrians. Now pedestrians and cyclists always have problems with each other. And the cars have problems in general because cars are getting too big (Bishop, May 2023).

Even though in some areas of the centre the space is small to house car pedestrian and bicycle lanes, *Heinzelova* street would be appropriate to have even a separate cycling pathway. That is what happens in the intersection between this avenue and *Grada Vukovara*, another avenue that crosses the central area in the west – east direction, passing in front of the train station.

Here the cycling pathways are separated, on some parts of the route, from the vehicles and the sidewalks by little curbs. There is room for a wide sidewalk, two bike lanes, each one in one direction, and in some areas even a small bed with plants. The buildings nearby are high and

recently constructed, appearing to be residential ones with commercial rooms on the ground floor. The avenue itself contains three lanes in each direction.

Continuing in this path, the first traffic light for bicycles of the whole ride appeared. Comparing this area (Figure 10) with the rest of the route, because of the type and appearance of the buildings, I would say the lanes and the infrastructure for cycling here is recent and have been adapted to these buildings.

As I approached the *Centar* again, the cycling lane indications disappeared, as did the little ramps on the curbs that serve both cyclists, people strolling baby cars, people in wheelchairs and walkers. Because I knew beforehand that the law in Zagreb states that bicycles should go on the sidewalk, I continued there, but while I did that, many other cyclists were using the street, competing with cars, motorcycles and at one point, even the trams. On

Figure 11: Rubber element separating cars and bicycles in *Andrije Hebranga* street. Photo taken by the author.

the side-walk, the path was not easier: construction scaffolds, parked cars and lots of pedestrians were there.

Arriving at *Kralja Tomislava* square, across from the train station, the path on the sidewalk became wide, so riding was comfortable again. Even though the area has no indication of the need to share the sidewalk space with bicycles, pedestrians seemed accustomed to this set up on the square, which contains one renting station too.

In front of the Croatian Academy of Arts, another surprise: a lane with indicated direction to the west, which I followed to explore another street, *Andrije Hebranga* and to return to my starting point. Here, the lane was separated from the cars by some type of rubber element attached to the ground with screws (see Figure 11).

On a particular intersection a new complication appeared. The traffic light was open for me to go straight. At the same time

Figure 10: Bicycle path along the avenue *Grada Vukovara*. Photo taken by the author.

the cars to my right were allowed to turn left, thereby blocking my way.

When I reached *Franklina Roosevelta* square, I turned left, crossing it to enter *Savska Cesta* street again. This square is well-signalized for bicycles, presenting lanes on both directions, wide enough to ride comfortably. Again, by comparison with the others, I assume they have been recently remodelled and adapted for more intense usage.

I contoured the square and crossed to the other side of the street, just to return and try out what seemed to be a recently painted crosswalk with indications for bicycles too (Figure 12). Passing the square, my path was the same as at the beginning: two-direction lane on a wide sidewalk with little signalling that indicated which one was which. I returned my rental bicycle, a procedure as complicated as renting it, due to the hidden lock on the back.

Figure 12: Crossing to *Franklina Roosevelta* square. Photo taken by the author.

The overall analysis of this ride is that the area cycled is heterogenous and so is the treatment given to cyclists on it. If there were a uniform pattern of cycling lanes painting and place to ride, it would be easier to use them. The lack of continuity, one of the biggest problems in developing usable bicycle lanes, makes them lose usability and connectivity with other means of transportation. The reduced number of places to park the vehicle properly can be observed near the train station and the tram stops, an issue pointed out by the Knight:

(...) they started a few years ago, thanks to our demands, they started putting proper bike racks which you can tie your bike easily and securely. Yeah, but there is (sic) not still enough places (Knight, May 2023).

This corroborates the narrative that the city is not prepared to serve the cyclists and reinforces the opposition between the government and the cyclists. Even though the government is now a left-green one, the priority is still the motorized vehicles.

Conclusion

There is a clear connection between the cycling culture and Zagreb je NAŠ movement. The presence of members of the cycling culture inside the government makes this theme dear to a part of ZjN members. The similarity of values and objectives shared by the government, the new municipalism movement, and the cyclists plays a significant role in facilitating communication among them.

Because of these connections and the opportunity to intervene in local politics, cyclists' expectations of the green-left co-

alition government were high. For the cyclists that are part of ZjN and the government, the hopes of making change towards a more just and inclusive city were big too.

However, as this research demonstrated, these expectations were not, yet, met. Other demands, financial and personnel issues, an earthquake, and a pandemic to recover from, became more relevant, and some of the initial goals and ideas proposed on the election program had to be put aside.

For cyclists, the disappointment is as huge as the expectations. They see Zagreb as a city with propitious cycling conditions, a critical mass, and a government with the same ideals as theirs, which could lead a change on the mobility system. They are still speculating on why it is not happening, even though acknowledging the difficulties the government is currently facing, being them either the inherited personnel or the fear of popular negative reaction.

The traces of this Zagreb's bicycle culture intertwine with those of ZjN and other urban social movements that preceded ZjN and contributed to its emergence. A city where everyone could move in a safe way is a better city for all, and the current government is making moves in that direction. Zagreb's cycling culture role in ZjN is relevant for the organisation's emergence and development, under the right to the city flag. Many members entered it fighting for better cycling infrastructure, actively participating on groups and communities on the topic.

Due to this strong connection between both groups – and the points of intersection among them – the status of the relationship is turbulent. The expectations,

on both sides, were not met with the seizure of power by ZjN. From the organisation, political platform and government sides, the government takeover brought more challenges and obstacles than expected. As from the cyclists, the expectations are that much more would have been done by the current administration for improving the cycling infrastructure, but they are glad that they can at least participate in the discussions now.

There are still plans of significant modification in mobility. The interviews with members of the government and the indications for the New General Urban Plan demonstrated that. There is also still hope that the green-left coalition can decisively change the city in the remaining part of the legislative period or, perhaps, in a second term.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

(1): These lectures were organised inside our project's field trip, and were given by members of the government, members of *Možemo!* IPE and members of the organisation ZjN.

(2): *Trnjanski Kresovi* 2023, an event to celebrate Zagreb's liberation from the fascists in 1945 by the partisans, traditionally organised by the government during the Yugoslavian years, was promoted by anarchist groups, until the arrival of ZjN to power, when the municipal government began to promote it again.

(3): The literal translation of OraH from Croatian to English would be "walnut".

(4): The document is available online in Croatian. It was written by more than 200 people, each in their area of interest or expertise, based on formulars filled by local communities. The text I have worked with was translate to English using the google translate engine.

(5): Translates to road.

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DEFINING COMMONS IN ZAGREB

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Abstract

Commons are particularly prevalent in Croatia due to their importance in the socialist past of the country. Yet, privatisation of urban spaces is on the rise since the change in government in the 1990s. Particularly in the past 30 years, struggles against these phenomena are emerging and gaining in momentum. The present research investigates their significance today, guided by the question How can practices of commoning in Zagreb be characterised, and how do these practices relate to the Right to the City movement? Incorporating information from six interviews with diverse activists as well as field notes and observations, the idea of place-based commons and commoning practices in Zagreb are characterised and defined in five sub-chapters. The conclusions are manifold: A view into Croatia's Yugoslavian past revealed the prominence of two different sets of struggles for commons and their particular importance for the Right to the City movement. In the specific context of Zagreb, commoning practices manifest in various places that serve distinct purposes and are all contributing to a diversifying political landscape. They insist on their independent identities while promoting self-expression, community building, and activism. Zagreb's commons exemplify a trend towards sustainable, multi-functional urban spaces, fostering social bonds, a sense of belonging, and environmental con-sciousness.

How can practices of commoning in Zagreb be characterised, and how do these practices relate to the Right to the City movement?

Introduction

Managing land is fundamental for the public, who, however, is often not considered in decision-making and thus, the land remains in the hand "of a small political and economic elite who are in the position to shape the city" (Harvey 2003, 13). The fight for access to land and against privatisation lies at the heart of Zagreb's Right to the City

movement. The right of urban dwellers to not only have "access to the resources that the city embodies" (Harvey 2003, 1), but also to shape it (Lee 2015), was firstly expressed by Lefebvre (1996[1968]) as the 'Right to the City'. The struggle to prevent urban spaces from being privatised is also one form of the struggle for (urban) commons

The conceptualisation of the commons already gained attention in 1968, when Garrett Hardin published his article "The Tragedy of the Commons" (Kip et al. 2015). In this work, he claimed that resources that were "open to all" were doomed to be diminished by its users. His argumentation is based on the premise that the users would favour their self-interest instead of the interest of the whole community. This would eventually lead to the exploitation of the resource to the detriment of all users. While Hardin's study was widely challenged and criticised, one of the most prominent critiques was form-ulated by Elinor Ostrom in 1990 challenging this argument (Čukić et al. 2020). She points to tremendous flaws in Hardin's study set up which would nullify his argument.

Ostrom's vast empirical analysis shows that in prior cases of commons, rarely they would be exploited by its users. In her argument she sophistically argues for the governance of resources neither through the market nor the state. Instead, a common resource is to be managed by the community itself and governed through a set of rules set forth by the community (Tomašević 2018).

Thus, we can demarcate three pillars of the commons: the resource, the community, and the institution. The resource refers to the shared resource in question.

This could either be "natural resources (water, forest, fish, land, air), but many other resources can also be managed as commons, including urban space, knowledge, culture, internet, land, etc." (Čukić et al. 2020, 21). The second pillar of the commons, the community, refers to the people making use of the resource, shaping and (re)creating it. The third pillar of the commons is the institution. The institution refers to both, the social practices of the community in relation to the commons and to a clear set of rules.

These rules are made by the community to manage and govern the use of the resource. This set of rules ensures that the resource is not exploited but instead that the community also contributes to the recreation of the resource. The process of consciously using the resource while sustaining it is also widely referred as commoning (De Angelis and Stavrides 2010).

Harvey (2012) stresses the importance of the urban dimension of commons as the urban is increasingly becoming the place for the absorption of capital. This process contributes for cities to become the site of speculation to the detriment of the Right to the City for all.

"Urban commons are about much more than just securing access to physical space, but rather about securing people and equitable life in the city"

Guding Research Question

Our research team was captivated by the concept of urban commons and sought to explore its existence in Zagreb, as well as whether these spaces identified themselves as urban commons. Employing specific methodologies, we identified six spaces that we considered to be urban commons, ranging from cultural centres to a bookshop, to squats. As our research progressed and new insights emerged, we eventually formulated the following broad research question:

How can practices of commoning in Zagreb be characterized, and how do these practices relate to the Right to the City movement?

Structure of the Chapter

The structure of the chapter proceeds with the methodology, outlining the entire research process from literature review to the identification of commons, communication with interview partners, and data analysis methodologies.
The breadth of the research question allowed us to accommodate the diverse range of findings obtained from our data analysis, which we present in the following five subchapters each written by a team member:

1."History of commoning in Croatia": This section delves into the moments of crises that have led to the formation of strong communities among diverse cultural actors, which have been instrumental in the success of urban commoning projects.

2."Accessibility & Exclusivity": Here, we explore the varying levels of exclusivity in common spaces, often tied to sup-ported ideologies, influencing access to resources and fostering a sense of responsibility.

3."Sustainability & Multi-functions": This subchapter focuses on the diverse forms in which commoning is practiced, such as sharing economy and adaptive reuse. These practices align with the goals of the ZjN movement, encompassing self-expression, community building, and activism.

4."Role of Academia": In this section, we highlight the significant role played by academia in Zagreb's commons. It serves as a provider of resources (people and knowledge), a hotbed of the municipalist movement, and engages in commoning practices itself.

5."Right to the city movement and urban commons in Zagreb": This subchapter focuses on common places in Zagreb, affiliated with the right to the city movement or independent from the official political scene. These places serve as hubs uniting individuals striving for societal changes through shared activities and experiences, promoting social movement, and collaboration.

The last subchapter of this research is the conclusion, which reflects on how effectively our findings address the research question and identifies potential gaps that need to be pursued.

Additionally, we critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the research and present an overall assessment of the state of urban commons in Zagreb at the time of our research.

Methodology and research process

Our research process can be categorized into three stages: firstly, the preparation phase in Weimar; secondly, the field trip during which data was collected; and finally, the data analysis conducted back in Weimar using the gathered information.

Preparation Phase

Prior to embarking on the research trip to Zagreb, we conducted a comprehensive literature review and engaged in discussions related to the themes presented. The majority of the literature sources focused on Croatia's post-socialist history and the countries of the former Yugoslavia, as well as municipalist movements worldwide, particularly in Spain. Significant emphasis has been placed on the municipalist movement Barcelona en Comú, as it shares strong connections with the Right to the City movement that has been unfolding in Zagreb. Additionally, a significant portion of the literature explored theory on urban commons within the context of South-Eastern Europe. During the research, we also deliberated on the data collection methods, which involved taking field notes and conducting semi-structured interviews. Interviews were chosen as a main research method as it allows to openly ask about motives and situational meanings, collect everyday theories and self-interpretations, and gain discursive

understanding through interpretations (Hopf 2004: 203). Given the specific focus on commoning practices, it was crucial for us to gather information from individuals actively involved in promoting these practices. Regarding the type of interviews, semi-structured ones were chosen, as this would allow us to be more flexible. It was important since we were familiar with the field of research only through literature sources, and the people we planned to interview had very diverse backgrounds. Additionally, during the study, each member of our group was looking for a narrower topic that would interest them. In this case, the looser structure of the interviews allowed us to gather more information and form our own focus of interest.

Field trip and data collection

Between 29/04 – 12/05/2023 we went on a field trip to Zagreb for workshops and individual data collection. Once we arrived in the capital city of Croatia, we found it much easier to delve deeper into the subject and the urban context. Through our workshops and the organized program, we had the opportunity to meet people and discover places that were highly relevant to our research topics. We identified six places that we considered as place-based commons. We got to know them through to our organised workshops and desk research. These places are:

1. MaMa – the Multimedia Institute;
2. Pogon – Zagreb's Centre for Independent Culture and Youth;
3. Biciklopopravljaona – bike-repair shop (short: BicPop);

4. Što čitaš? – the anarchist bookshop;
5. Medika – an autonomous cultural centre;
6. a squatted place, in the following called Utopia.

As a group we prepared questions for semi-structured interviews and contacted possible interview partners. In total we conducted eight interviews with people who are in charge of these places, organise urban common, or participate in commoning practices. All interviews were mainly conducted in English, as is is the common language of our group and our interview partners. Only during interview 2 (see table below) we switched to German after the first half, as is was easier for our interview partner. We realised that this had an impact on the depth and precision of the answers and information given.

Overview of our interview partners

Name for referencing	Place-based common	Role of the interview partner
interview 1	Multimedia Institute MaMa	Founding member of MaMa and independent researcher
interview 2	Multimedia Institute MaMa	Founding member and programme coordinator MaMa
interview 3	Pogon, Zagreb's Centre for Independent Culture and Youth	Coordinator and representative of the independent cultural scene in Zagreb
interview 4	BicPop, bike-repair shop Biciklopopravljaona	Person in charge of the shop
interview 5	Što čitaš?, second hand bookshop & anarchist publisher	One of the owners of the anarchist bookshop
interview 6	Utopia, anonymous squatted place	Resident of the squatted building
Interview 7		Student and activist
Interview 8		Researcher and activist

Table 1. Source: Authors' own compilation

Additionally, we used data in the form of field notes from 12 workshops, Q&A sessions with people practising urban commons or befriended individuals, and field observations.

anarchist bookshop Što čitaš? : Photo taken by the author.

Data Analysis

When we returned to Weimar, our first step was to transcribe the interviews. For those interviews that contained parts in German, we utilized deepL to translate them into English. Sub-sequently, we carefully examined the transcriptions and notes, and assigned brief codes to identify emerging topics. These served as the foundation for developing our specific research topics concerning the commons in Zagreb and how to define them. Then, each member of our research group directed their attention to one of the five topics introduced earlier. Employing a consistent systematic approach for coding, we highlighted crucial subjects and keywords from each interview, fol-

lowed by the selection of relevant quotes that aligned with those themes. With this approach, our objective was to emphasize essential data pertinent to our research question. This data analysis method proved ideal for us, given the substantial amount of information we gathered. Furthermore, our research group comprises five members, and this approach enabled us to effectively concentrate on specific topics while highlighting those that aligned with our research areas. Considering the vast amount of information, the size of our group, and the study's structure, the coding method facilitated independent development of our individual topics that collectively addressed the overarching research question.

Data Analysis in the group: Photo taken by the author.

A History of Commoning in Croatia

by Jönne Huhnt

Introduction

Commons play an ever-increasing role in leftist academia today as "common space can be considered as a relation between a social group and its effort to define a world that is shared by its members" (Stavrides 2015, 11). In socialist Yugoslavia, such commons were not just a theoretical concept but instead constituted a lived experience for its citizens. However, with the collapse of the state of Yugoslavia, many of the virtues of this experience have been forgotten.

This chapter attempts to illustrate these qualities and at the same time reflect on their shortcomings using the modern-day conceptualisation of the commons. This analysis neatly connects to the evolution of Croatia's Right to the City movement which will be analysed subsequently.

 I will base my account of the Croatian history of commons mainly on one in-depth interview (Interview 1). This subchapter is completed with information from academic and journal articles to provide comprehensive nar-ration and subsequent analysis. Most of the sources I used for this analysis are written by leftist authors or from the perspective of the Right to the City movement. In order to explain how the development of the commons coin-cided with the evolution of Croatia's Right to the City movement, I will structure my subchapter in the fol-lowing manner.

Firstly, I will outline briefly Yugoslavia's ideal of "community-led socialism". The first section will be concluded with the dissolution of the socialist state of Yugoslavia. In the second section, the change of government will be illustrated through the transformation of property. The abandonment of social property, in turn, provides grounds for a comparative analysis of some of the aspects of community-led socialism as well as the modern concept of com-mons are presented in the third section. Sub-sequently, the struggle of cultural actors and (political) activists in post-socialist Croatia will be elaborated on.

In the fifth section, the importance of these actors for the struggle for com-mons as the struggle against privatisat-ion in Croatia will be outlined. Finally, a conclusion will synthesise these findings to emphasise the special case of the developments of commons in Croatia.

The Emergence of Commons in Socialist-Yugoslavia

In 1945, after WWII, the monarchy in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was ab-olished in favour of the creation of the Federal People's Republic of Yugos-lavia. The new republic included the republics Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Slov-enia, as well as the two autonomous provinces Kosovo and Vojvodina. The new state, which would later be one of the founding members of the non-aligned movement, tried to diverge both from the market-capitalist West and the state-socialist East (Tomašević et al. 2018). A new form of self-governing socialism was formed which placed emphasis on the ideal of the people's self-management (Simmie and Hale 1978). The ideal of self-manage-

ment was to be made possible through a radical devolution of the state to decentralise power from the state to local communities (Ostojić 2022). These local communities were to govern the resources to provide social ownership of all means of production (Tomašević et al. 2018).

Social property, or also societal property, was neither state-owned nor privately owned but instead signalled a third ownership model in which such property was owned by the whole of the society (Čukić et al. 2020). This process signalled a step away from Soviet-style state-led socialism (Inter-view 1). With the creation of worker's councils, workers had the possibility to self-govern their communities through direct democracy (Tomaševic et al. 2018). Thereby, the workers themselves were to take over control over the means of production in line with the Marxian principle to eventually arrive at a stateless socialism (Marx 1935).

