Common Ground

European Cultural Foundation

Europe Day 2021

Content

PHOTO Quintin Lake

BACK TO THE FUTURE? NEIN DANKE

"How to write a magazine editorial in the middle of a generational crisis?" This was the question I asked myself in last year's edition and somehow the question has not changed.

We are in the 3rd or 4th lockdown and it feels like a never-ending Groundhog Day. Spring is delayed, in terms of weather and general mood. At the time of writing, 650,000 people have died from corona in the EU alone (excluding the UK, which would have increased this number by another 130,000). We know that the corona health crisis will be over at some point. But this 'some point' seems to be a shifty affair.

We are tired. We have somehow adjusted ourselves to this permanent emergency. We bake, do handicrafts and frequently change the Zoom background of our home office. Will we miss this when we are sitting behind our analog office desks fully vaccinated. Will we? At some point the corona time may be glossed over by nostalgia. We discovered a resilience we did not know we had, we helped each other, showed remarkable solidarity, watched Netflix, stood in line at the bakery, met friends and colleagues for walks in the park or even for a lockdown beer. May this be the corona time we remember. But let's all get vaccinated first.

This magazine is not about the last days of corona but the future we ought to build out of it. What can we learn from the last one and a half year? What can we do better and how? There is much talk about the New Normal. Can you still remember the Normal just before corona hit? Trump looked confident to win his second presidential term. Despite the Greta Thunberg impact and all the talk about climate change CO_2 emissions had reached another peak. California was burning yet again. The new European Commission looked little inspirational while Brexit reached its sad finale. The immediate Normal before corona should not be our reference point as we look into the future. So, what about the 'new' New?

There is plenty New in this magazine. This is intentional. We will read about the case for a Cultural Deal for Europe, may get inspired by the idea of a new European Bauhaus movement. We believe the time has come for a whole new chapter of European philanthropy. We see the future being imagined in European Pavilions springing up all over Europe. Challenges cry out for new solutions. This is what The Europe Challenge is about, a new initiative in the works with the libraries of Europe. We are ready for the future.

Further in this magazine you will discover European moments of hope, resilience and solidarity, why black lives matter, why we must not forget about Belarus, what the new Gospel means for Europe and what the sisters of Europe have to say about the independent media. You will not find only one but four photo essays. That's four times more than in our last edition. Finally, there is a short story on life in lockdown, just to remember it before we move on.

I do hope you will find inspiration, hope and fresh ideas in these pages and a thirst to make the future together with us. We are counting on you.

André Wilkens
May 2021

A Cultural Deal for Europe

An Overarching Framework to Put Culture at the Heart of Our Common Future

There might be something in the tone and manner of speaking that places the cultural sector in a world apart. It seems like we have forgotten that the difficulties the entire cultural ecosystem is going through are shared with many others. There is a need for culture to get out of its niche and convince itself first that, in addition to being a specific sector, it is also a necessary vector for the social bond.

We know that a comprehensive recovery of our societies needs to include a cultural dimension. Culture is what brings us together. It is at the basis of collective projects and shared memory. It is key to hold communities together and to determine how the future of our societies will look like.

Tere Badia

The gravity of the pandemic proved again that culture cannot be reduced to either a service or product, but is the fertile ground on which to jointly build cohesive, equal, diverse and sustainable societies. COVID-19 has accelerated trends and exacerbated weaknesses of Europe's social, economic and cultural ecosystems, including income losses, growing precariousness, inequalities and social fractures. If we do not act decisively together, the effects will be devastating and long-lasting.

Culture is, fundamentally, a process nurtured collectively. It exists as part of the wider environment and it is anchored in interdependence between artists and society. Just as social and economic conditions determine cultural practices, culture needs to be in a dialogue with the lives we live. Recognising this interconnectedness of culture with politics, systemic thinking and social tissue are crucial. A holistic strategy is needed, as the cultural dimension cannot be forgotten in tackling societal, environmental and economic challenges that need transversal and multidisciplinary responses.

For these reasons, we are convinced that Europe needs a new Cultural Deal, an overarching framework-in-progress that should demonstrate the EU's political commitment to place culture at the heart of the European project.

The Cultural Deal for Europe has the ambition to be a political message in the first place, as was the Federal Writers' Project that U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt included in its post-Great Depression New Deal across the Atlantic. Today's Cultural Deal for Europe is a call from a wider European cultural community to acknowledge the pivotal role of culture in shaping the future of our lives in common.

The Cultural Deal was first presented on 18 November 2020, during a high-profile online debate with the participation of, among others, the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth Mariya Gabriel, the President of the European Parliament (EP) David Sassoli, the Chair of the EP Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) Sabine Verheyen, the French Secretary of State for European Affairs Clément Beaune, and the President of the Committee of the Regions Apostolos Tzitzikostas.

President Sassoli opened the event, echoing the call of Europe's cultural ecosystem: "[We need to] think [...] of culture as a pivot for recovery, in particular for the green and digital transition, but also as the social cement of a post-COVID world that needs to be rebuilt," he said. According to him, culture and the arts bring beauty and 'poetics', a creative force that animates us and allows us to live together. "It is through culture that we can advance the European project," French Secretary of State Clément Beaune echoed.

Against this backdrop, the Cultural Deal for Europe aims at fully including culture in all support schemes and recovery and resilience plans developed at European and national level, **by endorsing the strong call coming from the European cultural ecosystem to** dedicate a fair percentage of the recovery envelope to culture.

It also aims at acknowledging the contribution of artists and cultural workers to the European project. This could be done by reconsidering their social and legal status, but also by going beyond the sectoral perspective and including cultural approaches and voices in the main EU decision-making on programmes and policies, as well as in the Conference on the Future of Europe, tasked to rethink what the EU does and how.

"To show the power of culture, we need a unified cultural sector: we need collaboration, cooperation, a common voice, common advocacy strategies," said Sabine Verheyen. "We have to work together on the common narrative in order to be able to convince Member States to see culture as a strategic investment," Mariya Gabriel agreed.

The Cultural Deal for Europe wants to mainstream culture across all policy fields to fully realise its potential: from the green transition to Europe's geopolitical role, and from the digital shift to a value-driven Union. In this regard, the New European Bauhaus – the Commission's initiative to make the Green Deal a cultural project and bring it closer to the citizens – could provide a promising platform for imagining and co-creating the key features of the way we live together.

It brings together both short-term and long-term perspectives. It eyes the immediate recovery of our societies, with the ambition to build a new paradigm for our collective future. It wants to provide an umbrella strategy for reviving and reshaping Europe through culture, which will be the only way out from the pandemic crisis, leaving none behind.

The Cultural Deal for Europe should put culture as a powerful catalyst for the future of the European common project, which will indeed be not about going back to what we were used to, but to imagine new ways, paradigm shifts, and new answers to old and new challenges.

For the reasons stated above, it is not just a new request for public support for culture, or even a specific sectoral claim. It wants to be a call to recognise the interdependence of all human activities and the recognition of the cultural aspect of any collective effort in the construction of a common future. In light of that precise complexity of the cultural dimension of human activities, only a comprehensive Cultural Deal can sustain the way out of the crisis.

The Cultural Deal for Europe is jointly proposed **by Culture Action Europe**, **the European Cultural Foundation** and **Europa Nostra**, also representing the European Heritage Alliance. Follow the #CulturalDealEU online and engage with the campaign.

The New European Bauhaus

A New Cultural Project for Europe?

"The European Green Deal – the transformation path to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 – is not just an environmental or economic project: it needs to be a new cultural project for Europe". With these words, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, introduced the New European Bauhaus as a new ambition to bring Europeans together in shaping better places for a better living together in harmony with the planet.[1]

The New European Bauhaus is about joining forces from all parts of society to co-create solutions to the global challenges at the scale of our daily life, our neighbourhoods, our villages, the places where we live and our ways of living. At this scale, all of us can contribute to the transformation that can improve our lives. At this scale we can cross perspectives, imagine and implement transformation projects which improve sustainability, bring more inclusion and respond also to our aspirations beyond functionality or efficiency: aesthetics, sense of belonging, meaning and a whole range of dimensions which we value as part of our quality of life.

Achieving our climate goals will require for sure sizable investments, technological development and innovations in many fields. The New European Bauhaus will explore how to mobilise the construction ecosystem and the built environment to reduce our emissions. It will stimulate innovation and bring new ideas to the market, scale up promising solutions and technologies and look into the opportunities linked for example to nature-based building materials and circularity. These dimensions are fundamental to get an impact on the ground, and for the physical renovation and transformation of our living and working places.

The potential is huge as 40% of the European energy consumption comes from buildings.

If we want the Green Deal to be a success, it also has to be an inclusive and socially just project. The New European Bauhaus will have to secure that beautiful and sustainable solutions become affordable for all. It's not about having stylish and sustainable housing solutions for the happy few at the centre of our rich cities, but about broadening these solutions also to more deprived neighbourhoods and rural areas. The New European Bauhaus is also about living together across generations with an ageing population as well as with people with disabilities. These dimensions are fundamental to secure the social sustainability of the transformation.

However, beyond the physical and social sustainability dimensions, the mind-set will be key to drive the transformation. This is about our visions and behaviours as much as our capacities: What new pact do we wish to reinvent with nature? What lifestyle and underlying socio-economic model do we develop to bring both environmental and social sustainability? What brings us together and how do we wish to build on our diversity? These are cultural questions. The way we will answer them in shaping our neighbourhoods and villages will also largely define the future of Europe. As we are longing for getting back together after the COVID-19 pandemic and engaging in a deep recovery process, and as we just initiated a Conference on the Future of Europe, the New European Bauhaus initiative brings culture at the forefront of the European agenda and its green and digital transitions.

To reflect on all these dimensions, the New European Bauhaus has started with a design phase: an invitation to participate in a broad multidisciplinary conversation. The European Commission is collecting hundreds of inspiring examples, of ideas and visions as well as of challenges associated with the development of beautiful, sustainable and inclusive places. This is a way to better understand what people value and what their aspirations and main priorities for this new initiative are. This will contribute to shaping the concept of this new initiative that the Commission will present after the summer.

Keeping people at the centre, the New European Bauhaus wants to connect the creatives with the scientists and engineers; the students with the experienced professionals; the technology with the craft; the public authorities with businesses; and the social economy actors with the third sector.

At a time when the cultural ecosystem is deeply hit by the COVID-19 crisis, we have already noted a strong mobilisation of the 'creatives' (artists, designers and architects), as well as of the cultural organisations and institutions. Many of the organisations applying to become official partners of the New European Bauhaus are also coming from the cultural and creative sectors. Their contributions underline how the fine balances that the New European Bauhaus aims at require participation and imagination, dialogue and vision, community and originality. They also illustrate how cultural dimensions can be weaved into local transformation projects bringing values at the forefront, creating space for encounters or revisiting local heritage, craft or materials as elements of a shared sense of belonging?

Across the EU, cultural actors are already taking an active part in the communities engaged in the transformation of places, to accompany and, at times, stimulate or even provoke a change of the mind-set and to contribute to the laboratory where our future living together is being co-created. We invite them to continue spreading the conversation about the New European Bauhaus at all levels from local to European, to create bridges with communities, universities and scientists, businesses and policymakers, and share the emerging ideas to nourish the design of the initiative.

In doing so, they exemplify the role that culture can play in shaping the future of our lives, as advocated by the European Cultural Foundation and other European leading organisations in the field under the concept of a 'cultural deal' for Europe.

After the design phase the delivery phase will follow. We will further refine the New European Bauhaus concept in the light of the contributions received and the conversations held. We will also devise a support framework, piloting different support measures building on the diversity of existing EU policies and instruments. The objective will be to have a concrete impact on the transformations of places across Europe, the transformation of the construction ecosystem and the associated markets as well as the transformation of the mind-set. The objective will also be to grow and support the cross-disciplinary community of the New European Bauhaus, connecting people and projects, knowledge and experiences across Europe and progressively at a global level.

Culture has a crucial role to play in these transformations and we are happy to see that cultural actors are already active in the New European Bauhaus Community. This is certainly one of the best ways to ensure that the New European Bauhaus will succeed in making the green deal a new cultural project for Europe.

1. State of the Union address by President von der Leyen, European Parliament, Strasbourg, 16 September 2020.

Philanthropy for Europe

The Best Way of Predicting the Future is by Inventing It

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown what many of us might have deemed impossible: the entire world brought to a standstill, economies and societies of all sizes and models deeply affected, and millions of individuals who feel exhausted and powerless in the face of the devastations that the virus is causing. We need courage, determination and perseverance to get out of this crisis and rebuild our societies. Together and better.

Initially, government responses to the pandemic were slow, tentative and uncoordinated. And as with many issues, European media and citizens blamed the EU for what felt as a cacophony of voices and actions. But then, twenty-seven heads of state and government pulled together and agreed to a historic European recovery plan ('Next Generation EU'): an unprecedented €750 billion of loans and grants in frontloaded financial support. Together with the EU's budget 2021-2027, it totals €1.8 trillion, making it the Union's largest stimulus package ever financed. Member States are now preparing their recovery- and resilience plans, setting out reforms and investments to implement before 2026. Involving civil society, among which foundations, in these choices and their implementations is of crucial importance. Their resources and proximity to the field add knowledge and value to the package, while helping to rebuild Europe for and with its communities and citizens.

Philanthropy also responded to COVID-19 like to no other crisis in recent history. A **McKinsey report** estimated that philanthropy in Europe had committed more than €1.1 billion by May 2020, mostly geared towards emergency relief and general support of struggling non-profit partners. Foundations were also quick in adapting their modus operandi allowing for greater flexibility and adaptability when it came to activities, deadlines and financial allocations. In the spirit of European solidarity, a community of 186 foundations from 32 countries signed **a pledge committing to support their grantees and partners** in the most meaningful way, notably by responding to their immediate needs. Living in an 'age of perma-crisis' in which one crisis seamlessly follows the next, the question arises whether these practices will become part of the 'new normal' of foundations. It seems obvious that new and recalibrated instruments and mechanisms are needed to ensure the most effective responses.

These extraordinary public and philanthropic interventions are as much relevant as they are needed, but much more could be achieved, also in the long run, if public, private and philanthropic actors would commit to strategic cooperation. This can entail very different forms and fashions, from co-granting, shared loans, aligned funding and pooling of capacities, networks and resources to the launch of a new European public-philanthropic matching fund and the generation of new money. Our times need new thinking and innovation, both within the public and the philanthropic sector. Working together instead of next to each other, and as strategic partners instead of complementary funders, would mean more money and impact and would open new grounds for Europe.

The foundation sector – private money for the public good – in Europe amounts to a €60 billion budget annually, but there are only a handful of European and some national foundations that engage in European cooperation and exchange. Philanthropy for Europe remains unchartered territory. Why is this and what can be done about it? ECF and Allianz Kulturstiftung commissioned the study ***Imagine Philanthropy for Europe*** looking at definitions, obstacles and opportunities for philanthropy in Europe and for Europe. The study analyses the reasons for the lack of Europe within foundation practice and aims to steer debate within the larger public realm. It is great to see how the topic gains momentum, both within the public and civil society sector.

The findings in a nutshell: There are legal and tax barriers to cross-border philanthropy, which the **Transnational Giving Europe network** and **DAFNE (Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe** are determined to abolish. Also, there are language and competence barriers. But the main obstacle seems to be the lack of belief that foundations have a role to play with regards to Europe. The biggest part of them act on local, regional and national level. While Europe has transformed so fundamentally and rapidly in the last seventy years, philanthropy has remained foremost responsive to local needs or engaged with international agendas.

Europe is overlooked and seldomly addressed as foundation priority. As a result, the EU did not factor in philanthropy as a credible and strong partner in its strategy to help Europe back on its feet. Although there is expressed political interest of some of the most dynamic and open-minded politicians and bureaucrats, there is not yet a European plan bringing public, private and philanthropic actors together to jointly take on the challenge and develop together new funding instruments and methods. There is a 'hope gap', a gap between being aware of the situation and doing something about it.

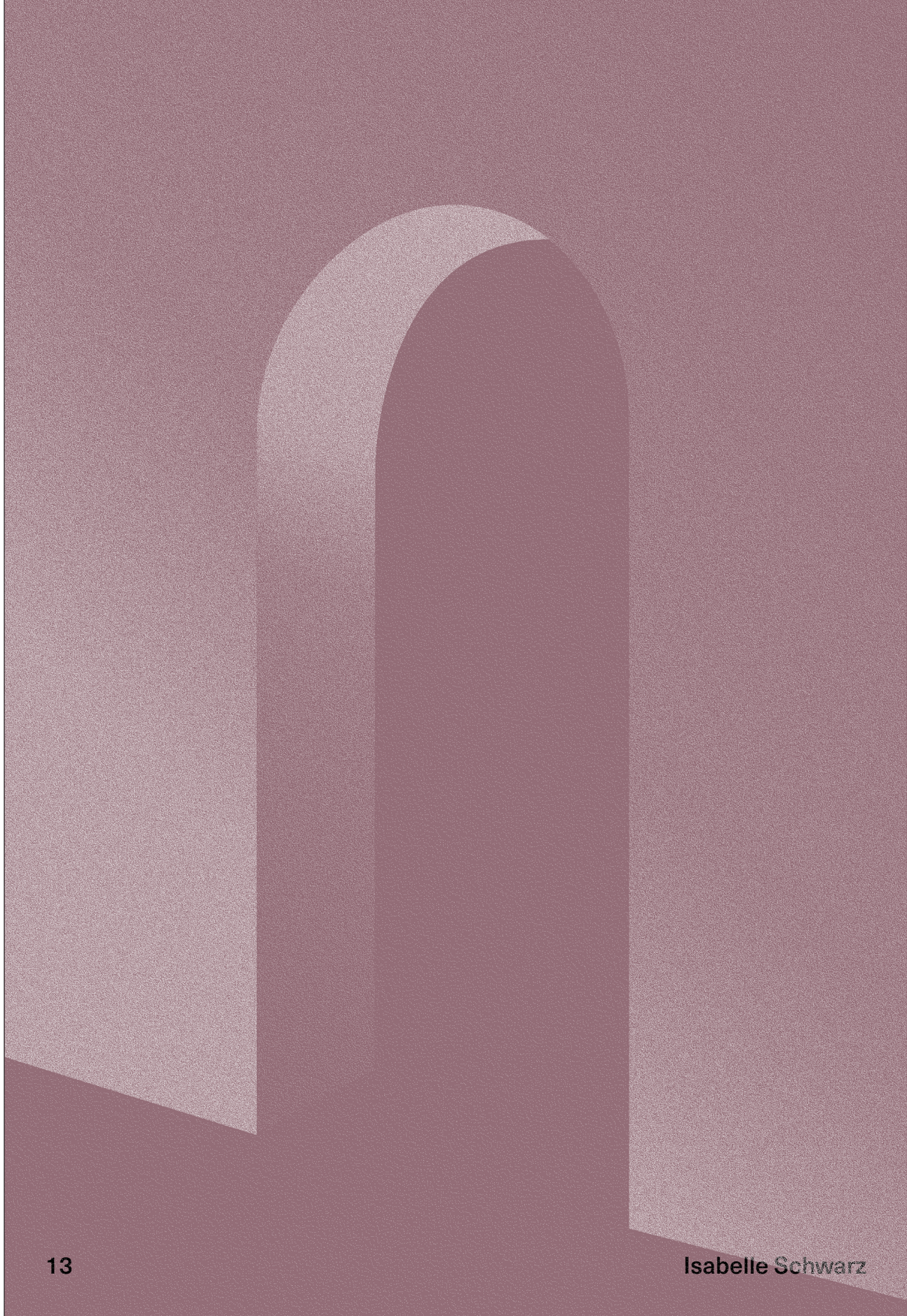
Something needs to be done. The corona crisis could become the EU's moment, and foundations' call to commit to our common ground, Europe. And maybe this new European partnership model – as part of the **Cultural Deal for Europe** which thousands of civil society actors across Europe are calling for – will be quite different from traditional cooperation models. And this is good. In order to stay relevant and valued, the EU and philanthropy need to address the big issues of our times together.

An **EFC survey** has shown that for the vast majority of foundations collaboration has been the key throughout the pandemic: collaboration within foundations themselves, collaboration with other foundations and collaboration between foundations and their grantees. The extra mile to go is more collaboration across sectors and innovative collaboration with the EU. This would require a cultural shift with the potential to lead to groundbreaking new initiatives, like a European public-philanthropic matching fund. In

this spirit, ECF launched right at the beginning of the pandemic, in March last year, the **Culture of Solidarity Fund** to support actions of solidarity in times of lockdown and uncertainty, bringing partners from the public and philanthropic sector on board. So far, six foundations have joined the Fund. The EU has much welcomed the initiative, but not yet joined the partnership.

Maybe a pilot multi-stakeholder fund can become an integral part of the EU's recovery plan and future European Agenda. The EU would get more out of its money and foundations scale their work while using their knowledge of the local context to ensure recovery funding is spend rapidly, effectively and unbureaucratically, in ways that really benefit the people of Europe.

The long-term effects of this pandemic will resonate for decades to come. We need to overcome cultural, institutional, legal and technical obstacles to working together. Where there is a will, there is a way. Let's be daring and forward-looking. Let's stop predicting obstacles and start inventing solutions. The future awaits to be made.



The Inner Circle

Gert Verbelen

The Inner Circle is my quest for the essence of Europe. For me that meant: Not the Europe of tomorrow, but the Europe of yesterday, the Europe we all came from. Many of the places I visited are still alive in the stories family members tell each other, but not so much in real time. Many of these geographical centres of the countries of the eurozone have seen middle-aged persons leave. It's the elderly and the young families who keep these places alive. These are places people leave, not places people flock to. I did not prepare my visits, did not do much research, even though I had to book a bed and breakfast or arrange for couchsurfing. But I wanted to act like I would have been dropped, blindfolded, in another reality.

The realities in these places are never the same, but the reactions of inhabitants sometimes were. It happened to me regularly inhabitants would call me the Belgian fool, walking their streets. "Nothing to see here," people would say, "it's the next village you can find something special." It did not occur to them I was not looking for something special. I was looking for the banalities of everyday life, the colour of bricks, the changing lights, the backyards, the villagers in their surroundings. I tried not to focus on finding templates, but on the uniqueness of each place.

In 2015 – during the so-called migration crisis – many media were asking, again, what it means to be European? There was and is a certain fear of the globalised order, of the speed of change. In many villages one could sense the feeling of not having boarded the high speed train towards promised futures. But I did not come across many who envied life in the big cities. People were happy with their lives in their own manmade surroundings, including their slow internet or their villages being hardly accessible with public transport. I also encountered clichés I thought only existed in tourist guides: the bearded old man drinking Guinness in Ireland, the pétanque players in France, but these were no advertisements, this was real. As real as the surprising fact how little English many Europeans speak.

During my stays in these almost forgotten villages, I would walk around, taking photos. Up to 800 a day. Because I did limit myself to staying with the village boundaries, I could return to spots on different occasions. In the evenings I would start making selections and in my dreams that process just continued. Many of the photos that ended up in the book were not selected on rational arguments but on the feeling they needed to be in. I hope they reflect what this project turned out to be all about: showing these places are as much the beating heart of Europe as the mirror palaces in metropoles.

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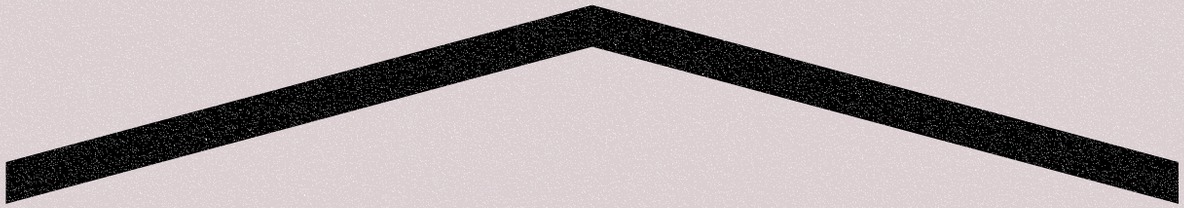

The European Pavilion is one of our newest programmes and stems from the conviction that we need a European art platform to continuously think and challenge what Europe means today and what it can be tomorrow.

THE EUROPEAN PAVILION

The European Pavilion: A Space for Experimentation and Imagination

"On the floor, amid faded brochures and labels, lie dusty extension cords over which we stumble. On the walls and ceiling, hang empty frames and old-fashioned projectors. Around us, a garden full of architectural peculiarities opens up, bearing the names of distant and familiar places: A concert of abandoned buildings, elegant, striking, overgrown with vegetation in a wild and calm environment. Seeking new beginnings in the rubble of this urban wasteland, surrounded by the sound of water, we ask ourselves: Is Europe in this ceramic tile? Is it in this copper wire? Is Europe to be found in the assembly of these rudimentary pieces?" **VENICE, 2091**

TIMOTHY SNYDER

"I love the idea of the Pavilion because it's permanent and it's not permanent. Sometimes you build things or pavilions and you never take them down. I also like the idea of a pavilion because a pavilion is necessarily inclusive of variety. What struck me about the idea of the Pavilion is also that it offers a form of protection. I think that the Pavilion has that virtue: that it can move things that were on the outside to the centre."

When one thinks of a European Pavilion, it is most likely the image of a physical building in the Venice Giardini during the Biennale that springs to mind – not the speculative ruin we have sketched in our imagined logbook of Venice 2091 above. The mental image of a building appears with good reason, as there is something terribly attractive and provocative about the idea of building a pavilion dedicated to Europe in a space that is known as a theatre of national representations. But very quickly we might wonder: in what other places could a European Pavilion cement itself?

IMAGINING EUROPE

The multiple crises unfolding before our eyes as the pandemic grips our continent compel us, as cultural practitioners, to open up a new European space for radical imagination. How do we imagine a Europe of the future? The European Pavilion is envisioned as a space or a shelter – to return to the essence of the term 'pavilion' – that invites imagination, wandering, experimentation, representation and dialogue. A space where we can ask important questions and begin to find, if not clear-cut answers, at least some initial paths. How should we deal with the crises we are experiencing and that we have created?

Where should this Pavilion, this space for experimentation and imagination, be situated if not in Venice? What do we want to say, in fact, with the European Pavilion? Is it a statement for an arts audience? Or should it be a symbol that can open up a critical and creative discussion beyond this circle?

If the essence of the European Pavilion, as imagined in the speculative logbook of Venice 2091, were to be found in a tile, would it manifest itself as a building? If it emerged from a copper wire, would it translate into a virtual environment? "It might look oceanic, with tides that flow in and out," novelist and essayist Rana Dasgupta suggests in the **European Pavilion Podcast**, describing his ideal European Pavilion. What if tides allowed us to "move things that were on the outside into the centre," in the words of historian Timothy Snyder, also a guest on our podcast, or "to go and find things far beyond the territory of Europe," as Dasgupta proposes?

A SERIOUS EXPERIMENT

The European Cultural Foundation launched the European Pavilion in 2020, initially as a thought experiment that has gradually evolved into a programme. This is thanks to the constant inspiration of our partners and advisors, our grantees – some of whom are featured in this magazine – as well as the contributors to the European Pavilion Podcast – some of whom you will hear from in this magazine too.

Through the European Pavilion, our ambition is to set up a pan-European programme, together with partners across the continent. After consultations with many individuals from different backgrounds and visions on the future of Europe,[1] it became evident that a single Pavilion could not represent all that Europe stands or strives for. A constellation of different pavilions shaped by a variety of partners in multiple local contexts across Europe would better reflect the essence and value of Europe as a diverse cultural community and a dynamic public sphere. Such a constellation would embody the European Pavilion that came as close as possible to the realities of the 21st century: one that brings together local and trans-local perspectives on Europe, and fuels imagination on the future of Europe amongst many diverse communities and audiences. This aspiration stands on the conviction that offering the opportunity to reflect on and envision our common future together is also a way to strengthen a common culture.

TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN PAVILION

In 2021, key partners Camargo Foundation and Kultura Nova Foundation will gather with experts from the arts, activism and academia sectors, and design values and shapes that the European Pavilion can have in their regions and with their communities. A text will be published that will engage a broader community of (arts) organisations and people across Europe to reflect and radically imagine a fresh European canon.

Rather than a static space for exhibition, our Pavilion should ideally be a flexible structure built for and shaped by reflection and experimentation; in other words, an "architectural object capable of disentangling itself from any specific function," as the collective EUPavilion, that we are supporting through our Culture of Solidarity grant scheme, puts it.

In this process of disentanglement, we hope to extricate the roles that Europe can play in building a better future, without fearing self-inspection and critique. As our podcast guest, philosopher Tristan Garcia suggests, "Europe could become this kind of space not defined by history but defined by the people who are there. Let's try to make the people define the space they are living in." Let's do that, together...

1 In July 2020, the European Cultural Foundion (ECF) brought together a group of arts professional and foundation representatives to reflect on what the European Pavilion could be and on which 'ground' (conceptually and physically) it should be built. The group included Anna Arutyunova (Head Pro Helvetia Moscow), Julie Chénot (Camargo), Stefania Coni (CRT Fondazione), Joseph Gaylard (Head of Pro Helvetia Johannesburg), Maria Hlavajova (General and Artistic Director of BAK), Timea Junghaus (Curator ERIAC), Lorenzo Marsili (European Alternatives/Rizoma), Simon Njami (Curator), Samuele Piazza (Curator, ORT), Adama Sanneh (CEO Moleskine Foundation), Madeleine Schuppli (Head Visual Arts, Pro Helvetia) and Dea Vidović (Kultura Nova).

EUPavilion

Through its 2020 Culture of Solidarity Fund, the European Cultural Foundation granted a number of cultural initiatives for work that resonates with the ambitions and visions of the European Pavilion and gave us much food for thought. The EUPavilion collective and the work it is developing around the question of the relationship between the European Union and architecture is one of these initiatives.

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EUPavilion is a laboratory of research on the relationship between architecture and the European Union. Its goal is to spark a discussion around the institution of a European Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The laboratory is working with a number of partners organising public events, educational activities and publishing essays and interviews. Its current main project is the organisation of an exhibition that brings together ten emerging European architectural practices to formulate a project for the first European Pavilion in Venice.

The Pavilion – an architectural object capable of disentangling itself from any specific function – is seen as an ideal testing ground to investigate the possible features of a (new) European architecture as well as to examine the language of the institutional buildings of a supranational structure such as the European Union.

At a time when traditional understandings of the role of monuments and architecture in our cities are under scrutiny, the EUPavilion project seeks to create a space for fresh reflections on the often-contested relationship between institutions and architecture. The exhibition – distancing itself from the authorial approach that sought recognisable interventions and symbols and dominated architectural production for decades – takes the form of a collective and multidisciplinary reflection on pressing issues of identity and spatial politics. On the other hand, an answer to the long-standing debate on the physical manifestation of the European Union within its cities is still pending, and the so-called 'iconographic deficit' of the EU remains a major interference to the construction of a project of relevant collective value.

As a prelude to the forthcoming exhibition, EUPavilion was invited in summer 2019 to run a design workshop at IUAV University in Venice on the very same theme. A group of 30 students were invited to imagine the new European Pavilion inside the Giardini della Biennale.

