

# instances of urban practice

at la Biennale Architettura 2021

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Instances of Urban Practice,  
an instillation by raumlaborberlin  
in the Venice Biennale di Architettura  
“How will we live together?”  
opening May 23rd 2021

Instances of urban practice is about shifting the perspective in architecture: from the built object to architectural practice, from thing or final outcome to a qualified process – architecture as an action that takes a societal position.

With instances of urban practice raumlabor presents two environments that are currently in the process of being negotiated on site. Two environments where raumlabor is involved within a diverse network of collaborators as initiator, negotiator, space-creator, mediator and caretaker. The Floating University and Haus der Statistik. Both are located in Berlin, adjacent to outstanding places: Floating University neighboring the former Tempelhof airport, and Haus der Statistik just off Alexanderplatz. They have very different characteristics and physical appearances but are both built on the same philosophy. Both share their origin in an artistic claim and initiative, growing into complex forms of self-organization and public-civic or scientific-artistic-civic cooperations. We love to see them as learning spaces. Learning in the sense of how to relearn ways of another city making, that

is aware of the pressing questions of our tomorrows: the relationships of us as humans to the planetary dimension and the question of the right to the city. This includes talking care of dynamic processes of acquiring knowledges, adopting, and reacting towards the evolution of the spatial and social forms.

Our installation in Arsenale consists of a scaffolding structure and a bubble room, referencing the architecture of the Floating University in 2018. In the exhibit, the scaffolding becomes the frame for pictures and graphics from both contexts: one side tells the story of the Floating, the other side that of the Haus der Statistik. The key graphic on each side is a timeline, that shows the cooperation, networks and events and thus gives the snapshots above in the installation a context.

Our instillation shows two examples of collaborative approaches to create common spaces of experimentation and exploration towards unknown futures. The openness of both projects allows for individuals and groups to join and engage on their own terms, enriching the collective sphere with their perspectives and expertise.

Both are evolving into non-disciplinary environments, challenging experience from all fields to find modes of translating their knowledges into the ongoing dynamics of the process. Both projects offer complex forms for supporting emerging communities to co-create the future city.

Responding to the question how will we live together? ... in emerging communities

We believe it is through extending architecture as a discipline into fields of contemporary societal struggles. By taking collective efforts in making a better city. By being part of a community where proposals for common possible futures are developed in dialogue and in resonance with the evolving situation on site. By understanding and engaging with urban transformation, reading power structures, understanding the driving interests of a multiplicity of stakeholders and placing an own agenda within that. We believe the urban practitioner cannot stay neutral. By getting involved the practitioner becomes a navigator of complex fields of possible futures.

press images can be accessed here:  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1iLy1bmQMB3ZOPfEQQ1iuXFhNs-sA51GV?usp=sharing>  
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## Background Floating University

Floating University is a carefully designed place, where human-made architectures intertwine with the habitat of a multitude of organisms. In a water basin consisting of polluted urban surface water, it presents a paradoxical paradise for parallel and common actions. A place of ongoing surprises and encounters. The openness of the structures motivates the permeation of ideas and relationships between Individuals, university groups, initiatives, neighbors and other species.

The Floating is now in a state of transition itself. Initiated in 2018 by a small team around Benjamin Foerster Baldenius, Florian Stirnemann, Dorothee Halbrock and Licia Soldavini, bringing together expertises from raumlabor and beyond, the first years achievements include an architectural prototype for use, a trans-disciplinary festival format and a multitude of co-operations by invitation - including

performance groups, universities, professionals and non-professionals. Active work was put into developing networks with the neighborhood. The Kids University invited the young to their specific program. Towards the end of the year a group of friends of the Floating, many of which involved in one or the other way over the year, decided to join energies to work on maintaining and further developing the Floating. They founded an association: Floating e.V..

