

The buildings in which we live almost always have an entrance, an atrium.



# UNIDEE

Residency Programs  
2020-2022

# Reflections on Embedded Arts Practice

Andy Abbott

Introduction Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto  
and UNIDEE Residency Programs

02

Curatorial Statements  
and Methodologies

06

Curator's Notes and Reflections

Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future  
Making Connections in Place  
and Across Distance 17

Groundwork for Embedded Practices  
Creating Infrastructure for a More  
Inclusive (Art) World 27

Embedded Arts Practice and The Future of Biella  
Reimagining The Territory With  
Young Local Experts 38

Tools and Technologies for Embedded Practice  
Methods, Approaches, Tools 45

Sustaining Embedded Arts Practice  
Resources, Strategies and Support 51

Action Research, Traces and Learning

Embedded Arts Practice in  
a Post-Pandemic Future  
65

Groundwork for Embedded Practices  
86

Tools and Technologies for Embedded  
Practice and Sustaining Embedded  
Arts Practice 94

Biella and Local Initiatives

100

Residents, Guests and  
UNIDEE Team and Testimonials

112

Published 2023

## Introduction

### Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto and UNIDEE Residency Programs

In 1999 Michelangelo Pistoletto founded Cittadellarte in Biella as a laboratory for art and social transformation. Its residency programme is open to artists and professionals from all over the world, providing tools and instruments for 'artivators', subjects working at the boundaries between artistic practices, processes of social change and collaborations with communities external to the art world.

Together, participants weave together moments of interdisciplinary research, exchange of knowledge and practical activities. The objective of the programme is to provide the participants with the inspiration, motivation and instruments to activate, develop or strengthen artistic initiatives based on the involvement of local ecologies.



UNIDEE (University of Ideas) started as an international programme of 4-month residencies (1999–2013), which then evolved into a model based on annual themes, and 4 types of residencies of different durations, each with different objectives: UNIDEE Modules, Research Residency, Connective Residency and Organisations in Residency.

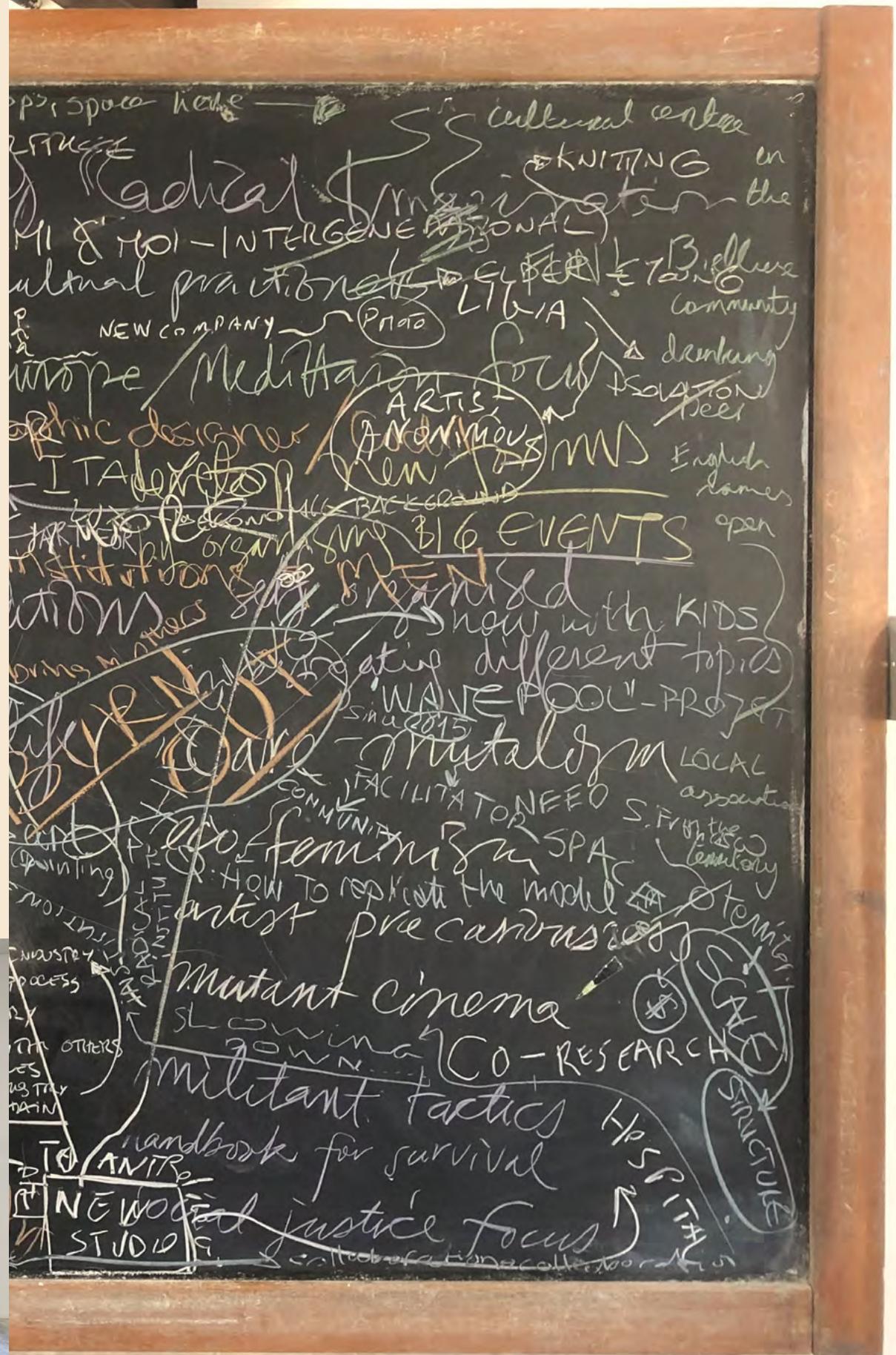
I was appointed as Visiting Research Curator for 2020–2022, and proposed a research arc investigating 'embedded arts practices', tracing back to my time as a resident with UNIDEE in 2006 when I began to draw parallels between the arts and cultural activity of post-industrial towns in Northern England and Northern Italy. The programme responded to the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath, comprising:

2 longer-form hybrid residencies: a 10-week programme in the Autumn of 2020 'Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future'; and an 8-week programme in Spring 2021, 'Groundwork for Embedded Practices', each accompanied by a series of weekly seminars, summarised here under the banner 'Embedded Arts Practice: Sowing The Seeds of Another (Art)World'

4 weeks of intensive in-presence 'Labs' in November 2021 and March 2022, titled 'Tools and Technologies for Embedded Practice'

2, 1-week residencies with guest curator Bianca Elzenbaumer, working with young people from Biella (December 2021 & May 2022), titled 'Embedded Arts Practice and the Future of Biella'

A final 2-week in-presence residency in June 2022: 'Sustaining Embedded Arts Practice'



# How will you live?

The global Covid-19 pandemic is an event that created new conditions for arts and culture. Amongst the many disruptions are irrevocable changes to how we relate to space, place and one another. We experienced a severe contraction in the physical space in which we can operate, accompanied by an explosion in the possibilities and technologies for remote collaboration. In this disorientating hybrid space, artists and those involved in cultural production – particularly those who wish to effect social change through their practice – were left with questions: 'What can we do from here?' and 'What future can we help to build?'

