

Reclaiming the Potential of Urban Vacant Open Spaces. The Story of Krater - Ljubljana (SL), an Experimental Feral Open Space in a Terrain Vague

Lorenzo Stefano Iannizzotto

DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal

lorenzo_stefano_iannizzotto@iscte-iul.pt

Alessandro delli Ponti

UNIFE - Università di Ferrara - Dipartimento di Architettura

KH STUDIO - delli Ponti & Novielli - Building Strong Stories. Paris

dlllsln1@unife.it

Abstract

Nelle città contemporanee, esistono gemme di immenso potenziale quasi invisibili: Terrain Vague o Vacant Land, spazi aperti urbani abbandonati e senza funzione in cui la natura spontanea prospera. Negli anni, diverse pratiche innovative hanno cercato di intervenire attivando il potenziale di questi spazi, valorizzando l'essenza di questi spazi con un approccio sperimentale, coniugando interessi ecologici, culturali e sociali. Tuttavia, in mancanza di un quadro legislativo che valorizzi la natura spontanea urbana e le iniziative locali autogestite, questi progetti faticano ad ottenere un riconoscimento e ad essere integrati nelle politiche pubbliche. Questo articolo affronta la storia del Krater, un esperimento urbano avviato da un collettivo multidisciplinare in un terrain vague di Lubiana, fornendo un resoconto dettagliato della storia e dello sviluppo del progetto, delle sue sfide e dei suoi obiettivi. L'articolo apre a un dibattito più ampio sulla legittimazione della natura urbana spontanea, la promozione di città multi-specie, il riconoscimento del valore dei terrain vague, e il ruolo delle comunità creative locali e dei beni comuni urbani.

In contemporary cities, there are gems of immense potential that are almost invisible: Terrain Vague or Vacant Land, urban open abandoned spaces without function, where spontaneous nature thrives. In recent years, innovative and emerging practices have sought to activate the potential of these spaces by embracing their essence through experimental and innovative approaches that integrate ecological, cultural and social interests. However, due to the lack of a legal framework that recognizes the value of spontaneous urban nature and locally self-governed initiatives, projects struggle to be integrated into public policies. This article presents the story of Krater, an experimental project initiated by a multidisciplinary collective in a terrain vague in Ljubljana, providing a detailed account of the project's history and development, its challenges and goals. The article contributes to a broader debate on the legitimization of spontaneous urban nature, the promotion of multi-species cities, the recognition of the value of terrain vague, and the role of local creative communities and urban commons.

Keywords

Terrain Vague, Vacant Land, Landscape-based Urbanism, Care, Urban Commons

Terrain Vague, Spazi residuali, Cura; Comunanze urbane, Landscape-based Urbanism.

Urban Voids Potential

In times in which the European Union strives to chart a course towards a 'just and green transition', researchers and practitioners are urged to critically examine the frameworks and approaches to planning, spatial, and landscape design that have contributed to the current global poly-crisis. The article addresses this challenge by exploring the potential of vacant urban spaces to reshape our perception and production of the city. These urban spaces often remain invisible for years, acting as secret realms where life unfolds parallel to daily urban occurrences. In planning documents, these spaces sometimes appear as blank and undefined areas (Vasset, 2007); at other times, they take the reassuring pattern of planned programs that have yet to land on site. Land reservations for infrastructural development or special programs can take decades to be occupied and sometimes remain unutilized by human society on the long term. In planning literature these spaces are often qualified as urban voids. The analogy with 'Void' though, while likely veracious to connote their epistemic and legal status, seems to obscure their rich potential when applied to their spatial and environmental profile. This article explores the nuances and opportunities inherent in the ambiguous status of these spaces.

How does life go on, despite or thanks to the absence of planning and building initiatives? Are these areas to be interpreted as passive costs for the city, or

do they offer services and opportunities? Which new cultural values and practices can these spaces promote? Which (human and non-human) intelligence shapes them?

Our inquiry is based on a concrete case study: the 'Krater' in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The story of this place, along with the cultural initiatives surrounding its status and evolution, exemplifies how a Terrain Vague can become a pivotal element in urban transition dynamics, revealing socio-cultural and environmental perspectives that have long been overlooked.