The ideals of self-management were not only confined to the workplace and its workers but also included the non-economic areas of society. Among these sectors were those of culture, science, healthcare, education, and housing (Ostojić 2022; Simmie and Hale 1978). Thereby, the local communities could provide their members with a social network of care and support. As Mladen Ostojić (2022) put it:

"The local community was a site where people from the neighborhood congregated to socialize. This was one of the main motives for their establishment: to create a space where people would come together and connect with their neighbors for the sake of humanizing social relations and avoiding desocialiation.

In the official discourse, the local community was portrayed as an "extended family" whose basic function was to promote "people's welfare and the development of humane socialist relations." At a time when entertainment venues were scarce, local communities provided a common space where people of all ages gathered to socialize by watching TV together, playing board games, or, in the case of the youth, throwing parties." (p. 4).

However, even though nominally the individuals had great decision-making power in the local communities and workers councils, in reality, their influence was limited. The self-management system was created with the aim to decentralise power from the state and instead transfer that power to the communities to decide for them-selves which resources they need and what decisions are to be taken (Ostojić 2022). At the same time, however, these councils tended to be either run by the "state bureaucracy", that is members of the ruling party, or by "technocrats" which includes ex-perts, managers, et cetera (Tomašević et al. 2018). This in effect nullified the individuals' power to influence substantial decision-making.

Growing unease within the population in the late 1980s finally led to the downfall of the socialist state of Yugoslavia: after a series of political and economic crises, massive worker strikes and unemployment coupled with staggering inflation, nationalist forces were growing (Čukić et al. 2020). These factors led to the state of Yugoslavia to dissolve into five parts, accompanied by bloody wars.

Croatia's Nationalist-led Government in the 1990s

With the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, most of its former states experienced a "crisis of state" (Interview 1). This crisis was marked by nationalist forces coming to power and, "bringing war conflicts, economic devastation and political and economic transformations" (Čukić et al. 2020, 43).

With the nationalists coming to power, the socialist system of Yugoslavia was abandoned in the newly independent states as this post-socialist transition was taking a neoliberal turn (Tomašević et al. 2018). Capitalistic market ideals were at the heart of the new nationalist government, which had drastic effects on virtually every sector of society. In a move away from socialism and towards capitalism, in the first step, social property was turned into state property (Tomašević et al. 2018). Whereas social property was belonging to everybody in the society, it became state property which meant that it belonged to the state apparatus, and they could decide how this property was to be used. In a second step, this state property was turned into private property. In effect, through "shady, non-transparent and in many cases illegal privatisation" (Tomašević et al. 2018, 65) processes, the property of everyone was turned into property belonging to a small elite. In consequence, this process of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2012) triggered a wave of developments forming the future of the societies in the post-socialist states which shaped the ways in which culture developed in the years there-after.

The Social Heritage of the Commons

The special case of Yugoslavia, especially its strive for community-led socialism, marks an important foundation for the development of the idea of the commons in the region. However, there is a widespread agreement that these takeaways must be assessed cautiously as these experiences tend to be "largely vilified by nationalist forces or glorified by a part of the leftist forces" (Tomašević et al. 2018, 13). We can, nonetheless, clearly demarcate factors that are impacting the two dimensions of urban commons.

When comparing the historical experience of societal property with the three pillars of the modern concept of the commons, mainly conceptualised in the global north, we can trace the interplay between the different pillars as well in the Croatian case. An investigation of the workings of these historic commons allows us to assess the potential and difficulties for the implementation of modern commons today in Zagreb.

In analysing the development of the commons, my interviewee sees "an ambivalent history" (Interview 1, line 566) of the commons in socialist Yugoslavia. This ambivalence stems from the failure of the commons to transpire into the economic, social and societal system of the 1990s onwards. With this conceptualisation of the commons in mind, the first two elements of the shared resource and the community are easily applicable.

The social property functions as the shared resource which is accessible to everyone.

The local communities and workers councils, respectively, function as the community that "is the collective subject" which "governs the commons" and "engage[s] in their appropriation" (Tomašević et al. 2018, 48).

"The third and most important element", according to De Angelis (2010), is Commoning, which del-ineates "the social process that creates and reproduces the commons" (p. 2). Likewise, Čukić et al. (2020), citing Harvey (2012), underline this importance by insisting that instead of "understanding urban commons as a resource or asset" it should be under-stood "as a social practice through a verb – commoning" (p. 29). It is precisely here that my interviewee sees the ambivalence of the commons in Croatia. This assessment lies on the grounds that societal property did not emerge from the communities through the process of commoning, but instead, it was planned in a top-down manner by the state. The community could participate, but only in a framework set forth by the state (Interview 1). With the state putting forward the resource, the community, and the framework in which they are to act, the commons could not emerge from the process of commoning. Yet, it is the process of commoning which is decisive for the lasting presence of commons, according to critical commons scholars and my interviewee as well. My interviewee traces the failure of the ideas of the commons to "carry over into the 1990s" to the fact that "cooperative structure was not really strong" (Ibid., line 570).

The second understanding of urban commons which are struggles against the privatisation of land is strongly linked to the development of social movements in Croatia. In this regard, my inter-viewee emphasised the link between the government's stand towards Cult-ure and the development of anti-privatisation movements (Interview 1).

The focus on what is considered to be culture and particularly what kinds of culture are supported by the govern-ment has shifted with the Nationalists coming to power in the 1990s (Interview 1). On the one hand, there has been a shift in the govern-ment's support of culture to only focus on solely "Croatian" identity, history, culture, and language. On the other hand, there has been a restriction of the under-standing of culture to only focus on representative forms of cultural work or cultural production "including museums, theatre houses, film, and literature" (Ibid., line 85).

However, this focus on culture was very exclusive as it left out many other productive forms of culture and a lot of cultural heritage. Effectively, this pro-duced a division in culture between the allegedly main Croatian culture, which was supported, and other forms of culture which were left with no means to sustain themselves. These other forms of culture that were "marginal to the bourgeois system of culture, were alternative culture or subculture" Ibid., line 87).

Within these non-bourgeois struc-tures, also structures existed that "included community, cultural centres, student cultural centres and socialist youth cultural centres" (Ibid., line 90) and other forms of culture which were left with no means to sustain them-selves. In Yugoslavia, particularly

these have been the places in which "a lot of new forms of cultural making were developing" (Ibid., line 91).

In the 1990s, these places have been considered to be places belonging to the socialist Yugoslavian past and therefore have been "purged" (Ibid., line 423). My interviewee highlights that with the government restricting the focus of culture, diverse actors collaborated as their resources were cut:

"All these cultural makers then come together with anti-war activists, human Rights activists, and many other people, who found themselves as outcasts within the anti-war movement in the 1990s, which was not very big and not very strong, but it was creative in many ways. Very diversified in in terms of interest, but also in terms of peoples' individual politics. Now you had anarchists, you had communists, you had liberals, everything that was basically not nationalists at the time"

Interview 1, line 96-101)

Thus, cultural actors lost their resources due to the cultural policies of the 1990s and have since then been dispersed. In order to bring these actors together and help them connect in Croatia, the project Clubture network was initiated by subcultural centres in Zagreb, for example, MaMa, Močvara, and Attack! (see the subchapter "The Role of Accessibility and Exclusivity in Shaping Commons" for more information). The project would allow for cultural actors in the periphery to gain recognition for their work and then also have the opportunity to collect the funding needed for it. This was particularly valuable in Croatia as it "is very centralised. It's not like Germany, it's more like France, or more like Britain, where you have one centre where most of the cultural production happens" (Ibid., line 254). Much of the cultural production and funding take place in the centres in a time where there are "some resources in Zagreb and little resources elsewhere" (Ibid., line 272). The Clubture network proved to be immensely successful as in a matter of three years, over 500 events were organised (Interview 1).

The Clubture Network and its Importance for Social Movements

While this newly found network was very successful for the "production of culture" (Ibid., line 263), it also proved to be immensely important for the coordination of social movements. After four years of ruling, the social democrat government failed to win elections for another term and the nationalists come back to power in 2004. The nationalist government

wanted to "terminate the structures of support that the social democrat government has created" (Ibid., line 281). The government wanted to close the council, which had been promoting subcultural forms that lay aside of the "bourgeois structures". Cultural actors all over Croatia united to put a stop to this law. Through the Clubture network over 70 organisations could be activated "overnight" (Ibid., line 282) to put an amendment to this law. In fact, after the protests "the cultural council in question remained part of the new structure of the ministry" (Kovačević and Vuković 2008, 6).

"It proved to be a really successful form of political pressure and a huge lesson in what it means to organize and create collective agency" (Interview 1, line 285).

In explaining the reasons for the success of this struggle, my interviewee draws multiple lessons, which can be correlated with the different elements of commoning.

The first lesson is linked to the element of Community when my interviewee highlights that there need to be people who are bound by collective trust for these kinds of struggles to be successful. The second lesson emphasises that these people need to have a material ground for which they are fighting for, which could be linked to the element of the resource. The third lesson my interviewee points to is the importance of collective agency. Collective agency could in turn be linked to the element of commoning which

describes the act of the community to make use of the resource. Thus, by explaining the emergence of the social movement, Interview 1 emphasises the importance of the commons. With the protest at the Ministry of Culture, the collective agency was emerging. From this point onwards, a series of contestations followed which all made use of this collective agency.

My interviewee sees the strong spirit of collective agency present in the protestors as one reason for the success of these contestations. The first protest at the Ministry of Culture not only "proved to be a really successful form of political pressure" (Interview 1, line 285), but it turned out to be also critical for sustaining this collective agency.

This collective agency allowed for the protests to "carry over into next rounds" (Ibid., line 378). The precondition for sustaining such collective agency is twofold. On the one hand, to "help these actors maintain" they need to have "access to resources to sustain their work" (Ibid., line 379).

On the other hand, it is important to invest that collective agency "in moments that are not purely symbolic, that have capacity to transform." (Ibid., line 382). In 2014, through "working with trade unions, all those cultural organisers from the Clubture network, environmentalist groups and other political initiatives" (Ibid., line 367), the strong collective agency was successful. Realising the "transformative capacity" (Ibid., line 382) of the protests, the "government stepped back" (Ibid., line 377) which "was a huge moment of subjectivisation" (Ibid., line 377). This, in turn, further empowered the social

movement "to step up to go further and further, and I think that's what allowed ultimately for ZjN to happen and also M!" (Ibid., line 384).

Conclusion

Croatia constitutes a very interesting example for the study of commons, social movements and their interaction. Yugoslavian community-led socialism embodied vital elements of the modern-day concept of the commons. The societal property was to comprise a resource which is neither owned by the state nor by the market but instead by the whole of society. The society could then, through their respective local communities, shape and redefine these resources. Therefore, in socialist Yugoslavia, nominally all three pillars of the concept of the commons were present. With the whole society being owners and potential users, they formed the first pillar of the community. The societal property marked the common resource as the second pillar, and the third pillar was constituted by the local communities which would govern the use and recreation of the resource. However, in reality, the situation played out differently. The local communities were eventually permeated by state officials that shaped the decision-making processes and thus made substantial influence by the ordinary citizens impossible. Further, the whole project of social ownership was implemented in a top-down manner by the state and did not evolve from the community.

When in the 1990s the socialist state of Yugoslavia collapsed after a series of crises, the idea of communally owned property failed to transpire into the new economic and political system. In fact, when the Nationalists came into power in Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s, these ideas have been largely neglected in favour of neo-liberal market solutions. My analysis showed that particularly the failure of socialist-Yugoslavia to promote the capacity of individuals to shape the social property hindered the idea of communal ownership to manifest in society.

The era of the Nationalists in the 1990s further entailed a significant setback for many activists connected to subcultural fields. As their resources were lost in the post-Yugoslavian transition and their funding were cut, these diverse cultural actors, political activists, and others that did not fit into the nationalist system were dispersed around Croatia. When the social democrats then came into power after almost a decade of Nationalist ruling, the Clubture network was founded to reconnect these people. They were not only successful in promoting subcultures but proved to be a platform that could activate a powerful social movement that would have lasting impacts on politics ever since.

In a series of protests, they would obstruct the government whenever privatisation was to be furthered or the cultural spectrum was to be confined. Ultimately this proved to be a strong basis from which ZjN and M! would start from.

Right to the City Movement and Urban Commons in Zagreb

by Anna Alayskaya

In the scope of our research, one of the central themes revolved around exploring the relation between Zagreb's right to the city movement and place-based commons. This movement began in mid-2006 in Zagreb in response to neoliberal changes in the city (Dolenec et al., 2017). As it was stated by one of our interviewees, the right to the city movement gained momentum in Zagreb when various people came together to oppose the previous local government and promote more progressive views (interview 1). As a result of this movement, a coalition named ZjN was established, operating as a municipalist platform. Its policy agenda aimed to restore decision-making power to citizens, empower neighbourhoods in city planning, protect quality of public services, and prevent the privatisation of public utilities. In 2019, members of ZjN formed M!, a national political platform uniting social move-ments and green-left parties, extending its action on a national scale (Milan, 2022: 6).

From the beginning, the spatial urban aspect has played an important role throughout the development of the right to the city movement. One of the key ideas behind this movement in Zagreb was to transform the city and grant a sense of ownership over its space to the citizens It was demonstrated clearly during one of the most crucial events of the movement — the occupation of Varšavska street and the demonstrations against the redevelopment project at the so-called Flower square. As it was

mentioned by one of our interview partners, that despite the failure to prevent the development project, these actions served as a crucial catalyst in organising people and instilling the belief that that struggle is possible (interview 1).

During the research, it became evident that place-based commons play a vital role in the right to the city movement. They not only offer an alternative approach to managing and owning urban space but also serve as crucial focal points for the movement's development. The relations between social movements and specific urban spaces were researched by different scholars. Sociologists Leach and Haunss (2009) introduced the term "social movement scene" which is both a social network where people with shared identities, beliefs, and values come together, and a collection of physical spaces where these like-minded individuals gather. Hence, the social movement scene arises from two elements: a community of individuals and a spatial dimension, encompassing various locations. According to Nicholls (2009), places play a crucial role by facilitating tie relations between people, resulting in effective mobilisation. Based on these findings, I found it intriguing to examine the role of urban commons-promoting places within the Zagreb's right to the city movement.

Participants of this social movement convened at certain places to exchange ideas and organize themselves for forthcoming protests and demonstrations.

This fostered the development of a social movement network with distinct spatial implications. In relation to our overall research question (see the introduction), I investigated the

relationship between urban commons and the right to the city movement in Zagreb. I focused on three aspects in this regard:

1. Functions of urban commons within Zagreb's right to the city movement.
2. Connections and collaborations between place-based commons.
3. The relation of place-based commons to ZjN and official politics in Zagreb.

Functions of Urban Commons within Zagreb's Right to the City Movement

When discussing the role of urban commons, especially in the context of their presence in specific places, it is crucial to emphasise functions of these places. According to Nicholls (2009), places provide opportunities for diverse actors who share similar inclinations to connect and engage with one another. Additionally, places host various activities that foster relationships and solidarity among participants, as indicated by Creasap (2011). Rituals such as making music and engaging in direct actions, along with prefigurative practices like communal cooking and planning parties, create a sense of belonging among those involved (Creasap, 2011: 187). Hence, it becomes possible to identify the key functions of places within social movements, which primarily involve bringing together individuals with shared views and ideas, as well as facilitating the exchange of knowledge, ultimately fostering a sense of community.

In relation to place-based commons, several other distinctive functions were identified. These spatially anchored urban commons facilitate the sharing and dissemination of information and knowledge, while also providing free access to specific resources. In certain instances, they grant individuals the freedom to express themselves through art, providing access to knowledge and equipment without charge. Additionally, they serve as housing resources, represented by squats, and offer opportunities for personal activities like attending open events such as concerts and communal cooking gatherings etc. Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight the subcultural aspect present in certain places, exemplified by the punk culture. Moreover, specific locations act as hubs for individuals with anarchist views to congregate.

During our examination of the places, we observed various functions, but their main objective is to bring together individuals sharing similar perspectives and interests. These factors collectively underscore the distinct social significance of place-based commons. In most of the interviews conducted, the role of place-based commons as spaces that bring together like-minded individuals with shared viewpoints and aspirations, was evident. This pattern was observed when participants were questioned about the reasons for engaging in activities within a specific place. For instance, one interviewee, representing the independent cultural scene in Zagreb, emphasised that their main motivation for being part of running a common place was the presence of "engaged" individuals.

Another interview with the practitioner of commons' knowledge sharing echoed a similar idea, focusing on the functions of one of the urban commons. It was highlighted that the place serves a unique purpose, bringing people together to share ideas and engage in discussions. This place is inclusive, even welcoming individuals who may not be actively involved in other activities but seek a platform to converse and exchange thoughts. It serves as an essential space for those who lack others to talk to about their ideas and reflections (interview 4). Regarding urban commons, specifically identified as squats, two aspects are noteworthy in relation to the right to the city movement. Firstly, the occupation of these places symbolises the right to reclaim urban spaces from market forces or private entities and restore them to the community (Creasap, 2011). As mentioned by the individual residing in the squatted building during the interview, the squat represents a "symbolic resistance towards housing rent" (interview 6). Secondly, these places serve as hubs for the concentration and mobilisation of people sharing similar views and political stances.

The locations under study were primarily characterised by the presence of anarchist ideologies. Regarding the direct link to the right to the city movement in Zagreb,

several places showed especially significant connection to it. According to Dolenec et al. (2017), the origins of the right to the city movement in Zagreb can be traced back to the collaboration between independent cultural non-governmental and youth NGOs in 2005. One of the results has been the emergence of a cultural centre, which was one of the places under our research, that provides urban cultural commons mainly for young people (interview 3). Another place, which now functions as a bike repair shop, promoting the concept of urban commons, played an important role during the emergence and development of the movement as a meeting and gathering spot. This location was utilised, among other purposes, for practical preparations for demonstrations. Another location that provides cultural and creative commons is the club "MaMa", which is regarded as the "birthplace" of the ZjN platform. Apart from its cultural activities, this place remains a hub for M! party members' meetings and various political discussions (interviews 1, 2)

In summary, the functions of urban commons within Zagreb's right to the city movement highlight two key characteristics. Firstly, places hosting urban commons act as meeting hubs, bringing together like-minded individuals to advance societal changes. These locations actively promote shared practices and advocate for the principles championed by the right to the city movement.

Secondly, certain places studied have direct ties to the movement by serving as practical spaces for organizing demonstrations and making activist decisions in addition to gathering people.

