ROBERTO CIRILLO • MARIA FRANCESCA DE TULLIO EDS.

HEALING CULTURE, RECLAIMING COMMONS, FOSTERING CARE

N. 3

A PROPOSAL FOR EU CULTURAL POLICIES

in collaboration with

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Cultural Creative Spaces & Cities

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SECTION III
A SYMPATHETIC CONNECTION OF RESEARCH AND ACTION:
ARTIST RESIDENCIES IN ROCCAPORENA, UMBRIA

INTRODUCTION

by Roberto Cirillo and Maria Francesca De Tullio

This book was born within the framework of the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities (CCSC) project[1] thanks to an alliance between an academic institution, the University of Antwerp (the Culture Commons Quest Office); an international network of cultural centres, Trans Europe Halles; and a cultural commons in Naples, Italy, *l'Asilo*[2].

This volume presents a set of cultural policy proposals – ranging from micro-policies to policies at the EU level – capable of supporting cultural commons as a means of addressing issues of democracy, inclusion, social justice, territorial cohesion, and protection of culture workers. Following the example of Practice Theory in the field of International Relations (Neumann 2002, 629; Adler and Pouliot 2011, 14 ss.; Cornut 2017, 4 ss.), this volume will strengthen the case for the consolidation of relatively small participatory practices. These micro-policies can have a considerable impact on policies at a larger scale by elaborating new forms of political self-organisation through concrete experiments, trial and error, and even the successes and pitfalls of utopian aspirations (Latour 1983, 164–165).

This research is also a pilot for two methodological lessons that have been learnt and which are pivotal to the CCSC project (Torre 2020). The first is that cultural policies for commons can only be elaborated by giving voice to the commoners and artists themselves. The second is the need for active forms of financial and non-financial support which aim to free up these actors' time, thus improving the participation of this fragile and precarious demographic. In fact, the CCSC funded and co-coordinated a mixed group of researchers, activists, and arts workers who produced and shared knowledge in connection with a broader community of reference. Therefore, this study is also a participatory experiment. It is interdisciplinary not only in terms of fields of study – ranging from law, policy, philosophy,

[1] See www.spacesandcities.com
[2] See www.exasilofilangieri.it

and economics to urban studies – but also in terms of its connection with expertise related to arts, social, and political activism.

The knowledge produced by commoners during this process has been nourished by the struggles and cultural resistance of inhabitants and workers in the field of arts and culture. However, this book also demonstrates how the research then contributed something back to the struggles of those same actors.[3] Therefore, this work highlights the multiplying effects of supporting "culture as a commons" (CCSC 2020a), which is to say culture produced and made accessible in open, collaborative, and accessible environments. Hence, the study is also aimed at observing the mechanisms and tactics that commoners spontaneously employ to transmit and share knowledge produced collectively.

Healing Culture, Reclaiming Commons, Fostering Care

At this moment in time, culture is at a turning point and requires urgent action to overcome the crisis.

Since 2020, states across Europe and around the world have reacted to COVID-19 with the suspension of cultural activities and events. Now, cultural workers and venues are struggling for survival. In the Italian context, state aid was not always sufficient and was sometimes even inaccessible for a whole category of professionals who had been employed either with very precarious contracts or illegally.[4] The pandemic, therefore, proved revealing when it came to the already unstable conditions of many culture workers.

Nevertheless, culture is surviving as the base of our communities, "as a way to create empathy, give voice to the voiceless, overcome social distance and [the] emptiness of public spaces" (CCSC 2020b). The sector produced artistic and creative responses to the void, often without proper remuneration. For example, concerts, performances, and workshops were made available through digital means or in creative ways to respect safety regulations; artworks were published in open archives. Additionally, culture workers and operators have been building alliances with other workers to reclaim social protection.

Despite this situation, culture is not specifically addressed by the Next Generation EU and the Recovery and Resilience Facility,[5] which

[3] See especially Chapters 5 and 9.

[4] See Chapter 5.

[5] Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

is supposed to determine the pillars of social and economic reconstruction in the EU. While some states are autonomously choosing to use their Recovery and Resilience Plans to support culture, some others are not (Culture Action Europe 2021). Italy, for example, received the highest share of the fund but did not provide for specific investments in culture beyond those beneficial to tourism[6].

This situation raises serious questions about the future of culture and arts, given that they are intrinsically social rights: they are not sufficiently protected by the market alone and require social intervention from the public sector.

Healing Culture, Reclaiming Commons, and Fostering Care are the three urgent needs that this book identifies given the present state of European cultural policies.

Healing culture means providing it with platforms but also recognising the cultural labour that goes on behind the scenes and ensuring sustainable conditions for culture and creative workers as well as the 'social status of artists'[7].

Sustainability is understood here within the framework of Pascal Gielen's (2018) biotope. This represents an ideal-typical abstraction of what is needed to build a long-term artistic career. The model derives from a series of interviews with different kinds of creative workers, highlighting that cultural work is only sustainable when there is a balance between intimate spaces of research and production, peer-to-peer learning, the market, and the civil dimension. Moreover, evidence shows that, while at some point in time all these domains have enjoyed some form of collective or institutional protection, this can now only be said about the market domain. Especially in the aftermath of the financial and debt crisis, European governments have approved austerity policies which have brutally affected culture and the arts. Furthermore, socio-economic changes have weakened the traditional institutions that used to foster each of the biotope's domains.

In response, culture workers across Europe are saying that they do not want to go 'back to normal'.[8] Instead, they are making clear that culture needs social policies to be rethought along with a strengthening of the social pillar within the EU (Bonciu 2018; Grohs 2019).

[6] Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, April 2021, Mission 1, Component 3.

[7] European Parliament resolution of 7 June 2007 on the social status of artists (2006/2249(INI)).

[8] An example is given by the French mobilisation of art workers during March-April 2021, which led to the occupation of theatres all across the nation (Le Huffpost avec AFP 2021).

Given this framework, Reclaiming Commons becomes a way to advocate for new institutional protection for culture and cultural workers of the sort that would strengthen their self-determination and mutual aid while still fulfilling the social duties of the public sector.

The recommendations of the CCSC project view 'Homes of Commons' as cultural and creative spaces for encounters between the EU, local institutions, and the community at large (Torre 2021). Commons are allocated as resources for autonomous, open, and horizontal communities – including cultural and creative workers – to share knowledge and means of production in order to initiate actions of solidarity and mutual aid as well as to prototype their own policy proposals. Therefore, these spaces become permanent arenas for transformation by allowing concrete experimentation with and around different human relationships and forms of production. Their role is to amplify the voices of communities and cultural actors in order to build a bottom-up agenda for local and EU institutions, beginning with existing needs and political practices.

This means implementing the recommendations of the Open Method of Coordination concerning participation in the governance of cultural heritage,[9] as well as safeguarding the very existence of public heritage so as to keep urban spaces open to social use and participation.

Fostering care is a focal point of the process. Society is not uniquely based upon productive labour but rests heavily on so-called reproductive labour, ensuring wellbeing, relationships, and whatever else is necessary to human and non-human life as well as to the environment in general. This labour is often invisible both at the individual and collective level.

Feminist scholars and activists have pointed out that – in the dominant social and economic framework – this work has been unevenly distributed as well as invisibilised and underpaid, if not unpaid altogether. As a result, the present economic system is structurally based on the exploitation of this labour as well as of natural resources. This is why women demand not only visibility for and recognition of this work (Cox and Federici 1976, 11 ss.) – in the form of a salary or care income – but also its reorganisation and redistribution (Zemos98 2017): the objective is to free such work from its instrumentalisation within models of extractive capitalism.

[9] Report of the OMC (Open Method of Coordination) working group of Member States' experts, available at https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/b8837a15-437c-11e8-a9f4-01aa75ed71a1.

This dynamic also exists in a collective dimension. Commoners and cultural actors both undertake a labour of care and real solidarity towards society as a whole (De Angelis 2019). However, the Next Generation EU, as mentioned above, is only the latest example of an institutional tendency to neglect these activities and therefore to exploit instances of spontaneous solidarity without fulfilling the duty to support them.

This was even more evident with the COVID-19 pandemic. The urgency to provide an immediate and concrete response to the crisis gave rise to a sudden increase in mutual aid initiatives (Larre 2020). Communities proved to be resilient, able to work together, and respond to basic needs. In the cultural field, commons provided spaces for cultural workers at a time when the habitual dearth of cultural and creative spaces had been made even worse by the pandemic; moreover, the arts were at the forefront of the reconstruction of peoples' empathetic reach despite social distancing. It should also be noted, however, that social intervention is a major task for the public sector, which has the duty to fulfil fundamental rights. As such, it remains necessary to further investigate how the EU might ensure support for these actions as well as to encourage member states to act in the same way.

Navigating the Book

These issues are addressed by focusing on one commons in particular, *l'Asilo*, which is notably relevant for this project as it has developed – from its beginnings – an unprecedented capacity for using creativity to shape new legal and policy tools.

L'Asilo is an experiment that was born from an occupation by artists. It defines itself as a commons – and is recognised as such by the city government – because of its direct management of a public building by assemblies of artists, activists, and citizens – groups which are open to everyone and that decide by consensus.[10]

By now, *l'Asilo* is a variegated reality. For the purposes of this research, it is considered an interdependent centre of cultural production that collectivises spaces and equipment. As such, it welcomes artists and creatives – individuals and collectives – regardless of their identity and especially when they are in need of time and space for experimentation. In an era of permanent economic crisis, auster-

[10] See Chapter 2.

ity, and budget cuts to culture, these actors are increasingly excluded by the market and outside patronage circles. In its first four years, *l'Asilo* has hosted about two thousand people and five thousand eight hundred open activities for about two hundred thousand viewers. This notwithstanding, self-organisation is not a complete solution in itself but rather a tool for claiming social interventions from institutions, as well as a way of imagining new forms of economic democracy that might inspire and accompany such an intervention, setting off from grassroots practices.

For this reason, *l'Asilo* has also elaborated a vast array of legal institutions and policy proposals at the local level. Among them, this community created a new legal tool, namely the 'urban civic and collective use', through which the city government could formally recognise the assembly's self-regulation without any contract entrusting the building to an individual natural or moral person.[11] Moreover, *l'Asilo* and other Neapolitan commons succeeded in establishing two new institutional bodies, involving commoners and activists themselves as members. These bodies were the Observatory on Commons, and the Council of Audit on Public Resources and Debt, both consultative bodies aiming to raise public debate and make collective proposals on the use of public resources and property as well as on policies which foster the right to the city.

This research into such a commons space was an opportunity to evaluate this knowledge and these methods at the EU level, too. The purpose, then, was to match the Neapolitan experience of commons with the questions emerging from the CCSC research. The earlier results of this work were published in June 2020 in a report titled *The Commons as Ecosystems for Culture*,[12] which was the starting point for a co-creation lab on possible virtual relationships between the EU and participatory local cultural policies.[13] This book is a revised and extended version of that report – developed a year later – and includes reflections and outcomes that were connected to or derived from the original research and its practical applications. On the one hand, some parts of this work were further elaborated within the CCSC project, during the co-creation lab itself, as well as

[11] A focus on the studies from and around *l'Asilo* is available at: http://www.exasilofilangieri.it/approfondimenti-e-reportage/

[12] See https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Commons-as-Ecosystems-for-Culture-Ready-for-the-website.pdf.

[13] See https://www.spacesandcities.com/event/co-creation-lab-commons-sense-resources/.

in the book *Commons. Between Dreams and Reality* (Micciarelli and D'Andrea 2021; Acosta Alvarado 2021) and in the project's final policy recommendations (De Tullio 2021; Cremer 2021). On the other hand, the community of *l'Asilo* continued its own research trajectory by collectively designing an artistic residency in Roccaporena[14] and elaborating policy proposals on the basis of the work done with the CCSC project. Moreover, *l'Asilo* advanced artistic proposals – along with the methods explored in *La Tela*[15] – to match the ongoing protests for the rights of arts and culture workers, which was also the main trigger for and background to the research of the original report of June 2020.

As a result, this book provides three interconnected examples of how commons can produce cultural policies by addressing requests and claims to institutions, enacting grassroots artistic practices of resistance, and making creative use of institutional funds.

Section 1, 'Commons as Ecosystems for Culture', addresses the basic question of how the EU can establish the preconditions for commons to be supported and promoted as a way of creating sustainable ecosystems for cultural and creative work.

Chapter 1, authored by Adriano Cozzolino and Benedetta Parenti, provides an overall picture of how austerity and neoliberalism have affected the notion of culture in the context of EU policies. The essay offers recommendations aimed at countering the growing commodification of culture so as to foster its emancipatory potential by enhancing democracy and providing infrastructure for both culture and commons.

Chapter 2, by Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado, Angelica Bifano, Chiara Cucca, and Angela Dionisia Severino, analyses the case study of *l'Asilo* through the framework of the biotope (see above) in order to investigate how the EU could provide institutional support for commons as creative environments, in order to nourish culture in connection with local communities and social rights.

Chapter 3, by Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado, gives an outline of the *Van Gogh* programme, a proposal developed in the co-creation lab of June 2020 by one of its team of participants,[16] and further elaborates on the recommendations of Chapter 2.

Chapter 4, authored by Andrea de Goyzueta, Margherita D'Andrea, Giuseppe Micciarelli, and Maria Pia Valentini, analyses the issue

[14] See Section 3.

[15] See Section 2.

[16] Van Gogh programme by Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado, Natalie Crue, Dries Van de Velde, Michel Jacquet, Benedetta Parenti: https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Challenge-1-TEAM10-Ana-Sofia-Acosta-Alvarado.pptx.

of remuneration for cultural work starting from the context of commoning activities. It explores the hypothesis of an 'income of creativity and care' provided by the EU and other public institutions as an instrument of emancipation in labour system, following the model of the academic 'sabbatical year'.

The recommendations laid down in chapters 1–4 are the outcome of the theoretical study and analysis of political documents as well as field work involving participant observation undertaken with the community at *l'Asilo* and the post-COVID-19 workers' movements. The researchers organised focus groups, working tables, and public meetings with international academics and cultural practitioners.[17] This opening-up to the broader context of the city and cultural operators was vital to the process and required professional facilitation.[18]

Finally, Chapter 5 contains the translation of a document on cultural policies elaborated by *l'Asilo*, *Intermittenti Spettacolari* and the *Coordinamento Arte Spettacolo Campania*. This is an open call to offer proper support for culture, which would favour young spectators, cultural and artistic venues for emerging professionals, and projects based on cooperation. The proposal was further elaborated in April 2021 by connecting the research undertaken within the CCSC project with the involvement of Neapolitan art workers' movements.

Section 2, '*La Tela*', is a proposal for cultural resistance, born from the same ecosystem as the previous section and complementary to its policy proposals. Sections 1 and 2 both bear the trace of the same thought processes, assemblies, and debates about the survival of arts and culture in general and in the wake of COVID-19 in particular. These led to a form of alternative cultural production based on voluntary self-organisation without, and regardless of, institutional intervention.

La Tela [the canvas] is a collaborative artwork born in the first few months of 2020 as a way to keep community and culture alive despite the physical distancing brought on by COVID-19. Artistic creation was an important language for the expression of desires and possibilities as concerns alternatives to the dominant mechanisms of cultural work often based, as they are, on precariousness, isolation, and competition.

[17] To that effect, credit must be given to our guest experts who shared their knowledge as part of this community process: Luisella Carnelli, Roberto Casarotto, Giuliana Ciancio, Cristina Da Milano, Giorgio De Finis, Pascal Gielen, Bertram Niessen, Hanka Otte, and Christian Raimo.

[18] For this reason, special thanks are due to Angela María Osorio Méndez, who facilitated this complex process of open learning, and to Luna Caricola, who enabled broader participation through her communication and dissemination efforts.

Chapter 6, by Roberto Cirillo and Martina Locorotondo, is the auto-narration of two researchers who contributed to *La Tela* through both artefacts and participation in the collective authorship of the artwork. The essay presents excerpts of the artwork itself as well as its public follow-up in the wake of protests led by arts and theatre professionals in the city.

Chapter 7, authored by Federica Palmieri, Jessica Parola, Marco Sallusto Palmiero, and Roberta Tofani, presents the work made by a research collective who interacted with the *La Tela* experiment. It analyses the patterns of resilience, care, and horizontality that emerge from the artwork and which mirror the nature of the community of *l'Asilo* itself.

The experiment presented in this section is an example of practices that ensure the survival of culture and social bonds, which are rarely visible to policy-makers, since they are not usually involved in EU programmes and consultations. Hence, the open question is how the EU could map these practices, build spaces of encounter for them, and eventually learn from grassroots initiatives to shape cultural policies.

Section 3, 'A Sympathetic Connection of Research and Action: Artist Residencies in Roccaporena, Umbria', describes the experience of *Rockability*[19], a regional project for cohesion and social innovation in Roccaporena, a hamlet of forty-seven inhabitants). The artist residency organised by the project between the 17 and the 25 of August was concurrent with the local community cohousing project and laboratories involving young people in foster care as well as the co-design workshops with the Master's students in Interactive and Participatory Design at the IUAV University in Venice[20].

Chapter 8, by Silvia Quaranta and Alfonso Raus, gives an introduction to the project, its purpose, and its significance for the social reactivation of an insulated community in a seismic area. It narrates efforts to empower the local social fabric and undertake meaningful community activities as well as the role of culture and education in the process.

Chapter 9, written by Silvia Cafora, is a reflection on *Rockability*'s community cohousing where, in August 2020, resident artists lived together with minors from foster care and organised workshops and laboratories with them. Drawing from the experience, the article observes potential connections, which emerged during this period, be-

[19] See http://www.rockability.it/
[20] See https://masterpropart.it/

tween commons and community cohousing based on empathy, mutual learning, and cultural production.

Chapter 10 is an interview with Chiara Cucca and Angela Dionisia Severino, who participated as resident artists in the research for Chapter 1 whilst organising and implementing the artist residency in Roccaporena. Using the lens of the biotope, the interviewees give a retrospective analysis of the residency that they co-organised with the project coordinators. The dialogue sheds light on the needs and concerns of commoners-artists at a time of pandemic and their reconciliation with social purposes.

Chapter 11, authored by Olinda Curia, Stefania Dal Cucco, Michela Rossato, and Silvia Sette, is a report by the IUAV students who participated in workshops where the project's next steps were co-created along with artists and inhabitants by imagining an improved experience of community cohousing and a participatory artistic programme in the town and its surroundings.

The design of the residency was conceived by artists and researchers from *l'Asilo* while they were working on the report *The Commons as Ecosystems for Culture*, in May–June 2020. The research processes therefore fed into this experiment but with the still-open question of how to value the social potential of arts and culture by allowing them to exist independently and sustainably and without exploiting or instrumentalising them.

Finally, the conclusion, written by Alice Borchi, reflects upon the future of cultural policies, prefiguring new approaches based on cultural rights and participation with the power to posit culture as the base of society rather than an instrument for non-cultural objectives.

A Never-Ending Journey

In conclusion, this work is a stepping stone in an ongoing process of reflection and collective learning about the future of culture and care. It shows how publicly supported research and participation in cultural commons can develop policy solutions at all levels, with beneficial effects for social movements and communities beyond the commoners themselves.

The solutions themselves, however, are only a starting point for the actions that are required to ensure the survival of sustainable cultural production across all of Europe, and they to guarantee principles of cohesion, equality, and solidarity.

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SECTION I
COMMONS AS ECOSYSTEMS FOR CULTURE

1. Culture and the Arts in an Age of Permanent Austerity: Policy Recommendations for Bringing Culture to the Heart of Human Emancipation

by Adriano Cozzolino and Benedetta Parenti

Introduction

This chapter reflects upon the critical importance of culture and the arts in creating a more sustainable and democratic future for European citizens, and outlines a series of specific policy recommendations in the broader field of cultural policy. In general terms, we conceive culture and the arts as fundamentally tied to human progress, democracy, and emancipation – rather than 'commodities' to be exchanged in the marketplace. Accordingly, the recommendations developed within the Cultural and Creative Spaces initiative have been designed to bear out and do justice to this view.

The structure of this essay is conceptually twofold. It comprises an analytical dimension devoted to clarifying (at least some of) the key elements of neoliberal society and especially its evolution in Europe and the European Union. Through this, an attempt is made to put culture and the arts back in their place by understanding how they have changed within this broader paradigm shift. The second dimension of this chapter is prescriptive and relates to the policy recommendations mentioned above. Methodologically then, the critical-analytical section and the prescriptive dimension coalesce to reject a technocratic vision of culture and the arts – one that regards them as 'tools' or 'instruments' for fostering economic growth and/or European identity – in favour of a more political vision based on their emancipatory and fully democratic potential.

More specifically, the analysis starts by identifying the characteristic paradigm shift that occurred during the 1980s in the West, coinciding roughly with the ascendancy of neoliberal political economy. This will allow, as already noted, a brief assessment of the changing nature of culture in society within this broader shift. The following sections zoom in on the European Union and emphasise two related trends: the prolonged imposition of neoliberal and austerity measures, especially after the great financial crisis of 2008, and the

growth of political phenomena such as Euroscepticism across many European countries. After this general overview comes a more specific analysis of the role and conception of culture at the European Union level, along with how it has evolved over time, and its current state.

This overall critical assessment paves the way for the prescriptive aspect. A series of policy recommendations are drawn – as developments which grow out of liaisons with activists and grassroots experiments in the arts and culture sector – to foster more inclusive, democratic, and equal forms of growth in Europe. An emphasis is placed on a view of culture and the arts that acknowledges their emancipatory potential, which is seen to be indirectly but no less fully political. Thus, it is maintained that forms of popular-democratic politics and socio-economic wellbeing in the cultural sector and in society more generally are both intertwined and key to foreseeing and building a better future for all.

Background: The Neoliberal Paradigm and the Politics of Culture

Since the 1980s, and especially during the 1990s, Western economic systems have been marked by deep structural changes. With the crisis of the Fordist production model during the 70s, a new economic paradigm based on the centrality of markets – and within this, on elements such as a knowledge economy and innovation – began progressively to consolidate itself along with the strengthening of more finance-led models of development. Especially in those countries inserted into the Western capitalist core, the creation of value shifted towards high value-added sectors (advanced technology, research and development, finance and insurance services, and so on). In many cases, industrial production (of raw materials in particular) started to be outsourced to countries in which the labour costs were comparatively lower than in industrialised nations, thus fostering an increasing global integration of productive chains and transnational flows of services, capital, goods, and labour. In other words, these were the halcyon years of neoliberal globalisation and of the so-called Washington Consensus. The latter refers to a set of neoliberal policies that, since the 1980s, have characterised the policy paradigm imposed by international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). The paradigm comprised – and largely still comprises – "fiscal restraint, reduction

of subsidies, broadening the tax base, interest rate liberalization, exchange rate liberalization, liberalization of international trade restrictions, privatization, and civil service retrenchment" (Broome 2015, 8-9). The growing transnational transnationalisation of trade, production, and finance started to consolidate a network of complex and overlapping relations which, while creating the infrastructure for a global and integrated political economy on the one hand, on the other triggered a cycle of growing social inequalities in the West (Milanovic 2016). The accumulation of tensions, contradictions, and imbalances within global capitalism (Bieler and Morton 2018) escalated after the global financial crisis of 2008. Yet, rather than leading to a paradigm change that favoured alternatives to neoliberalism, some scholars observed the "strange non-death" of neoliberalism in many policy sectors (Crouch 2011; Robertson 2020). If flexibility and adaptability seem to define the "non-death" of neoliberalism, it is important to also include in any analytical picture their more political consequences. This is a question that shall be analysed in greater detail briefly. For the moment, let us simply remark that the accumulation of widespread imbalances could not but find new political channels in order to express the growing fear, rage, and resentment caused by worsening material conditions.

The question here is to understand how such processes – the bigger picture – have been translated into the art and culture sector. Crucially, it is in this period that some scholars (among others, Garcia 2004) point to a sea change in conceptions of culture's role in society. In other words, the so-called creative industries began to acquire more and more importance in mainstream political discourse, and culture became part and parcel of the new market and dominant entrepreneurial worldview. The consequences of this fundamental change, which reflect the expansion and intensification of the role of capitalism as a form of life in society as a whole (Harvey 2014), imply that the mechanisms, processes, and even forms of consciousness broadly linked to arts and culture came to be integrally and organically embedded into market relations and logics. In other words, cultural and broadly artistic products became commodities like any other human product. Of course, this does not imply that all cultural and artistic forms and processes respond to such a logic. As the essays and cases in this collection attest, the arts and culture, especially when conceived in their collective and political dimensions, are also key material and immaterial spaces for developing forms of resistance and alternatives – namely channels for other kinds of ex-

pression, realisation, and sharing. Therefore, raising consciousness and developing alternatives to our "age of resentment" (Engels 2015) through the arts is a political call for action.

Europe between Permanent Austerity and Euroscepticism

The previous discussion has provided an overall picture of some of the key politico-economic elements of neoliberalism while also exploring these in terms of their effects on the fields of art and culture. The specific case of the European Union is now the focus. An overview of the political economy of the EU is given, which is followed, in the same manner as neoliberalism above, by an analysis of its political consequences. Methodologically, the aim is to emphasise the strict interconnection between socio-economic processes and political phenomena and to identify possible spaces for dissent, resistance, and alternatives.

The political economy of the European Union, and particularly of the Eurozone, is based on a mix of neoliberal policy and fiscal "permanent austerity" (Ryner 2015; Ryner and Cafruny 2016; Talani 2016). Accordingly, the centrality of liberalised and integrated markets – a 'flexibilisation' of labour, wage deflation, low inflation, and the privatisation and generalised liberalisation of market sectors – constitute the backbone of the European macro-economic model of growth. This backbone, crucially, is coupled with tight discipline concerning state budgets and public finance (in the framework of the Stability and Growth Pact (1997) and, currently. that of the European Fiscal Compact (2013)), irrespective of the economic cycle or other general societal conditions (such as rates of unemployment).

This mix was even strengthened in the context of the global crisis (2008) and Euro-crisis (2011–12). In fact, soon after a short period of sustained expansionary fiscal measures intended to avoid both the collapse of the market economy (by sustaining businesses and households) and possible political unrest, the permanent austerity paradigm once more became the (short-sighted) dominant approach to political economy within the Eurozone (Cozzolino 2020).

The main consequence in the years that have followed the global financial crisis is that the prolonged adoption of austerity measures – through cuts in public expenditure – and neoliberal policies have worsened social cohesion right across Europe and especially within southern countries.

On a more political and institutional level, the imposition of such measures has increased the perception of European institutions as an intrusive "technocratic power" (Kreuder-Sonnen 2018) while triggering a widespread crisis of legitimacy for the European Union at a national level. Not by chance, this is also the historical phase in which Eurosceptic forces and 'sovereignism' (a political posture that supports full monetary, fiscal, and political sovereignty at a national level) have escalated as part of political discourse within many domestic political systems (Pirro, Taggart, and Van Kessel 2018). As noted above, such forces have managed to politically intercept the growing rage and resentment that are mounting in European society along with the feeling of exclusion and marginalisation that many segments of the European citizenry experience on a daily basis. Indeed, if large segments of the population feel excluded and/or not adequately represented within the existing political system, they will likely nurture feelings of anger towards established political classes and political institutions.

On the other hand, political cultures related to populism and Euroscepticism foster a nationalist-authoritarian view of societal relations and systematically blame and target minorities and differences in sexual and political orientation, calling (directly or indirectly) for the exclusion of people and groups that do not belong to the 'native' population and/or belong to marginal communities, such as migrants and LGBTQ+ communities. Clearly, 'Europe' too has become a target in the discourse of right-wing populists. Concerning this last point, even if COVID-19 seems to have put the ongoing existential crisis of the EU on partial standby, the post-pandemic period, especially in light of an unprecedented economic crisis, will likely bring such problematics back into European politics.

The issue, against this background, is to understand what role culture and the arts can perform as part of these political and social processes; namely, how culture and the arts might play a critical role in ensuring the future development of broad-based democracy and social justice in Europe. Before analysing this in detail and outlining a series of proposals, however, it is worth critically framing how culture is conceived in EU-sponsored policy programmes, as well as how this is changing, and what can be done to further improve this sector and its endless potential for human emancipation.

The European Union vis-à-vis Culture and the Arts

This section frames the competences of the European Union in the arts and culture sectors. This is functional to tracing how competences and especially the vision of the EU has changed over time, and how it is currently changing.

In general terms, European jurisdiction in cultural fields has relatively recent origins. The Maastricht Treaty, which came into force in 1993, constitutes the legal basis for cultural activities in the European Union (especially art. 128 and also art. 167 TFUE). This represents the first recognition of the importance of culture for strengthening a (theoretical) European common identity. Since this period, a new process has emerged that aims at identifying a common European cultural policy and framework or, in other words, a shared terrain upon which not only to identify what might constitute a shared 'European' culture but also a common policy and legal framework for its governance.

However, there is also a widespread belief that there is a long way to go before this is achieved. For instance, looking at the evolution of policy, the first "policy for culture" (Gordon 2010) was the European Agenda for Culture, adopted in 2007, which established several priority areas in which to take action and achieve strategic objectives over the following ten years. Within the cultural sector more broadly, the EU is increasingly called to coordinate and support initiatives taken at the level of member states. This strategy is based on promoting cultural exchange and guaranteeing financial support for cultural actors working in local areas (Sassatelli 2009).

Well before 2007, the Commission provided some instruments to finance projects in the domain of culture. The first stage for the cultural support programmes goes back to 1996–97 with the adoption of Kaleidoscope, Ariane, and Raphael, which were later transformed into the Culture 2000 and MEDIA Plus (2000–2006) programmes and again into Culture 2007–2013 and Media 2007. Through the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), in place for the period 2014–20, the Commission aimed to combine culture and media in one single programme, that is, Creative Europe as mentioned previously, which will be put forth again for the period 2021–2027.

Although in absolute terms the amount of financial resources has grown during these decades, their relative share of the European Union's overall budget remains quite limited. Furthermore, looking at the recent past, the increases in the last years have been small (from

1,136 million for Culture 2007–2013 and Media 2007 to 1,463 million for Creative Europe 2014–20). Moreover, the increase in resources for Creative Europe 2021–2027, though greatly anticipated by those working in the sector, does not in fact seem to be forthcoming (Culture Action Europe 2020).

The underfinancing of Creative Europe, which is the only programme related to the cultural sector, is also a noticeable problem at the institutional level.1 The programme's budget is narrow not only as a percentage of the total EU budget (for instance, for the period 2014–2020 the yearly budget allocated for Creative Europe was on average 0.13% of the total budget allocation) but also with respect to other programmes.