Cittadellarte's director Paolo Naldini outlined in his 'Pan-democracy' manifesto that we may take this moment as an opportunity for rebirth. As he puts it: 'If we still don't know where exactly this virus came from and how it spread, we can decide where it will direct us'. Concurrently the network of ambassadors for Michelangelo Pistoletto's The Third Paradise began to tackle questions for the post-virus world such as: 'How you will live? How you will learn? How will you communicate? How will you express yourself? How will you do everything you do?'

## Groundwork for Embedded Practices

The specificities of the global Covid-19 pandemic may have been unforeseeable but it was not an 'unprecedented event'. Rather the pandemic can be understood as symptomatic of a failing, outmoded, dead-on-its-feet 'zombie' politico-economic system.

As artists in this frictious and fractured landscape we can help reveal, understand and contribute to the new social and organisational forms that propagate in the shadows – the 'other' ways of being and acting together based on co-production, collective agency, mutual aid, care, commoning – and that offer alternative narratives to endless productivity and growth. As Susan Jones from the Rewild the Arts campaign has put it, 'place-specific activists and interest groups in arts and culture spheres perceive the pandemic's exceptional circumstances as an opportunity to imagine a radically different, fairer, inclusive arts ecology'.

## Embedded Arts Practice and The Future of Biella Part 1

The residency is an opportunity for a week-long conversation for residents to learn about hopes and futures for Young People in Biella: What's good? What change would you like to see? In your most hopeful moments, what life do you imagine in 40 years' time? What resources do we have or can draw upon? How could you make it happen (through and in connection with embedded arts practice)?

A group of young people from Biella will learn from guest curators and the resident artists about (socially engaged/ embedded) practice – what it means to be an artist/ curator working social field, potential career opportunities, interdisciplinary and collective approaches, etc.

Residents will have an opportunity to learn about Biella, engage with young people, and share their practice with peers.

Together we will co-create an outcome (a publication/ an exhibition/ a recording) that marks the learning – a container for proposals for future projects focused on new ways for improving and activating the territory.

## Embedded Arts Practice and The Future of Biella Part 2

The second part of the residency will build on the results of the first. We will continue to imagine ourselves as a tourism organisation of 2060 called the Circle of Interdependence. This time we will immerse ourselves in Oasi Zegna for several days to imagine the future from multiple human and non-human perspectives. We will explore concepts such as connection, empathy, caring, relationship, bonding, sharing and community. This residency will be an opportunity to work, building on the experience of December 2021, towards an outcome that embodies and represents the collective conversations, learning and wishes of the group.

A group of young people from Biella will learn from mentors and artists in residence and delve into (socially engaged/ embedded) practice – and what it means to be an artist/ curator working in a particular field or society, identifying potential career opportunities, and interdisciplinary and collective approaches to contemporary issues. Guest artists will have the opportunity to get to know Biella – and Oasi Zegna in particular – through the ‘young experts’, to work collaboratively and share their practice with colleagues.

Together we will co-create a result (performance, video recording, publication) that tells of the learning process – a container of proposals for future projects focused on new ways to improve and activate the territory.

## Tools and Technologies for Embedded Practice

‘As ‘Socially Engaged Art’ continues to be increasingly recognised by the mainstream and institutional artworld as a discipline (with accompanying commissions, educational courses and career paths) we might take this opportunity to reflect on how we can create shared resources and toolkits for embedded practice capable of disrupting the homogenisation and standardisation of such practice.

How can we deterritorialise situated practice and keep it prickly? What can be shared, what transfers, what can be adapted and repurposed, what is specific and/ or reliant on context? What tools and instruments can be hijacked or repurposed to do more than, in Audre Lorde’s words, temporarily beat the master at his own game.’

Audre Lorde, ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’ (originally published 1984), *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), pp. 110-114.

What resources and tactics can we share to collectively dismantle the old world and forge new paths to exit the perennial crises of late capitalism? And beyond instrumentalisation, what other benefits might there be in taking time to share our concrete experiences and learn from one another? We hope in this way that the lab acts as a key step in Cittadellarte and Pistoletto's commitment to developing a network of solidarity and common intent across disciplines, and of creating a global community of practice across our many locals.

The 'Artwork as Toolkit' lab began with the question 'What are our tools?'. This lab stems from the intersection of two online platforms, [www.arte-util.org](http://www.arte-util.org) (Association de Arte Útil) and [www.dpe.tools](http://www.dpe.tools) (Decentralising Political Economies), presented by Alessandra Saviotti in collaboration with Gemma Medina and Owen Griffiths. Starting from the recent usological turn we will look into a set of tools and exercises developed as part of both platforms – such as the 'Coefficient of Art' and 'A Capitalist Reading of our Usual Breakfast' – that place art at the outset of the development of a set of tactics to achieve societal change. Analysing the idea of the 'artwork-as-toolkit', the mentors will propose to look at how socially engaged art can be understood as an expanded technology that manifests itself as practices on a 1:1 scale. From our diverse and often specific practices and projects what surplus can we share, preserve, ferment and take forward for the future?

In the 'Tools for the Commons' lab we hope to bring together the experiences of artists and activists creating spaces for the growth of the commons; from the micro level of the individual, personal or subjective, through to the reclaiming or occupation of urban space, and the influencing of planning and policy. Mentors Emanuele Braga and Gabriella Riccio will draw upon their experiences in occupied art and cultural spaces MACAO (Milan) and L'Asilo (Naples) as well as the postcapitalist think-tank, Institute of Radical Imagination. Long-term comrades and collaborators Keir Milburn and Gareth Brown will bring a UK perspective on creative activism including the use of political strategy games, utopian consciousness raising sessions, and the establishment of Public-Common-Partnerships. What tools (or toys) for establishing and developing the commons can we identify, adapt or invent? Which of these are we able and willing to share, and under what terms?

## Sustaining Embedded Arts Practice

In this final chapter of my research arc we hope to explore more of the practicalities around embedded arts practice including: the creation of alternative funding structures and resources; creating or reclaiming commons; the formation of counter/ alter-institutions; and reforming and working within, against and beyond existing structures. We also hope to dig deeper into some recurring questions including: How can we create sustainability, for ourselves and our worlds, through embedded practice?; What productive tensions exist between the formal and the informal, the structured and organic, and the institutional and self-organised?; How might we work across different scales and spaces of embeddedness, from the individual, the social, and the environmental/ structural?; What are our networks and interdependencies?; What should we build and what should we dismantle?; How do we begin and where might it end?; What would it mean to 'disappear' or merge into the social fabric?

