

Searching for Plan C

Celebrating and Cerebrating the Crisis

IETM Spring Plenary Meeting
15 – 18 April 2010 in Berlin

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Concept Paper



Plan C – Idea

“Crisis” may be the buzzword of the last years. The economic crisis is only the culmination point – climate change, an ailing social system, debt overload, migration flows, security, growing poverty, disenchantment with politics – all these challenges that we are facing globally and locally are part of what we call “the crisis”. At the same time we sense a loss of confidence in the existent system of society, industry and politics. We feel that we have surpassed the system that

democratic societies have been based on since industrialisation. We have been aware for a long time that things cannot go on like they did over the past years. We understand that we are facing an all-embracing, cultural crisis.

We have no idea what is going to happen in the future – all we know is that we have left Plan A and Plan B behind us and that we have to shift to new concepts – to Plan C. We know that we need a revaluation and a new way of handling familiar concepts of work, of social systems, national states, the capital market or liabilities. We need an enlargement of options; we need to think out of the box. And we assume that we cannot disregard certain values, moral and ethics.

If we are dealing with a cultural crisis, we must be allowed to ask: in which way is culture part of the crisis? And in which way does cultural life bears responsibility for the crisis? Both for the outbreak and for its handling? What ideas could we as artists and cultural operators generate with art and creativity to show a way out of it?

There certainly is a consensus about the capabilities of culture and creativity. We talk about culture as a motor for development and transformation, for economic and social cohesion; we talk about the impact of arts on creativity because creation always is a process where ideas are able to flow. Creativity is about taking the risk without fear of failing. It is flexible and open and holds the promise of coming up with the unexpected. It is about collaboration instead of confrontation or competition.

Metaphorically speaking, Plan C means to climb over the wall instead of to build it (Plan A) or to break it down (Plan B). It means that there is no “either or”, no black or white, wrong or right but that there is a space between these antagonisms. We invite you to meet in this interspace in Berlin to link supposedly incompatible antipodes and to think further.

So let’s show and discuss concretely, what all this is about, what cultural life could offer and what we could do in order to overcome the crisis. In short: What is our Plan C?

Plan C – Method

The IETM meeting in Berlin will not only discuss these questions but also integrate “Plan C” in its methodological approach. The meeting will be self-organised and self-responsible. We meet this flexibility and openness during the Open Camp session where you as a participant set the agenda, deal with the issues that are most important to you and where you lead the discussions yourself, based on a unifying theme. This is an extremely dynamic way of discussing difficult questions and turning talk into action in a very short space of time.

Inspired by a keynote on the first evening, the Open Camp will create a working atmosphere where the expertise and experience of all participants will comprise a pool of creativity. Everyone who suggests a topic is responsible for the working group and its documentation. A moderator will be responsible for the smooth running of the day, a young team of editors is going to observe the process and summarize it for everyone’s benefit. Thus the documentation of the Open Camp will be both the basis and the impulse for ongoing work on Plan C in the future. The beauty of the Open Camp is that none of us know where it will lead but we all stand to benefit from the creative exchange that it will generate.

Our motto is: own initiative

Plan C - Preparation

"What is your Plan C?" will be the title of the Open Camp. We ask you to prepare the Open Camp by considering the following questions:

- If politicians would ask you (as a cultural operator, as an artist or just a creative mind) what to do in order to overcome the crisis: what would be your answer?
- Which problems need to be solved? What are the priorities for transformation?
- What kind of incentives do we need in order to implement new steps forward?
- How do you (personally and in your work) deal with crises and what are your examples of overcoming them?
- What kind of worst practices do you know? What examples of failure do you want to share with others – in order to learn from them?
- Are you developing interdisciplinary projects where cultural life is part of the crisis – dealing with environmental issues, with social footprints or other topics – and would you like to share them with others?
- How do we make cultural activity more important for the public – and for the public opinion?
- In which way could the arts and creativity be used as a motivating and inspiring force for social transformation processes?

If there are things you want to change, if you are passionate on ideas you have in mind that you want to share, if you like to think out of the box, if you feel visionary about things, if you feel bothered, if you work on projects or proposals you need support on... all is possible because in Open Camp you set the agenda. Nothing is off limits.

If you feel like this event might not be for you then that is a sure sign we need your input! If you feel that the issues that affect you or your sector never get discussed so what's the point of turning up? This is the event for you.

Our motto is: personal responsibility

C Berlin – C Plan C examples

“Yes, I can” is written on an old fabric wall in front of the meeting venue RADIALSYSTEM V. Crisis, change and reinvention are and have always been crucial in Berlin’s history. The city of Berlin therefore is not only the location for the IETM meeting but will be integrated into its concept. On Saturday all participants will have the opportunity to spread out in different areas of the city in order to visit, to discuss and to explore Plan C examples in artistic showcases, pecha kucha, guided exhibition tours, creative solutions and an artistic programme.

This artistic programme is not curated, but nevertheless ‘chosen’ for this occasion. Many private and public companies and theatre groups are going to present their work in stage performances dealing with Plan C.

During the meeting we want to visit examples for Plan C where new and courageous solutions and approaches are on their way in order to rethink Berlin in its urban spaces, voidages and creative places that are newly shaped. Some artistic directors are going to guide individual groups through specific districts and locations, meet people from other disciplines who have creative visions or who are responsible for a creative change that has happened in the past years, who explain how things have changed or who develop their visions regarding different plans C that are or could be on their way...

Leading questions are:

- What is the role of arts and cultural life in urban development projects in Berlin?
- In which way the creative approach has a say in the political and economical discussion about change in Berlin?

We will stimulate this exchange to surpass disciplinary borders and to discuss overall approaches.

Our motto is: thinking out of the box

Plan C Goals

The meeting is considered to be the starting point of an ongoing process, dealing with the role of cultural operators and artists as crisis managers who are able to engage more in society. The goal of the meeting is to make a shift in thinking and feeling - every participant should see him or herself as part of a larger perspective, the big picture. On the last day a handout of Plan C will be presented by the editors team. It is meant to contain the main and most important points of the discussions, giving every participant tools for change and allowing them to work further with the results of the meeting.

Plan C Organisation

Being a no-budget meeting, Plan C is also synonymous with the organizational part of the meeting: giving and taking, investing and gaining, engagement and partnership are all balanced. The exchange of goods and services means more than products and currency. There won't be a conference folder; we limit printed documents to the minimum needed and we afford alternative solutions for accommodation: Berlin artists invite IETM members to sleep in their houses and are going to take care of them by accompanying their guests to all locations and artistic venues during their 4 days' stay in Berlin. Cultural venues are going to set up bedrooms - "night nurse" and breakfast included.

The venues of the IETM meeting are located in the eastern and western part of the city - shuttles will be made individually by metro, bus, boat and – the best way to move from A to B (and to C!) in Berlin which is: cycling.

Our motto is: self-organisation & collaboration

*...Creativity Challenge Culture Community Complexity
Communication Cooperation Connection Contamination Chaos
Conference Context Content Concert Cyberspace Cycling
Curiosity Celebration Credibility...*