In relation to the internal content of cultural policy, the EU framework has evolved following a dual approach. On the one hand, it has invested significantly in what could be conceived as the symbolic power of some cultural initiatives to foster a common European (cultural) identity and its corollary of shared values. On the other, it has increasingly focused on the economic relevance of the cultural and creative sectors, which are often linked to tourism-related activities (for an example, see The European Capitals of Culture initiative). Finally, although economic impact is mentioned in all the programmes related to the cultural domain, it has gained a truly central role in the rhetoric of Creative Europe (Bruell 2013). The feeling is that, in the recent period, the economic dimension has even overtaken the symbolic while also disempowering the overall relevance and potential for collective emancipation of culture and the arts.

Towards a Shifting Conception of Culture over Time in EU Discourse and Policy?

The evolution of European cultural policy follows the social and historical process already described in the introduction, namely that culture – like all other domains of society, from public services to water – began to be conceived as an industry (and a commodity) in its own right, deprived of any political and emancipatory power. While in the first part of twentieth century culture – broadly understood – lay at the margins of industrial capitalism, since the 1980s it has gradually become a full-fledged industry. Accordingly, "cultural economic

[1] See the commission's mid-term evaluation report. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0248&from=EN

policy" (Kong 2000) emerged and became part of the market paradigm, with culture as a proper "economic asset" and, as such, coming to be considered as yet another factor in growth development strategies, especially in urban contexts.

Creative Europe is a case in point. While the importance of transnational linkages is aptly framed among the initiative's goals, this programme fosters an idea of culture as a business item – the function of which is (i) to enhance profitability in the sector, (ii) to improve economic performance, (iii) to improve the internal market by also enhancing competitiveness, and (iv) to boost job creation and employment. The EU discourse also fosters the idea that those who benefit from culture are merely consumers (see Bruell 2013) and not – broadly speaking – citizens and communities. The problem with such an understanding of culture and the collateral practices in cultural programming is twofold. First, culture is reduced to the market sphere, which in turn decreases its emancipatory potential and overall impact on communities as well as on transnational cultural – and therefore social – relations. Second, such reductionism also disempowers the relevance of culture as a tool for fostering new politico-democratic practices – for instance, through the commons and commoning practices, which could otherwise help to counteract the wave of resentment and anger that seems to characterise the contemporary crisis of democracy in Europe.

On the other hand, it is also worth emphasising that the notion of culture at the EU level seems to be gradually changing from a strict market logic. For instance, other (newer) EU cultural programmes such as the Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022 (2018) – part of the European Agenda for Culture – have gradually shifted away from a narrow vision of culture to a more "holistic and horizontal" approach in cultural policy. Thus, new priorities are: (i) sustainability in cultural heritage, (ii) cohesion and wellbeing, (iii) an ecosystem supporting artists as well as culture and creative professionals, (iv) gender equality, and (v) international cultural relations. More importantly, the new discourse and practice around commons and commoning is gradually entering the EU lexicon. Despite all its problems and contradictions, this seems to be at least a positive, if partial, intertwining of the democratic potential of the commons on the one hand and the emancipatory power of culture and the arts on the other.

Rethinking the Cultural Sector, the Arts and Democratic Procedures

The category of 'culture' has blurred boundaries. From an anthropological perspective, it is conceived as culture-as-society (Sider 1986), and it involves both intangible values and tangible artefacts that identify a community. Nevertheless, the term 'cultural sector' is often used to identify heritage, arts, and artists (Gordon 2010). Even when the meanings grouped under the concept of culture are so reduced, at its most straightforward it involves a large set of domains with different characteristics and needs. From a policy perspective, therefore, offering one single under-financed programme to support this huge sector seems inadequate. Indeed, from an economic point of view, culture is not merely considered an asset but rather a "merit good" (Musgrave 1959), reclaiming the role of public intervention for something considered worthwhile to society as a whole, as culture and the arts.

In outlining some policy recommendations, the aim here is to espouse a broad vision of culture – one that sees culture as a domain which is organic to society in its entirety – as part of the development of our communities and thus as a commons. As noted at various points in this chapter, culture and the arts need to be understood in all their emancipatory potential. For this reason, these policy recommendations lay out a gradual and feasible strategy to put this area of human experience at the heart of the development of our societies and, in this manner, restore its political importance.

The Prescriptive Side: Restoring Culture as Human Emancipation. Policy Recommendations

This final section of the paper is prescriptive. It outlines a set of specific policy recommendations aimed at placing culture and the arts right at the heart of human emancipation. We have designed a policy strategy that is simultaneously gradual and feasible – a clear pathway that could immediately be pursued at a national and especially European level. More specifically, the strategy comprises six general point that aim to provide a set of broad guidelines for direct policy action from existing institutions. The second part of the strategy addresses four specific dimensions: (i) participation and public-private network/institutional infrastructure, (ii) funding and material infrastructure, (iii) learning processes and the costs of par-

ticipation, and (iv) EU level practices. The purpose of the policy developed in these four specific sectors is to make the strategy tangible by covering all potential situations in which culture and the arts can encourage – through appropriate public action – emancipation, inclusion, and democracy at various territorial levels, from the local to the EU.

General Points

(a) To consolidate the idea of culture and the arts as both commons and critical resources to the development of communities;

(b) To consolidate the idea of participation not as mere post hoc consultation but as institutionalised networks among public authorities and artists, stakeholders, and citizens;

(c) To consolidate a holistic and horizontal view of culture. Thus, while culture is not necessarily an instrument of direct/indirect political consensus and legitimation, it can nevertheless foster collective growth and social emancipation as well as the inclusion of disenfranchised minorities;

(d) Following on from (c), artists and creatives are not 'instruments' to revitalise democracy as such but workers in the fields of culture and the arts who perform a key public function. The role of public institutions – from the local to the supranational level – is to improve their overall working conditions and thus the production and circulation of cultural products;

(e) To foster the connection between culture and the commons/commoning practices;

(f) To acknowledge the critical importance of material and immaterial infrastructure to the development of culture and the arts.

Participation and Public-Private Networks/Institutional Infrastructure

• Address how socio-economic inequalities and other specific issues concerning the local context may affect the overall participation of workers, activists, and citizens in the field of culture and the arts.

• Involve local communities and stakeholders in policy-making and policy initiatives, for instance through a structured framework of public-private partnership. More specifically, local public institutions should regularly gather community needs, concerns, and other first-hand information from a broad range of actors (artists, cultural operators, entrepreneurs, and activists) and implement more targeted policies accordingly.

• Promote the creation of an institutional infrastructure by recognising, within one comprehensive legal/institutional framework, those experiments that work in the field of culture and the commons as 'informal institutions'. Consider building a comprehensive public-private network through which (i) public authorities can establish a dialogue with such informal institutions and open themselves up to cultural operators, activists, and other stakeholders, in turn favouring participation and co-decision making; (ii) the different informal institutions linked to commons and other cultural/artistic forms of expression can be shared.

• Drawing on the case of *l'Asilo*, consider involving commons-based experiments in the field of culture and the arts within the creation of shared legal, institutional, and policy guidelines related to commons management and the legal recognition of commons as informal institutions.

• Acknowledge that – as the case of Naples confirms – cities are places of real spatial and territorial socio-economic inequalities. Addressing the inequalities within the city is of great importance to promoting broad participation. Thus it is important to begin with the peripheries and suburban areas in order to let culture and commons express their potential in such contexts.

• Recognise that the COVID-19 crisis will significantly worsen the general conditions of work and livelihood. Arts and culture workers, along with gig and freelance workers, will be among those worst affected by the pandemic, as they were throughout 2020. Against this background, it is both important and urgent to take action and promote forms of basic income and income support.

• Target disadvantaged groups and groups in marginalised urban areas with specific policy initiatives.

Ensure that all public policies and practices that revolve around culture and commons remain accountable to stakeholders and citizens more broadly.

Funding and Material Infrastructure

Improve the fight against the clientele-based distribution of funds by pushing local institutions to act in two ways: first, through the promotion of open calls as a method for accessing funding; second, through the establishment of an alternative development of cultural agendas based on the structured involvement of as many local cultural operators, artists, and activists as possible. This will create a

more bottom-up local cultural agenda and improve transparency in how funds are distributed among stakeholders, artists, and cultural operators.

Consider the importance of material infrastructure for the development of culture and the arts and for the support of employment in this sector. Work in liaison with institutions at all levels to allocate a proportion of municipal assets – for example. disused buildings – to cultural workers and gig and freelance workers. Make such spaces available to them for free or apply public rent controls. Such assets could be transformed into workshops, factories, ateliers, or commons labs through which (i) workers could earn an indirect income – that is, by being spared renting costs or paying only a moderate rent – (ii) citizens/activists could find premises to develop, along with public institutions, a network of participatory practices within the city.

Consider the route of microfinance and interest-free loans. Importantly, such facilitated forms should address in particular the purchase of means of production that can then become collective resources (material and immaterial). On the one hand, this would foster more horizontal/commoning practices and the learning processes related to these; on the other, such a use of funding could also have a windfall effect and benefit a very wide demographic.

Learning Processes and the Costs of Participation

The management of creative spaces and practices following a 'commons perspective' is not easy. It involves a learning process that, over time, allows the participant to shift their vision from a top-down perspective to a horizontal daily practice where everyone shares a certain amount of responsibility and involvement.

Participation – as the experience of *l'Asilo* demonstrates – is a costly activity. It is important to acknowledge such costs and compensate them through a range of means: (i) by allocating public assets and heritage to groups of workers, and (ii) by offering training and consultancy.

EU-Level Practices

Broadly speaking, the EU needs to better its overall democratic fabric. The importance of improving representative and accountable institutions must be acknowledged first and foremost by the Europe-

an Parliament. The current crisis of legitimacy facing the EU is partly related to ongoing austerity therapy (the output dimension) but also partly due to the lack of political representation for different social groups and mass democratic channels (the input dimension).

Consider the creation of a Europe-wide network of cultural practices following the principles of commons and commoning. This would also be a key infrastructure to (i) promote, on a structural basis, the consolidation of such experiments across Europe and foster a permanent window of dialogue as well as to (ii) promote the sharing of best practices related to culture and the commons.

Rethink the funding mechanism for culture and the arts and creative spaces. Consider a shift away from the strict competition-based model of access to funding platforms based on (i) smaller amounts of individual funds granted to a larger number of cultural operators across Europe, (ii) interest-free loans, and (iii) micro-financing.

Consider reducing the bureaucratic complexity of applications for EU projects and project management, which can especially affect more marginal groups who are less endowed with structures capable of bearing competitive pressures and bureaucratic demands.

Many commons and creative spaces that function within a commons framework often lack proper legal recognition (such as foundations or associations) – this is particularly true given the oppositional/conflict-based nature of experiences rooted in commoning practices. Therefore, consider opening up more channels to also allow informal/grassroots experiences access to EU projects.

Conclusion

In this chapter, two issues have been addressed. The first is a critical framework concerning the rise of neoliberal society and its overall political consequences. Specific attention has been paid to Europe, the EU, and their peculiarities. The second is a critical understanding of the evolution of culture and the arts within the current historical period. Within a broader movement of the 'commodification' assailing many spheres of human activity (public services, water, health, transportation, and so on), culture and the arts have not been spared. In fact, they are increasingly being seen as economic commodities whose function is to foster economic growth. Additionally, it has been stressed that there is, in the EU in particular, a technocratic and instrumentalist view of culture as a mere tool to create,

via a top-down process, an artificial European cultural identity along with the prevailing view of culture as an economic asset. This vision, however, deprives culture and the arts of all their emancipatory and democratic potential, especially when considered in direct relation to the commons and to the key political processes attached to them. In fact, if correctly sustained and encouraged by institutions at all levels, culture and the arts can be the path for a counter-offensive European strategy to tackle the widespread feelings of rage and resentment that increasingly characterise our society and thus to foresee a better and more democratic future for all – in other words, a strategy to turn resentment into resistance.

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2. Cultural Policies for the Commons, by the Commons, Including Small, Informal Realities in EU Programmes

by Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado, Angelica Bifano,
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Introduction

The ever-present COVID-19 crisis has revealed, among other things, the incapacity of government structures as responsive units, whether as branches or as a whole; the failings of the paradigms that are at the base of the dominant economic system; and the open secret of rising inequalities in even the most developed countries. As a result, we are being forced to reimagine our society and livelihoods, taking into serious consideration both respect for the planet and social justice. The commons stand as a viable alternative to counter the ravages of neoliberal policies and politics and the capitalist mode of production more broadly. In the midst of the pandemic, solidarity initiatives emerged quickly as a response to the tardiness and inadequacy of official help and measures. These initiatives were not coincidental; rather, they are part of a phenomenon that can be understood as a powerful articulation of civil society and grassroots movements, many of which came from the commons, as was the case in Italy.

The arts and culture sectors were deeply impacted by pandemic measures such as the closure of cultural venues, museums, theatres, concerts, etc. In fact, they still have not received an adequate response one year later, even as they lift the spirits of the people forced to stay at home with diverse, creative virtual projects, which were particularly visible during the first wave. But then again, their welfare has been neglected for years now, and the demands for more government support and an appropriate social protection system for professionals in these sectors are still unmet. Moreover, there is a clear, if tacit, message that they are not a priority in our current context. Aware of this bleak scenario, emerging institutions have taken matters into their own hands, and, as a result, cultural commons spaces currently provide (within the limits of their power) community support through the mutualisation of spaces and means of creation and production, as well as *agoras* for political confrontation/articulation and reflection on grassroots policy. In the city of

Naples, *l'Asilo* is such a space: a polyfunctional, interdependent centre for the production of art and culture run by an open community, self-managed, and self-governed: an emerging urban commons.

For over nine years now, *l'Asilo* has been providing support to arts and culture workers, engaging in political battles in the city of Naples as well as promoting the principles of anti-fascism, anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia in its day-to-day operations. This is, however, not (yet) the tale of what happened (or did not happen) in this place during the hard lockdown in the first wave of the pandemic. What follows is a story of 'before', way back. It tells the tale of a deprived territory and of the nurturing practices that managed to change the urban and cultural landscape of a city and beyond. Thus, the aim of this chapter is threefold: firstly, to explore the definition of commons so as to set the discussion; secondly, to introduce *l'Asilo*, its history, and the ways in which it constitutes an artistic biotope (Gielen 2018); and thirdly, to expose the institutional barriers at an EU level that hinder the production and reproduction of similar experiments and to provide some policy suggestions to tackle this issue. This work is the outcome of a process of action research, which employed a myriad of tools and methods along with a creative approach (De Tullio 2020).

What Are the Commons?

In her seminal 1990 work, *Governing the Commons*, Elinor Ostrom presents a thorough study of the governance of natural resources as common goods. Ostrom, studying the commons as CPRs (Common Pool Resources), referred to "a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large as to make it costly (but not impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use" (Ostrom 1990, 30). Her work criticised the traditional perspective within policy analysis concerning the management of large resources and provided evidence that problems relating to CPRs can be solved via a 'third way', remaining at the margins of both state and market solutions. Nonetheless, this third way does not imply a strict theoretical prescription of actions on how to proceed. On the contrary, it represents a diverse array of imaginable answers. Ostrom aimed to demonstrate how certain institutions may influence the behaviours and outcomes of users and their interactions when dealing with CPR situations and proposed a set of design prin-

ciples embodied in robust and long-lasting CPR institutions. Furthermore, her work provided a conceptual analysis of the relationship between property rights and natural resources within bundles of rights (Schlager and Ostrom 1992). In addition to this, Ostrom and those around her furthered the analysis of collective action and the commons, proposing a revised theory of collective action (Poteete et al. 2010).

From an in-depth analysis of Ostrom's work, Coriat (2011, 2015) presents a definition of the commons based on a three-entries approach. According to Coriat, there are three constitutive elements that help to recognise and/or acknowledge the condition of commons: (1) the resource, (2) the distribution and allocation of rights between users, and (3) the structures of governance. Additionally, Coriat et al. (2019) note two complementary moral and political considerations which form an intrinsic part of the identity of a commons. The first is the ecology of the system, meaning that the rules implemented by commoners must aim to reproduce or enrich the resource and the community around it (Ostrom 1990); the second is equity, which can also be understood as social justice. Moreover, new commons (Hess 2008), including "knowledge commons" (Hess and Ostrom 2011), have helped construct new narratives about the commons as a whole. As a result, the discourse around the commons has spread to many intersecting societal issues on a local and global scale. In this regard, and ranging from the administration of shared natural resources by small, remote communities to the governance of the internet and culture, or from the organisation of common areas in cities to access to digital files, the commons have been recovering spaces and spreading to different spheres of human life.

In the Italian context, the Rodotà Commission offers a definition of common goods as goods that "express benefits functional to the exercise of fundamental rights as well as to the free development of the person, and are guided by the principle of intergenerational preservation of these benefits." This Commission, chaired by Stefano Rodotà, was established in 2007 by decree of the Ministry of Justice in order to draw up a draft law for the modification of the rules of the civil code regarding public goods. In a complementary way, emerging subjectivities have come to be defined as commons; these experiences are noted for undertaking a direct reappropriation of abandoned, under-utilised, or otherwise dismissed spaces which, through various commoning practices, manage to establish shared, self-governing forms of management functional to fundamental rights (Acosta

Alvarado and De Tullio 2020). Micciarelli (2014) defines these experiences as "emerging commons," or "those assets administered in the form of a cooperative and mutualistic government" which, in many instances, "addressed the fulfillment of fundamental rights affecting the entire community of reference connected to the good itself."

L'Asilo: Changing the Urban and Cultural Landscape in Naples

L'Asilo is an example of an open and interdependent cultural space self-governed by an open community. In a way, it could be regarded as a creative office that does not compete with the city's cultural programme, which is made up of private artistic centres and small theatres in perpetual hardship. Thus, *l'Asilo* integrates the production cycle by mutualising spaces and means of production, providing the creation and rehearsal spaces necessary for the realisation of a project from its initial stages right through to completion, all of which is free.

2 March 2012: L'Asilo Is Born from an Occupation

Before the birth of *l'Asilo*, the city lacked a free, multidisciplinary space that could serve the needs of non-institutionalised culture. In Naples, at that time, workers of the performing arts had little dialogue with each other, and there was no free space to rehearse, create, and imagine together. It was a moment of profound cultural flattening, and it had been too long since anyone had 'dared to'. That period was characterised by a deep stasis coupled with a sectorisation of the arts; it was practically a period of artistic depression.

Following the experiences of the *Teatro Valle* and the *Nuovo Cinema Palazzo*, something new began to take shape in Naples: a movement came to life which brought together the discourses around cultural policies and the commons. So it was that a group of culture and performing arts workers began to meet regularly, and, shortly after, the collective *La Balena* (The Whale) was born. Its aim? To experiment with new cultural practices and processes of creation and production that would be as inclusive as possible.

In this first phase, meetings were held in very different places, as if to foreshadow the heterogeneity of the community that would later be created. The first assemblies of *La Balena* were held in the informal setting of a bar in Piazza Bellini; then, at the Ska, an occu-

pied space in the city; and, finally, at a cultural institution, the *Museo Madre*, in what was a genuine and spontaneous occupation.

In no time, this collective of artists, citizens, and activists gathered in the 'belly of the whale' and decided to dive towards an objective: to assemble in one of the buildings that hosted an institution – newly appointed by the municipality – which created the kind of centralized cultural policies that the collective opposed. At the time, Naples was hosting the Universal Forum of Cultures, an international cultural event that aimed at funding cultural policies and initiatives, which that did not proved inclusive or sustainable and that nourished cultural consumerism without improving the rights and conditions of art and culture workers. *La Balena* took over the Forum's work space and occupied, as the large mammal that it was, the third floor of the building. It was not, however, an occupation so much as the reappropriation of an underused city space that had historically sheltered a vocational resource for neighbourhood children facing hardship.

There was a need to be more daring and to act on the necessity of coming together as opposed to the urgency of the moment. Therefore, at the end of an assembly held at the *Museo Madre*, *La Balena* moved in a caravan right into the headquarters of the Forum of Cultures to reclaim the space and return it to the city and the artists.

After the first three days of occupation, of open public assemblies, and of concerts and projections, it became clear that *La Balena* was able to welcome not only different groups of workers of the arts and culture but also the wants and desires of other social movements and even those without a particular affiliation. It was perhaps the first time that different social centres of the city and other small counter-cultural realities met and assembled together, overcoming their differences to engage in dialogue and share their experiences in a new, open, fluid, and potentially infinite community – a space where disparate views could come together as one project: that of the commons.

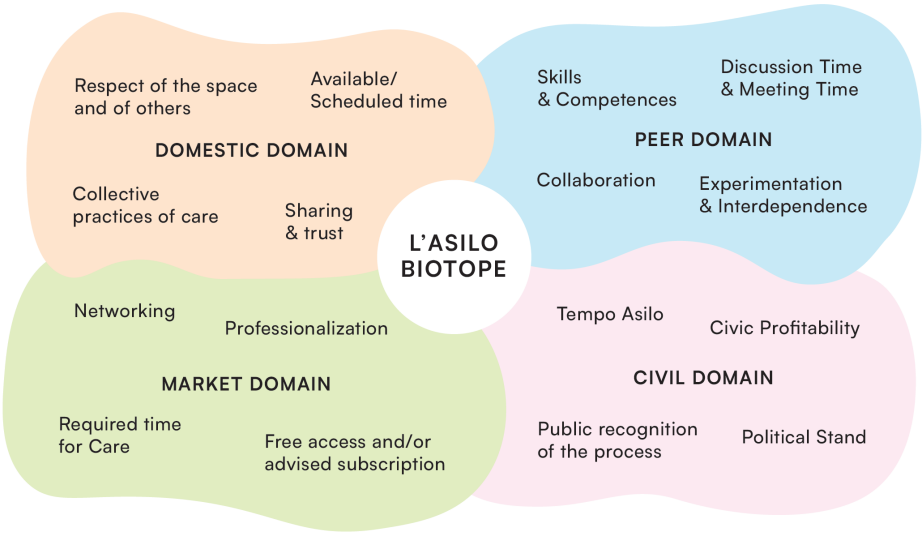
The process was carried out with great care to protect the informal community from any degradation, such as the establishment of a putative cultural foundation or association. This gave way to a collective reasoning around a new legal device that could protect, without any proprietary claims, the space that was hosting the newborn community. This new intuition came across land and sea and, specifically, from the branch of law that protects shepherds, fishermen, and breeder communities, who benefit from the civic use of resources (sea, pastures, woods) in a non-exclusive and non-competitive way.

Thus, an open, free, and multidisciplinary space was born – a space recognized as a commons by the municipality due to the legal reinterpretation of the civic uses proposed by community. It became a non-circumscribed space because it welcomed a potentially infinite, ever-changing, and heterogeneous community, which offered concrete possibilities to artists in need of spaces and means of production (but who practiced new ways of relating), and which aimed to overcome patriarchal, intrusive, and colonial automatisms. It became an office for the arts where skills multiplied and the means of production were mutualised and shared, as well as a place where artists could prepare before entering the market, and where interdependence with other artistic sectors offered opportunities for meetings and confrontations that nourished personal growth and artistic work. It also became an experiment that reappropriated public space by overhauling and uniting the many positions of those who traditionally practiced politics by refusing any meeting with the establishment and local administrations. What emerged from *La Balena* was a practice that first and foremost experimented with new ways of relating and was capable of overcoming the disputes, competitiveness, and individualism that creep too easily into social movements. And so it was that the collective, mindful of its limitations, decided to dissolve into a larger, open community guided by the practice of consensus.

The practice of care immanent in *l'Asilo* proved, and continues to prove, that it is possible to develop antibodies against individualism and competitiveness by opening spaces of creation and production where no one is left behind because even those still without support have the right to their space of creation and experimentation.

The Biotope of the Commons: The Case of l'Asilo

The exercise of depicting the Creative Biotope of *l'Asilo* (Acosta Alvarado 2020) enables an identification and evaluation of the practices that are implemented there and of the people who work and live in the space. It also allows an understanding of how, in the current context, a commons such as *l'Asilo* can foster artistic careers in a sustainable way. The impact of *l'Asilo* on the different domains of the Biotope is unbalanced, though this does not have to be seen as a failure or a weakness in its organisation. In fact, according to Gielen (2018), traditionally, there are different institutions that support the development of the artist in each domain.



The results of our exercise demonstrate that *l'Asilo* has the greatest impact on the Peer Domain followed by the Domestic Domain. This is because it is a space of creation which provides artists with the conditions and means of production necessary to develop their work, but it does so under governance rules and community practices that overturn neoliberal logics of competition and hyper efficiency. *L'Asilo* instead fosters spaces and moments of sharing and learning that spark synergies and interdependence in both artistic creation or socio-political initiatives. We should note that *l'Asilo* cannot provide fully for the classic Domestic Domain as it is not focused on individuals and proprietary logics; as a commons, the place belongs to everyone, and this makes it hard to fully account for intimacy and 'own time'.

Regarding the more outward-looking domains, *l'Asilo* as a process is very dynamic in the Civil Domain. Moreover, *l'Asilo* enjoys international recognition as an interdependent production centre of arts and culture with increasing professionalisation and an extensive curriculum, which is the result of eight years of collective work. In fact, it now has the opportunity to become a formal co-producer of individual works and a relevant hub for many professional circuits. Furthermore, *l'Asilo* has been able to advocate for the recognition of the 'civic profitability' generated by the activities that take place in their space and by the community. Civic profitability consists of the positive effects (positive externalities) that the activities developed at *l'Asilo* offer for the city and society at large; these advantages are

not part of a dense artistic civic programme but an inherent component of its nature as a commons.

Finally, the Market Domain is the hardest domain for a commons to cultivate. Through the mutualisation of the means of production and the free use of the space, *l'Asilo* breaks down some market logics and helps significantly reduce production costs for the artists. It cannot, however, offer an income, grant, or scholarship to an artist, even though urban commons do generate an indirect income.[1] On the other hand, there is a way to foster the Market Domain at large, and this is by means of creating an ecosystem of institutions and devices that can facilitate access to funding and the market. The aim is not to comply with the practices of this domain as we know it but to improve it by changing neoliberal logics that hinder the development of a more inclusive and less competitive market domain. One possible action is to change the way funding schemes for the arts and culture work within European projects, along with the eligibility criteria that block the participation of small and informal realities and commons initiatives, among others.

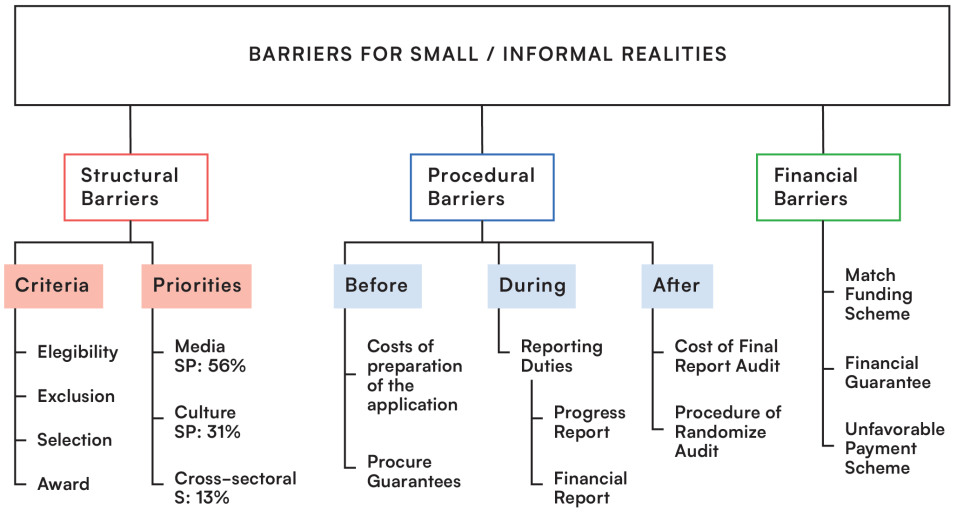
How to Move Forward: Lifting Institutional Barriers for Small/Informal Realities at the EU Level

The aim of supporting the culture sector is twofold: firstly, to protect and promote European cultural heritage while propping up the cultural and creative industries, and, secondly, to enable them to act as a driver for growth and job creation.[2] We are confronted by the fact that culture is conceived as a vehicle for the advancement of an entrepreneurial logic that has no regard for its potential to regenerate social fabrics, and which consequently disregards the labour of the many (small and informal) organisations that work towards such a goal. As noted before, commons have difficultly integrating into the

[1] This indirect income for cultural work is best grasped by considering the reduction of production costs from which artists benefit through their right to use – collectively and at no cost – an urban commons space and mutualised means of production as well as the recognition of immaterial value found in community membership, the pooling of multidisciplinary skills and knowledge, and the opportunity to establish relationships with peers.

[2] According to the Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020), cultural and creative sectors are regarded as a source of innovative ideas that can be turned into products and services, which in turn create growth and jobs and help address societal changes.

market domain primarily because they adhere to different rules and creeds but also because they encounter numerous roadblocks to their initiatives – lack of funding being one of the most significant. Furthermore, and most frequently, commons initiatives are small-scale and informal (though they do hold a legal status), and these are features that are unfavourable when applying for European Funding simply because those grants are designed to target medium-to-large-scale, formally registered organisations. We identified three main types of barriers: structural barriers, procedural barriers, and financial barriers. Additionally, as long as informal realities are not constituted as a legal person, they cannot participate in the funding.



Structural barriers refer to intrinsic obstacles that small/informal realities face that are present in the Creative Europe (CE) programme guidelines. The ensemble of criteria may become a barrier when trying to access funding if an organisation falls short of the programme's requirements. There are four types of criteria established for the CE programme: eligibility conditions, exclusion grounds, selection criteria, and award criteria. Moreover, eligibility conditions encompass the following elements: eligible countries, applicants, projects, activities, and period of time. Some commons, as informal realities, do not satisfy one or more of these requirements. In the case of *l'Asilo*, which has decided to maintain its informal character as a political choice, it is automatically disqualified from applying either as a project leader or as a partner. Another type of structural

barrier is set by the 'priorities' in a zero-sum game logic. This means that if 56% of the CE programme budget is destined for the Media sub-programme that supports film and other audiovisual industries, and 13% is allocated to new cross-sectoral strands, which includes funding the new Creative Europe Desks, then only 31% of the funding will be available for the Culture sub-programme for performing and visual arts. This broadly reflects the hierarchy of priorities within the programme.