The Limits of Planning - Urban Voids in the Authoritarian City

Planning anticipates and prepares for the future, guided by cultural and functional visions that shape choices and decisions. Tracing paradigms that inform these foundational visions, and deconstructing the relationship between spaces, norms, and socio-cultural interpretations, allows us to understand contemporary urban dynamics critically and renew our approach to thinking about the future. Urban voids are a perfect test terrain to explore this perspective. Within Planning documents, urban voids are generally associated with public mineral spaces or with spaces of domesticated nature, such as well-delimited and regulated parks and gardens, presenting a variable delta of commonness, privacy, and cultural importance. These voids fit into precise categories and



serve specific roles in public life. They also play a role as elements of future projects in making the city's future acceptable and desirable.

In recent decades, major European cities have incorporated a rather generic (and yet over-regulated) notion of Green into their spatial policies, flattening the complexity these spaces incarnate into a bi-dimensional normative characterization. Through the

years, the state-led production of Urban Projects in the '70s and '80s, the Public-private districts of the 2000s, the more recent C40's Re-inventing Cities financial models, all have used this generic and service-oriented dimension of 'Green' and 'Green void' as a key selling point of new real-estate operations (Bengtson & Mossberg, 2023).

As Farinella illustrates in his recent reflection against

Fig. 1 - Krater's topography in winter
(photo: Amadeja Smrekar).

Fig. 2 - Krater's topography in summer
(photo by A. delli Ponti).

the Authoritarian City (Farinella, 2024), a forest of rhetorical green operates as a 'Troy horse' to produce consensus towards planning policies that allow extensive land consumption and diffuse high-rise development (Tozzi, 2023). Becoming through the years the dominant framework through which the 'Future' is envisioned, invalidating the very goals ascribed by EU in its documents for a - Just and Green Transition.

In the context of these initiatives, it is hard to identify the cultural and social values of a general vision that might have guided planning decisions. We rather recognize the signs of the post-democratic condition denounced by Colin Crouch, in which the cultural and political dimension of planning and open-space design are put under siege by the authoritative power of financial capital (Crouch, 2004). Under this purely functional paradigm, the city spaces and the social bodies that inhabit them are understood as mechanical parts of a 'growth machine' (Molotch, 1976) existing in function of a potential value extraction (Harvey, 2008). Spatial Planning has hard times answering these challenges, the time scales upon which it operates are extremely long, the process of strategic elaboration and validation are complex and articulated in numerous administrative steps, the scale of the phenomena it is called to regulate escapes the limits of its governance capacity. Spatial Planning opposes inertia to the volatile flexibility and effectiveness of

the financial market powers and of the construction industry.

This operative condition reveals the struggle between speculative expectations for the future, understood as shaped by economic actors, and the latent values of local spatial and living systems (human and nonhuman) that represent a longer-lasting memory of the city as an inhabited space.

It thus becomes interesting to explore those spaces that do not fit in the proper categories of planning documents, spaces in which authenticity, improvisation and open intelligence are still possible. The best way to understand how a planning system functions is to observe the spaces of exception that escape its system of control, regulation and maintenance - blurry areas where the spatio-temporal constraints that organize "urban worlds" are suspended and a radical alternative seems to be proven possible (Baboulet 2002).

Terrain Vague and Urban Vacant Land Potential

In contemporary cities, one often encounters a peculiar type of space—ambiguous and undecided, frequently appearing almost invisible. Various authors have attempted to define these underdeveloped and underutilized urban open spaces, devoid of any productive or official function, abandoned, and existing in a transitory state: *Terrain Vague* (Lévesque, 2001; 161

Mariani & Barron, 2014; Solà-Morales, 1995), Vacant Land (Bowman & Pagano, 2004; Pagano & Bowman, 2000), Urban Voids (Lopez-Pineiro, 2020), Wasteland (Gandy, 2013, 2022), or Third Landscape (Clément, 2022). These spaces may result from various factors, such as geographical conditions or, more commonly, rapid and uncontrolled urban planning coupled with a lack of integration in legislative tools across broader scales and different planning levels, thereby creating ambiguous residual spaces. These spaces can be seen as the B-side of the ideal “postal card” of the future city delivered by the media, unproductive in economic terms, and yet meaningful for local communities that use them as a secret gateway to a realm of improvisation, cultural experimentation and communion with the living.

