
The Teilnahmerei - Everybody was free

Federica, Igor and Manuelo from the Teilnahmerei talked to Elena Ballarin.
Edited by Tau Pibernat.



Teilnahmerei is a collective based in Berlin, founded by 7 Italian (Igor, Manuelo, Federica, Verena, Alessandra, Gianluca and Filippo) emigrants to the German capital: a very heterogeneous group of people coming from different experiences more or less directly involved in activism.

This project started in winter 2011 inside a space in the district of Kreuzberg that the collective was renting. "The idea to create the Teilnahmerei started from a common need to have a space where people could meet and share ideas and projects without any type of judgement or competition, as well as to offer a meeting point for the neighbourhood, no matter one's age, nationality or cultural background."

Creative activism has many different faces, and this one was a space based approach. Often it is said that the a sustainable revolution involves leaving behind ideas of destruction and building the actual structures you'd like to enjoy instead. "We have consciously chosen a slight distancing from politics, preferring to achieve concrete changes through joyous microrevolutions having as starting point the real needs of people in an environment characterised by the truth of feelings, by a special energy in the relationships among the people, where everyone is encouraged to express their creativity free from any kind of judgement."

Their space in Wrangelstrasse 80 was about 60m² and had only 2 rooms and a very small toilet "The smallest toilet in Berlin!" says one of them proudly. The back room was used as a laboratory and the front room looked a bit like a bar and a bit like a home living room. The walls were available to anyone who wanted to do something on them, so many artists used the facilities and exhibition space to share whatever they were doing "We had a public plenum once a week where one could come and propose an activity. We wanted to promote a means of sharing knowledge devoid of the exchange of money, so everybody was free to use the space to organize an activity"

Organised in this collective way, many activities took place inside those walls. They hosted several workshops, welding, sewing, German classes, meditation, tenor banjo and guitar or recycling design. Artists showed their work and projected videos, musicians used to play almost every evening, others expressed ideas, feelings, emotions, creativity. They also used to have a movie-night once a week and an urban garden situated close-by. "We liked to join together all our different skills and we held repair sessions in the laboratory room where we were helping people to repair any kind of broken things" Sometimes they were part of bigger events like the Globale Filmfestival in Berlin, that included their free screenings in the program. In order to pay the bills they kept a regular bar and received donations for their homemade food and cocktails that they prepared. They often had a table full of people's-kitchen-style food and for a fixed donation guests could eat as much as they wanted.

In their space reigned a warm and human feeling, a special freedom. In the beginning they opened everyday, from 10 am till 9pm, later on they only opened at 3pm and on the weekends stayed open until the last person left. "Let's say we were almost living there! And the strong creative energy daily generated by the union of so many heterogeneous minds was really making a concrete microrevolution." Who used the space? All kinds of people, from the fashion girl to the heavy drinkers and many other characters often considered as crazy by

society "We were welcomed everybody without any type of prejudice or limit, and we were altogether realizing that even the strangest people, if taken with another kind of approach, were not that strange in the end!"

The local response was very positive and this is usually the most rewarding, to make strong connections in the neighbourhood and develop a real social network. Many neighbours used to visit regularly and they explain how many others gave them their implicit agreement to not call the police during their very crowded and quite loud weekend parties. "Ours was at the same time a project focused against gentrification, a very deep problem in Berlin nowadays and our neighbours perceived and supported our cause."

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Unfortunately, the house management didn't like this project and 4 months after the opening they started to act against it, imposing limits and doubling the rent, until they managed to push them away. The Teilnahmerei left Wrangelstrasse 80. but didn't disappear, "During these months we have kept organizing our weekly plenaries, especially focusing on discussions around the topic of having or not having a job and its consequences and developing our project and its ideals further". Meanwhile Alessandra, Gianluca and Filippo have left Berlin and new people have joined the Team.

They are still running the movie nights, they have been active in supporting other activist initiatives and have organized a couple of event-parties under the name of the Teilnahmerei, where many of the old attendees showed up and supported them. They are also searching for a new space around Kreuzberg to

host their project. "We have recently restarted our urban garden in the same place as last year, and going back there we have been pleasantly surprised to find some interesting changes...that who knows...might make us think about creating our next space exactly there!"

They talk about the piece of land at the end of Cuvrybrache between Schlesischer Straße and the river Spree. It's a beloved abandoned wild grass area that has been used as a spontaneous party space, tent area, homeless refuge and has held several community gardens initiatives. At the time of publishing this interview the plans of investors from Munich to build flats and other facilities in this last untouched piece of the south Spree are being revealed publicly and so any plans for keeping this space accessible to independent actions are falling apart.

But Teilnahmerei will persist!

You can follow the future of this microrevolution on <http://teilnahmerei.noblogs.org>





DIE TEILNAHMEREI CURRENT WORKSHOPS

SCHWEISSEN KURS

dienstag/donnerstag
and reparations of course
18.00 - 20.00

GUITAR

TENOR BANJO

donnerstag
come on and
pull some strings
18.00 - 20.00

INDIVIDUAL

SHIATSU MESSAGES

1 hour long
dienstag
16.00 - 18.00

RECYCLED DESIGN

dienstag
make new stuff with old
things or garbage
18.00 - 20.00

KNITTING &

CLOTHES MENDING

donnerstag
bring old wool clothes to
reuse them or stuff to repair
17.00 - 18.00

MEDITATION &

BREATHING

TECHNIQUES

bring a pillow and blanket
mittwoch
19.00 - 20.00

JACK O' MATTO'S

ALTER-NATIVE GERMAN COURSE EXPERIENCE

dienstag
Learn German in an easy and joyful alternative way!!!
18.00 - 20.00

ALL COURSES ARE ON DONATIONS

every wednesday (17.00 - 19.00) open and public assembly!
come and share your ideas or project, suggest and organize your
own workshops!

Visuals by:
Teinahmerei