Connections and collaborations between place-based commons

During the research, the relations between various place-based commons in Zagreb was observed. Given the importance of social movement networks in enhancing their efforts and coordinating their actions to attain shared political objectives (Nicholls, 2009: 91), it becomes intriguing to depict these interconnections. The connections between these urban commons can be attributed to three factors. Firstly, there is a group of individuals who belong to a specific circle and actively participate in multiple locations. As mentioned in one of the conducted interviews: "To some extent it's a bubble. Just, in general, like people involved with some sort of a social movement" (interview 4). A similar aspect was expressed in another interview: "So our environment here, though of course we also have a bubble of people..." (interview 2). Furthermore, throughout the discussions, the interviewees frequently referred to the same locations and individuals, underscoring a strong interconnection between place-based commons in Zagreb. Interestingly, this observation highlights their shared interests and objectives, aligning with the principles of a social movement. Both the activities of individual groups and the collective endeavours of these places were characterised as efforts geared towards effective societal changes. The second aspect of the interconnection among urban commons in Zagreb relates to the specific activities they engage in. In certain cases, the cultural function plays a crucial role, fostering shared event and collaborations among these places. For instance, connections "through functions" (inter-

view 6) and collaborative projects between them were highlighted during various interviews. As an example, there is a relationship between the club MaMa and the independent cultural centre Pogon in Zagreb. Besides MaMa being one of the founders of Pogon, they also collaborate on organising events and various activities together (interview 3). The third aspect of the connections between place-based commons is linked to the subcultural element and a distinct way of life and societal outlook. As mentioned by the interviewee living in the squatted building, people are connected by a shared "lifestyle-anarchism" (interview 6). These characteristics foster strong connections among those engaged in urban commons activities.

Considering these aspects – the shared functions, values, and perspectives, resulting in a distinct "bubble" of people participating in specific activities – a form of networking was observed among the urban commons in Zagreb. In this regard, it is interesting to draw a parallel with one of the principles of the right to the city movement in Zagreb, which is called "tactical networking", which implies collaboration between various groups and organisations in civil society. These partnerships were not just temporary; it was seen as long-term investments in working together for a common cause (Dolenec et al., 2017).

Analogous connections can be witnessed among place-based commons in Zagreb. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the observed relationships might also be influenced by the nature of our research process. We were also immersed in a kind of "bubble" and gathered information

about certain places using the snowball method. Nevertheless, we should not overlook the existence of connections between these places and their active social stances, which are directed towards instigating changes in the city. Furthermore, in the context of these places in Zagreb, the term "social movement space", as defined by Nicholls (2009), helps illustrate the interconnectedness among diverse individuals and groups.

As mentioned earlier, the right to the city movement resulted in the establishment of the ZjN platform and the subsequent formation of the political party M!. As already noted, place-based commons are strongly involved in the movement. However, it is also intriguing to investigate their association with the official political scene, specifically with ZjN and M!.

First of all, it is essential to highlight the distinct stance of all place-based commons regarding their independent identity. However, this independence is manifested differently for each of these places, leading to the identification of two distinct groups.

The first group comprises places directly associated with ZjN. These include, for example, the club "MaMa", which, as already noted, was the place where ZjN was founded and now plays a significant role in the functioning of M!. Nevertheless, it was also emphasised that "MaMa" serves other separate functions: "We try to keep it separate because, first of all, we do very specific cultural work here and political work is the concern of ZjN and M!" (interview 1). Additionally,

another place, independent cultural centre Pogon, has a direct association with ZjN, although historically, it was established with the assistance of the club "MaMa". One of the charac-teristics of this place was described as "a partnership between the city of Zagreb and the coalition of civil society organizations" (interview 3).

Another group of commoning practices exhibits a distinct inclination to distance themselves from the ZjN and the official political scene. This separation is not only evident in practical aspects such as finances. As mentioned by one of the interviewees: "we don't get funding from foundations or from the government... And it's like a very strict political decision not to do that" (interview 4). Additionally, this inclination towards separation is evident in these places' deliberate disengagement from the official political scene:

> "I think it's important for social movements to be separate from political power" (interview 4).

It is crucial to acknowledge that the inclination towards separation is also influenced by the anarchist ideas promoted in these places. This is particularly evident in squats, as expressed by one interviewee: "In theory, any squat should be against any government, including an attempt of a leftist governing body because according to anarchy, there is no good government" (Interview 6).

Identifying the relationship between place-based commons and ZjN and M! reveals two distinct groups. The first group predominantly consists of com-

moning practices which self-identify as associated with ZjN in some manner, be it through financial support, historical ties, or functional connections. The second group comprises urban commons that distinctly assert their independence, detachment, and lack of involvement in the official political scene. This detachment is mainly rooted in the community's anarchist views, as previously described. Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight the commonalities between these groups. Firstly, there is a shared aspiration to maintain independence and preserve their social and cultural functions, regardless of their political affiliations. Secondly, these groups share similar values and perspectives, evident primarily through the practices of urban commons. All place-based commons have played a vital role in the right to the city movement, acting as catalysts for social change in Zagreb, and they continue to do so.

Conclusion

Investigating the relation of commoning practices to Zagreb's right to the city movement, I have researched three aspects: functions of these practices within the movement, their connections and collaborations and their role within official political scene.

According to the first aspect, apart from the functions of these practices as urban commons, they rally people together, fostering the formation of a cohesive community with shared perspectives and principles. This played an essential rolealso during the formation and development of the right to the city movement in Zagreb. Despite the various approaches and concepts upheld by these place-based commons, they all exhibited

similarities and some level of connection to the ideas. One of the most significant shared goals is the reclaiming of the city by its inhabitants and advocating for the freedom of access to certain resources. This characteristic pertains to the objectives of contemporary urban social movements, which respond to the continuous commodification and the significant shift in the role of the state in urban development. Often, this results in the city being shaped according to private interests rather than public welfare (Dolenec et al., 2017: 1404). As pointed out by Creasap (2011), there are instances where individuals engaged in a movement scene may not necessarily identify with the corresponding movement. However, it's important to recognise that even without this specific identification, social movements are characterised by being forms of collective action, composed of a diverse array of organizations and individuals, and they form political action (Nicholls, 2009).

Regarding the second aspect under the investigation, I observed a strong interconnection among these urban commons, which manifests in various aspects. This forms a specific kind of networking, characterised by the creation of a particular circle of interested and motivated individuals who share similar values and perspectives regarding the social changes required in Zagreb. Furthermore, these ties are reinforced by the subcultural component, collaborative events and activities, and the shared lifestyle of individuals who support commoning practices.

And thirdly, another intriguing finding revolved around the examination of the connection between place-based com-

mons and official politics, particularly with the ZjN. In this context, the urban commons can be classified into two distinct groups: those directly affiliated with ZjN and those choosing to maintain autonomy from it. However, it is worth noting that this distance could be a deliberate choice to avoid direct links with "official" politics, while actively participating in various political and social activities. It is essential to highlight the significant aspiration shared by each of these places to preserve the independent nature of their activities.

In conclusion, commoning practices have a significant impact on Zagreb's right to the city movement. They act as meeting points for like-minded individuals, playing a crucial role in driving meaningful societal changes. These places facilitate connections and may have different degrees of involvement with politics while retaining their distinct objectives and independence.

The Role of Accessibility and Exclusivity in Shaping Commons

by Sonia Fernandes

Urban commons, as an alternative to neoliberal urbanism, have garnered attention for their potential to foster community engagement and sustainable resource management (Card, 2019). The commons identified for the purpose of this research can be categorized primarily as cultural commons, which have demonstrated their value in accommodating a larger number of users through unrestricted access in contrast to natural commons that may necessitate more regulated access to ensure their long-term

viability (Tomašević et al., 2018).

The central aim of this subchapter is to explore two pivotal aspects concerning urban commons. Firstly, it examines the intricate relationship between different degrees of accessibility to these shared spaces. While urban commons are often hailed as open sources, it is essential to acknowledge that complete inclusivity is rarely achievable. Certain exceptions may arise due to various factors, shaping the dynamics and functioning of each urban common. Secondly, the concept of "critical exclusion", as proposed by Williams (2018), comes to the forefront. This refers to the need for effective management and decision-making processes, where some level of exclusivity becomes necessary to ensure the sustainable use and maintenance of the commons. Through the examination of data collected on identified urban commons, this chapter will shed light on these two critical aspects. Detailed findings will illustrate how different levels of accessibility and management approaches shape the unique identities and characteristics of each urban common. Five of the six commons i.e. MaMa, Pogon, Što čitaš? - the Antikvarijat i knjižara, BicPop, and Utopia, excluding Medika, will be discussed here.

In conclusion, the subchapter emphasises the significance of striking a balance between openness and critical exclusion within urban commons. It underscores that the success and long-term sustenance of these shared spaces hinge on effective management and responsible decision-making. By embracing both unrestricted access and thoughtful exclusion, urban commons can thrive as dynamic hubs of cultural exchange, community living, and

sustainable resource utilization within the urban landscape.

Multimedia Institute – Club MaMa

"I mean like we are 5 employed, 5 people employed. Let's say the core team, I would say there is a kind of elder council at the station Council, like the four of us."

(interview 2) founding member of MaMa, when asked who constituted the team

MaMa is a "non-profit organization" (interview 2) that played a pivotal role at the crossroads of "culture, art, technology, activism" (Multimedijalni Institut – Klub Mama / Multimedijalni Institut, n.d.) and the ZjN organisation. Since its founding in 1999, MaMa has been bringing together people with different social and cultural interests, with the goal of creating a space that allows for the collaboration of various organizations and actors in socially engaged works, digital culture, and emerging cultural spheres (interview 1).

MaMa quickly became a thriving space for various forms of cultural expression and socially engaged work. It facilitated the convergence of cultural actors, activists, and groups who shared a passion for social change. MaMa provided the essential resources and space for different actors in the cultural realm (such as music producers) to develop and amplify their initiatives, sparking a remarkable expansion of cultural activism and grassroots endeavours in the early 2000s (interview 2).

The founders of MaMa embraced their id-

entities as free-thinking intellectuals, and they were unapologetically drawn to the realms of theory, attracting like-minded individuals who could be described as "freaks, geeks, and nerds" (interview 2). The result was a collective of unconventional thinkers who saw the potential in exploring experimental forms of collective organizing within the digital culture and alter-globalization movements.

MaMa could very well be termed as an "open access" urban common as there are very few restrictions on the regarding accessibility to the space. MaMa's distinctiveness lies in its role as a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community, as well as its reputation as a hub for intellectuals, activists, artists, hackers, coders, and free software proponents. Certain restrictions such as the non-alcohol policy restrict the kind of public that is allowed to access these spaces (interview 2). Overtime, MaMa inspired directly or indirectly other organizations in Zagreb. One of the founding members of MaMa also founded Pogon (interview 3).

Entrance of Mama. Picture taken by the authors

The Centre for Independent Culture and Youth, Pogon

"Because I think it is the way how it should be that people within the society participate on different levels in the life, whether by voting, whether by demonstrating, whether by developing policies."

(interview 3) Coordinator and representative of the independent cultural scene in Zagreb

Pogon is a "cultural centre" (interview 3) that was created through a partnership between "civil society and the city" (interview 3). The centre is committed to using community-based approaches and common principles. Its focus is on promoting independent culture and youth, offering resources, technical support, and space to people on a first-come, first-served basis. Pogon's ethos is based on the principle of "commoning" (interview 3), which encourages community participation and shared responsibility. This governance model allows many different users to share resources and space, leading to a dynamic and connected community (interview 3). However, the original idea of establishing multiple locations following this model has not been realised beyond Pogon (interview 3).

Pogon's management system is unique and consists of an executive board that includes representatives from various sectors. "One member comes from the city, one member from this coalition of independent organisations, and the third member from the employees of Pogon." (interview 3); and the second body comprises of its founders. These representatives of the executive board meet regularly to provide advice and make decisions, ensuring a democratic approach to governance and amplifying the voices of artists and cultural practitioners. The executive board is independent of the founding members, who belong to MaMa and the "autonomous cultural centre" (interview 3) "governing a part of Medika" (interview 3). Pogon has built a wide network of interconnected partners through joint projects and activities, fostering a collaborative spirit that has enriched the centre's offerings and strengthened ties within the wider community (interview 3). Although Pogon's management system is 'critically exclusive', its platform remains inclusive by empowering artists and cultural practitioners by providing them with resources, support, and exposure.

Što čitaš? — the Antikvarijat i knjižara (Anarchist Bookshop)

"We don't, we don't ask people to identify some...some people we know, some people we don't know. ... it's a lot of times we get people here who get for the first time in contact with some of the ideas or concepts that you know or like just the general idea of some social movements exist"

(interview 4) One of the owners, who was present during the interview, when asked about the accessibility to the place.

Što čitaš? —the Antikvarijat i knjižara is an Anarchist Bookshop, an amalgamation of an archive, library, and second-hand bookstore. Unlike typical bookshops, this unique establishment aims to be accessible and open to everyone, shying away from exclusive subcultures. Founded as a collective venture to ensure survival, it has evolved into a treasure trove of anarchist literature and a repository of historical archives (interview 4). Since its inception in 1995, the archive has been a witness to the evolution of ideas and social movements in Zagreb.

The Introduction of a scanner revolutionised accessibility, allowing for the digitalization and online sharing of resources, transcending geographical boundaries (interview 4).

 The management is critically exclusive. On a regular basis, the bookshop is managed by a team of two individuals, while overall a dedicated group of six people oversees various aspects of its functioning (Interview 4).

The Anarchist Bookshop is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment that welcomes everyone without any judgment or requirement for identification (interview 4). It serves as a gathering place for both regulars and newcomers to explore the world of social movements and new ideas (interview 4). For many visitors, it is their first introduction to anarchist concepts and ideologies, making it an important gateway to education and awareness (interview 4).

Unlike other subcultural establishments, the Anarchist Bookshop is committed to accessibility for all (interview 4). This commitment to inclusivity reflects the underlying philosophy of anarchism, which seeks to build a world based on

shared knowledge and egalitarian principles (interview 4). The bookshop finances its operations primarily through the sale of second-hand books, with a special emphasis on anarchist titles (interview 4).

Bike - Repair Shop BicPop

"I mean, it's not entirely common like so I mean it is given like to Zelenaja Akcia to be managed but much like with the public. Purpose and in a way, in a way effectively. Say it serves some very like important common public. Probably would know how to say because several groups were using. Many groups were using the space like that were not exactly that were not part of friends of the Earth."

(interview 5) A member of the commons, when asked if they considered BicPop as a common.

Founded in 2009, BicPop by of a group of 7-8 passionate individuals with sociology backgrounds, and alumni professors, and is a part of the non-governmental organization (NGO) called Zelena akcija/FoE (Friends of the Earth), that focuses on climate change, waste management, and biodiversity (field-notes). It officially is coordinated by one person (Bicycle Repair Workshop, n.d.). BicPop's mission is to create sustainable transportation solutions while promoting social solidarity among diverse groups (field-notes).

BicPop emerged with a visionary goal of revolutionising sustainable transport in Zagreb (Interview 5).

Their initiative aimed to make cycling more appealing and accessible to the public, especially when compared to traditional public transport (field-notes).

BicPop sought to inspire people to embrace cycling as an eco-friendly and efficient means of travel (interview 5). The project's self-sustaining nature allowed it to flourish, backed by dedicated individuals eager to make a positive impact (fieldnotes).

What makes BicPop unique is that it has opened its doors to the public through volunteering programs (fieldnotes). The diverse volunteering community makes the urban common as accessible as possible to the public not only in terms of space but also in terms of creating a sense of community (ibid). Initially comprising pre-dominantly male members, the organization actively worked towards inclusivity (ibid).

Today, one-third of volunteers are women, reflecting BicPop's commitment to gender diversity (ibid). To further foster inclusivity, they introduced exclusive courses of fixing bikes for women, encouraging their active participation in shaping sustainable transport initiatives (ibid).

The volunteer program at BicPoP is welcoming individuals from various backgrounds and walks of life (fieldnotes). The organization offers opportunities for volunteers to learn and gain experience by fixing bikes that will be donated to those who lack access to public transport (ibid). The commitment to inclusivity extend beyond local volunteers, as BicPop has also facilitated connections between locals and refugees, further strengthening com-munity ties (ibid).

BicPop has grown beyond its initial focus on sustainable transport to become a hub of social solidarity (fieldnotes). The organisation's workspace on the first-floor houses offices for NGO activities (interview 5). The building where this activity takes place is rented from the city. The organisation's workshops and events have become primary meeting places for activists fostering collaboration and shared purpose (interview 5).

BicPop aims to expand its vision, by introducing various initiatives, including a clothes exchange program aimed at encouraging sustainable fashion practices. This program would aim to teach participants how to repair clothes. This, in turn, shows how BicPop has increased its

BicPop. Taken by the author

degree of accessibility by encouraging diverse activities and volunteering programs.

Urban Squat Utopia

"In theory, any squat should be against any government including an attempt of a leftist governing body because according to anarchy, there is no good government. Then there is no good politician, and again we have interesting new young anarchists in the city who have several tiny projects."

Utopia is a squat in Zagreb that is quite unique from the previously mentioned examples in terms of the ownership. While the previous examples are legally recognised, this urban common is considered to be illegal since the common is "squatted" in a slaughterhouse, and despite repeated eviction attempts the members have stood their ground (fieldnotes). It still stands for the principle of the Right to the City movement. Initially, the venue focused on punk shows and entertainment for independent bands, attracting like-minded individuals from the punk scene (interview 2). However, over time, Utopia experienced transformations, with shifts in the composition of its residents and their level of political involvement (interview 6). Utopia's history began with a mix of individuals, including punkers, ravers, and heroin addicts, who squatted

the building around 2011 (interview 6).
The interview partner also stated that "... all of the original veterans that did squat the place left basically a long time ago..." (interview 6). As the years passed, the community witnessed change, with a more politically-oriented group arriving in 2014-2015, seeking to make the space more politically engaged (interview 6). However, as these individuals moved on, a new generation of younger residents emerged. These youths did not engage with the political fervour of the previous group, embracing more of a anarchism lifestyle approach. They saw themselves as part of the punk subculture, where adhering to certain ideologies and values was vital for acceptance within the "tribe" (interview 6).

"The first situation or they will tell you that... I'm sure that when they start telling you their criteria, it's going to be super superficial... they are a part of punk subculture and it's like a tribe. You have to have certain tribe, tribal colours on in a sense, and if you have all these boxes ticked, you are cool ... That's the thing with subcultures, you know, and that's why I'm kind of critical towards them because I feel it's just it's very tribal ... just a bunch of who have a need to belong. We all have a need to belong. That's legit. But I feel that this need to belong can get quite superficial sometimes and people will shed their own identity just for the sake of this shelter because they never had. I mean, I think everyone has this inside of... I feel that everyone has this potential to be themselves, I don't know. But there are these forces around us that are kind of..." (interview 6)

With the current focus on punk shows and entertainment, Utopia has become somewhat entertainment-oriented and apathetic in terms of political stance (interview 6). This shift has led to a sense of superficiality within the community, as the need to belong to a particular subculture becomes paramount (interview 6). This anarchism lifestyle approach, characterised by a lack of coherent

collective identity and unity, raises questions about the authenticity of the community's political commitment (ibid). Not all residents of Utopia are content with the current state of affairs. There are individuals, who seek to foster a more politically and critically engaged space within Utopia (interview 6). Currently, initiatives like movie nights are introduced as an attempt to create a more thought-provoking atmosphere (interview 6). However, the success of such endeavours can be hindered by the predominance of superficiality and lifestyle-focused anarchy within the community (interview 6). Prior to this, there were also book clubs discussing different authors who wrote about anarchism which did not sustain long (interview 6). The lack of a coherent collective identity poses challenges for meaningful discussions and shared goals.

The degree of accessibility in Utopia is clearly visible. While punk concerts and movie nights are accessible to all, the squat itself is only accessible to a small group of people who call the place their home. This "critical exclusion" is necessary as communal living in Utopia can be both liberating and demanding. The diverse backgrounds of the residents bring about unique complexities (interview 6). Living with a group of people who have varying levels of emotional intelligence and self-awareness can lead to unexpected dynamics and occasional conflicts (interview 6).