From then the Floating is a self governed, multi-disciplinary pluralistic entity. In 2019 the festival „CLIMATE CARE“ curated by Rosario Talevi and Gilly Karjevsky of soft agency, brought further discourses and styles. The relationships formed in 2018 grew, more members joined and in 2020 the Floating Association started

to reconfigure and prepare for the future. Optimism in pandemic times, nourished by mutual support. The imaginary became reality, the people attached to the Floating are building not only a place, but also its dynamics, intense relationships, friendships, discourses, expertise. Today, the Association is working on a common future for the site and the city and its new possible imaginaries.

more info:  
<https://www.floatinguniversity.org/>



## Background Haus der Statistik

Haus der Statistik is a GDR government office building of the late 1960s, which had stood empty and abandoned since 2008. Driven by a coalition of the civic society it is now in a phase of transition into a civically run space for affordable living, art, culture, social and educational programs. Initiated by a group of artists and placed in the discourses of gentrification, rising prices in Berlin and the right to the city - Haus der Statistik is turning into a showcase for new collaborative protocols.

The civic actors have consolidated in the ZUSAMMENKUNFT Berlin cooperative, of which raumlabor is a founding member, co-designing its evolution and working together on the shared future. In the KOOP5 Berlin's Senate department for urban development, the district of Mitte, WBM - a public housing company, BIM - Berlin's real estate department and the ZUSAMMENKUNFT work in close collabora-

tion. Together decisions are taken in consent. It is an outstanding example for a new way of making the city – together.

The Initiative understands and engages with urban transformation, reading power structures, understanding driving interests of a multiplicity of stakeholders, and placing its own agenda within.

One of the tools the Initiative uses to activate the building during construction is pioneer users. There is a choir "Chor der Statistik", an art project initiated by raumlaborberlin in collaboration with Bernadette La Hengst for Berlin Art week as part of STATISTA. The choir is made up of neighbors and city dwellers who meet to sing utopian songs about the city. The old bumper car rink in the courtyard is used for dance classes. Bees now

live on the roof and a community garden flourishes. It was the site for our "making futures school", a prototype for a school for spatial practice that is acting as an engaged form inside an evolving situation. Looking deeper into collaborative modes of knowledge production and exchange, we focused on questions around architecture as a resource and architecture as a collective form. The school itself is conceived as a collaborative testbed with more than 150 participants and 500 visitors.

more info:

<https://hausderstatistik.org/>

<https://zusammenkunft.berlin/>

<https://www.making-futures.com/>

# raumlaborberlin

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## Bio (mission statement)

Raumlabor is an architectural practice working on urban transformations on many levels and in experimental ways since 1999. We adopted the term urban practice, a way of working towards the city as a whole in a trans- to non-disciplinary way. In our works you can find an inherent conviction, that the city is co-produced between all of us, as a physical expression of all our ongoing activities. We develop frames that bring people together activating agency, acting in a common form, against tendencies of singling and isolation. We are interested in exploring the commons as a form of urban governance, aiming at fostering self-organization and cooperation. We strongly believe that that there is a potential of scaling through a network of connected commons activities.

## Bio (series of facts)

Raumlabor, est. in 1999, is a collaborative practice of around 20-30 practitioners with a core of nine long-term members whose works sit at the intersections of architecture, urbanism, public art and activism, often proposing playful, temporary or speculative urban prototypes aimed at transforming the city, our collective imaginaries, our ways of doing (different) and in the long-term society and our built environment.

## Partners:

Andrea Hofmann  
Axel Timm  
Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius  
Christof Mayer  
Florian Stirnemann  
Francesco Apuzzo  
Frauke Gerstenberg  
Jan Liesegang  
Markus Bader



## Selected Awards and Recognitions:

Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, 2018  
Curry Stone Design Prize - Social Design Circle, 2017  
Core77 Design Award, 2017  
Berlin Award, Heimat in der Fremde, 2016  
Götaland Architecture Prize, 2016  
Kasper Salin Award, nomination 2015  
Future Housing Architecture Award, 2012  
Hans-Schaeffers-Award, mention, 2004