Although typically regarded as degraded areas or mere opportunities for profit, there is a substantial and growing body of scientific literature exploring the social, ecological, and economic value of these spaces and their potential within urban life (Brighenti, 2013; Gandy, 2022; Kim, 2016; Lopez-Pineiro, 2020; Mariani & Barron, 2014). Many scholars focus on the ecosystem services provided by terrain vague (Kim et al., 2015; McPhearson et al., 2013), the richness of their biodiversity, and the role of spontaneous nature (Clément, 2022; Gandy, 2022). They highlight the opportunities these spaces present for conversion into public green spaces or nature-based solutions, their

role in mitigating environmental risks such as flooding, and their importance as sites for spontaneous appropriation by diverse communities, enabling informal uses that reveal unacknowledged and unmet local needs (Kamvasinou, 2020; Kamvasinou & Roberts, 2014). These areas function as biodiversity reserves where endemic and migratory plant and animal species find refuge and space to co-evolve, free from the intensive maintenance practices of typical urban parks (Lenoir, 2018).

Indeed, terrain vague offers a unique intersection of social and ecological interests (Anderson & Minor, 2017). The values of authenticity that are hard to find in new urban developments and freshly planted parks are here granted by informal settings, spontaneous vegetation, and preserved older plantations. Terrain vague represents fragments and exceptions within the urban fabric. Yet, it holds the potential to connect to the city’s broader environmental systems, becoming a key node in the green and blue infrastructure, contributing to raise awareness on the relevance of other neglected landscapes such as railway service areas or residual green spaces along mobility axis. The terrain vague has the trans-scalar capacity to connect and nurture larger robust environmental systems. When integrated, these b-side landscapes form a traversable and usable environmental network for pollinators, animals, and fungi, creating a living substrate for the city.

The greatest challenge posed by terrain vague, as identified by the author who originally coined the term (Solà-Morales, 1995), lies in the difficulty of intervening and designing within these spaces. Due to their transient and undecided nature, coupled with their legislative fragility, any intervention risks being destructive or overly invasive, erasing their previous diversity and freedom. These spaces constantly appear to be on the verge of disappearing forever, along with their intrinsic qualities. Nevertheless, over the past two decades, a range of alternative and innovative formal projects and practices have challenged traditional design approaches, proposing a new vision for terrain vague (Kamvasinou, 2014, 2017, 2020; Kamvasinou & Roberts, 2014). These socio-ecological approaches aim to intervene in such spaces while simultaneously preserving their intrinsic value and essence (Iannizzotto et al., 2024; Iannizzotto & Paio, 2023).

In times when the environmental footprint and economic cost of building new parks rises exponentially due to the increased scarcity of sand, vegetal soils, and climate-resistant plants (delli Ponti 2024), the Terrain Vague allows for radical optimizations. It offers a space to regenerate fertile soils locally, it hosts valuable and old trees, as well as interesting invasive plants that can be used to qualify surfaces with reduced maintenance costs. While neoliberal planning interprets the city soil as a bidimensional *Excel grid*

ordering land costs and potential revenues, the Terrain Vague valorises the soil as a deep and complex ecosystem - a key resource in which the presence of specific bacteria and insects prepares the ground for higher fertility. In terms of time scales, the Terrain Vague opposes the short and medium-term life span of urban programs for commercial and tertiary areas, with the long-term memory of living systems, of monumental tree exemplars and living soils. The invisible witness of urban transformations surrounding it, season after season.