The lack of a strict schedule or structure adds to the flexibility of life in Utopia, with daily tasks and chores arising on an as-needed basis (interview 6). The residents of Utopia have developed unique strategies for survival. The re-cycling of food from the farmers' market allows them to sustain themselves without adhering to rigid grocery shopping routines (interview 6). Moreover, the community sustains itself through the organization of punk shows, where funds are generated from beverage sales and entrance fees (interview 6). The community also uses an online crowdfunding website run by an anarchist corporation for projects that are required around the squat (interview 6).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the urban commons identified in Zagreb challenge conventional notions of property ownership as the sole determinant of common spaces. The different examples show that practices of commoning define what can be an urban common. Negotiations over who accesses and takes responsibility for the urban commons highlight the dynamic nature of these spaces, shaped by ongoing practices and relationships.

MaMa, Pogon, Što čitaš? — the Antikvarijat I knjižara, BicPop, and Utopia all provide examples of different degrees of accessibility and critical exclusion that take place in management. The spaces are not open-access but are dependent on the nature of the resource and the ideology that the members of the commons support. Often times these ideologies are political in nature. Exclusivity in the management of common spaces is essential to create a sense of responsibility among those accessing the resources and also to regulate the use of the resources, preventing free-riders from exploiting communal benefits without contributing to their upkeep. While legally identified commons were a little lenient with who

could access the spaces, members of Utopia are very selective of who is able to access the squat because there is a need to be protected from the "outsiders" and "eviction".

Responsibility for the commons extends beyond the immediate users of the space, with volunteers playing a vital role in reproducing and maintaining these shared resources. While some commons may be critically exclusive to specific groups, they still foster a safe space for commoning together, where access is often dependent on the kind of activity taking place rather than rigid ideologies. BicPop is an example of an urban common that actively tries to involve volunteers in their program who belong to different marginalised groups. This in a way makes sure the city has accessibility to this urban community space and the volunteers get sort of a first-hand experience of becoming a member of an urban common.

MaMa, Pogon and Što čitaš? — the Antikvarijat I knjižara present a highly evolved urban common which at a glance would be viewed as an NGO, a cultural centre, or a bookshop, but by analysing the degree of accessibility of the spaces, the critical exclusion in management, along with other aspects such as the benefits and resources, helps to categorise it as a kind of an urban common. Overall, the concept of urban commons challenges us to rethink how we define and manage shared resources in urban environments, emphasizing the importance of participation and collective responsibility in shaping the spaces we inhabit.

The Role of Academia in Urban Commons

by Theresa Münzenberger

According to the Oxford Leaner's Dictionaries, "academia" describes "the world of learning, teaching, research, etc. at universities, and the people involved in it". In this part, place-based commons and commoning practices in Zagreb and their relation to academia are analysed. In that sense, I refer to academia as people, places, and practices related to knowledge production, sharing, distribution, or publishing. While conducting the interviews in Zagreb, I realised that a lot of people we talked to come with an academic background, holding a university degree, or were talking about theories of social science. It seemed striking to me that it is mainly people with an academic degree who are in charge of the common places in Zagreb. Therefore, I was curious if they could probably play a leading role in the development of commoning practices and places. Commons theory after Čukić et al. (2020) says that commons consist of three elements, namely the resource, the community, and the governance.

In this subchapter I mainly focussed on the resource and the community. To find out about the role of academia in the commons in Zagreb, I analysed seven interviews and additional fieldnotes. I developed codes and ascertained two main categories that describe the role of academia in the commons in Zagreb. The first category refers to the people who organise the commons and whom we interviewed. I learned about their academic background and the mental re-

sources they brought to develop practices of commoning. Second, I had a closer look on the specific practices of commoning and found out that they often consist of knowledge and skill sharing, free education, and making knowledge access-ible to everyone. In contrast to academia in the context of universities and traditional research institutions, which are very exclusive to elites and their accessibility highly depends on social status and class, the commons in Zagreb can be characterised as an approach for an inclusive alternative for everyone.

Academic background of urban commoners

Our interviews that are used in this subchapter are conducted with people from different places and organisations. Two of them are in charge of the multimedia institute MaMa (interview 1, interview 2), one of the bike repair shop Biciklopopravljaona (BicPop) (interview 5), one of Što čitaš?, an anarchist book shop (interview 4), and one of Pogon, Zagreb's Centre for Independent Culture and Youth (interview 3). Two other interview partners are living in a squatted place in Zagreb (interview 6). Another interview partner was contacted due to his involvement in the ZjN platform (interview 8).

Analysing the interview transcriptions and fieldnotes, I realised that all of our eight interviewees hold a university degree. They studied philosophy, social science, or cultural management. (interview 1, interview 2, interview 3, interview 4, interview 5, interview 6, interview 7, interview 8) Therefore, they can be identified as intellectuals or academics

Many of the interviewees were considering a PhD or academic career before they started working in common places. Some of these intellectuals talked about their research career as a previous life (interview 2, interview 3). It indicates a turning point when they decided to leave academia and started to focus on something else. They identify themselves not only as in-tellectuals, not coming from an academic elite, but as "freaks and geeks" (interview 2) being interested in underground and subcultural topics. But it is not only the people we conducted interviews with that can be identified as intellectuals. At MaMa for example, there are also other people working with a higher educational background in technologies (interview 1, interview 2). Especially in the emergence of MaMa in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it seemed as if there was a hotspot for a whole group of then mid-20-years-old students and graduates (interview 2).

"So once you tried MaMa, for us [there was] never then the urge to go back or to think of some, for example academic or whatever career." (interview 2)

As I found out, the people who are in charge of place-based commons are intellectuals coming from an academic background. Following, the question comes up, in how far they are still doing scientific work. Three interviewees, from MaMa (interview 2), Pogon (interview 3), and the bike repair shop (interview 5), turned their backs to academic life at the university when they started their current work in the field of culture, commons, and activism. On the other hand, there are still active researchers in the environ-

ment of the analysed places, for example one interviewee from MaMa (interview 1), and other befriended researchers (interview 7, interview 8).

Academic activities of urban commoners

There are two main activities of people being identified as intellectuals, that can be typically connected to the role of an academic: critical thinking and the use of theoretical approaches. Our interviewees have criticised the prevailing political and societal system. The representatives of MaMa criticised the existence of intellectual property and its inaccessibility for a broader community. Often, only the "colleagues in rich and academic institutions had access to" specific knowledge and data (interview 1, l. 204 f.). Also, the interviewee criticised the lack of ethnic diversity in universities in the 1990s in Zagreb. MaMa intended to be more open and diverse, more accessible for a variety of people and, therefore, aims to create a counter design to traditional institutions, as to be further elaborated in the next part about practices.

The interviewees expressed criticism on the prevailing political system. They criticised the old mayor and the former municipal administration (interview 2), as well as give a critical counterpart to the ruling party ZjN. For example, one of the interview partners mainly involved in ZjN highly criticises the predominant technocracy in politics. The decision-makers come from academia and were taught to be radical, but once they went into politics, they no longer represent these radical ideas. The interviewee stresses the importance of involving citizens and not just having policy made by experts (inter-

view 8) The interview partner from the squatted place criticised the political system too, as well as the lack of democratic participation. In contrast to the other interview partners who are highly connected to political actions and interests, this person talked about the non-existence of politicisation among people in their environment and a higher interest in anarchism as an alternative form of societal organisation that leaves political determining structures behind. The same person said that "nobody gives you the tools to think critically" (interview 6, l. 500). It is a matter of education and accessibility to learn the skills to criticise prevailing structures and systems. Our interview partner from Pogon also demands the improvement of the educational system (interview 3).

It can be seen that, on the one hand, the people in charge of the places actively criticise the prevailing systems, and use the places as a space for such critique. At the same time, they are aware of their privilege of education and the social determination to access it.

The places again seem to work as alternative institutions for free and accessible education, knowledge sharing, and publishing, as to be further elaborated in the part about commoning practices.

Applying academic theories

Furthermore, in the interviews it became clear that our partners are well educated people with an academic background because of the language they used and the theorists they referred to. These were known to us, students of urban studies, but it is very specific knowledge and not part of the the general knowledge of an

average citizen. For example, people from MaMa referred to Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Marc Augé, and Jürgen Habermas. (interview 1, interview 2) In interview 8 Saskia Sassen was brought up and the person from Utopia was talking about Emma Goldman and Mark Fisher (interview 6). Without going too deep into these theorists and their approaches, it can be said that they all belong to the fields of philosophy, urban theory, and Marxist critique on neoliberal processes. Our interview partners applied the theories to actual development processes in Zagreb. For example, David Harvey's critique on social injustice and gentrification (Harvey 1973) is what has actually happened in Zagreb in the later 2000s when the flower square and Varšavská street in the city centre of Zagreb was supposed to be privatised. As a response, the Right to the City campaign arose, with Henri Lefebvre's concept of the Right to the City (Lefebvre 1991). Urban theories were applied to urban reality in Zagreb.

What seems interesting is that even though MaMa as a place with the idea of commons and the people from MaMa have been doing research and projects about the commons, the development of the Multimedia Institute was not initially linked to the commons theory. One interviewee mentioned, that they "didn't know about the concept of the commons at the time, and maybe it wasn't important" (interview 1 l. 106 f.). MaMa grew naturally due to the need of a place for culture and to meet with like-minded people.

This shows us that, on the one hand, the people who initiate and organise place-based commons in Zagreb come mainly

with an academic degree and from a research environment. They criticise societal and political structures and bring their academic knowledge to practice. Scientific theories have been applied to the analysis of urban development in Zagreb, but they are not necessarily used in relation to the emergence of urban commons. Place-based commons have emerged out of a practical need and interest rather than being based on scientific theories. The role of academia in the commons can be characterised through the people organising the urban commons and also as a resource of people and ideas. The intellectuals bring their knowledge, skills, and motivation and put it in the creation and organisation of common places, even if they are not the direct origin of these places.

Commoning Practices: Educational Spaces

This section will characterise the practices of commoning and show how they can be seen as something similar and parallel to traditional and more exclusive academia at universities. All the observed places have the function to serve as space for people to exchange, to organise, to hang out, and to live. Even Utopia, which is more exclusive than the cultural centres, can be described like this. BicPop and MaMa also has been serving as a meeting point for the political and activist organisations. For example, the idea behind MaMa was to create a space to experiment with new forms of collective organising. Also, the members of the ZjN platform met there. BicPop shares its space with the NGO Friends of the Earth and also opened their space for other initiatives and collectives to use. There-

fore, these common places provide space for social, activist, and municipalist movements and serve as a hotbed for these dynamics. (interview 2, interview 4)

To become more precise, some places work as spaces for education and skill sharing. In Utopia, people organise critical movie nights and discussion rounds about the topics covered. (interview 6) At Pogon, there are educational activities for young people offered, also addressing empowerment and capacity building. Pogon serves as a space where external groups can bring their knowledge and share it. (interview 3) MaMa works similar. It can be used for workshops by people for the people for free. But also, the people working at MaMa organise panels, presentations, and discussions about societal topics from a critical perspective. In such rounds, knowledge is exchanged and produced, as well as theoretical models intellectual work on a very theoretical level becomes apparent. It is different at BicPop. Here, the space is also used for knowledge and skill sharing, but in a very practical way. People can come with their broken bikes and learn from volunteers how to repair them. It is about empowerment and mutual assistance. (fieldnotes)

It becomes obvious that these common places serve as a space where knowledge and skills are shared and produced, similar to what universities serve for. The difference is that the knowledge and skills come from everyone who wants to participate, not only top-down from the institution. Therefore, the commons in Zagreb could be identified as another model of education, a hub for interested people to learn and teach, and more inclusive and accessible for all.

Commoning Practices: Publishing

Another significant characteristic and function of the observed common places are their publishing activities. The anarchist bookshop Što čitaš? is selling second-hand books, serves as an archive and also has published books for over 20 years. The books are mostly related to anarchism and alternative politics, but also old history books are preserved there. The bookshop has a scanner to digitise literature and make it available to people who need it. (interview 5) The multimedia institute MaMa also publishes books. The authors are mainly academics or intellectuals dealing with theory of philosophy, economics or social science. With the idea of open access, MaMa also provides resources digitally. The digital commons and accessibility to resource and knowledge comprise a very significant part of the work and activities at MaMa. (interview 1, interview 2) It can be said, that MaMa and the anarchist book shop serve as a library and archive, analogue as well as digitally and often for free, which makes knowledge easier accessible for more people, and could be characterised as a deliberation of academic knowledge distribution.

Accessible Spaces for Learning and Teaching

Place-based commons seem to be less hierarchical or even anarchistic in contrast to universities and research institutions. Pogon and MaMa both identify with the independent cultural scene in Zagreb. (interview 2, interview 3) The interview partners emphasised the aim of independency. Especially the people at

MaMa talked about a vibe of otherness, alternatives and the identification as something cool and new when MaMa was founded.

The users of these places highly differentiate from the typical university students and researchers. Pogon addresses young people and cultural workers. BicPop is also open for everyone to come to repair their bikes or to volunt-eer. Our interview partner said that many refugees and internationals come there too. When we visited these places, the diversity of people in age, gender, and ethnic background was recognisable. MaMa is run by intellectuals but aims to be open to everyone. One of our interviewees said the people coming to MaMa are very diverse. Some are computer nerds and hackers, others are homeless and use the space to play chess or just hang out. Also, many internationals come to MaMa as a first stop when they come to Zagreb or Croatia. Our interview partner described the place as a hub for newcomers. However, there is a loss of social diversity at MaMa recognised. For example, there was a time when homeless people met at MaMa and played chess with young people. Nevertheless, the aim remains to stay accessible for a variety of people, not only intellectuals and elites. (interview 2).

It becomes clear that the idea of commoning is highly intertwined with making spaces and knowledge accessible for everyone. The urban commons work as spaces for critical exchange, knowledge and skill sharing, the provision of literature and knowledge analogue as well as digitally. There is not enough data to definitely call the analysed places more accessible than traditional universities and other academic institutions, but they seem to be more likely to be accessible for everyone.

In this analysis, it was not comprehensively possible to dive deeply into the role of place-based commons as knowledge providers and distributors because our research period was limited. Unfortunately, we were not able to research more the external people that make use of the common places. Nevertheless, MaMa, Pogon, BicPoP, and Što čitaš? could be characterised as places that open up space for knowledge exchange and production, for independent research and the access provision of literature and digital data. They function as publishing houses, libraries, hubs, think tanks, and melting pots for social movements. The parallel to universities becomes obvious. Therefore, due to the identified commoning practices the place-based commons can be defined as an alternative form of traditional academic institutions.

Conclusion

The investigation in the role of academia in the commons brought two remarkable insights. First, the people who are the initiators, organisers, and heads of common places in Zagreb are well educated, intellectual people with an academic background. They are characterised not only by holding a university degree, but are also identified by two activities that are typical for academia: to think critically about political and societal systems but also about their own role and privilege of education, and to apply scientific theories from the fields of social science, philosophy, and economy to ongoing processes in Zagreb. And second, in terms of the practices, the urban commons are identi-

fied as spaces for meeting and critical exchange. They are melting pots for social movements and activism, they work as spaces for knowledge sharing and education, and as publishing houses. Knowledge is being shared, produced and distributed by a variety of people to a variety of people, whereas traditional academia is produced by academic elites and distributed to academic elites. The urban commons we analysed can be seen as an alternative space for collective learning and teaching in a democratic and participatory way. One could call it a more deliberative form of education. Academia serves as a resource for the commons in Zagreb, but at the same time commons provide an alternative approach of academic work which is accessible for everyone.

Sustainability and Multifunctionality

by Shivani Desai

Introduction

Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia, has fully embraced the concept of commons in its urban life, manifesting this ideology in various aspects of the city's development. As David Harvey succinctly puts it, "the city is the site where people of all sorts and classes mingle, however reluctantly and agonistically, to produce a common if perpetually changing and transitory life" (Harvey, 2012). This statement by Harvey encapsulates the essence of Zagreb's urban landscape, where the diverse population comes together, sometimes with friction, to create a shared and ever-evolving urban experience.

In recent years, Zagreb has experienced a notable surge in the creation of sustainable and multifunctional spaces that not only promote community engagement but also prioritize environmental consciousness. This subchapter aims to explore the concept of commons within Zagreb and delve into how these urban spaces embody principles of sustainability and multifunctionality.

Definition of Commons in Zagreb

Contemporary commons theory in the Southeast Europe region faces a language challenge when translating the word "commons". In Croatian it is translated as "zajedničko dobro" which means "common good". Commons refers to shared resources and spaces managed and governed collectively by the community. A wide spectrum of theoretical background literature defines commons in conspicuously similar ways. Most definitions present commons as a construct constituted of three main parts: (a) common resources, (b) institutions (i.e. commoning practices) and (c) the communities (called commoners) who are involved in the production and reproduction of commons (Benkler, 2003). In Zagreb, the commons encompass a wide range of spaces, including public parks, community gardens, urban forests, and co-working areas. These spaces provide an opportunity for citizens to come together, share ideas, and actively participate in shaping their urban environment. A member of MaMa states commons as shared goods which can be used by community and participation of community in regulating the allocation of those goods.

> "For us, this echoed specific form of property that existed under socialism, which was societal, property or social property, which wasn't state property. It was rather managed by community"

Interview 2

Urban struggles are quite often both of these things simultaneously, and the Right to the City movement in Zagreb testifies to this hybridity. The movement framed its objective as fighting against "the economic exploitation of space, governing public space against public interest, unsustainable urbanisation policy and excluding citizens from decision-making regarding urban-isation" (Right to the City movement, 2015)

Sustainability

Sustainability and commons are inter-sected in various ways in Zagreb. The concept of commons emphasises the col-lective management and responsible use of shared resources, which aligns with the principles of sustainability. The case studies are categorised according to the way the spaces are used and how different groups practice sustainability.

Sharing economy initatives

The sharing economy, which encourages the sharing and collaborative use of resources, can contribute to sustainability. In Zagreb, several platforms and ini-tiatives have emerged that exemplify the principles of the sharing economy and

contribute to a more sustainable urban envir-onment. BicPop is a bicycle-sharing platform in Zagreb that enables residents and visitors to access bicycles con-veniently, encouraging the use of bicycles as an eco-friendly alternative to cars, reducing carbon emissions and traffic congestion. Medika is a community-driven space that serves as a centre for various activities, fostering a sense of community and social cohesion through art exhibitions, workshops, concerts, cultural events, and even providing a free health clinic to make healthcare services accessible to the community. The Peoples kitchen in-itiative in Zagreb aims to combat food waste and food insecurity by re-distributing surplus food to those in need, encouraging a more sustainable approach to food consumption. These initiatives align with Lefebvre's idea of the "right to the city," promoting the right to urban everyday life, the right to simultaneity and encounters, and the right to creative activity by creating inclusive and vibrant urban spaces for the community (Lefebvre, 108).