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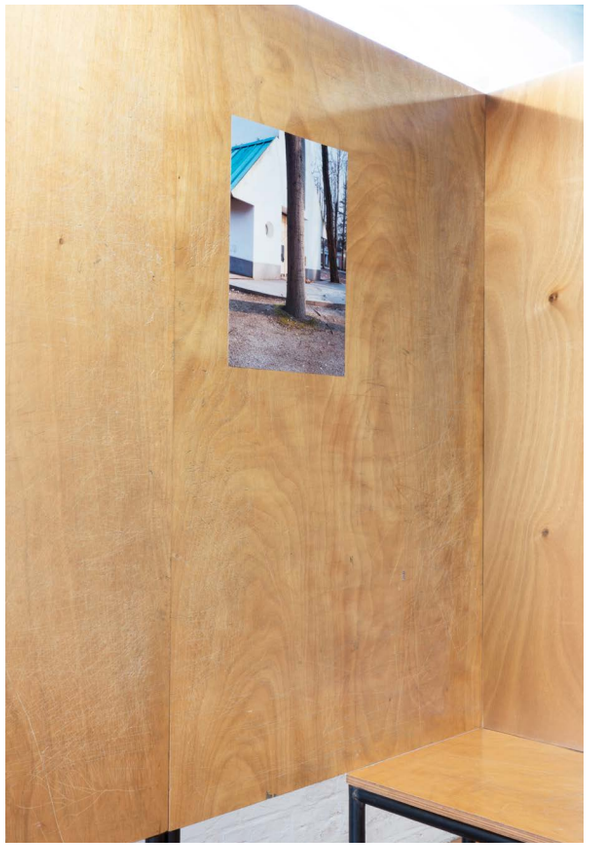

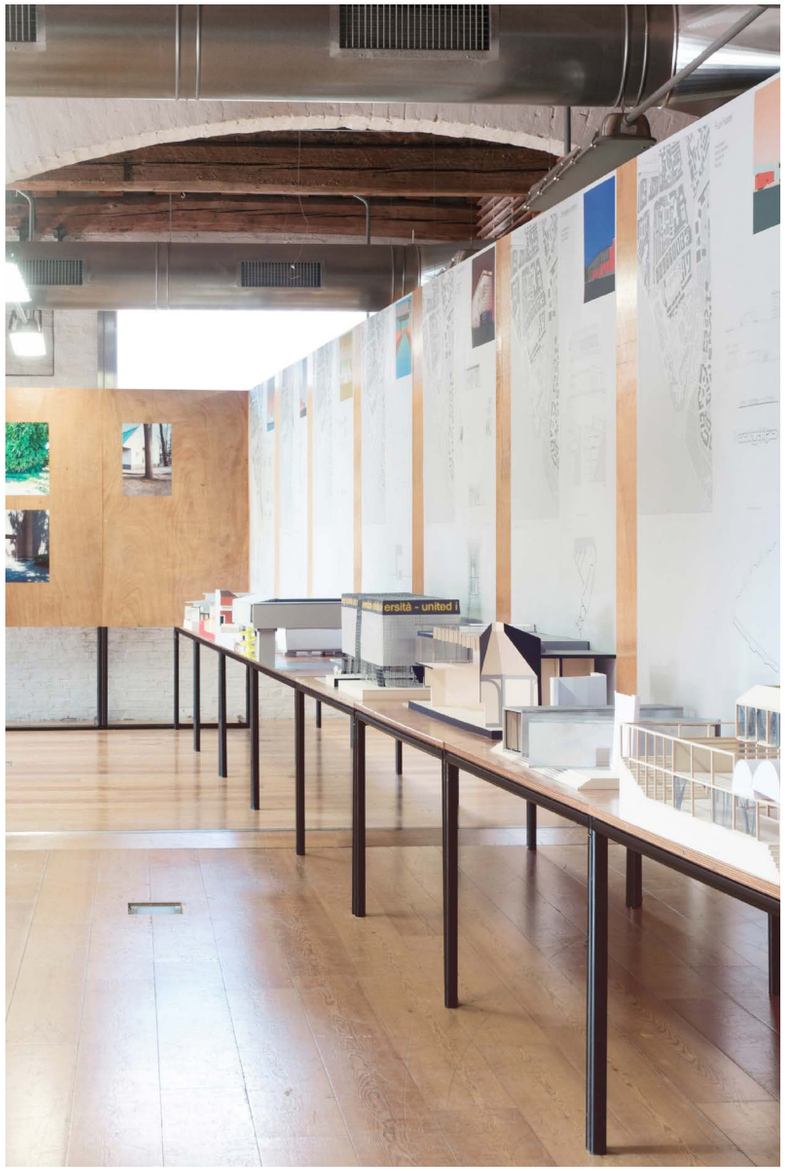

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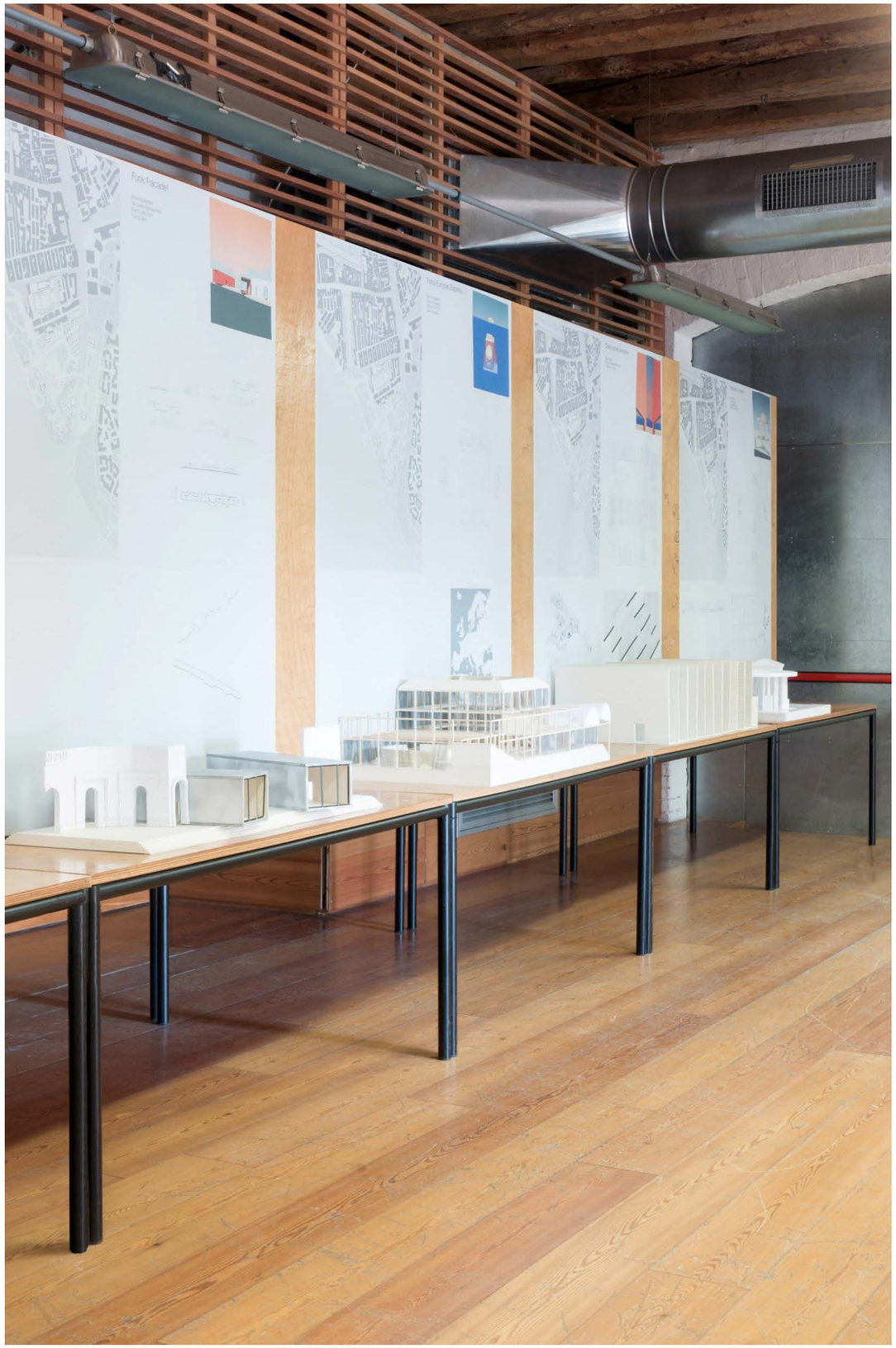
1–7 Supervoid+Friel, EUPavilion workshop at Iuav Wave 2019 Summer Workshops



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European Pavilion Podcast

ZAMZAM IBRAHIM
“The role that the European Pavilion can play is to call out some of our ugly truths, because to overcome them, they need to be right there in front of us. [...] It would make people uncomfortable regardless of their background because they will see something that has been hidden away, but on the other side of it, there are the solutions: there is the world we want to see and we need in order to survive. Climate justice plays a huge part in this.”

LARA GARCÍA DÍAZ
“I think the Pavilion could be understood as a structure from which to coordinate diverse needs and urgency: both the ones that you can detect but also the ones that emerge during the construction of the structure itself. In a sense, this idea of learning by doing.”

In the run-up to the launch of the European Pavilion, conversations with personalities from the worlds of arts and culture were organised and edited in a series of podcasts that question but also propose what a Pavilion could be: Where could the encounters, learning opportunities and communal activities that a Pavilion strives for take place? The podcast also discusses what a European Pavilion could mean as a tool for formulating a desirable future for Europe: a future that builds on a strong heritage, but repurposes it so as to foster inclusion and sustainability.

During the winter of 2020, **the European Pavilion Podcast** was launched with a series of episodes that discuss topics that resonate with Europe today, including post-national imaginaries, representation, public space and ecology. We started our series by addressing Europe’s relationship with the model of the nation-state. This led us to later look at issues of citizenship and inclusivity. Such issues directly point at the way we relate to each other and perceive each other, and they invite us to consider the very space we inhabit and share: in our latest episodes, we thus discuss how public space is imagined and constructed as well as in relation to nature.

The truly inspiring guests who contributed to the podcast so far include novelist and essayist Rana Dasgupta, researcher Lara García Díaz, activists Zamzam Ibrahim and Joci Márton, mammalogist Tim Flannery, philosopher Tristan Garcia, artist Joanna Rajkowska, and historian Timothy Snyder.

On the following pages, we publish two edited versions of our conversations with Tim Flannery and Joci Márton.

On Public Space, Ecology and the Lands of Europe

Tim Flannery is one of Australia's leading writers on climate change. An internationally acclaimed scientist, explorer and conservationist, he is the author of the book *Europe: A Natural History* (2018), which is an invitation to view modern Europe through its natural history.

A Conversation with Tim Flannery

TIM FLANNERY
"I would make the Pavilion experiential for people. It is possible we could walk into a soundscape or some sort of virtual landscape of Europe of 100 million years ago, and then 50 millions, and then 25 millions, and then 5 millions, and then onwards a hundred years ago, 5 years ago; and then 200 years into the future."

EUROPE AT THE CROSS-ROADS OF THE WORLD

LORE GABLIER: What is striking in your book is the way you describe Europe as a place of hybridisation: you even use the word *métissage*. Hybridisation, *métissage*: these are words that tend to be perceived negatively. Can you explain why hybridisation is so fundamental for Europe and perhaps reflect on the political implications this may have?

TIM FLANNERY: Hybridisation has been occurring in Europe at a very rapid rate through its history because Europe is a crossroads of the world. Species from Africa, Asia, and in the past, even North America can meet and mix and, if they're sufficiently close, will hybridise and create often stable new forms of life and new species. Hybridisation has a negative connotation for some people, but as far as I know, hybrids are very vigorous and fit, and often better at surviving.

In terms of politics, the lesson that I take away from this is that the rhetoric in Europe about racial purity or environmental purity is unhelpful. It's dangerous. It's not the way Europe has been created. Europe has always been about change and hybridisation. It has been this land of creative destruction, of change, of hybridisation, of geniuses arising from exposures to new ideas and new ways of thoughts.

If we go back to the essence of what Europe is, we see that racism has no place in Europe. So, I would just ask people to go back to their European roots and to say: What is it that makes this continent such a great power in the world, even if it's a small place? What is it that can continue to make us leaders in the world? And all those ideas come back down to a simple decision: Do we let refugees in? if you look at what Europe is, you would say: Of course! Because Europe would benefit from this, Europe would grow and become more diverse and more wonderful. And yes, it would be painful for a time: it always is; the process of creative destruction is always like that. But in the end, it's what makes Europe what it is.

That process of hybridisation, of constant challenge and creative destruction, has created a very dynamic continent. The Europeans seem to me to be always thinking a little bit ahead of the world. The European Union is one example of that: the way it brings everyone together seems to me to be the future of global politics. I think the rewilding process that really started in Europe is again the future of our planet. We know that we have to do this process of rewilding because, otherwise, we will face irreparable damage to the fabric of the living earth that supports us.

PUBLIC SPACE AND WILDERNESS

LG What is the process of rewilding and why is it of such importance? What does it mean for Europe?

TF Rewilding in the European context means restoring the biodiversity that is necessary for Europe's ecosystem to function in an optimal way, and not to keep on losing some species. All ecosystems need large herbivores and large carnivores, and some diversity to keep going. In Europe we see rewilding today focusing on species such as the giant forest wisent – the European bison; maybe bringing back the ancient European horses. It's a fascinating experiment. What it will mean in a long term is that Europe will be restored in a very meaningful way. The ecosystems of Europe that have been so devastated by people for thousands of years can be made to function properly again.

LG How do you understand public space and how to approach it from the perspective of wilderness? What is the link between public space and wild space?

TF I think, as Europe starts its rewilding process, we need to think a lot more about what is public and private. I don't have the answers but this is a question for future Europe. It is a question for young people to think deeply about. Europe has had this tradition of the commons: they're not really public spaces because everyone has ownership of something in the commons. Someone might have the right to collect mushrooms; someone else would have the right to put cattle on for a certain time. I think rewilded areas are going to be extremely environmentally diverse and, if you take that general model, it fits much more comfortably in the commons concept rather than into the concept of private ownership. As Europe rewilds, we see some issues arising, for instance, regarding wolves. But Europeans will have to come to terms with a social architecture that allows wolves and nature to thrive alongside them.

We have to think carefully about what we do. But also, we have to understand that, in the longer term, we have to work with nature. Because, unless we work with nature, we will end up creating what I would call unsustainable and suboptimal systems that don't reflect the natural glory of a place like Europe. So if I was European, I would want to start gently crafting landscapes of rewilded areas. I think you have to see this as a great ongoing experiment. Some things would work. Other things would not. But take pride in the fact that Europe is the very first continent to do this and will be the very first to take this on and show the world a new way to live sustainably with nature, and not against it. It's a huge contribution that Europe can make to the world.

IMAGINING EUROPE

LG **In your book, when you give the example of the *Oostvaarderplassen* in the Netherlands, you say that, for many people, this nature reserve born from a process of rewilding does not correspond to their romantic idea of natural Europe and its pastoral landscapes. It seems to me that one of the tasks ahead is also to overcome a certain ideological perception of Europe. How should Europe be perceived?**

TF Europe is extraordinarily diverse as a landscape. In the past, it was probably even more diverse. If you look at a place like *Oostvaarderplassen*, it is not a forestal environment because the soil is so rich that herbivores can exist in vast numbers. But if we would create an equally sized reserve in Germany, in particular where the soil is not so good, we might have fewer herbivores and more forests, and a different mix of animals. So let's treat this as a great experiment: let nature guide us rather than our preconceptions or our aesthetics.

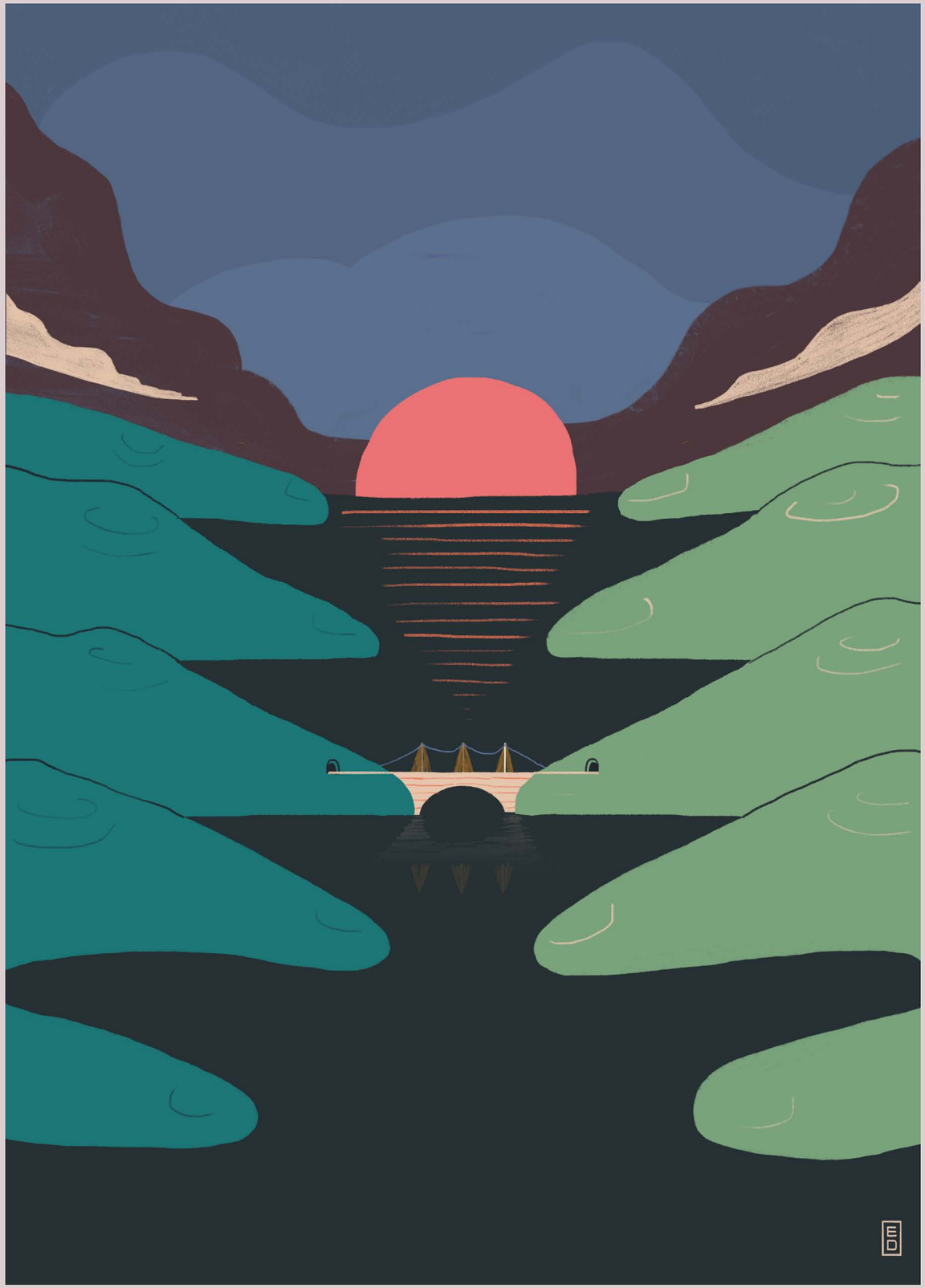
I personally see the future of Europe as this wild place. You are going to have most of the forests, and the elephants and the lions, long after they have gone out of Africa, because Africa is going to have a population of four billion people, whereas Europe will have a population of way fewer. And you will have all the forested lands. I can imagine Europe in the future being an archipelago again: an island of cities, separated by these great tracks of wild forests. And the young Europeans will go hiking in the forest to learn and have adventures, and take tourists to see the wildlife.

LG **How would you yourself imagine the European Pavilion? What would it look like?**

TF I would give almost no space to nations but I would give a lot of space to regions, and to history, and to nature. I would want to have a Pavilion prompting people to ask: What is Europe? We use the word all the time but no one really thinks about what makes Europe special, distinctive. I would make the Pavilion experiential for people. I don't know how we would do that, but would it be possible to do it as a soundscape or some sort of virtual landscape of the Europe of 100 million years ago, and then 50 millions, and then 25 millions, and then 5 millions; then 100 years ago; and then onwards 200 years into the future where Europe features great forests again, with European rhinos and elephants.

LG **It's interesting that you're bringing in the elephant here. The first time we spoke, indeed, you told me that people think you're crazy for wanting to bring elephants and lions back to Europe. You insisted that Europe has room for them, and I couldn't help but think of the well-known saying: the elephant in the room. What do you think is the real elephant in the room when we look at the future of Europe? What is there that we don't want to see?**

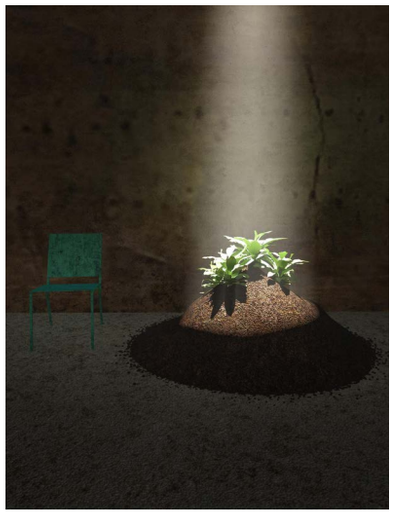
TF To me, the elephant in the room is the unconsidered attachment to only one version of Europe: the kind of vision that you find in children's books of Europe with little mice and little birds, which is adorable and lovely, but in a way, it is a diminished vision of Europe. What is holding back our imagination about what we think European nature is? People think they know Europe but they don't. They don't know that European elephants still survive in Africa.



The Forbidden Garden of Europe

Studio Wild

Another collective that the European Cultural Foundation supported through our 2020 Culture of Solidarity Fund is Studio Wild, a young Dutch architecture practice that endeavours to develop provocative designs to exceed the current boundaries of architecture. In their work, they operate on the border, in areas of tension between politics, architecture and nature, embracing complexity by working in a variety of disciplines, with a focus on the relationship between landscape and architecture. In what follows, they introduce their project *The Forbidden Garden of Europe*.



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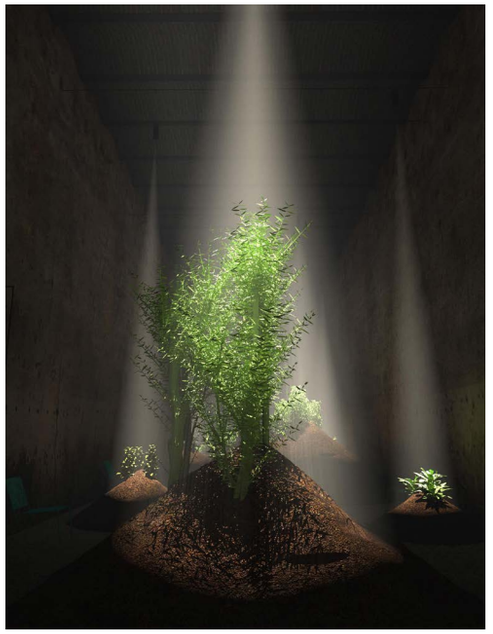
Studio Wild's exhibition space at the Venice Biennale Architettura 2021 will host a garden of 'invasive alien plant species', which have been listed for their ethnic and biological characteristics and pose a threat to European native species. The European legislative act from 2016 instated a list of 35 invasive plant species that are to be eradicated and banned from European soil.



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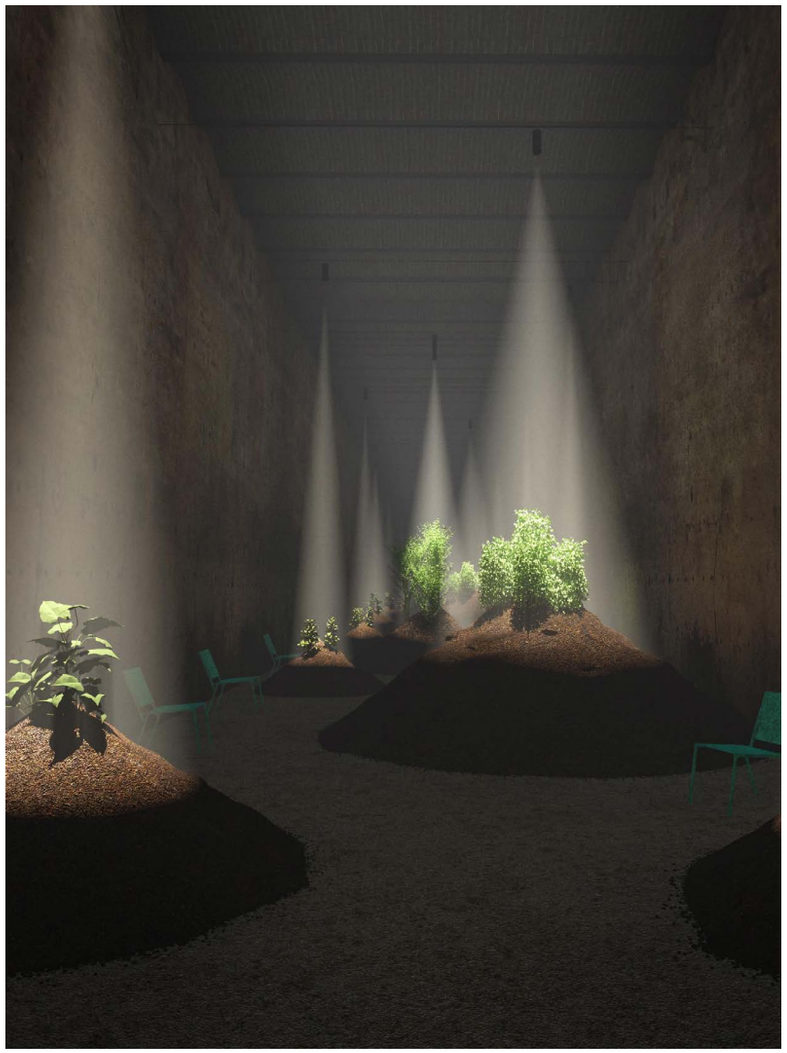

Using plants as metaphor, *The Forbidden Garden of Europe* sheds new light on politically charged topics and tells the story of 'invasive alien plant species' that are on a controversial list by the European Union. Based on their ethnic and biological characteristics, these species pose a threat to native European plants and are illegal to grow, trade and transport throughout the EU. Our aim is to create a parallel between the fate of these species and the fate of many of our neighbours who struggle to find common ground in Europe just because they are different.

We want to question this European legislation, and by doing so, provoke the discussion on whether spatial, legal and social restrictions contribute to a more inclusive society. As Voltaire put it at the end of *Candide*: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin." In order to change the world around us, we have to take responsibility for cultivating our own garden. With this notion in mind, we can investigate new ways of living together.

Rather than banning plants from European soil, we should try to cultivate coexistence in a post-COVID-19 society. This is the time to recalibrate ourselves and set course for future-oriented solutions. With *The Forbidden Garden of Europe*, we want to expand the notion of Europe as an open and shared public space for everybody during times of looking inward and making decisions based on nationalistic values.

1–3 Renders from *The Forbidden Garden of Europe*. Courtesy Studio Wild

Quit Speaking to the Centre

Joci Márton is a Roma LGBTQ+ activist from Hungary. After graduating as a teacher with a Romology specialisation, he took part in the CEU Roma Programme. In his work, he mainly focuses on intersectionality and identity politics. In 2019, he organised 'Owning the Game', a project developed in collaboration with the Roma LGBTQ+ community, with the aim of creating photographs and videos, as well as poems and other writings, that portray these communities with dignity. Joci is a founding member of *'Ame Panzh'*, an informal Roma group that broadcasts content on social media to change the public discourse about minorities and thematising current events through a queer-feminist Roma perspective.

A Conversation with Joci Márton on Representation in Europe

1–3 in order of appearance: Miki, Jana and Jóci. PHOTOS: András Jókúti. STYLIST: Anett Gálvölgyi & Márton Miovác: HAIR STYLIST; Márk Károlyi. MAKE UP: Tímea Vozák.

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LORE GABLIER: Representative democracy is based on the idea of citizen participation. While it is a model that has enabled the inclusion of a multitude of voices long excluded from the public sphere, it is also far from perfect. What are your thoughts on this? What does it mean for you to be represented and how does it relate to being present?

JOCI MÁRTON: It is possible to be present but not being represented. I think this is the experience of many of us who belong to a minority group, especially when you belong to an intersection just like me: I am a Roma man who happens to be gay. Growing up as a Roma, I never felt represented. You watch TV, you open a magazine, you see billboards, and you never see yourself. It feels like you simply don't count. In Hungary, we are completely out of media representation and yet we are 10% of the population. If you talk about Europe: we are 10 millions. There are countries that are smaller, so we should be really more of a factor. That's why I felt the need to focus on the representation of Roma LGBTQ+ communities and together with them, we produced photos and video material. I chose to name the project *Owning the Game*, which refers to the question of self-representation.

It is important to make a difference between self-representation and representation. For me, self-representation means that we are now the ones who decide what we are going to look like in pictures and videos in public space. When we talk about the lack of representation, we also need to mention the bad representation that comes from the fact that we are not the ones who lead the way we are portrayed. And it's not just about Roma people. Think about women: we can't say that women lack representation, but unfortunately, their representation has historically been led by men.

LG As you point out, raising the issue of representation and the lack of it, also invites us to consider the importance of self-representation. Could you elaborate on this notion?

JM Self-representation from a minority point of view is almost impossible. I often feel that I can't get rid of the conception of the people of the majority. Many times, when we would like to talk about ourselves, we realise that we are seeing ourselves through a majority glass. This is what we need to consciously get rid of. One of the ideas at the beginning of my project was to decrease the stereotypes against my group. But then I realise that, if I went continuously against the stereotypes, there would be no space left to speak about myself. It is thus really important to distinguish between decreasing stereotypes and self-representation. They are both important but they need to be distinguished.

I think that the politics of representation are also connected to media representation. For example, when it comes to talking about Roma issues, there is no media representation, so there is no one to remind the majority to address these issues as well. The people of the majority have to influence politicians and check what they are doing for Roma communities. When you have a voice in the media, you can raise awareness of political realities. That's why I feel that more Roma should talk to the people as well as to their communities. When you look at how the government is built up, and by whom, you don't see Roma people. It's obvious that decision makers cannot represent our interests, and this needs to change.

I feel that nowadays, thanks to social media, our society became a little bit more democratic. On social media platforms, young Roma people started to be present and their followers are mostly their Roma peers. I can say the same about people with various disabilities: they also found a way to reach their public through social media. But it doesn't change the fact that we are excluded because it is the mainstream media that has the power to make you count. All the acknowledgement goes to the inventive young minorities who try to make the most of the available tools. But I also feel like we are creating little ghettos online. At least, we can claim a little platform, but it's not something that we can be satisfied with.

LG How should we approach the question of representation from the perspective of Europe?

JM I have a European identity. But I often feel that Roma people can only feel this if they travel. It's really hard to feel this European identity and togetherness if you have never left the place where you live, when you don't speak languages, when you don't have friends from other countries. That's why, when there is a political party advertising itself with a European feeling, I feel like they're talking to me because I am a middle-class man who travelled and saw the world. But what about people who simply don't? For me, it's really interesting to think about how other people can be involved in this Europeanness: how they can feel it.

LG In your imagination, what could the European Pavilion look like and what shall it address?

JM I imagine it in a way that is really inclusive. I imagine that it is going to be more as a mirror of real society. Sometimes, we tend to think that the representation is a mirror of our society but it is simply not: so many people are not represented. I would say that the European Pavilion should be brave enough to bring up topics that we don't want to discuss. When I say that we need to be brave, I mean that we need to stand for our values. If we really think of human rights and democracy, we need, as we say in Hungarian, to quit *középre beszélni*, or 'speaking to the centre'. We need to take a stand and that's what I would like to see.

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JOCI MÁRTON

“I imagine the Pavilion to be more as a mirror of real society. Sometimes, we tend to think that the representation is a mirror of our society but it is simply not: so many people are not represented. The European Pavilion should be brave enough to bring up topics that we don’t want to discuss.”

Words from our Partners

Camargo Foundation, based in Marseille, and Kultura Nova Foundation, based in Zagreb, are the very first partners in 'building' the European Pavilion as a pan-European initiative. Here is what they have to say about the European Pavilion...

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JULIE CHÉNOT, DIRECTOR OF THE CAMARGO FOUNDATION

LG What is the context you work in and why is Europe relevant?

JC In my early twenties, I moved to Beijing. It was the early 1990s and China was starting to slowly open up. On a personal level, it was while working in a very different cultural context that I felt commonalities in European culture and realised how I strongly belonged to Europe. Those first eight years of my professional life, working in a Chinese organisation – mainly on China and Europe cultural exchanges – made a strong mark on me. Since then, I have always been involved in multilateral cultural collaborations. I moved back to France in 2007 to work for Marseille Provence 2013 European Capital of Culture on its European and Mediterranean dimensions.

Now, I am the Executive Director of the Camargo Foundation. It is a residency centre for artists, scholars and thinkers in Cassis, France, on the edge of the Mediterranean sea. The Camargo Foundation was founded in 1967 by Jerome Hill, an American artist and philanthropist. This was his former house that he developed after World War II as a place for creativity and freedom of experimentation – inviting artists from the USA and Europe. I was hired to develop the programme and open it up to be both grounded in this area as well as internationally. The European dimension was an evidence.

Considering the history of the site, its location on the Southern edge of Europe and the current challenges the world is facing, this was a perfect place to think, create and reflect together on today's world and imagine possible futures. This kind of reflection should be done at different levels. Obviously to be grounded at the local level is key but also a broader level is needed. Europe is the right level with the richness of our histories, our diversities and our commonalities.

LG Why is the European Pavilion an interesting idea and how would you like to collaborate on it?

JC Since European institutions were established after World War II to prevent further conflict and to create some international cohesion, the economic agenda and the creation of a common market have defined its identity. Over the last seven decades, the tensions between national supremacies and the enlargement of the European Union have contributed to Europe's fragility. Today more than ever, with European unity being threatened by COVID-19, Brexit and other political and social tensions, Europe as an institution is at risk in a period when it is really needed to face current challenges – from climate change to increased social inequality and more broad systemic change.

The essence and value of Europe as a wide and diverse cultural community and a dynamic public sphere are not acknowledged. The idea of a Europe based on solidarity, mutual respect among people and cultural cooperation across borders and differences, where citizens feel they belong to a common demos, is struggling to take shape. Europe has failed to build a European imagination powerful enough to influence the way Europeans negotiate, exchange and interact with each other and the rest of the world. This is probably partly due to the fact that we confuse Europe and the European institutions.

At this stage, building and sharing various European imaginaries of possible enviable futures would be an important contribution to the process of rethinking Europe. Hence, this could become the European Pavilion.

We are currently working with the European Cultural Foundation on inviting a few thinkers from different disciplines to exchange and develop a framing text proposing common ground for the Pavilion concept. It should be open to various questions and the invitation should be extended to help germinate imaginations. Each Pavilion will then be able to provide possible answers based on their specific locations from within Europe or beyond.

LG In your dreams, what would the European Pavilion look like?

JC A few years ago, Thomas Bellinck came to Camargo to prepare the second edition of his performance installation *Domo de Eŭropa Historio en Ekzilo* ('The House of European History in Exile', translated from Esperanto) presented at the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée–MuCEM in 2018. It is set up in the second part of the 21st century and it tells of the failure of the European dream, described in objects, cards and recordings that chart the long disintegration of the EU. Each visitor has an inner encounter in time and space with how the history goes and what we are at risk of losing. And it ends with a bar on the rooftop of the MuCEM facing Marseille and the Mediterranean, where the bartenders were scholars and activists and in which informal discussions would take place about the importance of Europe. This work was really powerful and reminds each visitor of the value of Europe and the need to act now.

I would dream now of a series of Pavilions in different locations within Europe and outside Europe, in urban and rural areas. This is a constellation that would have commonalities but each individual Pavilion would be a sparkle of the European Pavilion programme. Each Pavilion would address its own local specificities about what could be a European horizon and dreams could spread out from there. It should be of

1 Scholar-in-residene, Camargo Foundation, 2019 © Sarah Farid

artistic and intellectual quality but inclusive. Invitations to other Pavilions could be extended to ensure connection and exchange between the constellation. The constellation should start with a few sparkles and grow organically.

Physically they should be different from a physical building – becoming a more open and natural space. More than the physical form, it is important for these Pavilions to be a welcoming space for diversity – just as Europe should be.

DEA VIDOVIĆ, DIRECTOR OF THE KULTURA NOVA FOUNDATION

LORE GABLIER: What is the context you work in?

DEA VIDOVIĆ: The question of context is always a complex one as it could be grasped from many angles and perspectives. Croatia is a post-war country – a country that belongs to the third wave of democratisation, and the last Member State that joined the European Union. Those are the factors that have had a profound effect on the frame of reference within which the Kultura Nova Foundation is working.

We can pragmatically categorise this frame of reference in three main strata – the national (local specificities), the regional (South-east Europe) and the pan-European context. As a public body dedicated to providing support for civil society organisations in contemporary arts and culture, our work is strongly focused on observing the working conditions and framework for functioning and development of civil actors in a specific cultural niche of contemporary arts.

Those organisations in Croatia have a very important role. The importance of their role pertains to introducing new themes, modes of operation and production, redefining values and broadening the cultural debate horizon with political and critical perspectives, raising awareness about sensitive issues and announcing new tendencies in Croatian socio-political reality marked by post-transitional vulnerable democracy, and perpetual economic crisis.

Parallel to this, civil society organisations (CSOs) are facing continuous budget cuts at the national and local level, as well as the declines of physical spaces for their activities. Despite the strong potentials that CSOs have for development of cultural programmes, artistic concepts and collaborations, these organisations have been systematically driven to the threshold of their financial and organisational endurance.

project logic work in the civil sector has taken its toll on the professionals that work in this sector. Consequently, the CSOs have been chronically exposed to unstable, project and non-standard working conditions, and the state of crisis is their permanent state followed by social insecurity. Kultura Nova has been counterbalancing this situation by providing support for CSOs' work and has matched their commitment in instigating positive changes in cultural policy provision, becoming a relevant institution on the local and regional level with distinctive resonance on a European scale in providing multidimensional perspectives and critical approaches in debating and contributing to cultural policy change.

The change that is needed encompasses systemic responses to the vital issues of instability, precariousness and distress that civil society actors are continuously exposed to. In this respect, the local, regional and European contexts merge into common aspirations, needs and goals that are slowly being achieved through collective action on all geographical scales – creating new forms of cultural policy and governance that is more emphatic, responsive and encouraging.

LG Why is Europe relevant?

DV The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has exposed the political, economic, social and cultural vulnerabilities of Europe. The list of traditional impediments has been expended by a new one, creating a variety of emergencies across the continent – from climate change, rising xenophobia and nationalism to increasing inequalities, political populism, migration crisis, rise of illiberal democracies, deficit of democratic institutions, shrinking public spaces, division among European elites and European common people, failure of cultural democracy and intercultural dialogue, to physical distancing and restrictions for public events, closing borders, health crisis management, economic crisis, etc.