The Story of Krater, (SL) Ljubljana

The story of Krater is emblematic of how a Terrain Vague can become a key element in the dynamics of urban transition, revealing emergent socio-cultural and environmental values. The story of Krater has been reconstructed thanks to a site visit organized in 2023 and an interview conducted in 2024 with M. Arch. Danica Sretenović - Creative Co-Leader of Krater and content curator of cultural programs at Krater. That of Krater is a story in which various protagonists and levels of interpretation overlap: the physical characteristics of the land, including its dimensions, depth, non-human inhabitants, and biodiversity; the administrative history, encompassing urban planning interventions at both municipal and national scales, and their relationship with the dynamics of groups of researchers, creatives, and activ-



Fig. 3 - Plan of the city and Krater (open-street map collage, image by the authors).

ists who seek a new dimension to identify commons and transform their contexts of belonging.

Season 1. Discovery and activation

In 2020, the *Trajna* Collective, an interdisciplinary group of designers, ecologists, biologists, permaculturists, and architects based in Ljubljana, identified and entered a disused, abandoned, and underutilized space in a densely populated and heavily trafficked area of the city. This particular Terrain Vague, later named *Krater* by the collective's members, was an 18,000 m² area surrounded by a fence. It had been left abandoned since 1990 following the demolition of a large military complex. Over time, it had been used as a quarry for extracting materials used in the construction of houses throughout the surrounding neighbourhood. As is often the case with such spaces, various competitions and projects had been proposed over the years to plan its future, yet none had come to fruition. This prolonged the space's uncertain status indefinitely. By the time *Krater* was rediscovered and explored by the collective members, it appeared as an expansive pit, resembling a crater (hence the name). Due to its prolonged abandon-

ment, as well as excavation activities and the use of heavy machinery, pioneering and invasive plants thrived and intermingled with a variety of other species. This led to the formation of a peculiar ecosystem, rich in biodiversity and of significant ecological interest. Drawn by the possibilities and potential of the space, and eager to explore opportunities for innovative and alternative artistic production sites, the collective leveraged the growing public and media attention on the unused land. They successfully negotiated an agreement with the Ministry of Justice, the current manager of the publicly owned land, to reopen the space for public use. A one-year renewable contract was signed by three collectives. In exchange for the land's concession, they assumed responsibility for its management, public accessibility, and maintenance. Furthermore, they utilized funding from a European project to support their initiatives.

Season 2. Collective Explorations and Experimentations

Over time, the initial *Trajna* Collective expanded into a larger group that brought together the three founding collectives, friends, and new interested in-



Fig. 4 - Krater local resources-based design (photo by the authors).

dividuals. This larger group adopted the name Krater Collective. Initially composed of approximately 30 members, it could occasionally involve a broader network of participants, numbering around 80 people. This collective began taking on tasks related to mak-

ing the space publicly accessible such as cleaning, organizing, constructing, painting, and improving accessibility. Additionally, and more importantly, they focused on the management, maintenance, and care of the site, as well as organizing events and ensur-



ing public access. Entrance to the space is controlled through a gate created and managed by the collective. This gate ensures the site is open, public, and accessible to everyone during operating hours when collective members are present. When closed, it signals the absence of the collective, allowing the space to exist without human oversight. This approach accommodates the high level of interest in the site's biodiversity, facilitating a balance between public and social events and periods when the space can thrive undisturbed by human activity. The first major activities in the space revolved around establishing an alternative productive site. Here, the collective experimented with creative production using residual, recycled, and waste materials, as well as invasive plants (e.g., wood, paper, and clay). They also organized guided walks to study and observe the site's unique ecosystem.