This last question around the visibility of embedded practice has particular resonance in a moment where 'social practice' – as well as the collective and collaborative methods it entails – gains ever more traction. This is happening both in the institutional art world (as seen in the 2021 Turner prize and Documenta Fifteen) and in the social sphere where the last 2 years of disruption and upheaval – as symptoms of a larger and ongoing social and ecological crisis – have prompted us to reconsider the value of practices of care, mutual aid and communitarian ways of being and doing that counter the 'normality' of endless growth, expansion and extraction.

Concurrently we understand that the most sustained change that can be affected through aesthetic experience occurs below the surface: at the sometimes imperceptible level of emotion and subjectivity. Art, even at its most representational, can create sites for the emergence of a collective imagination capable of thinking and desiring beyond 'capitalist realism'\*. How do we keep radical subjectivity on the table in a world that demands we visibly prove our worth and measure our impact? Through the residency we hope to develop a network of practitioners doing what they can from where they are, that together constitute a paradigm shift proving that another (art)world is possible.

\*Mark Fisher 'Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?' 2010

## Methodologies

The residencies and labs were structured around:

- \* A weekly programme of Seminars delivered by guest mentors. These mentors were experienced artists, curators, arts organisers and researchers in the field of embedded practice from across the globe. As well as presentations and activities as part of the seminars, the mentors also facilitated group critiques, and 1:1 tutorials were also made available to residents either in person or via Zoom.
- \* Independent Action Research undertaken by the individual residents in their own locale using artistic methods for the 10 weeks of the programme. They used the online collaboration tool Padlet to share the process of their projects remotely and form connections and opportunities for collaboration.
- \* A 1-Week Intensive where residents were invited in small groups to spend a week in Cittadellarte, or where travel was impossible, to take part online. This was an opportunity for residents to share, unpack, reflect and collectively test out elements of their research in a different setting. We used peer-to-peer methods like group critiques to aid this.
- \* Grounding in the Local. A programme of visits and meetings with local initiatives was offered to each group in their 1-week intensive to give an insight into the local context. This included tours of Cittadellarte and its galleries; presentations from the other initiatives of Cittadellarte such as Let Eat Bi sustainable food project and Hydro young people's social centre; visits to local initiatives like PACE Futuro migrant support organisation; as well as walks and trips to enjoy the green and blue spaces of Biella, like the river and Oropa Sanctuary.
- \* Handover and Traces. At the end of the 1-week intensives residents were asked to 'leave a trace' of where they were currently with their research. This could be an image, print or other material that would give a sense of the resident's project, the direction it may be going in and their experiences. At the end of the residency these traces were compiled into webzines using the Hotglue 'internet samizdat tool'.
- \* Informal and Self-Organised Learning. When present physically the small groups in their 1-week intensive would live, eat and spend recreational time together outside of the scheduled programme. In the cases of partially or entirely virtual intensives, the residents were encouraged to create a forum for informal communication (WhatsApp group, Facebook group, etc.) and self-organise opportunities for collective activities that they could do 'together-apart' such as movement, yoga, word puzzles, walks in their respective places, and so on.



## Curator's Notes and Reflections

## Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future

### Making Connections in Place and Across Distance



## Roughly Speaking: What Do We Mean by Embedded Practice?

As a curator I didn't want to put forward a solid definition of 'embedded practice' for the residency and the research arc overall, trusting that the conversations and the practices shared in the programme would generate their own over time. I'd become fatigued by the institutional artworld's jargon and I was conscious of adding another buzzword to the pile. That said, I'd found the term 'embedded practice' useful both through my work with the East Lancashire artist-led organisation In-Situ, and to describe my own work as an artist. It points towards what we might see as a 'sub-discipline' of socially engaged art or social practice more generally, or of Pistoletto's 'art for the responsible transformation of society'. For me, 'embeddedness' emphasises the context and place specific, long-term research methods that may involve co-production or collaboration, and – perhaps most importantly – an ambition to mesh with the social fabric of everyday life.

Through their presentations as part of the seminar programme on the residency, the guest mentors helped to illustrate, flesh out, broaden and deepen this loose proposition.

In his keynote presentation for the plenary seminar **Paul O'Neill** referred back to his book *Locating the Producers* (2011, edited with Clare Doherty) to give an overview of 'durational approaches to public art'. He presented examples of discursive exhibitions that evolve over time and prioritise process over outcome. Emerging as a reaction to so-called 'plop art' and the commercialisation of public space, Paul gave examples of artists that show more authentic ways of engaging with communities and place, including Park Fiction (Hamburg 1995–ongoing), Project Row Houses (Houston, 1994 – ongoing), The Blue House (Amsterdam, 2005 – 2009), Edgware Road Project (London, 2009 – 2011), and Grizedale Arts (2005 – ongoing).



The UNIDEE 2020 programme 'Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future' brought together over 40 residents from across the world to engage in a 10-week hybrid programme (of virtual and physical presence) to explore the questions of 'where next' for socially engaged and embedded practice and 'what future can we build together' under unfolding conditions created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As well as these case studies, Paul set the scene by outlining methodologies that have been gleaned from these projects; thinking about embedded or durational curatorial processes as having stages of research that include gathering, focusing, reporting, making things public, and dissemination, both as part of the process and the final form.

Also as part of the plenary seminar **Claudia Zieske** presented her 'town as venue' methodology, developed through her work as founding director of Deveron Projects in Huntly, a town of 4,000 inhabitants in rural Scotland. Deveron Projects existed without a venue, and they came to see this as a benefit rather than a barrier. Taking inspiration from Patrick Geddes and his invocation to 'think global, act local', they worked with over 100 artists in 25 years through 3-month-long residencies. Claudia explained how the artists they invited are always necessarily socially engaged as they don't have a studio, therefore engaging directly with the space and the people of the town through performances, cycling, food projects, walking, etc. Through this the artist has become like the butcher or the baker, and in fact Deveron has outlived the town post office and bank.

In-Situ described how they were inspired by artist **Rick Lowe** and the aforementioned Project Row Houses to embrace and develop an everyday, slow, durational, invisible community-led, artist-led approach to their work in Pendle, East Lancashire (UK). Founding director **Paul Hartley** explained how In-Situ was born in 2012 from the desire of 3 artists to do something for the place they were in – a place seen as a 'cold spot' of traditional culture but with a radical history. Also one where (as **Rauf Bashir** of the community cohesion charity Building Bridges explained), due to new arrivals and migration for the textiles trade, 'embeddness' is a process of 'integration' where new neighbours are given safe space to find common ground and explore their relative differences. Through a long-term commitment, In-Situ and Building Bridges are now being given opportunities to work at a different scale and ambition – including a long-term project with Suzanne Lacy in 2015–2017 – and to work as part of a Town Deal that will put people and social engagement into the regeneration process. Paul and Rauf were keen to ask the cohort, 'What does embedded practice mean to you?'