The current global crisis makes the weaknesses of the existing economic and political system visible but it also calls for the reconsideration of our own positions and roles within the socio-political system. The current times are the pinnacle of a long-overlooked necessity to rethink Europe as a relevant political, social and cultural structure – Europe that wouldn't be divided and polarised across nationalities, religions, genders, languages and all other political, economic, social and cultural differences. As one of the most developed continents, Europe should fulfil its promise to be a place where the principles of social solidarity, human rights, freedom, equality and tolerance are standard for all citizens of Europe.

LG Why is the European Pavilion an interesting idea and how would you like to collaborate on it?

DV The idea of a European Pavilion converges cross-border and trans-local perspectives that address the way people, institutions and media feel and view Europe. The European Pavilion is a fluid and open public space where people can meet, discuss, exhibit, and imagine different experiences and views. It is not envisaged as just one Pavilion, but many that would grow across Europe. A variety of forms, sizes and territories would better reflect cultural diversity in Europe.

Through our collaboration within the European Pavilion, Kultura Nova will bring the voices of our specific national/local and regional perspectives to the European scale. Collaborating with Teodor Celakoski, Iskra Gešoska, Šejla Kamerić, Višnja Kisić, Goran Tomka and Ana Žuvela, we will be exploring the future modality of European Pavilion(s), which will not be an exclusive and elitist permanent zone but a trajectory of European diversities, zones of participatory practices that engage numerous actors – especially those who have been previously marginalised. They will be zones of exchanging and sharing between peripheries and centre, zones of strategic cooperation between sectors, disciplines and territories. Together with the five collaborative platforms in Europe, that are made up of 53 organisations from 16 countries, and are supported by the Kultura Nova Foundation, we are also going to explore the future of European Pavilion(s) according to the needs of those cultural actors, and the possibility of extending the Kultura Nova Grant Scheme for Collaborative platforms in Europe within the European Pavilion.

LG In your dreams, what would the European Pavilion look like?

DV One of the most inspiring aspects of this initiative is the contradiction between the name and the initial idea of European Pavilion. In its name and traditional form (pavilion and even European) there is nothing new and interesting. As we all know, the current cultural system is significantly represented by a rigid, bureaucratic and hierarchical form of organisation that is built on discrimination regardless of social class, age, nationality, gender, religion, etc. But considering the initial idea of a European Pavilion as a potent platform for decolonisation and de-elitisation of the dominant culture in Europe (i.e. a platform for emerging forms of transnational collaborations, sharing and exchange of variety of marginalised voices), we hope that the European Pavilion will become a promising and emerging support scheme and initiative – a platform where diverse voices unite, where different discussions are led, where continuously challenging views are joining in and where new knowledge is produced.

We see the European Pavilion's greatest potential as being the space of changing a dominant narrative and connotation of ingrained meaning of words, notions and concepts without creating new terminology and a new world. In that sense, the European Pavilion can become a compelling policy change-maker.

MEDIA

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Sisters of Europe

Sisters of Europe received a Democracy Needs Imagination grant from ECF. The project was among the eight finalists of **Advocate Europe, the European Ideas Challenge** by **Mit-Ost**, and was a shortlisted for the **Prix franco-allemand du journalisme 2020** as well as the European Press Prize 2021.

“How I hope people will look back at the series Sisters of Europe in ten years? I hope that they’ll get a good insight about what it was like to be a European woman in 2018-2019. That they’ll see the incredible diversity of feminism in our small continent at a crucial moment: the post #MeToo era. Besides, there are excellent interviews, the photos are great, and maybe even the design turns vintage cool in ten years. Mostly I expect that the hard data – like the gender pay gap or the percentage of women who hold public office – which are mentioned next to the interviews are outdated.”

Across two seasons Sisters of Europe mobilised over 70 reporters, photographers, graphic designers and others to tell the story of women in today’s Europe through 27 interviews with 27 women from 27 countries, four debates in four capitals and an online summer campaign. Along with her cross-border team, Prune Antoine aspired to build a kind of time-capsule for future generations. Not one of those superwomen who are portrayed in legacy media, not one of the women who are portrayed as victims, but women with a goal. From Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg to Belgian transgender MEP Petra De Sutter or Italian astronaut, Samantha Cristoforetti. On the website of the project it says: “Our 27 ‘sheroes’ are famous and unknown, young and old, activists and astronauts, miners and politicians, but they all share a common goal: change. We want to shed light on new voices, new faces and new visions to document where women stand in today’s Europe.”

“Because we are living in times of fracture, in an era of redefining roles on what it means to be men and women. #MeToo may have been an incredible liberation of women’s speech but look at Poland, look to Eastern Europe where some autocrats who are using anti-feminist rhetoric to gain votes. In these times of turmoil we are going through, I believe most people feel afraid and are looking for something to hold on to, like the good old patriarchal values. In this time of confusion, retrograde values seem to gain popularity. To me, having grown up in France in the 80s, it still seems unconceivable that a woman cannot decide over her own body. I want women to have a choice for everything. I thought we had achieved abortion rights long ago, and that we would never have to discuss that matter again. When I think of Poland or even Germany, where abortion is depenalised but yet still not legal, clearly, I was wrong. Or take the protests against same-sex marriage in France a few years ago or the way domestic violence is still not taken seriously by police or judicial systems. Plus, there is clearly a conservative backlash in Europe with some catholic lobbies like Ordo Luris pushing another agenda! Not to mention that this pandemic represents a major threat for gender equality.”

“Sometimes when I’m reading an interview with a French MLF (Mouvement de Libération des Femmes) activist of the 70s, or I’m looking at a documentary about British ‘suffragettes’ in the twenties, I feel upset. Those women were at least as emancipated and determined as the activists of MeToo. Why is integrating women’s rights in the legal system so slow? Why isn’t there any European harmonisation for parental leave for example? History is an eternal repetition, and if we would much more look at what has been done or said, we would definitely understand that we need more action like introducing a gender quota for women in politics.”

“My biggest regret with this project is that its lobbying aspect was complicated to reach. Our initial idea [Prune started the project together with Greek journalist Elina Makri] was articulated around three pillars: first, to document the situation of contemporary women in an enlarged Europe, from Paris to Minsk; second, to connect with civil society in organising events in various cities and an online campaign under the hashtag #sistersofeurope to collect grassroots suggestions to improve women’s rights; third, to convey all the proposals we would have gathered online and in real life, to a political level in Brussels. We were in touch with the European Parliament committee on gender equality, to present the project and to try to push it as much as we could. But lobbyism is a full-time job that requires other qualities than journalism. And as a writer, I believe I can change more things with my pen and fight injustices or situations that revolt me by telling stories. Besides, I am too direct for playing political games.”

“I am confident one could duplicate the concept of Sisters of Europe with a lot of various topics, from climate change to pollution. Tell stories, raise your voice and take action. I think that re-empowering audiences is an interesting way to improve journalism and democracy too.”

“Being Labelled as a Feminist is Problematic for Me”

Marleen Stikker is an Internet pioneer and fights for a fair, open and inclusive online world. In a tech world dominated by men, she co-founded the Fairphone and set up the Waag Society, a research institute for creative technologies and social innovation. Waag is a partner in ECF’s Initiative for a European Public Space.

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LAURA URBONAVIČIŪTĖ: How did you get interested in technology?

MARLEEN STIKKER: I’m interested in how things work; what’s inside systems. If you present me with a black box, I’ll want to open and understand it. I studied philosophy which, in a way, is like studying the meaning of everything: how we understand the world, how it’s all connected.

In the mid-80s and for a long time, personal computers were there to help us organise ourselves. In a way, they were a democratic tool. But soon after I realised that technology has a meaning, it’s made for a purpose and there’s an intention to it. So I started working with artists. Exploring what technology is has been really fun.

LU What is it like to be a woman in the tech world?

MS It’s been an issue, of course. But when people start addressing me as ‘a woman in technology’, I stop wanting to engage with them. I don’t understand what the problem is. I *am* a woman in the tech world, but I’m not the only one, so why is it so special? I don’t just want to be seen in that way because ‘above everything’ I’m a person, a human being.

LU Do you think that the #MeToo movement affected your field?

MS A lot of strong women are defining the culture in the Waag Society. I think it’s quite open and multilayered. I was raised by a very independent woman; her strong sense of self is something she passed on to me. She always supported me in pursuing my dreams. For her it was normal to be financially independent, swim against the current and not fit in. It’s really nice to have that as my heritage, a way to identify myself.

LU Could you tell me a little bit more about your mother?

MS My mother got pregnant with me when she was still a student but that never stopped her, even if stopping was commonplace at the time. I wasn’t even one year old when she got divorced and she raised me on her own. Taking these decisions, being financially independent, only living with women, having lesbian affairs and relationships… Growing up, I didn’t know how to explain the fact that there were two women in the house. Some people understood while others just didn’t talk about it. Back then, I wasn’t officially saying that my mother was a lesbian; it was nice because it wasn’t a label. My mother never really came out of the closet because she had never experienced the closet, she was just living the life of an independent woman. Perhaps my feeling of not wanting to be labelled as a woman in the tech world came from the environment I grew up in…

LU Do you consider yourself a feminist?

MS I’m a humanist. Being labelled as a ‘feminist’ is problematic for me. We live in a democracy, I don’t see why it’s only women and not men who have to care about feminist issues. I also think that sometimes it’s hard for me to only identify with women. Not that I don’t like it, but it’s more about not being able to draw a divide ‘between genders’. I can see how being a man can be problematic as well.

What’s demanded of us, the way we’re raised, what is considered successful… What’s important to me is the value you, as a person, bring to the table. Maybe women are more equipped, thanks to their upbringing, to be the changemakers right now. Women have been excluded from economic and political systems, they’re probably better suited to see the problems ‘we are facing’.

LU Speaking of politics and representation: how do you see the role of women in Dutch society?

MS With regards to politics, financial institutions and workplaces, I think the system is still very hierarchical. ‘The Netherlands’ is a really great place to be, to build your career, pursue your dreams and have an impact. There are a lot of opportunities. But within all of that, there are still a lot of implicit power structures that are difficult to address or identify.

LU With these problems in mind, do you think the Internet can serve as a more inclusive, egalitarian environment? Or are we just placing old power structures into the cyber world?

MS In the Waag Society, we’re working towards making technology open, fair and inclusive. At the moment, the technology surrounding us isn’t either of those.

In the early 90s the Internet became a creative commons; it was shared knowledge, built by people coming together and talking about the best way to design the next steps. But ‘then’ the big companies came in. For the last 25 years, we’ve been warning people that this shared resource will become a market. A hardcore market. A large part of the Internet was developed by individuals looking for possibilities and sharing their outcomes. Now, 25 years on, we’re in an extreme situation in which all the technology we use can be intercepted, either by the state or by companies. It’s not just our privacy that’s at stake, it’s our sovereignty.

We live in a very strange world. What I love is that, given the extreme situation we’re in, politicians and lawmakers are finally understanding that what happened is neither helping democracy nor sovereign states. Still, I think it’s possible to reclaim the Internet’s social value, but we have to act – it’s not going to happen by itself. I think 2018 has been a game changer, but we’ll probably need another 25 years to solve these problems.

LU You advocate for consumers to take matters into their own hands and become makers, disrupt the current system. Could you elaborate?

MS There are different kinds of disruption. I love the kind of disruption that exposes hidden structures and narratives behind power.

Then there’s the type of disruption that Silicon Valley-type ventures are claiming. Disrupt, go fast and break things. We need to change that and make it more value-based; go slow and fix things. People believe in technology the way they used to believe in states or justice systems. I think we should be wary of that. It’s not the right kind of disruption because new power structures and belief systems are being built, sort of like a technological religion.

LU What do you think we should be focusing on in the future?

MS Right now, we’re optimising everything we do for humans whereas we should be thinking about other species as well. We’re neglecting non-human systems when we talk about our planet’s future. It’s a problem to think that, with all the technology we’re developing, we will be able to sustain life. It’s insane to think that our future lies in artificial intelligence or blockchain when the ‘carbon’ footprint of these technologies are terrible. We need to understand who we’re actually serving with technological advancements, who gets to define the direction we’re heading in and who is on the losing end of everything.

That’s something we realised when creating the Fairphone. We asked ourselves important questions like: How is technology being produced? What conditions are people working in? What is technology’s life cycle? What happens when it becomes rubbish? We need to think about technology in a more holistic way. I think that’s the biggest challenge in my field, and I’ve noticed that these questions only make up a small part of the story.

LU What do you think about the EU’s position regarding the Internet and technology?

MS I think the EU is looking for a place in the tech world, but it definitely doesn’t want to become Silicon Valley… it missed that boat. The EU doesn’t come close to the big 5. We can’t compete with them so we have to do something else. Silicon Valley’s hidden narrative is this idea that technology will one day replace the state and democracy. Meanwhile, China uses technology to enforce ‘good’ behaviour. So you could say that there’s room for the EU to use technology that’s in line with societal values.

We’re at a turning point. Populist movements are against globalisation and the EU is being pinned as a globalist, capitalist institution which creates resistance – both from the left and the right. Creating a new EU identity based on its value, translocality, could be an antidote. And that’s where the Internet is interesting; it allows people to organise themselves locally in connection to other places. Act local, think global, work transnationally.

This text was originally on Sisters of Europe.

1 PHOTO Brindusa Natasa

TEXT Laura Urbonavičiūtė Marleen Stikker

Social Movements and European Media

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Europa Reloaded is a podcast series re-loading the debate on EU-integration, starting off from the voices of social movements across the Old Continent. Alexander Ricci received a Democracy Needs Imagination' grant to produce the series.

Alexander already worked in European media, but felt he lacked immersive and inductive insights on social movements, which also shape our continent. "For we tend to cover social movements, by focusing exclusively on their antagonism vis-a-vis a system, and not on what they try to construct. And so I thought it would be good to find out more about the ideas that shape social movements and let them express themselves more freely." The first episode exemplifies this way of work. For that episode Alexander travelled to Athens to report on the ways in which local communities in Athens' Exarchia district were hosting migrants in so-called squats. "Exactly, because we might learn something about their specific local practices and at the same time about the systemic management of migration flows by the European Union."

During the making of your series, COVID-19 changed all, how did this influence Europe Reloaded? "Obviously, I couldn't travel anymore. So, you lose human interaction, you lose the opportunity to describe the places you visit, in short, it is harder to empathise with your subject. But the pandemic also changed the movements I was covering. The protests in Bulgaria for example were partly fueled by Bulgarians returning from abroad. Those returning were mostly young people who had emigrated over the past few years and came back late spring last year. It somehow created a huge potential for this kind of protests to explode in the first place."

"It me made wonder about our idealisation of freedom of movement in the European Union. For yes, it is great to move freely, but these migrations can also be a force working against having social movements, diminishing the concrete power to change nations. And don't get me wrong, I am not talking about a 'brain drain' here, but about the actual numbers of young people that have left countries. I think it's not wrong to assume that social movements are mostly fueled by the participation of the young who have time, energy, desire, who get excited by fighting for a better idea."

There are studies which claim there is not a lot of contact between protest movements in former Western and former Eastern Europe, but you seem to contradict this. "Partially, but it is especially the resonance of protests in Bulgaria, in Romania, in Poland, that is not big in former Western media. Maybe with the exception of anti-abortus protests in Poland, because these resonate with a cause others also demonstrated for. But I agree, the potential for cross-fertilisation of protesters and social movements across Europe could be bigger if specific actors in our societies would play not a better role, just a different role. I obviously refer to media. For it's astonishing to see how specific protests gain the cover page for a couple of hours one day, as if these protests would just happen on that day. The logic of our breaking news approach prevents readers to discover that it's actually been ongoing for weeks and months. The media never actually cover stories all along. And last year it didn't help many media were trapped in the monopolisation of reporting all things COVID only."

Then, Alexander, is there a European media? "There are two answers I would like to give to this question. No, there is no European media, as strong as many national media we have. We might see one in future. But I also answer with yes, as there are many small experiments going on, as **Cafébabel** or **Are We Europe**. There are generational aspects to answering this question too, even though I hate putting one generation against another, but it's just a fact that our generation speaks more languages. It's better positioned to interpret facts going on in other countries. It could help us break national stereotypes which we still encounter too much."

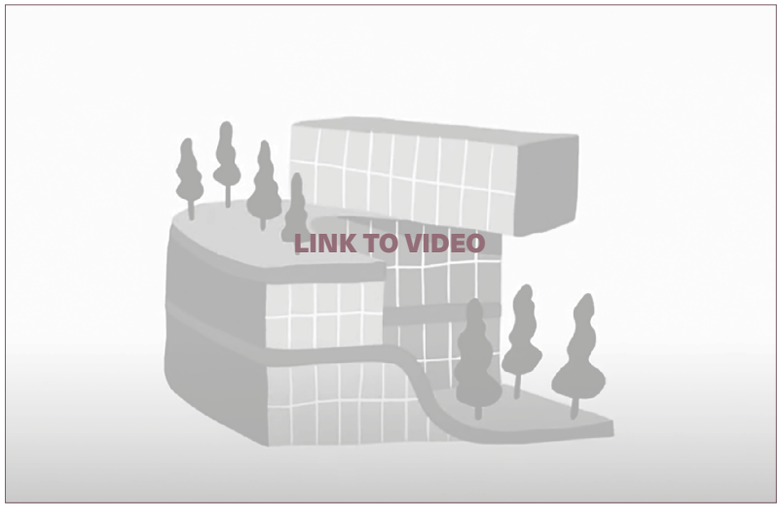
In one of the latest episodes of Europa Reloaded, you refer to social movements as a start-up of politics. You also mention a few in the media sphere, will these then grow up to become this new pan-European medium? "I believe much more in the networking of national media partners as a solution than in creating a new big European medium. I think the latter scenario is neither realistic, neither feasible, neither ideal. In future we will be able to work with digitalised translation services, which will allow content produced in one country to move abroad. Because the fact is that national and local media will always be better to describe specific facts and situations, giving you the nuances and breaking stereotypes, which in other countries appear exactly because you're not able to cover that story and you need them to simplify the discourse you're giving to your audience."

1–2 Images courtesy of Europa Reloaded

LIBRARIES

The Europe Challenge is a collaborative process with public libraries across Europe and their communities to identify and address some of Europe's pressing challenges that are relevant both for the local contexts and on a European level. The libraries are facilitated to work together in a European network, and share practices and approaches to tackle the identified local challenges.

Looking for a Challenge?



“The library is among the most critical forms of social infrastructure that we have… Everyday life in libraries is a democratic experiment, and people cram into libraries to participate in it whenever the doors are open.” — ERIC KLINENBERG, PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE, 2020

“Libraries ceased to be dusty book storage facilities a long time ago. Today they are foremost about the future.” — KNUT SKANSEN, DEICHMAN BJØRVIKA LIBRARY IN OSLO

WE ARE LIVING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

What will Europe look like after the Coronacrisis? What can culture do to deal with possible economic recession, health systems at breakpoint, unemployment, social tensions, the environment, new borders, new divides and more? How can we reverse the trend towards new borders? One year after the start of the global pandemic, the notion of an open, democratic and diverse Europe, in which people live together in harmony, remains a crucial cultural task.

How can we turn the challenges of today into opportunities for tomorrow? How can solutions be local and European at the same time? How can we engage citizens where they are and not where some want them to be? How can we create safe and sound public spaces? How can the shared work on big and small solutions foster a European sense of belonging, a European sentiment?

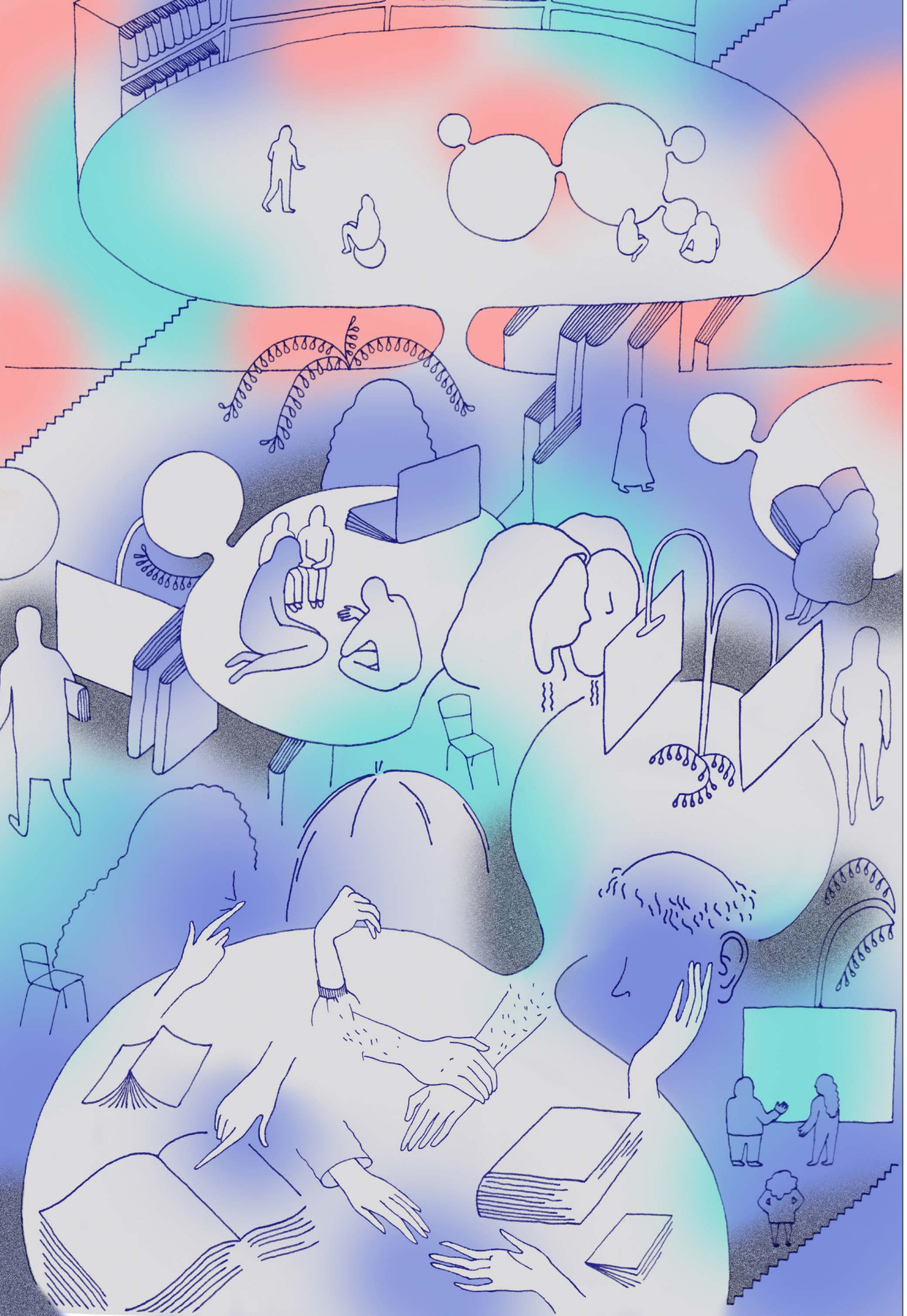
Let’s go to places which already exist everywhere in Europe, places which attract millions of people every day, places which provide storage for small stories and big history, to places of community and creation. Let’s go to these places to listen, to understand what the real challenges of today really are. And let’s find a way of supporting those who want to work on solutions for tomorrow. These places are the libraries of Europe.

THERE ARE 65.000 PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN EUROPE

Almost every town and rural district has one or more. There are century-old ones like in Lisbon, there are shining new ones like in Aarhus, there are under-resourced ones in Romania and mobile ones close to the arctic circle. There are prestigious university libraries and small community libraries. All these different libraries are part of an existing public cultural infrastructure of knowledge, learning, community and creation. Libraries had to reinvent themselves early on in the digital revolution. Libraries still lend printed books, of course, but they have become so much more. They are flexible co-working spaces for young entrepreneurs, WiFi hotspots for travellers, club houses for interest groups, places to warm up for the poor and homeless. In some places libraries also provide public services like issuing driving licenses and residency permits. Libraries are an essential part of the social and cultural fabric of Europe. Smartly connected, libraries can be a truly social network of Europe, analog and digital, and an important component of the nascent European Public Space.

LOCAL EXPERIENCES, EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS

Local challenges are often shared challenges in a European context. With The Europe Challenge, we want to identify these shared local challenges, and courage and support shared European solutions. In doing so we hope to connect a local and a European experience. Working with public libraries across Europe – both big and small, avant-garde and traditional, capital-based and rural – we



The Europe Challenge

provide local, open and free access to the Europe Challenge via a trusted and safe public space that is serving people with different backgrounds.

MAKING IT WORK

The Europe Challenge is not a single event, it is a collaborative process with libraries across Europe which together with their communities will identify and address concrete questions/challenges that are relevant for their local context. They are facilitated to work together in a European network, and share practices and approaches to tackle issues such as literacy, digital citizenship, AI, democracy, inclusion & equal rights, and the reinforcement of our public space. An initial core group of seven libraries has started the design of a Europe-wide programme of activities that engages citizens in shaping and imagining how Europe and its public spaces should look like. The Europe Challenge will provide activities, methodological support, European connections, funding and space.

Interested in joining the Europe Challenges? Let us know at **europechallenge@culturalfoundation.eu**. We are counting on you.

ILLUSTRATIONS Zuzanna Loch **André Wilkens**

The Europe Challenge

Getting to Know the Sant Boi Llobregat Public Library & De Krook Ghent

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The Europe Challenge is not a single event. It is a collaborative process with seven libraries across Europe which together with their communities will identify and address a concrete question/challenge that is relevant for their local context. They are facilitated to work together in a European network, and share practices and approaches to tackle the identified local challenges.

In this piece, we talk to two participating libraries: Pauline De Wolf of De Krook in Ghent (Belgium) and Maria Montia Enrich, Andreu Orte del Molino of Jordi Rubió i Balaguer Public Library in Sant Boi de Llobergat (Barcelona, Spain).

TEXT Nicola Mullenger, Olga Alexeeva

Pauline De Wolf, Maria Montia Enrich, Andreu Orte del Molino

NICOLA MULLENGER, OLGA ALEXEEVA: What is the context you work in and how is Europe relevant to it?

MARIA MONTIA ENRICH, AADRE ORTE DEL MOLINO: Jordi Rubió i Balaguer is the central library of Sant Boi de Llobregat, serving the whole city of about 83.000 inhabitants. There is another library, Maria Aurèlia Capmany, which acts as a branch library in a smaller district of the city. As all public libraries in Barcelona province, we have the support of Diputació de Barcelona library's service in the context of the Barcelona Province Municipal Libraries Network (MLN). Currently, the network comprises 227 libraries and 10 library buses in 311 municipalities of the province. Users of the Municipal Libraries Network have a single library card, valid in all public libraries, a collective catalogue and access to an extensive supply of activities and services.

The almost 4000 m² of the Jordi Rubió i Balaguer library building stands out for its integration into the natural environment of the Parc de la Muntanyeta.

Because of our city characteristics, our library has two focus areas of work: health and natural environment. Sant Boi is very well-known for the quality of its mental health care services and facilities. Reflecting that in the library, since 2007 we have the Disability Information Centre. That service was organised with the support of the Social Inclusion and Equality Unit of Sant Boi de Llobregat City Council, to offer information to people with disabilities and their families, to the educational community (teachers and students), professionals, organisations, associations and to all citizens interested in this subject.

The city has an important link with the agricultural economy too, as 40% of its territory is dedicated to agriculture. In 2013, the library started a project called *De l'hort a la Biblioteca* (From the orchard to the library) with the aim to provide and spread information and resources linked with the products of the Agricultural Park, which is an important contributor to our city economy alongside with local commerce, logistics industry and small and medium size enterprises. In 2014, the project won an award for innovation in Catalan Public libraries.

The issues we are working on – environment, health, quality of life and land use – are very similar to the issues people are facing in many locations and contexts across Europe. We could greatly benefit from sharing our struggles and imagining solutions with each other. Additionally, we see a similar interest in other libraries in Europe in generating ways of working together with their communities and improving citizens' involvement in democracies.

PAULINE DE WOLF: De Krook is a collaboration between the library of Ghent, the University of Ghent and research institute imec. Together, these partners aim to create an environment where people living and working in Ghent can experience a dynamic view on the future. Our goal is not only to inform and inspire them about future-oriented subjects, but also to engage them in moulding this future through bottom-up innovation processes, co-creation and collective tinkering with innovative solutions.

Therefore, the partners of De Krook are building theme-based clusters of activities, situated on the intersection of technology on the one hand, and societal challenges on the other. The activities within such themes are aimed at involving citizens, bringing knowledge together, and transforming this knowledge to action through rapid materialisation and collective experimentation. As such, De Krook and the experiments act as a centripetal force to discuss and shape common futures.

De Krook also has a very wide reach towards people living or working in Ghent – in 'normal' (non-COVID) times, De Krook receives 5000 – 7000 visitors each day. Besides this essential asset, the infrastructure also houses several research groups (knowledge actors) and experimental environments ranging from a public agora, a large interactive data-wall co-working spaces, creative spaces, experimental laboratories and next-generation experience spaces (and a bar!).

However, it is not easy to leverage the full potential of these assets, since these mean nothing without supporting programmes, processes and activities. Therefore, we are now defining processes to involve citizens in co-creative processes that create sustainable solutions to societal challenges, based on bottom-up ideas and involvement; and how to do this in a way that creates value for citizens. From this perspective, we think it would be very valuable to interact with libraries that experiment with similar processes and projects, hence shaping and imagining a European public space together.

NM, OA How do you see your role as a public library in facilitating community engagement in democracy and public spaces?

MM, AO The Barcelona Province Municipal Libraries Network is evolving towards a new library model that highlights the social value of public libraries within a community. The new library model embeds two challenges:

A. Libraries need to focus on both users' needs and non-user's interests. Libraries need to be flexible and adaptive depending on the community they

operate. In this library model users have room to decide about the activities and orientation of the services;

B. Libraries are powerful actors in transforming communities. Libraries have more impact when they are centrally located in our towns and cities. They need to be a key facility on a daily basis. However, location does not mean all. Libraries need to strengthen alliances with social agents, associations and NGOs in the community. Libraries and community actors can complement each other.

The new model is transforming the role of libraries by modifying their relationship with users and their social context. That is determining the way libraries' activities are produced and the way libraries' spaces are designed. The future of our libraries is based on four areas of action: libraries are spaces for discovering, learning, creating and sharing. Every public library needs to develop its own action plan based on their local social context.

In this framework, and also building on years of experience in the development of activities linked with the environment, sustainability and our territorial needs, the Sant Boi libraries have started exploring new ways of cooperative work in the last three years. An example of this exploration is *Racons de Lectura* (Reading corners): a project carried out in 2019 by both Sant Boi libraries in collaboration with citizens and the Citizen Participation Area of the City Council. In this project, libraries provided little spaces with children's literature in the public health care units, to help children relax while they were in the pediatrics' waiting room. The success of this experience opened doors to collaborative work in the city. Also in 2019, we ran a project with UAPA (Unit of Evaluation of Administration Projects) that involved citizen participation in the search of solutions to improve air quality.

PW A very interesting link between public libraries on the one hand, and innovation & future-oriented thinking on the other, are stories. Stories have the power to introduce and explore new ideas within a recognisable context. When it comes to imagining how the future might look, how innovation, technology and other evolutions impact the way our society will evolve, stories are a very powerful tool. Fiction offers us a tangible portal to all kinds of futures, and helps us reflect on them, think about how they might and should look like, and think about how we want to contribute to shaping them.

From this perspective, there is an obvious link between the 'traditional' role of a library, and the future-oriented community engaging activities that can take place there. Making the connection between stories and imagination on the one hand, and knowledge and research on the other, could be a very strong foundation for creating sustainable, relevant and surprising innovation.

Several De Krook partners have in-depth experience in both community-driven, citizen-centric processes, tools and methodologies such as civic crowdsourcing, generative co-creative methods, design sprints, interaction/UX design, setting up experiments, field trials, rapid prototyping, etc. These have been successfully applied in previous collaborations between the De Krook partners and is beautifully illustrated by the project Hello Jenny, an experimental smart speaker to fight social isolation amongst elderly citizens **(more information)**.

NM, OA Why did you see The Europe Challenge as an interesting idea and would you like to collaborate on that (with other libraries /with other partners)?

MM, AO The Europe Challenge with Public Libraries presents an excellent opportunity to highlight the libraries as safe places/spaces where European values, e.g. community-generated content, network involving citizenship, open culture and creativity, are promoted.

Our realities are very different, but we all share the idea of maintaining and caring for public services, as a key factor to preserve equality and free access to human knowledge, experiences and ideas. It is not an easy moment, but we think that working together makes us stronger.

We strongly believe this project will also be useful for other municipalities of the Barcelona Libraries Network since there is an aim to adopt tools and knowledge from international experiences.

PW The Europe Challenge fits very well within the plans we have for 2021 and the following years, which entail the search for a (partial) redefinition of our entity as a space where public and complex societal challenges can resonate with experiment-based solutions to these challenges.

Although we have already been experimenting with co-creative processes and engaging communities, we still see the project we are starting this year as a 'lab': a lab where we ourselves experiment with methods to engage citizens in a way that creates value for them. We believe we should constantly keep evaluating and optimizing these methods, and that collaboration and exchanging experiences with other libraries can only strengthen our own processes, and those of others.

NM, OA How could the Europe Challenge look like in your dreams?

MM, AO Our aim is to evolve to the new model of public library. We envisage the library as a 'pilot ecosystem', providing the necessary resources to create new knowledge and share information.

We see the library as a facilitator for the assimilation of knowledge based on experience. A promoter of collaboration and alliances with the educational community. A supplier of social innovation resources for the development of critical thinking, research and community action.

We would like to develop the co-creation of new knowledge. To become a laboratory (BiblioLab) of creation, citizen science and social innovation to solve social challenges. To encourage new vocations. To be part of a driving force for social transformation and become an opportunity's generator space.

Additionally, we wish to promote meeting, socialisation, debate, exchange of ideas and experience spaces. To promote the participation of community stakeholders. To share resources and knowledge openly. To spread democratic values and integration, inclusion, diversity and equal rights.

Following this model, we would like to become a basic resource, for citizens and communities, in the development of solutions for the detected challenges.

PW We mainly dream of experimenting with a solution to a relevant, societal challenge that actually changes something, that solves a problem for some people. If we succeed in 'inventing' something that actually solves an existing problem, and if we manage to make that solution sustainable, we would consider it a big success.

NM, OA What are your next steps in making that happen?

MM, AO One of the first steps we are going to take is to continue our conversation with the City Council's Participation and Innovation Units. This will help us work together and ensure the city's government commitment in giving answers to citizen's concerns and in putting into practice their proposals. We think it is important that the outputs of whichever project we develop must have a long-term impact. Political commitment is crucial to get that.

Straight after that, we will launch a campaign to engage people and communities to work together on the definition of the challenge we take on and the activities it could involve.

We would like to achieve agile dynamics and brand-new dialogs and interactions with all the actors involved.

The pandemic situation forced us to put many of the ongoing projects on hold, waiting for a better time to develop them.