Season 3. A Cultural Adventure

Despite the ongoing activities and growing popularity of the collective, in 2021 the national government selected the Krater site for the construction of the Palace of Justice—a large complex intended to consolidate several courts, parking facilities, and other functions. Due to significant challenges in the polit-

ical, planning, and legislative frameworks to incorporate and recognize the value of pre-existing practices and activities on the site, as well as its spontaneous and feral nature, the national competition launched for the design of the new Palace of Justice treated the space as a *tabula rasa*—a mere void without qualities or value, ready for development from blank. As a result, for example, the winning proposal of the competition included three underground levels, necessitating extensive excavation that would inevitably destroy the existing ecosystem. To prevent the destruction of this ecosystem and to encourage innovative solutions, the Krater Collective chose not to merely protest the proposed project. Instead, they organized an event, a conference, and an alternative competition titled the Feral Palace. This international competition aimed to inspire alternative approaches and solutions that would consider the ecological value and ecosystem of Krater. It sought proposals rooted in principles such as zöonomic methodology, multispecies urbanism, and more-than-human commoning, demonstrating their feasibility through concrete design proposals. Moreover, the competition was not conceived as a traditional architectural contest but as a collaborative learning event lasting several months. It included lectures, workshops,

Fig. 5 - Public meeting in Kraters pavilion
(photo by A. delli Ponti).

field visits, and interdisciplinary team projects involving not only architects and designers but also lawyers, ecologists, biologists, and environmental social scientists. The teams were guided by international mentors, including Klaas Kuitenbrouwer (Het Nieuwe Instituut), author of the term multispecies urbanism; Debra Solomon (Urbaniahoeve Foundation), a researcher in social-ecological transformations; Rok Kranjc (Institute for Ecology), co-founder of the Krater creative laboratory; Gaja Mežnarić Osole (Trajna); and architect Danica Sretenović. During the event, eight proposals were developed, each exploring different scenarios for the future of the space. From the competition, discussions, and lectures, several critical issues emerged and were addressed. These included the outdated and rigid nature of planning processes, the lack of legislative tools to recognize the value of spontaneous nature, the absence of a holistic vision for ecosystems extending beyond individual plots, and the importance and richness of soil as a living, complex ecosystem. These issues highlighted the extensive damage caused by excavation and architectural projects that treat soil as an inert void. The outcomes also led to the development of a protocol for designing with an awareness of soil's living ecosystem, called the SOIL Protocol.

Season 4. Expanding influence in an uncertain future

Following the experience of the Feral Palace—a highly attended event that garnered significant public and scientific outreach and impact—the members of the collective continued their reflections on the Krater site, broadening the scale of their focus. Through the practice of Feral Cartography, they critically examined traditional and hegemonic cartographic and representational tools, highlighting the invisibility and lack of representation of such spaces and other essential elements of life and ecosystems, such as soil. This approach allowed the collective to expand the discourse around Krater to encompass other spaces and scales, both urban and territorial, while also building networks with similar cases in other countries, thus broadening their research to an international panorama. This expansion enabled the collective to engage in broader considerations concerning urban planning and legislation and to participate in European calls and competitions alongside similar projects across Europe, all without losing focus on Krater. Despite the widespread resonance and impact of their events, Krater remains a buildable site, with no change in its zoning designation, and, critically, no legislative tools have been introduced to pro-



Fig. 6 - Krater feral landscape
(photo: Amadeja Smrekar).

tect its rich ecosystem. For this reason, the collective considers participation in European initiatives, such as Future DiverCities—of which the collective is a member—to be essential. These initiatives aim to drive change and advocate for a revision of European legislation to better protect and safeguard urban spontaneous nature. While the authors are writing this article, Krater's future remains highly uncertain, as the concession contract for the site is set to expire in December 2024.

From Planning to Care policies, recognizing the Rights of Nature

The Krater experiment reveals the opportunity to envision planning and the urban Plan from new perspectives. It illustrates the possibility of thinking of the Future not as an a-contextual image, top-bottom cast to promote urban growth, but rather as the unpredictable result of the progressive and collective evolution of local values and spaces. It proves the importance of involving local populations and knowledge communities in planning choices so that transformations are opportunities to create a bond between different social groups, to stitch together local territories, and to co-create a shared memory.

The protocols of planning - zoon, replace, demolish, build - are here opposed by a logic of - observation, socio-environmental co-evolution, and care - that can generate specific care-oriented policies at different scales (delli Ponti, 2024). Environment and landscape no longer appear as adjectives of the city but as integrated living systems. They are endowed with their autonomy to human life and choices.