Other takes on embedded practice were provided by Belgrade-based architecture/art duo **STEALTH.unlimited**, who saw embeddedness as an urban practice. They presented projects that involved creating fictional narratives to imagine different futures for urban development, as well as a campaign to launch a collectively-owned apartment building, and setting up an energy co-operative to grow over the next 10 years, to produce of their own energy in Belgrade (referencing again Rick Lowe in the Row House Community Development Corporation) and thereby provide affordable rental housing.

**Jasmeen Patheja**, winner of the Visible prize, outlined a practice as emerging from local social concerns in India, including discussions around public space that revealed the reality of everyday sexual and gender-based violence as a starting point for the long-term ongoing project, Blank Noise (started in 2003). She described how the project grew from very specific local issues into a national campaign against sexual violence. As Visible Projects' Matteo Luchetti explained, Jasmeen's work shows how these long-term, mass-scale projects may be made of smaller, more focused events or exhibitions, such as 'Meet to Sleep' or 'I Never Ask For It', with the aim to become embedded in the public consciousness.

Palestinian architect and researcher **Sandi Hilal** talked through her lifetime of practice as embedded in the issue of decoloniality; inviting us to think about our own subjectivity or position in relation to that term. She explained how for her, an awareness and active embrace of context and position is a way of maintaining a critical (decolonial) position. In her practice this has involved refusing the matrix and frame presented, rejecting the offer to be a guest and instead becoming a host, and by opening up her own house as a safe space for interactions with people that allowed those gathered 'to trust our minds with each other' and to help one another break taboos. Sandi also talked about how to create and be part of networks whose task is decolonisation (in different forms) and this being part of an overall struggle for a more inclusive world. Along with guest curator Aria Spinelli, Sandi invited the group to discuss these concepts, asking them to reflect on their position in relation to decoloniality.



Curator's Notes and Reflections – Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future



**Yvonne Carmichael** and **Alice Withers** from South Square Centre in Bradford (UK) described the journey of their arts and community centre towards securing a 99-year lease via a Community Asset Transfer that would ensure the building's use as artist studios, vegetarian café, and community hub for future generations. Activities manager Alice went into detail describing the work the centre continued to do through the various lockdowns and social distancing regulations of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a small and agile community arts organisation they were required to think creatively and responsively to provide vital cultural and social activities in a village where isolation is already rife – doing so through both digital (an online wellbeing festival) and analogue (postal projects and outdoor music performances for local care homes) means. Director Yvonne described how throughout the life of the centre the use of conviviality, and especially parties, was a key part in building the relations and trust necessary for long-term engagement work, and then invited our residents to plan their own Zoom party.

Researchers and Curators of the Arte Útil Archive **Alessandra Saviotti** and **Gemma Medina Estupiñan** discussed Tania Bruguera's definition of Arte Útil as a tool – where art's function is 'no longer to be a space for 'signalling' problems, but the place from which to create the proposal and implementation of possible solutions'. They also introduced the concept of such art as operating at a 1:1 scale as described by Stephen Wright in his *Toward a Lexicon of Usership* (2013). Together they delved deeper into how the varied and globe-spanning projects gathered in the Arte Útil Archive (that are in themselves context specific and related to place) may be presented together in a way that makes sense in the place where the archive is encountered. Alessandra and Gemma described methods for 'activating the archive' both as a way to create a dialogue in that place and as an educational tool to 'infiltrate the institution': shaping the curriculum through a double ontology. This introduced concepts of embedding by stealth and methods of 'piggybacking' or hacking existing frameworks to effect change.

**Nadia Moya** and **Fernando Escobar** from the School of Arts at the National University of Colombia further described the Latin American context for 'embedded practice', where categories of socially engaged art or social practice have little meaning. They explained how they would rather talk about art practices and social processes that together 'build the common' in a territory, and from this asked, 'what would a toolbox look like?' Nadia and Fernando presented projects like the creation of alternative heritage walks and community gardens in Medellín that are not necessarily seen as having a relationship with 'contemporary art' but, due to the social, economic and political contexts in which they operate, are critical acts. They also described how in Bolivia a former slaughterhouse has been reclaimed and renovated by art collectives to become a place for intersection between traditional indigenous art forms and contemporary street art and culture. They invited the cohort to identify the resources in their respective action research projects in relation to territory, social processes, art practices, and how these may be activated to build the commons.

In the penultimate session, professor **Mick Wilson** described how historically the discourse around art and politics – or social practice and art – has often led to unhelpful binaries, with one of these being the relationship between embedded practices (as examples of art that may be thought of as being in public, outside the gallery or in the social domain) and the exhibition format. Mick proposed Theaster Gates, Kathrin Böhm, Jeanne van Heeswijk and Tania Bruguera as examples of artists who use the exhibition format, or 'exhibitionary moments', in their practice without those necessarily being at the centre of the practice. Instead, the exhibition becomes a device within a longer-term engagement. Mick was interested in whether there are practices that cannot be exhibited or that risk having meaning destroyed in the process, and posed this as something for the residents to consider in relation to their practice.



Finally but not least, Bergen-based artist-as-organiser **Eva Rowson** reflected on embedded practice as a way of concentrating on the micro organising and micro details required to create 'radical hospitality' – spaces in which people feel welcome. She described the process of embedding as a close-focused attention to the micro details of the everyday that aid or hinder the creation of a welcoming space. Eva used projects including 38b in London (2010–2018), FOOD in New York (1971–1974), la Musea in Barcelona (2017) and her current work at Bergen Kjøtt, as examples of artistic projects that try to put into practice the theory and ideas of 'radical hospitality'. This requires valuing labour and work that is not normally seen as central or important. For Eva, embedding a practice – making it sustainable – may require that we turn the invisible visible, or bring these marginal concerns into the centre, despite it being unglamorous and often boring 'maintenance work', such as cleaning up. Eva's invitation to the group was to make ginger beer together (from our respective places) for an end-of-residency toast, and also to share something we would be taking and carrying with us from this residency, for example a bit of learning, a tool or method, a connection, or a question.

## Reflections: On Art in the Time of Covid and the Hybrid Residency Format

A term that was under constant scrutiny throughout the residency was 'post-pandemic'. It was clear from the outset that we were talking about 'post' as meaning after the event/ arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic and its unfolding, not a time after its disappearance.

So, during this time we were also talking about embedded methods in the time of social distancing measures, restricted travel and movement, and lockdowns of various lengths and degrees of severity. In this context Paul O'Neill noted how strange it was to be looking at images of people sharing space and touching each other. We heard how some organisations like Building Bridges and South Square Centre had been quick and agile enough to respond to the conditions, or like Deveron Projects who subsequently had their importance and value highlighted. Aria Spinelli, when outlining the Italian context as part of the plenary seminar, reflected on how the acts of creative togetherness and mutual aid forced by the pandemic (neighbours singing opera across apartment block balconies and providing food parcels for the needy) might be considered a form of art, but how, at the same time, the pandemic had highlighted or exacerbated previously tolerated inequalities. Mick Wilson noted how galleries and museums had used the pandemic as an opportunity or excuse to move everything online, often without criticality of what doing that means, especially against the backdrop of other global movements such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter.