Procedural barriers refer to the bureaucratic procedures established by the Creative Europe Culture Sub-Programme Guidelines. These barriers can be ordered chronologically: (1) The first one emerges before the grant is awarded. According to the report "Creative Europe: Programme Analysis and Recommendations" (Culture Action Europe 2017) developed by Culture Action Europe, the average time to prepare an application, excluding project design, is one month. The investment of time and resources may become a barrier to access; therefore, a specific application for small and informal realities has been requested. It is also important to recognise monetarily the work invested in the preparation stage. (2) During the funding period, reporting duties take up a significant amount of time within the larger project, distracting from the actual execution of the project. Furthermore, including the requirement to produce a financial report complicates the work of organisations' members. A need for the simplification of the reporting procedures is widely shared by different beneficiaries of the programme. In turn, a diversity of evaluation methods is encouraged by the stakeholders so that the qualitative importance of the projects can emerge. (3) After the project is over, an audit report is required depending on the size of the EU grant. The cost of the audit has to be foreseen in the budget form upon application and should not surpass 7% of the overall budget under the subcontracting rule. Additionally, grant holders should be prepared to face a random selection process for an audit carried out by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency within five years of the closure date. The audit methods unfortunately do not take into consideration the particularities of small organisations, and therefore this may also represent a barrier to participation.

Financial barriers simply imply that, in order to access funding, you are expected to have funds of your own.[3] This is only possible for established organisations that enjoy either government subsidies

[3] The eligibility criteria expect applicants to have stable and sufficient sources

or private funding. Small organisations, for their part, may not have the financial capacity to either answer match-funding[4] schemes or to meet the financial stability requirements (up to 40% for small scale projects and 50% for large scale projects within the cooperation scheme). Sometimes the funding programme will demand a 'financial guarantee' to reduce any risks linked to pre-financing if the organisation's financial capacity is found to be unsatisfactory, and this guarantee has to be presented every time that a pre-financing payment is expected. Consequently, these organisations are often forced to seek lines of credit, which is restrictive in the sense that they are not usually subject to credit. Moreover, the cost of the audit has to be set aside from the payment of the final installment by the end of the project; a small organisation is expected to supply a substantial part of the project's funds in advance. The process of participation in European projects, from conception to closure, affects the organisation's budget and staff salary. This situation is discouraging for many small actors who do not have the cash flow required to participate in these projects; therefore, open access and representation are not properly fulfilled in this financial scheme as economic inequalities create barriers to access.

Conclusions: Recommendations to Enable Participation

Supporting the commons should mean a pledge to renew key paradigms in our society, such as celebrating cooperation over competition or dismantling traditional structures of privilege to foster true inclusion and horizontality in decision-making processes. In light of this, the CE programme could improve and upgrade the role and scope of the Creative Europe Desks to empower practices of commoning in cultural project proposals. A reflection on the inclusion of informal realities is therefore paramount because new voices coming from grassroots movements are more directly in contact with different territories and, through arts and culture, can have a more effective and sincere impact on the regeneration of the social fabric. Hence, it is necessary to reevaluate the different priorities and criteria established in the CE programme, which have become barriers

of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period in which they are grant holders.

[4] Match-funding schemes establish the condition that funds that are set to be paid in proportion to funds available from other sources.

for its further democratisation. It is also central to demand larger funds dedicated to arts and culture. At the same time, there is vital advocacy work to be done towards diversifying the funding delivery mechanisms so that they can harbour a plethora of actors, such as the commons, not traditionally considered by funding schemes.

Some mechanisms to be considered are the following[5]: (1) Re-granting or sub-granting by a primary grant recipient (financial support for third parties): a financing mechanism whereby funding is provided to an organisation of reference which, in turn, facilitates funding (sub-grants) for a number of smaller or grassroots organisations. This could be particularly useful to support grassroots and community-based organisations (small/informal) without forcing them to contract any loan or change their nature. (2) Follow-up grants: an additional grant awarded to an existing beneficiary in order to continue a successful project. This implies a reconsideration of the evaluation criteria, focusing on social impact, civic profitability, and the dissemination of best practices – instead of the evaluation of the financial reports. This proposition, however, should still adhere to the principles of transparency and non-discrimination. (3) Ring-fencing: a practice focused on setting aside all or part of a budget for a particular type of beneficiary or action. Commons initiatives can therefore be supported by funding particular activities or actors. In this scenario, the aim identified for support would be the regeneration of the social fabric through cultural initiatives within the commons.

Finally, *l'Asilo* – an open and interdependent cultural space self-managed by a permeable community through all-inclusive assemblies, born from an occupation, a creative office, a research community, and emerging urban commons – managed to contribute to a policy analysis and process of recommendation as a 'handshake partner' (since its non-legal status did not qualify it as a formal partner) of the *Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities* project[6]. This means that there is an interest in including commons experiments in the conversation and that the richness of such experiences can help to build a more inclusive society through solidarity and care.

[5] The funding schemes are identified in the report "EU Funding Delivery Mechanisms: New Trends in EuropeAid Funding, and What They Mean for Civil Society Organizations," commissioned by CONCORD Europe (European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs).

[6] https://www.spacesandcities.com/

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3. The Van Gogh Programme[1], Reshaping Europe's Support for Artist and Commons

by Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado

Overview

The Van Gogh Programme would bestow dedicated grants, fashioned in the mould of *ERC Starting Grants* (European Research Council n.d.) and *Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions* (European Commission n.d.a), designed to support artists as well as art and culture workers. It would be a dedicated fund for the formation of artistic collectives, among other collaborative configurations, with a generative and regenerative research approach, which would aim to provide an income to the members of the collective so as to recognise the importance of the creative process (the artistic research and conception involved in a work) as well as the impact of arts and culture on the regeneration of the social fabric. Additionally, it would foster the participation of commons spaces as host institutions for artists, and it would support the acquisition and mutualisation of means of production to lay the groundwork for economic sustainability – of both the collective and of the space – once the project is finalised. Thus, these grants and this model of funding are designed to support the organic and experimental character of practices of commoning along with their impact on the given area and its social fabric.

Aims

• To stimulate a commons practice through arts and culture by supporting creative artistic researchers and to experiment with new forms of participation, collaboration, and organisation.

• To recognise and legitimise the value of the intellectual work car-

[1] The Van Gogh Programme was hypothesised in the report *Commons as Ecosystems for Culture*. It was developed further with other participants of the CCSC Co-Creation Lab 'Commons Sense' and was included in the *Policy Analysis, Policy Recommendations* document of the CCSC project.

ried out by artists and to germinate and promote a sustainable, cultural, and creative sector. It is important to recognise labour and not just production in addition to the overall value of the artist to society.

• To provide support in the form of funding and grants to small/informal organisations.

Challenges

• To make it possible for commons and alternative cultural spaces (small/informal organisations, in addition to individuals) to have access to EU funding as the character of commons spaces requires new forms of policy and funding.

• To define rules and ethical principles for collaboration and move away from competition and market logic.

• To shift the focus towards experimentation and the creation process rather than the output. It should not be compulsory to tailor a grant to a codified final product. Rethinking the notion of deliverables can allow alternative outcomes to emerge.

• To identify priority areas for the allocation of funding:
- education and skill building;
- rethinking the value of artistic and cultural work;
- impact on the relevant territories;
- arts and culture as tools for strengthening the social fabric.

Who Can Take Part?

Workers of the arts and culture – as individuals or organized in a collective – as direct beneficiaries and organisations active in the cultural and creative sectors, favouring the selection of commons spaces and/or small organisations that are rooted in a local context as host institutions. This programme promotes inclusion by welcoming beneficiaries and partners of any nationality and age (whilst nonetheless focusing on young artists) and supporting their innovative ideas.

The Mechanism

The Van Gogh Programme would operate under the authority of the *Creative Europe* programme, the European Commission's framework

programme for supporting the culture and audiovisual sectors managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency. Projects and initiatives hoping to benefit from the Van Gogh Programme – as is the case for the Cooperation programme, ERC, and MSC actions – will undergo a selection by a panel of experts who are not only knowledgeable about the diverse fields of art and culture but also sensitive to the commons framework and with experience in grassroots and commons movements. Therefore, establishing more open eligibility criteria with a special focus on the inclusion of commons experiences would lift barriers to access for small/informal realities and profiles traditionally overlooked by other funding schemes. The amount of funding granted and the time allowed should work similarly to those programmes of reference and according to each proposal.

The various actions of this new programme would not only support collaborative projects, networks, platforms, mobility for artists and cultural professionals, and policy development, they would also recognise, value, and legitimise the creative labour of arts and culture workers at every stage. Thus, the emphasis would move away from those forms of circulation and outreach encapsulated by 'Hypermobility' and 'Big Event' logic in order to focus on fostering small interventions and collaboration with local actors as well as on the value of artistic labour, recognising in particular the value of artists in relation to forms of societal care. Preferential status would be granted to artistic and creative research that is 'out of the market' in order to fortify the social dimension of cultural work.

The Van Gogh Programme would aim to provide financial and institutional support to artists and host institutions. Under this programme, identifying commons as host institutions would afford preferential status to the applicant in the selection of grantees. This is an example of how EU funding could support commons in a way that does not distort them.

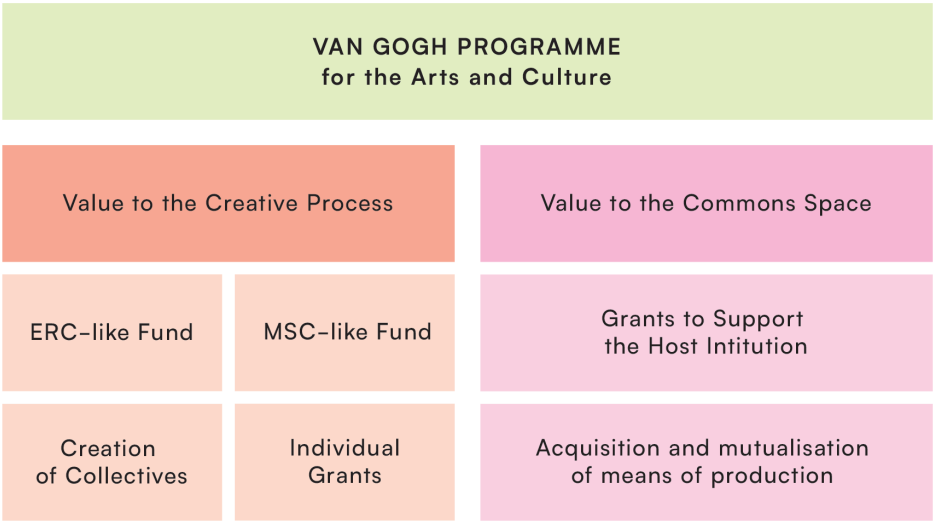
Accordingly, the host institution should spend the allocated resources in line with the needs of the culture worker and the decisions of its own community of reference. This is a practical way of forging mutual connections between cultural work and the general interest. Moreover, all expenses are eligible, including general expenses for the maintenance of the commons – provided they have been identified following principles of mutualisation and by community consensus.

Short-Term Actions toward the Implementation of the Project

• The creation of a beneficiary profile[2] for 'artists' and the establishment of coherent funding opportunities available to this target population.[3] This profile could be modelled based on the benefits that potentially analogous existing profiles enjoy. The profiles to be taken into consideration are:

- Natural Persons Grants: Both the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020) and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) recognise single natural persons as grant receivers under the rubric of Researcher and Farmer respectively.

- Young Artists as Young People: The EU budget already includes specific programmes to support young people in gaining work experience or studying abroad as well as programmes targeting unemployment among young people. Creating a Young Artists programme would establish a dedicated fund to help young artists to navigate the market domain, thereby supporting the development of their career. In accordance with the Young People profile, this grant would be open to young people (thirteen to thirty-one years old), youth organisations, and other stakeholders working with young people.



[2] Current beneficiary profiles are detailed by the EC. See *Eligibility: Who Can Get Funding?*

[3] For funding opportunities for young people in current EU programmes and schemes, see *Opportunities for Young People* and *Other Funding Opportunities Open to Young People*.

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4. Vindications about Income and Labour across and beyond Urban Commons[1]

by Giuseppe Micciarelli (Research Coordinator), Margherita D'Andrea, Andrea de Goyzueta, and Maria Pia Valentini

The following recommendations and policy proposals have the potential to shape financial support for the commons. Considering the experience of *l'Asilo* and other emerging commons around the world, however, an outstanding problem remains: long-term economic sustainability. This concerns both the material and natural structures of the commons and also of the commoners, who through these resources carry out activities that do not fit exclusively within the category of volunteerism. This issue is related to intrinsically activist tasks: organisation, taking care of a space, planning, and the whole process of self-governance, which is always open to those who wish to participate.

Work connected to the care and self-management of many urban commons is not directly remunerated, since efforts are made to avoid relationships of power and competitiveness related to the dynamics of employment. Given this, the economic sustainability of a commons poses a question that contains a possible contradiction. On the one hand, there is the voluntary dimension of activism as a practice of solidarity and commitment to the community. On the other hand, there is the need to liberate this work from the chains of economic livelihood; otherwise, commoning risks becoming a privilege for those who already have the means to fulfil their basic needs. Such an unpaid amount of work, in an era characterised by very high unemployment and the dismantling of public services, produces profound civic profitability and has a real social impact on city life. At the same time, making an urban commons the only workplace for commoners, or worse, their main source of economic sustenance (as is the case with natural common pool resources) would be far, far too risky. The urban commons are hybrid experiments which are first and foremost political but also social, cultural, and work-related, because they put into practice the idea of a place where cooperation is

[1] The following paragraphs are mainly drawn from in-depth developments of the research elsewhere. To read more about the investigation, see Micciarelli and D'Andrea (2020).

generated from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs and desires.

The presence of a paid organisation with a standard management team would reduce otherwise wide and diffuse participation. Mutualism is characterised by solidarity plus the free and voluntary exchange of means and time. But sharing difficulties and a poverty of resources does not automatically make us richer. For this reason, building such spaces is also very difficult. Any space of creation and production, however oriented towards an alternative logic, is always immersed in the economic system we inhabit.[2] Here the problem of income becomes evident. The self-employment solution is very limiting and may generate other kinds of inequalities between members of the experiment as well as create an invisible access barrier for new members.

Instead, it would empower certain actors rather than others in the direct management of the commons. This mechanism runs the serious risk of generating inequity: the horizontal management approach is fundamental for an active and effective aggregation. This issue cannot be solved through traditional financing programs for private structures. Indeed, a commons like *l'Asilo* is self-managed by open and potentially unlimited communities gathered in assemblies, who have the right to use the space; their 'ecosystem-assembly' is formally recognised as a management body of the public-common space. This can be considered as an "Institution of the Common" (Dardot and Laval 2014; Hardt and Negri, 2017).

For these reasons, it is necessary to introduce an alternative type of income support that cannot be considered a standard salary for the 'management' team. In short, what is needed is individual economic support for all those people not currently receiving a salary despite contributing actively and fully to the development of the cultural and social life of a city. The commons must also develop prac-

[2] Among the most relevant cases explored is CTRL. This was a political and artistic project founded by Corrado Gemini in 2015 with the aim of building a new, independent copyright collecting society based in Italy. The main idea was to rethink the music industry according to a model based on the sharing of knowledge and skills by a group of artists and market operators. The project's vision was that these actors would be able to interact through a new web platform as collective owners. The structure would allow the choice of 'copyleft' licences and the collection of royalties with a computerised system. One of the reasons for the long pause in the project was the lack of funds to cover all the expenses required to develop it, from the construction of the platform to the remuneration of technicians, developers, and all the workers involved. For more on the CTRL project, see D'Andrea and Gemini (2016).

tices of economic and labour democracy, and their guiding formulation should have more to do with that original utopia of the Soviets than with places of recreation and playgrounds for juvenile antics (Bookchin 1995).

Lots of Incomes under the Sky?

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the political discourse around income. In Italy, the lockdown created the utterly unique historical precedent of a generalised abstention from work for the majority of the population. This led to an explosion of claims around income, sometimes supported by liberal parties and industrial sectors: 'emergency incomes', VAT bonuses, measures against redundancies and redundancy payments, extensions to research grants and scholarships, 'intermittent incomes' (*indennità di discontinuità*), and a 'cultural project income' for cultural workers.

The government proposals around income were presented as universal, aimed at treating all citizens equally; however, they highlighted the substantial inequalities between those same citizens who formally had equal rights. The question is one of inequalities already present in society, but which were made even more evident, beginning with the inequalities between those who had the privilege of a larger house during the lockdown compared to the many who live in much more precarious conditions. Think also of the often rather basic and superficial distinction between the health of the body and that of the mind, the latter not sufficiently taken into account in the restrictions imposed or of the institutionalised difference between 'essential' and 'non-essential' jobs. On the one hand, this exposed an entire category of people who were not adequately protected from risk (in hospitals, in factories, etc.), and, on the other hand, it degraded many other jobs to the oblivion of being 'non-essential'. As usual, the arts, research, schools, universities, and the entire cultural field were relegated to the bottom of the pile. It is precisely the closure of schools and the forced cohabitation of more people within the family unit that has made reproductive work – that is, care, assistance, and domestic work – weigh even more heavily. Women have been the main victims, as always, of this enormous burden of unpaid work (or badly paid work without rights). As early as the 1970s and 1980s, eco-feminist struggles focused on demanding a wage and protective conditions for the invisible work that hundreds of millions of women

were and are forced to do by the patriarchal system. These demands have found a consistent complementarity with denunciations of that same patriarchal system's predatory appropriation of the entire ecosystem (Weeks 2011).[3]

Over the last few years, the category of 'care' has also been articulated by degrowth, climate change, and environmental justice movements by welding an alliance between themselves and feminist movements. During the COVID-19 crisis, calls for a 'care income' grew, which would be made available to all those who – not being formally salaried – are engaged in the care of people and/or urban and rural environments, in the home as much as in the community and ecosystem (Barca 2020; see also D'Alisa 2020).[4]

The pandemic has relaunched many other income claims, thus aggregating different demands under the same "empty signifier" (Laclau 2005); unfortunately, this aggregation tends to last only for a short time and acts on a merely rhetorical-discursive level. Income claims then return to dividing rather than uniting once they are translated into concrete policies. There is not a 'singular income' for all seasons, nor is there a singular policy, and for this reason many countries and political organisations have approached the issue in different ways. There is therefore the risk of missing the opportunity to think up a stable, lasting, sustainable, and sensible form of income and of instead promoting a mere stimulus to support demand, which would perfectly fit contemporary neoliberal rationality. In this scenario, art workers have played a special role. Not only do they represent one of the sectors most affected by current lockdown restrictions, but their own profession risks being affected permanently. This is why they have been one of the central drivers of workers' protests. As was the case with the intermittent French struggles of the 1990s, these workers from a 'peculiar and particular category' have been able to interpret wider needs that speak to other types of workers similarly affected by the radical changes in the world of labour (Corsani and Lazzarato 2008). As the present analysis demonstrates, the claims of cultural workers oscillate between two types

[3] In the 1980s, the Women Count – Count Women's Work petition gave voice to a mass movement for the recognition of invisible work; signed by 1,200 organisations representing millions of women around the world, it obtained a United Nations resolution in 1995 calling on governments to measure and value unpaid work in GDP.

[4] See the Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE), entitled *A Blueprint for Europe's Just Transition*, which can be consulted via the online platform www.gndforeurope.com

of interventions related to income. On the one hand, there are those who support an intermittent income as a social safety net dedicated to art workers. On the other hand, there are those who claim a universal and unconditional income for all.[5]

The irreconcilable distance between these two approaches lies in the role of work, whose apparently emancipatory function is criticised by supporters of a Universal Basic Income (UBI): "far from becoming common good, modern work is increasingly common bad" (Fumagalli 2013, 38; see also Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017; Pisani 2014). In the last three decades, autonomous Marxist, alter-globalisation, and more recently degrowth and new feminist movements have shared a radical critique of the binomial 'work-emancipation' that was once indisputable. Their vision and practices show that the aim "is not primarily that of obtaining, improving, or defending one's job, but that of obtaining more freedom from it" (Barca 2019, 177).

If we relate this approach to the income issue, we find a certain reason behind the degradation of the welfare state, which has turned unemployment benefits into the blackmail of having to take any job, even a de-professionalised one, or following the often Kafkaesque rules of the agencies responsible for subsidies.[6]

Unemployment benefits encourage systems that force the weakest people to 'take it or leave it': something that is difficult to translate into an emancipatory key and seems more like 'an offer you cannot refuse'. Against the paternalistic reading of welfare, claims such as UBI are powerful because they are able to break with the constitutive fragmentation of the world of labour today, unifying subjects that are free from the concept of class: housewives, industrial workers, the unemployed, professionals, students, creative workers, and teachers can feel included in the claims of an unconditional basic income. The unconditional basic income, which is above the living wage, is then relevant for all people but is particularly crucial for the many who are excluded from social shock absorbers. UBI is therefore an important strand of an emancipatory path – despite its weaknesses – provided it is not thought of as an incompatible alternative to other welfare policies.[7]

In order to make UBI work, it is clear that the entire tax system

[5] See the assemblies towards art for *UBI Manifesto* at https://instituteofradicalimagination.org/the-school-of-mutation-2020/som-iterations/art-for-ubi

[6] This situation is vividly described in *I, Daniel Blake*, the 2016 film directed by Ken Loach and written by his long-time collaborator Paul Laverty.

[7] For a more detailed critique, see Micciarelli and D'Andrea (2020).

would need to be restructured and that a number of the cornerstones of recent decades' neoliberal policies would have to be removed. A measure like this should always be connected with a level of progressiveness concerning the tax levy, where taxable income could for example reach as much as 99%. Moreover, the institutional level from which UBI can be distributed needs to be properly identified: although it is claimed as a universal measure, there are no universal institutions. This means that the specific amount of the income would be proportionate to the economic situation of different countries, their public debt, level of social safety nets, GDP, and average income. This is evidently inequitable and would create dangerous and deplorably unequal outcomes rather than equality. Also, within the EU institutional framework, there is no exclusive authority in the social-economic domain, so any such income model would be provided by national states. Looking to Europe, this disparity would have devastating effects on the immediate future, creating anger, resentment, and nationalism, which is the real poisoned fruit of competitive policies that have never been dormant and are indeed intensified in the Eurozone.

Hacking Welfare: For a Creative and Care Income

Basic income can provide a vital wage when it comes to escaping the trap of unskilled and precarious work, but it cannot do much more. People have needs, desires, and affective connections with others, all of which can only be met with a full income. And this is something that only a job can provide. If we want to move "from the right to work to the right to choose work" (Fumagalli 2013), the key question is how income policies can affect and transform labour itself. There is a need, then, to articulate the question of income together with the question of labour and to highlight what UBI alone cannot do: redefining the significance of the means of production in favour of the working class. In short, a struggle is needed in the pursuit of a fairer wage (and therefore a fairer working income). This is, however, still not enough. Ways to share and redistribute the means of production need to be seriously thought about. The state/market dichotomy must also be disrupted in the spheres of work organisation and wealth creation. If we reason around income as a tool for liberation and self-valorisation (Weeks 2011), it should then be problematised as a matter of freedom (Amendola 2014), able to directly affect the concrete structures of the world of labour.

Urban commons represent not only a communitarian project of economic redistribution; they are above all practices for declaring the need to rebalance power relations in the world of labour. Without struggles to restore concrete power to those who produce – compared with those who own the means of production – any action relating to income will not only become sterile but will function to consolidate the capitalist system.

Knowledge and cognitive workers[8] should have the right to an income that allows them to follow their own professional desires and ideas or to pursue collective projects and challenges. The proposal of an 'income of creativity and care for knowledge workers' aims to borrow from and improve upon the ratios of the sabbatical model within the academic world and some agencies. Let us imagine that a cognitive worker could request a monthly income at regular intervals (for example, every two to three years) commensurate with the minimum daily pay for artists. The purpose is to develop his or her own training or artistic project. In order to obtain this income, it would not be necessary to win a call for proposals; the only requirement would be to present the project and report, regardless of subsequent changes (even radical ones), during the course of the program.

The creative and care income guarantees a medium- to long-term income (semi-annual or annual). This could be during a period of unemployment or as a paid suspension from a stable job. In this way, we intend to rebalance the artistic biotope formulated by Pascal Gielen, which explains that the areas of exchange among colleagues (the

[8] There are two types of cognitive work. The first type can be understood as 'semi-involuntary' work: comments, feedback, reviews, cookies, navigation tracks, and big data are just some of the relational footprints between individuals that represent an economic value exploited by algorithms in what can be called the "profiling society" (Micciarelli 2021). It is clear that logistical and material work has not disappeared at all, but it is equally clear that contemporary capitalism feeds on social cooperation (Negri and Vercellone 2007). In Lacanian terms, it would seem that this kind of cognitive work activity is foreclosed, both hidden and yet central to the functioning of the system. In this picture, universal basic income is certainly a formidable tool to provide economic relief to this kind of value involuntarily produced by social cooperation, which we conceive to be close to the Marxian notion of 'general intellect'. A second type of cognitive work can be distinguished: the professional kind. In this case, what is described are types of 'voluntary' activities: workers who use their ingenuity and creativity as the main resource in carrying out tasks or producing goods, organising services, and creating material and immaterial outputs. This, then, refers to art, culture, and entertainment workers, as well as researchers, academics, and programmers; in general terms, all those workers who are called on to leverage their relational, dialectical, and intellectual skills.

'peer' dimension) and the individual contribution to collective well-being (the 'civil' dimension), such as the time invested in personal growth (the 'domestic' dimension), are hardly remunerated and, if they are, it is only through the fourth dimension – that of the 'market'. For this reason, most artistic labour is too often underpaid (Gielen 2018). This is exactly what many urban commons and SOAs[9] seek to overcome with their collective organisation (Acosta Alvarado 2020).

In a way, this proposal can be seen as an income of potentiality. The need for such an income has also been understood by the heads of the Italian National Institute for Social Security (INPS), which has proposed, on an extemporary occasion, a "cultural project income"[10]; through this, what is being attempted is the application of a 'creative use of law' and a methodology of hacking the welfare system (Micciarelli 2021; Micciarelli forthcoming). Nevertheless, this income is much more than a training aid (however necessary) because it offers the possibility of artistic experimentation and of investigating crossroads between the arts, which might be under-explored and apparently without any output from the point of view of guaranteeing that a product reach the market. Income means freedom, and to free art it must be liberated from the anxiety of product performance. A creative and care income could generate cultural works otherwise unthinkable due to current market conditions. This idea is fully in line with what is already produced in emerging urban commons (Micciarelli 2014; Stavrides 2014), where spaces of possibility are built for artistic creations without the worry of deadlines, projects, and outputs to be sold. The funds to be drawn on for such an income should be financed at the European level and implemented by local and regional authorities. Indeed, cities could be the indirect beneficiaries of this income. For the beneficiaries of this type of income, during the period of supply, may well need a space to host them – a place where they can think, create, and build their own project, alone

[9] We define SOAs as commons spaces that identify themselves as alternatives to dominant ones from a productive, relational, and socio-economical point of view. The main characteristic of SOAs is not only inscribed in a political identity conceived in a shared political horizon such as, frequently, anti-racism and anti-fascism. It also consists of the following elements: the aim to create opportunities (individual and collective) and the satisfaction of needs addressed to a wider sense of community. They are self-organised experiments: spaces in which politics means not only claiming new rights but trying to realise them concretely through direct actions. This concept is more broadly developed in Micciarelli and D'Andrea (2020).

[10] See speech of Pasquale Tridico, President of the INPS, at the Italian Parliament on 27 October 2020, https://webtv.camera.it/evento/16945

or with others. Having a space (a laboratory, a workshop, a cultural centre) is another of the privileges and inequalities that must be separated out. However, there are also spaces for collective use, premises which are opened up for social activities and the care of the area. This is the role of urban commons and SOAs, which each recipient of a creative and care income can choose as a host institution. Containers condition the content. Recognising and funding only the culture produced in traditional institutions, such as museums and theatres, is short-sighted and fosters the decline of alternative spaces where other forms of culture and counter culture are generated and produced.

This is also why we want to create an open and renewable list of potential host institutions that includes spaces for associations, social centres, urban commons, and SOAs, as well as schools, small municipalities, or other institutions that meet the precise criteria of solidarity: a willingness to offer creative support and the ambition to play a role in the cultural care of the territory.[11] It is not at all a question of mapping all the places where culture takes place, which fortunately exceed any possible classification, but of broadening the number of those that can, if they wish, obtain various types of legal recognition, including funding. This host institution will receive additional funding equivalent to the amount given to the individual worker in order to facilitate and support the beneficiary of the income of creativity and care. The purpose of this funding is to provide tools, materials, travel expenses, and any other costs necessary for the institution not only to host the artist who has chosen it but for all the other activities it contains. This funding would also be essential to implement the income of creativity and care for the sector of technicians, scenographers, and organisational experts, without whom the world of culture and shows would not exist as such.[12]

Just as the ERC grants consider an allocation for a host institution as a recognition of administrative work, this additional budget

[11] An example of how to enable a connection between artists and a non-conventional host institution is the artistic residence created in the framework of the *Rockability* project in Roccaporena in August 2020 in collaboration with the Master's programme in interactive and participatory design of the IUAV University of Venice, *l'Asilo*, and *Coooperativa sociale CIPS*; see Section 3.

[12] These workers are important players in the income protests. They have been not only directly affected during the pandemic crisis but forgotten, among others, by Italian government measures that failed to consider the undeclared work they often undertake.

line would further recognise the civic profitability that small/informal realities generate in their area. In this regard, small organisations and informal projects would be preferred as a recognition of their grassroots work and in line with a redistributive logic so as to tackle inequalities. This initiative would support not only the daily activities of these spaces, but it would also empower them to expand their mission and would bring them within reach of the EU.[13] To achieve this, we suggest starting with the implementation of the European Social Statute of the Artist, approved by the European Parliament on 7 June 2007, which aims to guarantee study and training projects (Articles 25–29).

Obviously, many things still need to be worked out: for example, a specific register for host institutions, election criteria, and limits to the maximum number of knowledge workers who can choose them, etc. These are not just details but crucial aspects to concretise the above proposals. However, the intention here is just to focus on the theoretical reason for this alliance between cognitive and knowledge work and grassroots practices. In our view, it is necessary to take into greater consideration the fact that a certain kind of cultural activity very often plays a huge part in the daily programming of many urban commons: for example, cineforums, art residences, dance rehearsals, performance and exhibition spaces, lecture halls, small libraries, craft workshops, or small, shared carpentry shops. These activities suffer from a lack of funding. Their depletion leads to deeper cultural impoverishment because art is not something to be understood so much as something in the service of a territory or, more precisely, in osmosis with it. Pushing forward with the struggles of the eco-feminist movement around an income of care, visibility, and support can allow a focus on the urban and rural regeneration that thousands and thousands of citizens, activists, and volunteers carry out daily in countless locations. This leads to the second theoretical frame of our proposal: an income that can be used to implement collective care.