Adaptive Reuse of Buildings

The practice of adaptive reuse by organisations like Medika and Utopia involves repurposing abandoned buil-dings for new functions and activities. Rather than constructing new buildings, adaptive reuse makes use of existing structures that have been neglected or left vacant. This approach to urban develop-ment aligns with sustainability principles and offers several benefits.
Adaptive reuse reduces the demand for new construction materials, saving valu-able resources such as raw materials, energy, and water. By utilising abandoned

buildings, Medika and Utopia minimise the ecological footprint associated with new construction. By activating previously vacant spaces, these organisations attract people, businesses, and activities, which can stimulate economic development and community engagement. This re-juvenation of neglected areas can have positive social and economic impacts on the surrounding community. Medika and Utopia can adapt the spaces to suit their specific needs and goals, creating unique and innovative environments. This adaptability fosters a sense of uniqueness and identity within the spaces they occupy.

Community Resilience and Self-Sufficiency

In Utopia, sustainable practices have taken root within the community of squatters, demonstrating a commitment to environmental stewardship and promoting local resilience. Despite facing challenges related to housing, the residents of Utopia have embraced eco-friendly initiatives that not only improve their living conditions but also contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally conscious lifestyle. Within the constraints of their living space, squatters in Utopia have em-braced gardening and urban agriculture. By cultivating their own vegetables, and herbs, they reduce their reliance on store-bought products, which often comes with a high carbon footprint due to transportation and packaging. Urban gardening also promotes a stronger connection to nature and fosters a sense of self-sufficiency within the community. Recognising the value of water as a precious resource, squatters in Utopia have implemented rainwater harvesting systems. Collecting

rainwater in barrels or tanks allows them to use it for non-potable purposes such as watering plants and flushing toilets. This practice reduces the demand for treated water from municipal sources, conserves water resources, and minimises the strain on the local water supply. Living in an environment where resources may be scarce, squatters in Utopia often practice waste reduction and upcycling. They find creative ways to reuse and repurpose materials, reducing the need for new items and minimising waste. Upcycling not only saves money but also decreases the demand for new resources, which in turn reduces the environmental impact of production and disposal.

Alternative Lifestyles and Minimalism

Squatters at Medika and Utopia embody a countercultural movement that challenges conventional consumerism and advocates for alternative lifestyles, cantered around simplicity and minimalism. A squatter from Zagreb demonstrates that "it's also possible to live non-hierarchically. That it is possible to live in a community that believes in caring for each other and sharing resources" (interview 6). In contrast to mainstream sociosociety's emphasis on material possessions and constant consumption, these communities choose to live with fewer belongings, prioritising sustainability and environmental consciousness Squatters at Medika and Utopia adopt principles of simplicity and minimalism, focusing on the things that truly matter to them. By simplifying their lives and reducing their dependence on material goods, they free themselves from the

burden of excess possessions and discover a more meaningful and intentional way of living. Living with fewer possessions inherently reduces the ecological footprint of squatters in Medika and Utopia. With reduced consumption, they lessen the demand for resource-intensive manufacturing processes and reduce waste production. Beyond their own practices, squatters at Medika and Utopia advocate for broader social change. By challenging the dominant culture of consumerism and promoting sustainable living, they inspire others to reconsider their own consumption patterns and contribute to a growing movement towards more sustainable lifestyles

Multifunctionality

Most of our case studies are known for their multifunctional use and have been connected to Right to the City movement in various ways. These spaces are often seen as alternative cultural centres that promote community engagement, artistic expression and social activism. While the Right to the City movement may not have direct organizational relationship with these spaces, they share common values and goals related to citizen participation, transparency and the use of public space.

"To be a common meeting ground because it is big, I mean it is big and and yeah and also it has various kind of. So, you have upstairs where we where we have been last time there is like. You can you. Can have like a relatively large meeting.

And underneath there is a relatively well-equipped workshop and so. So it was, it was very good in that sense".

Community Engagement

Common space may be shaped through the practices of an emerging and not necessarily homogeneous community that does not simply try to secure its reproduction but also attempts to enrich its exchanges with other communities as well as those between its members. Common space may take the form of a meeting ground, an area in which expansive circuits of encounters inter-sect (Hardt and Antonio, 2009). Through acts of establishing common spaces, the discrimination and barriers that characterise the enclave urbanity may be countered. MaMa and Pogon are exceptional examples of inclusive and vibrant spaces in Zagreb that foster creativity, collaboration, and community engagement. These venues provide a platform for local artists, activists, and community members to express themselves freely and showcase their talents while promoting positive social change. As cultural and social hubs, MaMa and Pogon play a vital role in the Right to the City movement's vision of creating a more participatory city. By serving as meeting points for creative minds, activists, and engaged citizens, MaMa and Pogon nurture a strong sense of community. The spaces become places where people from various backgrounds come together, exchange ideas, and form connections. This sense of community

and belonging fosters a supportive and collaborative environment that encourages individuals to take initiative and contribute to positive social change. MaMa and Pogon empower the community by encouraging dialogue and active involvement. A member of Pogon says that, "It is our space and everyone can use it for a certain amount of time. And in order to for the community to get the possibility also to participate in that" (interview 3). These spaces prioritise inclusivity and participation, giving community members a sense of agency and ownership in shaping the activities and events that take place. By involving the community in decision-making processes, they create a more participatory and democratic urban environment.

Flexible use of space

The flexible use of space by MaMa, Medika, and Utopia is a striking example of creative urban revitalisation. The members of these places have transformed underutilised or abandoned buildings into vibrant cultural and community centres. This approach aligns perfectly with the concept of multifunctionality, where spaces are designed to accommodate diverse activities and serve as meeting points for the community. MaMa, Medika, and Utopia demonstrate the power of adaptive reuse by giving a new purpose to buildings that were once left neglected or abandoned. Instead of constructing new structures, these spaces utilise existing buildings, reducing the environmental impact of new construction and preserving the city's historical and architectural heritage. A member of Friends of Earth group talks about how the space is used differently at

various occasions. He talks about the big hall on the first floor which is used to held large meetings and the space below has a relatively well-equipped workshop space. Through flexible use these spaces have transformed into vibrant cultural and community hubs. They offer spaces for exhibitions, workshops, film screenings, discussions, music concerts, and various other events that cater to the diverse interests and needs of the community. These dynamic and inclusive spaces bring people together, fostering a sense of belonging and shared ownership. The flexible use of space at these centres encourages social and cultural interaction. By providing spaces for creative expression, dialogue, and collaboration, they strengthen community bonds and create opportunities for learning and knowledge exchange. These interactions contribute to a sense of community identity and foster mutual understanding among diverse groups. Adaptive use of space aligns with principles of sustainable urban development. It reduces urban sprawl by utilising existing infrastructure, thereby minimising the need for new construction on greenfield sites. Additionally, it contributes to the preservation of historical and cultural assets, reducing waste and supporting the circular economy.

Alternative Culture and Counterculture

These case studies are more than just cultural and community centres; they represent hubs for alternative culture and countercultural movements in Zagreb. The spaces mentioned in this chapter provide platforms for artistic expressions, subcultures, and grassroots initiatives that often challenge main-stream norms and

promote alternative lifestyles.

"Maybe to kind of help young people find the subculture of Punk, I mean, they also do a lot of techno and Psytrance and like, more kind of clubby events". (interview 6) The ZjN, primarily focused on local politics, also demonstrates a commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and the recognition of different cultural expressions within the city. The above-mentioned case studies in this chapter play a crucial role in nurturing artistic expressions that may not conform to traditional or mainstream norms. They provide a safe and supportive environment for artists to experiment with innovative ideas and unconventional forms of art, fostering a vibrant and diverse cultural scene in Zagreb.

They embrace various subcultures and provide a platform for subcultural movements to thrive. Whether it is underground music scenes, street art, or alternative lifestyles, they create opportunities for subcultures to come together, interact, and grow. Countercultural movements often challenge societal norms, advocating for social change and questioning dominant cultural values. By providing a space for countercultural expressions, these centres encourage critical thinking and the exploration of alternative perspectives within the community. They celebrate alternative lifestyles that prioritise sustainability, minimalism, communal living, and activism. By promoting these alternative lifestyles, they inspire others to consider more environmentally conscious and community-oriented ways of living. The Right to the City movement, while primarily focused on local politics, also recognises the importance of diversity and inclusivity in the city's cultural landscape. By supporting these spaces, the movement acknowledges the value of diverse cultural expressions and subcultures that enrich the city's social fabric. These cultural centres empower grassroots initiatives and community-led projects that address local challenges and promote social change. They act as catalysts for collective action and community engagement, allowing local residents to take ownership of their urban environment.

Conclusion

The practices of commoning in Zagreb, Croatia, can be characterized by two distinct sets of practices that intertwine with the broader context of the Right to the City movement. The first set of practices is rooted in the concept of the commons, encompassing shared resources, community participation, and the active practice of commoning. However, while Croatia's Yugoslavian history espoused a vision of "community-led socialism" which embraces these principles, our analysis reveals flaws in its realization. The second set of practices involves resistance against the privatization of land, a prevailing issue in Croatia. The success of the Right to the City movement is partially attributed to its ability to unite diverse actors who suffered from discriminatory practices during the 1990s nationalist period.

In the specific context of Zagreb, commoning practices manifest in various places that serve distinct purposes, such as housing (squats), cultural hubs, and knowledge-sharing centers. These interconnected spaces form a cohesive

"bubble" of like-minded individuals committed to driving societal change. Some spaces carry a subcultural and anarchist character, whereas some align closely with the Right to the City movement and even engaging with the city's political landscape. Notably, the core concept of commoning aligns harmoniously with the movement's ideals, solidifying these places' pivotal role within the movement's framework. Diversity char-acterizes the accessibility of Zagreb's urban commons, illustrated by examples like MaMa, Pogon, Što čitaš?, BicPop, and Utopia. Access to these shared resources depends on the resource's nature and the members' ideologies. While some spaces employ exclusive management to cultivate re-sponsibility, volunteers from margin-alised groups actively contribute to certain commons, such as BicPop. This inclusivity mirrors the ethos of the Right to the City movement, which challenges exclusivity, prioritizes equitable access, and promotes active participation. These urban commons thus play a central role in fostering more inclusive cities.

The individuals driving commoning practices in Zagreb are predominantly well-educated intellectuals with back-grounds in social science, philosophy, and economy. They analyse ongoing pro-cesses through theoretical lenses, such as gentrification, critiquing the prevailing political system. The urban commons become hubs not only for activism but also for knowledge sharing, education, and publishing. The urban commons we analysed can be seen as alternative spaces for collective learning and teaching in a democratic and participatory way, fostering a unique form of collective

learning and teaching. While occasionally collaborating with the Right to the City movement, these spaces maintain their independent identities. They challenge traditional power structures, spotlight social inequalities, and amplify margin-alised voices. These hubs serve as platforms for artistic expression, nurtur-ing endeavours often overlooked by mainstream institutions. Simultaneously, they encourage experimentation and in-cubate innovative ideas. While the Right to the City movement primarily focuses on inclusive governance and citizen engagement, the urban commons em-brace self-expression, community build-ing, and activism.

Zagreb's commons exemplify a trend towards sustainable, multifunctional urban spaces, fostering social bonds, a sense of belonging, and environmental consciousness. Their achievements offer a replicable model for other cities aspiring to create adaptable, inclusive urban environments. As commoning practices continue to thrive as collaborative endea-vours, they must cross boundaries, including those that purport to be egalitarian and anti-authoritarian. In contrast, the Right to the City movement primarily aims for institutional change through civic engagement and trans-parent governance, and shares common values with these spaces, but differs in its primary goals.

As our study set an explorative focus to investigate different commoning practices in Zagreb, we concluded with an overview of five distinct points, where commoning practices intersect with the Right to the City movement in Zagreb. Reflecting on the research process, we could detect

several shortcomings which future research could address. First, we found it very challenging to work in such a big team of five people. We shared the main interest in the commons and how they appear in Zagreb. Nevertheless, we all had slightly different ideas of how to approach this topic.

Therefore, there was lots of internal communication and reflection necessary which was also very time consuming on site. Second, we felt very comfortable with our method of semi-structured interviews, but language proved to be a barrier in some cases as it only allowed us to consider material that we could find in English and it also only allowed us to interview people which are able to give an interview in English. Third, as we developed our specific research interests during and after the field trip in Zagreb and used the interviews as a basis, our data was limited to what we collected on site. For a more in-depth research, a second phase of data collection could have been valuable.

Our findings about how commons are approached in Zagreb and how they can be characterised show that there is a significant curiosity about this alternative form of collaboration and organisation of cultural and educational institutions or living environments. The Right to the City movement and the ZjN platform, on the one hand, made use of these places and found here spaces to meet and people to collaborate with. On the other hand, the movement and the platform both foster the idea of alternatives for participation and collaboration as already implemented in the urban commons in Zagreb.

Concluding we can say that the common-ing practices in Zagreb play a significant role for a variety of people, both politically interested and rejecting the prevailing political system. With the outlook to our future and ways of sustainable living and action, the idea of commons and how they are practised in Zagreb can be used as a role model for other cities.

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WHO CARES?
(CHILD)CARE IN THE CITY OF ZAGREB

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Abstract

This paper delves into the transformative journey of Zagreb je Naš (ZjN), a progressive green party, in reshaping the childcare landscape of Zagreb. Through in-depth qualitative interviews, the study uncovers the interplay of challenges, current realities, visionary aspirations, and strategic endeavors undertaken by ZjN. The challenges encompass deeply rooted clientelism and persistent gender inequalities, compelling the quest for substantive change. ZjN envisions a society founded on gender equality, universal access to childcare, fortified workers' rights, and a paradigm shift towards a common-good oriented society. Central to their approach is the feministization of politics, aiming to empower women's participation and influence in governance. Additionally, the party champions the reorganization of care, seeking to provide flexible and accessible childcare. ZjN's chosen incremental approach underscores dedication to its profound transformative goals, navigating the future path towards tangible and enduring societal progress.

"Dependency on care – framed as exceptional in a society that regards independent, autonomous, and self-sufficient hetero-masculinities as ideal – is something all lives begin with, and most lives end with."

Dengler et. al 2022

1. Introduction

The perception of care and its role in society has been a part of feminist discourse for decades, because it puts women in unequal positions, given that they are mostly obligated with care-related tasks.

As exemplified in the quote, the main criticism is that although care is indispensable in society and also a major condition to keep the capitalist economy alive, it is not recognized as such and either not paid or exploitative (Federicci 2020; Dalla Costa 1983; Dengler et al. 2022).

Since the party of Zagreb je NAŠ! (ZjN), strives towards the feministisation of politics, which includes doing feminist politics, we were curious about how ZjN addresses and challengees the topic of care. The topic of care is very broad and includes many different spheres such as elderly care, household, caring for the environment or emotional care, but our research is limited to childcare, since the lack of institutional childcare in Zagreb has already been discussed by the party (Programme ZJN 2020: p.61-62) as well by the media (Vračar 2022: n.p.) Additionally we wanted to maintain a clear scope of one aspect of the topic.

In the first section of this chapter we will come up with a theoretical conception on the topic of care, aiming to build a basis for our further analysis and discussion. In the methodology section, we elucidate the data collection approach, which involves conducting semi-structured interviews, and the data analysis methods, namely narrative analysis (Felmann et al. 2004) and thematic analysis (Willig 2014). Additionally it provides an overview of the data gathered during the course of our research.

In the results and discussion sections, we will present and interpret the key findings of this research, that are the

status quo of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the City of Zagreb, the visions of an ideal care-taking society formulated by ZjN, and the strategies as well as instruments they employ regarding (child)care. In the end this research aims to answer the following research question:

Which strategies does Zagreb je NAŠ! employ in organising childcare in the city of Zagreb, and how do these strategies align with their envisioned caretaking society?

2. Care as backbone of social life

This chapter deals with the topic of care within the new municipalist movement. Thus, in order to grasp the holistic meaning of the topic of care and related dimensions, we introduce it in the upcoming part. First, starting with the definition of care provided by the Care Collective in 2020, we show how care dynamics are fundamental within (western) societies and branches in all spheres of life. Being highly neglected and devalued within the capitalist market economy, care provision is inevitable and the backbone of social life. Coming from a feminist-marxist perspective, we share the assumption that care work is a necessary condition to maintain the capitalist market economy. Framed as social reproduction or reproductive labour, it becomes clear that care, in the form of food supply, emotional care, and infrastructural maintenance, is conditional to restore workers workforce, thus keeping capitalist mar-

ket economy alive (Federici 2018, 473; Dengler et al. 2022: 311; Hester 2018, 345; Kussy et al., 3). This labour is, due to a gendered division of societal spheres in a patriarchal system, not valued as such. Care work is either perceived as a naturally given act of love or, within a neoliberal market economy, it is badly paid and sold as commodity (Dengler et al. 2022, 312, 315; Fraser 2016a, 32).

Within municipalist movements, the aim for a society based on commons and a political strategy designed to enable the commons is formulated (Kussy et al. 2022: 1). This strategy includes a commoning of care and builds on different means such as a feminist narrative on care, new forms of organising care or building social infrastructure (ibid.). In the case of ZjN, no explicit care strategy is formulated even though they are advocating for a green-left social change within the city. Thus, to shed light on the possibilities of care as commons for a green-left social transformation, we introduce a degrowth perspective on care. The feminist-marxist analysis of care and its crisis, as well as the degrowth perspective on care, depict the theoretical foundation for our research.

Care Definition

As a conceptual framework for a care-just society, we draw upon the writings of the Care Collective, an interdisciplinary London-based reading group that collaboratively wrote the book "Care Manifesto - The politics of interdependence" (Verso 2023).

They wrote the book to shed light on the carelessness that currently reigns in the world (Chatzidakis et al. 2020, 8).

However, their understanding of care is holistic and includes perspectives on the relation of care to politics, kinships, communities, states, economies, and the world (Chatzidakis et al. 2020:7). The book thus makes the ubiquity of care relationships visible and provides a basis for argumentation on why care should be considered a common good in the establishment of a just society.

In the Care Manifesto care is defined as "our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material, and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive - along with the planet itself." (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 10). Therefore, to be able to determine the state of the collective ability to care in order to thrive, a comprehensive analysis of what holds a society together in its fundamental aspects, structurally, culturally, and economically, is necessary. Following the Care Manifesto, we will illustrate the aspects of care and its societal conditions in four (interpersonal, societal, political, and economic) dimensions below.

An approach that would enable the social organisation around care is the approach of the degrowth society. A degrowth society aims to address the multiple crises of capitalism and advocate for a fundamental systemic change. This change aims to shape a future society that is both socially just and ecologically sustainable and organised around "life-making" rather than growth and profit (Barlow et al. 2022: 11). Degrowth strategies aimed at fostering socio-ecological transformation are aligned with principles of solidarity, direct democracy, and grass-

roots organisation (ibid.: 9). We hold the perspective that the degrowth approach is well suited for the establishment of a society centred on caregiving. Thus, the forthcoming considerations concerning a socially equitable society are underpinned by aspects of the degrowth framework.