In terms of how the post-pandemic context played out in the residents' action research projects, it was notable how many found new ways to stay connected, or establish connection, as a foundation of trust on which to build longer-term embedded approaches. Also, it was striking that although there was a desire to gain theoretical and critical understanding of the situation, as Mick explained, often in these scenarios it is the practice that is leading the exploration, and the theory will come later. It was as if we were on the edge of something and feeling it out together.

Doing the residency during a period of travel restrictions and social distancing posed obvious practical challenges, especially when so much of the residency experience is based on the 'informal' and intangible learning that comes from being in a place. These restrictions caused a crisis for residencies in general, as relayed by various organisations at the 'Rethinking Residencies' online symposium in December 2021.

However, we also found that our hybrid programme allowed for the participation of artists not normally attracted to or accommodated by the residency model, one that so often prioritises production, proposal or academic reflection. Geographical restrictions were lessened and participants were able to fit the residency around their usual working lives and family commitments, creating a more diverse cohort.

Concurrently it allowed a revisiting of the 'longer form' and more open-ended residency format that UNIDEE had started with (and that I had taken part in as a resident in 2006). This happened at a time when the organisation was also formalising its accredited educational programme as Accademia UNIDEE. Together, this created a space in which to challenge the narrative of education as a top-down 'banking' model, and the increasing intellectualisation or academicisation of art in general.



Instead, we put into practice a peer-led methodology with the ongoing practice and lived experience of the residents at the centre. Participants were in general selected based on the project they were bringing and their willingness to share it. The guest mentors acted as mirrors for the residents – one of many 'multiple perspectives' we aimed to provide for them. Later, in the residencies guest curated by Bianca Elzenbaumer, the young people were the 'local experts'. Naturally, hierarchies and structure still existed: residents paid (or were subsidised by bursaries) for their participation, whereas the guests were paid for theirs. Accommodation and food were separate but in many cases we chose to eat and socialise together, generating interesting questions around the boundaries, ability to opt out, and tyranny of structurelessness when working collectively.

In this sense the residency – in times of Covid-19 and in the 'post-pandemic' era – became a test site for new ways of forming knowledge. Like the artist-led organisations and counter institutions we worked with, we were able to be agile and responsive and took risks, experimenting with new forms that could feed into Higher Education curricula to come. Through the Embedded Arts practice residencies of 2020 and 2021 we found playful ways to 'break through the frame/ screen' and create intimacy and connection through various (mis)uses of technology and digital platforms – from synchronised daily routines across time zones to online cabaret shows. The experience of the UNIDEE Embedded Arts hybrid programmes demonstrated both the need and potential for new models of sharing and learning from what BAK (basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht) has called 'situated practices', which may involve roaming formats or a network for embedded arts practitioners.

## Groundwork for Embedded Practices

### Creating Infrastructure for a More Inclusive (Art) World

The 2021 UNIDEE Residency Program aimed to further and deepen the conversation started in 2020, with a specific focus on alternative structures, frameworks, ecologies and organisational forms for socially engaged art projects, and the groundwork required to build and sustain them.

Over 10 weeks from May to July 2021, the residency provided a forum for practitioners from a range of backgrounds to gain new perspectives and develop their practice through a programme of peer-to-peer learning. As part of the programme residents undertook a 1-week intensive in small groups. They could participate at Cittadellarte or remotely.



How can we create sustainability, for ourselves and our worlds?

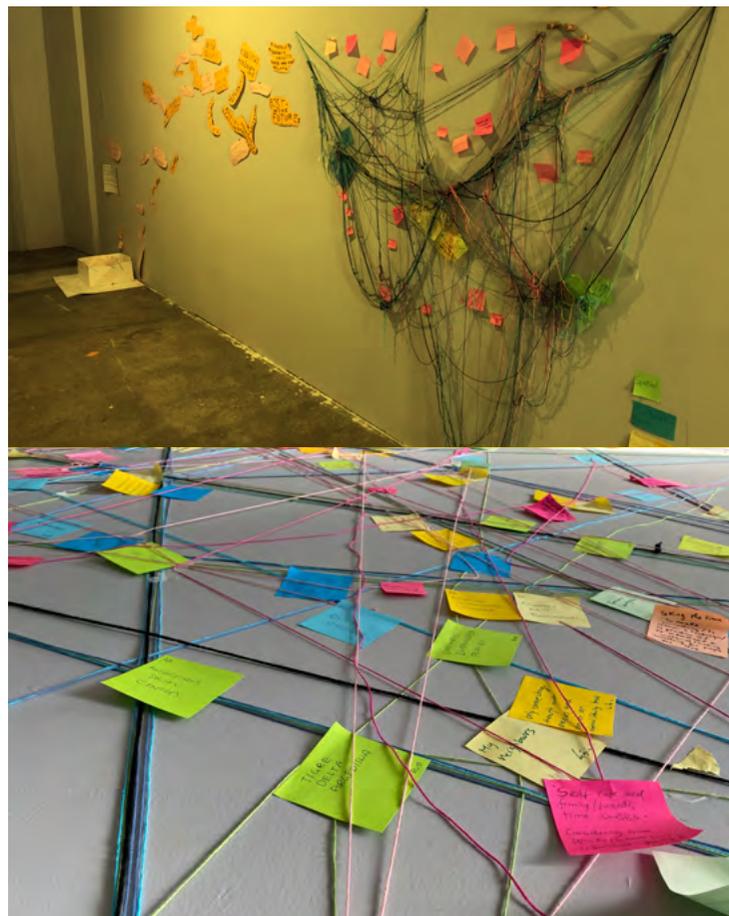
What new ecologies of practice exist or can be formed?

In which spaces and places can this grow, and what are the ideal conditions?

What groundwork is required, and how do we get started here and now?

## Embedded Practice: Sowing the Seeds of Another (Art)World?

My formative cultural experiences were within the Do-it-Yourself music scene, and from this I became interested in self-organised culture more broadly. The post-industrial towns and cities of Northern England in which I lived, studied and worked (Leeds and Bradford in Yorkshire, Pendle in East Lancashire) have a rich history of countercultural, grassroots, and independent creative activity born as a response to the absence of a conventional cultural offer and the availability of cheap space and free time (which, up until the age of austerity, was common to cities where unemployment and empty industrial buildings are rife). In these places, where people have no choice but to 'make their own fun', innovative and sometimes radical experiments emerge, grounded in ethics of mutual aid, solidarity and collective self-determination. The seminar programme of the residency helped to draw together similar experiences, initiatives and narratives of artists, activists and cultural workers building the world they wanted to see.