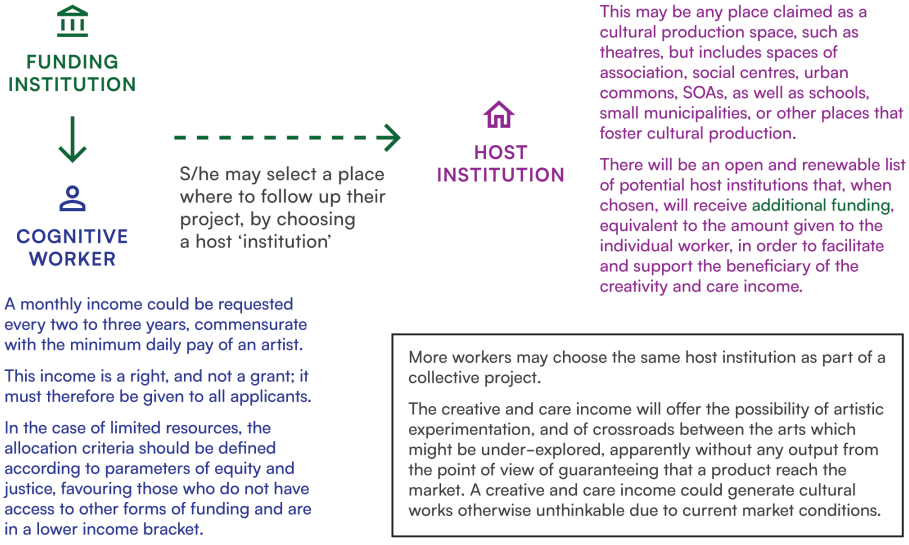
[13] Therefore, a complementary strategy would be a funding scheme for artists following the priorities of the EU Work Plan for Culture. Such a funding program should create an ecosystem for sustainable creative work by financing artists with a significant non-refundable component, which is necessary for the peculiarities of artistic experimentation and research. Moreover, it should favour interaction between individual artists and emerging communities, allowing the acknowledgement of initiatives with the highest social impact on the territories even when such organisations do not have a particularly large amount of experience. This approach, oriented towards individuals, would also help to bring the EU closer to smaller-scale domains following, for example, the success of the Erasmus+ program (which is different in nature, but very effective in building European identity, since it gives concrete opportunities to individual students).

Keeping such spaces open is an invisible task. As feminist struggles teach us, the first step to becoming visible is to name work as such: to be given an income not only as human beings (which even a moderate liberal would be willing to accept) but recognising that income as a product of work. This has a precise meaning: to claim the right to be called by the name of one's profession. The workers who suffer the most from a lack of recognition regarding their profession are those who dedicate themselves less selfishly to themselves in order to participate in collective processes. Anyone who has helped activists write their curriculum vitae or apply for a grant or a job has seen how much of their lives and knowledge is not 'quantifiable'. In 'professional' language there is a myriad of skills which are invisible when produced outside the market, as it happens in an urban commons: organisational skills that would be the envy of company directors; management and budgeting skills capable of developing projects that would usually require much greater financial support; strategic, legal, and relational skills that would compete, and overturn, those within a business school; the ability to facilitate participatory processes; an artistic sensibility worthy of the best experimental academies, and many other skills that simply pass for 'uncountable collective activities'. Generations of cognitive workers are thus deprived of the demonstrability of their skills, which should nevertheless be recognised as such, even outside of the spirit of militancy and gratuitous passion with which they are carried out. And there are still more people who would like to put their minds to social projects instead of a bank, at least for a certain period of time. Therefore, through a reinterpretation of eco-feminism linked with commoners' movements, the creative and care income is to be seen as an instrument oriented towards financing individual and collective interests such as the mutualistic management of social spaces, houses for commons, natural resources, neighbourhoods, rivers, lakes, mountains, and many other 'places of the heart' that need a new kind of widespread custody. This could in fact prove to be an opportunity for rethinking the social value of art and to hybridise artistic skills with civic and democratic processes. In fact, an income that would free workers from 'bad' work would also facilitate the creation of 'good' work.

The link between knowledge work and host institutions is also crucial when it comes to creating an alternative that can contrast, through its mere existence, the distortions that afflict cultural institutions. This kind of income may serve to give freedom of study, re-

search, and production, if for a short time, by separating them from the subordination of organisational structures, such as universities or companies, which determine people by managing funds and limiting the possibilities of a life. The idea of the market as the consensus of the public is a fiction that hides the fact that the public itself is the effect of a construction and process of taste formation.[14]

A creative and care income complements another proposal: not only UBI but also traditional welfare measures. One must be very careful about superficially judging the traditional demands around welfare as rearguard struggles. Otherwise, we not only run the risk of playing the (bad) game of neoliberalism but also of separating ourselves from weaker workers: as proof of this, in recent months in Italy the battle to obtain an allowance for discontinuity between one job and another has been raging. The creative sector needs a multiplication and diversification of job opportunities and cultural projects that do not exclusively rely upon cultural enterprises but are intended for individual workers to self-determine their own career path.



The careers that are interrupted by the substantially pyramidal system of labour are first and foremost those of the people who do not have the means, either personal or familial, to invest in their

[14] The same reasoning can apply in other fields: think of the scientific community and the relevance of citations and similar bibliometric criteria.

own projects. Cognitive work is a class system which we must break, making potentially significant research pathways truly autonomous. A creativity and care income could make the voluntary work of a multitude of people more visible and give many more the chance to direct their skills and professionalism within the social field without having to submit to the rules of the third sector. Why should we give this privilege to knowledge workers and not to others? As discussed above, we are suggesting a strategy that should be adapted to different professional contexts in order to find the leverage to identify the nodes of exploitation within multiple categories of work so as to overturn them. In order to overthrow a system, it is necessary to take advantage of what it hides and to expose the foundations upon which exploitation is built. Behind the neoliberal rhetoric of self-realisation or of equal opportunities, there can be another way. Give us the possibility to create better jobs, jobs everyone would like, or simply to take a break from the one we have chosen: we want bread, roses, and even stages and creative places where we can dream and get the recognition we deserve.

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5. Call for a New Season of Cultural Policies

by Intermittenti Spettacolari, l'Asilo,
and Coordinamento Arte e Spettacolo Campania

"We can prove with a wealth of examples how in the animal and human worlds the law of mutual aid is the law of progress, and how mutual aid with the courage and individual initiative which follow from it secures victory to the species most capable of practicing it."
(P. A. Kropotkin)

It is well known that the culture sector as a whole has suffered enormously due to the crisis that the rest of the country is going through. Culture has yet to receive a real response, one capable of getting it back on its feet. There is still a need for measures that go beyond temporary support and aim instead at structural reorganisation. Beginning with the management of ordinary, national, and European funds and looking ahead to the near present – that is, the management of the Italian recovery fund – culture must be considered beyond a logic of mere entertainment. It is now time to adopt a necessarily political and structural perspective concerning the framing of culture – something that, for years, many have been calling for.

It is therefore the right moment to

• foster real infrastructural, mutualistic, and joined-up action – the kind that can create a system to support the entire social and artistic fabric without excluding anyone;

• combine the vitality and uniqueness of bottom-up experiments in cultural policy – conducted in recent years in various Italian cities – with European experiments and the related European funding programmes. This joint action would encourage medium – and long-term synergistic processes and trigger more structured and lasting effects. It would be a way to move beyond the limits imposed by the temporary nature of experiments in local government and the frequent dynamics of the 'spoil system'.

With the general aim of strengthening the foundations of a sector where public investment has been cut back for decades and which has been increasingly left at the mercy of the market, some aspects emphasised here should not be overlooked: firstly, young people – that is, those for whom access to cultural offerings should be better

facilitated; secondly, small, independent performance spaces – authentic places where training, free experimentation, and early public performances can be encouraged, particularly through multilevel support policies on the part of local, national, public, and private bodies; lastly, it is important to underscore the need to set up instruments that encourage cooperation and mutual aid between the various agents operating in the area so as to encourage the exchange of skills and mutual support.

Culture credit for young people: a main concern here is to dispense with the narrative that assesses the damage caused by the pandemic solely from an economic point of view. Therefore, we cannot overlook the social tragedy experienced by young people, who have been affected at the very moment when they were most likely to expand their social relations outside the family unit. The closure of schools, cinemas, theatres, clubs, and concert halls strikes at the heart of young people's social relations; it does not only impact that sector's economy. For this reason, it seems fair to give young people a special incentive to enjoy culture collectively: a credit card with a pre-established spending limit that allows people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine to buy tickets for two concerts, two shows, and two films at the cinema per month; super reduced (minimum price) tickets or tickets paid for in full by the state to ensure that this proposal is not a burden for the theatres, clubs, cinemas, companies, or groups and thus encourages the involvement of a new demographic.

Support for clubs, small performance spaces, and emerging professionals: by means of tax relief policies and relief from specific charges following the example of the English Live Act. These are the places where avant-gardes are born and where tomorrow's cultural operators, artists, and others are trained. All too often, the importance of the young and very young who start working in the performing arts in technical and organisational roles is overlooked, and, far too frequently, this work takes place in illegal conditions. Neglecting this means perpetuating the current situation: abandoning the new cultural workers and emerging groups to a predatory market which forces them into undeclared work and underpaid apprenticeships. This constitutes nowadays the norm for workers in the cultural sector, who historically learn their trade by practising in so-called

'clubs'. It is necessary to support these clubs in order to protect and strengthen all the professional categories found there, such as musicians, actors, dancers, lighting and sound technicians, along with photographers, graphic designers, and small promoters.

In Italy there are even top-level workers in the creative sector who operate in degrading conditions. Instead, such a heritage must necessarily be the subject of a vast support program by the state and local authorities to allow such skills to emerge and be consolidated through actions such as

• funding seasons for venues with fewer than 200 seats (small theatres, concert halls, live clubs, etc.) and funding residencies for all artists.

• making disused public spaces and/or spaces confiscated from the mafia available for rehearsals by companies and groups as in the example of the civic use of commons (for example, *ex Asilo Filangieri*).

Support for the creation of an integrated and joined-up system for the whole cultural production sector through the creation of

• local aid centres such as public offices in connection with foundations and other aid organisations – that is, places intended to provide information and guidance for operators in the sector on taxation, contractual issues, and internationalisation opportunities, thus supporting the entire artistic fabric, which, whilst still of vital importance, is increasingly abandoned to precariousness and poverty.

• ad hoc forms of funding that favour the creation of partnerships and cooperative networks between cultural actors in the area (local and national) in order to activate peer-exchange processes and outline a relational mapping of productive subjects – small and large, independent and recognised – that is neither static nor self-referential but operational, interconnected, and ready to interact with the opportunities that will arise in the coming years. Therefore, we should encourage the exchange of skills and mutual support – larger groups supporting smaller ones, emerging forms revitalising more structured ones – and projects where collaboration and interdependence are also creative practices capable of building popular workshops and intertwining interdisciplinary skills.

• spaces for discussion between those who design cultural policies and those who are affected by them. These spaces should go beyond the logic of formal consultation and aim to identify funding pro-

grammes that adhere more organically and dynamically to the real needs of the various sectors within the cultural, artistic, and creative ecosystem at a local and national level. We can also refer to relevant practices that have already been widely experimented with in recent years: participatory co-design processes; direct management of cultural spaces for civic and collective use; observatories and councils as new participatory consultative bodies that directly involve workers, sector operators, and inhabitants who animate bottom-up processes.

This approach aims to optimise expenditure and to address the prospect of changes to come – which are necessary, indispensable, and unavoidable – from the perspective of development and sustainable management.

SECTION II
LA TELA

6. Making Community in a Time of Social Distancing: An Auto-Narration Enquiry into *La Tela*

by Roberto Cirillo and Martina Locorotondo

Introduction: A Reflexive Auto-Narration Enquiry into *La Tela*

The chapter that follows is a reflexive auto-narration enquiry into the questions and possible answers that the open community of *l'Asilo* faced at the onset of the pandemic, which both led to and continue to fuel the artistic journey of *La Tela*.

Some of these queries concerned the cultural sphere, and in particular *l'Asilo*, which among the Neapolitan commons is known as an interdependent cultural centre. For example, is it appropriate to continue to make culture during such a delicate time? How do people continue to make culture from below? Other questions had to do with 'making community' at a time of social distancing and inescapable isolation, which is to say the relational aspect central to a commons like *l'Asilo*. Finally, we asked ourselves how these two aspects – culture and community – might be made to coexist and interact in the light of the new virtual and interactive modes and communication tools that the pandemic has forced us to employ. In other words, how to bring a commons to life – temporarily and contingently – on the web?

The exercise of telling the autobiographical story that follows tries to answer these questions, not through external observation but through a participatory methodology of auto-narration, which stems from the reflections of two subjects actively involved in the process (Mason et al. 2013; Breuer and Roth 2003). In this sense, auto-narration stands as a tool for 'learning-in-action', processing and enhancing self-reflexive thoughts about what is practised with the community in a completely spontaneous, as opposed to predetermined, way (Tedder and Biesta 2009; Alheit and Dausien 2002). In fact, and consistent with the nature of *La Tela* itself, this method implies that theorising always develops from practise and never the reverse.

Finally, the ultimate goal of this auto-narration is not to give definitive answers but rather to reflect on some of the solutions that have been collectively outlined along the way. In fact, this process, which must be understood as both exploratory and open, reflects the creed of

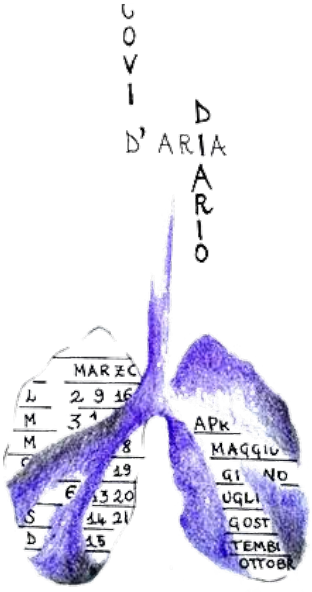
preguntando caminamos, a central principle of the Zapatistas. These solutions, which are never definite and are always susceptible to revisions and rewritings, leave certain questions open, which could be answered further through practice, as well as a space for future discussions. In this sense, the content of this text is meant as a possible tool for self-reflection to be used by the community itself and as food for thought for other projects that have faced these issues – as well as for researchers and those interested in the field of the commons, grassroots cultural practices, and community responses to the pandemic.

The present story – as a way of processing a (continuing) path – has endeavoured to follow the chronological order of the facts and the questions as they arose. For this reason, Section 2 of the paper retraces the Genesis of *La Tela*. This is followed by a description of and a reflection on some of the founding principles of *La Tela* (Section 3: The Unfolded *Tela*) and on the informal, participatory methodologies elaborated by the community (Section 4: Composition of the Creative Act). These are flanked and constantly enriched by diary entries written collectively at different moments and by continuous references to the materials that populate *La Tela* itself in a continuous cross-reference between practices, materials, artworks, and reflections, both upstream and downstream of the process. Finally, Section 5 deals with the possibilities of *La Tela*'s existence beyond the web through a narration of the *Venerdì della Freva*. In the conclusion (Section 6), we try to pull the threads of the self-reflection together, highlighting some points that emerged as central and others that deserve further discussion.

La Tela is accessible at http://www.exasilofilangieri.it/la_tela/.

The Genesis of *La Tela*

Saturday, 7 March
The last public event at *l'Asilo*:
"*Grande come una città*."
Everything was interrupted
on the following day.
We have spent weeks wondering what to do.



(fig.1 Example of an illustration combined with puns)

The spread of the pandemic, together with the related safety measures, had a significant impact on the ordinary practices of the community that animates *l'Asilo* in Naples. Yet, despite this commons temporarily ceasing to exist as a physical place, it survived as a space of aggregation by (temporarily and not without difficulties or doubts) moving to the virtual dimension.

> On 14 March, the silence of the previous days was broken,
> putting together the new terms that had become
> recurrent during the lockdown.

The community sought new ways of keeping the fire of its relationships alive and burning. In the absence of presence, it tried to continue to take care of its members, offering itself as a space for mutual aid and discussion. Indeed, after years of self-government, the community discovered that *l'Asilo*'s output of political and artistic experimentation is not as important as the relationships that are built along the way, and which cannot be dispersed. *L'Asilo* was, in this way, incidentally discovering the asset that it had been producing up to that point and decided to enhance it, shedding the risk of tying its own survival to that of the physical space.

We responded to isolation and social distancing, and to the contradictory news items that chased each other in the media, by striving to feel together and, despite the physical rarefaction, nevertheless close. As the quintessence of *l'Asilo* has always been rooted in artistic production from below, we asked ourselves whether and how a place of cultural production should continue its activities in such circumstances.

> Starting on the 16th, puns began to multiply.
> With the arrival of spring, we began to share
> the first stories that would have given shape to a logbook,
> irregular and chaotic, in order to transform this moment
> into a space of collective elaboration
> to be preserved for future creation.

It was in this way that the 'Viral Arts' group was born (www.exasilofilangieri.it/arti-virali) as an act of resistance in the face of isolation by the people who had lived and used *l'Asilo* before and who were then left without a material space to meet, think, and create, as well as by whoever else allowed themselves to be 'infected' by the creative process – from those involved in artistic and creative work and workers of spectacle and 'of the immaterial' to volunteers, activists, and

whoever felt the need to spend such a time of suspension as part of a collective project.

The first question that animated the initial meetings concerned whether or not it was appropriate to make culture in that moment, especially for those who worked all year long in the sector. The answer was far from unanimous: some workers in the field, not being aware of how long the forced pause would last, welcomed the break as a breath of fresh air and therefore declined to commit.

However, the majority of the community – feeling a strong responsibility not to shirk the task of both narrating the times we were living in and of recording them for the future whilst keeping the flame of counterculture alive through 'the darkness and the desert' – chose to get active and accept the challenge imposed by time and social distancing by continuing artistic experimentation in a new and different way.

> By the end of March, we considered the idea of putting together all the materials produced that tell the story of that moment by sharing them online.

Therefore, the question that arose was how to carry on the kind of artistic production that had always characterised and distinguished the practices of *l'Asilo* given the impossibility of any physical presence, such as was the case in phase one of the first wave of the pandemic between March and May 2020.

At first, two distinct groups were born that would meet via online communication platforms, which were becoming increasingly popular. One of the first initiatives of *l'Asilo* was the procurement of a new means of production necessary for the times: a subscription to the online platform. This, as per the policy of sharing 'traditional' means of production at *l'Asilo,* was offered to local movements and citizens in order to safely continue their militancy meetings, focus groups, and the committees' actions.

One group was a creative writing workshop and the other was the group from which the *La Tela* project would later emerge. The two were often contiguous, and they intensively dialogued with each other during the first wave of the pandemic. Both met once a week.

The sessions of the former focused on literary production through which to verbalise the spirit of those uncertain times and preserve its trace. As a way of providing their testimony, the group aimed to auto-narrate their feelings in various forms, such as dioramas, diaries,

poems, and sharing the works of others. Through a variation of the Situationist and collective literary game *cadavre exquis*, various authors interacted online, melting their voices within a deliberate dissonance that suddenly became harmonious. By cutting and pasting, the individual identities came together as a single voice which was then able to capture and reproduce – better than isolated entities could – the atmosphere of that uncertain and distressing moment.

Thus, it was through a pretext (the drafting of a shared and collective script) that a community was created. This did not form around a physical space but rather an immaterial and creative activity which functioned as a trigger. Ultimately, this operated as a life jacket for everyone who had been sailing by sight and was shipwrecked in collective uncertainty. At that time, anything that could have made people feel less isolated was more crucial than ever.

(fig.2 Example of drawing on *La Tela)*

L'Asilo is a commons.
Without its space, what is the commons?
The network of people can become one.
This network becomes a commons:
La Tela.

The group of *La Tela*, for their part, tried to create interplay between different art forms, from sound to readings and from drawings to video. The methods of interaction were borrowed from those common to *l'Asilo*. *La Tela* is, in this sense, like *l'Asilo* but virtual – a place of free sharing, its natural continuation in a different and new dimension which bears novel possibilities as well as the limits of the medium. Participation, which is open to anybody, is free, and there is no art direction but instead a constructive and open collaboration among peers who act by consensus.

The question was how to reinterpret a collective art practice in light of the isolating circumstances and how to continue to give voice to a critique of the present. After a few sessions, the group decided to develop this shared need for art

making – one that was so varied and polyphonic – through the collective construction of an art space on the web.

> On 28 March, a digital archive was created
> in which videos, sounds, and images were collected,
> inspired and created by the people who used to inhabit *l'Asilo*,
> who, lacking a material place to meet
> and moved by the urgency to speak out at that difficult moment,
> transferred their will to congregate [to an] online [medium]
> in order to undertake a collective action
> that would go beyond individual contribution.

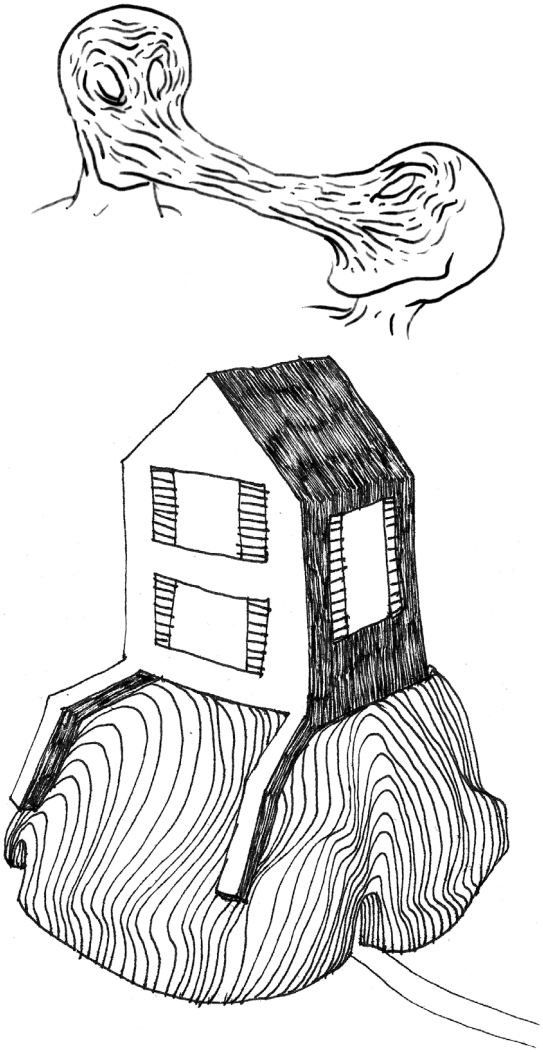
Through this cycle of doing and questioning, *La Tela* was born during the lockdown. An act of resistance in response to isolation that reinvents artistic production in a non-solipsistic key. It is configured as an art space on the web, populated by various contributions which range from sounds, videos, and voices to words and images, some original and others not, but all inspired and collected by people who already knew each other and *l'Asilo* before the emergency, as well as by people outside the channels of *l'Asilo*. It is thanks to the online medium that some of these people, despite being geographically distant, have been able to get involved in the process.

> At the beginning of April, the project
> of an open sound stream involving musicians from all over the world
> was outlined:
> each musician, confined to their own home,
> was invited to record sound lines that would then be put together
> according to combinatorial and partially random criteria.
> The call then widened to other artistic languages (video, texts...)
> A mega non-composition was born
> without direction.

This is how lines of sound recordings arrived from different places in Italy, which were then reassembled and played collectively on the platform of *La Tela*. Just as the notes melted together, so the individual artists stripped themselves of their authorship and began to collaborate in a collective artistic process.

It is precisely for this reason that *La Tela* is not only an online space populated by works of art but above all a place where everyone, regardless of their physical distance, can meet, interact, create together, and face the apathy and uncertainty of isolation a little less alone.

On 7 April, we received the first tracks.
Within a month, about a hundred performers were together,
albeit in a virtual dimension, in the concreteness of sound,
representing once again that spirit of
interdependence and cooperation that is the essence of *l'Asilo*'s process.
The results will become the sonic fabric of *La Tela*.
Once published, *La Tela* lends itself to being
drawn, decomposed, reassembled, shaped, kneaded, written, and set to music with online public contributions.
There are and will be mistakes.
But those, like the rest, will be allowed to happen and flow freely.



(fig. 3 and 4 Examples of drawings on *La Tela*)

The Unfolded *Tela*

Through assemblies and continuous interactions, this experiment has been enriched along the way with characteristics and principles that were never fixed and always debatable – each of them born from practice followed by theoretical discussion – and which ended up delineating *La Tela*'s own identity. In this way, the artistic experiment borrowed the *modus operandi* of *l'Asilo* in an attempt to transpose it onto the virtual world.

An open art-work

La Tela, like *l'Asilo*, is an open work that exists as a space for free sharing, a circle always open to everyone. Thus, it rediscovers and breathes new life into what Umberto Eco had already affirmed in 1962 about turning openness into a precise instance and model to be constantly pursued. In fact, *La Tela* is characterised by a continuous inclination towards inclusion and contamination. These are mediated not so much by the act of browsing the platform (whether it is more or less interactive) as they are by the commitment to welcome anyone who wants to offer their creative contribution or simply participate in the creative process.

Each contribution interacts with the others, often through mechanisms that opt for unpredictability and randomness as their predominant stylistic feature. We frequently tell ourselves that "randomness is a guide inside *La Tela* and improvisation its motto." In fact, following the same Situationist spirit that inspired the experiments of the writing group, many of the contents that make up *La Tela* are born as scattered seeds that sprout spontaneously and are then put into conditions of interaction to explore how they could be combined by chance.

(fig.5 Example of drawing on *La Tela*)

Accordingly, *La Tela* became an exercise in mega-composition (or, better, non-composition), where

nothing is predetermined or defined, but everything is fickle, and where nothing is premised, and every error is invited to become a possibility.

'Randomised' art and the inclusion of error

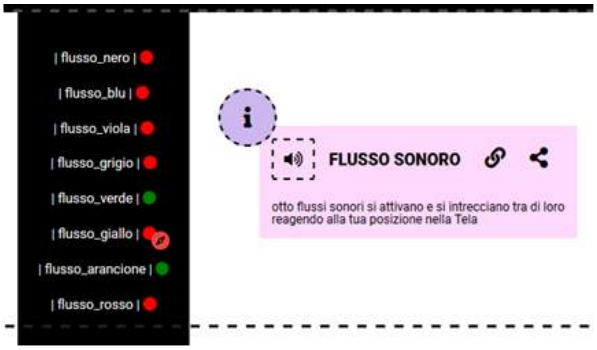
In this sense, there is a fruitful, and always reciprocal, contamination that has been created by the interaction of artists with web programmers and their language.[1]

If the history of art is full of examples in which error is integrated or even becomes the pivot in a larger discourse, the same cannot be said of computer programming. No flaw must escape the programmer who builds a web structure, and whose role demands the identification and plugging of gaps.

The very dense dialogue that has been established between the creative and the technical – and which, by its very nature, *La Tela* summons – has inevitably translated what is established within the aesthetics of art into the field of programming, generating something new and innovative through this kind of experimentation.

To clarify, here are two examples:

1. As the Sound Fluxes project was taking shape, and the material expanded with the arrival of new recordings, the combinatorial codes of these sound objects saw their complexity gradually increase. More and more variables began to structure and relate to each other, just like the artists who had created the sound streams. Inevitably, not all of the pieces found their perfect place in this mosaic. It was then that an error generated an interesting implication that the community of *La Tela,* long sensitised to accepting the non-intentional, recognised as 'poetic' and worthy of



(fig.6 Sound Fluxes)

[1] Credit for that technical-poetical contamination goes particularly to Paolo. *La Tela* was programmed in HTML, PHP, and JAVASCRIPT.

preserving. Unintentionally, the code was tampered with, generating a 'predisposition' to silence: if the user does not interact with *La Tela*, the passage of time increases the probability that the composition will come to a conclusion.

2. *La Tela* spans a white area of 5,000 pixels squared. Whilst websites usually unfurl vertically, starting from the top left corner of the monitor and moving down and along the width of the screen, visitors to *La Tela* begin their navigation at a lower and more central starting point. Accordingly, navigation is omnidirectional since users can move around the screen in all directions, which creates an immersive and enveloping experience.

Experimenting with codes came to generate, again by mere error, a black band along the top and left sides of *La Tela*. The darkness of the black, in contrast with the white of the background, ended up evoking the suggestion of an unknown and unexplored otherness. Once again, then, it was thanks to a slight stumble along the way that a more fascinating condition was reached than any pre-established procedure could have produced: the creation of a space, within *La Tela*, that implied going beyond *La Tela* itself by transcending it and leaving its boundaries behind, thus allowing users the possibility of exploration in a moment of physical seclusion. In other words, the error was accepted and retained in the form of other possibilities. This is how the black band was born, which was then extended to frame all the sides in order to host further artworks, and on which, little by little, other contributions will be installed.

This technical characteristic corresponds to what the community itself does when it meets every Wednesday at the online 'Viral Arts' workshop. In other words, *La Tela* is confirmed as being nothing more than a pretext for meeting and exceeding, constantly, initial positions and individual proposals to reach a final combinatory result whose value is always greater than the mere sum of the parts.

(fig. 7 Puns around Arti Virali/Arti Vitali/Anti Virali)

It is also in technical errors, therefore, that possibility must be sought. The discarded stone literally becomes a cornerstone in *La Tela* by recognising it as a καιρός to be valued rather than a mistake to be corrected. For this reason, *La Tela* is a work in constant and permanent evolution, like a construction site which is always open or a text with mobile characters to which anyone can always add further signs.

Derived but not derivative art

The experimentation within *La Tela* aims to overcome the notion of art as an expression of creative genius, with its imperatives of originality, individuality, and recognisability. Instead, it proposes the relationships between ideas and people as the foundational core of creativity.

