In cities and neighbourhoods throughout the world, citizens and communities are resisting, organizing themselves and generating alternatives to challenge an imposed urbanization model based solely on market rules that systematically generates social and economic exclusion. These alternatives mitigate the negative impacts of a crisis, sometimes referred to as “3F” (Food, Fuel and Finance).

From 2013 to 2015 six dossiers will be published as part of the collection: “Another city is possible! Alternatives to the city as a commodity”. The dossiers will introduce some of these alternatives and their actors and also include written and visual resources for those who want to know more and become involved. These are far from exhaustive accounts of the alternative ways that people are building “other possible and liveable cities”, realising Utopian ideals envisioned through the World Social Forum. However, each one of the alternatives listed below corresponds, in our opinion, to the most promising ways to reclaim the “Right to the City”.

(i) Participatory Budgeting (forthcoming 2013)
(ii) Alternatives to forced evictions – staying in place (forthcoming 2013)
(iii) Housing and Employment co-operatives
(iv) Community Land Trusts (CLTS)
(v) Complementary and local currencies
(vi) Urban and peri-urban Agriculture, from a food sovereignty perspective

Each one of these six topics plays a key role in an alternative urban production system, beyond simply market rules. And yet whilst each one of them is expanding remarkably in different parts of the world, their combination as a system is under-developed. This is due, in part, to the insufficient dialogue between leading actors. Therefore by documenting these experiences and connecting those who are behind them, this series will address a double challenge: the first is to link-up, put in perspective and potentially unify, these different initiatives, both globally and locally. The second is to shift scale and transformative capacity in order to generate a strong alternative to the production of housing and the city as a mere commodity. We are convinced a decisive step into shifting scale comes from linking up these alternatives.

Each one of these dossiers offers a set of around 25 four-page briefings comprising: about 12 case studies; cross sectional analysis; synthesis; threads between the cases in order to go beyond localism; recommendations to scale up; existing and potential bridges between one issue and the five others in order to ‘weave” the system (for instance how PB can and is being used to fund urban agriculture on a regular basis and strengthen food sovereignty); introductions to key players internationally and locally. Accessible basic references, introduction to key websites and a selected filmography complement each one of the files, that are at the same time standing alone and inter-connected. These four-pages briefings are written in the language used at least by some of the people where the experience is built: Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, English or French. The Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation, FPH, will translate all the material in English and French and upload it on their site, CITEGO <www.CITEGO.info> [Cities, Territories, Governance].

The experiences briefly introduced are only the tip of the iceberg. They were selected from many examples according to five criteria: (i) radicalism in terms of deep and structural positive transformation of a given situation (an eviction, unemployment,
etc.), and contribution to direct or at least participatory democracy, and citizen empowerment; (ii) availability and accessibility of information such as field notes, testimonies or grey literature; (iii) Close contact with those who are or have been implementing the alternative, in order to complement and validate what is written; (iv) innovation: the case focuses on some innovative aspects more than on the whole story; (vi) Bridges, existing, planned or potential with the other five issues from the collection (key criteria).

These alternatives mirror the state of struggles and of utopias that turned reality and therefore permanently evolve. The whole project would lose any meaning if action committed readers are not enriching it. You are therefore invited to share experiences worth documenting.

One singular feature of the editorial project is to offer a digital version through the CITEGO website and through partners’ websites with whom agreements are made along the “creative commons” principles. In addition, and on a case-by-case basis, local printing and publishing are envisioned, depending on requests. We invite people, institutions and organizations to express their interest. To date, some collaborations are planned, and hopefully many more will follow: Self-reclaimed Chilavert Co-operative in Argentina expressed interest in publishing in Buenos Aires, and the Inhabitants National Network from Cameroun as well. The dossiers should reach each one of the partners at no cost and in a publishable format.

Using concise, organised and reflexive data, “Another city is possible! Alternatives to the city as a commodity”, aims to contribute to the various Forums that will pave the way towards Habitat III taking place in Istanbul in 2016. Despite its quite modest character, the collection posits a “counter-hegemonic” perspective towards the dominant discourse on the city and our urban future.

These files contribute to CITEGO project (www.citego.info) as an international documentary resource site to exchange, showcase innovation and highlight significant experience in the field of urban governance.

Another city is possible!

Contact:
Yves Cabannes: ycabanes@mac.com
Cecilia Delgado: cmndelgado@gmail.com