**Katherine Gibson** began the seminar series by explaining her action research methods (as she noted, 'what you call art') that have enabled her to dig deeper into experiments in alternative community economies. Fundamental to this approach is to maintain an open position and engage in experimental thinking. Many of her projects in postindustrial and deindustrialised places begin with an acknowledgement (through listening and talking together) of the negative emotions and affects that may exist. This precedes a releasing of more positive affects through action. Another key aspect in the diverse economies approach is looking at assets and strengths rather than deficits. This is done through inventory and asset mapping that reveals alternative economies and helps to create new (non-capitalist) discourses; a process of redrawing the economy. In this way the 'groundwork' for embedded practice is the formation of new discourses or narratives. For Katherine this experimental thinking and acting increases the viability of future experiments – be they in community building, alternative economies, people's banks, commoning and so on.

**Jeanne van Heeswijk** presented projects that she has initiated that tap into and facilitate the growth of alternative forms of collectivity and organisation, including Community Land Trusts, co-operatives, and assemblies in the Netherlands, the UK and Philadelphia. Jeanne provided detail of these projects as examples of her practice in 'radicalising the local' and 'training for the not-yet'. A fundamental part of her methodology is deep listening to the emotional condition of the place, to start identifying or creating fields of interaction. Jeanne gave Homebaked in Anfield, Liverpool, as an example of a project where a community who were sick of and frustrated by issues of regeneration and housing found bread and baking as a new avenue for engagement, resulting in a long-term sustainable project that has since transformed the area. Jeanne also explained that she takes care in her own projects to make sure everyone is paid a living wage, often through the creation of a project team, and that this is a method with which to hack institutions.

The Interdependence (**Kathrin Böhm**, **Bianca Elzenbaumer** and **Kate Rich**) questioned the totalising (and autonomous) nature of the 'collective' and illustrated 3 different approaches to creating alternative economies – all through the setup of drinks companies. Company Drinks, Cube-Cola, and Comunità Frizzante were offered as demonstrations in organising our practice around economic practices, and thinking of the economy as something we can support or subvert through everyday activity. They also talked more broadly about how these projects aim to build a network of interdependence. For Kathrin, Bianca and Kate, connecting the 3 practices shows that we need each other in these localised practices, along with forms of peer-to-peer pooling of knowledge. The projects showed the possibility of being 'radically utopian in a normal business space' and described building an alliance or network as the groundwork for embedded practice. From this, the residents were invited to do their own mapping or inventorying of their practices.

**Alessandra Saviotti** and **Owen Griffiths** presented 'toolkits' for practices that involve growing (sometimes literally) at a community level. Decentralising Political Economies was initiated as a partnership between the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, Liverpool John Moores University and the Association de Arte Útil. It was intended as a shared platform that would be open source and activated in different contexts, with an aim of repurposing the museum as a tool for social change. Alessandra explained how her role in DPE has been to create a syllabus using the city as a case study that has included projects in Liverpool such as Kitty's Laundrette, Granby 4 Streets and the aforementioned Homebaked. Owen Griffiths talked about working as an artist in Swansea at a neighbourhood level, often in post-industrial contexts that involve dealing with colonial pasts.

He asked how we might, through socially engaged art, de-romanticise the industrial heritage of these places and gain a better understanding of the place we are in; a process that might create some friction. His projects included a community garden on postindustrial land and illustrated his commitment to 'digging where you stand' – working locally as a political choice to create an archipelago of 'local work' outside of London and the gallery system.

**Nour Hifaoui** of Samandal Comics gave a presentation about the work of a collective in the face of an ongoing crisis. She described the journey of Samandal as a collective of artists and writers from different backgrounds with a shared love of comics, formed because there was no comics market in Lebanon or the Middle East. They set up as a non-profit organisation championing experimental approaches to the comic format, putting the artist's voice at the centre of the work, often in the face of censorship and limited freedom of speech. The collective also provide workshops and talk with young people about social struggles. Nour described how in Lebanon access to space often happens through friends helping each other out, and a gift economy. Samandal's publications are distributed through shops, libraries, festivals and exhibitions, creating an alternative network of distribution outside the contemporary art world. Nour also relayed how the financial crises in Lebanon – where inflation is making it impossible to publish – combined with the pandemic, has forced everything online. However, for her, Samandal is more than just a publishing collective, it is a community of people that love comics and storytelling.

**Cráter Invertido** offered an experimental and experiential tour of their collective based in the Santa Maria neighbourhood of Mexico. Describing the different 'arms and tables' that make up a collective body they explained how collectivising can be self-sustaining but also described tensions that arose when funding from Arts Collaboratory Fund were introduced. At the heart of the collective's practice is imagination and subjectivity; they demonstrated how they use automatic drawing as a group to help realise the collective imagination. Cráter Invertido began self-publishing through the use of a Risograph machine as a shared resource and made over 100 'little books' that, as it has for Samandal, created a community and a network of small affinity groups. They also presented to the group their radio station, something they understand as a common tool for research, and described how their territorial struggles may expand to other territories. The collective then invited the residents to think about how the seemingly mutually exclusive categories of violence and humour relate to their own practices.

**Andrew Raine** and **Sam Lanchin** from collective Wharf Chambers described the practicalities of setting up a co-operative in a city like Leeds in the North of England, and shared the vulnerabilities and ongoing challenges they had encountered in their journey. Wharf Chambers was set up in 2011 in 'a typical post-industrial town' against a backdrop of gentrification and commercial growth. It was intended as a space for music, art and film, building on Leeds' Do-It-Yourself music scene. Andrew and Sam described how through the structure of the organisation – a members' club managed (not curated) by a workers' co-operative – they have, unintentionally, arrived at being the queer and trans safe space that the city needed, and are more inclusive and diverse than many of the 'properly funded' cultural organisations in Leeds. Working in this responsive and community-led way, however, has created issues. Beyond the initial contradiction of being an 'anti-capitalist commercial space', Andrew described how Wharf Chambers is also sometimes 'too arty for the political people and too right-on for the hedonists'. They also described the challenge of inventing new protocols as they go along, relating to safety, security, inclusion and racism. They invited residents to think through these problems with them.