Even if we, and our teams, are used to dealing with change, the future we are facing seems to include pretty disruptive facts and situations. Things will change in so many aspects, political, economic and social. Our expectations in joining this project are to get a booster to prepare the library to lodge changes and citizen's challenges, to keep doors open to collaborative work and to learn a lot from all the experiences we will share.

PW We are currently planning our first theme-based cluster of activities around the topic 'health'. We would like the starting point of this process and these activities to be crowdsourced, bottom-up problems and societal challenges. Our goal is to find relevant challenges by means of crowdsourcing campaigns.

Next, we are planning a cluster of activities to co-create and experiment with solutions to one of these challenges, such as generative co-creative methods, design sprints, interaction/UX design, setting up experiments, field trials, rapid prototyping, etc.

In parallel, we plan to organise activities that focus on knowledge sharing and debate, since we are convinced that innovation and tinkering with technology should go hand in hand with looking at the bigger picture. And the bigger picture might contain some interesting ethical questions. What is the role that we want technology to play in our future? What are the 'dangers' we should be aware of? Public debate concerning such questions will become a second important goal we would like to realise.

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1–2 De Krook, Ipem labo. De Krook, beleving-strap. PHOTOS Michiel Devijver.

TEXT Nicola Mullenger, Olga Alexeeva

Pauline De Wolf, Maria Montia Enrich, Andreu Orte del Molino

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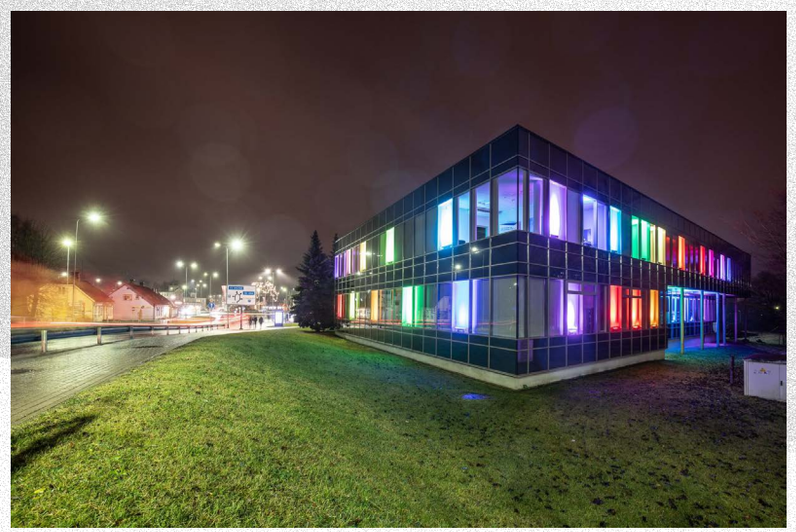
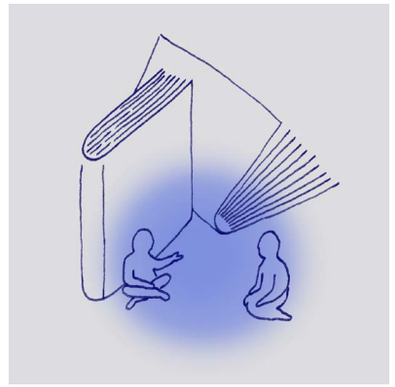


1 Valmiera, photo courtesy of Valmiera library.
2 Sant Boi Library. Photo courtesy of Sant Boi library.

Libraries as Forums for Democracy



“Connect. Innovate. Advocate” – that is what drives everything our partner for the Europe Challenge, Public Libraries 2030 (PL2030), does. Over the years, first as Public Libraries 2020 and now as PL2030, the organisation has been inspired by how public libraries serve their community and the impact they have. As PL2030 launches into an ambitious project imagining libraries as forums for democracy, PL2030 Director, Ilona Kish, sat down with Anthony Zacharzewski, Director-General and President of Democratic Society (Demsoc) – our Europe Challenge’s facilitation and design partner, for a conversation on how this can be achieved and why now is the perfect time for this.

ILLUSTRATIONS Zuzanna Loch TEXT Ilona Kish Anthony Zacharzewski

Jumping into Demsoc's start, Anthony explains that it was set up around 15 years ago to create new opportunities for citizens to get involved with governments and for governments to talk to people in different ways and open things up. How did Anthony see this happening? By developing new approaches and rethinking what participation is. Ultimately, Anthony notes that people expected more from governments, politics and democracy than what was being delivered and there was a need to do something more personal and direct than voting every few years.

This observation is very much in line with the culture of participation, which, as Marie Østergård (PL2030 Founder and Director of Aarhus Public Libraries, Denmark) told us, is being cultivated in Aarhus. However, in order for this approach to have a sustainable character, according to Anthony, participation must be built in an inverted 'T' shape going upwards to the institutions making the big decisions and horizontally within the community. The top-down hierarchical mindset of the 1950s and before needs to evolve into something more collaborative, participative, that allows for a two-way flow of information rather than just one way.

When Demsoc started, they felt they had enough time to develop new approaches and ways of working before there were real threats to the system. That is what happened in 2016 with Brexit and the election of Trump. Anthony knew this was the moment Demsoc had been waiting for but it was like looking up from a book you are reading on a train journey and realising you have arrived at the station and scrambling to get your bag and get off.

The events of 2016 stemmed from a hollowed-out system that needed a small nudge to destroy the rules holding it together. People were willing to trust questionable visions because they had been continuously disappointed by politics and, as Anthony explains, because the prior opportunities and spaces that allowed civic groups, political parties and other actors to disseminate their messages had disappeared.

In that same breath, the media were becoming less and less accessible despite us being able to comment on pages and host our thoughts on blogs. The fragmentation of media meant it was a lot harder to get your voice out and heard unless you already had a strong voice. Added to that was the disappointment that the digital world brought about. On top of the digital inequity that emerged, this new world allowed voices to cluster, find each other and be disruptive to the system as we saw mainstream political voices be driven out of debate spaces in the 2000s and 2010s.

As Demsoc built up its portfolio of new approaches and ways of working, they encountered challenges with finding genuine long-term engagement programmes and trusted spaces. Oftentimes, governments commission organisations such as Demsoc to run participatory budgeting programmes or citizen engagement programmes. While some may be honest and open, it is likely that the 'deliberative wave', as coined by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), will lead to fake democracy, democracy wash, and unfair or skewed processes being carried out. The question that emerges is: how can you work with a government or an institution that wants to get public voices in and still remain genuinely independent?

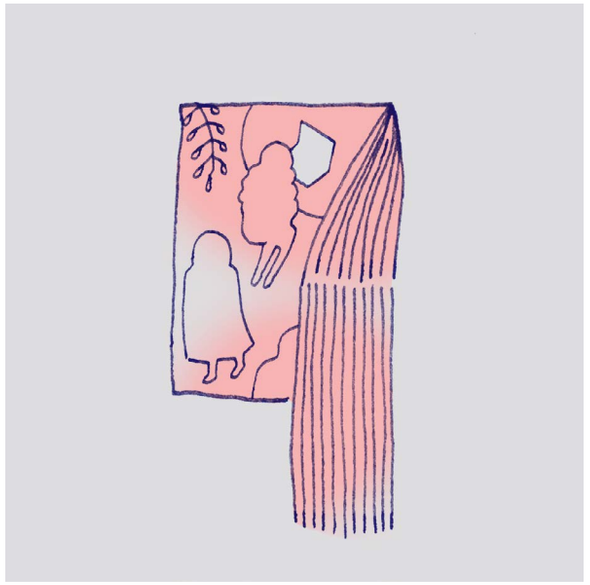
While digital spaces or offline spaces can answer this, the end point should be to have a network of organisations and people who can make these spaces happen and who can deliver accountability and trust. Rather than having a single action or transaction, this creates a long-term approach to participation mechanisms and structures. To build these, finding neutral, trusted and local spaces is vital. "It is a straightforward 100-percent no-brainer discussion to start thinking about libraries in this light because we know libraries from our childhood as civic hubs, as places where learning, information and different sources are brought together," says Anthony.

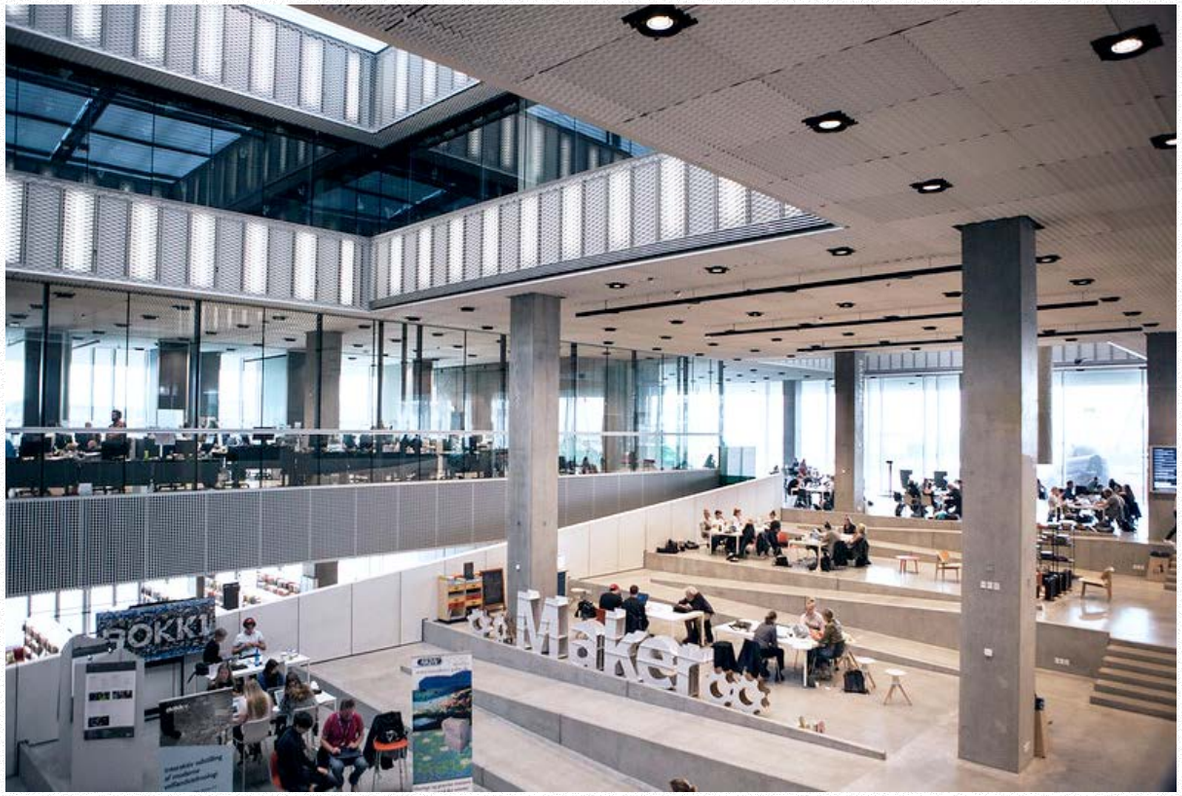
For Demsoc, the innovation seen in libraries is a critical part to the creation and maintenance of a democratic network that allows people to feel they can go to the places where they know the people and can still be connected into a national, regional, European or global conversation and decisions that are shaping their lives.

However, to start this, a narrative around the library being a neutral space needs to exist beforehand. Otherwise the risk of having the same old political arguments enter the library and hinder the possibility of moving forward and possibly cause damage to the institution. For Anthony, a significant part of this conversation needs to be around the space for the civic and what it truly means in this era. For him, "civicness is about the universality of public service; it is about bringing together people from across the spectrum and the places where they are."

Democratic processes like this that are more inclusive and open allow for conversations with people whose experiences and life may be completely different to our own and these are more easily conducted in a comfortable, neutral space. Furthermore, there is a need to feel a sense of belonging and participating in your community and Anthony notes that this is an unmet need which can be answered by libraries and a democratic network that facilitates civic conversations.

This will be a transformative experience for libraries, in which a strong partnership with local organisations that facilitate and look after civic conversations can help get started. That's where the ambitions of PL2030, Demsoc and the European Cultural Foundation's Europe Challenge with public libraries fit perfectly. It will give the partners modelling tools and ways of engaging that we can scale out and up to a wider network of libraries working with their communities across Europe. Getting the message out quickly about these news ways to engage and new tools to this library network is how we will see things join up. We are convinced that the national, regional, European and global conversations can be real and relevant to people's local conversations in their local libraries.





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3 Aarhus, photo courtesy of Aarhus library
4 Berlin, Fresh air library at the ZLB. PHOTO Vincent Mosch
5 Kranj library. PHOTO Svetlejsa Naslovna

Public Libraries as Living Labs

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PUBLIC LIBRARIES ‘IN THE MAKING’

Only a few infrastructures, such as libraries, have survived for centuries under the same name, despite performing quite different activities in each period and the recurrent predictions of their extinction. The public library is for many people a place to read, borrow books or study; for others, it is a space to attend cultural events or to have access to maker technologies. Libraries have to deal with ambivalence: on the one hand, their social representation has remained historically stable and recognisable, and on the other hand, libraries have constantly innovated and created new services adapted to the needs of the communities they serve.

In these times of uncertainty and the current spread of disruptive technological practices, the emergence of some innovation ecosystems within libraries that place the community at the centre of co-creation processes, has transformed some public libraries into encountering spaces.

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

The global health crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has only deepened the conviction that we live in increasingly changing and uncertain times. Uncertainty has also settled in libraries across Europe: many library closures have turned from temporary to permanent, it is still unclear how and when some services will be reinstated and doubts also loom as to what the public library will be like again once herd immunity is achieved. However, COVID-19 has also led to certain social consensuses on libraries that were not so evident until now. One of them is the consideration of public libraries by citizens as priority proximity services. The statistical data of the digital lending service in Spanish public libraries during the first two months of hard lockdown (March and April 2020), clearly point in this direction: in just two months, nearly 800.000 digital loans were made (almost half of those made during the whole of 2019), and there was a 90% increase in users compared to the total for 2019.

But not only citizens have placed public libraries in a prominent position as a proximity agent: public authorities have also reached an explicit consensus on the consideration of public libraries as an essential service for citizens. In Spain, for example, public libraries have been one of the first public services to open their doors during the initial phases of de-escalation of the pandemic: with controlled occupancy and the establishment of security measures, libraries were reopened as key infrastructures to recover community welfare.

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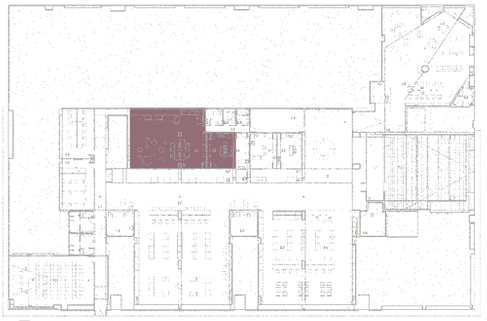

LIVING LAB SPACE

LIBRARIES AS BOUNDARY ORGANISATIONS

Even with the corona pandemic, public libraries continue to maintain their strength as key agents of community building. The public library is a flexible infrastructure that allows the coexistence of different communities of practice. Readers, students, makers, job seekers and many other find in the library four different trustworthy, safe and caring spaces to keep on growing as human beings: learning spaces to explore the world they are surrounded by; performative spaces to create things; inspiration spaces to expand their creativity; and meeting spaces to share and engage with the community.

At the same time, the library is a stable infrastructure: it is this stability that bridges the boundaries between different communities of practice and allows them to carry out common goals. Understanding public libraries as *boundary organisations* is precisely that: realising that they are both flexible and stable infrastructures, where very different social worlds intersect, where diverse interests and needs converge in a shared meeting space which is open to the whole community. When members of different communities are brought together, issues may arise, along with problems and concerns that are potentially conflicting and on which it is not always possible to reach consensus.

It is in this idea of cooperation between different communities of practice where the concept of the boundary organisation expands: in the absence of consensus, boundary organisations make collaboration possible by enrolling different actors on the basis of their convergent interests. Facing the legitimately divergent positions of the different social worlds, boundary organisations do not promote practices oriented towards imposing a certain representation or to coercing minority positions, nor to silencing non-hegemonic voices. Within boundary organisations, divergent interests coexist, dissidence inhabits the space and disagreement occurs. Indeed, it is precisely such heterogeneity that enables the emergence of collaborative practices among the communities that converge there.

LIVING LABS: SOCIO-TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURES OF INNOVATION AND CO-CREATION

Living Labs are user-centred, open innovation environments where different stakeholders participate in co-creation processes that give answers to societal challenges in real-life communities and settings. The aim of these socio-technical infrastructures is to take research out of the laboratory, put it into everyday life and involve users from the very beginning of the design process, often with a strategic approach on the potential uses of technologies. Although the first experiences on Living Labs emerged at the MIT in 2004, this conceptualisation as innovation ecosystems is inherently European and was launched under the Finnish Presidency of the European Union in 2006. During that mandate, a programme was established to implement a European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) in order to renew the Union's innovation system and ensure the development of common methodologies and tools to support, stimulate and accelerate innovation processes across Europe. Currently, ENoLL counts over more than 150 active Living Labs members worldwide (more than 440 historically recognized over 14 years).

Understanding public libraries as boundary organisations allows us to better understand the existence of a particular socio-technical infrastructure of innovation: The Library Living Lab, in the Miquel Batllori Public Library of Sant Cugat del Vallès (Barcelona, Spain). The Library Living Lab is an open, participatory and experiential space, fully integrated into the public library, where people, technology and innovation meet and become enablers of social transformation. The aim of the Library Living Lab is to explore how, through collaborative innovation processes, technology can transform the ways in which communities experience culture and interact with them. The library thus provides the context of an encountering space where diverse communities of practice come together and innovate on the basis of living lab perspectives and methodologies.

BUILDING COMMUNITY FROM THE LIBRARY WITH LIVING LAB METHODOLOGIES

The following two projects, both carried out at the Barcelona Library Living Lab, show how different communities of users met technologies, interacted with them in certain ways and created new things together.

Brossa Inèdit (Unpublished Brossa) was a transdisciplinary project which aimed at the (re) valorisation of digital collections through the participation and contributions of the public. The community of library users had the opportunity to choose which unpublished poems of a given digitised collection (1.120 digital visual poems of the Spanish poet Joan Brossa), would be made public for the first time. At the same time, users also had the possibility to create new narratives from the evocations generated by these poems. The project was more than just a classic action of digitising a collection with the purpose of bringing it to value and disseminate it to a wider audience. The collection was transformed, enriched and made public by the community of users who attended the installation. In the Library Living Lab, the unpublished poems were revalued thanks to a process of collective action.

3D Capitals was launched as a Citizen Science project with the aim of digitising and 3D printing on a small scale the 144 Romanseque capitals of the Sant Cugat del Vallès monastery cloister, which are a masterpiece of European medieval art. In this project, citizens did not play the role of data collectors, sample suppliers or testers on the effectiveness of a prototype: the library users who participated in this project were co-creating agents from the very beginning, from the very first phase of co-designing a prototype. *3D Capitals* was not a simple collaboration between the library and other citizen agents to carry out a digital humanities project: thanks to this project, the community re-appropriated its local cultural heritage and placed it inside and outside the library.

Rethinking the public library as a boundary organisation, allows us to understand why it is able to integrate such a socio-technical infrastructure of innovation, a Living Lab: because public libraries coexist with diversity without requiring the different communities to abandon their own original practices when meeting technologies. In these times of corona, those tensions observed in libraries mentioned at the beginning, between permanence throughout history and constant innovation, also persist: public libraries are flexible enough to integrate changes, but stable enough to be recognised as libraries, regardless of where in the world they are located. Perhaps it is precisely this tension that gives the library its character of stability. In these uncertain times, I dare only say one thing: the public library is a stable infrastructure that has always been in transformation, 'in the making'.

Some sections of this article are partial summaries of the following research paper: Hernández-Pérez, O., Vilariño, F. & Domènech, M. (2020), 'Public Libraries Engaging Communities through Technology and Innovation: Insights from the Library Living Lab', Public Library Quarterly. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2020.1845047

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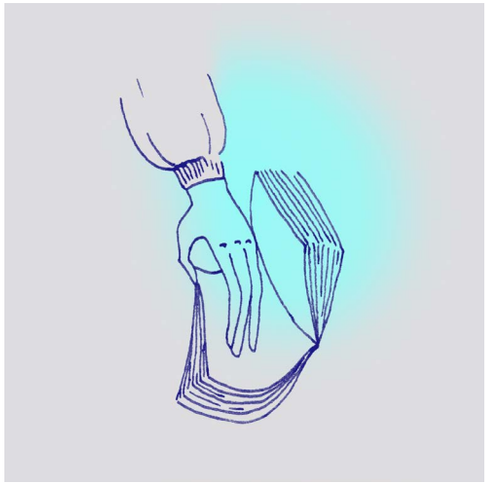
1–3 The Library Living Lab is located inside the Miquel Batllori Public Library in Sant Cugat del Vallès (Barcelona, Spain). PHOTO Adrià Goula.
4 Different stages of the *3D Capitals* project. Training session on photogrammetry at the Library Living Lab;
5 Different stages of the *3D Capitals* project. Capture session in the Monastery of Sant Cugat del Vallès;
6 Different stages of the *3D Capitals* project. First 3D-printed capitals exhibited at the Library Living Lab. PHOTO Library Living Lab.

Libraries and Sustainable Development Goals

Access to information can drive growth, development, and equity.



The ability to create, collect and use information has never been greater. It is access to information that can change people's lives and contribute to sustainable development. Information, and what we do with it, is essential for growth. The Nobel Prize in Economics 2018, awarded to Paul Romer and William Nordhaus, is an acknowledgment of how important this matter is to recover economies. Investment in new ideas, and the and their dissemination, is key to sustainable growth.

Unfortunately, too often, income poverty is associated with informational poverty. People need guarantees to get information for free to cope with their own challenges and risk of exclusion. Without access to information, there is no way to get involvement in Education and Knowledge.

Public libraries' very core mission is about Human and Fundamental Rights of Information and Education: they are open to all without any restriction, and therefore, are key institutions offering access to information for all. Providing free and equal access to information and knowledge is the essential mission of libraries across the globe. Libraries are deeply committed to their core role of supporting literacy, learning, and reading in our communities. Libraries are developing services embracing digital innovation and are proud to be guardians of the memory of the world.

Fortunately, libraries all over the world share common goals and are united in serving the population with great respect for human rights values. Democratic access is the gate to development, and it is known when individuals and communities use library services their lives improve and change for the better.

Libraries promote equality and fight poverty. We know that the information age and the digital era are driving inequalities. Labour markets are changing. Those who can make full use of the information are empowered. But those who cannot, are in danger of being left behind.

In an information society, there is a risk that informational poverty will be associated with a wider disadvantage. In libraries, meaningful access to information can drive growth and development locally, at the individual, household, community, country, and at the global level. It means that we can all have the physical possibility, the skills, and the attitude to find, understand and use the information to improve things, to improve our lives. For people in poverty, who face more challenges than most, it can be a way to a better life, a path to achieve sustainable development. Libraries contribute to minimising the Digital Divide.

Several years ago, **Librarians organised under the International Federation of Libraries Associations and Institutions (IFLA)** started thinking how to face and tackle global challenges and go further working together, with the global library field pursuing the same objectives, and presenting the same arguments. **The United Nations 2030 Agenda** and **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** have provided a great opportunity to do this. We live in a society that is increasingly connected. The SDGs are an affirmation because, for the first time, there is an important document, signed by all the Member States of the United Nations, which emphasises the importance of access to information. It is clearly reflected in goal 16.10, which focuses on peace, justice and solid institutions. It explicitly talks about access to information, but it is often interpreted as access to government information. But also in about 20 other targets of the rest of the SDGs, where the importance of access to information, both the physical connection and the skills and rights to use it, is crucial. This is exactly the essential access that libraries provide every day to our communities.

By adhering to the SDGs, the 194 Member States of the United Nations promised libraries and their users to support access to information. The Member States also agreed on a continuous process of review and reporting through National Voluntary Reviews. Through the specific goals and indicators, it is possible to track progress. In this way, what was a political decision to work in a global framework towards development, is actually something that can bring at the local level a conscious reason of working on the ground and giving impact at national and global levels. A way to see who is advancing, who has not yet advanced, or who is lagging behind. This process gives libraries an opportunity to talk about what we do. To explain it in terms understood by politicians and officials. To create awareness of how important libraries are in the chain of development and, to gain support for our work.

In this context, the first step in moving towards a comprehensive and effective action by public libraries was to think strategically about the best way to empower local librarians to work on achieving SDGs ambitious targets among the full 2030 Agenda. Additionally, it was important to understand how to communicate and measure the results of this new approach. The idea was that each library should do this at the local level and report their results at the National Voluntary Review, while IFLA must be the global voice participating at **UN High-Level Political Forum** to report about the compiled results. With this purpose IFLA launched the **Library Map of the World**. Selected library performance metrics provide national level library data across all types of libraries in all regions of the world and indicators such as collection volumes, numbers of users, internet's access points and number of loans.

Moreover, we worked intensively in IFLA and launched the **International Advocacy Programme**, known by its acronym IAP. In mid-2016 we decided to work on a new ambitious and structured programme that would increase the capacity of the global library sector to promote and advocate for the general interest, with a specific focus on the SDGs.

At the kick-off of the programme, IFLA offered a 'train the trainer' workshop. We gathered a group of experienced trainers from around the world in The Hague and learned together what SDGs are, what they mean to libraries, and what the key steps are to effectively promote and defend libraries. We continue with workshops in Africa, Asia/Oceania, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and North America. Each country's national association's representative was invited to attend their regional workshop and sign a commitment to return to their country and

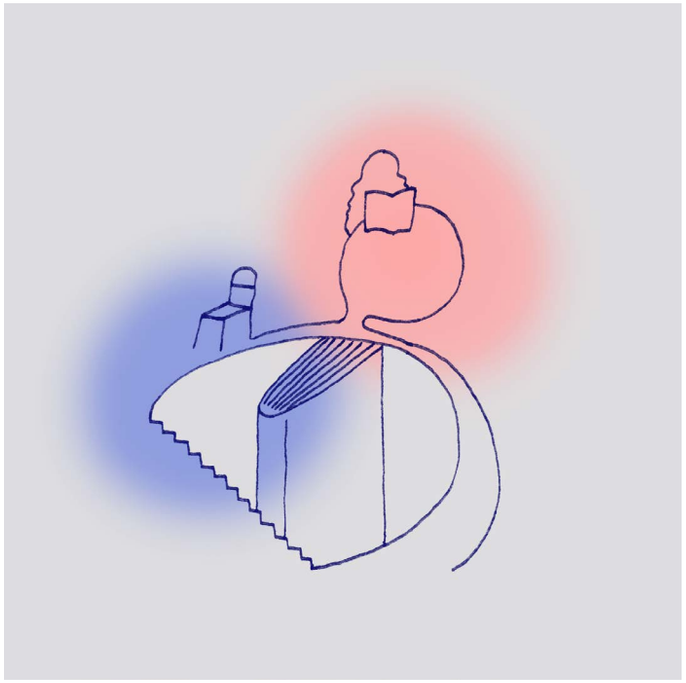
disseminate their learning, raise awareness of the SDGs, promote and advocate for recognition and support for libraries. Based on the SDGs, the National Library Associations guided by IFLA developed plans, held workshops and events, organized meetings, and several innovative activities.

After two years of working towards SDGs and 2030 Agenda, we met at the Public Library of New York in an **IAP Global Convening**. We visited the UN and met with the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations for Public Information, together with the representation of 40 ambassadors and librarians from the countries that had the most impact on the development of the programme to accelerate the recognition that 'libraries are motors of change', engines of social change. We live a unique moment to review and celebrate the work done and to agree on future plans. These forty countries became a model to follow by others.

More than 120 countries joined the IAP and I can say that it's an excellent illustration of a united library field acting to promote change and development. A sample of what we can achieve by working together with a strategic focus on a common goal by creating a global movement to show the role of libraries in achieving sustainable development.

With a common theme, *Every Librarian an Advocate!* thousands of librarians from 7 continents started moving forward with the same purpose, showing how far we can go in a united library field aligned to humanity's goals for progress and sustainable development. There is still a lot to do but fortunately the library movement is on.

Libraries' future will depend on the capacity to understand and focus their work to serve people's information needs. It's going to be a great future for library services if libraries maintain their capacity for action, joining a global vision on tackling global challenges and working together for the sake of humanity development. Today more than ever libraries have to diversify their offer, looking further than their collections. Libraries' commitment to informational social needs, providing training on digital skills and spaces of discussion to increase critical thinking and behaviour, are going to be essential for sustainable development.



ECHO Mobile Library – Mobile Cultural Exchanges

As part of our work in Libraries for Europe, the European Cultural Foundation funds ECHO – a mobile library based in Athens – which provides a space for creativity and learning for migrants and refugees. ECHO is also a grassroots project organised through a community network between Athens and eleven camps and community centres in mainland Greece.

Although ECHO is not a public library in a traditional sense, they are an excellent example of providing a safe and accessible space for learning and exchange to the most vulnerable individuals and communities housed in refugee camps in Europe. The two primary services they provide is a book exchange service for all displaced individuals and educational children's learning programming. We interviewed full-time coordinators Keira Dignan and Becka Wolfe from ECHO on what inspired them to start the mobile library.

Keira and Becka explained that once the **EU Turkey deal** was passed in 2015 refugees and migrants were no longer able to move through Greece to get to the rest of Europe. This led to many informal camps springing up in the North of Greece near the border region, including one in a disused petrol station called EKO. It was there that many solidarians came together to help people who were living at the abandoned petrol station. A group of these solidarians decided to start an educational project in the camp. Laura Samira Naude and Esther ten Zijthoff are part of the group who founded ECHO.

Their thinking behind founding ECHO was that people had many basic needs that were not being met in this informal camp, where there was also a desire and need for a shared space for people to come together and talk and share their time. There was also a massive desire for education; they wanted to offer a means for people who had had their educational journeys interrupted through forced displacement, a way to continue their lives and use the time that they had to learn more and improve their skills.

There was also a desire for culture, literature and the arts and ways to experience the world and share art forms. ECHO's founders thought that a mobile library would be a brilliant way of facilitating access to these things to as many people as possible.

In Greece, in-person learning was stopped in March 2020, which meant that services like the library could not continue in real life, so ECHO had to halt its activities. A very strict lockdown was introduced nationally. Keira explained how ECHO adapted to the pandemic once constraints were placed upon the way their library was operating: "During this time, we offered online resources to our database of library users. We would text people in the relevant languages and inform them about what was happening and let them know they could access the resources online. We could fulfil some requests through our online library database, whereby people would text us to request a book, and we could send them the PDF of the book if we had it.

The most significant thing during the lockdown was how we acted to support a broader grassroots solidarity movement in Athens. One of those groups was the Khora Kitchen; usually, they have a restaurant space where people can come and get freshly-cooked, nutritious food for free, in a safe space. When this was forced to close, they started to cook and deliver up to 1000 meals per day.

The mobile library became a food delivery vehicle, which occasionally doubled as a library van when people saw what was inside, which was nice. We ended up reaching out to people who have never seen the library before and engaged new volunteers who were involved in preparing and distributing the food. And they would say, 'ah, so what's this? A library?'

The library has always had to be flexible to the ever-changing political and material conditions. Last year, in response to a huge number of library users without accommodation in Malakasa camp, *The Guardian* reported Keira as saying, 'we have changed our lending system to not ask for an address but to ask where the tent is.'"

For ECHO, this year has been one of anxiety, as they watched their friends in the camps be locked away, even more isolated and forgotten, added to the dangers of a virus that has already killed many vulnerable people.

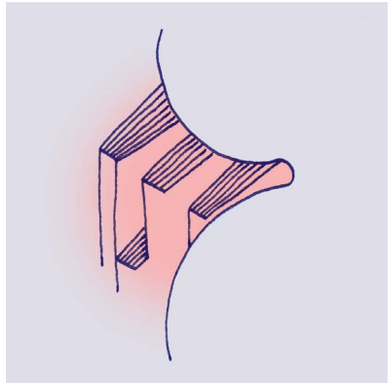
It has also been extremely frustrating for them as a library. Although they have adapted to COVID-19 measures to make the library an almost no-transmission zone, they have nevertheless been stopped from providing what they consider to be essential needs – safe community space, recreational and educational activity – to some of the most isolated groups of people in Europe. They hope in six months' time to be able to fully restart their activities, rebuild relationships and support their friends to read books, play games, learn languages, make friends and build new lives in Europe.

SUSTAINING SOLIDARITY

When it comes to how ECHO fuels solidarity between individuals and communities, across differences, borders and nationalities, Keira explains, "We often have many enthusiastic residents who come in and essentially help us run our library sessions every week, either on a particular day or in a specific camp. This has been great to see because we feel that you can empower those people to gain new skills and run something that benefits them and the camp's fellow residents or wherever we're working."

We at ECF believe that libraries are a shared safe public space for many communities in Europe and ECHO is an excellent example of a library learning space functioning in a challenging context.

When it comes to focusing on the now and based on EU legal changes, we asked ECHO how they see what is happening in a period of a pandemic in relation to these communities? Becka says, "At ECHO, we see that this moment is being used to further strengthen institutional powers to restrict the rights of marginalised and vulnerable communities. The pandemic has shown in sharp relief the failures of EU policymakers to support people seeking a safe and stable haven here, including the horrendous conditions on the Greek islands and the lack of long-term support for recognised refugees in Greece. The massive fire that destroyed Moria camp on Lesbos was an indictment of EU policy. Instead of rethinking the entire paradigm, it was simply reproduced a few kilometres down the road, and people continue to suffer."



GO HOME POLISH

Michal Iwanowski

51°34’54.4”N 2°59’08.3”W

Walking by the Newport passport office, where I was issued mine two years ago. I’m smug and resentful in equal measures. I’m smug about the immunity to Brexit, but resentful about how expensive that vaccine was. But smugness takes over. There will be no more anxiety at the UK border for Michal, he will not be needing to explain his intentions on entry, he will not be needing to prove he doesn’t intend on crawling into the nooks of the black market, nor to suckle on the swollen tit of the benefit system. He will, instead, hear welcome back home, mister Eee-wan-sky, consistently mispronounced and therefore reassuring him that he has, indeed, arrived home.

51°34’58.7”N 2°46’45.6”W

There’s an odd woman collecting rubbish at a car park, muttering to herself. She reminds me of mama, barking under her breath when she’s pissed off with my dad. Although this woman doesn’t make it look quite as cute. Still, I decide to engage. I tell her I pick up bikes that have fallen down if I happen to walk by. Looks like we’re both

into picking things. She's not that impressed, but instead asks what we're filming. Her already long face gets even longer when Ian explains. She immediately breaks eye contact and tells our chests it's been difficult for many, her son included, to find work because of the immigrants. The air between us gets heavy. There is nothing else I say to her. There is nothing else she says to me. We walk away from each other awkwardly, like two adversaries who have come to a duel with no weapons, two students unprepared to argue their corner in a school debate.