Interpersonal dimension of care

On an interpersonal level, care can be understood as an emotional investment and attachment to others, and is framed in the literature as 'caring about' (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 21). This smallest and most interpersonal dimension of care highlights the relation established between caregiver and care receiver (Dengler et al. 2022: 312). Received as natural given 'labour of love', the interpersonal level of care is associated with the private, non-commodified sphere of the home. Thus, 'caring about' each other is historically assigned to female individuals within heteronormative house-holds. Nevertheless, it plays a crucial role within patriarchal capitalism, which is made invisible through its naturalisation. As described by Federici, "[b]y denying housework a wage and transforming it into an act of love, capital has killed many birds with one stone" (Federici 2020: 17). She refers here to the multitude of care tasks, which includes physical, emotional, and sexual services which all are crucial to reproduce social life, while not being recognised as work. But also, outside the realm of the heteronormative household, caring about others is based on asymmetrical power relations, limited autonomy and vulnerability (Dengler et al. 2022: 312). However, in order to transform this unequal condi-

tionality of capitalism, it is inevitable to make the social dependency on care work visible. As stated by the Care Collective, "we must first and foremost recognise our mutual inter-dependencies" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 21) and put care in the centre of our societal thinking.

Societal organisation of care

Western capitalist societies can be described as a "social system of organised loneliness" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 45) which are based on concurrence and competition. Its ideal individual is independent, autonomous, self-sufficient and authoritative cis-male (Dengler et al. 2022: 312). As mentioned earlier, this independence from care needs is a fallacy, created through the disguise of care work. Care work is not only rendered invisible, but also pathologised and devalued. Thus, the devaluation of care for dependent individuals and the exploitation of care-giving people are normalised. This leads to a social organisation in which dependence on care is denied and care workers are suppressed (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 25, 33).

For a degrowth and care-just society, the societal organisation around the topic of care is a proposed solution. Instead of disguising social interdependence, care is placed in the centre of social organisation and taken as an "organising principle" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 26). As a necessary step to achieve such a society, a paradigm shift is needed, which replaces the patriarchal ideal of isolated self-sufficiency with an ideal of caring communities in solidarity. Further, caring communities

are in need of public space and local forms of democracy, to be able to establish mutual support systems and to share resources (ibid.: 37). In short, an ideal care taking society is "based on a notion of the commons: owning and sharing together" (ibid.: 41).

Politics of care

The Care Collective argues for a shift from the welfare state to a caring state. In this model, the fundamental principles of the post-war welfare state are followed, which was conceptualised as an institution ensuring the well-being of its citizens. However, the sexist, racist, and hierarchical foundations of that era are also critiqued and overcome in this new framework. In a caring state, "belonging is not defined over and against a radicalised or subordinated other" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 49).

Infrastructures of care, such as public schools, kindergartens, universities, affordable housing, and shared public and cultural spaces, are the institutional foundations of a care-centred society. Additionally, working hours in paid employment must be reduced to enable capacities for caregiving. Overall, a society focused on caregiving is one which provides necessary conditions for mutual thriving. It brings with it new concepts of belonging, citizenship and rights, to provide the basic needs for all (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 48-53, I.L.A. Kollektiv 2019: 29). In a care taking society, we can look confidently into the future, because in a social organisation that recognises caregiving activities as a central pillar of social coexistence, no one becomes a burden

when they are old or sick. In difficult times, everyone can rely on the care of others (I.L.A. Kollektiv 2019: 25).

Economy of care

In an ideal society centred around care taking, the organisation of social structures is based on meeting needs. This ideal also calls for an economy that facilitates the support and care for one another (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 55). However, the current global economy, driven by neoliberal capitalism, revolves around profit and disregards the concept of mutual care in two ways.

Firstly, the private domain of care work is not recognised as paid labour, and consequently, remains unseen. Secondly, tasks related to care in sectors like healthcare, education, and infrastructure maintenance are turned into commodities within the framework of the neoliberal economic system. The principles underlying caring relationships are fundamentally different from the principles of the market. Care is built on patience and endurance, whereas the market operates on efficiency and competition (ibid.: 58). As a result, caring relationships cannot be subordinated to profit-oriented motives (Dengler et al. 2022: 313). This leads to their invisibility within capitalism or their transformation into profit-generating activities, the latter achieved by minimising time and infrastructural resources. However, since these resources are essential for quality care work, a fundamental contradiction exists between a society centred around care and the current economic system. Therefore, the economy around care must be one

that does not align with the competition-driven growth logic of capitalism.

For a care taking society to materialise, the foundational principles of resource allocation and societal organisation need to undergo a transformation. Approaches focusing on the local organisation of social and economic networks show promise because they allow for interpersonal closeness due to their spatial proximity (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 38). Additionally, a collective and democratised resource allocation system can help break away from the isolation characteristic of a competition-based economy. Furthermore, a caring society aims to decommodify care, in order to remove care tasks from the realm of competition and efficiency-driven logic. This notion is also expressed by Dengler et al. in their article about strategies for social-ecological transformation in the field of care:

> "A degrowth society ideally values care work without valorising it and collectively shares the joys and burdens that care work entails beyond the "private sphere" of heteronormative families on the one hand and "public" market, state, and non-profit organisation provisioning on the other, focusing on collective forms of caring."

Dengler et. al 2022, 313

Collective forms of care within a degrowth society aim to counteract the commercialization of care labour and elevate care to a de-commodified aspect of life, while eliminating its invisibility at the interpersonal level and within private households (Dengeler et al. 2022: 316).

Bench for baby changing and breast feeding in Zagreb; Photo taken by the author.

Connection to ZjN

As mentioned earlier, the local level is a promising starting point when it comes to establishing a new caring society. Local urban governments, therefore, offer a good opportunity to test the premises of a care taking society. As part of a new municipalist movement, the urban government of Zagreb, as well, seeks to embrace the paradigm of a green-left social transformation. We were curious to explore whether the ideal of a care taking society is also shared by ZjN and how their new policies in the field of care work are instigating change.

3. Methods

Data collection methods

In order to answer our research question, we used different methods for collecting data as well as analysing it. Our main method of collecting data was conducting semi-structured interviews, mainly with members of ZjN, but also with people who work in care work or researchers in this field. The reasons we decided on interviews were groun-ded in "Qualitative Interviews: An Overview" (Hopf 2007). The concept of discursive understanding and interpretation discusses the discursive understanding facilitated by qualitative interviews, aligning with our goal of interpreting ZjN's care strategies within the larger framework of an envisioned caretaking society. This made it possible to understand underlying meanings, ideologies, and visions guiding their actions. (Hopf 2007)

To ensure the intersubjectivity of research, it is imperative to transparently outline the criteria that guided our selection of interviewees. First, the selection reflects the accessibility in Zagreb during the two weeks and is not dependent of the prejudices of the researchers (Merkens 2004). The method re-

flects purposive sampling or expert sampling which contains a judgement on someone's knowledge. The logic and power of expert sampling lies in selecting people to study or interview who are especially knowled- geable about a topic and are willing to share. (Madondo 2021) Above that, Merkens (2004) describes case-groups. For example, a case-group exists of the members of ZjN which is attempting to supplement or complete knowledge of the party. Recognizing the importance of incorporating diverse viewpoints, we sought to gather insights from multiple perspectives. In addition to engaging with members of ZjN, we intentionally consulted two other case-groups: experts who maintain no affiliation with the party, and care workers.

Overall, we conducted 7 semi-structured interviews, took field notes during two talks and discussions with members of ZjN and during semi-structured interviews with parents at the first of May celebration in Maksimir Park (Table 1). All participants provided informed consent for taking part in the research project (Hopf 2007). Additionally, we also analysed the party's electoral programme from 2020 and the midterm report from June 2023.

Abbreviation	Role of interviewee	Date and setting
Semi-structured Interviews		
Member of ZjN 1	City Council, member of the Committee for Education, Sports and Youth, member of ZjN	conducted on the 16th of May online via Google Meet, audio-recorded

Member of ZjN 2	Researcher, member of ZjN	conducted on the 26th of May online via Google Meet, audio-recorded
Member of ZjN 3	Activist, member of ZjN	conducted on the 13th of June online via Google Meet, audio-recorded
Care Worker 1	Care worker in ECEC from Zagreb	conducted on the 8th of May online via Google Meet, audio-recorded
Care worker 2	Care workers (two people) in the centre for parenting support	conducted on the 25th of May online via Google Meet, audio-recorded
Expert 1	Researcher for Gender and Politics, specialising in Child-related policies in Post-Yugoslavian countries	conducted on the 6th of June online via Google Meet, audio-recorded
Expert 2	Feminist Historian, employee of Women's centre in Zagreb	conducted on the 11th of May at the Women's centre, audio-recorded
Field notes		
Member of ZjN 4	Member of ZjN, working on the topics democratisation and feminisation	Notes from a talk and discussion on 3rd of May
Member of ZjN 5	Researcher, activist and member of ZjN	Notes from a talk and discussion on 3rd of May
Parents	Zagreb citizens with children under 18 years old	Notes on short talks with 5 parents on the 1st of May celebration in Maksimir Park
Written data		
Electoral Programme 2020	Written by: Members of ZjN	The programme outlines goals to be reached until 2030
Midterm report from June 2023	Written by: Members of ZjN	The midterm report outlines the goals and reflects on the three years in power

Table 1: Sources and types of collected data

For analysing our collected data, we used two different methods because of the different layers of our research question. For the identification of visions (and instru-ments) we used Thematic analysis, which means identifying themes within the data (Willig 2014, p.147) and for analysing the status quo in the city of Zagreb and the strategies employed by the party we used the method of narrative analysis. (Feldmann et al. 2004) Those two methods will be explored in the further subchapters.

Thematic Analysis

This section presents the method used for identifying the party's vision. In the initial analysis, our aim was to identify the party members' vision of an ideal caretaking society. The analysis is based on interviews with members of the party and topic-related chapters of the programme, such as education and gender equality.

For identifying the vision formulated by the party we used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves the identification of meaningful themes within the data, which are crucial to answer the research question and may also facilitate connections among these themes. Willig (2014) argues that this type of analysis helps the researcher to identify patterns in the data but is not a method of analysing itself. After the identification of the themes, the researcher still needs to decide what these themes represent (ibid, p.147).

Nevertheless, thematic analysis proved to be the most appropriate way for identifying the vision shared by ZjN, since there was no clear explanation formulated on this matter by the party.By employing this approach, we could effectively identify the shared vision within the party, which served as a crucial starting point for the further analysis and evaluation of whether the party's strategies and instruments align with their formulated vision.

Narrative Analysis

This section presents the methodology employed to investigate the status quo and challenges faced by ZjN as well as the strategies employed to overcome those in organising childcare in the city of Zagreb. The primary objective is to understand how these strategies align with their envisioned caretaking society.

To reach this, a narrative analysis approach was applied (Feldman et al. 2004), exposing the unexplicit perspectives and discourses of politicians and a care worker as well as academic experts involved in the childcare system.

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method that focuses on the interpretation of stories, oppositions, and enthymemes. The validity of this method was first verified upon the data material, consisting of interviews and two policy documents. Due to the narrative character of this material the analysis method is a good fit. Above that narrative analysis reveals how protagonists interpret things. In this sense undermining stories reveals the understanding of members of ZjN and broader the movement. Feldman underlines that stories contain the narrators' understandings of specific 'recipes' for change. Given the specific focus of our research questions aimed at uncovering strategies and changing visions on care-taking society, this chosen method holds the potential in doing so. The challenges faced by ZjN also become implicitly clear in their internal arguments. (Feldman et al. 2004)

Our analysis began with colour coding the parts of our transcript material that correspond to one of our four questions mentioned above. Some data were relevant for multiple questions and were coded respectively. Following, we went on with the identification of stories (Table 2).

Within the interviews we identified the recurring narratives that showcase the current challenges, status quo and strategies of ZjN. We consulted each other to verify stories and we had mutual questioning and debate as part of our process. Tables 1 and 2 give an overview of our empirical data. In the following, we refer to the abbreviations in the list to indicate that our statements refer to specific interviews and/or stories.

Abbreviation	Interview	Main message
S 1	Member of ZjN 1, Member of ZjN 2, Member of ZjN 3	This is a story about the difference in 2 types of care policies: clientelistic, that was employed by the old government, and emancipatory, that is now aimed to prioritise professional and social development of women and kids.
S 2	Member of ZjN 1, Member of ZjN 3	This is a story about the necessity of a mix of private and public kindergarten provision to achieve universal equal distribution in the future.
S 3	Member of ZjN 3	This is a story about the fight between feminist perspective in politics and right-wing agenda.
S 4	Member of ZjN 1, Member of ZjN 2, Member of ZjN 3	This is a story about ZjN efforts to push feminist agenda forward to address more diverse issues and achieve societal changes.
S 5	Member of ZjN 1, Member of ZjN 2, Member of ZjN 3, Expert 1	This is a story about the effects of the 'Cash for Care programme' in gender issues and care.
S 6	Member of ZjN 2, 5	This is a story about transitioning to a different economic system that prioritises care and compassion.
S 7	Member of ZjN 2	This is a story about the poor work of the previous government, whose actions drove further the emigration trend.
S 8	Member of ZjN 5	This is a story about uneven distribution of autonomy. The member aims at more local decision making power on care/social topics.
S 9	Expert 1	This is a story about the system being decentralised after the fall of Yugoslavia, which created an unforeseeable amount of 'units'. The expert highlights the danger of inequalities between units.
S 10	Member of ZjN 2, Expert 2	This is a story about the security in job and leisure people felt in Yugoslavian period. The people today wish this sense of security they felt, also on the theme of care.
S 11	Electoral Programme 2020	This is a story about ECEC that should be safe, ecological and accessible for children, visitors and employees.
S 12	Caretaker 1	This is a story about the conditions in the kindergarten which are precarious and there is a lack of safety for the kids and a lack of educational toys, referring to having stepped back in Yugoslavian times.
S 13	Caretaker 1	This is a story about the precarious working conditions which does not allow leaving, but does not guarantee well-being for kids and staff either. Emergency solutions due to decades underfunding are inadequate.
S 14	Member of ZjN 1, 2	This is a story about the kindergarten crisis era fueled by the Cash for Care program, coinciding with a rising demand driven by increased female participation in the labor market and the recognized benefits of ECEC.

Table 2. Identified Stories

"Kindergarten teachers and other workers in Croatia join forces with parents to build a better early childhood education system. There is a shortage of stuff and wide variations in pay among teachers.

Vračar 2022

This newspaper article reveals the precarious status quo for care workers in the city of Zagreb and overall, in Croatia. Croatia is facing a lack of availability in ECEC and need for better working conditions for care workers. After providing an overview of the organisation of childcare in the city of Zagreb, we dive into the challenges the party ZjN faces in changing this status quo.

Public vs. Private

The city of Zagreb offers ECEC services, namely public kindergartens for children from the age of 6 months. These kindergartens are generally operated by the city or local municipalities and provide education, care, and social and cognitive development for young children. In addition to public, state funded childcare, there are to a lesser extent also private childcare facilities. These include kindergartens operated

by private companies or individuals e.g., nannies. These private institutes have been growing over the last two decades which shows their greater importance in forming an answer for the large demand for childcare services. They are generally more expensive than publicly provided ECEC (Freise 2015).

Scale

Preschool education (e.g. kindergartens) is the responsibility of local and regional governance, while social welfare and children welfare is organised on the national level. In interviews we could define two opposite ideas. On the one hand an 'unevenly centralised system' has been perceived as the real problem, causing the local level to have a minimal impact (see S8) (Member ZjN 4). Expert 1 raises concerns about the decentralised provision of social services in place. The statement highlighted that when there is a lack of a well-established policy and fiscal framework that considers regional disparities in administrative and financial capabilities, decen-tralised systems tend to perpetuate unequal access to services across different regions (see S 9).

As for the family policy in Croatia – directed on a national level – it is manifested mostly through material benefits, such as children's allowances, tax reliefs, maternity leave, rather than through provision of services for children. Maternity (rodilji dopust) and paternity (roditeljski dopust) leave is in place until the child turns six months, while parental leave may be used after the child has turned six months. While

using maternity or paternity leave, the beneficiary is entitled to salary compensation equal to 100% of the salary. To receive this benefit, the mother must have worked 9 continuous months before the start of the maternity leave, or 12 months with interruptions within the 2 previous years. If that condition is not met, the beneficiary is still entitled to maternity or paternity leave, but the salaries for the same amount are 70% of the budget base (309,01 euros). Parental leave can be taken from 6 months until the child turns 8 and consists of 8 months for a single child, 30 months for twins. The months can be divided among the parents (2 non-transferable) (Fieldnotes, 2023).

Neoliberalism

Since the end of Yugoslavian times, the status quo of capitalist accumulation has been established. It was marked by modes of governance that combine authoritarian neoliberalism, heteronormative familialism, and repatriarchialisation. In response to the multiple neoliberal crises and their authoritarian management, municipalism rose (Sarnow & Tiedemann 2022). The narrative in interviews bends over the sense of security which existed during socialism, which is contradictory to the individualist society nowadays (Member of ZjN 2). The interviewee juxtaposes the holidays and jobs arranged by the state against the capitalist society where you rely on yourself and your resources. (See S 10) Not only the infrastructural aspect but also the emotional aspect of longing this security is of importance. Member of ZjN 2 believes that there should be more dialogue about the pos-

sibility of transitioning to a different economic system that prioritises care and compassion. While doing so, still advocating for more public discourse on moving towards a more caring economic system. (See S 6) They imply that capitalism is not inherently oriented towards caregiving, highlighting the lack of focus on care within capitalist discourse, which tends to prioritise competitiveness, profit, and monetary value.

"Care is not a sort of leitmotif of a capitalist society. It's not part of the discourse, right? It's not about competitiveness and profit unless care is something that also has monetary value and produces growth et cetera." (Member of ZjN 2)

This resonates with an argument by Nancy Fraser: the crisis of care is best interpreted as an acute expression of the social reproductive contradictions of financialized capitalism. In the neoliberal context, care is often deprioritized or undervalued because it does not inherently align with profit-driven motives. (Fraser 2016) As a result, vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and those with disabilities, may face challenges in accessing adequate care and support. It does undermine the sense of social responsibility and collective well-being as neoliberalism causes individualisation and privatisation. With this status quo we fluently go over to challenges which ZjN faces regarding childcare.

5. Challenges

The status quo in childcare brings forward diverse challenges that ZjN is facing. We captured the challenges in three groups. The first group bends over the previous governance structu-

res, which have left a lasting impact on the current state of childcare.The second group of challenges revolves around 'gender inequality' in Zagreb and the broader context of Croatia. Additionally, the third group of challenges examines the implications of Yugoslavia's history on childcare.

Previous governance

One challenge facing the party concerns the migration exacerbated by the previous government. The narrative presented in the interviews highlights a concerning trend of outgoing migration among young, educated individuals, which poses significant implications for the funding and care of the young and the elderly. Elements of the previous government such as nepotism and corruption /clientelism worked hand in hand to drive further this emigration trend (See S 7). This outgoing tendency is tamed with an EU-integration, since 2013. However, the narrative does evoke a genuine concern regarding the repercussions of still ongoing emigration on both the current and future socio-economic fabric of Croatia.