**Mao Mollona, Emanuele Braga** and **Marco Baravalle** talked about The Institute of Radical Imagination, a thinktank with the aim of implementing post-capitalism in different contexts: the economy, urban spaces, citizenship, pedagogy, work and labour. They took ideas of the commons and commoning as points of departure to talk about a number of studies and ideas, with aim of shifting the narrative and show that economic life is not just public and private, not just capitalism and communism, but is more diverse and mixed. They develop policies and tools to transition beyond capitalism, including Universal Basic Income. Marco talked about self-organisation co-existing with institutions and how an 'instituting of the commons' can occur through existing institutions 'becoming minor', and also through the formation of alter-institutions such as Sale Docks in Venice. Emanuele talked about the occupied cultural centre MACAO in Milan as an example of prefigurative direct action against austerity and gentrification, and also how to create alternative economic space and solve precarity, especially in the field of art, such as the creation of a common wallet. They invited the residents to reflect on their own practices in relation to the commons as groundwork for embedded practice



**James Hill**, director of Leeds-based arts collective Pyramid and academic **Jade French** (University of Leeds) posed questions around what it really means to reinvent structures to be more inclusive. James described Pyramid's exercises of 'barrier mapping' and how to work within institutions to bring these methods into the mainstream. Pyramid is a charity that works with artists with and without learning disabilities. They were set up in 1989 as a volunteer art club working within an institution and when this dissolved, Pyramid collective formed as a way of people keeping in touch. More recently they changed the model from artists working for people with disabilities to the pairing of artists with and without disabilities. In 2018 Pyramid started working on a new strategic plan that included the disruption of social and institutional barriers that prevent Learning Disabled people's development as artists. Jade outlined a new initiative called the Irregular School whose aim is to support artists for whom the usual linear development path doesn't work. She described how they are working with Pyramid, the University of Leeds and other artist-led spaces to create an inclusive Fine Art degree, taking the opportunity of institutions' declaration to be more inclusive to experiment and push this forward.

**Marlo De Lara** looked at groundwork for embedded practice through the lens of alternative and feminist networks in the music industry. Describing the need for solidarity, support and emotional resourcing within these scenes, especially in post-pandemic times, she invited us to consider Audre Lord's descriptions of radical self-care ('self-preservation not self-indulgence') and community care. Relaying experiences of online residencies during pandemic times, Marlo also introduced the role of virtual networks and open collective models, suggesting that we should not rush to 'go back to normal' when there has been an increased level of accessibility for some – introverts and Black and Indigenous People Of Colour, for example. The question for Marlo then was how to integrate these accessibility benefits with the humanity of immediate contact, recognising – as Sara Ahmed has done – that emotions enhance collectives and that community care is the groundwork for making social change.

In the final seminar **Gregory Sholette** offered some historical context of art groups collectivising and forming around a particular (local) issue such as gentrification. He also offered a reminder that embedded practice can be about being part of a wider international movement; embedding in a cultural process or political cause. Gregory described how Chicago in the 1990s, like New York City in the 70s, was a time of reconstruction and possibility after the infrastructure of the city had fallen apart. In this context, artists and artistic projects emerged such as Dan Petermen, Theaster Gates and Temporary Services, who were involved in making zines, giving away ideas, creating a gift economy and running a free shop. For Gregory, it is in these moments that collectives come together and challenge the normal way of doing things. This process of artists lending talents and skills to causes (as groups) is a way for them to embed themselves in political movements. Gregory also introduced Group Material as an example of artists creating their own art world and discussed the relations (and tensions) between informal collectives and formal organisations. Often the collective's small scale gives it agility and it can formulate things quicker, but this leads to questions around sustainability. Here the tough groundwork for embedded practice also involves liberating the imagination to overcome spectacle.



Overall then, throughout the programme we were presented with multiple lenses through which to understand 'groundwork for embedded practice' from the actual labour and processes involved (action research, mapping, listening, collaborating, digging, caring, collectivising) through to practical ways of organising and working together (sharing of resources, building networks, self-publishing, forming workers co-operatives), through to the creation of infrastructure and foundations upon which to build alternative worlds (alternative economies, expanding the commons through alter-institutions, either as acts of autonomous prefiguration or through 'hacking', hijacking or reforming existing institutions).

What came across was that this work is not linear, procedural or step-by-step. The groundwork is a constant cycle of investigation, application and collective self-reflection. We are necessarily in a process of rebuilding and dismantling, using theoretical and practical tools. The practical projects and action research demonstrated the different stages and phases of this process.

## Reflections: On 'Going Back to Normal'

During this residency we found that for a lot of artists who work in an embedded place-based way, the pandemic and lockdowns have been good opportunities to reflect and focus on the local in a new light. It was also clear that the remote/distanced residency could be more sustainable, more accessible and more environmentally sound (reduced carbon footprint), allowing the connecting of the local and the global and sharing of expertise without the 'colonising' or 'parachuting in' that such practice often entails.

Digital tools play a part in this and have proven to be useful in reaching otherwise inaccessible co-producers/ participants, but the residency has usefully highlighted the limits of these technologies (qualitative in terms of Zoom fatigue) and unequal access (digital poverty) that needs to be addressed. Of course the informal and spontaneous, unplanned and self-organised aspects of collective learning is very hard to replicate in the 'rigid' structure of digital space and the tactile and 'embodied' nature of such practice is also at risk of being lost.

We are coming to terms with the fact that the 'post-pandemic future' is not one where Covid-19 has disappeared from memory. The future that we build will be scarred by this experience and we will be living with its affects forever. The question then is what to keep, what to improve, what to discard and what to radically rethink.

This was an entirely distanced programme but with opportunity for residents to spend their 1-week intensive in Cittadellarte. I got the sense of overall Zoom fatigue, and a desire or need to move beyond the virtual frame. So in comparison to the previous (hybrid) residency there was less appetite for recreating or substituting the informal through virtual means. This was a missed opportunity perhaps, but one that, along with the need to dig deeper into the practice, informed the decision to move towards the in-presence 'lab' format for the remainder of the research arc. This also helped to give the time and intimacy necessary to dig deeper into the methods and motivations of the practice, again something that is perhaps less common to art education or residencies where the tendency towards abstraction and theory is often more comfortable and defensive.



Curator's Notes and Reflections - Groundwork for Embedded Practices

# Embedded Arts Practice and the Future of Biella

## Reimagining the Territory with Young Local Experts

**Residency Keywords:** Speculative futures, future of (art)work, postindustrial condition, rural and alternative economies, ecology, hospitality, sustainable development, slow tourism, transport and mobility, alternative education, placemaking, co-production, artistic action research, creative mapping, collective imagination, self-publishing/ dissemination.

In December 2021 and March 2022, a group of young 'experts' from the Biella area mingled with a group of local artists, and were supported by mentors, to explore the present and future of tourism in Biella, Oasi Zegna and the wider territory. For a week, each group of experts entered into conversation with various players in the field: artists from Cittadellarte, actors and actresses from the Zegna Foundation, a hiking guide, a basket maker, a brewer, an expert in wild herbs, the river, the beech trees of Oasi Zegna, the Carabo of Olimpia, the snow, and many others.



'What is hospitality? It means receiving people with a smile, sharing what you love, with the idea of a hospitable and sustainable territory, for those who live there and those who visit, where nature and humans live in harmony in full mutual respect. It is not necessary to repeat pre-established patterns, but to create new models.'

Interview with Anna Zegna

## Themes and Methods

What Biella would we like to see for ourselves and future generations? What steps can we take to get there? What exists and can be developed? What do we need to invent or create? In our explorations and conversations, the following concepts for a desirable future took shape: connection, empathy, caring, relationship, ties, co-sharing and community.