51°31'28.7"N 2°20'18.2"W

The BnB host, Richard, well past his retirement date, walks me to my room, and we small talk on the way up. He is having a hard time grasping why anyone would want to walk all the way from Wales to Poland, his brows furrowed, his head tilted like that of a dog when the fridge door opens. My mouth is full of Brexit, but I keep it shut, there's no need to spit, not into this lovely home, not onto this lovely host and his clean carpets.

He offers to dig deep in the freezer in search of vegetarian sausages, something he's not done

in a long time, but he is adamant I need a big breakfast tomorrow, if I'm to keep going. He's on a mission to do that for me. He's nice to me. Even in saying my English is very good, he is coming from a kind place, and I choose to take it as a compliment, despite my knickers getting into the mother of all twists about it – as sensitive to patronising as a canary to toxic gases in a mine.

51°26'22.6"N 2°00'15.6"W

Calne. I stop for a fish and chips, served by local immigrants. The fish also turns out to be an immigrant.

51°24'30.9"N 1°20'34.4"W

The morning after the referendum Celia goes to a funeral of a friend. She's livid to discover leave voters among her colleagues. To add insult to injury, there is no way to unleash the fury, given the circumstances.

She cannot tell which tears are heavier – those for her friend, or those for her nation.

Grandmother Iwanowska had lived through radical shifts in national borders courtesy of Hitler and Stalin. When asked about home, she delighted in quoting a young boy, whose adoption case she had managed, who was adamant that home is the place that smells of cake on a Sunday.

51°03'28.8"N 3°20'42.3"E

The sun is relentless, beating down on my neck, radiating off the asphalt. In that heat trap, I'm hit with the repulsive smell of rotten flesh. I follow it to a pool of blood, in which five putrid piglets, still in amniotic sacs, are sprawled in dramatic poses, as if copied from Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. I am disgusted, but I cannot take my eyes off this scene.

50°59'21.2"N 3°50'07.2"E

There is a BAR sign with a burning heart above the entrance to a church. Years of catholic indoctrination have not prepared me for an occasion like this. Is this a trap? Have things changed this much since I wandered off the path of Jesus?


BRIT-EUROPEAN

Well here we go, *an ex-catholic walks into a bar…* I peek my head into the narthex, where I see a statue of Joseph, standing with young Jesus, at the foot of a long shelf that is wedged between the stations of the cross. The shelf is lit in warm light, and it looks luxurious, like a jewellery shop window, but instead of gold, it carries bottles of wine and sake. I can hear *Psycho killer* playing inside. I decide to enter. Gingerly, half expecting a lighting strike – this Pavlovian reaction I am yet to eradicate. But perhaps all roads have been leading me here, to this altar, on which to squash some old catholic beef? I enter the nave and scan the interiors. Benches have been replaced with tables and seats, and a stack of barrels has taken the central stage, where the altar used to be. Otherwise the church looks very much like a… church. Statues of saints with the usual scorning expressions, heads hanging low, a great number of pointing fingers. Stained glass makes the whole place imposing. There is a long bar on one side. It offers coffee, but also beers, wines, and sake produced right here, in this very church. Jesus has done it again, and this time I am here to witness the magical transformation of water into booze.

I cannot contain my excitement. Getting into an empty school on a weekend is one thing, but unpunished frolics in a church? – that is a whole new ballgame. I aim straight for the confession box. That's where the pain is, where a nine year old Michal was instructed to hand over control over his moral judgement to a grown man in a black gown. That's where I and other children were branded sinful, and trained to confess intimate secrets in exchange for a momentary release from the guilt. That's where I was told being human was wrong. Let's put that shit back where it belongs, in this Pandora's box of confessions.

I order a black coffee, set the camera, and claim the seat in the centre of the confession box, where a priest normally sits. Now I am the judge. I think about my friend who died the day after coming out, and I think about the epitaph his father had engraved on the tombstone: *He will only be judged by god and by those who knew him*. Fuck that. No one dare judge that boy. Hands off him. Hands fucking off.

50°50’20.2”N 4°22’26.6”E

The words European Parliament, translated into twenty-four languages, adorn the entrance to the Altiero Spinelli building, named after the father of the EU, the man who, in 1941, drafted the Manifesto For a Free and United Europe, in secrecy, on cigarette papers, while imprisoned for standing in opposition to Mussolini’s fascist rule. I go through the languages. I speak two of them fluently, further two sufficiently enough to have a conversation about the past, the present, and the future, and I could easily get drunk, or laid in at least further five. On the 8th position in the grid, sided by Greek and French, sits English. For now, it is still one of the stars in Europe’s golden necklace, but it’s already unhinged. It will be someone’s job next year to take the engravings down, to dispose of one, and to arrange the rest anew. Will they bring the remaining languages closer together in a bid to rid of the unsightly gap? Or will they perhaps leave that gaping space, as a reminder of what consequences befall misinformed people led by opportunists?

I imagine Altiero’s disappointed face. A black Labrador walks past the wall, lifts his leg for a piss, but then changes his mind and walks on.

50°51’49.5”N 5°33’40.4”E

Are you a good immigrant? An invisible one? Or do you offend with your evident imported aesthetics? I try my best. I am white and clear of a Roman nose, a Hellenic brow, or tropical skin, I have worked hard to resist a Polish haircut, and if I don’t open up my mouth to speak, you will not know there is an ambiguous monster strumming my vocal cords, sometimes you will think it’s French, sometimes German, but you will never know for sure, and it will bug the hell out of you, so you will need to ask, or better still - guess, Swedish? Dutch? no, no, keep guessing, Spanish? Italian? nope, keep guessing, keep going, South Africa? nope, I don’t know any other countries, Denmark? That’s the ticket, yes, but beware, I give a different answer each time, I gotta get off somewhere in this humiliating game. Are you a good immigrant? Yes, as long as I am silent.

51°01’44.7”N 8°29’02.5”E

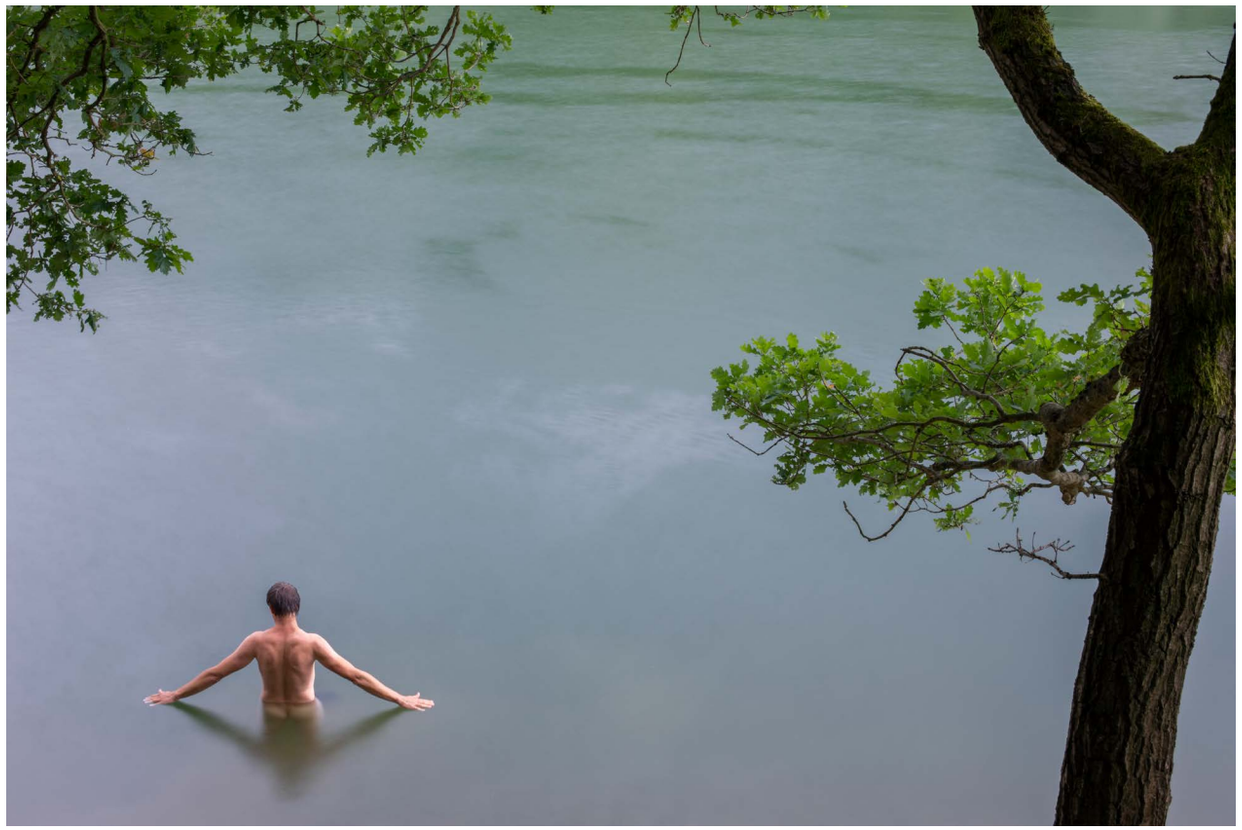
Where is home for you? I ask an older man by the side of the road. He points to the house. That’s it, right here. Home is where you don’t have to pay

the rent. A scruffy dog comes out from behind the fence and the man's face lights up. We talk about the comforting sound of sporadic traffic.

Anyone who suggests the earth is flat can go and do one. The state of my legs is hard evidence the planet is everything but flat. How I wish it were, while I'm averaging 75 floors a day. Gravity does not negotiate.

51.079004, 12.125853

Flyover graffiti spells Remigration! Resistance! There is no going back. There is no Command Z on emigration. In a world that is in constant movement forward, taking a step back is simply not an option. It's as futile as trying to get back into the womb – a world that cannot contain you anymore. A couple of my parents' friends emigrated to the USA in the 80's to chase the dollar. They spent their working life there and retired back to Poland, to the mothership, only to find out the longing they had felt all these years has travelled with them and is now looking towards America. It cannot be quenched by looking back – only by looking up and understanding you have been home in both places all along.



Reframing European Cultural Production

This text is not written to reflect on Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities (CCSC), a policy project co-funded by the European Commission. Pascal Gielen's Culture Commons Quest Office was a partner inthe project. As was the European Cultural Foundation.

From 2018 to 2021, the CCSC project has developed new ways for cities and regions to bring together public administrations and the cultural sector to co-create public policies. CCSC shows that culture and commoning practices can transform neighbourhoods and cities into more sustainable places, catalysing better lives for their communities.

Find out more via the **homepage of the project**, take a look at the **toolkit** or download **a copy of the project's publications**.

From Creative Industries towards Cultural Commons

SUSTAINABLE CREATIVITY

Over the past 15 years, we have conducted studies into artistic selection processes and careers in the arts. Originally, this research focused on contemporary dance and visual art in Belgium (Gielen 2005; Gielen and Laermans 2004; Van Winkel *et al*. 2012), and was later extended to include a great variety of disciplines, from architecture to theatre and film all over Europe (Gielen and Volont 2014). In 2016, the research was continued in a large-scale interdisciplinary European study on sustainable creativity in post-Fordist cities (2016-2021). Through in-depth interviews, panel discussions, surveys and case studies, 1739 respondents (of which 47% woman and 53% man; 4% younger than 25, 48% between 25 and 54, 4% between 55 and 64, and 1% older than 65; 30% of them have a Bachelor's, 43% a Master's degree and 76% of them did a training in art education) in ten European countries were asked more or less the same question: What does it take to build a career, especially a sustainable one, in the long term?

This quest also brought the role of the institutional context to our attention (Gielen 2014; Gielen and Dockx 2015). Not just institutes for art education, museums and theatres, but politics and even family life have an important influence on a creative career. In the recent developments of the creative industry and creative cities, in which labour is organised on an ever-larger scale and even globally, these institutions find it increasingly difficult to guard the borders between the different spheres of life. This also means that pressure comes to bear on an artistic biotope, which is needed to do creative work in the long term.

In this essay we will begin by outlining this artistic biotope. Then we will describe how the various domains within the biotope used to be protected institutionally in a national context. Next, we will ponder the changing mediating role of institutions. This transformation is partly the result of the transnational policy for the creative industries and creative cities implemented Europe-wide nowadays, based on a global market competition and the longing for a monotopic European identity. These institutional changes put pressure on the artistic biotope. In a final conclusive section, we will, on the basis of recent and still ongoing research, put forward a number of suggestions as to how, in our opinion, a healthy artistic biotope may be maintained in the future too, and how artists can offer us a more complex heterotopic understanding of Europe in a globalising world.

ARTISTIC BIOTOPE

The question of what artists and other creatives need to build and maintain a long-term career received roughly the same answers in various consecutive studies. In the variety of respondents' answers we were able to distinguish four separate domains into which their requirements can be categorised in an ideal-typical manner (Weber 1904):

The domestic domain
The domain of the peers
The domain of the market
The civil domain

Subsequent field studies, which included studio visits, in-depth interviews, and case studies, showed that these four domains are very different in terms of (1) social relations, (2) professional behaviour, (3) use of time and how it is experienced and, finally, (4) appreciation or assigning values.

Within the domestic domain, in terms of social relations, for example, the respondents prefer to work in isolation, without being disturbed. Visits to the studio are restricted to an inner circle of spouses or partners, relatives, and friends, especially when it comes to unannounced visits. What is important is that in the domestic domain, when it comes to social relations, intimacy, trust, and respect are the keywords. In interviews many respondents stated that in fact only their partners decided whether a work would even ever leave the studio. If the partner didn't find a work beautiful, interesting or relevant or even pronounced it 'bad', the work was sometimes even destroyed. In other words, partners and other intimate others also guard the borders between the domestic domain and other spaces. With regard to professional behaviour, everyday rituals have an important role in the domestic space. For example, a creative person may first drink two cups of coffee or listen to some music before starting to paint, sculpt, or rehearse. This implies that creatives are masters of their own time and can plan their work according to their own preference. Finally, in the domestic domain much value is assigned to personal judgement, personal taste, intuition, and insight to determine whether an artistic creation actually has any value. Self-reflection and personal experience therefore play an important part in assigning value.

The second domain is that of the peers. This is where (aspiring) artists make their first contact with creative professionals and experts who are knowledgeable about both practical and theoretical aspects of their (future) profession. Obviously, at art academies teachers often fulfil the role of discussion partner and critic, but fellow students can also be important peers. Open studios, workshops or other professional gatherings also make up the domain of the peers. Although here, as in the domestic domain, social relations can be characterised by respect, the evaluative nature of the exchange prevails. Among professional peers, there is a constant evaluation going on. Even when students go and have a beer with a teacher after school, they know that everything they say, each idea they come up with, may be evaluated. This relationship is continued in later contacts with

programmers, curators, art critics, etc. Among peers, evaluative interactions come first. Behaviour is therefore defined, more so than in the domestic domain, by the active exchange of knowledge, by creating and practising skills, whereby one's own ability and creative talent are continuously measured against already known skills, already realised creations or against the artistic canon. The domain of the peers is one of research and development, where new ideas and artistic experiments are constantly measured against already existing works or against the knowledge and skills of other professionals. Here, recognition or assigning value is not so much based on self-reflection and intuition, as in the domestic domain, but rather on (historical) knowledge and scientific reflection that are the result of social interaction. It is also the social interactions that define the organisation and experience of time in the domain of the peers. This may vary from an endless debate or a productive discussion during which one loses track of time, to institutionally imposed schedules and contact hours in a classroom. The own time of the domestic space is thus exchanged for collectively determined time in the domain of the peers.

The third domain, where money is all-important, we simply call 'the market', albeit in a very broad definition: each time an artistic activity or a creative product is exchanged for money, according to our ideal-typical definition we have a market situation. Therefore, this also applies to governments subsidising the creation of a theatre performance or the organisation of an exhibition. Commercial galleries, art fairs, auctions or the box offices of theatres are of course more obvious marketplaces. The important thing is that in those places social relationships are defined by money changing hands. This is why the art auction is probably the best example of an ideal-typically pure market. At an auction, the only thing that matters is how high an offer is made to acquire a work of art. Bidders can do this completely anonymously and don't necessarily need to know anything about art or art history. They don't need to maintain social relationships with artists or other professionals and don't have to publicly account for their purchase. When buying a ticket for the cinema or theatre, no one will ask us for an extensive motivation – the only thing that counts is paying for admission.

The domain of the market in the artistic biotope is primarily defined by financial relationships and quantities. The social relationship is in the first place one between supplier and customer. This means that these relations can be relatively anonymous, which also gives artists a certain freedom, as they don't have to engage in personal relationship with each individual visitor or collector. In this respect, money 'liberates', as already stated in the classic sociology of Georg Simmel (1858-1918) (Simmel [1858] 2011). However, in the domain of the market the creative workers are obliged to constantly quantify their work. Not only do they have to estimate how much money they can ask for their work or how large a buyout amount should be (see, for example, Velthuis 2007), they must also learn to estimate production costs and how to work against a deadline.

In short, an important aspect of professional behaviour in the market is the ability to express oneself in terms of quantities, which also applies to the organisation and experience of time in this domain. Time is converted into units and must be calculated as efficiently as possible. Projects with a clear deadline or delivery date are therefore a suitable method for organising one's work. In the market one cannot afford to lose track of time in endless reflection or introspection, as in the domestic domain, or by having interminable debates, as may happen in the domain of the peers. By contrast, in the market time is strongly rationalised, since time is money. Recognition or assigning value, finally, is expressed in quantitative terms too, such as the price of an artwork or the number of tickets sold, but also the height of production costs or the amount of time spent on making a creative product define the appreciation of a creative work.

The fourth and last domain of the biotope is then the civil domain. Here, social relationships are in the first place public ones. That is, they are visible in a public debate or in an interview or a review in a newspaper or other media. The point is that in the civil domain argumentation and public debate are central. Through argumentation an attempt is made to demonstrate the quality of creative work before a larger public. In arguing the quality, quantity, as in the market, no longer comes first, but rather the artistic, social, and cultural relevance. Such an argument may be that the work is artistically innovating or has a particular social value. Social support is therefore not simply measured in numbers of visitors or consumers, like in the market space. Rather, what is at stake is the broader recognition of an artistic idea or a creative product as a cultural value, without the need to go look at the work or buy it. This means that its recognition goes beyond the borders of the peer domain and also transcends monetary value. A thing only gains cultural value when a number of people use it, for example, to construct their own identity or confirm their social class and culture or subculture (Bourdieu 1984).

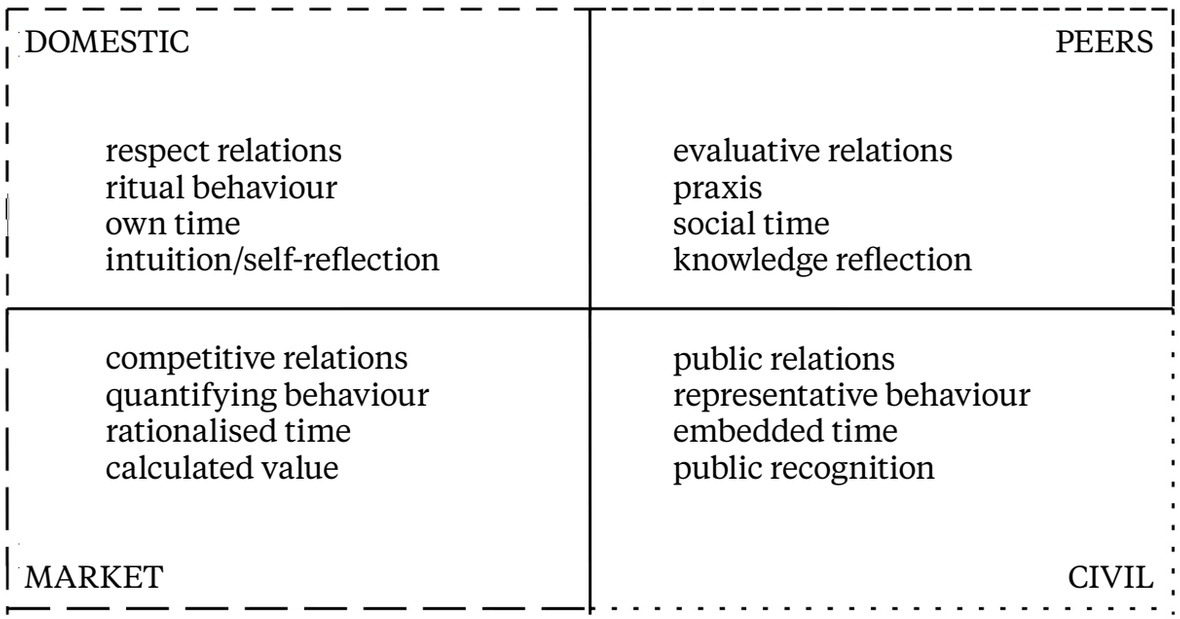
Within the civil domain creative expressions can also carry political import, as we know from the national canon. In any case, in this last domain artworks can function as references for a collective or wider culture to define its self-worth and identity. This civil space plays also a very important role in building national and European identities. Cultural policies and subsidies or cultural and art education are therefore legitimised by this domain. These arguments are not only to be found in grant applications by artists but also in the policy plans of museums, theatres, biennials, and art festivals. In the civil domain, professional behaviour is no longer exclusively defined by artists who know how to make and defend their work on the basis of (specialist) know-how, as in the domain of peers. Here they also defend the values of the art world or creative discipline they represent to the outside world. In other words, civilly recognised artists assume a public role in which they represent and defend their own support base before a wider, heterogeneous public of politicians, students, journalists and 'the man in the street'. In order to obtain this recognition, a different time span than that in the other three domains is often involved. Not 'own' time, social (professional networking) time or quantified time but social incubation time defines the organisation and experience of time in the civil domain.

It is the time of embedding that is required to gain public support. As we know, this may take very long, especially for new or idiosyncratic artistic ideas. In interviews, for example, successful artists and architects spoke of a period of ten years before their work really started to enjoy recognition in society. Prior to that, their work may very well have circulated and be recognised by peers (sometimes even mostly internationally) but not yet in the national media or a national museum or theatre. Civil recognition can take a long time coming and for many artists it simply never arrives. This is also true for artists and designers who are doing quite well commercially. Several of the interviewed creatives make a very decent living from their artistic work. Some artists are even represented by profitable galleries in New York or have no trouble selling their work at the art fair of Basel, even though they are hardly mentioned in the media or have exhibitions in museums. In short, recognition by international peers or the market does not automatically mean social recognition in the civil domain.

An analysis of creative careers shows that the above biotope is often navigated in the same way. Young creatives produce their first tryouts and experiments in the domestic domain. If they are not self-taught, they then go into art education and gradually integrate into the professional peers domain, and then – sometimes aided by teachers – they may be picked up by a gallery owner (the market) and/or a public museum or art critic (the civil domain). Although there is a certain 'chronologic' to this 'biotope trajectory', almost all respondents emphasise that at some point in their career a balance between the four domains is important. For example, successful artists who have been in the market and or civil domain for too long, volunteered in interviews that they felt it was high time to return to the peers or domestic domain. Dwelling too long in the market or the civil domain often generates the well-known phenomenon that artists keep 'endlessly' repeating an originally good idea simply because it brings them public acclaim and/or economic success.

Being able to return to the domestic domain, to the 'own time' in order to reflect deeply

Diagram 1: The artistic biotope



on their work again, or to the environment of peers where they can in all confidence arrive at new insights through discussions with experts is always deemed necessary, at a certain point in their career, to further develop and deepen their own artistic or creative oeuvre. Reversely, those who keep 'hanging on' in the domestic domain will never become professional artists. Art then becomes a hobby or creative therapy, but no creative person can make a living from their artistic work when they remain in the comfort zone of the domestic domain. And also, those who only dwell in the domain of peers run the risk of remaining stuck in endless debates and experiments without ever arriving at an artistic outcome or product.

In short, artists who wish to be able to continue to develop their own work in the long run and also wish to make a living from art will continually have to perform a balancing act between the four domains of the biotope outlined above.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL SECURITY AND ITS GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

When we take a second look at the diagram of the biotope, this time from a more theoretical and macro-sociological angle, we can draw at least two conclusions. First, we may assume – and this is frequently stated by respondents in the interviews – that the outlined domains enjoy, or at least did enjoy, some form of collective or institutional protection, often on a national level. From interviews, documented artists' biographies and sociological studies (Adams 1971; Bott 1957; Weeda 1995) we may infer that, for example, the traditional family structure is crucial during the first professional years of creative individuals. After all, much trial and error doesn't pay many bills and older respondents readily admit that during the first five or even fifteen years of their career they were in fact living off the income of their partner. But the institution 'family' is not only important for financial reasons. Partners also provide mental support, often a crucial element in the developmental phase of creatives. During their start-up and experimentation stage creatives can have serious self-doubt and often have to deal with disappointments.

In short, in the domestic domain both own time and intimacy are institutionally protected by the family. But as we know, this traditional family structure started to erode substantially since the 1970s. The number of divorces and single-parent families has grown tremendously over the past forty years. A changing labour market, which not only welcomed more women but also placed higher demands on mobility and flexibility (see, for example, Zaretsky 1977; Sennett 2006 and 2011) started to take its toll on the private sphere and therefore on family life. Especially creative labour – which often means precarious project work and expects increasingly international mobility in a globalising cultural industry – is hard to combine with traditional family life (Gielen 2009 and 2013). All this contributes to the decline of the institutional protection of the domestic domain.

The same can be said for those institutions that have traditionally played a protective role for the peers domain or the civil domain. Especially after the Bologna Declaration, universities and academies in Europe came under pressure from international competition. It's one of the reasons they have grown in scale over the past ten years. They have merged with other educational programmes and have strongly rationalised educational space and time through measures such as strict contact hours and competencies (see, for example, Biesta 2013; Gielen 2013). And although this may have increased the efficiency of education, it has made it increasingly difficult for our education to safeguard its characteristic social time for debate and trial and error.

A similar analysis can be made for national museums, theatres, art critique, and other public art institutions in the civil domain. The continuing global economic crisis is not only causing subsidies and political support for such institutions to cave in. Within a globalised cultural industry, both cities and art organisations are increasingly forced to compete against each other. Cultural and creative cities try to survive in an economic sense or enhance their position (Nowotny 2011; Gielen 2013). In this competition, economic value is mistaken for cultural value, just as visitor numbers are mistaken for a social support base. As a result, institutions no longer, or do less so, protect the incubation time for the social integration of artistic work. Fewer art reviews in the national mainstream media also mean that artists have fewer public platforms, making it increasingly difficult for them to realise their public role (Lijster *et al.* 2015).

At first glance, it seems like the current tendencies of globalisation are reinforcing only one institution, i.e. that of the market. At least at the European policy level we see that European citizenship, culture, and education since the Lisbon Council of Europe in 2000 are understood as a means of making the Union the most competitive and dynamic economy of the world (Biesta 2011). The market with free mobility of goods, money, and people was already seen from the very beginning, after World War II, as the foundation of its politics and institutions. Official cultural policy on the European level is seen in the first place as an economical tool for welfare improvement (Minichbauer 2011).

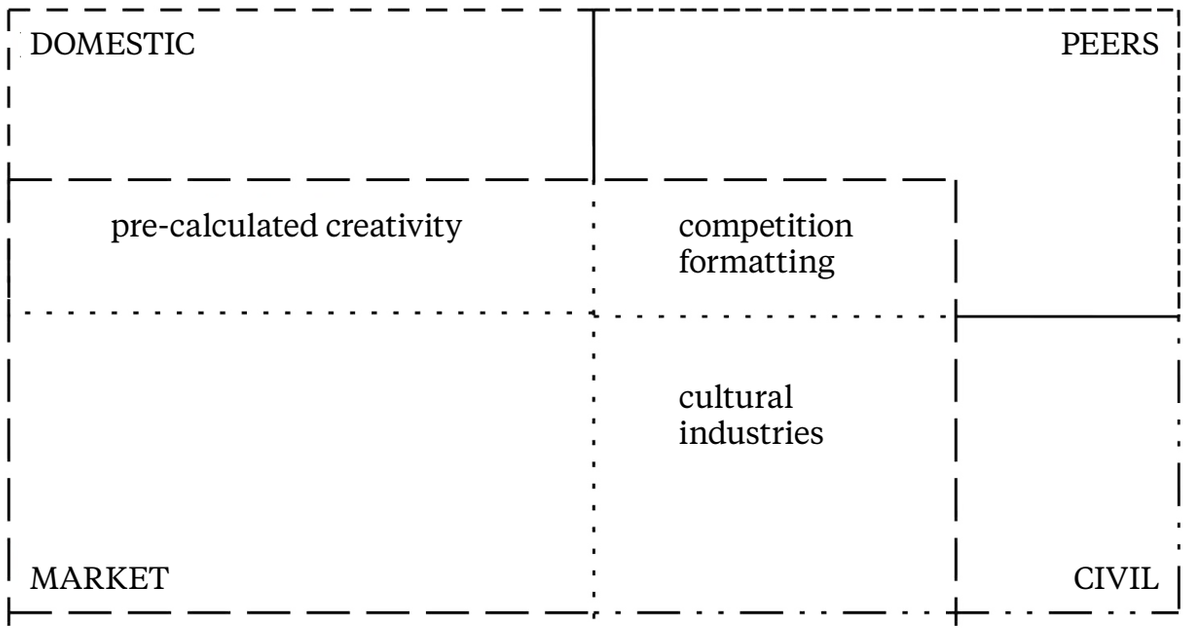
Encouraged by this European official policy, the borders of the other domains of the biotope are less institutionally protected and the logic of the market does intrude in these domains more than before. As a result, an important quality of the market, namely the ability to quantify one's own creative labour and results, is now being integrated in the other domains. For example, we learned from

interviews with architects that they are increasingly using design software in their studios that monitors risks and feasibility, also in a financial sense, already during the creative process itself. This means that the creative process is already quantified and formatted in its initial stages. Also, the global advent of Internet access in the home enables creatives to move from the initially domestic space into other domains with ease. For example, from the studio one can chat with one's peers about artistic work at an early stage, or put work on offer on the market, virtual or otherwise. Many respondents said that nowadays they use the Internet to maintain social networks, both with peers and the market, as well as in the civil domain. In any case, email and other virtual communication appear to hold great attraction. Some of the respondents said that they consciously banned the computer (and especially the Internet) from the studio, precisely because it was a constant threat to their concentration, and also invaded their 'own time' and intimacy.

In the domain of the peers the quantification logic of the market intrudes via, for example, the rationalisation of the educational space, via the Bologna Declaration in Europe, as stated before. Contact hours, competencies, the duration of studies and all the concomitant monitoring in the form of accreditations and audits alter the relationship between student and teacher and interfere with the social time for debate and knowledge exchange (Biesta 2013). Besides, the competition between teachers and students and among the students themselves is being fuelled by contests, teamwork, (Sennett 2011) and by agencies within the schools aimed at 'marketing' the students even before they graduate. In the civil domain we see how institutes such as museums and theatres also tend towards a logic of quantification. For example, visitor numbers are meticulously kept and become more and more decisive in making artistic choices and legitimising policies. In the case of governments giving subsidies, the emphasis is more and more on the number of venues played and on how much income (including that from ticket sales) is generated by the artists or institutes themselves.

This strongly encourages national museums and theatres to orientate themselves on international art tourism or the cultural industry. Diagram 2 illustrates how this expansion of the market space – again, encouraged by European policy – installs hybrid zones in which the values and logics of various domains start to intermingle. The already noted confusion of visitor numbers with public support in the overlap between the market and the civil domain is but one example of such a zone. Courses in cultural management and artistic entrepreneurship in which students learn how to calculate their creative talent and measure it against the potential market value in advance, are expressions of another hybrid zone in the fusion of the market and the domain of the peers. With its heterogeneous zones, Diagram 2 therefore illustrates the paradigm of the creative industry in which creativity is not only quantified, measured and formatted, but is also assigned a well-demarcated district in creative cities.

Diagram 2: The artistic biotope in the creative industries paradigm



FEEDBACK

Worth noting in this is that a market that imposes its quantitative logic onto other domains, thereby also begins to transform itself. This is why we stated in the preceding section that 'at first sight' only the institution of the market was reinforced. As it is, the expansion into other domains also generates a remarkable feedback to the market domain. A traditional free market that is governed by the rules of supply and demand and by free competition begins to undergo a transformation because of this. For instance, illegal downloads, hacking, and piracy are known and even frequently occurring practices amongst the creatives we interviewed. From their presumably safe place in the domestic domain the respondents are frequently navigating the fine line between creativity and petty crime in order to expand their creative horizon.

However, such practices are known to be dysfunctional to the traditional functioning of the market. They at least disrupt the relation between supply and demand. The tendency to quantify, formalise, and standardise education in turn stimulates the homogenisation of cultural products in the market. In combination with the encouragement of competition among students this leads to increasingly competitive isomorphism in the market (DiMaggio 1991): artistic and creative products, including festivals and biennials, are beginning to look more and more alike because they are constantly comparing and mirroring each other. In any case, not just the artworks but also the artists themselves who are presented there seem to be becoming more and more interchangeable.

At the European level this evolution to homogenisation is again encouraged by defining the European territory as a monotopic market of interchangeable cultural capitals and creative cities. In any case, in the past decade in Europe, the dream of a common market with free competition and frictionless mobility has turned into a problematic political name-calling, troikas, and barbed wire. In particular the use of troikas such as in Greece are evidence of the belief that unity within the European Union can be achieved or restored by fixing the economy, that mutual trust can be gained by balancing budgets. In this belief, the European territory is seen as a monotopia in which the competition between (creative) cities, regions, and countries benefits everyone.

Until recently, no one would have dared to predict that this European utopia might very well turn into a dystopia of reactionary divisive politics and exits. Nevertheless, social geographers Ole Jensen and Tim Richardson neatly pointed out, as early as 2004, that a policy of competition between cities, regions, or countries might raise the common prosperity, but would also always generate winners and losers. No matter how relative differences may be, the inherent logic of competition is that it creates a hierarchy of at least gradual inequalities between those who have more and those who have less. Those who see the free market as the foundation of Europe apply the same measure to all residents, cities, regions, and countries, looking only at their differences in quantitative terms. From that perspective there are only actors who do better or not so well, who are very successful or do very badly. Then there are only front runners and stragglers and everyone in between, but everyone is going in the same direction, towards the same worthy goal. That goal is after all easy to calculate and can be expressed in numbers. Within Europe, this leads to the ironic but rather apt spectacle in which glances are mostly cast from down to up, or from the geographical south to the north. At the moment, in Europe fierce competition inevitably leads to envy and exclusion, along with the occasional foul play. The fundamental problem of Europe on the cultural level is the belief that cultural differences can be smoothed over by making everything mutually comparable in exchange value. And this we finally can also detect in the last domain: the civil space. The partial 'occupation' of the civil domain also produces curious effects in the market. Within the paradigm of the cultural industry more and more artistic clusters and chains of private institutions are formed (for example Guggenheim or the majors in pop music), which leads to monopolies. As we know, monopolies also form a threat to traditional markets. Diagram 3 sketches the situation in which not only the institutional grip on the domestic domain, the peers domain and the civil domain is loosened, but also that on the domain of the market. In our view, this represents what the global terrain of artistic and creative production looks like today.