Given this attempt to dissolve individuality within the whole, the realisation of any fragment of *La Tela* is shaped by everyone's works, which interact and are all collectively hybridised, phagocytised, made spurious, mixed, remixed, and reworked into a version completely different from the original. Each contribution is continuously reborn, taking on different incarnations and, for this very reason, is always unpredictable in its results. It is in this way that *La Tela* is a 'derived' work, which simultaneously guarantees a permanent turnover of ideas and forestalls any risk of crystallisation.

'Derived', however, does not mean derivative, the latter being a work that merely reassembles other artists' ideas, and which limits itself to combining them in a different way, thereby going along with the postmodern tendency of exasperated 'citationism' and supreme self-referentiality. On the contrary, *La Tela* refuses the postmodern conception of art that cares for aesthetic form above all and places substance in a subordinate position. It does this by continuously winking at other artworks, in which it also takes refuge (Jameson 1991).

La Tela in fact proposes itself as a 'derived' artwork – that is, the result of cooperation, not competition, between people. Therefore, individual artistic contributions are often and intentionally 'derived' from the ideas and contributions of others, recognising themselves as part of the same creative process.

Given this inclination, *La Tela* succeeds in making art which, while not being systemic, is not atomistic either. Indeed, it is driven by the idea that the opposite of dependence is not independence but *interdependence*.

Interde- and not inde-pendent art

According to the collective reasoning behind *La Tela*, nowadays it is no longer enough for art to be independent. Rather, it is indispensable that art be *interdependent*, which is to say, arising from relationships. It is in this sense that we have tried to intertwine the political and relational path with that of artistic experimentation.

Indeed, the single art performance has always been a pretext at *l'Asilo*, an opportunity to trigger intersubjective relationships between different individuals. This implies attempting to counter the difficulties of an increasingly atomised *modus vivendi* which discourages encounters.

In order to combat the automatism that sees in the other a possible competitor, *La Tela* has distanced itself since the beginning from the ideal type of independent art, fruit of an individual genius impermeable to possible contaminations by the other.

Accordingly, the wish to locate interdependence as the beating heart of art-making emerged. This implies that any artistic contributions in *La Tela* are intrinsically intertwined with each other, just as the ideas and the people who generated them.

Behind this stance lies a conception of art, beauty, and culture that is by its very nature intrinsically open and inclusive of the other as a reason and opportunity for continuous enrichment in view of a mutual and reciprocal flourishing.

This represents the destruction, in art, of a wall. Indeed, it is not by chance that the name of *La Tela* itself emerged from a discussion after the proposal to call it *Il Muro* (The Wall).

> ... Let's try to create something like a blank wall that you can put lots of things on.
> Like the wall on which you post the dazibao,
> and we are the ones composing it.
> I find the expression "wall composition" terrible.
> Can we name it something else?
> We don't meet to compose walls.
> Let's name it Platform...
> ... Composition Game...
> ... Viral Sharing...
> But let's avoid the word *wall*.
> We're already barricaded, aren't we?
> Could we name it *Tela* [canvas]?
> I really like *Tela*.
> Among other things, it suggests the existence of a warp, a weave.
> I like *Tela*: it is well-known [for its potential to be] made and unmade.

Right! *Tela*!
A *Tela* is painted,
or even woven.
A carpet is also woven.
And on a carpet, you can fly...

La Tela intends to be the fruit of an interconnection between worlds that do not always, or only with difficulty, enter into dialogue with each other, unaccustomed as they are to this kind of interaction due to the economic and anthropological paradigm which considers each individual a separate cell (Bauman 2001).

Therefore, the art of *La Tela* is a holistic one, reflecting the social ideal that sees each individual as part of a whole, never a monad or an island, sufficient in itself, but existing as interconnected and aware of this connection with others (Alici 2004).

This is *La Tela*'s own way of developing the notion of relational art (Bourriaud 1998), especially at a time, such as that of its birth, when external causes made encounters even less feasible and affected everyone in their relational assets – unable as they were, due to social distancing, to cultivate them.

La Tela attempts therefore to recover the central importance in artistic production (though not only there) of relations, granting them a very high value of political pre-eminence according to which every form of genuine wellbeing can only be such if it is shared.

La Tela *as a community practice that cares*

From the centrality of relationships, and therefore of the other, comes care for the relationships themselves. Care is a natural corollary of the other principles of *La Tela* as it is conceived: a form of resistance to creeping indifference as well as to a conception of wellbeing based on unbridled individualism.

Care is an active exercise that bears the trace of feminist practice (Federici 2020) as well as of Don Milano's "I care." It is lived, therefore, as preservation not of one's own private interests, which exclude the other, but of the common interest in which the other is included. The effort made by *La Tela* is therefore one centred around caring: assuming the responsibility of welcoming the other, their proposal, and co-feeling with them.

Indeed, the community of *La Tela*, like *l'Asilo*, is conceived as a porous, permeable entity in continuous evolution, always open, hori-

zontal, and without hierarchy or ideologies that could blind it by creating barriers to access (Nancy 1995).

La Tela, by robustly proposing a practice of community art, endeavours to include not only those who are in its bubble of proximity but also those who are tertiary, excluded, marginal, different, or far away, either in time or space (Moroncini 2001).

In this way, and thanks to the virtuality to which the pandemic has pushed it, *La Tela* has allowed *l'Asilo*'s community of art and spectacle workers, researchers, and workers of the immaterial to expand spatially by overcoming geographical distance and allowing interactions with those who otherwise could never have access.

Composition of the Creative Act

Calls to the Arts

This Call to the Arts is nothing more than the artistic advertisement of an open call for vacancies. Through this, *La Tela* extends an invitation to anyone who wants to become part of the creative process. The call is always open in order to constantly nourish collective thinking and to reflect on the ever changing present by simultaneously renouncing any crystallisation or pretension of completion.

Responding to the call entails being willing to consider one's own creative proposal as a starting point and never as a point of arrival. Each contribution will be the trigger for a shared action, and therefore transformations will not be discouraged but, rather, strongly welcomed. In this sense, none of the contents of *La Tela* can ever be considered closed or sheltered from new evolutions; they are always ready to be re-thought.

Whoever responds to the call will approach the 'Viral Arts' assembly in one of the following ways:

- by simply participating in the weekly assembly held every Wednesday and, for example, expressing an opinion on any aspects of the ongoing artistic process;
- by contributing an artwork/fragment to be placed on *La Tela*, where it will interact with others and evolve into something different;
- by proposing a methodology of collective composition to be explored together;
- by suggesting the transformation of any of the 'raw material'

on *La Tela*. What the community calls 'raw material' is an archive in which various materials are collected (writings, recordings, images, sounds, ideas, inspirations, and contributions), which have not yet found a place and that are always available for manipulation.

The calls that have been launched over time have had a varied nature: there have been general calls to contribute to *La Tela* and others more targeted to a specific need, such as the one addressed to musicians for the Sound Fluxes project. On the one hand, the calls represent a tool for bringing new participants into the creative process. On the other, they were conceived as an integral part of the same creative process. For example:

> EVENT ON FB INTERTAVOLO TELA – RESEARCH AND CREATION MEETING
> Thursday, 23 July at 18:30 in person at *l'Asilo* or remotely on platform
> DERIVED ARTWORK, FIRST EXPERIMENT: COLLECTIVE COMPOSITION
> FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO PARTICIPATE ONLINE JUST CONTACT US HERE OR VIA infrasuoni@exasilofilangieri.it.
> *LA TELA* is online at: www.exasilofilangieri.it/la_tela
> Would you like to participate in the construction of *La Tela*?
> The invitation is to create together a great 'derived work' made from existing works with which we can interact.
> In this second meeting, those who want to can share their own creative contribution (music, images, text, sound, graphics, codes...) to participate in a preliminary experiment of collective composition that relies on random relationships between the materials.
> Whether it is a composite element or a small suggestion, from all the materials we see or hear, we may be inspired to:
> use them
> transform them
> correct them
> deconstruct them
> burn them
> ignore them
> adore them
> smell them
> ...
> add more.
> The experiment can and should stem from the contributions already present on *La Tela*, which can also be transformed. Thus we suggest you explore and discover it by identifying possible connections with your creative proposal.
> Not sure what to do? Write to la_tela@exasilofilangieri.it to connect with the community.
> Are you a musician? Feel free to check it out here:
> http://www.exasilofilangieri.it/chiamata-flusso-sonoro/

One call in particular was necessary to broaden the circle of web programmers, who are essential for the running of the website. The promise was that they would not be involved merely to solve functional or technical issues but to be integrated into the creative process:

Dear programmer, we know that you like to create from scratch, but in Italy your profession is hardly recognised and your work is often underestimated.

We also know that:

in most cases you have to blindly execute someone's requests; in *La Tela* you have the opportunity to invent whatever you want: writing code can be a creative act.

Often you are given strict deadlines; *La Tela* has no fixed timeframe or obligations.

Usually you are not called to discuss the contents you have to manage in your work; here you can express yourself in music, theatre, images... […].

Almost always, yours is a solitary work; here you will exchange views with many other people – expect chaos.

So, if you feel like experimenting with arts, music, photography, and creative processes, we invite you to participate in meetings for *La Tela*.

In light of the 'Diminished Reality' that will overwhelm us in the coming months, *l'Asilo* aims to spread the vital energy of *La Tela* as much as possible in the viral world. In this, YOU, dear programmer, are fundamental and concrete.

Such calls have been repeated and renewed over time to avoid any temptation of finitude in the creative process. For example:

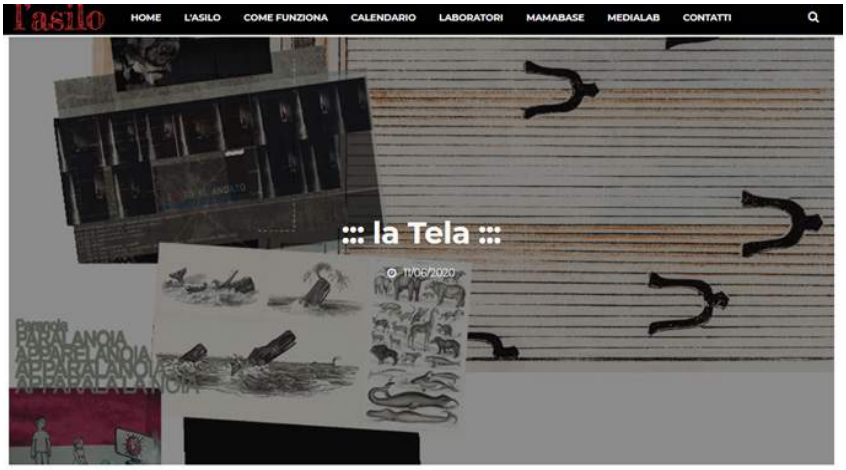
Open call for the transformation of *La Tela*

> RESEARCH AND CREATION MEETING
> Wednesday, 4 November at 18:00 on remote platform (to participate write to la_tela@exasilofilangieri.it).
> The invitation is open to everyone to, together, transform *La Tela*, a collective and 'derived' work.
> Now there is the need to reactivate and re-signify *La Tela* through a new collective reflection in order to avoid the risk of the artwork becoming static and to reflect the continuously changing context.
> If you already have a creative idea (music, images, text, sound, graphics, programming codes, methodologies for experiments in collective creation...) you can tell us about it during the meeting: together, we will imagine how to make it interact with the works already present on *La Tela* and with the other proposals that will emerge on Wednesday.

Don't have an idea yet? Attend Wednesday's meeting:
more heads make more ideas!

Participation in *La Tela*'s assemblies has not diminished over time, but it has seen a continuous change in the composition of the community that animates it. In particular, corresponding with the pandemic's second wave, *La Tela* witnessed a stronger response to its call to the arts as new people approached the process.

An exploration of La Tela

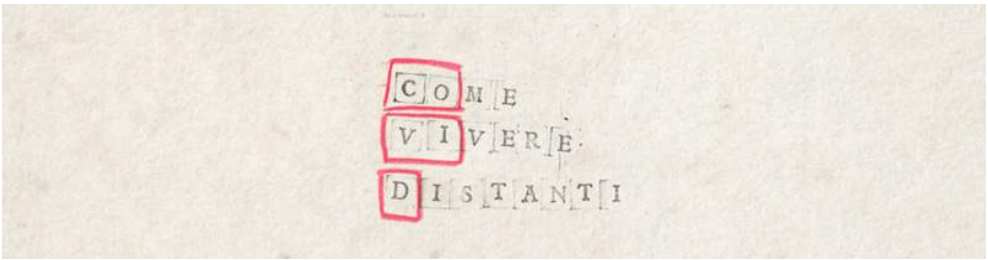


(fig.8 Page of *La Tela* on the website of the commons *l'Asilo*)

La Tela's website has been live since 14 June 2020.

Upon opening the web page of *La Tela*, an introductory screen appears with the following words:

CO.me
VI.vere
D.istanti
[How / to live/ far apart]



(fig.9 *La Tela*'s landing page)

By clicking on the image, the user is taken to a page which introduces *La Tela* in a few sentences:

> You will enter the centre of a canvas [*Tela*] full of contents: drawings, words, music, photos, video, voices.
> They all stem from the experience of living in lockdown for months but intend to go beyond that.
> As you explore *La Tela* in all directions, events will happen, and you can make more of them happen by experimenting.
> *La Tela* is a place open to sharing as much as *l'Asilo*, where it was born, so you can propose your contributions by writing to la_tela@exasilofilangieri.it.
>
> If you can, we suggest you use headphones and Firefox as your browser.

Once the user arrives to the main page of *La Tela*, she will not follow a predetermined path. Browsing in any direction, she can explore multiple artworks and interact with them.

At the top right corner of *La Tela*, there is the *Album di Famiglia*, which was created during the darkest period of the first lockdown. This artwork is a collection of photographic self-portraits taken by the community of *l'Asilo* and *La Tela* in the isolation of their own rooms.

Just beneath this, there is the logbook, an auto-narration of those same early phases of the pandemic written by several hands, and which accompanied the birth and development of *La Tela*.

More recently, there is an addition that has been developed since November 2020, during the second phase of the pandemic, and which is to be found to the left of the *Album di Famiglia*. This is a composition of photographs and texts, freely mixed and remixed

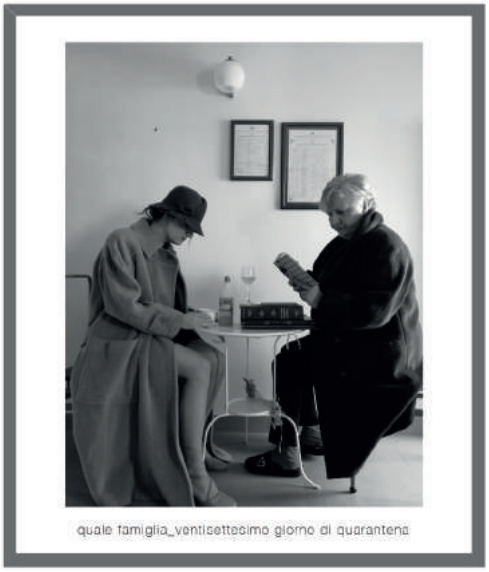
by the users, which arises from reflections on today's anthropic landscape, and which attempts – through the interaction between the photographic gaze and the text – a critique of the ways in which the human species is inhabiting planet Earth. The user is invited to choose her favourite combination and to fix it by clicking on the OK button in order to leave a trace of her passage that the next user can see.

Beneath this artwork there is the *Reflusso,* a building inhabited by a multiplicity of voices that the user can listen to by clicking on the different dots. None of these voices originated as a standalone but in dialogue with and in response to an initial theme/voice – which still narrates the first moments of the pandemic – placed on the upper left side of the building itself.

There are still many artworks to explore on *La Tela,* and the intention of this text is not to spoil the users' journey, which must necessarily proceed by trial and error. For this reason, we will not describe the works further, and we will leave the user to pursue the pleasure of discovering the platform as well as the open community that is reflected in it.

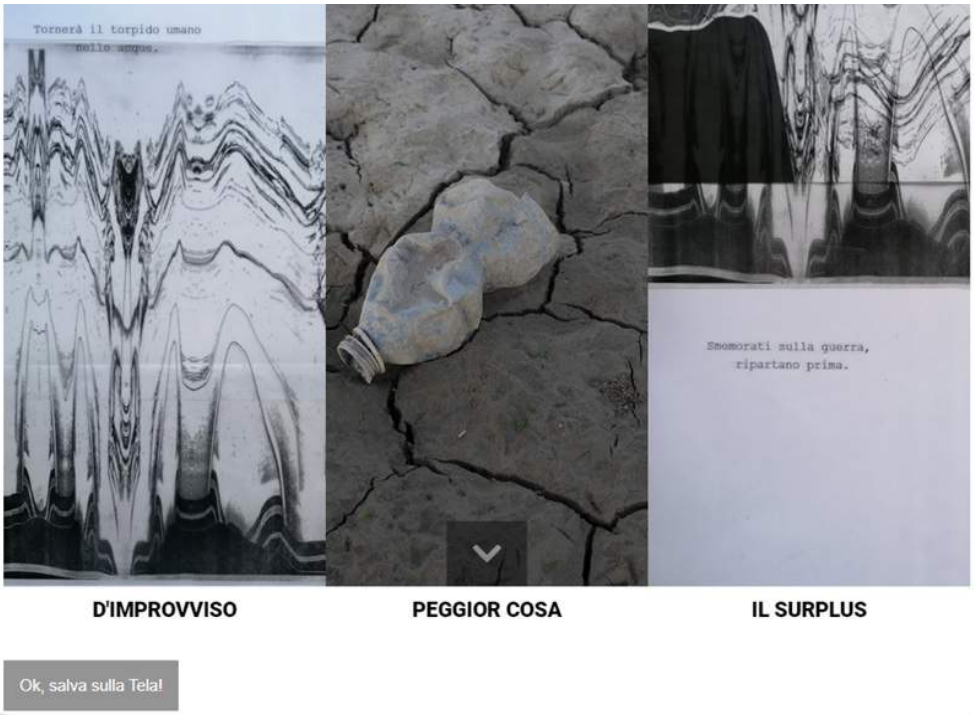
The information dots placed next to some artworks, however, do guide the user by giving some explanations or linking to other pages of the site – for example, that of the Virtual Writings, where the user will read:

> If words were not like stones, as they say, but fluid like water, melted like ice, vapour like air, then they would have no owners – available to all – and anyone would be those words.
> This is the desire behind the texts



(fig. 10, 11 and 12 *Album di Famiglia*)

shared on *La Tela*: that every piece of writing can be an inspiration and then used to create.
If you feel like it, you can collect the texts you find here, or on *La Tela*, or share your writings by making them available for possible creations.
(the Virtual Writings' can be accessed at: http://www.exasilofilangieri.it/scritture-vi-r-t-u-ali/).



(fig. 13 composition of photographs and texts on *La Tela*)

By clicking on the yellow plus (+) and minus (-) buttons at the bottom right of the screen, it is possible to zoom in or out of *La Tela*. That way, users can also explore its black borders or get an overall view, as suggested when one clicks on the info button on the left:

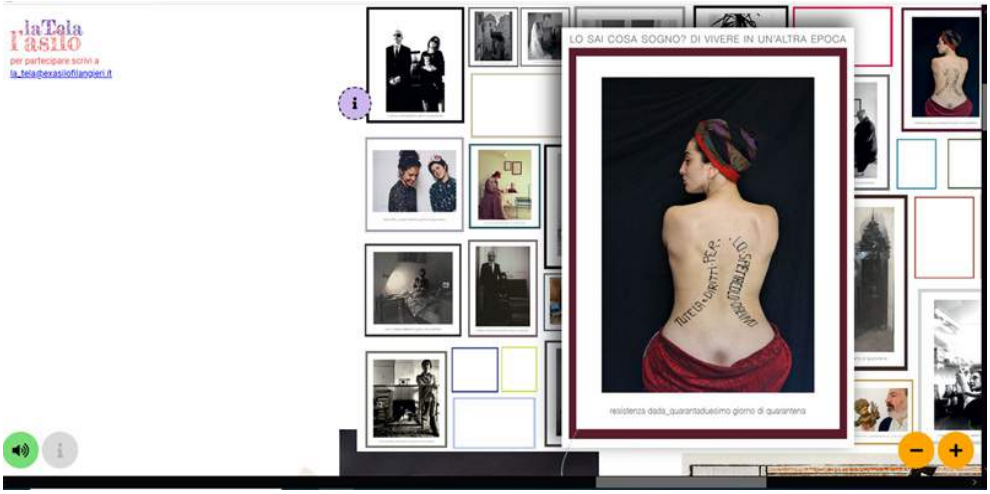
Find the lost voices: Clues: *La Tela* is white but also black. You can make it bigger but also smaller. You can collect the sounds to create your own 'derived artwork' from them.

The 'lost voices' in turn interact with the sound streams. There are eight streams, and they activate and intertwine with each other, responding to the visitor's position on *La Tela*. The vocal and sound element acts as a background and interacts with the reading of the diary, the drawings, or the films.

(fig. 14 *Reflusso*)

Each time a person visits the website, her experience will be different from the previous one or from that of others. Indeed, the Sound Fluxes that accompany the user's exploration can interact in many different ways among themselves as well as with the other works that populate *La Tela*.

(fig. 15 Example of a section of *La Tela* – on the right, the logbook)



(fig. 16 Example of a section of La Tela: a detail of the *Album di famiglia*)

This is the case thanks to an algorithm that complies with the randomness principle, which processes the user's movements on the platform in a ranking system connected to predetermined combinatory clauses. In this way, those who browse *La Tela* influence

the development of its composition by moving within it, not in a way that is strictly determined by cause and effect but, rather, by a sum of the experiences that each user has on *La Tela*. Not every action necessarily has a corresponding result; on the contrary, sometimes the command can literally go blank, in accordance with the randomness principle that characterises *La Tela*.

Common art in common

All the materials that compose *La Tela*, including things that have not been uploaded on the official web page yet, are always made available to those who want to use or transform them into a new work. This allows the community to reject the logic of the Copyright in favour of the so-called 'copy left'. This conception of the artist reflects, on the one hand, the Godardian remark "intellectual property does not exist. Copyright? An artist has only duties," and, on the other hand, the Troisian "poetry does not belong to the writer: it belongs to those who need it" (1994). The latter – whosoever needs poetry – is therefore invested with a role that is active and participant and crucially detached from a property logic that imprisons the free enjoyment of art and culture.

Beyond *La Tela*: The Friday of Rage

On the one hand, as described so far, the political value of *La Tela*'s art practices can be seen to unfold via an "other-doing" in the field of art (Holloway 2010). This is substantiated by the cooperative, inclusive, and non-competitive relations that it upholds in opposition to neoliberal competition and atomisation. On the other hand, in order to avoid the risk that such counter-practices end up reserved for a single community – albeit an open one – the need to bring *La Tela* out of the virtual world and to have it meet, support, and hybridise with other realities and struggles was strongly felt on several occasions.

With the pandemic and the lockdown, one of the areas that was sacrificed and left to uncertainty was precisely that of art and culture. A field that, already lacking in protections and recognition, has been blocked indefinitely as a result of COVID-19 and is without adequate subsidies.

In this context, the art and entertainment workers of Naples

(through the *Coordinamento Arte e Spettacolo Campania*), in parallel with the occupation of part of the *Teatro Mercadante,* organised an accompanying artistic component to the protest action This took place through the repurposing of the so-called 'French Fridays of Rage'.

Accordingly, *La Tela* took the opportunity to bring its own artistic practice to the fight by participating in particular in the *Venerdì della Freva* on 23 April 2021.

Rather than contributing a pre-packaged performance, the happening was developed organically following a co-planning meeting which had taken place a few days earlier at *l'Asilo*. On this occasion, several Neapolitan groups currently engaged in struggles in the cultural sphere were called to participate, including the *Coordinamento* itself and the student collective *Abana* from the *Accademia di Belle Arti* of Naples.

On the 23rd, *La Tela* became a device through which to bring together the different contributions from the groups involved in the struggle to get them to hybridise and play out chorally on a single plot. It was only by starting from the interdependent relationships between artists that it was possible to achieve the overlapping of different artistic languages, such as dance, theatre, writing, music, and composition.

As had already happened virtually on *La Tela,* sound flows cadenced the performance in Piazza Municipio. Six musicians were placed in different points around the square with space between them as a symbol of the social distancing brought about by the pandemic. Each played a few agreed-upon lines of sound, which were then overlapped by means of a mixer in real time. The resulting mix of those single performances were audible only through the central speaker, where the individual sounds finally melted together, finally in a collective composition.

On top of these Sound Fluxes then rang out the voices 'of struggle and love' of those who took the microphone to read political and poetic texts. The readings featured, among other interventions, the chronicles of a fightback (the logbook of the workers in occupation at the *Mercadante*), a monologue on the theatre and its role in society, questions posed by *Campo Innocente* to the national assembly of art and spectacle workers in Rome regarding the condition of women workers in the field, and a text by the *Abana* collective.

Finally, the moving bodies of the dancers entered into dialogue

with the sound element that was also intertwined with the readings. This, after so long, gave to *La Tela* the corporal element it had so strongly been missing.

The *Venerdì della Freva* is only one of the possible forms that *La Tela* as a device might take, as it is always ready to hybridise, to welcome others, and to transform itself through collective making. If, on the one hand, the future of *La Tela* is impossible to predict given its intrinsically open and directionless character, there is, on the other hand, a shared and undimmed desire not to let it withdraw into itself but to continue the hybridisation with other realities and with anyone who wants to become part of it – a hybridisation between poetic language and political action, between the world of the web and that of the city.

How are we?
Are you okay?
Is discomfort a symptom?
What are the boundaries of what we call 'workplaces'?
When am I a worker, and when am I not? Is there a clear boundary?

How many hours do I work?
Do I work at times when I don't feel I'm working?
How familiar am I with the dynamics of self-exploitation?
If I received a guaranteed income would I work under the same conditions?

What power asymmetries emerge in the work contexts in which I move?
Are you working?
Are you part of a political struggle?
Can you do both at once or does one exclude the other?
What fires you up and what gives you breath?
What do I desire? Am I still able to dream?

About the trauma in our bodies, is anyone dealing with it? Are we removing it?
Is it possible to say no?
When did you say no?
If I don't, does someone else do it for me?

Do you feel that you are required to be nice, helpful, bright, compliant, etc., etc. in order to keep your job or to get one?
Have you ever been in an art project that made you close your creative channels instead of opening and multiplying them? Did you quit?
How does one say powerful, affirming, joyful NOs?

Why are you here?
If you don't work, do you feel like shit?
In the absence of social protections and welfare, what strategies do you use to maintain welfare? Do you borrow money? Do you not take care of yourself?
What kind of performativity and performance is required of you?
Does it produce anxiety in you?
Have you ever had to perform when you were sick and you should have just taken care of yourself? Why didn't you give it up?
Have you ever gone on stage after a bereavement?
Does your age affect your job possibilities?
How much precariousness is there in an age limit?
How do your family or your class background contribute to the sustainability of your work?
Have you ever been offered visibility as compensation?

How do you transmit the body's knowledge?
Are you asked to meet standards or ideal canons?
Have you been told or heard that you are too thin, too fat, too feminine, too unfeminine, etc.? Is your body not able-bodied enough?

Have you ever realised that you had suffered violence only much later?
Do we listen to each other while we talk?
How do you get away from discriminatory jokes that aren't funny? By saying "not funny"?
Is it possible that I have to carry the burden of training those who discriminate against me?
Why do I have to do all this work of mediation, choosing the right words, the right tones, when it is you who offends me?

How sustainable and desirable is the future you envision for yourself?
Are political struggles always sustainable?
Do we feel performance anxiety even in struggles?
Are you able to speak at the assembly? If not, why?
Is my word as credible as yours? Is my voice as credible as yours?
If you are a comrade, [does that mean] you are not sexist?
Are the methodologies, and not only the contents of political processes, neutral?
Is the synthesis patriarchal?

Can I cry during an assembly?
(Some of the questions posed by *Campo Innocente* in Rome and re-interpreted at the *Venerdì della Freva*.)

(fig. 17 and 18, photos from the *Venerdì della Freva*)

Conclusion: There Is No *Tela* (canvas) without a *Telaio* (frame)

What emerges from the preceding auto-narration is first of all that *La Tela* constitutes an occasion to question the production of art today: questions about making art (and whether to make art at all) at the onset of the pandemic; about how to make art in the age of hyper-individualism and neoliberal competitiveness; about how to make art through, but at the same time beyond, the web; and finally about how to make another "making art" on the web during the pandemic, and, before anything else, by making community at the same time. *La Tela*'s greatest experiment can then be said to be its attempt to intertwine art making with the political and the relational.

Returning to the queries posed in the introduction, let's try to draw together what has been narrated so far.

La Tela was born and developed in response to the needs posed by the period of pandemic isolation and physical distancing. It was, in the first place, a response to the need for the open community of *l'Asilo* to continue to survive despite the loss of their physical space. *La Tela* tries to achieve this by continuing to nourish the artistic, inclusive, cooperative, and non-competitive relationships that have always given life to that commons. It also uses and plays with the virtual medium, having nothing else at its disposal but always mindful of its will to go beyond it. This is how *La Tela* has gradually taken shape as a virtual place in which, at the core of artistic action, the connection between individuals can be found, and in which the arts seek to be viral rather than droplets.

La Tela, born from the community around *l'Asilo* to invent a new way of keeping artistic (and non-artistic) relationships alive in March 2020, ended up finding its ultimate meaning in making in common making and in what can come from that: reflection, cooperation, sharing, empathy, non-competition, and community. Therefore, *La Tela* is nothing more or less than one way (among many) to continue the experimentation fuelled by *l'Asilo* and extend it further. In the absence of the physical and collectively managed space, that experimentation has led to the realisation that the commons being built was the community itself.

In this sense, behind *La Tela* – or rather at its centre – there is a *telaio* (frame), made up of the structure of human relationships and the encounters from which the artwork takes shape. Contributing to an artistic process always implies meeting and relating to the community that constitutes the frame of the canvas itself. Ultimately,

rowing against the prevailing atomisation and hyper-individualism (amongst other things) in the artistic field, *La Tela,* unlike other projects with similar convictions, brings relationships and the community itself to the core of the creative act.

At the moment, and consistent with what has been previously written about its natural tendency towards openness and contamination, it is impossible for even its own community to predict the new forms that *La Tela* – randomly discovered as it was due to the pandemic – and *l'Asilo* will take in order to preserve this openness. What is certain is that what we have been *preguntando* until now – as the open nature of the political process requires – so as to trigger and leave room for more questions rather than peremptory answers. It is precisely these questions which fuel the engine of our *caminamos*.