"There is more than there used to be outgoing migration of young educated people. And of course, that begs the question of funding for care (...) because the two are connected. So I do think that's a worrying trend. I think that European Union integration kind of contributed to that as a pull factor. But I think there are many push factors in Croatia that led to this as corruption, nepotism, young people feeling quite frustrated that they can't get a job based on their knowledge and skills, but rather through social capital."
(Member of ZjN 2)

In between the lines, the electoral pro-

gramme of 2020 agrees and goes further with highlighting the lack of human resources and infrastructure that addresses the malfunction of previous governance. On the first page of the chapter within the programme, the ideal education is described as safe, ecological and accessible for anyone regardless class, identity, age and status. It does not only talk about the children/students within educational institutions but also about the employees that should be safeguarded. (see S 11). Above safety issues, there was no adequate budgeting which led to teachers having to procedure materials themselves. This is negatively related to the quality of employment and well-being of the employees. This lack of human infrastructure and well-being was amplified by the caretaker 1. The caretakers compared the lack of funding in the last decades to stepping into Yugoslavian times when material was precarious. There was never money for additional equipment or staff. (See S12)

The lack of proper funding under the previous administration is also evident in the inadequate staffing of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) facilities. The number of kids exceeds the allowed number in ECEC institutes. The narrative of the caretaker exposes the duality faced by the staff. On the one hand they can't leave as these kids would have no supervision, on the other hand there is no quality education, nor quality employment guaranteed. Emergency solutions as untrained nannies which are in place are a bandaid on a bleeding wound. (See S 13)

On infrastructure it is not only material but also broader the number of kindergartens which have been lacking. (See S 14) All members of ZjN and expert 1

highlight this because of the cash for care programme that was introduced by the previous government. The cash-for-care program entails a monthly allowance provided to one parent, typically the mother, when there are more than three children in the household, to support staying at home and caring for them. Mothers' absence from the labour market has significant implications for pension savings, resulting in a substantial economic dependency on their partners. Besides having a negative impact on gender equality, it had a negative impact on social inequalities because it's mainly children of lower social economics whose parents opted for this measure. Different studies also show the benefits of ECEC for the social and cognitive development for the kids (see Lazzari and Vandenbroeck 2013). At the same time it has been proved that ECEC provides social and cognitive development, fostering equal opportunities for children. Due to this cost-intensive policy, there was no budget for sustainable investments in kindergartens.

"(...) Cash for care and a lot of money was eaten there so they didn't think about investing in ECEC. (...) And on the top of that you were able to get some other benefits. But in the long term it's bad from a social inequalities perspective and gender inequalities perspective. Children are sometimes not ready to enter school and they're entering the school under different conditions and children who were in ECEC. So, it's reproducing social inequality." (Expert 1)

The cash for care executed by the previous government and recently ended, was a big of a social and financial burden. The narrative reveals the continuous social inequalities (re)production.

Member of ZjN 2 states the need that kids must socialise in ECEC and compare it to kids that stayed at home and are not ready to go to preschool at the age of three. Particularly from families with a lower socio-economic status as they really benefit from going to early education (Member of ZjN 1). On the financial burden this cash for care programme left on the city budget adds that the crisis on universal childcare is rooted in the city that could not provide due to the massive sum of money towards Cash for Care, which had no social or financial advantages in the end. More people are in the labour market and see the advantages of childcare for their children. The budget that needed to be taken out for universal child care could not keep up with the demand (See S 14).

Initially, after the earthquake then mayor Bandic said that everyone would pay for the reconstruction of their own property – the city for its own, the state for its own and the city and state together for citizens' property that is treated as a priority. After receiving EU solidarity money, the government's inability to produce coherent laws and policies and their reluctance to follow professional advice, among other issues, have taken their toll on the rebuilding of Zagreb (Petrović 2021). Above is men-tioned that the crisis continues, which we agree upon, there is still the challenge of coordination to be overcome:

"The City Office of Education will lead and monitor the rehabilitation and recon-struction processes of buildings damaged by the earthquake and the project to improve the resistance to future disasters of all buildings of public kindergartens

and schools. (...) Thanks to the green renovation, the buildings will have a smaller ecological footprint, while at the same time contributing to significant savings in overhead costs in the city budget." (Electoral Programme 2020).

This story reveals the lack of preparedness for an earthquake and the pressing need for sustainable and durable infrastructure to avoid high overhead costs in the city budget in the future. It underscores that they want to avoid constant cuts from their budget for fixing infrastructure, possibly alluding to the constant allocation of funds that went to Cash for Care mentioned by all members of ZjN.

Gender inequality

In social Yugoslavia, gender equality was once a priority, but it waned with the shift towards market-oriented policies in the mid-1960s. After independence, right-wing, nationalist politics emerged, perpetuating patriarchal norms and limiting discussions on Yugoslavia's social achievements. Even in the 1990s, there was a large retraditionalisation in Croatia which made women go out of the labour market (Member of ZjN 5). Defensive struggles persist for LGBTQ+ and moreover women's rights amid ongoing erosion of these rights under the current right nationalist political climate. Member of ZjN 1 gives the example of this persistent patriarchal scheme: "It's stereotypically in Croatian society mostly given to women who are expected to do most of the care work."
This patriarchal challenge is also highlighted in the electoral programme of 2020. "Educational institutions in Zagreb support different identities and act against sexism, racism, xenophobia,

homophobia and nationalism." At the same time the party of ZjN has to operate in the leftover DNA of a patriarchal Croatia, the issue of gender equality is not present in public discussion. (Expert 1,2) Politicians tend to use more child's perspective and labour market economic perspective, because these arguments are more catchy to the Croatian society. In the case of ZjN the issue is presented through the perspective of child development. In general: "A lot of the gender equality stuff has been defensive rather than proactive, and a lot of it has been about kind of stopping the erosion of rights of women to abortion and LGBTQ rights." (Member of ZjN 4). The challenge here is that also ZjN has to act within this rigid framework and cannot provoke.

Yugoslavian past

The last challenge faced by the ZjN party is reminiscing attitudes from the Yugoslavian past. In Yugoslavian period the state was responsible for providing care and job employment for men and women. For example, workers' families and peasants were able to get higher education, and the state made leisure activities as e.g. holidays accessible to all.

"I think that's actually quite important when we think about care, when we think about a caring state or a caring economy on a more macro level, that there are memories of a caring state (...) So it wasn't just care in terms of job security, but it was also about these leisure activities. I think someone who's working class today will go to the Croatian coast for a holiday with great, great difficulty. We know that from data, a high proportion cannot afford to spend a week outside of their place of residence, whereas before, workers could go to these kinds of state run holiday resorts." (Member of ZjN 2)

This deep-rooted nostalgia towards a state that provided equal public infrastructure and equal access to leisure and jobs within Croatian society is a challenge that has to be taken into account when discussing transitions to different economic systems and provision of care, including ECEC. A large part of the society expects state funded infrastructure, among many care infrastructure as well as there is an emotional aspect of longing for this kind of security which was in place during the Yugoslavian period.

Furthermore, negative memories associated with the era of socialism in former Yugoslavia continue to linger, creating a significant obstacle for the implementation of leftist or social policies in the present day (Member of ZJN1 and 2).

Those two aspects: nostalgia and taboo regarding the Yugoslavian Past form a challenge for the party to take into account.

5. Challenging the Status Quo: Zagreb je NAŠ!'s Visions and Strategies for Childcare Transformation

" For me, a caring society is a kind of just society
Member of ZjN 2

5.1 Implicit and Explicit Visions of an Ideal Caretaking Society Formulated by Members of Zagreb je NAŠ!

Our analysis has shown different and multiple perspectives on care developed by the members. Nevertheless, major visions could be identified, which are:

gender equality, universal access to childcare, strong workers' rights, and additionally ideas on community-based care models of care as well as the vision of a common-good oriented society.

Gender Equality

" When you ask me about a sort of vision for a caring society, it's where care is dispersed. It's also not gendered in the way that it is at the moment, where research in Croatia shows that women are still far more involved in caring for the household and children than men are
Member ZjN 2

One vision, formulated by all interviewees as well as written in the party's program, is the equality between gen-ders. In relation to care, this is formulated as an equal distribution of paid and unpaid care work, as seen in this quote:

"It's [care work] stereotypically in Croatian society mostly given to women, who are expected to do most of the care work, so our political goal is to ma-ke it more equal, of course [..]" (Member of ZjN 1).

Within this vision, as seen in the quotes above, they formulate critique, which aligns with critique voiced by feminist activists for many decades (see Hochschild 2012; Federicci 2020). The main criticism is that women are in un-equal positions in the labour market and

society, given that they still do most of the housework and care. When the topic of unequal task distribution is addressed by the party, they often refer to the unequal socio-economic status women must face when being responsible for the unpaid domestic care work. The explicit vision, we analysed through those claims and ideas, is to have more women in the paid labour market, for them to be more independent, and to have more socio-economic freedom (see Program of ZjN, 2021 p.77). Nevertheless, Interviewees such as Member of ZjN 3 raise concerns about the double shift women face when entering the labour market, while referring to Yugoslavian times in Croatia, a period in Croatia where many women were integrated into the labour market:

"But even then, it was very much a double burden, women's double burden because guess what? Men didn't do any more of the caring tasks than they had done before, really."

Many feminist discourses on care work highlight this so-called "double shift" or "double burden" women experience upon entering the neoliberal job market. The critique emphasises that women's participation in the paid labour market doesn't automatically lead to a more equal distribution of un-paid care work between genders (see Hooks 2000; Dalla Costa 1983). Even though the double burden is not discussed broadly within the party, the vision of more task distribution between genders is being expressed explicitly by all Interviewees and is one of their main visions for a gender-equal society. Moreover, the vision of distributing care tasks extends beyond unpaid dom-

estic care work to encompass paid care work roles, such as kindergarten teachers, where there is a significantly higher percentage of female care workers compared to males, as Member of ZjN 2 states:

"It's very much female-dominated, and I think it would be important for boys to have male role models in education".

This vision of the party aligns with the vision of a preschool educator that we talked to, who also highlighted the importance of male teachers for the everyday work in kindergartens.

Universal Access to Childcare:

The second vision for an ideal caretaking society that we identified in all Interviews is universal access to childcare, meaning a guaranteed spot in preschool education from the age of two. In this vision, various ideals and beliefs converge, including the importance of childcare for the development of children. This includes ideas that are shared by many researchers in that field, which claim the importance of early childcare for equal opportunities and for the development of the children (see Lazzari and Vandenbroeck 2013) as Member of ZjN 1 argues:

"we think of kindergarten not only as a service for working parents but also an important development for kids. Because all the research shows that the kid in kindergarten has better outcomes than those who did not attend. So, it's very important for us to provide that universal access to childcare" .

Another aspect of this vision that can be identified is the belief that childcare

should not be dependent on the parents' employment status, as it is now in the status quo, where children only have access to a spot in the kindergarten when both parents are employed (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1, 2 and 3; Programme ZJN 2020: p.61-62). This emphasises also the implicit vision for society that tries to counteract inequalities, through giving all children the same chances and a state that provides infrastructure for care.

Strong Workers' Rights and fair working conditions

" We think a fair world is possible, where people, where workers, where kindergarten teachers have more power in their hands, where they decide on the processes in their workplace, in their city, in the environment, which they're not just (..) how they say (..) casual observers or casual victims of the system, we live in.

Member of ZjN1

A third vision that we identified portrays a society wherein strong workers' rights and improved working conditions are accessible to everyone, potentially influenced by the significant representation of ZjN members from the workers' rights movement (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1). In the realm of childcare this means improved working conditions in the field of paid care work (see Member of ZjN 1 and 2). In addition to the primary goal of empowering workers' rights, the drive for better working conditions also seeks to attract more individuals to this field, given the current lack of staff in the childcare sector and the challenge of outgoing migration. This challenge of outgoing migration is being addressed by many interviewees and members of ZjN 2 formulate the vision of a transformation of the working sector, in order to keep the young people who leave the country. The vision of strong workers rights could also be identified, in parts of the interviews, when they refer positively to times in which they had better working conditions and more leisure opportunities in former Yugoslavia (see Interview with Member of ZjN 2 and 3).

Universal Access to Childcare:

Furthermore, in addition to advocating for better working conditions, universal access to childcare, and gender equality, some members also propose a transformation of the neoliberal market-oriented system towards a common-good green society. They address the challenges of neoliberalism, like going towards "ecological distraction" (Member of ZjN 1), exploitation and privatisation. In their vision, the transformation to a society that is not guided towards the market, would result in an enhanced care system that is more good

green society. They address the challenges of neoliberalism, like going towards "ecological distraction" (Member of ZjN 1), exploitation and privatisation. In their vision, the transformation to a society that is not guided towards the market, would result in an enhanced care system that is more community-based and just (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1, 2 and 3). In this ideal society, people would also have to work less and have more time for taking care of their community. This would also include less institutionalised provided care (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1).

Likewise, others include the distribution of material goods into their ideal vision, to provide social security for all groups of people and ideas of payment for people who take care of people with disabilities are being discussed by different members of the party (see Member of ZjN 1 and 2). Further, for Member of ZjN 2 an ideal care taking society is one that recognises and includes different identities, along age, gender, race, ethnicity or sexuality.

Member of ZjN 5 also highlights the significance of community-based forms of care as an important topic for the party and argues that as a municpalist party, their vision includes supporting neighbourhood and community structures. Despite that, they also address the gendered aspect of community care, where the burden of these responsibilities often falls disproportionately on women.

However, it is essential to note that these visions are often implicitly formulated and besides the vision of a green society also not mentioned in the parties programme. One reason for this could be the awareness of limitations of those

vision as seen in this Quote by Member of ZjN 3:

"Care is a common, care is a public good. People who give care get paid for giving care, but mainly get paid from public, from kind of social welfare budgets. It would be care which allows people to live in their own community and environment for as long as possible. It does not kind of neglect those people and then put them into stigmatising total institutions. It would be a local circular green economy in which people can buy food from somebody who's got a bit of land but that they give it cheaper to people who need it. So it would be probably, it will happen after a nuclear holocaust" (Member of ZjN 3).

Similarly, Member of ZjN 2 addresses their concerns regarding the transformation towards this vision of a common-good oriented society, because of the global and widespread influence of the market oriented system.

A caring State?

Our analysis brought up three major visions that are shared by the members of ZjN: gender equality, universal access to childcare and strong workers' rights. Through the interviews the members of the party have consistently emphasised Universal Access to Childcare as one of their central promises. Apart from the reasons previously discussed for its significance, another possible explanation for the emphasis could be that in a society lacking an open discourse on feminist matters, focusing on childcare allows the party to address feminist issues indirectly. As mentioned by a non-ZjN interviewee:

"I would use more child's perspective and labour market economic perspective because this is some-

something politicians will pick more than gender equality. [...] I mean, the Zagreb government, this local government [ZjN], they talk about gender equality, but even with them, I think it's not a central argument because it's just not catchy. I think they use even more of a child development perspective than gender equality"
(Expert 1).

Nevertheless, our analysis showed that in the context of gender equality and the feminisation of politics, ZjN explicitly communicates its vision for more feminist politics, but it could be argued that the vision of universal child care garners broader discussion within the party and is considered one of their primary goals and visions. Our interpretation of unstructured interviews with parents, showed also that each participant was well aware of the party's commitment to achieving universal childcare, but gender equality was not as prominently brought up during these discussions.

In additon to the three major visions that are also formulated more explicitly, we also analysed ideas and visions on a community and common good organised caring society. But despite advocating for greater support for community-engaged forms of care, their overall vision seems to lean towards a state-provided system of care and welfare, which also means in their vision to not be dependent on the private sector of care, which we identified through their disapproval with the privatisation of the elderly care sector in Croatia (see Inter-view with ZjN Member 1, 2 and 3).

Additionally, their vision of a caring society seems to be aligned with a just society, as Member of ZjN 2 states:

"For me, a caring society is a kind of just society".

In the next step we analysed through their actions and strategies whether their politics align with their envisioned caring and just society or not.

6.2. Going towards the envisioned future: transformation strategies of ZjN

Connecting the path of ZjN from the status quo and the challenges to the envisioned future of the city, we delve into the conceptualisation of strategies for childcare transformations employed by ZjN. To provide a comprehensive understanding, we begin by clarifying the concept of strategy and its relevance to our research.

Conceptualising strategy for childcare transformations

The concept of strategy is a contested one; hence, it is essential to establish a clear framework for understanding the strategy we adopt in this chapter. As we have seen through the party's visions, their perception of the future of Zagreb and their goals as a left-green party align a lot with degrowth values, therefore for this analysis we rely on the understanding of strategy applied by degrowth researchers. According to Nathan Barlow and others (2022) strategy is a 'thought construct' that outlines the approach or approaches to achieve systemic changes.

"Strategy serves as flexible mental map that links an analysis of the status quo to a vision of a desirable end state by detailing different ways of achieving (intermediate) goals on the journey towards that envisioned future as well as certain means to potentially be employed along these ways" (Barlow, et al. 2022, p.18).

By understanding strategy as a thought construct and a flexible mental map, we can define and contextualise strategy within the specific scope and focus of our research. Recognising the diversity of perspectives on strategy in academic and practical realms, this clarified understanding will guide our analysis and discussion throughout the chapter. In order to comprehensively analyse transformations and identify strategies, it is crucial to distinguish between the following layers of transformation: ways, means, and ends (Barlow, et al. 2022, p.18). Ways represent the transformation strategy itself. They encompass the various approaches through which the desired transformation can be achieved (ibid.). Means are the instruments and tangible actions undertaken to execute the chosen transformation strategy. Means serve as practical tools that facilitate the realisation of the selected strategy (ibid.). Ends refer to the actual results of the transformation. They represent the tangible outcomes achieved through the implementation of the strategy. These outcomes are aligned with the long-term vision of the actors (ibid.). By clearly separating these layers, we can gain a deeper understanding of the processes and outcomes. Moreover, it allows us to critically reflect on the effectiveness of the actions and feasibility of desired transformations.

In the following analysis of transformation strategies, we apply the framework proposed by Erik Olin Wright. According to Wright (2009), there are three modes of transformation strategies: ruptural, interstitial, and symboltic. The strategies were initially formulated by Erik Wright in the context of challenging capitalist so-

ciety. However, these strategies have proven to be valuable and adaptable frameworks utilised by scholars across various disciplines and contexts, including the field of degrowth (Barlow, et al. 2022, p.20-22).

Ruptural transformations involve a directly confrontational approach toward existing institutions and social structures that result in radical changes (Wright 2009, p.20). The goal is to break the existing system and replace established structures with entirely new ones. Interstitial transformations focus on creating alternative forms of social identities and practices – parallel to existing structures – and thus empower emancipatory structures (ibid.). In Wright's ideas, these exist at the margins of capitalist structures. How-ever, in general, these initiatives emerge outside of the domains dominated by those who are in positions of power. Symbiotic transformations are the third type of transformation formulated by Wright. Symbiotic transformations imply the processes of change that are taking place within the existing institutions and logics (ibid.). The aim of this type of transformation is to transform the system itself by effecting changes in its internal dynamics. While symbiotic strategies may encounter challenges due to their integration within existing systems, they serve as catalysts for facilitating the growth and success of interstitial strategies (Barlow, et al. 2022, p.59).

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In the next section we are going to apply this framework to analyse and interpret the data collected from representatives of ZjN. By utilising Wright's transformative strategies as a conceptual lens, we aim to critically reflect on the ZjN actions and evaluate the party's potential to reach their visions. The application of this framework will offer valuable insights into the party's transformative practices, shed light on the complexities of their strategies, and provide an understanding of their efforts to create meaningful changes within the realm of childcare and care provision in Zagreb.

Transformation strategies employed by Zagreb je NAŠ!