The curators of the Krater did not want to promote generic protection of greenery *per se*, nor condition the protection of the existing landscape to the services it should deliver to the city: from protection of pollinators to the space for testing the climate resistance of new plants, from the function of soil regeneration to that of a reservoir for excess rainwater. Instead, the focus has been on the existing ecosystem relationships, their transcalar dimension, and their depth. Documenting the extent and relevance of this natural system, as it has been done in recent years, is a prerequisite for recognizing the natural bodies of the Krater as 'legal subjects' so to grant the emerging nature a right to exist and be permanent in time. Recognized nature as a juridical subject allows to apply in planning what Hans Jonas called a 'principle of responsibility' (Jonas, 1979), whereby every action

Fig. 7 - Night event in Krater
(photo: Amadeja Smrekar).



corresponds to a systemic consequence of which one must be fully aware. In 2024, local public institutions initiated a reflection to transform the analysis and curatorial process tested on the Krater into a protocol applicable to other sites with similar characteristics in Ljubljana and other Slovenian cities. This approach allows planning to renew its tools by learning from these initiatives.

Towards Creative Urban Commons – Intersecting social, cultural and ecological interests

Observing Krater's social and cultural dynamics through the seasons, we recognize two movements: a progressive opening towards citizenship and neighbours and a need to institutionalize initiatives, creating links with research centres and EU institutions. This dual process integrates Krater's cultural initiatives within a local and global network of actors. The creative community of curators who discovered, protected, and valorised Krater launched a cultural battle to counter conventional urban transformation approaches. They sought to challenge the prevailing visual culture of the neoliberal city through artistic research, documentary photography, and the progressive institutionalization of Krater as a cultural

centre. Rather than viewing the 'creative city' (Landry, 2008) as a product of top-down strategies to attract capital, Krater defines an emergent, spontaneous pathway to the 'creative city', a pathway along which the inherited separation of humankind and of its socio-technical creations from "wilderness" is recomposed through new cultural and community rites (Gentili & Giardini, 2020). We can observe the emergence of a mutually empowering contract, binding the citizenship of tomorrow with the root-forces of everlasting (and re-emerging) naturality, in which preserved wilderness becomes a political object (Coccia, 2020). The Terrain Vague is not merely a space to exhibit culture but to produce it and make a difference in the city. It thus becomes a tool to shape society by focusing on two principles: the creative dimension of socio-cultural dialogue and co-construction; the deep relationship with the context, understood as a living body where individuals act as observers and curators. Krater becomes a new type of space – a park for creativity and knowledge production. In this context, such initiatives can be interpreted and conceived as *Urban Commons* (Borch & Kornberger, 2015; Dellenbaugh-Losse et al., 2018; Petrescu & Petcou, 2023; Urban Commons Research Collective,

2022), that is, as resources appropriated, organized, and managed directly by the community, not aimed at profit, and facilitated through processes of Commoning (Belingardi, 2015; Stavrides, 2014, 2016). In this case, the primary spatial resource is the terrain vague of Krater, encompassing all its material elements and the complex, rich life of human and non-human communities. Precisely due to its condition of abandonment and transition, this space becomes a privileged site for spontaneous and informal appropriations, as well as experimentation. Indeed, urban community gardens—one of the clearest examples of Urban Commons—often emerge in underutilized and abandoned spaces, namely terrain vague. However, in this instance, we are not dealing with a simple urban community garden or a traditional public green space such as a park or square, but rather with a new type of emergent local community space. Compared to classical examples and more well-known urban commons projects, the Krater experience offers new insights, inviting a reconsideration and updating of the definition of urban commons and the categorization of such practices. The uniqueness of the Krater project lies in its complex interaction with the non-human, the unplanned, the spontaneous, and the temporal dimension. This interplay challenges the traditional concepts of ‘resource’ and ‘commoners’, typically confined to the human species, by exploring new forms of collaboration, towards a possible reimagining of feral urban commons or feral public spaces.

Towards a new type of feral common space?