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7. Artists in the Time of COVID-19: *La Tela*, a Digital Work by a Resilient Community

by Federica Palmieri, Jessica Parola,
Marco Sallusto Palmiero, and Roberta Tofani

Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis saw governments impose restrictive security measures around the world. The SARS-CoV-2 infection was declared a pandemic by the WHO on 11 March 2020, shortly after which the Italian government closed the entire country – the first nationwide lockdown among democratic countries in Europe. In order to reduce the spread of the infection, the lockdown included the closure of all cultural venues, including theatres, cinemas, and concert halls. Artists were among the worst affected as they not only experienced the closure of their spaces but also had to abandon their traditional, encounter-based activities. The artistic world has experienced a significant historical moment of 'mourning' due to the loss of its spaces and its professional identity. Musicians, actors, theatrical performers, set designers, and thousands of other professionals in the world of entertainment have lost the relational dimension that most characterises their work. During the lockdown, close contact with the audience and physical encounters with colleagues were lost. If traditionally artists express themselves on stage, then during lockdown this mode of expression changes. In this context, therefore, performing arts professionals look for other ways and imagine paths different from their usual ones in an attempt to express their art.

In many cases, the new stage for artists has been digital. In a world in mourning for art, performing arts workers have built real digital venues to stage their artistic creations, thereby replacing *in-person* forms of expression[1].

In this context, digital technology has been the preferred tool. Citizens of all countries, and in particular in Italy, have experienced this historical moment in terms of a progressive digital acceleration

[1] Such initiatives include projects by the Creation Theatre in Oxford, the National Theatre in London, and the Centaur Theatre in Montréal.

(Lupton, 2018), with its attendant practices and habits. The search for new modes of expression in digital media is a further demonstration of how the pandemic has led to its widespread use (Miller et all, 2018).

This research therefore aims to study how artists have adapted their professional activities and artistic identities to the digital realm, thereby generating new opportunities. To this end, this research adopts a sociological perspective (Hughes, 2010) to investigate a particular community of artists and understand the ways in which the group has dealt with this moment of mourning, defined its own processes (artistic or otherwise), and how it has related to the digital world.

The specific object of study is the group of artists around *l'Asilo*, an open community of self-governing art and culture workers. The *ex Asilo Filangieri* is defined as a common good because of the way the physical spaces are managed. *L'Asilo* is characterised by the sharing of spaces, tools, and skills. These means of production are open and accessible to those who wish to share projects and cohabit the space. Starting in April 2020, *l'Asilo*'s community created a new artistic space in the digital world: *La Tela*. The digital work is entirely traversed by sound streams that vary according to where you are in the space – sound streams that intersect with photographs, drawings, and audio or written narratives.

The framework used to recount the artistic journey of reinventing the *l'Asilo* community is one of community resilience. Generally, resilience is the process by which some individuals, families or groups, in difficult situations, resist a negative event and maintain their sense of mastery, activating appropriate *coping* strategies (Prati and Pietrantoni 2009), which are resources to deal with adversity effectively. In this context, the focus was not so much on potential risks but on all those factors that can lead the community to mitigate the impact of the lockdown and to cope with the new situation. In the literature, resilience is not simply defined as a restorative action but as a pathway that gives rise to opportunities through the change it represents. "Resilience does not simply mean the ability to withstand adverse events, but defines a positive dynamic aimed at controlling events and rebuilding a positive life path" (Manetti et al, 2010, p. 2). In light of the concept of resilience within the social sciences, there is significant interest in understanding how the *l'Asilo* community has shown resilience following the traumatic event of the closure of art spaces. A community is defined as resilient when it shows itself

capable of regaining equilibrium after a crisis while achieving an improved functioning compared with before the critical event. When communities are resilient, they are able to react and change in relation to external pressures that strain their structures and resources (Prati and Pietrantoni 2009).

From a community resilience perspective, this research aims to emphasise community culture and to study how values, norms, and systems of meaning constitute resilience factors that foster awareness, a sense of community, and thus participation in collective action.

This chapter begins with a section on methodology followed by an analysis of the results, which includes three macro themes: Mourning, *La Tela*, and Art andthe Digital. Mourning, the first step in the resilience process, investigates the crisis experienced by the artists; *La Tela*, having identified the moment of resilience triggered by the community, explores the decision-making processes and community values expressed in the project; and Art and the Digital, was developed as a moment of reflection to probe the definitions of art and artistic adaptation to a digital medium.

Methodology

The research question was primarily concerned with how artists adapted their professional activities and artistic identities to the digital realm. It subsequently became clear that for the *l'Asilo* community, it was not simply a question of adapting to digital media but rather of how the community activated a process of resilience by finding a balance in the new situation, generating new opportunities as a result.

The digitisation of art has been observed as a processual and contingent phenomenon, subject to different influences that shape everything, from the processes of making art to relationships. A qualitative methodology fits the purpose of this research perfectly as it allows a close observation of the object of study and therefore a deeper understanding of it (Cardano, 2008). By stripping away the cultural habitus and prioritising what is meaningful to the artists in the community, the analytical categories that emerged were reinterpreted from a broader perspective that looked at the context in which the processes were taking place (Becker, 2007). The research, following a descriptive approach, was conducted over a specific peri-

od, October and November 2020, and considered aspects of a broader process in which *La Tela*'s artistic community is embedded. To answer the research question, the object of study chosen was a community that produced a digital work: *La Tela*.

The fieldwork[2] is based on participation in and observation of online working meetings, open to all, and later an online focus group (Cipriani, Cipolla, Losacco, 2013). Observation allowed a complete immersion in the field and in the practices to try to understand the symbolic universes wherein they move. There were two phases of observation in the field. The first was preliminary and explorative, which served to get to know the community and to explore potential themes of interest to develop in the research. This phase was necessary in order to conduct the focus group. The second centred on decision-making processes so as to integrate the narratives reconstructed by the focus group.

The focus group[3] was assembled to diachronically reconstruct the narrative of community creation that gave life to *La Tela* and its artistic process, one which began during the lockdown and is still ongoing. Both the selection of the participants and the choice of themes to be discussed within the focus group were coherent with the aim of reconstructing this narrative.

The selection criteria concerned, firstly, the level of participation in the artistic process, thus identifying the core members, and, secondly, the diversity of the different professional profiles to account for artistic variety.

Mourning

The category of mourning identifies the first stage of the process – that is, the moment of rupture, of crisis, experienced by artists. It tells of the pain they felt when they were no longer able to stage their feelings or express themselves and their art.

It was a painful time in many ways. Some experienced depression and anxiety for the first time, others found themselves reflecting on their identity, and many felt strongly about the unease that society as

[2] This time, the virtual field remains charged with the meanings of place as a space where practices imbued with values can materialise.

[3] The focus group, a discussion solicited by the researcher, is aimed at looking both at the participant's individual point of view and at the relational dynamics that emerge from the discussion among the members.

a whole was experiencing. There were also those who said they felt guilty about making art at such a critical time but then rediscovered the importance of the artist's role as a narrator of that unease and as the bearer of a vision of the world.

> It seemed almost frivolous to think of creative action in a space because there were bigger problems, bigger tragedies, but no! The responsibility is also strong; that is what the lockdown taught me: there is a great responsibility also for those who can simply provide a glimpse through a creative act. (E)

A fundamental concept emerges from the testimonies: place, which is to be understood anthropologically, is not only a physical space but an environment steeped in relationships and practices that tell of the symbolic universe within which the community moves (Hannerz, 2010). The closure of spaces, in fact, is the first and most immediate instance of a discontinuity with the past, with so-called normal life (Shutz 1974). Three different meanings of place have been distinguished which represent, in parallel, three different deficiencies that have come into existence as a consequence of the loss of the body's physicality.

The first identifies the loss of physical place, the physical structure where artists do their work, which causes a major economic as well as organisational problem. Even when these spaces have been momentarily reopened, there were no conditions, given the necessary security measures, to allow the artists complete immersion in their work.

The second meaning refers to the relational aspect: places are also steeped in relationships, which are lacking, both with the public and with colleagues. For an artist, relationships are essential because they are a necessary condition for the expression of art – that is, the possibility of sharing.

> It is art par excellence that connects you with human beings. And this is an orgiastic training, very strong. (A)

The removal of the body was a difficulty shared by all the artists. In fact, in the period following the lockdown, the need to return to physical presence was felt strongly by the *l'Asilo* community, who wanted to regain those relational dynamics that are only possible with the body.

The third meaning of place reflects the deepest emotional and psychological states: the place where art is made is also the place of identity "because it is one of my places" (V). It is the space where identity is built and affirmed.

The rupture of everyday, 'normal' life brings with it a sense of emptiness, as recounted by various testimonies. From a phenomenological point of view, one can talk about the unrealisability of ontological security (Giddens 2001), of the kind which would guarantee a continuity of the personality.

> And I started to question myself about identity – that is, I asked myself what it is that creates my identity. (V)

Despite the difficulty of a lack of physical places to perform and relationships with others, many say they felt a sense of responsibility towards society and therefore a desire to act, to do something that they locate in the narration of the present. In fact, being in the present is the "golden nugget" for an artist (A).

In this sense, *l'Asilo* both fills that gap, thanks to the contacts that already exist within it, and gives birth to a new community of digital artists, allowing that need of sharing art to finally be expressed.

> And so at this moment, creating this digital identity with a group, through an artistic operation, an artistic process, makes me rediscover one of the places I had lost. (V)

The process of building a digital work, however, was not easy. The community made several attempts before realising that it was impossible to simply translate analogue works into digital ones. The profound need to reconstruct their artistic identity meant that the artists persevered for a long time, despite the confusion they were experiencing, until the actual birth of *La Tela*, which was around 28 March[4].

La Tela

Community Culture

In the context of mourning and the closure of physical art spaces, *La Tela*, a digital art space for the sharing of artistic processes and

[4] The end of March marks the birth of the first archive of materials that would later become part of *La Tela*.

contents, was born. The process of creating and developing *La Tela* is inseparable from the culture and universe of values within *l'Asilo*, as the artists underline:

> *La Tela* captures our kindergarten spirit and takes it into another sphere. (H)

L'Asilo reveals itself to be a community with a culture from which it derives a very precise set of values based on the tension between the concepts and practices that are essential for the artistic process. The founding values, on which all of the community's activities and creative processes are based, are interdependence, horizontality, collaboration, and decision by consensus.

The spaces of *l'Asilo* are open to any form of artistic process, but they are also open to anyone who wants and needs to get together. *L'Asilo* was declared a common good in 2015 due to its methods of civic and collective use of different spaces. It was born as an experiment that aimed at sharing, in an open manner, its means of production – that is, its spaces, tools, and skills.

The community is not, therefore, a closed and self-referential group. On the contrary, relationships and networking are central, if not all-embracing. This leads the subjects to make a fundamental assertion about the importance not only of artistic content but of the artistic process – in other words, the importance of 'how' a work of art is created, whatever it may be, and not just of the final product. Therefore, the artistic process constitutes a union – if not a dissolution – of individual artists within a group, who collaborate and integrate their ideas in the creation of a single project or piece of work. The relationship is the starting point for their artistic processes. In this sense, their artistic conception is one of *relational* art.

Also fundamental for the *l'Asilo* community is the constant search for an alternative to the dominant model of organisation that affects all social fields. The relationship becomes the starting point, in this sense, not only of artistic processes but also of political models. In fact *l'Asilo* can be said to foster moments of sharing and learning that trigger synergies and interdependencies in both artistic creation and socio-political initiatives.

> If there is no reconstruction beforehand of the relationships between people, everything risks and ends up being incorporated into a system that is devastating, that cancels out any drive, dissent, resistance, and so on. (F)

Political art is an artistic form which serves as a vehicle for transmitting a system of action and values towards which all social processes should strive. The artistic process, based on collaboration and interdependence, trains the participants to learn about diversity, to experience the ideas of others as a possible complement or a possible alternative to their own, and, in this way, to break down conformity. This modus operandi, if alive and disruptive, can constitute real political action. In this sense, "artistic action and political action become indissoluble" (F). The artistic process thus becomes a practice through which to imagine the construction of a society. Just as artistic content is created through relationships, so politics and any other social system should be created by and focused on relationships.

What emerges, moreover, is the desire to 'infect' the whole of society with this value system based on the sharing of ideas, spaces, and means of production. The contagion comes about thanks to the artists' own practices: a theatrical performance or concert can become a moment where collaboration between the artists is expressed as well as an opportunity to manifest and transmit the richness of an inclusive artistic process to the public. The experience that revolves around the performance, and the relationships that are created between different artists or among the audience, become part of the art itself. The community, when it succeeds in conveying this message of artistic action, feels that it is the spokesperson for a movement.

Creation Process: La Tela

La Tela was born out of a profound artistic need: to create interdependent artistic processes and collective actions. Left without a physical place where they could put their processes into practice, the community imagined and searched for solutions which differed from their norm. The lockdown imposed on many artists the need to reinvent themselves, but their desire went far beyond adapting. Their need was not simply to share artistic content but to share processes. Given this situation, *l'Asilo*'s community implemented one of its fundamental values: the search for experimental alternatives that are based on the meaning they give to art as a process and not as a final product.

The choice of the word *tela* is interesting. *La Tela* is conceived as a large, white space to be weaved and presupposes the idea of a warp – that is, a set of threads that make up the fabric itself. These threads

cross each other, intersect, and influence each other so that they are harmonious in their union and complexity. It is beautiful to think how the threads represent the participating artists, whose ideas intersect following principles of collective execution and realisation. Ultimately, *La Tela* represents something to be weaved, unravelled, and reweaved again and again. The name of this digital space describes and delineates, then, the artistic process to be realised.

It is important to underline how *La Tela* represents a translation of the space of *l'Asilo* within the digital world. *L'Asilo* is a common good, and, in the digital world, the common good becomes the network of people and artists who cohabit the space of *La Tela*. In this sense, the community makes an abstraction of the concept of 'common good': from common good as urban space to common good as relationship. Its call to 'citizenship', in turn, represents just that: the desire to expand the network of artistic collaboration, demonstrating the openness and inclusiveness of the community.

Reinventing the Artistic Process: La Tela

One of the main findings of the analysis concerns slowness. The publication of the contents on the web is described by artists as a very slow process. However, slowness is rooted in the values of the community. Slowness may be a sign of difficulty, but it is first and foremost a necessity. A necessity that, in the first place, stems from the desire and need for collective reflection, which can lead to new ways of integrating individual or initial ideas within new harmonies. Slowness has, in fact, a double face. The first is reflected in the fear of not getting to what is essential in a work; the second reflects the drive for ever newer visions, new alternatives that are at the heart of the artists' process. This difficulty, in fact, practically dissolves in the stimuli which come from the long reflections, to the point where time is no longer an issue.

> Things can go on forever, but it doesn't matter; what matters is that a series of new insights, new visions, come out, which are the life of it all. (F)

Slowness is also a sign of the decision-making process, which is based on consensus. This process emerged while observing the online assemblies. It became clear that, when faced with a problem arising from divergent ideas, what mattered to the artists was not so

much arriving at a final decision quickly but reflecting on the matter at hand until an integration of ideas could be arrived at.

> "In the process of deciding on a title, two different titles were kept because both yielded very valid reflections. The two were not kept to avoid [making] a final decision but to postpone it until after all of us had thought about and reflection [on the matter]." (Remark from the researcher's notebook)

Inclusiveness can give rise to slowness as well. Observing the assemblies revealed a great trust in the ideas of others, even when their professional activities were not known. Ideas about artistic form were welcomed and taken into account. If someone logs on to the platform on which the assemblies are held for the first time, they are free to share their own artistic idea, which will then be integrated, or to contribute other ideas.

Slowness stems from the need to have one's own time, to avoid being carried away by the speed of the outside world. The subjects perceive, in fact, a society that is too fast, too driven by the frenetic and materialistic logic of capitalism, whose only objective is to arrive at the final product and be competitive. Once again, the process assumes a privileged position. For if, in the outside world, being efficient means taking a linear path towards the completion of a product, then, for this community, efficiency derives from the way that the product is arrived at.

> Instead, *La Tela* is an endorsement of the slowness we need compared to the speed of the outside type of politics! What do we care about the product! What do we care about producing! (P)

From the assemblies of *La Tela*, as well as from the manifestation of slowness, emerges a desire to convey the importance of this reappropriation of time. Thus, the artistic processes of *La Tela* become a way to create a movement and expand it until it infects as many people as possible. Even before the lockdown, the community looked to create collaborative physical events, and, with *La Tela,* such a purpose can be met when interdependencies between physically distant strangers begin to form. When different artists with individual ideas and visions create together, the movement for which they are the spokespeople takes shape. In fact, the creative processes of *La Tela* are also intended to convey the courage of exposing one's own ideas, of imagining and, at the same time, of 'losing oneself' in the

ideas of others. Another fundamental result is, in fact, the loss of self, understood both as a practice belonging to the artists contributing to *La Tela* and as a practice to be triggered in the users viewing it. In the creative process of integration, the artists disperse themselves in the ideas of others, leaving aside the imposition of their own idea and letting themselves be carried away by the collective process. Users, at the same time, disperse themselves in the universe of *La Tela*, which has no order to its contents and does not seek one. The user can explore it however they wish through certain digital actions, such as zooming in and out or moving to the margins. Loss of self is also manifest in the artists' decision to 'hide' some contents. Only by exploring can the user discover all the threads that weave *La Tela*. Then, what emerges from the artists is the desire to lead users to lose their selves, to give them the courage to get lost. This courage to lose oneself is metaphorical: it is not something that should only exist in artistic practices but all areas of life. *La Tela* conveys the need and the beauty of getting lost among the flows and not following linear paths; it is about allowing oneself to be carried away.

Reinventing Artistic Identities

The analysis shows how the subjects have created, through the collective work of *La Tela*, a new artistic identity, a concept which is linked to authorship. The contents of *La Tela* have no signatures. This ties in with the idea of a collaborative and interdependent process. Individual identities are dispersed into a collective identity, which reflects the desire to be part of a collective, but which, at the same time, is the result of a deeper commitment. For artists, authorship is useless: people need to connect with others. Collective identity generates something positive for the whole society, which needs not be based on selfish and competitive values but, on the contrary, exists to communicate and unite its potential so as to create something superior. Society needs to regenerate itself through collectivity and through communion between diverse constituencies. Community affirms the need to think in terms of 'we' and not 'I'.

> To see this first cell of mine, the first idea of an artistic process, extend beyond me to people I haven't even seen physically, and to see their ideas and opinions extend in turn is the apotheosis of art – but not only that – it's the apotheosis of life. That's what I want to do; I want to undo myself. (P)

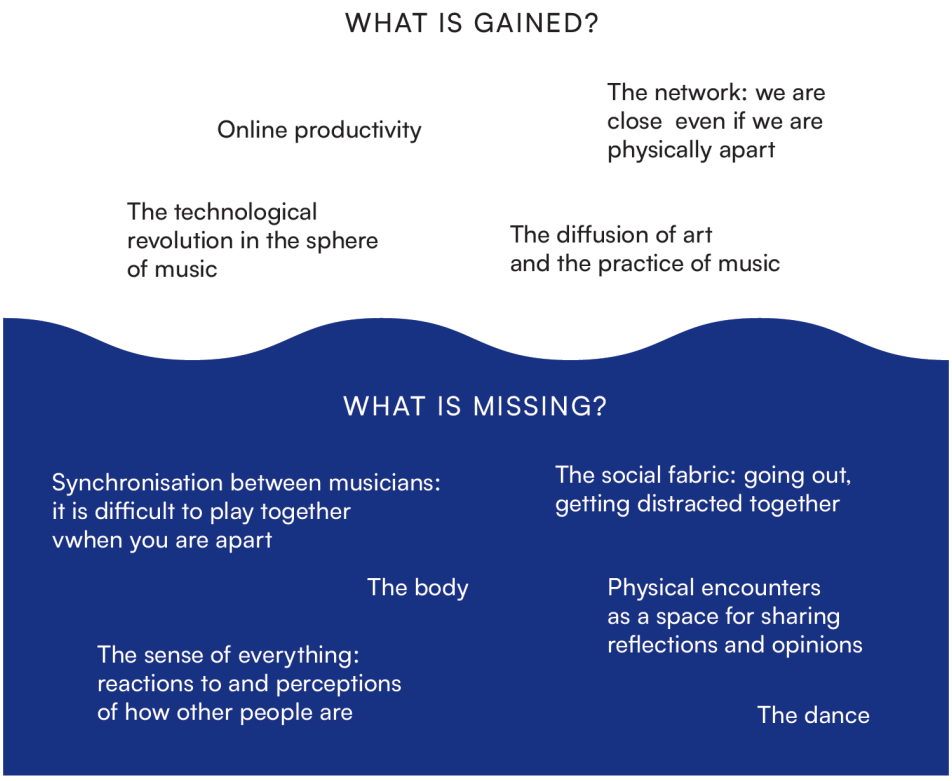
Experiencing Art in a Digital Realm

Art and the Digital

This period of seemingly suspended time has led to a profound sense of mourning in artists; the digital has become a privileged tool for continuing to develop creative processes and products. The absence of shared physical spaces and the lack of opportunities for artistic expression in physical settings drove the *l'Asilo* community to create a collective work virtually and in a new digital space. In this regard, the research group was interested in understanding the relationship that the community developed with the digital, the procedures for transferring artistic processes to the new tool, and the future of *La Tela* and thus the relationship that exists between this artistic product and the digital world.

The *l'Asilo* community distinguishes itself from other art groups through its affirmation of the specific and dense value seen to reside in the artistic process that influences the final product. It is therefore impossible to define the relationship between art and the digital for the community without taking into account the cultural meanings that these united artists give to the work and the process behind it. By maintaining the focus on the importance of the community's values, one can perceive the meanings that the artists of *La Tela* give to art and how these take on a new form through the digital medium.

In order to understand how these values translate into the digital sphere, a specific question characterised by a pronounced dualism was developed in the focus group: what is missing and what is gained in art created and disseminated in the digital sphere, compared with the 'live' mode? This question was designed to generate a collective reflection on the digital medium. The researchers asked everyone to answer visually in order to elicit any similar or converging opinions. A blank sheet of paper was shared, divided by a line separating the two spaces that represented this dualism: what is missing and what is gained. As the members responded, the observer filled in the blanks in a way that was visible to all.



The reflections shared by the group are very interesting. In some cases they refer to the practices of the professional individual, and, in others, they are structured according to the values of the community.

When it comes to the reflections according to the different professional categories, the musicians expressed the difficulty of synchronisation due to the impossibility within digital technology of listening to each other simultaneously; the actors, on the other hand, emphasised the limitations imposed by the absence of the body, as V relates:

> The body is definitely missing when I think about theatre and the difficulty of going on stage. I found fascinating that the theatre translated online; the theatre translated in *La Tela* – the recordings, with the sounds, the words. But the body is very much missing.

Reflections on the body are intertwined with another issue, highlighted by the artists, that structures the value system. The foundation of the artistic process for the community is missing or at least takes on a new form. In this sense, A describes how the development of the relational social fabric is missing:

There are certain dynamics that were being lost in the virtual world. First of all, certain senses are interrupted by the virtual medium; the ironic dimension is flattened; the ability to say things 'a latere' does not exist. In short, there is a whole outline that (under normal circumstances) completes the dimension of the relationship that was missing.

All the members of the community agree that there was a reduction of the perceptual senses, which are fundamental to the relationship that underpins the artistic process. Despite these real difficulties, the artists of *La Tela* nevertheless accepted the challenge of developing a creative process at a distance, via the digital medium. The encounter therefore takes on a new form in which perceptions and moments of distraction are absent, but the relationship remains. It became obvious, despite the insufficiency of the online relationship, that, in the development of a community-centric artistic process, it is not the way in which the relationship is arranged that is important; rather, it is the relationship itself which is fundamental, even if it is carried out remotely via a screen.

If the participants in the focus group were very specific when talking about what is lacking in digital art compared to live art, they also contributed profound reflections and opinions when reflecting on what is gained. The first positive aspect of the digital was linked to the potential of the web, which allows us to connect in a shared virtual space even if we are physically far apart. But the most discussed issue was the productivity that develops online, as E outlined:

> I remember when we had the chance to do two live meetings. There, it was very scary for me to realise how much easier it was; how much more productive we were when we worked online. I had a real aversion for this medium, but what scares me is how convenient it is.

A fear clearly emerged, which likely stemmed from a strong contrast with the artists' value system. The increased productivity of digital technology might be in line with the neoliberal cultural logic of hyper-efficiency from which the community would like to detach itself. In light of these observations during the focus group, an interesting reflection arose on the body as a vehicle for distraction.

Distraction is beautiful, especially in such strong political processes of sharing. When I am surrounded by the explosion of passion, I tend to fall in love with everyone and everything. There is an erotic dimension in political aggregation, which in person makes

it even more energetic. So, these are the distractions that I like a lot. (A)

Thus, while recognising the benefits of the productivity that characterises the artistic process in digital media, the community still preferred the energy of distraction experienced in the physical presence of others. It is no coincidence, then, that this energy of distraction is more in line with the community's underlying value system.

By digging deep into the artists' reflections on and opinions about the digital, it becomes possible to understand the importance of digital tools during the lockdown period. At the same time, however, it is clear that the digital has not affected their identity. The identity of the artists of *La Tela*, based on collaboration, the valorisation of all skills, horizontality, and so on, remained the same even in the digital context. An intervention from P clearly shows the meaning the community has given to the digital:

> *La Tela* is not something that begins and ends in the digital. The digital is a tool that allows it to be realised.

The community used digital tools to change the appearance of the artistic product: it was no longer a theatre play or a collective concert, but a digital space filled with the group's works. Although the form changed, the purpose of developing a collective work remained.

> Creating contact, interaction, interdependence. *L'Asilo* needs this, and we set out to solve this need. But we used the digital not to adapt but to do something lasting and which can go further! (F)

The Future of La Tela

In light of the relationship that the artists have developed with the digital as a tool, it seems relevant to explore the intentions of the community concerning the future of *La Tela*. Some reflections on the future of the opera emerged from the observations and the focus group, which, once again, are coherent with the group's set of values. Even though the united community hopes that the work will not be abandoned, doubts nevertheless remain as to its dissemination. Some artists spoke of the need to keep the virtual nature of the work alive, and others of the need to transpose it to a 'live' work when the conditions are right to do so.

Even if an overwhelming uncertainty remains, the community is committed to embracing the values and concepts of the relational process. If the right conditions arise for encounters and relationships, *La Tela* will survive. Since *La Tela* is the result of a process, then in the absence of the necessary conditions, the collective work will take unexpected paths. The uncertainty regarding the future of the opera is, after all, in line with the meaning that the community gave to the word *tela* – that is, capable of repeatedly unravelling and reweaving itself.

Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns forced the closure of art spaces, generating the need to reinvent and redefine the artistic process. This analysis shows how, to meet this need, the community of artists around *l'Asilo* went through various phases: from the critical event of fragmentation and isolation to the creation of a digital artistic community. In this context, the digital appears to be the privileged tool as the only means capable of maintaining the community's conception of artistic work, along with the significance they attach to art and the processes that form part of it.

In a historical period of great confusion for the art sector, *l'Asilo* emerges as an artistic community that continues to sustain itself thanks to its founding value system, which has provided a lifeline to cope with the crisis. It is clear, then, that the digital has been a tool for the continuation of *l'Asilo*'s cultural offering – one which proposes an artistic process made of the same values that characterise the community even when they are physically together. The analysis of the results revealed a path taken by the community that gave rise to new opportunities as a result of this change. From this point of view, the community of *l'Asilo* can be said to have activated a process of resilience, proving itself capable of reacting to and finding a balance after a crisis.

As such, one of the most comprehensive models of resilience in the reference literature is proposed by A. Sarig (2001), who considers the coexistence of several factors necessary to define a resilient community. Below is an analysis of these factors which sites them in the context of *l'Asilo*:

• *Sense of belonging to the community*. It emerged that the artists of *La Tela* feel a strong sense of belonging to the *l'Asilo* community.

L'Asilo has always played a central role in the lives of the members of its community, who strongly identify with its founding values. There is a strong cohesion among the members thanks to a shared symbolic universe based on anti-fascism, anti-racism, and anti-sexism.

• *Shared values and beliefs that strengthen identity and internal community ties in times of crisis*. The founding values, on which all of the community's activities and creative processes are based, are interdependence, horizontality, collaboration, and decision by consensus. Individual identities dissolve into the collective identity, which is based on the logic that puts relationships and encounters at the centre, and which enables the sense of 'we' in artistic works. If individual identities have undergone a major crisis, collective identity has been a lifeline to deal with the emergency. Indeed, collective identity composes the various individual identities and strengthens the internal bonds. This meant not seeking a solution to the crisis individually but together through collective reflection.

• *Controlling crisis situations*. The community put all their energy into continuing to develop their artistic activities despite the difficulties of the pandemic. *L'Asilo* showed a sense of responsibility towards society: the artists of *l'Asilo* positioned art as necessary for narrating the present and for crafting an interpretation of the world. The need to continue to express their art was then taken up by the collective process of *La Tela*. Thanks to this collective work, the community collectively managed to turn the crisis into something else.

• *Attitude of defiance to negative events reinterpreted as opportunities*. The community developed an attitude of defiance to negative events through the deconstruction of dominant language and narratives. The community's focus on language refers to the need to deconstruct narratives that come from the outside, such as the obligation to self-isolate. The puns proposed by the community were the first step in an attempt to regain semantic space, an act necessary for questioning these narratives and proposing new ones. Such an interrogation of the dominant narrative represented an opportunity that was then translated into the realisation of *La Tela*.

• *An optimistic perspective in which adversity is seen as temporary and as an opportunity for renewal.* For the community, *La Tela* represented not only an adaptation but an opportunity to renew themselves and initiate an artistic process, again in their own relational ways, this time via digital means.

• *Skills to face and overcome difficulties*. The *l'Asilo* community is a heterogeneous community made up of different skills and kinds

of professions. This made it possible to have the technical resources to carry out the digital work in practice. Additionally, the openness and respect for the skills of each member allows the continuous generation of new ideas. In this sense, collective intelligence has proved effective in overcoming difficulties.

• *Social support provided by formal and informal networks and organisations.* The community, by its very nature, is oriented towards creating networks both with other groups and with individuals. This attitude was evident in the public call to the citizenry, which made it possible to expand the group of artists working in and on *La Tela*.