Based on the insights gathered from our interviews, it is evident that ZjN employs two main strategies to achieve their visions within childcare: feministisation of politics and reorganisation of care. The following section will highlight the ways (strategies) and means (instruments) that party employs towards their vision. To facilitate the systematic organisation of the data derived from the interviews, we propose utilising the following table:

Vision	Gender Equality	Universal Access to Childcare	Strong Workers Rights	Common-good oriented society
Strategy	Feministisation of politics Reorganisation of care	Reorganisation of care	Reorganisation of care	Feministisation of politics Reorganisation of care

Instruments	- Abolish "cash for care" (Member of ZjN 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)- Providing childcare during political meetings (Member of ZjN 1)- Encourage people from diverse backgrounds to take part in politics (Member of ZjN 1, 2 and 3)	- Prioritise single parents for kindergarten spots (Member of ZjN 1, 2 and 3)- Build more kindergartens (Member of ZjN 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)	- Raise salary for kindergarten teachers- Transform limited contracts to permanent ones- Raise scholarships for prospective kindergarten teachers (Member of ZjN 1 and 2)	- Long term plan to stop to subsidise market-oriented care institutions (Member of ZjN 1 and 2)

Table 3. Layers of transformation of childcare in Zagreb

Strong Workers' Rights and fair working conditions

Feministisation of politics is central to the party's approach (see S 4). It refers to a process in which feminist principles, perspectives, and values are integrated into the political sphere and decision-making processes. Feministisation of politics as a strategic idea arises from the feminisation of politics, which was seen as "the insertion and integration of women both in terms of numbers and ideas" (Lovenduski 2005, p.12), and understood as the process when the higher number of women participating in politics results in the growth of importance of women interests (Dean and Maiguashca 2018, p.385). However, this approach is considered as insufficient as the inclusion of women in politics does not necessarily lead to the promotion of feminist ideas and equal rights (see Campbell and Childs 2015; Celis et al 2008; Childs and Krook 2006). Therefore, there is a need to redefine this notion and use the term feministisation which proposes a more complex understanding of inclusion of feminist perspectives in politics (Dean and Maiguashca 2018). In recent years, left-wing parties, like ZjN, have been increasingly adopting the notion of fe-ministisation to transform their political practices and align them with feminist visions (ibid. p.378).

From the insightful interviews conducted with members of ZjN, we can indicate the narrative concerning the significant role of the feministisation of politics as a transformation strategy that is aimed to achieve multiple party's visions (see S 3; S 4). Notably, the party demonstrates a concerted effort to foster a more feminist agenda by adopting various measures, including provision of childcare during political meetings (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1), encouraging people with more diverse backgrounds to take part in politics (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1, 2 and 3) and promoting more horizontal decision making process (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1, 2 and 3). Overall, feministisation of politics plays an important role in the party's agenda and particularly in the context of childcare and care-related matters.

"There clearly is a feminist perspective in Zagreb je Naš. The gendered dimension of Zagreb je Naš starts with women in leadership. It kind of says: "you need more women in politics. You need them to make sure that politics is feminised", although that is also controversial and problematic in some ways." (Member of ZjN 3)

By dismantling deep-rooted power structures and promoting gender equality, ZjN strives to create a society where women have greater agency and decision-making power including childcare policies (see S 3; S 4). Nevertheless, as the cited above member of ZjN states there is a controversy within the applied strategy and its transformative potential (see Interview with Member of ZjN 3). The strategy of feministisation of politics lies within the symbiotic logic (according to Wright categorisation), as it works within the existing political structure and seeks ways to the rich party's visions by pushing the change of institutional logics. However, the reliance on a singular type of strategy within this realm gives rise to the observation of comparatively less radical institutional changes. In our interviews we could see that this limitation is acknowledged by the members of the party, as one of the members emphasised in interview that there is a room for more action towards women's empowerment (see Interview with Member of ZjN 2).

Strong Workers' Rights and fair working conditions

Another strategy employed by ZjN to achieve their visions within childcare is the reorganisation of care. This strategy revolves around transforming the existing care system to ensure universal access to care, prioritise the needs of marginalised groups, empower workers in the sphere of care and address social inequalities (see S 2).

Through the interviews conducted with ZjN representatives, it becomes evident that the reorganisation of care

is of predominant importance in their approach to childcare (ibid.). Within this issue, the narratives of our interviewees highlight the opposition of the previous and the current government (see S 1). One member of ZjN explains their stance:

"Our position was that the priority is universal childcare and the priority of the opposition, was more that demographic one, that played people to stay home." (Member of ZjN 1)

The idea of reorganising the childcare system emerges from the challenges left by the previous administration's clientelistic policies (see S 1), gender inequality (see S 3) and reminiscent attitudes from the Yugoslavian past. The interviews shed light on the need for transformative changes, shifting away from clientelism towards empowering policies that create a more inclusive and supportive care system. While degrowth researchers propose strategies to liberate individuals from the constraints of wage work, allowing them to allocate more time to collective care activities (see Kallis, et al. 2013, Barlow, et al. 2022), ZjN's strategy of care reorganisation is one-sidedly oriented towards the goal of encouraging women to enter the labour market (see S 1; S 2). Some degrowth researchers disagree with this strategic approach as it often results in women bearing the double burden of paid and unpaid work (Dengler and Strunk 2018, p.7). Moreover, those benefits that women could receive from increased labour participation often happen at the expense of other women in more marginal positions (ibid. p.8).

Although the party's current strategy

may not explicitly align with degrowth goals, it seeks to offer women more flexible choices while providing essential care and socialisation for children. This is seen as a crucial step towards achie-ving the party's larger vision of common good oriented society by our intervie-wees (see Member of ZjN 1, 2 and 3). In pursuit of the reorganisation of care, ZjN implements a series of tangible instru-ments, such as abolition of the "cash for care" program (see Interview with Member of ZjN 1, 2, 3 and field notes Member of ZjN 4 and 5), construction of more kindergartens (ibid.), targeted access provision for vulnerable families (Interview with Member of ZjN 1), salary raises for kindergarten teachers (Inter-view with Member of ZjN 1) and propo-sals to increase scholarships for prospec-tive kindergarten teachers (Interview with Member of ZjN 2). By implementing these instruments, ZjN demonstrates a prag-matic and evolving approach to childcare policy, striving to create tangible improve-ments within the childcare system.

The potential inconsistency between the broader degrowth goals, such as the par-ty's vision on a common good oriented society, and their strategy may stem from the challenges the party faces in its pur-suit of these goals. This is also supported in the narrative of another member of the party:

" The whole idea of a more flexible way of organising childcare in which caregivers have real choices, is a long way away. But I think

that's the kind of aim, if you could guarantee and this might take two mandates, if you could guarantee that everyone who wanted it could have a place for their children in preschool education from the age of two, then that would be a major improvement. And then you could do some of the more transformative things.

Member of ZjN1

Indeed, the party's strategy is dedicated to making childcare more accessible and flexible, laying the groundwork for further transformative measures in the future. However, it is also acknowledged that the chosen transformative strategy may not fully align with the party's broader visions, which advocate for a more radical shift towards a com-mon good-oriented society.

As well as the first strategy employed by ZjN, the strategy of reorganisation of care lies within the symbiotic logic (according to Wright categorisation), which presents both advantages and limitations. On one hand, the reorganisation of care offers practical and achievable steps towards transforming the childcare landscape in Zagreb. It aims to address immediate needs and create tangible improvements in care provision. By prioritising the needs of marginalised groups and empowering

care workers, it takes concrete steps towards building a more just and equitable society. On the other hand, the one-sided reliance on symbiotic strategies, may lead to an absence of actual systematic changes (Chertkovskaya 2022).

Limitations of chosen strategies:

Overall, the limitations of both selected symbiotic strategies (feministisation of politics and reorganisation of care) stem from the possibility of co-opta-tion, meaning that the gain to the ac-cess to the public policy process could result in an absence of actual systema-tic changes, as the corporate actors may retain significant influence in shaping the agenda, leading to the blurring of radical demands (Chertkovskaya 2022, p.64-65). For instance, one of the members of ZjN provided an example that illustrates the challenges of implementing gender equality laws that are requi-red by the European Union, in this case the involvement of right-wing politi-cians in power hindered the effective implementation of these laws (see Interview with Member of ZjN 4). The same notion is also corroborated in the interview with the expert in the field:

"[...] even if you look at the Gender Equality Office, this national office, they didn't develop the strategy for I think seven years or something." (Expert 1).

This shows that the existence of laws on paper does not guarantee meaningful changes in real-world practices, which can be a significant obstacle in achieving the party's visions of a more

just and equitable society.

Furthermore, the presence of only one type of strategy, the symbiotic one, may not be sufficient to fully realise the party's visions. Academic debates on this topic emphasise the importance of interstitial transformations and localis-ed ruptures for achieving systemic change (Chertkovskaya 2022, p.67). Incorporating a more diverse range of transformation strategies, including in-terstitial and potentially even ruptural approaches, could enhance the party's impact and drive more radical changes within the childcare sector (ibid.). Here, cooperation with extra-parliamentary groups would be crucial, as initiated by the recent municipalist government in Barcelona, for example (Ezquerra and Keller 2022). However, the Barcelona case also illustrates how difficult it is to achieve greater equality and collective organisation in the field of care.

On the one hand, the absence of a variety of strategies seems to be connected to ZjN's overall understanding of the sequential order of strategies. For instance, a member of ZjN expressed a question:

"How do you get communities involved in, for example, when there isn't in the city public provision of preschool education?" (Member of ZjN 2).

This suggests that there could be a prevailing expectation within the party, that interstitial strategies can only be pursued after achieving universal childcare, as they would work to achieve a more radical vision of common-good oriented society. On the other hand, there could be an absence of existing

commoning initiatives within the sphere of child-care that ZjN could support. As we can observe in the examples discovered by Defining Commons in Zagreb chapter, party supports commoning initiatives and therefore realises interstitial strategies in other spheres in the city.

Moreover, it is important to recognise that the implementation of radical changes requires time and strategic navigation. As one of the members of ZjN notices, a lot of changes require a long time to implement and can not be achieved within a single legislative period (see Interview with Member of ZjN 3). More deeply the overall obstacles that ZjN faced were shown in "New Hope? Ideas and Actions of Zagreb je NAŠ! Government" chapter. The achievement of transformative visions requires significant shifts in societal norms, structures, and institutions and this requires time.

Playground sign in Park Maximir;
Photo taken by the author.

This paper serves as a comprehensive exploration of the issue of childcare in Zagreb and ZjN's challenges, future visions, and strategies for change. Our research journey commenced with a deliberate focus on feminist concerns within the urban sphere. It encapsulates a call to reshape our society with care, breaking down gender barriers and fostering a world where empathy is not just a sentiment but a force that guides us forward an equal society.

From the shadows of clientelism of the previous administration and gender inequalities, emerges ZjN's visions — emphasising gender equality, accessible childcare, strong workers' rights, and a common good-oriented society. At its core, these visions resonate with the foundational principle that a caring society is a just society.

Embedded within this framework, ZjN follows a pragmatic approach to address the current pressing issues in the city. The party's commitment to making childcare more accessible and flexible as well as creating an empowering environment for women in politics is a stepping stone for future transformative measures. The Symbiotic strategies applied by Zagreb je NAŠ! have the potential to create structural conditions for a more comprehensive transformation of daily relations, ha-bits, and routines, that in the end could lead to the envisioned ruptural change (Barlow, et al. 2022). Through the feministisation of politics and the reorganisation of care, the party aspires to trans-

form childcare landscape in the city, fostering a society that prioritises gender equality, social justice, and the well-being of all its members.

The journey towards a common good-oriented society may be challenging, but it has potential to be achieved through persistent dedication, strategic navigation, and a complex comprehensive approach, where in result the party can make a lasting and positive impact on the childcare landscape in Zagreb and beyond.

Since ZjN has only been in the government for two years, maybe not all the visions were tried to be implemented yet. But this would only lead to speculation and calls for further research in the future.

Center for Women's studies.
Photo taken by the author.

Acknowledgements

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Conclusion

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

GRETA BONNECKE

As we draw the final curtain on this booklet, we hope that you have found it to be an enlightening journey.

From every angle we explored – whether through the transformative force of common places, the reflections after two years of ZjN, witnessing the people of Zagreb holding their government accountable, viewing the city through a (non-)caring lens or from the seat of a bicycle, or seeking out the mediators of local politics – we have strived to connect with what moves people in their everyday lives.

The first chapter *"A New Hope? Ideas and Actions of the Zagreb je NAŠ Government"* has brought up obstacles faced by the ZjN government since coming into power. Among other findings, this study revealed that some issues turned out to be more challenging when ZjN members compared their position of being activists and politicians. The second chapter *"Mediators of Local Politics? - Potentials of Participation Within Democracy Through Neighbourhood Councils in Zagreb"* identified obstacles to and chances for citizen participation through NCs in Zagreb. From the research results one could conclude that administrative structures need time and more changes to establish a successful resonance relation with citizens and thus, to facilitate and encourage citizens' involvement in politics. A closer look at political and societal actors was also made in the chapter *"Cycling in Zagreb: the Intersections Between Zagreb's Cycling Culture and Zagreb je NAŠ"*. With the help

of narrative analysis, the *"players in the game of the city"* were identified and it was shown how the view on cycling shifted during the transition of ZjN from a movement to a movement organisation. Another transition happened regarding Zagreb's urban commons, which have been developed to exhibit unique functions and structures. In their chapter *"Defining Commons in Zagreb"*, the research group identified different needs for and functions of commons and highlighted the importance of their coexistence for the development of (sub-)cultures. Whilst commons are important for a city and its society, care work as well can be seen as a key part of a green-left and degrowth-oriented society. In the last chapter *"Who Cares? (Child)Care in the City of Zagreb"*, the authors explored the municipal organisation of childcare, future visions for a caretaking society of the new government and strategies on how this vision is brought into reality, for example through the feministisation of politics.

At the end of our booklet, we look back at our research findings, but we also reflect on our research process. One aspect which was a major challenge as well as a positive experience was the group work. We had to coordinate the efforts of multiple individuals with different schedules, perspectives, and working styles. Varying opinions on research methodologies or the interpretation of results sometimes also led to conflicts. On the other hand, working

in a group fostered our effective teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential skills in both academic and professional settings. We realised the great talents and skills our group mates possess in academic fieldwork and were more than grateful to learn from them. Right in the beginning of the research project we faced the difficulty of narrowing down our focus, as so much was of interest to us. Almost all of us were struggling to define a solid research question which presents a crucial part of the research. It requires formulating a clear, specific, and relevant inquiry that guides the entire study and helps us focus on the objectives. Some research groups changed their research question over time, for different reasons.

The study project was time-consuming, especially when conducting experiments, collecting data, and analysing results. We discovered, however, that we were able to conduct research in such a short time, which was a valuable know-how. It posed a challenge for us to continuously work on the same project throughout the semester. However, through this, some of us found that it is possible to do things at a regular pace, to also see results earlier and during the process, and not only at the end of the semester. Parts of our study group struggled with the *collection of data*, as it is difficult to know when to stop gathering data. One group also changed their research from quantitative to qualitative after the first days in Zagreb. Doubts about data collection also arose from the fact that we were not sure in the beginning how the research was going to be developed and presented. Most of the authors restricted the time

of data collection mainly to the time frame of the study trip, which gave them time to organise the analysis.

Within the data collection process, it proved to be tough to get access to and in contact with the right people and institutions regarding our topics. Language barriers displayed one reason for this, particularly in international collaborations or when accessing literature in different languages. Our understandings of the issues often differed from those of the people in Zagreb and from ZjN. Consequently, finding knowledgeable interviewees for certain subjects posed a significant challenge. Although some interview partners were not directly involved in the topics, their perspectives were, nevertheless, very valuable and helped to deepen our knowledge. Analysing all the collected data was not an easy task, but it was nice to see how the chosen methods uncovered underlying statements. Special difficulties arose from conducting research in an unfamiliar city. For example, it took some time for some of us to realise that face-to-face communication is more effective than digital means and that it is best to just ring at someone's door. Working, concentrating, and organising oneself in the hostel proved to be challenging too. It posed a problem not to have any private space to meet interview partners in the hostel.

Opposite to these hindrances, it was incredible how fast we found people who were willing to talk to us after having one contact. During the lectures, discussions, and interviews, it was quite comfortable to talk to our guests and interview partners and re-

flect on different topics together. We also discovered ourselves to be enthusiastic about the topics, finding great interest and fun in exploring diverse methods, such as interviews and mapping.

Conducting such a big empirical research project for the first time entails many *positive as well as negative surprises.* We were not expecting such a big gap between theory and praxis for some of the research topics. For example, the difference between the theoretical understanding of commons and its practical implementation in Zagreb was a fascinating discovery during the research. This led to the problematic task of connecting empirical data and theory. To bring both together, it sometimes meant for us to put the theory on a more basic level and the findings on a more abstract one.

The previously unknown patterns or linkages in data led to new insights. It proved to be a challenge, too, as some theories that were studied prior to the trip did not exactly correspond to reality, resulting in the dissolving of one group and the search for new research topics. Other groups' expectations on some topics have not been met and it sometimes turned out that there was no unified opinion by experts on some matters. This is, however, a good opportunity for us to face our own subjectivity, by which not only our research topics, but also our study results are influenced. We might have gotten answers that we wanted to hear, as we might have only looked for things that interested us or matched the theories.

New thematic and theoretical linkages came up due to the input during the study trip in Zagreb, for example the link from care work to degrowth theories and alternative visions on the ideal caretaking society. These revelations made us question the situation in our own countries. Confronted with realities in Zagreb, it led us to think a lot about democratisation and what a func-tioning democracy needs. We also were a bit sad that we could not find easy-to-implement solutions to problems and that some of those issues are quite inherent in the current capitalist system.

A very *positive discovery* was the kindness and openness of the people we talked to in Zagreb, who were always willing to help with the research and explain things we did not understand from the beginning. We were more than glad for the camaraderie between the groups – Weimar, Zadar, and Barcelona – which included, among other things, thematic exchanges, and the support in carrying out interviews and translations. The hospitality of the Croatian population made the navigation easier and more enjoyable.

When coming to Zagreb, the input and revelations made us rethink our understandings and the situation in our own countries. We feel ethical ambiguities, as we discussed these topics on an academic level which is not comprehensible for all. We aspire to bridge the gap between academia and society, aiming to democratise knowledge and bring these discussions to a broader audience. We realised that our research topics and results also depended much on timing. ZjN has only been in power for two years, if similar research projects are conducted in the future, significantly different results might be found. A final topic related obstacle

were complex structures and regulations in Zagreb which first needed to be understood.

In the end, we would say that the research project was a *valuable learning experience* for us and that we gained a lot from it. The combination of learning new methodologies and developing collaborative skills enriched overall research capabilities. The study project broadened our research toolkit and allowed us to approach future projects with a more diverse and informed perspective as well as practical knowledge. For some of us, it has been the first time to conduct interviews.

Doing the research gave us the certainty that we can do it, that we have understood the methods and theories from the master program, that we can do the Guided Research Project (individual study project in the 3rd semester) on our own and that there is no such thing as a simple or small topic. Having gained valuable insights, we are now more aware of the possibilities achievable within a limited time frame, effective ways to connect with people and do research, and constructing a research framework. Through the study project, we developed more confidence in our future research, having plenty of other students who were as well on the trip to advise us on the way. What we would like to leave with at the end: We believe in fearless politics and fearless research; we also believe in Pink Burek and we greatly believe in municipalism towards the future!

The research group in Zagreb
Photo taken by the author.