Diagram 3 illustrates how traditional, mostly national, institutions are having trouble protecting their institutional borders. Encouraged by a European policy, this results in changes in the relationships, professional attitudes, experiences of time and recognition (of quality) within each domain. Grey, or rather, hybrid and heterogeneous zones arise in which the logics of different domains and various institutions begin to intermingle. This macro-sociological shift and hybridisation doesn't alter the fact that individually, the interviewed creative workers and artists still distinguish between the various domains on the *micro*-sociological level.

Also, they deem a balance between the domains necessary if they are to survive artistically in the long run. However, the point is that this balance is less and less guaranteed or enforced institutionally. On the contrary, finding the right balance is increasingly seen as an individual responsibility. Drawing borders between work and private life, between the market or civil domain and the domestic domain, is a task that has come to rest squarely on the shoulders of the individual. The artist, the creative worker – often a freelancer – decides individually when to close the laptop. In a competitive

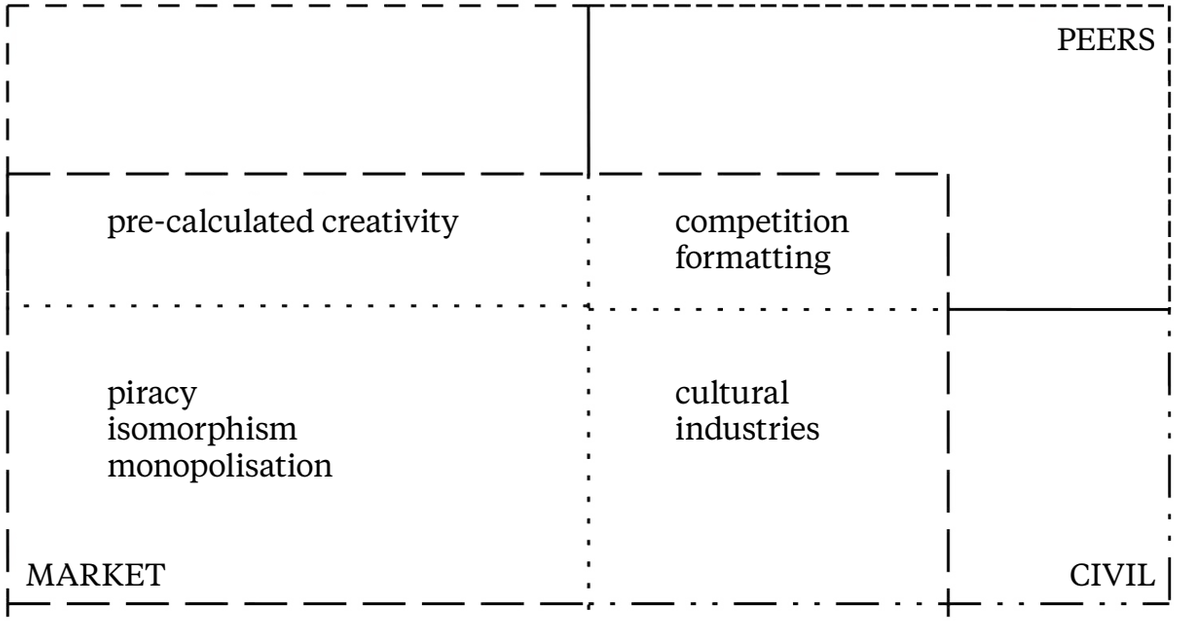


Diagram 3: Feedback in the creative biotope

atmosphere at school, a student makes a personal decision whether or not to measure a still fresh artistic idea against the opinion of fellow students or teachers, or to keep it private and thereby safe (because it is then protected against 'theft'). And in the civil domain the creative must individually decide whether to resist the pressure from a museum director (or subsidising government) who is only interested in showing work that draws a public (because it is already known) or to stubbornly persevere and choose to present little-known or not yet recognised work.

Collective responsibilities are increasingly shifted towards the individual, bringing more and more pressure to bear on creatives. This leads to well-known post-Fordist anomalies: stress, burnout, depression, and dropout. We have seen it all in the course of our frequent research visits, studio visits and in-depth interviews. It was one of the reasons why we set up a new study to specifically focus on the issue of sustainability and the role of the artistic biotope in this respect (see **CCQO.EU**). In what follows a number of hypotheses as tentative conclusions of this study are articulated.

CREATIVE COMMONS

In interviews with artists and creative workers, the same complaints often came up. When asked why a respondent came under pressure or suffered from a burnout, they pointed at more or less the same causes: increasingly shorter deadlines, resulting in too little time for development and experimentation, and heightened competition with fellow artists, which not only eroded trust and solidarity but also led to less exchange of knowledge and information among professionals. Schematically, these complaints were included in Diagram 3, where the growing free-market system generates all sorts of effects in domains whereas this didn't occur, or at least occurred less, in the past. And, as we said, in the end this has a relatively disrupting effect on the traditional operation of the market itself. The situation makes respondents sometimes cast a 'nostalgic' look at Diagram 1, where the domains are still neatly delineated and protected by national institutions. We call such utterings 'nostalgic' because they primarily look back at an idealised – and mainly Western – art world as it was in the first half of the twentieth century. In this image the (bourgeois) family is represented as a safe haven, royal and national art academies as friendly environments where one could debate and experiment until late at night, and museums, philharmonic orchestras, national operas, and theatres protected the (mostly national) art canon and cultural hierarchy. Most likely, this ideal world never really existed. Nevertheless, we may surmise that in those days of nation building the domains within the biotope were better protected than today. Our hypothesis, however, is that a restoration of national institutions in that vein is hardly likely. Whatever subsidising governments there were, over the past decade they appear to be mostly making cutbacks in educational and cultural spending, making it difficult for (national) institutions to protect the peers concerned and the civil domain.

Likewise, it is very doubtful whether the traditional family structure will be fully restored any time soon. This doesn't take away from the fact that the creative professionals, often working as freelancers, are in need of collective protection. Anyway, during interviews this was mentioned frequently. Sometimes, solutions were sought in, literally, 'collectivisation'. Artists then form collectives in which they share materials and studio space as well as social contacts, thereby cutting costs. In some cases this even leads to more complex systems of solidarity in which participants in, for example, cooperatives set up an alternative health insurance and provide other forms of social security.

In order to interpret these young, sometimes still budding initiatives we use the notion of the 'commons'. This concept has gained prominence both in recent philosophy (Hardt and Negri 2009) and in law research (Lessig 2004). According to Hardt and Negri, guaranteeing such a commons is necessary to safeguard future creative production. These philosophers have described the commons as a category that transcends the classic contrast between public property (often guaranteed by the state) and private property. In the area of culture, Negri and Hardt mention knowledge, language, codes, information, and affects as belonging to the commons. This shared and freely accessible communality is necessary to keep the economy running in the long term, to regain the balance in the ecological system, and to keep our cultural fabric of identities dynamic (Hardt and Negri 2009: viii).

It is because of this importance of the commons that our recent research focuses on this aspect, especially on concrete forms of organisation or even institutions that can support and protect these creative commons. So far, our explorations have led us to civil initiatives originating in the wasteland between market and state, between commercial value and political-cultural value. Especially after the financial crisis, artists have sought and continue to look for a way out through alternative forms of selforganisation and collective solidarity structures. One example of this we find in the music world in Amsterdam, where fifty composers and musicians have joined forces in order to acquire and collectively manage a former bathhouse in the city centre as a music venue. Splendor, as the organisation was named in 2010, has no hierarchic management, no PR or programmer, no public funding and no free market mechanisms either. In the tradition of the Do-It-Yourself culture the artists simply do everything themselves and have meanwhile established a broad audience for not always evident and sometimes also experimental new music. These fifty artists share responsibility for all aspects of the cooperative institute. Its financial structure consists of a modest one-time contribution (1000 euro per artist), bonds that were issued, and subscription fees of 100 euros per year providing access to membership concerts. Since the agenda of the venue provides playtime for all, a grassroots-democratic programming is assured in a simple manner, guaranteeing full artistic freedom for all.

The curious thing is that the fifty participants have never physically held a meeting, neither for the establishment or management of the organisation nor for the programming. This means that the board relies completely on mutual trust and in its by now eighth year of operating that trust has hardly ever been betrayed. All this makes Splendor one of the examples of new art institutes that organise themselves according to the principle of the commons (Ostrom 1990; De Angelis 2017).

All over Europe similar developments can be noted in which civil initiatives create their own third space between government (or state) and assemblies. Following constantly recurring bottom-up organisational principles, such as a grassrootsdemocratic decision-making structure, a horizontal organogram, self-governance, peer to peer consultation, and assemblies, an age-old principle of shared use of common ground is given new life (Gilbert 2014).

At Splendor this collective management – following one of the design principles for the commons as defined by economist Elinor Ostrom (1990) – is done by a relatively closed and homogeneous group with a shared culture. Other cultural organisations try to break open this relative seclusion by following the commoning principles as developed by political economist Massimo DeAngelis (2017) and others. Here, following radical democratic principles of inclusivity, the aim is to give access to cultural goods and their production to anyone, regardless of social class, age, nationality, gender, religious persuasion, and so on.

One example of this is the impressive venue Ex Asilo De Filangieri in Naples, where weekly assemblies determine how a landmark cultural building is used. The result of this decision-making structure is that the studios and rehearsal spaces are used by both local carnival clubs and renowned theatre directors. All those who participate in the assembly are allowed to co-determine the organisation's functioning and programming. The Spanish architectural studio Recetas Urbanas takes that grassroots-democratic commoning principle even further by providing its designs for free on the Internet and by actively inviting, in their interventions, collaboration with those who are not yet being represented (by politics, unions, NGOs or organised social interest groups). Prisoners, people with

disabilities, drug addicts, refugees, illegals, Roma, and so on, who are neglected by representative democracy – often having literally and legally no voice or right to vote – are given the opportunity to still have an impact on society through collaboration in building projects.

In that sense, the commoning practice of these artistic and creative organisations, in line with Jacques Rancière, is always also political: they render visible what was until then invisible. According to this philosopher, every political act is aimed at a rearrangement of that communal visible space. In relation to this he speaks of the common basis of art and politics as 'the sharing and (re)distribution of what can be perceived with the senses' (partage du sensible). This is the aesthetic moment of politics, but also precisely the 'political of art', in that it is capable of showing what had been neglected until then. Art can make us aware of voices that we did not hear before, of political emotions and interests that suddenly acquire a public face (Rancière 2000; Gielen and Lijster 2015).

Splendor provides self-governance for the bottom layer in the creative chain, especially the artist. L'Asilo and Recetas Urbanas attempt to uncover neglected cultures from the bottom up, time and again. Whereas with Splendor it is done by a limited number of 'initiated' from the same art discipline. L'Asilo attempts to reach out to everyone who wishes to organise cultural activities in the city, according to grassroots-democratic principles. By doing this, at Splendor they may be rewriting music history but this re-articulation remains the privilege of a relatively exclusive group of commoners. L'Asilo and especially Recetas Urbanas are opening the door to a much more permanent cultural recalibration.

The three examples all focus on those who are not yet being represented; those who are at the bottom of the symbolic or economic ladder or have very little power over making decisions. That's why their practices can be called *constitutive* and their organisations can be called *con*stitutions instead of *in*stitutions. They share the aspect that they are trying to provide firmer ground to that or those who do not yet have it, to those whose voices are not really heard or those who are not yet represented. In Dutch, the word for 'the constitution' is *grondwet* (literally 'ground law') containing the prefix *grond* (ground, soil, bottom, base). The fact that this operation is done through communal decision-forming processes also supports the choice for the term 'constitutions'. The prefix 'con' is a reminder of its collective character. Finally, Splendor, L'Asilo, and Recetas Urbanas operate in a civil domain between market and state for which very little is legally regulated so far. Commoning art organisations therefore frequently find themselves in the same position as the founding fathers of the constitution. The philosopher Hannah Arendt once said about them:

> … those who get together to constitute a new government are themselves unconstitutional, that is, they have no authority to do what they have set out to achieve. The vicious circle in legislating is present not in ordinary law making, but in laying down the fundamental law, the law of the land or the constitution which, from then on, is supposed to incarnate the 'higher law' from which all laws ultimately derive their authority (Arendt 1990, 183–84).

Whereas Splendor made the conscious decision not to apply for public funding as it does not wish to play according to the rules of the government (and the Dutch Performing Arts Fund), Recetas Urbanas calls its field of operation 'a-legal'. Ex Asilo Filangieri produced its own Declaration of Urban, Civic and Collective Use for the commonal running of its venue in Naples. This declaration was later adopted by the city authority and thereby also became applicable to other civil initiatives. In addition, both Recetas Urbanas and L'Asilo often rely on the national constitution to defend and legitimise their activities and self-regulation (De Tullio 2018, 299–312).

After all, many national constitutions already guarantee commonal principles such as the democratic use of and free access to basic community goods and services (such as education, culture, work, healthcare), inclusivity, equality, and the right of self-governance. Constitutions were, in most cases, drawn up by people who once fought for commonal principles themselves, such as autonomous government, equality, and mutual solidarity for the people of, in those cases, nation states.

On our explorative research trip, we encountered a growing number of artistic initiatives that generate completely different forms of working and organising. Despite their great diversity, what all those initiatives such as Splendor, L'Asilo and Recetas Urbanas, have in common is that they are built within the civil domain. That is to say, they all start with a civil initiative for which a government has not or not yet designed regulations or subsidies and that is not or not yet of commercial interests to a free market.

This is why in Diagram 4 we present them as an expansion of the civil domain. From there they trickle into the domestic domain (for example, open source projects such as Wikipedia and Linux) where they make free knowledge and free creative tools available. They generate free knowledge by launching debates and sometimes activist discussions in art academies, during artist-in-residencies and open studios where they analyse their social position from an economic, political and social perspective, as well as from an ecological perspective. In addition, they penetrate the market itself by introducing alternative economies (via, for instance, cooperatives) and alternative laws (such as the already mentioned Creative Commons licence) (Lessig 2004).

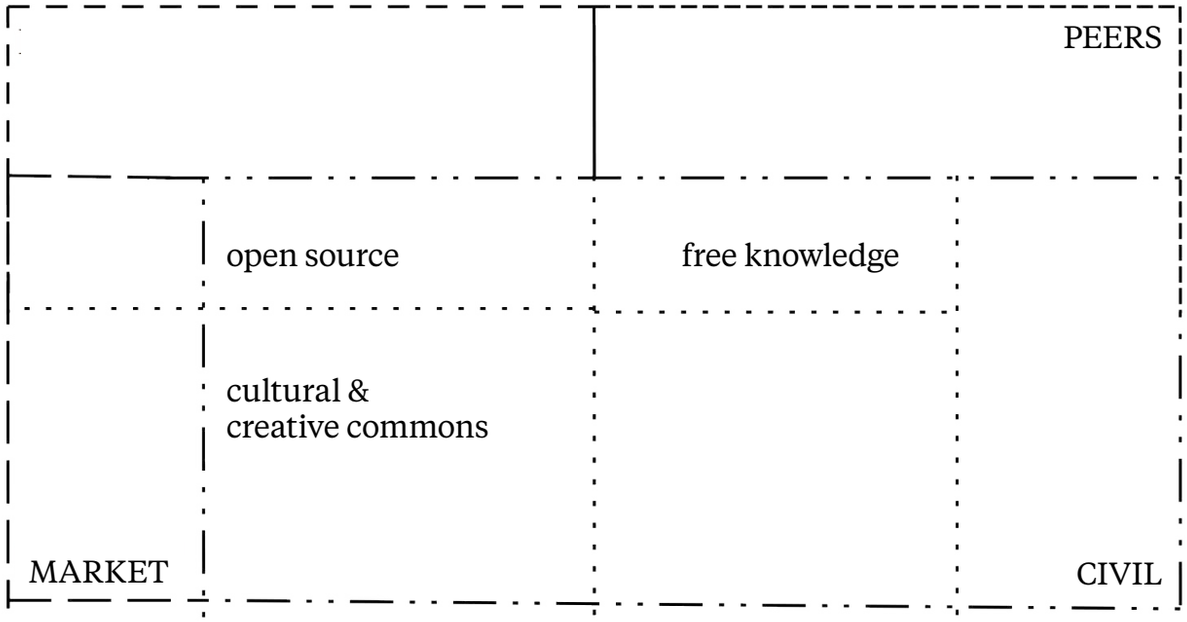


Diagram 4: The creative commons biotope

The organisations we have so far encountered in the domain of the Commons not only have in common that they all originate in civil initiatives. What is often also striking, is their highly heterogeneous configuration. They not only develop, simultaneously, activities in the most divergent fields, such as architecture *and* fashion *and* education *and* visual art, they also freely mix formal and informal relations, public and private, politics and labour in how they are structured. Just as in mixed farms or the traditional circus, family relations and friendships are combined with professional roles, and commercial and civil activities merge into each other to the point that they can no longer be distinguished.

Also, whereas many services are exchanged for free, others are strictly regulated and formalised in contracts. Precisely because of this heterogeneity these new institutions of the commons lend themselves to further study. Our hypothesis is that their organisational form may be more suited to the creative labour model in which individuals are involved as a whole. In relation to the biotope we have outlined, we could also say that these institutions of the commons attempt to solve the issue of the balance between the various domains internally through mutual agreements and a division of tasks.

To illustrate this with a concrete example: when one artist 'works the market', another artist within the same organisation has time and space to experiment and develop new work, since the latter is temporarily exempt from earning money, through a system of reciprocity. It is evident that social relations or the collectivisation of activities make it possible to establish a new balance within the biotope, while also allowing oneself a more independent attitude towards external, traditional institutions such as an art academy, a museum or an auction, or even a government.

In any case, the collective labour model provides better opportunities and also more security than the dominant freelance model of the creative industries. After all, this latter, post-Fordist model only pays for production time, while other things the creative worker needs to be able to produce at all (such as education, time to experiment and to develop) are being shifted more and more to the individual level. By contrast, a collective and heterogeneous labour model tries to meet these needs, which lie outside the sphere of labour and the market.

The potential advantages of these organisations of the commons do not prevent them from running into certain problems. For example, the typical hybridity can also carry the seed of dysfunctions we are familiar with from traditional mixed (family) businesses, such as nepotism and fraudulent tendencies. And such organisations are not only threatened from the inside, but from the

outside as well. Civil self-organising makes it easy for governments to relieve themselves of public tasks that were initially theirs. Governments may find it easy to ignore their cultural and educational responsibilities, if these tasks are already spontaneously taken care of by volunteer initiatives. However, less government involvement also means that it becomes more difficult to develop a broader social support base in the civil domain. Organisations of the commons are therefore at risk of becoming relatively closed peer communities of insiders or 'connoisseurs'.

In addition, commercial parties can then pass on a large part of the labour costs to these commons and only reap the lucrative benefits. Commons organisations have always run the risk of attracting 'free riders' (Ostrom 1990), individuals or organisations trying to walk away with the profit without investing in the commons proportionally. Further research will have to reveal what are the values and traps of these new artistic and creative labour models. What, for example are fitting legal and political conditions for an optimal functioning of the institutions of the commons?

As long as futurology is not an empirical science, it will be hard to predict whether this advent of the commons will continue. And therefore the question whether the new institutions of the commons will replace or complement the traditional private and public art and (national) cultural institutions, will remain unanswered for now. But their observed potential for re-balancing the artistic biotope and for generating more sustainable creative labour makes further research necessary, to say the least. It may even be our scientific and civil duty. But we see it also as the duty of European policy to give research about and testing of the commons at least a chance. Rethinking and developing new legal and economic models seems to us the main political task of a region that nowadays easily can draw lessons from its monolithic orientation on global economy and the free market.

The colourful multitude of singular artistic and cultural initiatives we met in the commons teaches at least that this restricted orientation neglects a divers and heterotopic potential to rethink human relations of exchange within Europe and its global relationships with the world. To safeguard culture and its multitude of identities assumes at least that we not only look at its economic side, for instance by encourage creative industries in a free market, but also and probably more so that we develop and stimulate a strong civil society where our human creative commons can take up a pivotal position between a global market and a national state.

Footnotes, **see online**.

Originally published under the title 'Saveguarding creativity: an artistic biotope and its institutional insecurities in a global Market orientated Europe', in the Handbook of Cultural Security, by Watanaby, Y. (edit.), published by Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing in 2018 (ISBN 978-1-78643-773-0), 398-415. Reprinted by permission of the author.

BELARUS

FREE CHOIR:

HOW MUSICIANS BANDED TOGETHER TO DEFY DICTATOR-SHIP IN BELARUS

In Belarusian, the name of the Free Choir is *Volny Khor* Names marked with * are changed on request of the heroes of the article for safety reasons, gender is preserved. According to members and leaders of the choir, it is inadvisable to make their participation in the choir publicly known.

They sing because they cannot remain silent.

TRANSLATION Katherine Balash Hanna Valynets

SUMMER. ORIGINS OF FREE CHOIR

"It was on Christmas Day, on 7 January. My son and I were walking to our car that was parked by the church," Inga Yegorova, a resident of Minsk, said.

"We were walking and talking, when suddenly I heard singing. My son stopped. We listened closely, and I recognised the voices of the Free Choir. We went in the direction of the sound and joined the first few listeners. The atmosphere around the choir is unbelievable. You want to listen and sing along – it is so inspiring.

These people have such a strong presence. They look so strong, confident, and fantastic. These days, people are afraid to talk loudly in the street, but they sing. I am drawn to their music. One cannot deny that the Free Choir gives inspiration and hope."

There are thousands of people like Inga Yegorova in Minsk. For half a year, the Free Choir has performed online, at metro stations, the central railway station, in shopping malls, the opera theatre, and other public places. The Free Choir is a community of musicians that was formed in August 2020 as a response to police brutality and election fraud in Belarus.

It all started when musicians, singers, conductors, and other employees of the Belarusian State Philharmonic, as well as musicians from other establishments, performed on the steps of the Philharmonic.

"We could not just swallow those insults and keep silent," Irina Stankevich*, a conductor and one of the founders of the Free Choir, said.

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"I was 150 kilometres away from Minsk, but I was moved to tears when I saw my former colleagues from the Philharmonic perform. I came to Minsk the next day."

"Artists and culture figures joined the protests, and I was among them. I was singing with them, although I am a producer," Aleksandr Chakhovsky, a music and theatre producer, a co-author of the popular project *Classics at the Town Hall*, said.

On 13 August, people sang *Mahutny Boža*, written in the middle of the 20th century. In 1993, there was a proposal to make it the anthem of independent Belarus. Several weeks later, the authorities pressured the philharmonics, and the riot police detained five participants in the demonstration 'for a talk'.

Two participants suggested that the choir moves to shopping malls and just random public places, because no one can forbid singing there. The people took the advice. Of course, they could also encounter the police there and be arrested, but the spontaneously formed group of musicians already started taking shape as a form of protest.

AUTUMN. HOW MUSICIANS SUPPORTED MINSK RESIDENTS

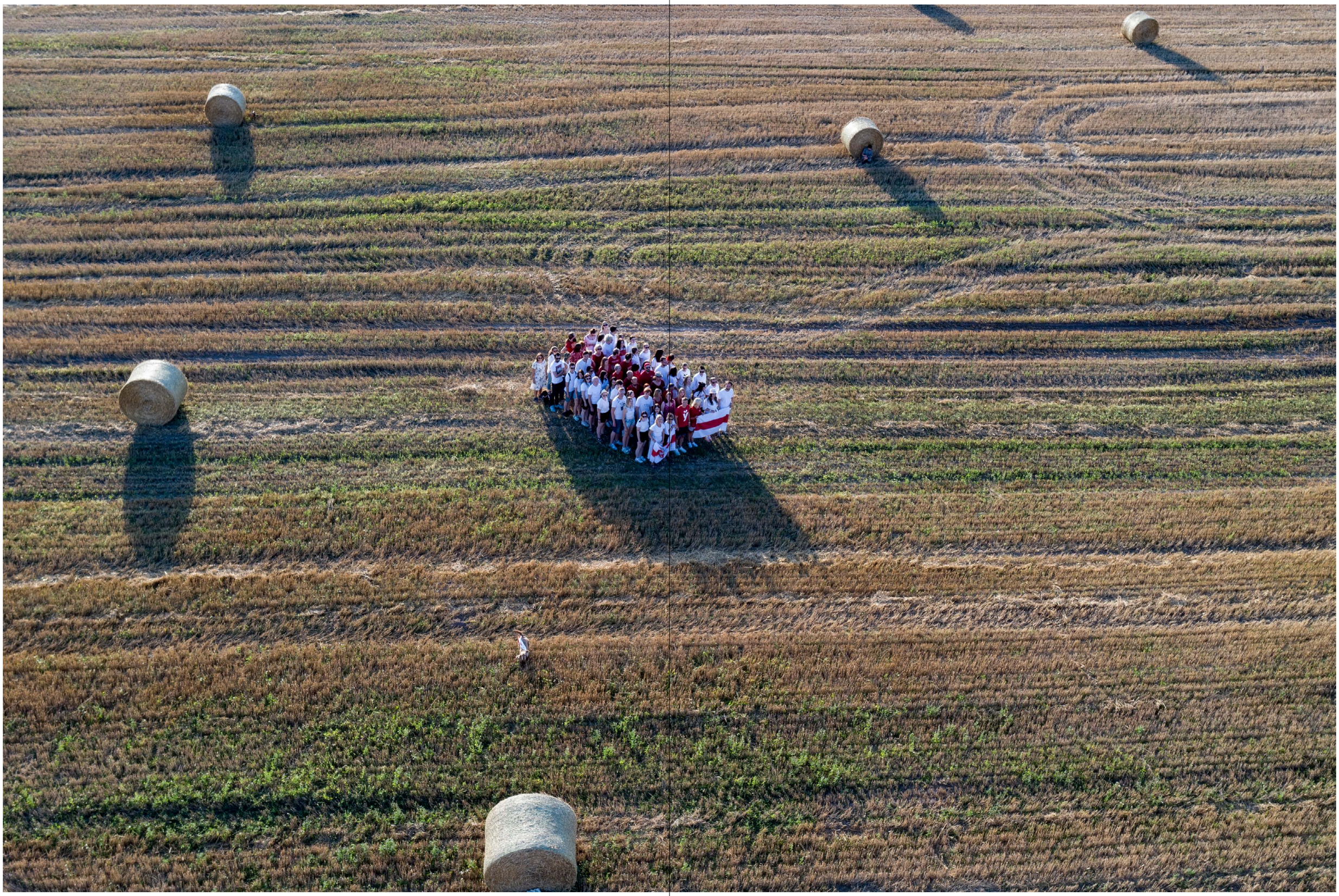
In August and the autumn of 2020, the Belarusian cities were bustling with activity, and the choir could not remain uninvolved. It performed in different public places several times a week. The Free Choir's repertoire includes national anthems and songs in the Belarusian language, some of them are modern, some are more than 80 years old. Authors of some of these songs were executed by the Soviet authorities. Some songs were also translated from other languages, for example, *El pueblo unido* of the Chilean resistance.

"The first performances [in shopping malls] were peaceful and majestic. Everything around us stopped: shop assistants were listening to us, workers of the shopping malls also stopped to listen, people unfolded flags," Maksim Sokolov*, one of the founders of the choir, said.

Every Sunday, the members of the choir sang at weekly marches. The marches brought together tens of thousands of protesters. Law enforcement agencies and the military tried dispersing the demonstrators, beating and arresting people. Despite that, the choir took part in all autumn protests.

"Our choir was also called 'the flying choir', and one day I understood why. One Sunday we were about to start singing, when we heard sounds of explosions, like those from grenades. The crowd was passing by, someone started telling people to leave. We were singing, and then stopped, I do not know why. In mere seconds, the crowd became full of people in face masks and black and grey plain clothes," Yelena Veremei*, a member of the choir, recalled.

Another member of the choir spoke about a demonstration in the city centre, when the choir wore white and red balaclavas and held a banner accusing the authorities of genocide.



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"We were standing in the middle of the procession and singing. Suddenly people started to leave. I also walked away from the police, pretending to be a local resident, but I noticed that everyone was looking at me. It turned out that I had forgotten to take the white balaclava off and was standing there for everyone to see," Vera Doroshevich said.

That autumn, Minsk residents not only staged protests, but also got to know their neighbours. Courtyards of houses across Minsk buzzed with activity and hosted lectures and concerts. The Free Choir also took part in them and sometimes received around ten invitations to such courtyard events a week.

"If anyone had told me that people would want a choir to perform in their courtyard, I would not have believed it," choir director Irina Stankevich said. "We were so free back then! In contrast to this spring, when we are basically hogtied..."

Hundreds of people listened to the choir, and singers encouraged people to sing along. "We want to sing these songs together when we win," members of the choir say.

At the end of the autumn, several key members of the choir were arrested. Supposedly, because the conductor dared conduct with a police baton and dress up as a riot police officer. This happened during the performance on 3 November in one of shopping centres on the outskirts of the city. Since then, the choir has become more cautious when organising flashmobs, and carefully looked into all its members again to be safe.

WINTER. HOW PROTESTS WENT UNDERGROUND, BUT FREE CHOIR REMAINED

By the winter, the protests started moving underground, because of the increased police presence in the streets. However, the Free Choir still performed, although less often. Here is what people wrote about it:

"Murderers are chasing and beating people in our neighbourhood! But music saves us! What a strong, brave choir!"

"Between their performances, I always worry if they are okay. Your singing gives us strength and is very touching. Thank you!"

During the quiet time in February, the choir staged one of its most famous performances, singing in a shopping mall in front of a three-storey-long national flag.

"It was so quiet, there were only the riot police everywhere. Everything came to a standstill, everybody was arrested – and suddenly I saw a huge white-red-white flag in a video. That happened on the day when the authorities threatened to declare the flag extremist and severely punish for using it. My first thought was that it was in Czechia, Poland, or the USA... But that was in Belarus!" one of the choir's leaders, Maksim Sokolov, said.

After that performance, the choir had to go underground for a month: one day the riot police surrounded a building during the choir's rehearsal. However, it was the wrong building, and the police just wasted time searching for the singers in empty offices.

3

In the spring, the choir resumed its activities, but its leaders stressed that it became harder to find a place for rehearsals, and they constantly remind the participants that if they join the choir they might be arrested.

Many members do not know each other and are not eager to make acquaintance. Neither are the leaders. Irina Stankevich knows only a couple of the members, she does not even know the names of most singers, although they have rehearsed together for half a year. How is that possible?

"I might be taken for an interrogation any day. The less I know, the easier it will be for me not to reveal anything," she said.

It is not an overstatement: Irina has already been arrested twice. All in all, the choir comprises about 100 people, six leaders, and six professional conductors. At least 20-30 of them have already been in jail, some more than once.

This came as a surprise: until 2020, people in Belarus had never been arrested for singing in a choir at their workplace. Now the singers perform in face masks and leave their smartphones at home. But the choir's spirits are high:

"They are like tigers, asking to let them perform in a public place. However, we have decided to move our activities online as much as possible. Our performances come at too high a price, as they lead to new arrests, making us suspend our activities," the choir's director Irina Stankevich noted.

Despite the difficulties, the choir has certain plans for the future. The Free Choir consists of two units and an orchestra. Most of its members are women. The activities of the choir have brought together up to a 1,000 people.

The Free Choir has already released several collections of songs and intends to release another one, make several music videos featuring the orchestra and rock musicians, and stage a concert.

Another new, but important line of activity is setting up local choirs in neighbourhoods of Minsk. So far, there are but a few, but the choir's leaders hope that there will be more in the future.

They stress that the Free Choir has prompted many people to reconsider their opinions about choral music. Professional musicians from all over the world send the choir words of support and praise.

WHY DO BELARUSIANS ENGAGE IN ART INSTEAD OF POLITICS?

The Free Choir is one of the few large professional underground protest communities in the field of culture and art in Belarus. To an extent, it is similar to Belarus Free Theatre, an underground theatre company that has existed since 2005 and is based in London. The theatre has been active for many years, but can perform in Belarus only in secret.

Perhaps, the future of the choir will be similar, if the government does not change. However, the choir's leaders believe that change will come. They would like to popularise choral singing in Belarus and turn their movement into "an official choir with several units and branches in several cities."

"For example, Latvians are a very singing nation, everyone sings there. One out of three people you meet sings in a choir. The Latvian song festival in June draws around 70,000 people, and tickets sell out in two hours. I wish it was like that in Belarus," Irina Stankevich shared.
Choral concerts are not that popular in Belarus. According to the leaders of the Free Choir, before August 2020, selling 200 tickets for a choral concert was a challenge.

Moreover, the authorities are not inclined to listen to figures of culture in Belarus, and the latter do not get involved in a race for power. Nevertheless, representatives of Belarusian culture joined in the protests.

"It all started with singing on the steps of the Philharmonic. Later, in August, many actors resigned from the Yanka Kupala National Theatre. Then people were singing and dancing in Nezavisimosti Square in the evenings," Aleksandr Chakhovsky said. At that time, he still worked as a producer, but later became an executive director of the Belarusian Culture Solidarity Foundation.

"Artists painted, demonstrators drew posters, came up with chants – and so much more. All this in solidarity. People have supported one another, showing that we are together, that we are a nation, that we are a culture that deserves better."

Representatives of Belarusian culture collected more than 1,600 signatures on the address to the authorities condemning vote rigging and police brutality. Some of them were forced to resign from state-run establishments, others left of their own accord. Although before August 2020, many of them liked to stress that they and their music are out of politics.

"I knew about everything [vote rigging and violence], but turned a blind eye to it Irina Stankevich said. "However, this time I get the feeling that the protests matter. We have no other way, and I am 150% sure that we will win."

Why have figures of art changed their mind? Perhaps, because the 2020 protests were the largest anti-government protests in the history of Belarus and affected everyone.

"The political protests are brimming with art, which is growing to the nationwide scale," Tatiana Vodolazhskaya, a sociologist and programme coordinator of the Flying University educational platform, believes. "Our political space is tight. There are no various political discussions. We have only one question: whether we agree to live under the government that resorts to violence and lies, or not. For the majority of Belarusians, the answer is obvious."

1 PHOTO COLLAGE Andrei
2 Eighty Grodno residents lined up in a white-red-white flag. Photo by Ivan Tsyrkunovich
3 PHOTO COLLAGE Andrei

ART AS A FORM OF PROTEST

“Belarusian protests are the most beautiful ones”

Arrests, trials, time in pre-trial detention centres and fines for white-red-white clothes, tea parties in a courtyard, or photos on social networks – such is the current situation in Belarus, where peaceful protests against election fraud and police brutality were met with repressions. Visual arts and protest art have become characteristic of the Belarusian revolution. Belarusian protest art plays an important role in the fight of the new with the old, the modern with the archaic, the society with the dictatorship.

EVALUTION

The first ‘wave’ of the cultural protest was triggered by the seizure of Chaim Soutine’s painting *Eva*. In June 2020, during a search in Belgazprombank in Minsk, the bank’s art collection of more than 100 paintings was seized in relation to the criminal case of Belgazprombank. *Eva* was the most expensive panting in the collection. Belgazprombank’s former head Viktor Babariko, who was Alexander Lukashenko’s main rival in the presidential election, was arrested soon afterwards.