The factors proposed by Sarig are coherent with the process of resilience of the *l'Asilo* community and have fostered awareness, a sense of community, and thus the creation of a new collective digital work. *La Tela* is in fact not only a reparative action but also a path that has given rise to new opportunities, such as feeling part of a community in a moment of isolation, expanding networks, and approaching a new tool for the creation and dissemination of artworks. The digital realm, then, has also allowed the creation of a new artistic identity made up of those of the different artists who, together, give rise to the *opera derivata*.

In conclusion, the example of *La Tela* highlights the real ability of artists to reinvent both themselves and their activities according to external pressures. If there is one sector that has been able to overcome critical events, injustices, and today's pandemic, it is the arts sector.

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SECTION III
A SYMPATHETIC CONNECTION OF RESEARCH AND ACTION: ARTIST RESIDENCIES IN ROCCAPORENA, UMBRIA

8. Introduction to Rockability

by Silvia Quaranta and Alfonso Raus

The *Rockability* Project – Pathways for a Moving, Reflective and Generative Community in the Spaces of the Possible[1] – is located in the municipality of Cascia in the hamlet of Roccaporena. These places are strongly characterised by references and devotion to St. Rita of Cascia, who was born and lived here.

Rockability promotes an active space for relationships and action in Roccaporena di Cascia to promote and implement a programme of regional transformation and regeneration. It aims to contribute to the development of the territory, beginning with elements of its very identity and using methods of intervention which are characterised by participation and constructive confrontation.

In the project, local knowledge, experience, skills, and attitudes, which anyone can contribute, become a valuable resource for strengthening the capacity to respond to and deal with problems and needs – whether these relate to the local community or to the area's economy – as well as to begin to envisage new horizons of development.

Rockability takes into consideration and connects a number of thematic concerns, among them territorial welfare for the development of a community that welcomes and educates while addressing social fragilities (particularly those related to young people), starting with the redefinition of the Roccaporena educational centre; enhancing Roccaporena's historical, artistic, and natural heritage along with the dissemination of responsible, sustainable, and accessible tourism practices; and quality of life and environment as well as opportunities for young people. Likewise, *Rockability* intends to legitimise and promote a developing 'community of reference', which is not only local but is also composed of human resources and compe-

[1] Funded by Umbria Region through public notice under Art. 12 of L. 241/1990 for the submission of experimental projects by third sector innovative actions of territorial welfare. The Act implements measures provided by POR FSE 2014–2020 (Regional European Social Fund Operational Programme 2014–2020) and POR FESR 2014–2020 (Regional Operational Programme European Regional Development Fund 2014–2020).

tencies, at the regional and national levels, through techniques that favour collaboration and networked cooperation between actors and between territories – in other words, a community of practices.

Through *Rockability*, the Roccaporena region also represents an important milestone towards a perspective of socio-cultural and economic innovation that welcomes and relaunches reflection, analysis, and experimentation with respect to other places throughout the regional and national context.

In its essence, it is configured as a multidirectional process of regeneration that is oriented towards determining interconnected structures of empowerment and enabling. It is an attempt to convert a set of basic and available assets and resources (for example, evocative settings, natural heritage, history, experiences, a variety of competencies and skills, common values around active inclusion, available structures, new information, etc.) into functions that manifest individual as well as collective interests. The capability-centred approach we have adopted, therefore, responds to the observation that it is not sufficient to make opportunities and resources available in a given territorial and aggregate context if the subjects involved are not able to learn and 'master' or grasp these resources to use them for transformational and emancipatory ends.

In this sense, the proposed method, understood as a pursuit of meaning and characterised by mutual and reflexive learning, is developed through two main devices:

i) The community meetings are places for the gradual and experimental emergence of a 'community of reference', which is conceived as a dynamic melting pot of subjectivities, resources, and responsibilities with regard to the governance of the project itself. A space for relationships and action has therefore been promoted and implemented – as a founding process rather than a pre-established one – which has been equipped with ways of defining itself that are based on shared meanings, points of general interest, the production of added value, and the identification of opportunities and practical solutions, all of which favour relational dynamics both inside and outside the area of Cascia.

ii) The community labs represent the organisational and developmental aspect of the process of analysis and co-design as well as of the construction of new realities in the territory. A collaborative context of active confrontation shapes the laboratories as social actors themselves, ones that take on a variety of forms and functions: workshops, in-depth studies by sub-groups, individual analyses, collec-

tive confrontation, proximity actions in the region, experimentation, feedback and reflexivity processes, etc.

In order to support the overall development of the project and of the two aforementioned devices, technical groups are working on the following thematic areas: i) the preparation and implementation of a system of indicators that measures progress, impact, and local participation; ii) economic sustainability; iii) strategies for minors/young people; and iv) the creation of a start-up and Territorial Digital District.

Indeed, the Territorial Digital District has already taken shape in the creation of a participatory and collaborative platform, *Territori Intraprendenti* (Enterprising Territories[2]). This continues to grow as a space for interaction and the co-construction of projects which can help innovate and enhance the territory. The platform, through its double interface, on the one hand makes tools and opportunities available for the local community to co-design and develop shared initiatives and, on the other hand, offers – following a promotional logic aimed at both inhabitants and visitors given the area's various forms of tourist and non-tourist use – a repertoire of initiatives, experiences, and activities to get the most out of the territory in a rewarding and sustainable way. The territory's social capital is, in essence, progressively developed and nurtured until it becomes an 'offer', a proposal, for both permanent and temporary citizens.

The platform is a form of infrastructure through which the territory can (re)define itself, constituting itself as a collective actor, and where latent physical and socio-cultural capital, reflective knowledge, collective action, relational bridges with the outside world, and the promotion of local participatory development can all intersect, thereby making the territory more self-aware and appealing.

There are, in this way, no 'users' in the strict sense of the word; rather, those who intercept and access the platform become co-actors who, from a generative perspective, contribute to territorial development through their intentionality as well as to the acquisition of individual advantages, such as an increase in their relational capacity and greater access to resources which belong to a wider system.

The processual rather than procedural character of *Rockability* continues to condition, by default, the flow and rhythm of its activities, which, although oriented upstream, are defined progressively along the way as a result of participatory construction. The centrality

[2] See http://www.territorintraprendenti.it/?locale=it.

of the 'emerging factor' is explicitly acknowledged, and this remains one of the most significant guiding elements of the project's experimental aspects.

These spaces for action and relationships take on the challenge of inclusion, welcoming and exposing their members to a programme of constant change based on a dynamic of empowerment. From this point of view, the centrality of relaunching and rethinking the Roccaporena educational centre, as mentioned above, bears returning to. This is a programme for welcoming minors, carried out by the ecclesiastical body Santuario di Santa Rita, which has changed over time from an organisational point of view, and which over many decades has hosted hundreds of children from all over Italy.

The programme's intention is to create a convergence between, on the one hand, the young peoples' trajectories of emancipation and autonomy and, on the other hand, the processes of territorial transformation triggered and enhanced by *Rockability*. This activates a mutual recognition and empowerment between young people and the territory that can then help them become a resource for one another.

The main transformative processes concern:

- the construction of a Slow and Responsible Tourism District in the area of Cascia;
- the promotion of an eco-sustainable Energy Community spreading from the Roccaporena area;
- an application for Roccaporena and the surrounding area to be considered an 'Ecclesial Cultural Park';
- the realisation of cohousing residences for art, culture, and entertainment;
- the creation of paths shared between schools and local community as an expression of an educational and diffuse community;
- the exploration of innovative digital tools for participation and collaboration (such as the collaborative platform *Territori Intraprendenti*);
- the establishment of self-construction workshops for interior and exterior furnishings and installations in the Roccaporena area, offered as part of the emerging project *Falegnameria 4.0* (Woodworking 4.0) and the district of the circular economy linked to wood.

More precisely, two processes of empowerment have been adopted:

i) the first concerns the individual pathway (both of the care leaver and of the citizen) implied or connoted by responsibility (involvement, dedication, the desire to contribute and take the initiative, to

make decisions, to find solutions to problems, to be responsible for results, etc.) and by 'possibilisation' (increasing the possibilities that the individual has for controlling his/her own life, the opening of new possibilities for the individual, etc.);

ii) the other relates to local capacities when it comes to community harmony, motivation, shared perceptions, regional analysis of needs, the enhancement of existing resources, and participatory planning, all of which should be oriented towards change and the more general objectives of knowledge and civic mobilisation.

For process (i), where approaches to care leavers are concerned, this means determining a move away from a rigorously top-down and deterministic educational model, where the 'educator' and the specialist team administer an 'artificial educational concentrate'. In contrast, an open model is favoured. Here, the natural community of care (the context, the territory, the community of reference) is a testing ground for autonomy, which develops in the absence of a script, and where even the randomness and the unpredictability of relationships become a resource. In this case, the focus is the principle of participation and development.

Moreover, the cohousing device is central, interpreted, as it is, as a space for relationships and learning in which care leavers can experiment with methods of self-efficacy and self-determination through workshops for meeting and learning.

For process (ii), the enabling device is the community of reference that is gradually being shaped through the *Rockability* project: it is a 'soft space' for the activation and/or enhancement of participatory processes at the local level based on civic activism and the protagonism of citizens.

The *Rockability* project sees social innovation as a practice of orientation towards new possibilities, tightly intertwined with the cultural field and forms of cultural production.

Producing a culture-centric social experiment requires, in this sense, promoting and encouraging practices where participants create and activate meaning rather than merely use cultural productions.

The intertwining of social and cultural functions is also manifested in *Rockability* through the involvement, on an equal footing, of persons from different worlds and sectors who have different roles and who occupy a position of relational asymmetry as subjects in a condition of fragility. These individuals, by embracing an approach oriented towards contamination and interdependence, are experi-

menting with new contexts for action where individual and collective impacts are produced.

The experience of *Rockability*, particularly as it has been implemented from mid-2020 onwards, confirms how participatory artistic practices can produce a fertile ground in which to cultivate new forms of social responsibility and action. This, as such, is one of a number of privileged places where professionals and non-professionals are increasingly playing an active role in the production of cultural content and practices, which can take on cultural, educational, economic, and social value.

9. A Community Cohousing in Roccaporena

by Silvia Cafora

Among the rocky and mountainous reliefs of the Valnerina mountain community, in the municipality of Cascia, the creation of a community cohousing project in Roccaporena has enabled the emergence of new local and trans-local synergies.

Here, two important needs (among others) converge: the need to regenerate and re-functionalise disused and abandoned buildings in the hamlet of Roccaporena and the need to find accessible spaces for artistic and cultural creation, which, at a national level, are cut off by inequalities and exclusionary dynamics, especially in urban centres.

The *Rockability*[1] project has activated a community cohousing project, which has enabled the creation of new ecosystems and triggered new biotopes (Gielen 2018)[2]. A small village within the territories of the Inner Areas has become a laboratory for social innovation on the margins, though it is not marginal, where communities of minors and adults, tourists and artists, can meet (Carrosio and Osti 2017). The invited artists, cultural innovators, and their respective networks have rebalanced the biotope by replacing what had been a local absence of an intentional and willing community, thereby transforming abandoned buildings through innovative cultural visions. Tenneggi has argued that, in order to activate the development of a territory, a cultural vision and the creation of a place's own narrative are necessary so the re-signification of the places themselves arises socially and has a pedagogical and intimately educational function (Tenneggi 2018).

[1] The *Rockability* project, Pathways for a Community in Movement, reflective and generative in the places of the possible; it is located in Roccaporena in the municipality of Cascia in the region of Umbria. It aims to promote an active space for relations and action so as to encourage and implement a programme of transformation and regeneration of the area and to contribute to the development of the territory, beginning with its elementary identity. It promotes social, local, and territorial regeneration projects.

[2] See Chapter 2, *Cultural Policies for the Commons, by the Commons, Including Small, Informal Realities in EU Programmes*, in this edition.

The spaces of Roccaporena welcome artists who develop their work creatively to set up new models of reception and links between communities. Thus, the community cohousing has become a container for an unprecedented habitat in a renewed local and trans-local community. The local inhabitants are stimulated while a sense of affection and affiliation to the place is established in the new allochthonous inhabitants. This union has been able to generate social and cultural vitality while producing new forms of ecological and economic sustainability and rebalancing institutional voids.

These fragilities can be overcome to create an incentive that counteracts polarisation, i.e., those territorial phenomena that lead to depopulation and the abandonment of fragile areas, leaving local populations impoverished and without public infrastructure, as well as the polarisation of social cultural, and real estate resources. How can all this happen? And how can these projects take root without becoming a temporary fixture?

A Community Cohousing in Roccaporena: A Device for Creating a Lively Habitat

It may be useful to start with some definitions to understand the *Rockability* project and to recount the actions, as they were implemented, imagined, or studied, whose purpose was to stimulate the commons as an ecosystem for culture.

The analyses proposed here are the sum of scientific doctoral research on the themes of collaborative dwelling, cohousing, and practices of participant observation or direct participation in certain phases of the *Rockability* project. This variety of approaches allows for a more precise, analytical, and in-depth account of the various identities of the project: community cohousing as composed of spatial, socio-cultural, and economic-management facets.

What is cohousing and what is community cohousing?

It is now generally accepted that cohousing originated in Denmark in the 1970s under the name *bofælleskab*, which means 'living community', and from there spread to Europe, North America, Oceania, and Japan (Gresleri 2015). The term 'cohousing' is used to define housing models with large common spaces (covered and uncovered) for collective use and sharing. In addition to being based on econom-

ic and functional coexistence, a cohousing project is generally also based on ideological principles, shared values, and the desire to create new forms of social aggregation. We can therefore say that it is a form of collaborative housing in which tenants actively participate in the design, construction, maintenance, and management of their neighbourhood. Active participation implies a meticulous organisation of the residents' management processes and triggers social responsibility along with awareness and new forms of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental).

Although it is a term used to formally define models of residential architecture, the value and organisational system from which it is composed allows for different declensions. The cardinal element, on which cohousing is based, as suggested by the Danish word *bofælleskab*, is the community, understood as an enabling, collective, and participatory device that permits and pursues transformative processes of local development (Vestbro 2015).

Community cohousing is also a device that, in addition to putting into practice a residential model shared by a mix of inhabitants, creates a lively habitat characterised by spaces for meeting and mutual learning and in the service of the empowerment of all actors involved. It also offers economic models for accessing spaces and models of democratic governance.

The Roccaporena community cohousing created a highly heterogeneous community made up of care leavers[3], minors from socio-educational communities in the Umbria region, artists, entertainment operators, excursionists, environmental educators, social and digital innovators, and active citizenship associations, who lived in the spaces at different times. Within the cohousing, minors lived temporarily with guardians of various regional and experiential backgrounds, with stays lasting about a week. Residential cohousing, on the other hand, provided medium- and long-term accommodation for care leavers. Care leavers live there in conditions of autonomy and benefit from trainings that envisage a shift from a deterministic educational model to one which is open to the natural community of care (the context, the location, the community), and where chance and unpredictability also become a resource.

The users' different lengths of stay in cohousing spaces can pro-

[3] Care leavers are the young adults who have just come out of the care communities. They can decide to stay for a few months or years in a cohousing – a protected but autonomous space.

duce new uses for the town, new supply chains for the territory, and new trans-territorial networks.

The Roccaporena cohousing community and the *Rockability* project aim to bring together young peoples' processes of emancipation and autonomy within trajectories of territorial transformation so as to activate national cultural exchanges along with mutual recognition and empowerment between young people and the territory, which then become a resource for each other[4].

Can social and territorial fragility collaboratively create an educational cultural system and a new narrative for Roccaporena?

The spaces of the Roccaporena cohousing are spread throughout the village. They occupy the building of a former convent for the medium and long-term residences for the young adults. The building of the former dormitory hosts temporary residences as hostel for tourists and 'shelters' for artists. The Roccaporena cohousing is rich in spaces suitable for the exchange of skills and cultural practices; there is also a theatre and some workshops along with covered and uncovered outdoor spaces. The relevance and effectiveness of diffuse spaces lies in the fact that the cohousing is not a closed community; on the contrary, it opens up to the village and the communities that pass through it, organically revealing the activities that take place and allowing 'contamination', even unexpected 'contamination', to occur.

The *Rockability* project also envisages the regeneration of its spaces as a community activity with a scope for training and education. In fact, part of the new furniture will be produced in 'self-building' workshops in which the young people and minors who live there will take part. Self-building one's own living spaces not only creates moments for learning but, as the designer and educator Enzo Mari contends, generates a sense of belonging and care for spaces and places as well as a desire to go beyond the limits of what has already been built in order to innovate again and again (Mari 2002). This, in turn, fosters feelings of affection within the allochthonous communities towards the territory of Roccaporena.

An important part of the new ecosystem is the territorial activation occurring at a macro scale as a result of the synergies between the regeneration of the village and the rehabilitation of the trail net-

[4] *Rockability* is a project of the Partes cooperative.

work that branches off from Roccaporena into the Valnerina. The objective is to build a district of slow and responsible tourism in the Casciano area and to make the Roccaporena cohousing a nodal point for hospitality of hikers, cyclists, and other visitors to the territory.

Of relevance to an analysis of the commons as an ecosystem for arts and culture is a careful study of the use model of the privately owned and previously disused buildings in Roccaporena – a model produced by this cohousing experiment for both social and cultural purposes. In fact, the project creates private partnership pacts as well as a mutual commitment between the parties, which mark the potential for the civic use of common goods to become a rehabilitating device for villages subject to depopulation dynamics and the cultural impoverishment of inland areas. Indeed, this use model shows how the presence of a diffuse, mixed, and culturally productive community, such as the one being progressively delineated within the *Rockability* project, can be an enabling device, an instrument that allows the emergence of transformative processes.

In Roccaporena, the activation and improvement of participatory processes at a local level passes through educational, cultural, artistic, and ecological practices. It is also amplified by the presence of human resources and skills from local, regional, and other territories at a national level. The neo-community of Roccaporena acts following a practice of co-design, which allows the contextual co-production of collective knowledge in a process of mutual empowerment. This process recognises existing local resources (explicit or tacit) and gives rise to new forms of awareness, furnishing the community of reference with a cognitive and operational infrastructure to outline new perspectives relating to their approach and to the sustainable development of territorial dynamics.

The *Rockability* project is promoted by a group of third sector and private organisations, which propose and support a multidisciplinary approach for the physical and cultural regeneration of Roccaporena. This resonates with the realities and needs of the area to form a new sympoietic ecology – as the philosopher of science Donna Haraway has outlined – that is collaborative, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable (2020).

Rockability is a cultural project that revitalises the territory and its networks, replacing or implementing the role of public institutions in supporting local communities and their development in the creation of trajectories towards a possible future. The project obtained Umbrian and European regional funding, which enabled its

implementation. Like many worthwhile projects, however, it was unfortunately unable to leverage policies facilitating access to credit or regulatory practices supporting process innovation. In fact, the recognition of shared values relating to the fundamental importance of culture and all its expressions as a tool for the revitalisation of territories and the creation of new forms of economic democracies is sorely lacking at a national level. With such shared values, public institutions could implement support for cultural practices as a tool for the construction of common goods – practices that are already present to varying degrees in the territories through the production of new, ad hoc, and punctual political tools and not only in the form of competition funds – thus creating a solid infrastructure of practices on a local, territorial, and national scale.

A Refuge for Artists

Taking into account that culture and the arts play a key role in the development of democracy and social and spatial justice in both vibrant urban centres and fragile marginal territories, it is interesting to note the following combination of factors in Roccaporena: on one hand, the cohousing spaces are common goods available for artistic, cultural, and therefore territorial development, and, on the other, art and culture are commons on which to base the regeneration of the cohousing spaces and the Valnerina territory.

As already described in detail above, the commons, which have the capacity to replace and/or complement the role of public institutions, support artistic creation. They achieve this by providing shared spaces, peer-to-peer networks, and models of democratic laboratories through which artists and innovators experiment with new policies for the management of collective resources.

The spaces of Roccaporena, and the model of access to and management of these, can be defined as a commons – that is, accessible spaces for sharing, exchange, and informal education. They can be described as habitats for everyday life in relation to the local landscape and social context, which take the shape of democratic and non-institutionalised spaces suitable for pandemic and post-pandemic retreat and creation: refuges for artists.

In addition to this, art and culture in Roccaporena can be considered a commons in that they provide meaning to disused or abandoned spaces in the village, transforming them into a refuge and

cohousing. Indeed, the potential within artistic disciplines to open up to the unknown in order to create the new (Amareida 2009) – together with the tools used to investigate places whether they are geographical or social territories – makes it possible to bring about new imagery and thus to preside over the process of redefining spaces, returning them renewed to the town. Art and culture become infrastructures for a new, local, and trans-local community, activating contingent potential and making them places of interest with the capacity to attract new audiences, new economies, and ecologies. In this way, the activities of artists and innovators assist public institutions in caring for and revitalising territories.

Living in an artist's refuge in a community cohousing means triggering a process of rehabilitation, finding a space for research, creating and exchanging skills, and cultivating a ground from which to propose cooperative, horizontal, and collective organisational methods aimed at the educational growth of all participants. By activating democratic laboratories and informal artistic-cultural education for the residents of the cohousing and the community, as well as creating events and festivals, artists and innovators enhance a place's attractiveness and increase the possibility for local and non-local communities to re-inhabit them at various times. They therefore set in motion and attend to local, territorial, and social fragilities – in particular local cultural impoverishment, the disused buildings in Roccaporena, and the scarcity of means for artistic production in the urban context – making them anchoring points for each other, which in turn counteracts polarisation and generates spaces of renewed socio-cultural, economic, and spatial vitality.

The great vivacity and commitment of the project are characterised by a fragile sustainability. This is because it is organised in a disintermediate and autonomous manner with respect to public institutions. In this context, the public is mainly present as the subject of calls for proposals at different regional scales and it is concentrated primarily on supporting the social and ecological rather than the cultural. Allowing projects to take concrete and long-term root could be a contrast to the fragilities at stake, but it is not guaranteed, it is only a possibility that hovers. Public institutions can develop tools that are better equipped to recognise these intentional communities, to support projects of great value for regional vitality and to co-design their cultural and regulatory footing.

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10. The Arts in a Solidarity Residency: An Interview with Chiara Cucca and Angela Dionisia Severino

by Roberto Cirillo and Maria Francesca De Tullio

R. You – as artists from the community of *l'Asilo* – have worked with both *Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities* (CCSC) and *Rockability*. How did that happen? Was there a connection between the two projects?

Rockability and CCSC were not connected with each other. We connected them.

In the research commissioned by the CCSC project[1], we worked as artists on the definition of the 'biotope' within *l'Asilo*, an open community of artistic and cultural workers that self-govern a common space. We studied what the biotope is, and how its criteria could be recalculated along with the model of *l'Asilo*. The biotope is a framework elaborated by Pascal Gielen which recognises four domains that need to be ensured for a sustainable creative work: the domestic domain, the peer domain, the market domain, and the civil domain.

Through the reconstruction of *l'Asilo*'s biotope, we came to realise how one might conceive an artistic residency that is sustainable not only for the space hosting the artists but also and crucially for the artists themselves. We pointed out that *l'Asilo*, as a centre of cultural production, only provides artists with means of production. Firstly, it cannot ensure the livelihood of resident workers; secondly, it 'abandons' its products, which is to say that, once it becomes a co-producer of a given performance or play, it is not able to follow up with its distribution, promotion, etc. We observed that *l'Asilo* instead allows room for one's personal and artistic research and for the peer domain, which is probably the strongest domain in terms of the biotope of *l'Asilo*. There, you can normally encounter other arts and theatre workers, which does not necessarily happen in other public or private spaces of research.

[1] The research was published in Acosta Alvarado A.S., Bifano A., Cucca C. and Severino A.D. (2020). A revised and improved version of this essay is in Chapter 2 of this publication (*Cultural Policies for the Commons, by the Commons, Including Small, Informal Realities in EU Programs*).

Then, something happened. While we were working with the CCSC project, a community in Umbria, in the area of Valnerina, contacted *l'Asilo* for an artistic consultancy about the *Rockability* project. That is to say, they had economic resources, a space owned by the curia in Roccaporena, and a desire to create a cohousing project shared by artists and minors living in a foster home. At that point, we were completely prepared! We knew what kind of artistic residency we wanted to realise, not for ourselves, but for people and artists in general. CCSC had prepared us for *Rockability*. It had given us some reference points that broadened our awareness of artistic work. We then put forward these elements when we discussed contents and contractual frameworks.

R. How did *Rockability* get in contact with *l'Asilo*?

Rockability's aim was to reconnect the social fabric in Valnerina – which is an earthquake area – while reaching less advantaged or marginalised groups.

Alfonso Raus[2], who is an expert in participatory practices, attended the first assembly of the Italian Network of Emerging and Civic Use Commons[3] in *l'Asilo* some years before and – in discussion with people from *l'Asilo* – thought it would be good to 'host arts', to contact artists, and to organise a social cohousing with them.

The *Rockability* project had previously hosted a residency of some local visual artists. In 2020, they decided to broaden their horizons and requested a consultancy with *l'Asilo* to organise a new residency.

The initial proposal was to forge a connection between two disadvantaged demographics: minors between thirteen and sixteen years old in foster care and artists in a moment of devastation – the pandemic.

When the proposal was shared in the assembly, we as workers of the arts actively requested to support it, but they were going through a period of stagnation without the tourists and pilgrims that usually populate the area; therefore, the project consortium decided to

[2] Alfonso Raus coordinates the *Rockability* project in tandem with Silvia Quaranta.

[3] This is an informal network of commoners, born to exchange practices and pursue coordinated advocacy actions among self-governed commons in Italy. See www.retebenicomuni.it.

support, in a durable, long-term way, another disadvantaged demographic that could 'land' in the territory: art and live performance workers. At that point, other people came from *l'Asilo* to contribute – artists and technicians, researchers, and activists – and participated in the three days of workshops that *Rockability* had organised with the IUAV University during the same residency period. The aim of these workshops was to co-design the project's future steps by joining forces with commoners, artists, and experts in participatory practices.

R. After that, how was your experience with the residency in Roccaporena in August 2020?

Now, we have to say that we were not totally happy with our first experience. For us it was an extraordinary moment of experimentation and learning, but we made some critical observations that eventually allowed us to make a big leap forward in the organisation of the following phase.

What did not work properly was that the bureaucratic and economic constraints of the project made it difficult to welcome us as artists. Their mission was education and social innovation, not arts and culture, and the funding scheme was quite rigid in that sense. Moreover, there was a lack of mutual knowledge. In the beginning, they did not appear to be fully aware of what a residency is about: a work of silence, waiting, secrecy, focus, where a company or artist needs to stay enclosed in an utterly quiet place – a grave, one might say – to focus on the work. They wanted to welcome artists, but they did not initially know the technicalities of artistic labour.

Both of us and the project consortium needed all our creativity and mutual solidarity to address these issues.

In our residency, we tried to reconcile, on the one hand, the project's need to offer workshops to the young people that were there 'on holiday' and, on the other hand, the organisation of a residency with other local artists that would be there to work on their own artistic projects. The initial idea was that we would focus on our residency and then, at different points during the day, offer workshops to the young people.

In the end, this was not possible, since residencies need intimacy and dedication that cannot be shared. A decision had to be made. If you have two groups with two different sets of requirements, the

group with the strongest needs attracts the most energy. The kids won. We realised that they needed our presence there; that was important for them: it was a very small and insulated town, and being with us seemed for them the only alternative to just hanging around with their smartphones.

Actually, they were lucky to find a group like *l'Asilo*, which was well acquainted with the practices and the will to engage in encounters.

R. Did the pandemic affect the possibility to reconcile the work with the minors and with the residency?

Not really. The main problem was how to distribute our energy and time.

Most importantly, at some point we chose to stay with the kids. We had two possibilities. Either we stayed with them, or we totally ignored them and plunged ourselves into a creative dimension which – as the biotope demonstrates – is an intimate one: a moment when encounters and relationships cannot be forced, and when looking after a group of kids that need to be animated is far from a priority.

R. Was it an opportunity to grow for you, even if the role was different from the one that you had expected? You are cultural actors, but you acted as social actors…

We even became artistic directors! This was an occasion for growth – along with the dissatisfactions and the problems that we first observed.

After that residency, the *Rockability* consortium contacted us to go forward with the process

This time they had more resources and proposed a much longer period of residence. The teenagers themselves, who had got to know us last year, were very keen for artistic experiences to be included in the future development of the residency.

Moreover, the project consortium has started working with local cultural partners in order to organise a residency and a festival together. We also thought of opportunities to reuse currently underused buildings in Cascia, nearby, to host artists.

In sum, they started with cohousing, and now things are going ahead with more proposals: festivals, workshops during the year…

With our experiment, they saw that another way along the lines of "we want to engage with education, but we can also deal with arts and culture" was possible. They recognised our contribution, and they called us to participate in the organisation of contents and logistics for workshops with new artists. This concern gave us what we had not received the year before: they demonstrated a real willingness to work with us. Despite not being a theatre company, they invested energy and initiated a lot of processes to activate this new round in response to the issues that emerged last time. For our part, we are now certain about which commitments we don't want to accept.

R. What will you do, then, in this new phase?

We have separated the workshop period from the residencies period.

In July, we will work with young people who have obtained their school diploma and turned eighteen to help them find their footing in the world of labour. We have organised three different workshops with artists from the community of *l'Asilo* and beyond to introduce them to three professions: analogue photography and photographic storytelling, cinema acting, and hip hop pedagogy.

In August, on the other hand, the project consortium is giving us the possibility of organising a residency for three theatre companies to undertake their own work but also open the doors – through open rehearsals – to other young people from the foster home.

And regarding what has changed? In 2020, we went with open hearts as artists without a real project in order to support the cause, to find meaningful relationships with this new organisation, and to earn something, and everything was fine because we were desperate and wanted to go and create a branch of *l'Asilo* and launch a commons-like thinking there. This time, in August, *Rockability* will host three projects which are all at an advanced stage – more advanced than the period of intimacy that we mentioned before. Since they have already started the work, they are in a good position to consider opening up and working with the kids, giving them inputs which will eventually feed back into the work of writing a plot and constructing a play. Meeting the kids will become an additional influence on the play, and there is a certain serenity for artists who do not have to produce a play in a week but already have a well-formed idea. In such instances, encounters really enrich and give oxygen to the work.

R. So, did this project somehow solve the distribution problem of *l'Asilo*?

No, not at all. The proper way for *l'Asilo* to allow its projects to circulate would be to disseminate them within the Italian Network of Commons and other such spaces. We dream that the companies that usually rehearse at *l'Asilo* – underpaid and with few opportunities for market distribution – might one day travel around the network of commons with their play, born and developed within *l'Asilo*. Angela could do a tour of commons in Milan, Bologna, Scotland, Denmark, etc.

