

It is about building community Interview with Mariana Alegre on how to create better public spaces for everyone

What is the idea behind Ocupa tu Calle?

“We focus on transforming public spaces.”

We focus on transforming public spaces, but we do not only have in mind the public space itself. Rather we focus on the process that we start by transforming public spaces. By taking some spaces of the city back to the citizens, and with their participation during that process, we actually want to have an impact on public policies, on private practices and of course on citizens behaviour. What is more, we make use of all interactions and create working relationships with all stakeholders, the community, the municipalities, the companies and with universities.

What can you achieve through these urban interventions?

The idea of these urban interventions ultimately is to improve the quality of life for people. It's not only about having a new bench to sit on or about having a better public transport stop. It is actually about building community. Over the course of these projects, you can make people work together on what they really want. It is like testing a process or a model of engagement that can then be replicated with a much bigger investment of public money, without the mistakes of the pilot project. So, you can actually try to find out what the project should be all about and in so doing you will enable a better public space for everyone.

How do you cooperate with local authorities?

We are accumulating and working with urban data for quite some time, in the framework of the Lima como vamos project. So local governments already know us and they are actually keen to know more about innovations and new ways of doing city for people. So, they are quite interested in learning and in taking action, as long as it will help them with their goals. You need to actually be very, very careful and to make sure to provide them the opportunities to succeed. At the same time, you want to leverage some of the benefits of the process with the community, with their citizens and of course with the media. The key for this is to actually have a public face that can communicate the results and the benefits not only to the authorities but also to the community and the general public.

How can small-scale interventions influence regular city-planning?

We see ourselves as facilitators of change processes and as articulators of public needs. We are not the ones making or re-making public spaces. We want local governments to do that. Or maybe also companies who could do better in managing areas within public spaces. So, with that in mind we do make pilots. And by observing these pilots either the companies or public governments could learn new processes and incorporate them in their core business or policy planning. Particularly when you

“It is actually about building community.”

develop several these projects, you will find commonalities and overarching lessons and these can be incorporated for example in the city plan or, for example, the activities of the public work office. Or they could inform the process of participatory committees. So, our aim is not to do stand-alone projects. Rather it is to engage all stakeholders. Then, of course, it will be great if, as a result of our efforts, a municipality will produce a public space plan with urban intervention as one of the faces of the renovation of the city. But even if that is not happening, you can always use some of the resources you acquired during the process and connect the money and the people in the different areas of the municipality to actually work for better public spaces for the community.

“We see ourselves as facilitators of change processes.”

Mariana Alegre

Mariana Alegre is Executive Director of Lima Cómo Vamos. She studied Law at Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP) and has a MSc in City Design and Social Science (London School of Economics). When studying her first Master in Human Rights, she decided to promote urban rights. She has been involved in several researches and academic work, in particular about sustainable urban mobility, public spaces and urban renewal with social inclusion processes. Since 2010, Mariana, is the Director of Lima Cómo Vamos, a citizen observatory (www.limacomovamos.org) whose mission is to evaluate the quality of life of Lima's citizens, and promotes the strategy “Ocupa Tu Calle” (www.ocupatucalle.org) that seeks to recover and create more public spaces. She is also a professor and coordinator of Social Management in the Business School of PUCP and writes a weekly column in Peru 21 journal.



Imprint

The Development and Peace Foundation (sef:) was founded in 1986 on the initiative of Willy Brandt. It is a cross-party and non-profitmaking organisation. sef: provides an international high-level forum for shared thinking on the complex challenges of globalisation..

sef: insight is an online publication to accompany key conferences hosted by sef:. It presents interviews with international experts as well as opinion pieces on pressing issues of local, regional and global governance.

Published by
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)
Dechenstr. 2 | 53115 Bonn | Germany
Phone +49 (0)228 959 25-0 | Fax -99
sef@sef-bonn.org | [@sefbonn](https://twitter.com/sefbonn)
www.sef-bonn.org

Editor
Dr. Mischa Hansel

Design Basic Concept
Pitch Black Graphic Design
Berlin/Rotterdam
Layout
Gerhard Suess-Jung

Contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher.
ISSN 2566-7262
© sef: 2019