Such treatment of world-famous masterpieces by painters from Belarus provoked outrage. Artists joined in the protests too. *Eva* inspired an artistic movement, with many artists reacting to the situation, which then went mainstream: stickers, T-shirts, bags, etc. – goods with Eva’s image sold out instantly. Belarus Free Theatre staged a performance in London – a procession of people wearing prison uniforms and masks with Eva’s face. A similar performance in solidarity with Belarusians was organised in Amsterdam. Such was the first reaction of the Belarusian diaspora in the summer of 2020. This was the start of the Belarusian ‘Evalution’.

NO TO BLUE FINGERS: ART IN RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE

In August, after several days of terror when the authorities and the police unleashed a violent crackdown on the post-election protests, new forms of protest art emerged. This was an attempt to process the injustice and illegal actions of the authorities, which the Belarusian society had faced.

“I know so many people who suffered from violence in one way or another. It felt as if it was just a bad dream where evil was almost palpable. It was that brutality and the repressions that gave rise to so many various visual forms of protest art. Belarus simply exploded with political posters, graphics, actionism,” Irina Varkulevich, a designer and organiser of various cultural events from Grodno, said.

On those August days, all intellectuals of Grodno – musicians, artists, healthcare workers, actors – took to the streets and publicly condemned violence. Six famous artists from Grodno wrote an open address, saying ‘no’ to blue fingers (blue fingers became one of the symbols of the Belarusian protests, representing the unwillingness to let go of power).

“True art is meant to create and unite, it always supports what is right and fair. What has been happening in our country is pain that cannot be suppressed, that cannot be endured. This is unacceptable! This is an insult to us as citizens and to our human dignity in general. Art cannot exist amid violence, constant lies, aggression, and terror... It is impossible to push a country towards ‘a better tomorrow’ with force and police batons!” the artists’ address reads.

The protests in Belarus have been characterised by an incredible outburst of art at several levels: visual (posters, mottos, symbols, performances), structural, and communicative (various forms of self-organisation and solidarity among people).

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"It seemed as if the whole city was one large family. People were happy to respond to any request, whether you needed lighting equipment for an art performance or a 300m²-large storage for a virtual project – you are welcome. The amount of help and support was massive. For 26 years, we lived in a void where you must obtain permission for everything. However, last year was the beginning of a true 'festival of disobedience'. For example, if we were not allowed to stick anything to walls – we went there and did that," Irina Varkulevich shared.

Grodno residents used symbols and art performances to express their position in a creative way. For example, drivers formed the Russian word 'Leave' and '97%' with their cars. There were marches with white-red-white flags and umbrellas on Sundays and pensioners' marches on Mondays. White-clad women with flowers stood in solidarity chains in a protest against brutality, 80 Grodno residents wearing white and red formed a huge white-red-white flag. A drone with the white-red-white flag could be occasionally spotted flying above the main square of the city.

Painters, of course, did not remain uninvolved. In order to support people who had faced repressions, they arranged a charity auction, putting their works up for the auction and donating the earned money to victims of the repressions.

"The current unrest in Belarus is a fight against the vestiges of the Soviet Union that is absurd in its essence. The protests have brought together many young, creative, free in mind people without a Soviet background," Irina Varkulevich remarked.

HOW ARTISTS 'LOST' TO MASSES

During the protests in Belarus, many people have been arrested. The autumn saw a surge in courtyard events – prison and courtyard art took centre stage.

Numerous graffiti depicting the white-red-white flag on walls, posts, bus stops, white-red-white ribbons on tree branches, white-red-white curtains, white and red clothes on balconies, white pieces of paper in windows. This form of visual protest became an attempt to secure one's place, to claim the city back (with the message 'it is ours'), to express one's stance and solidarity as well as a way of communication: people saw how many of them were out there. Visual art invented its own language in contrast to the one used by the government and its supporters. Such nationwide art demonstrates unprecedented devotion of large masses of people to a common political agenda.

"We are visualising the space around us. The Belarusian protests inspired the art of the masses, people who had never been involved in art before. Such an incredible surge in creative energy was so timely and natural that artists were unable to match that. Why invent something when life itself sparks so much creativity? In a way, we, artists, were overshadowed," Sergey Grinevich, a famous monumentalist painter from Grodno, believes.

Grinevich noted that the presidential election was what triggered political art. Back in 2010, he created several works as a reaction to the political events in the country, and those works are still relevant. (In 2010, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Minsk protesting against the traditional outcome of the presidential election in Belarus. Until the summer of 2020, they had been the largest protests in the history of Belarus, known as Ploshcha-2010 (Square-2010). According to different estimates, they brought together from 15,000 to 40,000 people).

The situation escalated and more people started analysing events in the country from a political perspective. New people came into the spotlight.

"Our protests are the most beautiful ones visually in comparison with recent revolutions. In terms of installations and events, everything has been top-notch. Our protests outmatch all others, all this thanks to collective art," Sergey Grinevich stressed.

"AN ARTIST SHOULD ALWAYS OPPOSE ANY AUTHORITY"

Belarusians are currently living through protests, living in a historic moment. Art is a means to record these feelings and events, analyse them,

wrap one's mind around them, and focus on specific important aspects. Amid incessant violence and repressions from the authorities, art has been helping people to find the strength to create something new and move forward.

Art has also become a way to express solidarity, both in Belarus and abroad. For example, many art exhibitions dedicated to the events in Belarus were arranged in Poland, Germany, France, and other countries. Such events draw attention of the international community to the events in Belarus.

"When I looked at the list of artists featured at such exhibitions, I was surprised to notice that 70% of them were absolutely new names. The youth have enthusiastically responded to the recent events, all of them support the protests. I like that the new generation is catching up with us," Sergey Grinevich shared.

A demonstration took place on the steps of the Palace of Art in Minsk in August 2020. Many artists stood on the steps with posters illustrating acts of violence. "An artist should always oppose any authority – it cannot be otherwise. When 'our side' comes to power, I will join the opposition yet again. True art arises from the conflict," the artist believes.

One of the forms of protest art in Belarus is organising online protest art galleries: amid censorship and escalating repressions, painters and other creative people move online. Grodno hosted several exhibitions that invited visitors to the world of freedom of expression without censorship with the help of VR glasses. There is little the authorities can do to curb such creative forms of the protests.

"All visual 'art' that is produced by the authorities can be called nothing but 'agrotrash'. For example, the song that they wanted to send to this year's Eurovision, the red and green colour scheme of the official flag. Professional artists and designers do not want to cooperate with these authorities, which is why they have to hire those who agree to work for them, people without proper education. I read somewhere that around 70% of the executive officials graduated from the agricultural academy in Gorki. There is nothing wrong with the academy, but 70%... Maybe this is why the visual 'art' of this government is just 'agrotrash'. This also applies to music, theatre, and other forms of art. Belarusian officials are stuck in the middle of the previous century, wearing ideological blinders, disregarding common sense," Grinevich said.

Perhaps, for the first time in a long while, the protests have not focused on the national aspect alone, the Belarusian national identity was not at the heart of the protests. It was not the national idea or a threat to independence that drove people to the streets, but unparalleled violence and illegal actions of the authorities.

In the end, the protests embraced the national element. The main symbols of the protests are the national white-red-white flag and the coat of arms Pahonya. During courtyard meetings, Grodno residents listened to lectures about the history of Belarus and sang Belarusian songs. They started taking interest in Belarusian culture. This is a very important achievement of the protests – Belarusians have started to perceive themselves as an independent nation and a community of citizens. Art has greatly contributed to that.

"We are moving forward in an evolutionary way. Our country will establish itself as a nation state, because there is no other way. The Belarusian language will regain its significance, our national symbols will return. Belarusians want to make their own decisions and follow European trends. We cannot abandon our continent, can we? When we deal with our main problem, we will catch up with other countries and start addressing gender inequality and environmental problems. When we solve our fundamental problems, everything will be different," Grinevich believes.

The protest force and the wave of protest creativity of Belarusians caused a sharp response from the authorities. Any manifestations of protest and dissent began to be destroyed: white-red-white symbols in the courtyards were fiercely painted over, people received heavy fines and even days in jail for a white-red-white combination of colors in clothes, under pressure began to close shops that sell goods with national symbols, many cultural sites came under attack. In Grodno, a cultural space that accumulates free, creative people who can have and express their opinions is the Center for Urban Life, created by the Grodno public figure and journalist Pavel Mozheiko. The Center remained the only site in the city where it was possible to make an uncensored exhibition or conduct an art performance. The Center's team supported the initiative of Grodno artists and helped organize an auction to help victims of repression.

For several years, the Center for Urban Life has been giving citizens the opportunity to meet, communicate, get acquainted with the work of Belarusian artists and photographers, train soft skills, build public relations, and implement the most daring ideas and projects. This has become a basis for the development of active local communities, and more broadly, of civil society. The values and principles that the Center adheres to and popularizes are freedom, 'Belarusianness', creativity, initiative. They should build the ground for new Belarus, which most Belarusians now dream of, and which we will build in the future.

4 In the studio of Sergei Grinevich. PHOTO Volha Korsun
5 In the studio of Sergei Grinevich. PHOTO Volha Korsun
6 Virtual gallery by author Alexander Boldakov. PHOTO Ivan Tsyrkunovich
7 Virtual gallery, hall of the protest posters. PHOTO Ivan Tsyrkunovich
8 Virtual gallery, Sergey Grinevich hall. PHOTO Ivan Tsyrkunovich

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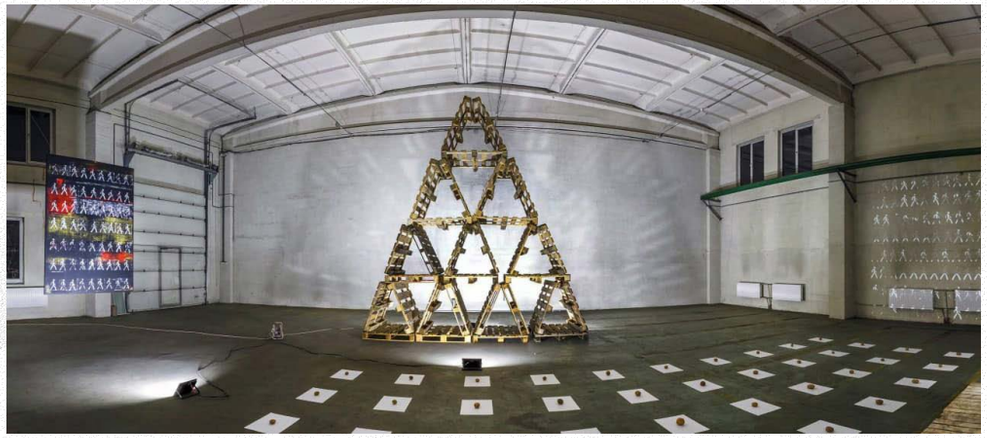

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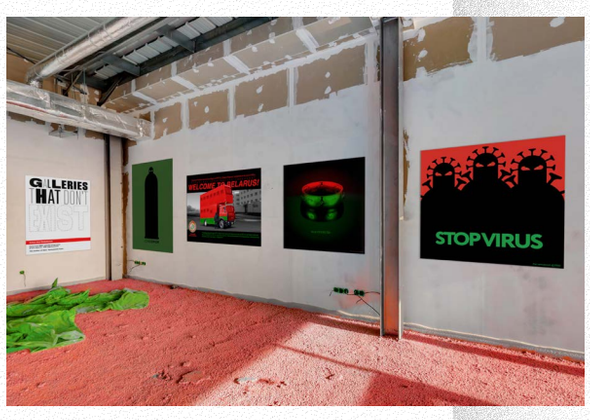

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La Grieta

Carlos Spottorno

Awarded Spanish photographer **Carlos Spottorno** was born in Budapest and raised in Rome, Paris and Madrid. He graduated in painting and printmaking at the Rome Academy of Fine Arts and was an Erasmus student at the Loughborough College of Arts & Design, in the UK. “I believe the European Union is the greatest diplomatic success of the modern time.”

Yet his work is not about making European dreams come true, but always tries to describe the present between history and wishful thinking, capturing the realities we like looking away from. He described his work on ***The PIGS*** as “.. a collection of clichés, both true and incomplete. The same way a travel guide avoids anything seemingly unattractive, this book shows much of what we find embarrassing, oftentimes rightly, and at times unfairly.”

In his latest publication ***The Crack*** – in collaboration with Guillermo Abril – he follows EU borders from Africa to the Arctic between 2014 and 2016. It is a book on European history in the making, portraying a continent in crisis as much as a multitude of individuals all trying to make the best of their lives in the midst of geopolitics.

He does so by a detailed research on particular stories – zooming in – and then looks for what connects them on a meta-level – zooming out. It thus becomes possible to imagine a reversed butterfly effect: how big historical events always influence the lives of millions. For as Spottorno says: “The border guard also leaves his home to do his job as best as he can. We can always choose to be good.” History for Spottorno is as much about the interrelated lives of individuals extending over space and time as it is about Big Events.

With such an eye for details, it is clear Spottorno does not like generalisations. “When Northern European media ‘suddenly’ started paying attention to the ‘waves of migration’ in 2015 many in Spain did not think something extraordinary was happening. For we were used to stories of migrants arriving in little boats. It did make us – Guillermo and me – curious for those other external European Union borders. For those were stories we did not know about. So, we had to go there and see for ourselves.”

As Spottorno knows not everybody can do like him and Guillermo, he pays much attention to how he can reach audiences with his storytelling. *The PIGS* publication mocked *The Economist*. *The Crack* is designed as a graphic novel, to deliberately break out from the niche of photo-books. “For there are many more graphic novel readers than photo book buyers. It is one of the ways to assist us in the fight against algorithms deciding what information comes to us. I hope the book contributes to making European storytelling more appealing. Because for me being European means being open minded. If I can help advance the idea of Europe as a space of possibilities, I will.”

For those who don't know it: this 12-square-kilometre enclave is part of the EU. And right from the start, one has the feeling of being inside a prison. Melilla is small and suffocating. A limbo wedged between Morocco and the Mediterranean. Its borders were fixed by cannon fire in the 19th century.

My mother lived here when she was a child, when it was a military base. My grandfather was assigned as a labour delegate during the dictatorship.

It was an important place for Franco: it was from Melilla that the troops with which he staged the coup in 1936 left.

There was no fence then. It appeared in the 1990s. Spain had just joined the European Economic Community. And Melilla suddenly became its external barrier. This place had to be sealed off.

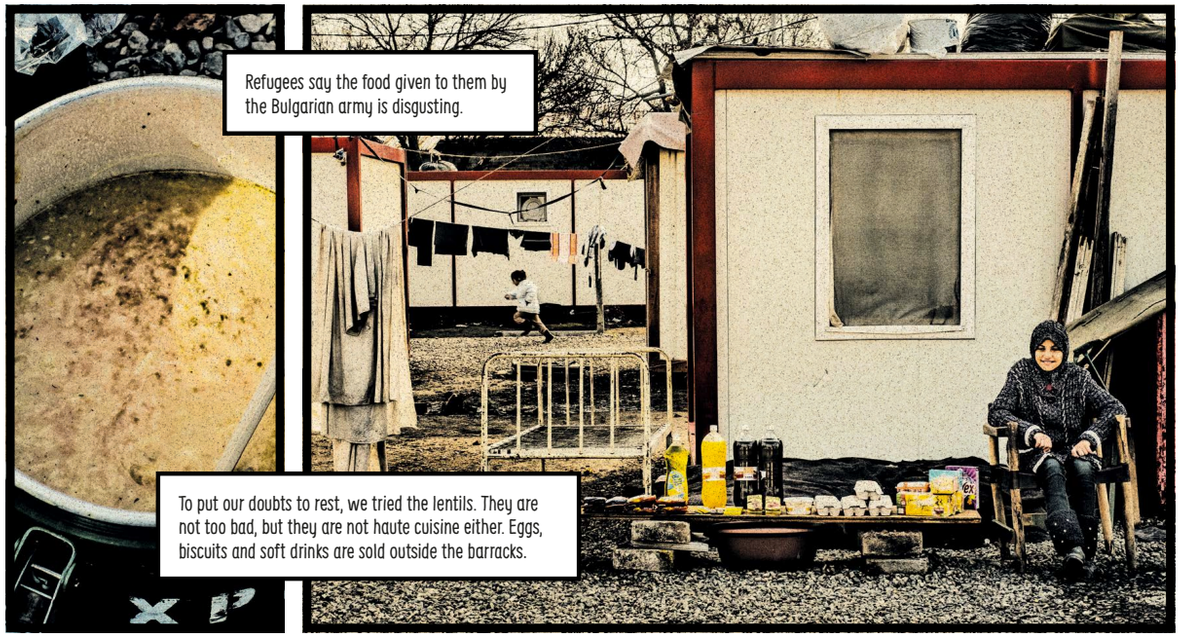
At first, a small wire fence was enough. But it grew to become a triple fence of six, plus three, plus six metres high, with a three-dimensional towrope in between, and covered with barbed wire: the 'concertinas'.

The whole of Melilla has been fenced off. A brutal wall separating Africa from Europe. It is considered the most unequal border on the planet.

And where irregular entries take place in a primitive way: immigrants, mostly sub-Saharan Africans, crowd in front of the gate and jump over it. Like water overflowing a dam.


Most of the Syrians and Kurds are in a part of the camp where there are modern, well-equipped barracks: dormitories, bathroom and kitchen.


Trades emerge. Normality takes over the environment.


Refugees say the food given to them by the Bulgarian army is disgusting.
To put our doubts to rest, we tried the lentils. They are not too bad, but they are not haute cuisine either. Eggs, biscuits and soft drinks are sold outside the barracks.


A Kurdish couple are doing their best to forget they are in a refugee camp. With a piece of green carpeting and a few fences, they have achieved a miracle: their hut almost looks like a real house.
For us it is time to return to Madrid and prepare our next trip. We did not yet suspect how dramatic it was going to be.

* The currency of Ukraine is the hryvna, which is further divided into 100 kopecks.

TEXT Friso Wiersum **Carlos Spottorno**

Tensions have also begun to be felt. These days, the NGO running the centre is discussing the inmates' complaints about the food; and how to remedy their excessive idle hours.

The ghost of New Year's Eve in Cologne, when almost a thousand women reported sexual assaults by foreigners, is still haunting the city. Here they have decided to run gender equality courses in which they explain: "No is no".

But there are already far-right groups patrolling the streets and attacks on asylum centres. "We are facing the biggest challenge since World War II," the NGO says.

And we leave with the feeling that the comparison is already so widespread in Europe that it does not augur well.

We follow the route to the far north, cross the Polar Circle and arrive in Ivalo. Located on the 68th parallel and 40 kilometres from Russia, this is the EU's northernmost military base.

Inside hang portraits of Marshal Mannerheim, who led the country, with Nazi support, against the Red Army. And there are maps showing the pre-1945 borders, before Russia took a chunk out of them. Asking about the neighbouring country here makes even the toughest military men hesitate.

"Russia's problem is that it wants to become a global hero," says Mikko Heikkilä, commander of the Border Jaeger company. He drives on his way to the troop's hideout.

LIVES

BLACK

MATTER

The Evolving Black Atlantic

When I moved to Lisbon from Rio de Janeiro in 2016, tourism was booming. Millions were flocking to Belém to eat the famous Portuguese *Pastel de Nata* (sugar custard pastries) while visiting the Monument to the Discoveries – a shrine to the "explorers and visionaries who established Portugal as the most powerful seafaring nation" and the *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos* –"a Gateway to the Age of Discovery and the Golden Era" (descriptions from official websites). In Lisbon, the *Praça do Comércio* – where Africans disembarked to be sold in the slave markets, and the narrow streets around *Rua do Pouço dos Negros* – a sixteenth-century informal burial ground for Blacks — were, along with the mercurial Tagus River, the preferred backdrops for sunset selfies. These sites and landmarks – evidence of heinous crimes against humanity – had been repackaged as innocent Disney-like attractions.

Rapid gentrification in many of Lisbon's traditional minority neighbourhoods like the Madragoa and Santa Catarina was further exposing racial disparities. One only had to take the train out to Sintra to perceive how white Lisbon was. Africans and Afro-descendants came into the city in the mornings as domestic workers or manual laborers to return at night to their homes in government housing projects or informal land occupations that looked very much like *favelas*. During the summer, I witnessed a violent incident involving police and Black youths at a beach near Lisbon. The images of Black bodies pinned to the ground under military boots was yet another scene I thought I had left behind in Rio.

At the same time, the city was imbued with Black culture. Black DJs, many first-generation immigrants from Portugal's former colonies like Angola were sought-after international stars of the night, drawing weekend clubbers from all over Europe. Afro house music was declared the sound of Lisbon, with *Kizomba* and Cape Verdean *Morna* coming close behind. Afro-Brazilian students riding the academic wave of affirmative action policies (established by former Brazilian President Lula da Silva) were part of the student bodies of universities across Portugal. Many were activists and used their voice and experience to strengthen Portugal's burgeoning Black movement.

Even with an estimated 15 million people of African descent living within the European borders, I noticed many fallacies in the pluriversal image of Europe that I had envisioned from Brazil. Public debates about racism or colonial legacy outside academia were few-and-far-between. There was only one national narrative and one national identity, and this wasn't the case only in Portugal. Other former European colonial powers like the Netherlands and Belgium were also suffering from collective amnesia rendering them incapable of considering how these singular narratives were harmful and excluded Black citizens and residents.

Unlike the United States, Europe had all too often denied the history of brutal racism and colonial plunder, which was not only the root of the ongoing migrant crisis, but also an impediment to forming a new gaze on Black bodies within the continent. A gaze that made Black agency and not displacement and suffering the principal component of Black identity.

I am interested in considering what ultimately provoked the international BLM protests in the summer of 2020. Was it a response to the video (images) of George Floyd's brutal murder or the images of the American uprising itself? Either way, there is no doubt that the scenes from America that spread across social media triggered Europe to 'wake up' to its own racialised reality.

The BLM protests in Europe quickly developed from actions of solidarity to powerful movements of their own. The issues people were protesting in the US were easily translatable to Europe: statues paying tribute to white supremacist slave owners, historically Eurocentric narratives and systemic racism. Black and Brown communities were more policed, vulnerable and plagued by social deprivation. Black Europeans were invisible and marginalised, abandoned, as Cornel West described, "to make something out of the nothing they have been given."

While some of the international anti-racist protests like those in Japan and Australia focused outwardly on the US, protests in European countries with colonial histories were forced to look inwards at their own issues. Brazilian protests seemed muted in relation to the size of the Afro-Brazilian population (second only to Nigeria) and the level of injustices aimed at Black Brazilians. For me this was not a reflection of a weak Black Social Movement or lack of engagement, but rather an indication of the level of oppression and trauma Black Brazilians experience within their own country. This verse from a famous samba by Wilson das Neves is a reminder of the nightmare of Brazil's white ruling class.

> O dia em que o morro descer e não for carnaval
> Ninguém vai ficar pra assistir o desfile final
> Na entrada, rajada de fogos pra quem nunca viu
> Vai ser de escopeta, metralha, granada e fuzil
> Guerra civil
>
> The day favela goes down and it's not carnival
> No one will stay to watch the final parade
> First, a burst uns, machine guns, grenades and
> rifles civil war

For Black Brazilians protest is in itself a privilege.

For me as an outsider with a particular Southern perspective, the European BLM protests exposed the latent hypocrisy of Europe, and the urgent need to decolonise the continent. Beyond removing racist statues and rewriting history books, it's an opportunity to examine Europe's relationship with Africa and to a further extent its former colonies, not only the history of violence and exploitation, but of white supremacy and epistemological dominance. It's time to examine Europe's impenetrable borders and imagine the territory as a permeable space with a natural flow of people, cultures and ideas.

For Black people living in Europe, the moment was a catalyst connecting Black activists and anti-racist groups from across the continent, and unifying the Black Social Movement. It was also a starting point to imagining a pan-European Black identity, melding terms like Afropean, Black Mediterranean and Black Iberian to an expanding and evolving Black Atlantic. In contrast to America and Brazil, Europe's Black populations are extremely diverse. It is challenging to envision an open and inclusive identity that connects, for example, newly arrived migrants from Africa to second-generation Afro-Brazilians, Black Christians or Black Muslims and Black queers. The protests opened a space to envision Blackness as an element in the construction of the European identity where the Black European is no longer synonymous with immigrant, as well as the possibility of being simultaneously African, European and South American.

ILLUSTRATIONS Hedy Tjin **Chantal James**

A pluriversal Europe that lives up to its image must begin by imagining its future as what Raewyn Connell calls a 'mosaic epistemology': a place where we have moved beyond a critique of Western hegemony, colonialism and domination to a place where we can perceive and create different world-views and cosmovisions. Where we can in fact embrace these cosmovisions to find solutions for our world's many urgent problems, primarily the climate crisis, poverty in the Global South and global inequality. After all, many of these problems were created by adhering to these very hegemonies in the first place. In other words it's high time for reparations!

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Combatting Inequalities

From the day my mother invited me on one of her trips to Brussels, the European institutions, the buildings, the flags and the authority they resemble have always fascinated me. It was only two years ago when I decided to enter the political arena and pursue the ambition that I had from a very young age. I have always felt a strong mission to combat existing social and economic inequalities and protect the rights of marginalised groups. My own experiences with discrimination and exclusion have been my primary motivation to fight for social justice. I believe the lack of equal representation in politics, and beyond politics, is one of the biggest challenges to date.

ILLUSTRATIONS Hedy Tjin **Samira Rafaela**

Within the European Union system there are three main institutions involved in shaping European laws and policies: The European Commission, The European Council and the European Parliament. The European Parliament is the representative body where directly elected Members (MEPs) scrutinise, amendment and vote on proposals tabled by the European Commission. The 705 MEPs are elected from the national political parties of the EU Member States and within the Parliament, they gather in seven political groups organised by political affiliations. Next to these groups, the Parliament's work is structured around 27 committees where MEPs debate and draft reports. Within the European Parliament, I am member of the Committees on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), International Trade (INTA), Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and Human Rights (DROI).

I must admit, entering this political system has come with certain challenges. The political arena remains an establishment where people with power aim to protect their own norms, identity and unwritten rules. If you do not necessarily conform to this norm, it means you will be challenged and not accepted instantly. At times, I felt discouraged to see so little diversity and resemblance of myself in the European Parliament, but it also strengthened me in my mission to achieve equal representation and more role models for the future generation.

Not only did I notice a lack of diversity within European institutions, I also envisaged that real priority had to be given to combating inequality, racism and discrimination in Europe. While the EU stands for core values of inclusion, solidarity and non-discrimination, the European Parliament and its political parties have failed to ensure that people with diverse backgrounds have an equal say in shaping policy. The EU is home to nearly 50 million people with a non-European background, accounting for almost 10 percent of the population, people of colour represent barely 3 percent of the seats in Parliament. These numbers illustrate a problematic gap. There is not a single European Commissioner of colour and there never has been.

The lack of ethnic diversity in the EU institutions is a missed opportunity and detrimental for the legitimacy of the decisions made by the EU. I am glad to see that the next generation no longer accepts the lack of representation in decision-making and expresses their political will. They take the streets to protest on pressing issues such as racism, climate change and COVID confinements. They increasingly demand their seat at the decision-making table and organisations and political parties that lack diversity are publicly scrutinised.

In the midst of the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement was a wake-up call and a reminder that racism remains a problem in today's society. Demonstrators all over the world opened the eyes of those who have had the privilege never to experience racism first-hand. As one of the Chairs of the Anti-Racism and Diversity Working Group of the European Parliament, I contributed to the passing of a resolution in which we speak out strongly against racism and call for swift plans to combat racism.

Following the resolution, the European Commission introduced the EU Action Plan against Racism, an ambitious plan to strengthen its legislative tools to combat racism and improve diversity for the next five years. With this action plan, the Commission gives a strong signal that it is taking racism seriously. The plan contains several practical and hopeful measures with which the EU's legal framework is to be enforced. For example, the European Commission will critically assess its own non-discrimination laws and evaluate whether Member States have implemented these laws correctly. Member States are urged to develop and adopt national action plans to combat racism. With the EU Action Plan against Racism, the European institutions and the Member States can soon be held accountable for the progress they make on eradicating racism and discrimination in the labour market, the housing market, education, the health sector, even in the digital world.

It is now the task of the European Parliament to monitor the progress made closely at both the European and the national level. The European Parliament also has a strong responsibility itself by improving the diversity on all levels. Equal representation is the key in creating policy that combats racism and fosters equality. I believe that a diverse Parliament that reflects the diversity of its Member States is better capable of making inclusive policy. After all, various studies show that better representation combats social injustices and that including a multiplicity of perspective results in better decisions.

One way to improve on representation is increasing our awareness on stereotypes. Stereotypes are unconscious but very powerful, and therefore complex to overcome. This does not mean we should not try. Combatting stereotypes, particularly related to gender equality, diversity and racism, is one of the most significant challenges of our generation. Hence, to achieve representative institutions, we must break through existing institutional patterns of exclusion and discrimination. We must start to practice what we preach. The European Parliament must set the right example by promoting diversity and monitoring whether progress is made. By exerting influence on national parties encouraging them to propose diverse electoral lists, the European Parliament can become a good practice for diversity in other parliaments.

I know from personal experience that racism and discrimination is real. As challenging as it is to combat these problems in our society, I am incredibly eager to contribute to this global fight. I aim to address racism and discrimination both within my own working area, the European Parliament, and in Europe. As European institutions, I believe we can make a difference. We can take the lead and be an example for organisations, companies and people all around Europe to achieve proper representation, address stereotypical beliefs and celebrate diversity.

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1 Samira Rafaela, PHOTO Alexis Haulot
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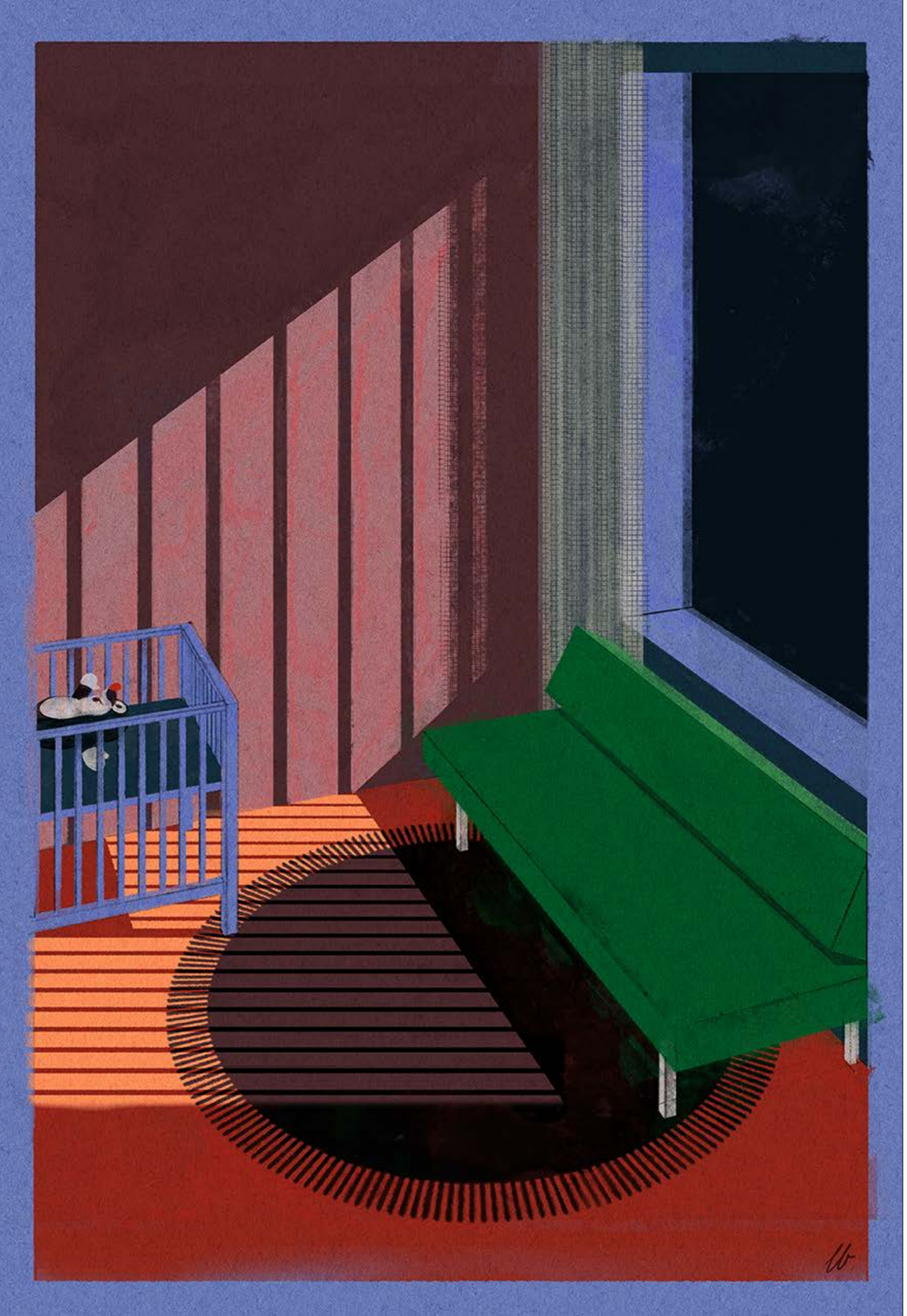


STATE OF EMERGENCY

KATEŘINA TUČKOVA

ILLUSTRATIONS LEONIE BOS

A one-bedroom with a spacious kitchen—a cozy den, as they say.

The bedroom and living room are fully furnished, the only thing possibly still left to buy might be a sofa-bed for guests. Electricity, water, gas—everything is in order, she checks several times a day to make sure of it.

They lack for nothing. Every other day, her husband comes huffing and puffing up three flights of stairs with groceries, by evening he's whistling by the stove, browsing web pages about healthy eating, looking up new recipes. Beef goulash for nursing mothers then appears scribbled on a scrap of paper pinned to the fridge by a magnet. Or turkey breast medallions for breastfeeding moms. In the meantime, she sews face masks, or rather tries to. From time to time, she looks down through the closed window at the street, only to turn quickly back to her work. The deserted streets of the once bustling city fill her with an indescribable dread.

Morning – seven hundred and twenty-four infected, eighteen dead, three hundred and two recovered.

Evening – seven hundred and eighty-six infected, still only eighteen dead, recovered three hundred and twenty-one.

She wanted to buy herself a new spring skirt and some kind of a jacket with pockets to go with it. For her son, his first pair of shoes, shorts, a sun hat. She was going to go shopping with her mom, who would so enjoy it. Shopping for her first grandchild! They had been planning it since the minute he was born, and now—nothing. Not

even the phone's small touchscreen display could conceal her disappointment.

"How are you?" her mother asks.
"We're all fine," she answers. "What about you?"
"Same."