But you need at least one paid person to coordinate this. I would love to do that job, but right now it would not be sustainable for me. It is not only about bringing the play there: you need to create the preconditions in these informal spaces – spaces that are centres of artistic production but not theatre companies – for them to find ways to host workers with regular contracts.

In the artistic field, we often receive offers of illegal employment, and we are so sick of that! Having regular contracts is needed for unemployment benefits, for retirement... In Italy it is nearly impossible to earn a pension as an artist! This is what COVID-19 has taught us. COVID-19 split the world of live performance into two parts: those who were granted legitimate access to an indemnity, and those who were effectively orphaned because they had worked informally or with less secure contracts, even within institutions. This is a serious issue, and it indicates the extent to which artists' training and teaching is not recognised.

R. So, will you now be recognised at *Rockability* in the way you desire?

Yes, we are currently arranging a few legal solutions to organise that. Last year we had to accept a sub-optimal solution because of bureaucratic constraints.

R. Why that? What kind of funds are you talking about?

Rockability was financed by different funds, mainly from the European Union and the Umbria Region. They were mainly funds for territorial cohesion in 'internal areas'[4] and seismic zones.

[4] In Italy, 'internal areas' are identified through indicators that describe their

There are frequent earthquakes in that region. In particular, between 2016 and 2017, there was a devastating seismic sequence, Amatrice-Norcia-Visso. Cascia is the only town in Valnerina which was not destroyed; Norcia, Amatrice... they do not exist anymore. We visited these towns and we cried. We felt as if we had been born there. It reminded us of Pompeii after the eruption. On one side, you could see collapsed houses which seemed to be still alive and inhabited, with furniture out in the open air and, on the other side, reconstructions, bungalows, prefabricated constructions, and shopping malls with a state road in the middle. People seemed like spectres in such a town.

For us, getting to know *Rockability* was a turning point.

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11. Roccaporena, 21–23 August 2020: Report

by Olinda Curia, Stefania Dal Cucco, Michela Rossato, and Silvia Sette

As part of the 2020 edition of ProPART – the Master's programme of interactive and participatory design at the IUAV University of Venice – a study visit was made to Roccaporena (PG) to deepen our knowledge of the *Rockability* project. The participants in the Master's course and the scientific directors took part in two parallel co-design workshops on Community Cohousing and Art, Culture, and Participation. The workshops explored the specific themes of the *Rockability* project with the aim of defining guidelines or at least highlighting some possible contents and pointing out critical issues.

Workshop: Co-Design of Community Cohousing

The Community Cohousing workshop, which began with an immersion into the *Rockability* project, took up the theme of cohousing and covered those cornerstones of meaning fundamental to the Roccaporena experiment, and which could be useful as a basis for design.

This was followed by a discussion with a number of key informants directly or indirectly interested in the cohousing aspect of the *Rockability* project. With the aim of prototyping practices, a series of open interviews was carried out with preferred interlocutors who were familiar with the project and would participate in its implementation. The outline of the interviews arose from their experience of *Rockability* and covered the potential of cohousing in Roccaporena, the future developments they foresaw, and the strengths and weaknesses of the whole. Interviews were conducted with protagonists in the fields of art and culture, environmental education, social services, responsible tourism, entertainment operators, and with experts in fundraising and in the reuse of common goods.

The interviews led to the clarification of common elements which then became the shared basis for co-design:

- how to develop a permanence for the experiment in the territory;
  experiencing the body;

• inhabiting spaces and activating/fostering relationships;

• bringing the 'outside' inside (a feeling of mutual connection between community and territory);

• building spaces, places, and opportunities to favour intersections;

• encouraging reciprocity in welcoming and giving (the project's multi-actor nature);

• thinking of a process in progress.

A theme that emerged as a backdrop to all of the interviews was that of the 'sacred': an essential axis of comparison in Roccaporena that stems from devotion to Saint Rita but can be traced towards the broader theme of the sacredness of human life, of the natural environment that is in many ways uncontaminated here, and of relationships with oneself and with others, which are favoured by the silence and protected environment.

Once the assumptions for guiding the co-design of the cohousing had been explained and shared, a direct experience of the intervention sites was gained via a guided walk through the indoor and outdoor spaces that would be used for cohousing. It was important to experience the places, to wander alone or in small groups in the village of Roccaporena, to gain concrete experience of the places that would have welcomed the project, and to talk with the inhabitants and tourists, as well as to walk through possible hypotheses of development in order to elaborate, with our feet and mind, a cohousing imaginary in Roccaporena.

The ideas, stimuli, and suggestions collected were summarised in the last phase of the workshop, making the objective data of the project explicit. This served as a point of departure for the exercise of creative thinking and the elaboration of some proposals to be handed over to the managers of the *Rockability* project as a guide for future development.

The range of proposals included

• the co-design and implementation of small interventions to transform and reappropriate public space through participatory workshops;

• the development of an approach to design and operations that does not fill all spaces but leaves room for the 'possible';

• the exploration and proposal of novel forms of tourism as Roccaporena is alive all year round – for example, encouraging hiking routes, Roccaporena for children, developing a deeper and less devotional experience of the 'sacred', and for Roccaporena to model it-

self as a centre for culture and learning by offering innovative and generative projects.

Workshop on Arts, Culture, and Participation

Rockability, in Roccaporena di Cascia (PG), intends to promote an active space for relations and action so as to encourage and implement a programme of regional transformation and regeneration and to contribute to the development of the territory, beginning with elements of its identity.

This group focused on the theme of art and culture as forms of community space.

Context

Roccaporena is a place of devotion and hospitality in an area where devotional, frugal, and sports tourism have developed. The aim is to broaden the potential uses of the place in order to promote other forms of hospitality, including artistic and touristic ones.

Timetable

21 August: Meetings to learn about the *Rockability* project.

22 August: Workshops to talk with the artists and actors involved in the area and to share previous experiences. Brainstorming and exploration of possibilities for activities and events.

23 August: Final assembly of the workshops on artistic residency and co-housing. Pooling of contributions from participants, artists from the *Ex Asilo Filangieri* in Naples, and students from the ProPART Master's programme.

Objectives

• co-constructing low-threshold, participatory spaces: creating experiences of residency, hospitality and community development, and practices of care for the collaborative construction/enhancement of safe, non-conforming, or deprived spaces;

• creating spaces of participation by involving sportspeople and devotees;

• promoting tourism that is not necessarily devotional or linked to

sports and using the Curia's spaces in a different way (for example, as a theatre and/or shared spaces);

• developing opportunities for artists in residence around Roccaporena;

• planning a cultural festival with participatory artistic direction.

Strategy

the strategy is divided into two phases. The first aimed at developing the artistic residency project, and the second focused on the organisation and planning of a festival.

The first day of the workshop focused on tools and methods to develop the artistic residency through cultural co-design.

We discussed how culture can foster the participation and involvement of the local community. In this regard, examples were given of some artistic devices such as the *Visionari* of the Kilowatt Festival, Altofest, Santarcangelo Festival, and pop-up events in surprise places.

The residential project was also discussed, and various methods of realisation were explored that take into account the needs of the artists and the relationship with the citizens and the territory.

The participatory festival (hypothetical title: Festival of the Impossible) could stage the outcomes of the residencies and include a programme of performances devised by a collective artistic direction composed of artists and citizens.

Outputs/Results

Festival of the Impossible	
We thought	**We did not discuss**
Participatory festival – collective artistic direction.	Sustainability. Regional funds can help with paving the way and laying the foundations for networks useful to future EU projects.
Community and partnership – other festivals, even multidisciplinary ones (not necessarily theatre festivals).	How to involve the community?
Horizontal with an inclusive and collective call for companies and artists.	What is the target audience?

Outstanding questions:

• Why would artists want to come to Roccaporena? What would be their aim?

• How to make the artistic residencies and the festival sustainable?

• How to involve the citizens of Roccaporena and Cascia and develop an interested audience?

• The issue of governance: how to manage a participatory artistic direction?

• How to open a dialogue and create a network with other Umbrian cultural festivals of national importance?

• How to have a permanent impact on the territory?

REFLECTING ON THE FUTURE OF CULTURAL POLICY

Reflecting on the Future of Cultural Policy

by Alice Borchi

Cultural policy is generally understood as those governmental activities "with respect to the arts (including the for-profit cultural industries), the humanities, and the heritage" (Schuster 2003, 1). There are however several different approaches to defining the remit of cultural policy: Bell and Oakley (2015) adopt a spatial definition, Gray offers a more detailed analysis of the areas than those usually covered (2010), and Hesmondhalgh and Pratt analyse its relationship with the creative industries (2005). The remit of cultural policy, therefore, is not clear-cut; what is even more difficult to define is its purpose. In a recent paper, Dave O' Brien poses an interesting provocation: "What is cultural policy for?" (2019, 142). Cultural policy is public policy and as such should be focused on the pursuit of the common good. But when we talk about culture, what is the common good, and who gets to decide? Bonet and Négrier state that "in contemporary cultural policies, distinct overlapping paradigms thus coexist: cultural excellence, cultural democratization, cultural democracy and creative economy" (2018, 65). Cultural policy is a product of the post-WW2 era; Bennett discusses how the roots of cultural policy can be connected to a cultural "civilising mission," its role in shaping national identity and in raising a country's international prestige (1997). Celebrating heritage and artistic excellence was thus essential to post-war cultural policy, and we can still see the impact of this legacy today. Later, as discussed by Pratt and Hesmondhalgh, the democratisation of culture became one of the most important frameworks of cultural policy:

> In Western European cultural policy, they led in the directions of democratisation, inclusion and greater access, in the form of projects intended to make art available to 'the people' (see McGuigan 2004: 38–9) but also towards exclusivity, in the form of subsidy for the producers of certain forms of high culture, rather than those associated with working-class and ethnic minority groups. (2005, 4)

This approach was critiqued by those who instead espoused cultural democracy of a kind that focuses on a pluralistic approach to defining what constitutes legitimate culture (64 Million Artists 2018). This concept is connected to what Bonet and Négrier define as "the participative turn" in cultural policy (2018). The term 'participation' encompasses a wide range of practices, and its application in arts and culture has been discussed from a range of perspectives (Walmsley 2013; Evans 2016; Jancovich 2017; Jancovich and Stevenson 2019). At the core of these arguments, there are two fundamental questions: why should people participate in culture, and who can actually participate?

O'Brien notes that culture is indeed a puzzle for governments: "On the one hand, arts and culture offer a wealth of positive benefits to society. On the other, arts and culture have a close relationship with a range of social inequalities" (2019, 135). The benefits of arts and culture have been discussed both from a social perspective (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008) and an economic one (Hansen 1995; Seaman 2020). The impacts of culture have thus become a way to measure cultural value. In his report *Capturing Cultural Value: How Culture Has Become a Tool of Government Policy*, John Holden (2006) describes how culture has become a tool to serve governments' social and economic agendas. Investment in culture is allocated on the grounds of instrumental values, and the methods used to supply evidence of social and economic impacts are not always fit for purpose or sufficient to justify such expenditures (16–17). Instrumentalism has become one of the key methods to justify public expenditure in the arts. In particular, economic impact has often been used as a *raison d'être* for spending taxpayers' money on the arts. The influence of market values is also reflected in the decision-making process of cultural policies (Gray 2000; McGuigan 2004). Gray (2000) focusses on the process of "commodification" of the arts, meaning the replacement of use value by exchange value: the arts are not valued on the basis of aesthetic or personal criteria but by those of the market system (2000, 6). This process of commodification has also influenced cultural policy: the target of public policy is no longer society as a collective but the individual (Gray 2007). Moreover, the value of public policies is not measured by their use value but by their economic value: public policies, in order to be valued as efficient and worthy, need to be instrumental to economic growth. According to Gray, a lack of political interest and power associated with the sector, particularly at the local level, leads to the development of policy "attachment"

strategies, whereby funding for the sector can be gained by demonstrating the role that it can play in fulfilling the goals of other policy sectors (idem, 206). While this strategy downplays the intrinsic value of arts and culture, it does seem to endorse a strong belief in their power to act as a remedy for the shortcomings of the state and the market. As a result, the value of arts and culture has been located in its impact on the economy, on urban development, on wellbeing, and on health. But who is delivering these impacts, and at what cost?

Access to jobs in the creative and cultural industries is still severely affected by factors such as race, gender, and class (Brooke, O'Brien and Taylor 2020). As a result, according to O'Brien, cultural policy tends to replicate the inequalities that it should aim to eradicate as the existing cultural situation is characterised by "a socially closed set of cultural producers serving a similarly closed set of cultural consumers" (2019, 6-7). The benefits of arts and culture, therefore, are a privilege for a closed group. It is also clear, however, that those socially engaged artists and cultural workers who are expected to deliver social impacts through their work are neglected by cultural policy. Often overqualified but precarious or underemployed (Bain and McLean 2013), socially engaged artists and cultural workers frequently give support and care to communities well beyond the remit of their work, providing free emotional labour that goes completely unnoticed. According to Eleonora Belfiore,

> the sector relies, defensively, on what it perceives to be rhetorically powerful justifications for funding, irrespective of their inherent robustness and validity. This, in turn, reinforces patterns of funding that advantage established public arts institutions, which receive the lion's share of public funds, while keeping socially engaged forms of activity under-resourced. In other words, the work of socially engaged arts practitioners—which as we have seen is primarily driven by a commitment to an ethic of care towards the communities involved—sustains and reproduces prevalent and long-standing unequal patterns of funding distribution, which see established, mainstream and building-based arts organisation [sic] as the main beneficiaries (2021, 13).

The perspective of care espoused by Belfiore can help us understand the current needs of the cultural sector and the role of informal networks and organisations in providing cultural services. In particular, it is necessary to address the changes imposed by COVID-19 on the cultural sphere and beyond.

The global economy has taken a massive hit, and inequalities have been further exacerbated (Stiglitz 2020), with welfare measures often being insufficient to ensure a livelihood for those who have lost their jobs. Furthermore, issues connected to poverty, such as not having access to an internet connection, a quiet space to work from home, or devices that allow remote work, study, and socialising have had a considerable impact on peoples' livelihoods. Moreover, the culture sector is also suffering the consequences of the pandemic: in the past two years, culture has mainly been experienced in isolation, very often online, far from theatres, cinemas, and concert arenas; this has apparently widened access to culture for some people but restricted it for others (The Audience Agency 2020) and might have an impact on the social value that people place on arts and culture. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to re-evaluate the relationship between individual freedom and the common good and between the government and citizens. As Devine et al. state, "the uniqueness of the shock begs the question whether the existing literature is relevant, or whether the pandemic renders the relationship between citizens and the state in new territory altogether" (2020, 9). This poses a challenge for the future of democracy: on the one hand, COVID-19 might have slowed the rise of populism in the EU; on the other, governments have to step up to new challenges (Movarelli 2020).

Changing times require changes in policy. As has been pointed out by Bogner et al., we cannot go back to normal: we must take this crisis as an opportunity to redefine priorities and plan for a more sustainable future (2020). Considering the challenges currently affecting citizen participation in culture and civil society, it is essential to think about the purpose of cultural policy and its future. What can cultural policy do to ensure that everyone has access to arts, culture, and their benefits whilst addressing the inequalities that are embedded in the status quo of the cultural sector? How can cultural policy offer a space to express and exchange different understandings of the world and opportunities for a plurality of voices to come together? The experiments discussed in this publication offer some examples of how communities, activists, and grassroots organisations can contribute actively to the formation of cultural policy and shape their own spaces for participatory and democratic cultural practices.

A reframing of cultural policy requires a broader look at its fundamental characteristics. In this sense, it is interesting to recall the UNESCO definition of cultural policy: "It was considered preferable: (a) that 'cultural policy' should be taken to mean the sum total of the

conscious and deliberate usages, action or lack of action in a society, aimed at meeting certain cultural needs through the optimum utilization of all the physical and human resources available to that society at a given time; (b) that certain criteria for cultural development should be defined, and that culture should be linked to the fulfillment of personality and to economic and social development" (UNESCO 1969, 10). In this definition, we can see an echo of Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits" (UN 1948, 7). This framework recognises that people have the need to participate in cultural activities, and that the fulfilment of this need is a fundamental human right. If contemporary cultural policy seems to measure the significance of culture on the basis of the attainment of non-cultural impacts, it is now time to reposition the need for culture at the centre of its activities. However, this must not be taken to endorse a paternalistic view of the state as providing cultural excellence on behalf of its citizens; instead, the state should foster spaces that allow people to participate in culture in an independent, bottom-up way.

From this perspective, we must consider how the commons can offer a useful framework to enable both cultural and civic participation. As Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado, Angelica Bifano, Chiara Cucca, and Angela Dionisia Severino have discussed in this publication, the biotope of *l'Asilo* offers an alternative way of understanding cultural management and cultural work. Cooperation, as opposed to competition, can make an organisation thrive in a sector where resources are scarce; furthermore, it can also enable people to develop their professional skills in a collective setting. Not only that but, due to the impact of its activities, *l'Asilo* has an important civic role for the local community. The authors also highlight how a variety of barriers currently prevent commons-based, informal spaces from reaching their full potential. For this reason, it is essential that European cultural policy create support systems for informal, small realities—which do not always fit the criteria required to apply to participate in EU projects—to have access to funding and support. The weight of these barriers has been even more evident during the pandemic: the restrictions imposed by governments as a way to control the pandemic have significantly affected the urban commons, which, due to their spatial and relational nature, have been unable to carry out their activities. As recounted by Lijster and De Tullio, *l'Asilo* and its

capacity to offer important services to the community have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, though it was still able to provide "clandestine solidarity" (2021, 10). Indeed, the authors describe how during the pandemic, *l'Asilo* and the network of Neapolitan commons provided mutual aid support to the community, offering services like "food delivery, psychological support, legal assistance, shelter to the homeless, production of medical equipment in makers' spaces" (idem, 12), all on the basis of voluntary donations and without any kind of support from the state. This goes to show that, despite having a legal status, *l'Asilo*'s relevance to the livelihood of the local community, including and beyond the fulfilment of cultural rights, is not fully captured by current policy. Creativity and care need to be acknowledged and remunerated, and, as stated by Giuseppe Micciarelli, Margherita D'Andrea, Andrea de Goyzueta, and Maria Pia Valentini in this volume, current welfare measures are inadequate for this purpose.

In these challenging times, it is necessary to turn to creativity to imagine new futures; this is beautifully exemplified by the artwork *La Tela*, which is analysed in the chapter by Federica Palmieri, Jessica Parola, Marco Sallusto Palmiero, and Roberta Tofani, and which represents a clear example of how a pluralistic, rhizomatic approach to the arts can offer daring, imaginative results. The artwork represents an opportunity for artists to express their right to self-expression in very challenging times. Furthermore, its relational nature offers opportunities for exchange and mutual collective creativity (Bain and McLean 2013), two essential aspects of artistic practice that have been significantly affected by the pandemic. This is confirmed by Roberto Cirillo and Martina Locorotondo who, in this volume, describe *La Tela* as a form of community and care practice that constitutes an alternative to the competitive logic of neoliberalism. The experience of the community in *l'Asilo*, as Chiara Cucca and Angela Dionisia Severino explain, was fundamental in shaping this process.

COVID-19 has revealed a global need to create more sustainable forms of economic development that encompass, at their core, environmental awareness, quality of life, long-term vision, and social justice (Bogner et al. 2020). The *Rockability* project, presented in this publication by Silvia Quaranta and Alfonso Raus, is an interesting example of how economic development can be designed following a participatory approach that encompasses a wide range of actors and aims to satisfy the needs of different groups. Silvia Cafora then

described how cohousing can be a basis for the creation of a new ecosystem capable of including both local communities and external participants. Tourism, in this case, is not just a way to exploit Italy's rich artistic and natural heritage or to gentrify small villages but can instead be used to revitalise communities and experiment with artistic spaces. Olinda Curia, Stefania Dal Cucco, Michela Rossato, and Silvia Sette, in their report on the project presented in this book, highlight that this requires the co-construction of participatory spaces that can meet the needs of tourists, artists, and members of the local community alike. Furthermore, the project's educational mission aims to extend the benefits of the project to future generations, giving them new skills and knowledge.

It is evident that the pandemic has had an impact on every aspect of human life; this is particularly true for cultural and civic participation. It must be noted that participation can be used for a variety of purposes: Bonet and Négrier warn about the risk of participation becoming a demagogic tool or a way to make distinctions between professionals and amateurs. They also recall, however, that participation can "reinforce cultural action and policy" (2018, 71). Europe must seize this opportunity to rethink cultural policy as a way for people to engage in meaningful participation, express themselves, relate to each other, collaborate, and imagine a better society. Participation in culture, therefore, does not merely mean 'showing up', which could happen at an exhibition, a play, or a concert, but rather 'taking part' in discussing and shaping the meaning of common goods that should guide public policy. This point is further reinforced in the chapter written by Cozzolino and Parenti, in which they identify the need for a kind of participation that is not mere consultation but is in fact a stable, institutionalised network that includes a variety of actors. This is not easy: as laid out before, it requires an intensive labour of care that often goes unrecognised (Belfiore 2021) together with time and resources. As stated in this publication, though, what is most needed are open and receptive governmental bodies and creative approaches to law and policy. This is at the core of the call presented in this publication by *l'Asilo*, *Intermittenti Spettacolari*, and *Coordinamento Arte e Spettacolo Campania*: a series of inclusive policies that can foster cooperation and participation from the bottom up, enabling people to create and pursue their own cultural opportunities. Indeed, *l'Asilo* is a perfect example of how participatory approaches, combined with collaboration from local government, can bring about innovation in cultural policy and create a blueprint

for future organisations. The work of organisations like *l'Asilo* should be supported by innovative programmes that value the collective and participatory nature of commons, and which also foster the exchange of different kinds of knowledge. In this sense, the Van Gogh Programme proposed in this book by Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado is a clear and feasible example of how this kind of policy innovation can happen at the EU level.

Reforming cultural policy is only one step on the path to a fairer and more sustainable future: structural inequality must be addressed in a holistic way and requires a radical change in the way we think about development. Participation is not only essential to arts and culture but rather to all aspects of public policy. Nevertheless, as O'Brien argues, cultural policy must face its own internal dilemma: aiming to make positive a change in society whilst maintaining the status quo. The pandemic has demonstrated that maintaining the status quo is not only unsustainable but impossible; for this reason, finding viable alternatives is more urgent than ever. This change can only be achieved by listening to those who deliver the impacts promised by cultural policy: artists, cultural workers, grassroots organisations, community organisers, and informal networks. These actors very often do not have the voices or the power of large cultural organisations, but, more often than not, they are the ones who know communities and their needs, and who are able to imagine and implement new ways of carrying out artistic and cultural activities whilst making the most of very scarce resources. It is essential to involve them in the creation of cultural policy not as tokens but as experts and to create new frameworks that can cater to their needs. This can be a starting point for finding new answers to O'Brien's question (2019, 142) and for re-imagining new purposes for cultural policy.

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Bios

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Coordinamento Arte e Spettacolo Campania is a free subject based on active participation, whose aim is to radically reconsider the principles on which the current system that regulates the work of the Arts and the Performing Arts is based.

Adriano Cozzolino is a PhD in International Studies. He currently works as a post-doc researcher at Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" and is the director of the research centre and think tank Center for European Futures. He authored the monograph *Neoliberal Transformations of the Italian State: Understanding the Roots of the Crisis* (Rowman & Littlefield) and co-edited several volumes about European integration. His research articles have appeared in journals such as JCM: Journal of Common Market Studies, Globalizations, New Political Science, Participation and Conflict, Interdisciplinary Political Studies.

Chiara Cucca (b.1995) is an activist, performer, and theatre organiser. In 2018, she entered the Accademia del Teatro Stabile under Renato Carpentieri. Since 2020, she has collaborated on the design and conception of the output *Rockability*. She is responsible for the organisation of the BEstand Collective and the performer Angelica Bifano.
Olinda Curia is an architect. In 2020, she participated in the PropArt

master's degree in Interactive and Participatory Design promoted by the IUAV in Venice. She is the head of IN3CCI educativi, a company that deals with participatory design, network weaving, education, and communication. She is active in the social and associative field.

Margherita D'Andrea is a lawyer and PhD scholar at the University of Naples Suor Orsola Benincasa. She investigates the paradigm of "collaboration" between capitalistic exploitation and collective action in urban and natural resources. She also focuses on creative commons, supporting artists and cultural "spaces of alternatives." She is an international observer and member of the executive committee of the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights. Her articles and essays are accessible at https://na.academia.edu/MargheritaDAndrea.

Stefania Dal Cucco has a degree in Communication from the University of Padua. She works as a cultural operator in the Fondazione Teatro Civico, where she carries out many Audience Development projects, which are directed mainly at young people. She is a facilitator of community projects and plans and coordinates fundraising strategies and actions. She is currently earning her Masters degree at the IUAV University of Venice as part of the ProPART programme.

Andrea de Goyzueta is an actor, theatre producer (president of the Tourbillon Association and member of the artistic direction of the historical production company Ente Teatro Cronaca Vesuvioteatro), operator, and cultural activist (member of the Permanent Observatory of Common Goods of the city of Naples).

Maria Francesca De Tullio is a PhD in constitutional law at the University of Naples Federico II and was post-doctoral researcher at the University of Antwerp – Commons Culture Quest Office. Her main research areas are culture, political representation and participatory democracy, Internet law and legal tools for urban commons.

Intermittenti Spettacolari is a group of men and women working in the Performing Arts who came together spontaneously during the lockdown to work on many critical aspects of our situation, present and future, with political contacts, media initiatives, and events.

Martina Locorotondo is a doctoral researcher at the Centre for Urban Research on Austerity (CURA) in the Department of Politics, Peo-

ple & Place of De Montfort University, Leicester (UK). With an education background and work experience in Art History and Museum Studies, Martina is currently carrying out a PhD project that holds together her interests in Grassroots Art Practices, Urban Studies, and the Commons. Specifically, she is looking at the urban dynamics in Naples as a contested arena between processes of touristification/privatisation and the experimentation of the commons.

Giuseppe Micciarelli is a political philosopher and legal sociologist. His studies focus on the commons, political theory, and transformation of institutions in contemporary governmentality. https://unisa-it.academia.edu/giuseppemicciarelli
He supports many different social, artistic, and political experiences around the world with the "creative use of law" methodology in order to enable their action and legal translation with innovative tools. He is also an advisor for several cities and local authorities concerning participatory process and urban renewal. Currently, he works at the University of Salerno, and he is the president of the Permanent Observatory of Commons, Participatory Democracy and Fundamental Rights of the city of Naples.

Federica Palmieri, Jessica Parola, Marco Sallusto Palmiero, and Roberta Tofani are an independent research group formed during the first lockdown in March 2020. Adopting an interdisciplinary outlook, the group's aim is to critically interpret the transformations of digital societies and innovate social research through mixed and digital research methods.

Benedetta Parenti got her PhD in Cultural Economics from the University L'Orientale of Naples and currently works as a post-doc researcher at the University of Basilicata. She has participated in several research projects in the cultural domain and works as consultant for the valuation of public policies. Her interests of research are mainly related to cultural economic policies and education. She has co-authored some papers which have appeared in international scientific journals such as International Journal of Tourism, Research, Quality & Quantity, Applied Economics Letters, Land Use Policy, and Higher Education Policy.

Alfonso Raus is a trainer, a civic activist, and an expert in and animator of participatory processes and network relations that foster active roles for citizens and local communities. He has developed research actions and projects in the fields of risk and environmental

sociology, constructive transformation of collective conflicts, and participatory and deliberative democracy. For over thirty-five years, he has coordinated and facilitated participatory practices concerning environmental policies, civil risks, sustainable development, and, recently, participatory regeneration of unused spaces and assets, including those yet to be valorised. He actively collaborates with public administrations, third sector organisations, and, in particular, the Association Cittadinanzattiva Umbria.

Silvia Quaranta is co-coordinator of the Rockability project, together with Alfonso Raus (see above)

Michela Rossato graduated from the Disciplines of Arts, Music, and Performing Arts programme at the University of Bologna. She carries out cultural planning and programming in the Municipality of Valdagno (VI), where she began working in 2008, before training in Audience Development and Engagement. Rossato currently attends the ProPART Masters programme at the IUAV in Venice. She works on co-design projects that incorporate various players into participatory processes, whereby they develop an increasingly attentive eye towards a collaborative cultural design approach that involves the community.

Silvia Sette is a scholar who attended the ProPART Master – IUAV University of Venice in theAcademic Year 2020.

Angela Dionisia Severino is an actress, dramaturg, and circus trapeze artist. A graduate in Agricultural Sciences, she dedicated herself to theatre with the need to integrate agronomic and environmental content into performances and narrations. Specialised in Commedia dell'Arte, she has been carrying out cross-cultural research on masks for years, specifically on the feminine in the mask of Pulcinella. She works as a theatre trainer, collaborating with the University of Coimbra and other Italian universities. She has experience as a clown, puppeteer, and figure theatre performer.

Maria Pia Valentini was born in 1990 in Benevento and transplanted to Naples in 2008. A former dancer, she has a degree in Philosophy and has worked in the performing arts since 2009. She has been a production secretary and personnel manager at the theatre production Ente Teatro Cronaca for five years and a resident at *l'Asilo* for seven years.

HEALING CULTURE, RECLAIMING COMMONS, FOSTERING CARE

A PROPOSAL FOR EU CULTURAL POLICIES

Since 2020, the pandemic and closure of cultural venues across the EU have made the precariousness of the sector even more evident. In response, the commons have been arenas of transformation and communities of resistance for social relations and culture, "as a way to create empathy, give voice to the voiceless, overcome social distance and the emptiness of public spaces".

"Healing culture, reclaiming commons, fostering care" presents the cultural policy proposal born from a participatory research within the community of l'Asilo (www.exasilofilangieri.it), conducted between May 2020 and May 2021 by a research team composed of academics from different disciplines, artists and activists, in connection with social movements.

The reflection starts from an experience of commoning to suggest bottom-up actions and recommendations for the European Union to give voice to commoners and workers themselves in cultural policies, promote inclusive decision-making and guarantee support for groups made even more fragile by Covid-19. The theory is enriched by examples of grassroots empowerment such as La Tela, a collaborative digital artwork, and the artist residencies in Roccaporena, as a project of social cohesion and innovation to build an empathic connection between artists and inhabitants in the internal areas.

Such proposals question us and act as a bridge towards a sustainable cultural production capable of fostering principles of cohesion, equality and solidarity.

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