To define and describe its practices, the Krater collective frequently uses the adjective feral, explicitly ref-

erencing the work of Anna L. Tsing (Haraway, 2019; Tsing et al., 2020), as well as the publications and projects *Feral Atlas* (2020), curated and edited by Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou, and *Feral Trade* (2003) by Kate Rich (Sretenović & Osole, 2022). In these contexts, the term feral is specifically employed to denote “situations in which an entity, nurtured and transformed by a human-made infrastructural project, assumes a trajectory beyond human control” (Tsing et al., 2020). The use of this term aims not only to move beyond the negative connotation often associated with it but, more importantly, to shift the focus toward the significance of non-human entities. By doing so, it challenges the traditional human-nature dichotomy, fostering a perspective rooted in contact, interaction, and contamination (Gentili & Giardini, 2020). Emerging projects such as Krater highlight the need for a new type of urban community green space that challenges traditional categories and typologies of urban public spaces. These conventional frameworks, referenced by outdated legislative systems and planning tools, often fail to safeguard and capture the essence of such spaces. This emerging typology of community green spaces observes, studies, preserves, and revalues spontaneous and feral urban nature, demonstrating its importance and necessity within the context of urban ecological transition. It proposes a novel concept of a feral urban common space where human and non-human communities coexist, observe each other, and mutually respect their interrelations. Furthermore, projects like Krater emphasize the significance of social, cultural, and creative processes in activating and managing such spaces, underscoring the disruptive

and innovative potential of grassroots initiatives for their governance. Finally, these community-led and bottom-up interventions, characterized by minimal, flexible approaches tailored to the spatial potential, serve as local catalysts. By employing adaptable interventions and temporary activities, they respond to the evolving needs of the local context while simultaneously emphasizing and enhancing the intrinsic qualities and characteristics of the space, effectively leveraging local resources.

Innovative Practices in Urban Voids for Future Planning Challenges

In conclusion, exploring Ljubljana's 'Krater' underscores the transformative potential of urban voids. Often overlooked and undervalued, these spaces reveal a rich tapestry of ecological and cultural dynamics that challenge conventional urban planning paradigms. The Krater serves as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of both human and non-human actors in the face of urban transformations. By embracing the ambiguity and potential of these spaces, cities can foster innovative practices that contribute to a more just and green transition. The lessons from the 'Krater' highlight the importance of rethinking urban voids as active participants in the urban ecosystem, capable of driving socio-cultural and environmental change. The Terrain Vague serves as a dynamic learning space, fostering a new ecology of the mind for both occupants and local communities, reshaping our collective perspective on urban evolution and future planning. This research can be expanded by comparing similar 'spatial heroes' across Europe, to validate the emergence of new relationships between human and non-human

communities. Further research can also explore the potential impact of these new spatial conditions on urban strategies in an era of increased unpredictability. This case study calls on urban planners, policy-makers, and communities to become stewards - curators - of their local areas. Reimagining the potential of vacant urban spaces as cultural hubs and transforming them into catalysts for sustainable, low-impact living is crucial to inhabiting our territories in a more mindful way.

Acknowledgment of Support and Contributions

The two authors contributed in equal terms to the article. The authors sincerely thank The Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) for funding the author's research grant with the reference 2022.11783.BD, and DINAMIA'CET-Iscte - Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies for supporting the author's research activities and deeply thank M. Arch. Danica Sretenović for her kind availability and for the rich exchange of ideas. The story of Krater has been reconstructed through a site visit and an interview.

The site visit, conducted by A. delli Ponti, was organized by M. Arch. Monika Tomiňsek in 2023, during the "Banquet of Feral Occupations: Acts of Reciprocity for Krater's Creative Practices," event part of the 35th Graphic Biennial in Ljubljana. The interview was conducted by both authors in 2024 with M. Arch. Danica Sretenović, Creative Co-Leader of Krater and content curator of cultural programs at Krater.

This work was supported by FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P. by project reference and DOI identifier <https://doi.org/10.54499/2022.11783.BD>.



Fig. 8 - Krater pavilion and green density in summer (photo by A. delli Ponti).



Fig. 9 - Krater design and community (photo by Amadeja Smrekar).

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