Sometimes their conversation is livelier.
"The mailman was here."
"What did he bring?"
"Facemasks. Your dad had them shipped from England," says her mother, then pauses meaningfully. It's obvious to her why. Her frugal father never ordered anything from abroad, because, after all, one could procure everything domestically—why waste foreign labor, oil, why increase emissions? He would only pull the family car out of the garage if there were minimally two passengers. To mitigate his own carbon footprint, he compressed all consumed articles to their most compact dimensions, so as not to foul up the planet with unnecessary litter, and dried polypropylene bags on the radiators, so that he could return them to the shops. Facemasks, however, were impossible to procure domestically—from the first day that a state of emergency had been declared, signs with *facemasks sold out* dangled on pharmacy doors and e-shops selling medical supplies reported the *requested item temporarily unavailable.* He must have suffered unspeakably when he had to resort to having them sent by plane.
"He left them on the steps," her mother continued, "with the delivery receipt sitting on top, and through his mask, from across the flowerbed with the begonias, gave us instructions. Sign the receipt with your own pen, leave it on the top step, take the package, go back inside..."
"He was afraid of you."
"We were of him! Instead of a facemask he was wearing a black helmet, dark glasses, thick leather gloves—if he hadn't been wearing a mailman's vest, I would have thought he was coming to rob us!"

No jacket, not even shoes. This spring she restocked the family wardrobe with entirely different articles of apparel—facemasks. And did so quickly. That filth could spread through every sneeze of a fellow

passenger on a tram, through every kiss hello. With facemasks people would protect themselves and others; it was forbidden to leave home without them; the government had decided from one day to the next and ordered any potential disobedience punishable by a stiff fine. Like other Czech mothers, that same night she found herself bending over her sewing machine and, according to patterns that had promptly appeared on the social networks, making masks out of cut strips of bedsheets, so that in the morning they could cover their faces.

Dexterity was something she hadn't inherited from either parent. So during those first few days, husband and son had to make do with all sorts of crumpling and creasing failed attempts, which to their dismay would slip off their faces, before right on the corner of their street a mask rack appeared. An old hanger fastened to a fence, so the wind wouldn't knock it down, on which every day, tied by ribbons, there was a fresh crop of *masks for grabs,* as the handwritten sign indicated. Plain white unisex masks most likely stitched from a tablecloth, brightly colored masks with floral prints or meditative mandalas, masks with a laughing little Mole, the popular cartoon character, in various children's sizes—anyone could take whichever one they wanted. Her husband took a few as well. In return, he left freshly baked pastries and a bag of fabrics and strings, which despite all her efforts she was incapable of turning into a product that fit. When a few days later she looked out of her window, she saw on the face of a scurrying pedestrian a scrap of her husband's shirt—the mask rack had sprouted a crop cultivated from their supplies.

Morning – one thousand two hundred and forty-five infected, thirty-six dead, eight hundred and fifteen recovered.
Evening – one thousand six hundred and eighty-five infected, dead forty-two, recovered nine hundred and fifty-one.

She has the impression that their apartment has shrunk a little. As if the walls had moved in closer to one another—just a few centimeters, but still. And suddenly one can hear everything through them. Her husband's work telephone calls, her son's crying, other people's footsteps above her head, an argument from next door. She paces from room to room like a trapped animal; the cozy den has become a cage.

"Don't you want to go outside for bit?" asks her husband.

"No," she shakes her head. Outside isn't safe.

"You mean you just want to stay locked up inside?" he asks further.

"No!" she snaps at him.

Her husband helplessly shrugs his shoulders, but soon is engrossed in his tablet, browsing cooking sites, preferring to look up another recipe.

Exhausted, that night she falls asleep with her son.

The nighttime images are no different from the daytime ones. Once again, she is at home, her child in her arms, pacing the familiar path from the corner with the toys to the wall with the paintings, from the paintings to the bookcase, from the bookcase to the window. Nobody is out there, the street bathed in inviting April sunshine is completely empty. She is saying something to her son, hears her own cheerful voice, at the same time is trying not to let him notice how short her breath is becoming. The room seems to be running out of oxygen, and suddenly it's impossible to breathe, she falls silent, her arms, in which she is holding her son, unexpectedly go weak, cold sweat breaks out on her forehead, her knees shake, she has a feeling that if she doesn't run away from here quickly, in no time they will both suffocate. But how to get out? she looks around. And where to? Along the hallway to the front door and then down three flights of stairs to the street—out of the question! It's for good reason that there's not a soul out there, whoever dared to poke out his nose collapsed on the pavement, poisoned by the pestilent air, and before the neighbors hiding behind the windows of their apartments had a chance to notice, the burial squad had cleared him away unobserved. She herself managed to catch only a glimpse of the long white beak of the ghastly mask before the death cart disappeared around the corner. No, not a chance—even though everything inside her was screaming to get out, she must not! Neither stay nor leave. What was left? With her last bit of strength she clasps her son in her arms, curls up with him into a ball, as if trying to press him back into her belly, oblivious to his terrified crying, she gasps for breath—calm, keep calm!—she rasps into his ear breathlessly, before

an ominous silence descends, before his limp hand slips out of her embrace.

It takes her a moment to realize it was just a nightmare.

"You asleep?" she then whispers shivering into the silence.

"Not anymore," mumbles her husband groggily.

The lamp on her nightstand glows as always with a dim light, in the semi-darkness she sees the outline of his reclining body. The mound of broad shoulders slopes down to the valley of his waist and then rises again gently to the plateau of his hip, the horizon aquiver with his regular breathing. She fumbles between the covers and finds his back. Spreading her palm between his shoulder blades, she channels peace from him.

"That dream again?" he asks sleepily.

"Actually no," she answers truthfully. This time it's not that simple.

Morning – two thousand eight hundred and forty-five infected, sixty dead, one thousand five hundred and fifteen recovered.

Evening – three thousand and nine infected, dead sixty-three, recovered one thousand nine hundred and eight.

Later she enters the room and notices the open window.

Who in God's name opened it? It couldn't have been her husband, after all, he knew that death lurked behind it. Or had he blown off what she had already repeated to him so many times? That would be just like him!

"Don't be silly," he reassures her, reopening the window. "We're going to suffocate in here!"

Nothing helps, no reassurances, that the filth doesn't fly through the air on its own, no arguments from the papers, radio, television... The top epidemiologist stated, the chief hygienist asserted, the Secretary of Health assured—why, she knew it all! He didn't have to explain or debunk anything to her, they followed the new developments together.

Even so—words turned loose by fear come hurtling out of her like an avalanche of rocks, they are words with sharp edges that not even

a mason would touch, she hurls them at him one after another as if she had lost her reason. However that's not the case—reason she still possesses. Even amid all the misery, she is well aware that her fear is exaggerated but she can't help herself. The fear is stronger than she is, it attacks her common sense, which has backed into a corner where it sheepishly cowers and softly mutters something. She can't hear it. The fear makes a terrible racket, it's making her head throb, giving her goose bumps.

Her husband waits, patiently waits, for her to stop raving and then comforts her in his arms.

Their apartment has without a doubt contracted. The walls have moved closer together, even the furniture has jumped. She can barely get around it now. Very soon they will be packed in like sardines here. She pointed out this unexpected complication to her husband. Supposedly this hard to explain phenomenon is related to the statistics about the infected and dead—every time she listens to the evening news, by morning the walls have moved a fraction.

"How are you?" her mother asks again into the telephone.
"We're all fine," she answers as usual. "And you?"
"Same."

She wanted to be a child again. To believe that everything in the world was subject to the will of her parents. To the sensible decisions of her good-natured father, or perhaps rather to the uncompromising edicts of her pedantic mother. With those two she was safe, they could do anything. Push out a car that had got stuck in a muddy road, convince a saleswoman to open a store, in spite of the sign on the door that said closed, get hold of a Mickey Mouse belt when everyone else's pants were still being held up by belts sporting the Wolf and Hare characters from the Russian cartoon. For her sake they even managed to find a chink in the iron curtain, so that after a prolonged bout of pneumonia they could treat her to a vacation by the sea. That time they had slept under a tent and survived on bread they had brought along and semi-dry sausage. They feared nothing, protected her from everything. If only they could protect her from herself.

It happened while her son was sleeping. That sacred hour of domestic peace and quiet, a concentration of happiness. She was again standing by the window, her gaze fixed on the deserted street, and when she turned to look back, she almost cried out in fright—the walls had begun to move. They inched forward, silent and sliding like slugs, barely perceptibly shuddering and swaying, the ceiling sagging and the floor beneath her feet suddenly slipping away, as if she were standing on quicksand... Everything was gaining momentum, falling over, buckling, at any moment it threatened to cave in on her... She didn't stand a chance, this time the walls would bury her alive!

"Breathe, do you hear me, breathe!" came to her through the falling bricks. And then again: "Breathe in—two—three—hold it! And breathe out!"

She latched onto that voice like a drowning person onto a rope and followed along—obediently, gratefully—breath after breath—out of the terrible dungeon that their apartment had turned into, out of that dreadful jailhouse, out. Except that upon coming to, she found herself again—inside.

"She's all right now," she overhears her husband whisper into the telephone. He thinks she is sleeping. She is not sleeping. She will not sleep. This is a matter of life and death, she is not about to sleep through her own execution. "Except she lost her milk."

Morning – four thousand three hundred and forty-eight infected, one hundred and fifteen dead, five thousand six hundred and twelve recovered.

Evening – five thousand nine hundred and fifty-two infected, dead one hundred and twenty-two, recovered six thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight.

The anniversary of that event was approaching, and although she had long since ceased to be that reckless girl, who would stand by the side of the road and flag down a passing car, something of that gal had remained inside her. Somewhere deep down she is still shuffling around among four cold stone walls, naked as on the day she was born, shaking and weak, with a splitting headache from whatever garbage he had

slipped into her drink—it must have been that coffee he brought back to her after a brief stop at a gas station—blinded by the impenetrable darkness and frightened to death. How long had she been there? Sixty-two hours, they later told her. Afterwards they were all promoted for their excellent work—a mere sixty-two hours, and on top of it she was found alive. Her—future—husband, whom she had been on her way to see, received no promotion, no praise either, for that matter, although he had been the one to decide not to wait forty-eight hours for them to declare her a missing person, and instead took off with her photograph and drove around to every gas station on both sides of the border. He said a feeling of foreboding had come over him that same day, the very moment when, at the appointed time, she wasn't standing by the church tower on the outskirts of the city, which it was so easy to get to by hitchhiking.

And yet they had made that trip already so many times—there and back, on their own and together—all one had to do was stand by the side of the road and wait a bit. Towards the end of the week especially there would be one car after another going in both directions, people heading home from work for the weekend, the students would hail them as if they were taxis.

Such a pleasant and unassuming person.

When in the courtroom he began to cry, she caught herself almost feeling sorry for him.

She is lying. She was never in any courtroom. Stuffed with pills, beneath the nurse's watchful eye, she was dutifully modeling one clay pot after another. It collapsed on her every time.

They would commemorate the day on which they found her year after year. And this year she felt the need to go back there more than ever before. To convince herself that the house at the edge of the village just a few kilometers past the state border was continuing gradually to crumble, that the driveway was overgrown with waist-high tall grass, that through the window to the cellar where he had held her, weeds were forcing their way towards the sun. To reassure herself with her

own eyes that time truly had borne all of that horror away. But this time they wouldn't go anywhere. The border had turned into an impassable bulwark, no one could get across or back. She can't help but laugh when it dawns on her that she escaped from one dungeon, only to suffocate in another.

Whose was the shoe she found in that dark corner?

Who left that illegible inscription that she found carved into the dank wall beneath the window boarded up from outside? She traces the shallow lines with the tip of her finger—and nothing, they make no sense. Or could her son have scrawled it there in an unguarded moment? Curled up in the corner of the room, her knees tucked under her short nightgown, she can't judge—her thoughts flit frantically between the past and present prisons, she is powerless to stop them, let alone concentrate enough to recognize exactly what she is looking at. Although—the wall bathed in the silver light of the moon should, after all, reveal its secret to her easily.

The moon.

Perfectly round, studded with a map of unevenly sized blotches, it shines in the dark sky and sends down its rays to her through the open window—as if all was as before.

The open window? Could he really have opened it?

Had he not listened to her?

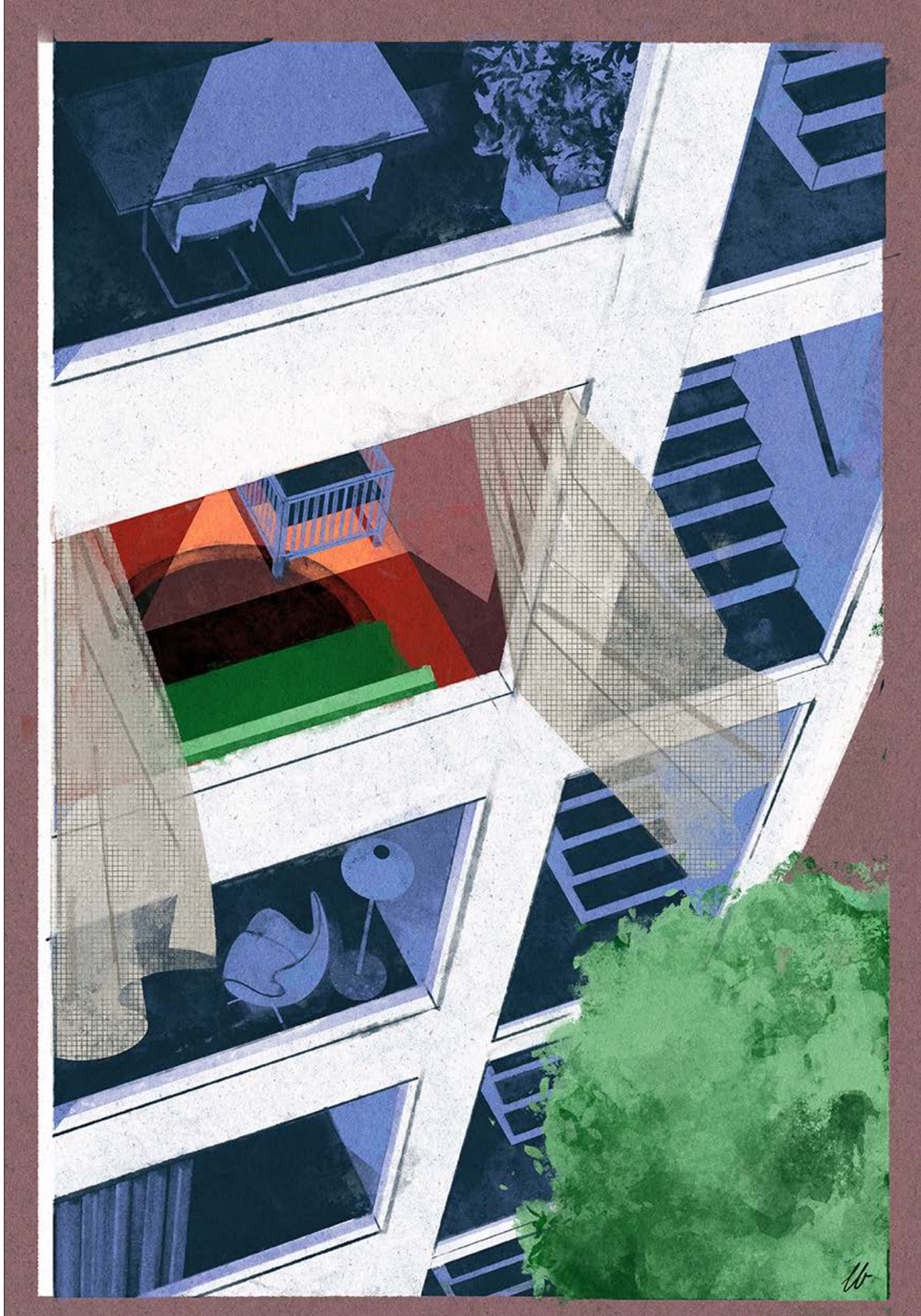
Or had he just forgotten to secure the casing?

Maybe he's trying to tell her—go!

And actually, she really should—in fact she must, she really has no other choice, because the walls have begun to move again, slowly sliding towards each other, bit by bit, unstoppably, this time they are sure to crush her. She feels her throat constricting again with anxiety, she can barely breathe, any second now she will lose consciousness. She must decide. Must stop arguing in her mind about whether death is lurking outside or rather inside, must... And then she hears it. That voice. Decisive and insistent, when it commands—enough now! Face your fear!—and she with an indescribable sense of relief obeys, because she's had enough of that dying slowly, whereupon she

fumbles with her fingers above her head, swings her bare calf over the window ledge—and then finally—out, out!—finally she can breathe freely and go—out!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY VÉRONIQUE FIRKUSNY



The New Gospel

The International Institute for Political Murder received a Democracy Needs Imagination grant from the European Cultural Foundation to support the project.

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1 The New Gospel PHOTO Armin Smailovic GRANTEE

The New Gospel by the **International Institute of Political Murder** (IIPM) of director Milo Rau entails an interdisciplinary project – campaigns, public events, performances, and a film – to talk about global human injustices, but rolled out in Matera, one of the two 2019 European Capitals of Culture. The film ***The New Gospel*** premiered at the Venice International Film Festival 2020. And is touring (online) festivals and cinemas ever since. For this text we had a mail interview with Elisa Calosi, production manager, and Giacomo Bisordi, dramaturg, and a public conversation with Milo Rau and Yvan Sagnet, the main protagonist, at IDFA 2020.

In the movie Rau's Jesus is played by the activist Yvan Sagnet, showing Jesus as a black migrant. The twelve apostles are migrants working in the fields and living in the ghettos of Southern Italy, activists and small scale farmers.

FRISO WIERSUM: Why is Yvan Sagnet the 21st-century prototype of Jesus?

THE NEW GOSPEL: Yvan Sagnet is a political activist. Born in Cameroon, he moved to Italy to study in Turin and initially earned his living as a farmhand. In 2011 he revolted against the system of exploitation and organised the first migrants farm workers' strike in southern Italy. The strike led to the introduction of 'caporalato' (mafia-led exploitation of workers) as a crime and to the first modern day trial in Europe for slavery and the conviction of twelve entrepreneurs.

Sagnet in *The New Gospel* plans a new revolt to give voice to those who hadn't one. Therefore he went across the largest of the wild refugee camps, the so-called 'ghettos' in Italy and among the 'wretched' of southern Italy, the refugees and migrants as well the small farmers brought to bankrupt by an unfair agricultural production chain. It is this *Revolt of Dignity* which is the true core of the movie. The *Revolt of Dignity* is based on a six-point manifesto declaring the freedom of movement, the right to humane working conditions and fair wages without any discrimination, the right of adequate housing, the object to the consumption of goods which are based on human exploitation, food production as not for profit but for the common good of present and future generations.

FW What did the *Revolt of Dignity* bring?

TNG A first *House of Dignity* has been founded, close to Matera. 'Casa Betania', a collaboration between different local partners is a house where the previously homeless participants in the film can now live in dignity and self-determination, working for local farms, with a legal contract.

The entire project of *The New Gospel* focused on its own sustainability. As, like in any other play and movie by Rau, the process is what really matters. So we did invite cultural tourists to the recording of the movie, as for them to become ambassadors of the *Revolt of Dignity*.

We keep in contact with the 'apostles' and work hard in realizing a second *House of Dignity*. Parallel to the movie prèmiere in Venice, we launched a crowdfunding campaign for projects that have been proposed by the activists and organisations involved in the movie. As an outcome canned tomatoes produced according to the six rules of the manifesto are being sold in Italian, Swiss and German supermarkets.

Say Yes to Tess

Tess Seddon received a Democracy Needs Imagination grant from the European Cultural Foundation to produce her musical.

"I once stood for Parliament," is the opening line on her twitter biography, as if this is the oddest thing ever. But then, for many of us it would be too, once you really think about it. For we might be familiar with some elected politicians, or even know a few, but have we ever been a candidate for parliament? Tess Seddon, a theatre maker in her normal life, has. For the Yorkshire Party that is.

An earlier show of Tess touched on politics. In *Tribute Acts* she and Cheryl Gallacher dove into what it means growing up with socialist dads, and seeing heroes turn into mere mortals. But it wasn't till the Brexit campaign ended in the well-known result Tess decided to make politics a topic for her theatre work again. "We did a show in Donchestewr and watched the EU referendum results in the bar. We saw a guy smashing his head into the wall yelling: "We are fucked, we're are fucked." Others were celebrating: "Out and out and out."

"It dawned on me that the whole campaign was a moment for people to yell it all out. The referendum was the example of the political system in the United Kingdom blocking any improvement. I mean, politics should also be about complexity, about participation, about evolving points of view. But ours is not." Seddon then continues with: "Only 34 percent of elected officials are women, and 29 percent of parliamentarians are privately educated. The people in power are not so representative and they like keeping it that way. It feels as if there is a great disconnect between ideals and politics."

Maybe *Tribute Acts* touched on the theme of reconnecting those two already, with hope not being betrayed yet. Seddon found herself back at the congress of the Yorkshire Party. "If it is smaller and smaller that we want, then this is the party to be." She was amazed by the diversity of people attending, persons she was sure she would never see at the congresses of the Conservatives or Labour. And she was even more amazed by the seriousness of people passionately trying to formulate policies.

She then wanted to start writing her play, but when seeing a tweet by the Yorkshire Party calling for candidates for the 2017 general election, things changed. She retweeted, but got messaged directly by the party: "Why won't you stand?"

They would take care of all legislative and financial matters, all Seddon had to do was campaign. "I could even say all that I wanted if it wasn't racist or going against the demand for devolving powers – as the UK is the most centralized state in Europe." How the campaign went, how the other parties reacted, and how many votes she obtained? Not so important for Seddon's translation of politics into her musical ***Say yes to Tess***.

"What some of the most surprising lessons have been? Firstly, the amount of people who don't vote. When I was going round doors many of them would be excited to talk politics, but wouldn't vote. My musical is to make people who think politics is not for them rethink what they would be doing if..."

"Secondly, that if you stand for office, you have to be very vulnerable yourself. I really had to go out of my bubble to talk to people. Because of course I was worried about what people were thinking. And most importantly, that if you don't understand something, you'd better mess with it, until you understand it. If anyone would stand for election we would all be living together much better."

The Perimeter

DAY 99: STOUT BAY, GLAMORGAN, WALES.

A video-clip of his project ***The Perimeter*** was announced as 'the most amazing film you have ever seen in this television show' on BBC's *The One Show* in September last year. The airing coincided with Boris Johnson declaring a new set of lock-down rules in the fight against the pandemic. But Quintin Lake had been walking the coastline of Britain for years already. His decision to walk the perimeter of the island had nothing to do with that other event – Brexit – but came about by his personal wish to combine walking and photography.

After an illness had confined photographer Lake to his room, he found a new purpose in walking. The slowness of walking – so he felt – allows him to slow down, be surprised and become a better photographer. An earlier walk had taken Lake from the source of the Thames to London, but this was his most ambitious walk yet.

As he set out to get under the skin of his island nation and find photographic inspiration, he didn't know how hard it would be. He could be walking for days without meeting anyone, he had to walk in all kinds of unfriendly weather, but still Lake says walking not only made him a better photographer, but a nicer person too.

His walk around mainland Britain totalled 11,000 kilometers and took 454 days over five years. He slept in a tent for most of the journey and carried all of his backpacking provisions. Lake would walk in sections of two to nine weeks, before returning home to edit the pictures, earn money from selling the prints, and prepare for the next section.

At the start Lake set out to capture the essence of Britain, but as he progressed it turned out the project invited him to focus on the wildness of the landscape. Lake likes abstract seascapes and is much interested in capturing industry and infrastructure as they paint a non-sentimental portrait of Britain. His photos capture the calmness, the stillness and the silence of the land.

In a piece in *The Guardian* Lake wrote: "The first person I met in Scotland, as I was following the Solway away from Gretna Green, was a farmer who, rather than tell me to get off his land, showed me the easiest way to cross and asked me if I had enough provisions. This was a heartwarming encounter, and one that confirmed that the right to roam is alive on the ground."

It might be that the calmness of solitude helps to really connect with others. Lake remarked he had more profound conversations with people offering him shelter along the way then he has had with friends.

We might all be looking at his photos and think of the conversations we like having with strangers.

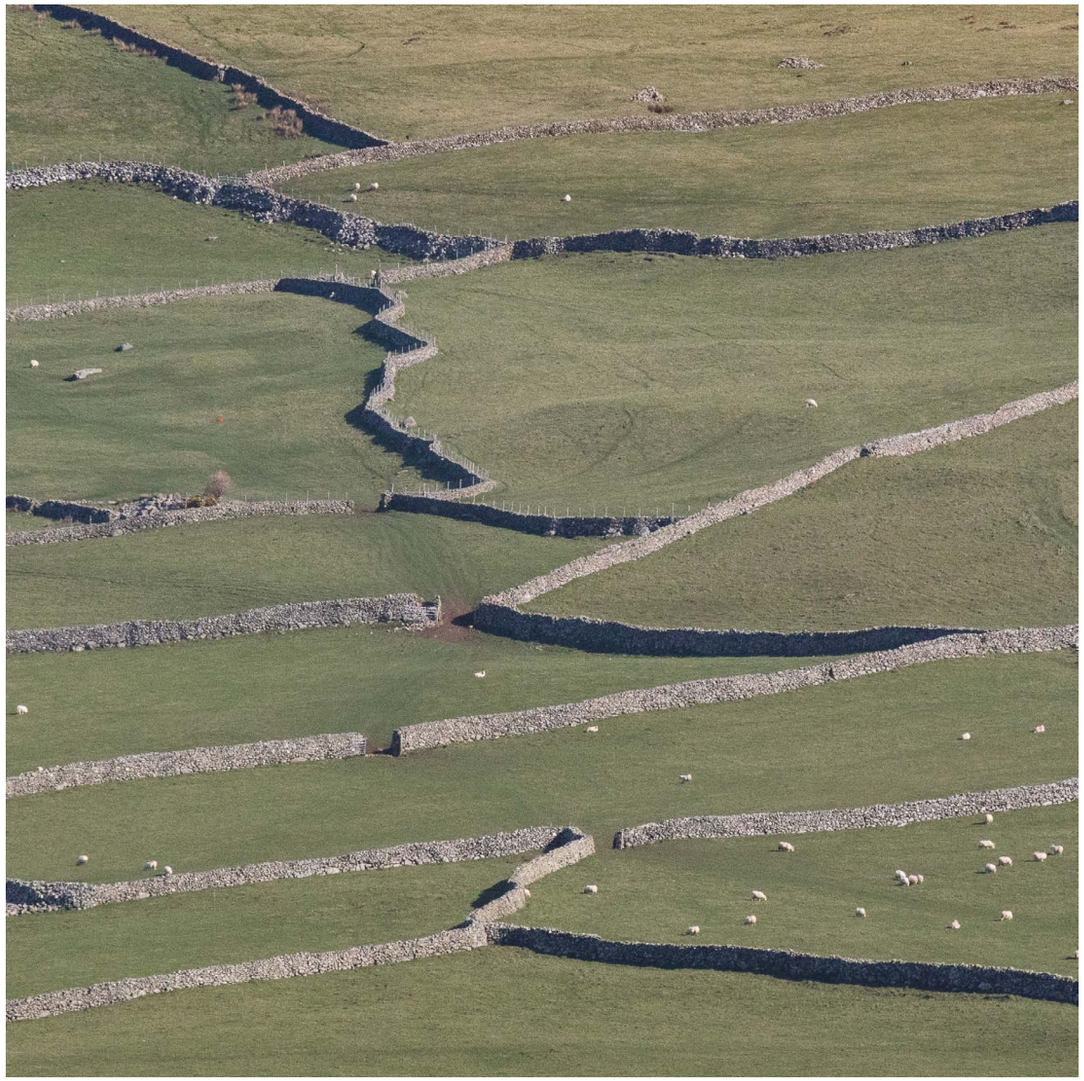
Quintin Lake

DAY 66: HELFORD POINT, CORNWALL, ENGLAND.

DAY 7: ONE WAY TO MAKE A HOUSEBOAT, SWALE, ENGLAND.

DAY 81: GCHQ BUDE, CORNWALL, ENGLAND.

DAY 214: FISH FARM, LOCH STRIVEN, SCOTLAND.

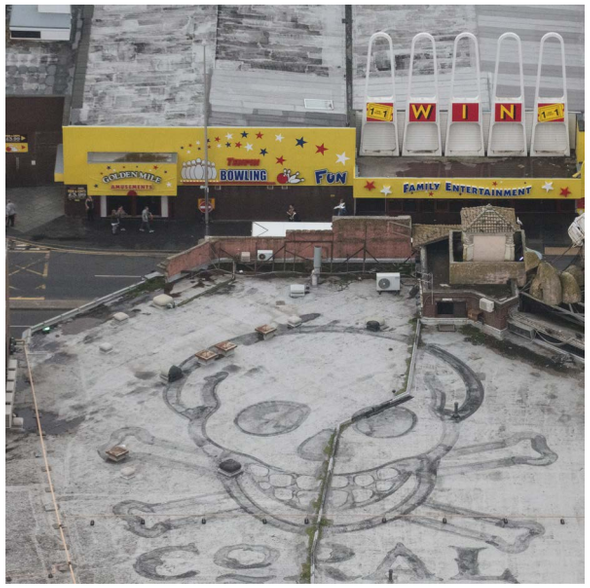


DAY 128: ABOVE LLWYNGWRIL, GWYNEDD, WALES.

DAY 111: AIR DEFENCE RANGE MANORBIER, DYFED, WALES.

DAY 212: CRAZY GOLF, DUNOON, SCOTLAND.

DAY 153: CORAL ISLAND, BLACKPOOL, LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND.



DAY 171: ANTHORN RADIO STATION, CUMBRIA, ENGLAND.

DAY 257: LOCH SUNART AND THE FLANK OF BEN HIANT, SCOTLAND.

Contributors

OLGA ALEXEEVA is Project Manager at the European Cultural Foundation.

TERE BADIA is Secretary General of **Culture Action Europe**, the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers. Culture Action Europe is the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy in the EU.

JULIE CHÉNOT, Director of Camargo Foundation.

EUPAVILLION investigates the relationship between European institutions and architecture with the aim to rekindle the debate on Europe as a cultural entity, as opposed to a mere political-economic union.

LORE GABLIER is Project Manager at the European Cultural Foundation.

PASCAL GIELEN is professor cultural sociology at the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (**ARIA**). He heads the interdisciplinairy **Culture Commons Quest Office** which researches the conditions of sustainable creative labour in different urban contexts. Gielen is also editor of **Forum+ Journal for Research and Arts** and of the international **Antennae – Arts *in* Society** book series.

THE GREATS is made with hope and love by **Fine Acts**. They invite great artists to share their free illustrations to change the world for the better. The images used in this magazine come from their portfolio 'Culture of Solidarity' which received support from the European Cultural Foundation.

OSKAR HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ is a PhD candidate in Science and Technology Studies in the Department of Social Psychology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain.

MICHAL IWANOWKSI is an artist photographer living and working in Wales. He holds two passports, British and Polish, and is a graduate of two universities, University of Wrocław (MA in English) and University of South Wales (MFA in Documentary Photography). He is also a photography lecturer. In his practice he combines landscape photography with personal and family narratives of home, war, and loss. He has exhibited internationally and his work has been acquired by a number of museums in Europe, including the National Museum of Wales. His first monograph *Clear of People* was published in 2017 by Brave Books, and was nominated for the Deutsche Börse Photography prize the same year.

CHANTAL JAMES is a Canadian of Guyanese and Welsh descent. A graduate of the Parsons School of Design, she is a co-founder and editor-in-chief of **La Rampa magazine**. James is a researcher and photographer. Her practice investigates narratives of power, visuality, aesthetics and violence with a focus on the Black Atlantic. She has exhibited her work internationally at photography festivals.

ILONA KISH is Director of Public Libraries 2030.

VOLHA KORSUN is a journalist.

QUINTIN LAKE is a British architectural and landscape photographer. He is originally trained as an architect and his interest in geometry and serenity informs all his **photographic work**. When not working on assignment for clients worldwide he creates photographic art works in series based on long landscape walks and aspects of the built environment. See **The Perimeter** for more information his latest project.

NICOLA MULLENGER is Project Manager at the European Cultural Foundation.

VIVIAN PAULISSEN is Head of Programmes at the European Cultural Foundation.

GLÒRIA PÉREZ-SALMERÓN is Chair of IFLA Global Libraries. She was Director of the Spanish National Library (BNE), President of the Spanish Federation of Societies of Archivists, Librarians, Documentalists and Museology (FESABID) and Elected President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

SAMIRA RAFAELA is a Member of the European Parliament for the social-liberal political party D66. As such she is part of the Renew Europe Group.

ISABELLE SCHWARZ is Head of Public Policy at the European Cultural Foundation.

CARLOS SPOTTORNO After working as an art director in the advertising industry, he switched to long-term photography projects, usually gravitating around economy, politics and social issues. Spottorno published seven books, has exhibited at numerous international venues and photo festivals, and is an active educator. Currently Spottorno is a permanent member of the Spanish Prime Minister's team of communication advisors.

SABRINA STALLONE is a doctoral researcher at the University of Bern. She completed an MA in Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam, where she received a pre-doctoral fellowship from the School for Regional, Transnational and European Studies (ARTES) and worked as an assistant at the Centre for European Studies (ACES).

ASHLEY THOMPSON is Online Communications Coordinator at the European Cultural Foundation.

XAVIER TROUSSARD is Head of the **New European Bauhaus Unit** – Joint Research Centre at the European Commission.

KATERINA TUCKOVA is a Czech author, playwright, publicist, art historian, and curator of exhibitions. She has won several literary awards, including the Magnesia Litera Award and the Czech Bestseller Award. In 2017, she was awarded the Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Award by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. She also has received the Premio Libro d'Europa at the Book Fair in Salerno, Italy. Her books have been translated into sixteen languages.

LAURA URBONAVIČIŪTĖ is a growth marketeer and communications professional, working with cultural projects worldwide. At the moment Laura is based in Amsterdam and works as a communications coordinator at the Prince Claus Fund – a non-governmental organisation supporting culture under pressure.

HANNA VALYNETS is a journalist.

GERT VERBELEN is a photographer and graphic designer. He studied graphic design and photography at KASK Royal Academy for Fine Arts in Gent. Verbelen obtained his Master in 2014. His photographic practice focuses on the relationship between humans and their surroundings. His work has been exhibited at ao. BredaPhoto Festival and was published in several international newspapers, including *The New York Times*. In 2020 he redesigned the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard* and now leads their graphic design department.

DEA VIDOVIĆ Director of Kultura Nova Foundation.

FRISO WIERSUM is Project Manager Communications at the European Cultural Foundation.

STUDIO WILD develops provocative designs to exceed the current boundaries of architecture. The studio operates on the border, in areas of tension between politics, architecture, and nature, embracing complexity by working in a variety of disciplines.

ANDRÉ WILKENS is Director at the European Cultural Foundation.

PHOTO Quintin Lake

Colophon

Common Ground is the annual magazine by the European Cultural Foundation celebrating Europe Day. We kindly thank all contributors for their work!

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Friso Wiersum
EDITORS	Eva Barneveld
	Bas Lafleur
DESIGN	Lyanne Tonk
DESIGN-ASSISTING	Isa Defeschew
TEXT CORRECTIONS	Vicky Anning
COVER IMAGE	Leonie Bos
BACK COVER PHOTO	Gert Verbelen

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