Posing as a tourist board of the future we collectively re-imagined the territory through the lens of hospitality and proposed new models for engaging with the territories of Biella. There was a focus on why people visit Biella in the Future. How will we welcome them? What will they do? How will they get around? What will they learn? What will they eat and drink? Who will come? What will it be like for older people and how will it be accessible? How will they capture and communicate this place and their experiences when they return home? What will the future postcards of Biella look like?

## Tools and Resources

- \* Presentations of how guest artists and mentors have developed socially engaged projects.
- \* Research on the materials of the Biella Città Archipelago mapping project presented as part of the 'Arte al Centro' review of Cittadellarte in October 2021.
- \* Visits and field experiences to understand the history and present of the territory by deepening the artistic-cultural fields, the environment and sustainable tourism.

Specifically: visit to Casa Zegna by Cristina Grosso; a tourist experience of Oasi Zegna with Raffaella Pivani; outdoor activities at Bosco del Sorriso with OverAlp; an in-depth study of the teaching activity of the Middle School of Mosso with Giuseppe Paschetto; a meeting with Paolo Vergnaghi of the Passi D'Asino Association, the Beer In company and Oro di Berta Agritourism.

- \* Group discussion sessions in which guest artists and young people shared their perspectives, experiences and their work on the theme of hospitality.
- \* Facilitated group discussions and brainstorming sessions.
- \* Co-production activity where the group collectively created a container for their ideas and learning from the week.

## Outcomes

#biellesevero2060

On Saturday 11 December 2021, the result of the first residency was presented to the public, consisting of a temporary exhibition hosted in the Biella Città Arcipelago spaces of Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto.

An audience of about 40 people took part, including families, teachers and friends of the participants and some owners of the properties involved in the visit programme. The participants created a self-produced instant magazine that collected the reflection material and the activities of the residency, and showed videos and audio recordings that represented the protagonists of the tourism board of the future. Visitors were invited to immerse themselves in this journey, accompanied by the taste of a drink specially created and produced by Comunità Frizzante.

In the instant publication we recounted two aspects that we believe will guide the future of the territory. The first is a transformation of language: in the future, tourists will be welcomed as co-habitants and as such they will immerse themselves in processes of co-research and care. The second is openness to non-human points of view: let's imagine that in the future, decisions regarding the territory will take into account the needs and desires of a variety of protagonists who at this moment remain in the background, such as animals, plants and natural elements (eg. water and air. In fact, we imagined that as a 'tourist body' of 2060, our name and composition will also have changed. We called ourselves the Circle of Interdependence. In addition to the local inhabitants, a whole series of actors are also part of it, those whose voices are lesser heard.



## Notes from Bianca Elzenbaumer

### Experience as a Mentor

The experience was very positive and I saw enormous potential in bringing together young 'experts' and emerging local artists from Biella. The young people re-evaluated their territory, got to know horizontal ways of working and had the opportunity to get an idea of what working life as an artist might be like. For artists, I think it was a wonderful way to get involved, avoiding the gap between artist and non-artist. They were able to test ideas and working methods that I believe some will take with them into their future projects. The fact that all the participants and mentors were quite close in age helped a lot in creating a lively, informal and productive environment. The task of imagining a fairly distant future was also helpful in not blocking the discussion on the feasibility (or non-feasibility) of things.

### The Working Method

The facilitation methods used were all aimed at creating a welcoming atmosphere of curiosity and conviviality, which is fundamental to making creative and collaborative processes work. Every day I proposed short group games, active listening activities and creative production activities (writing and drawing) to prepare the group for production of the final work. In the decision-making process we used the 'round the word' method to ensure that not only the most extroverted had the opportunity to share their points of view.

Every evening I facilitated an informal conversation among all the artists in residence in which we calibrated the following day's activities in detail. We decided together who would propose which activity, we reflected on the past day, we worked out how each artist/mentor could interact in the best possible way with the group of Biellese experts. This modality helped to activate their specific expertise. Co-managing the laboratory with Chiara Mura and Carlo Bettinelli from our Comunità Sparkling team was a winning strategy; they were able to lower barriers between people by asking questions and making interventions that no one dares to do in the art world anymore.

### Collective Work

Several working subgroups were formed around the thematic proposals that emerged. Each working group had an artist who coordinated the work with the experts from Biella. Thanks to the many group-coordination games and despite the fact that there was little time for production, these groups worked very well; the guest artists brought out the best in everyone's contributions, and the young experts got carried away by the idea that scattered notes hanging on the wall could be transformed into films, drawings, a publication, a drink, etc.

# Tools and Technologies for Embedded Practice

## Methods, Approaches, Tools

Building on the methods, learning and conversations from 2020's 'Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future' and 2021's 'Groundwork for Embedded Arts Practice' residencies, UNIDEE ran a series of week-long intensive 'labs' between 2021 and 2022.

The labs aimed to reconnect and make new connections between practitioners and researchers who felt they would benefit from an intensive week of 'putting their practice under the microscope'. This was done not so much to accelerate or 'push forward' projects, but rather as a way to 'zoom in' and get a better sense of the detail of the practice. The 'what' and the 'how' of the practice, as well as the 'why'. Through this intimate collective examination we revealed the sometimes imperceptible movement and trajectory of such projects, helping each other over the humps and sticking points, as well as identifying potentially overlooked problems and obstacles in the road ahead.

Through a responsive programme of collective exercises, workshops, group critiques and sharings, seminars and roundtables, games, walks, meals, and visits, we found ways in which to identify and leave a trace of the tools of our situated practice that could contribute to a toolkit or toybox for embedded practice.



## Toolkits and Toyboxes

We tried to approach the labs as a space for experimentation under the banner of the curatorial statement. This meant having our own set of tools and 'bag of tricks' to draw upon, adapt and apply to the situation. With the first group facilitated by **Jeanne van Heeswijk** this included deep listening, referral introductions exercises, be-longings maps and community agreements. The group proposed their own exercises around walks and dérives as public interventions.

The group worked very closely together, with group meals and collective cooking playing a key role. The trace they left was very much about the shared competencies and concerns they had. This was made up of methods, stakeholders, desires, etc. in the form of a mind map, a proposition for collective projects and an invite for the next group to continue it.

A pressing question emerging from this group that informed the seminar was how we build trust and be vulnerable with each other. **Paul O'Neill** discussed ideas of parahosting and opening up to the other, Jeanne the urgent process of becoming collective through risking subjectivities, and **Mick Wilson** the value of understanding genealogies of practice as a way to prevent their misuse and co-option.

They examined the idea of application and recuperation through Audre Lourde's quote and how this opens up into acts of solidarity that require us to risk our own subject position. Residents were invited to reflect upon their own practice through the question: 'what are your tools, and in what struggles and urgencies do you use them?'

The second group took up this invitation to use scholarly tools and, with the guidance of Mick and Paul, used the time to deconstruct the practice and the research, arriving at a more precise understanding of what they were doing and why. This involved a collective deconstruction exercise gridding one another to think about the contexts in which they operated (situations, places) and the different roles they took as initiators and receivers of a project.

# What are your tools, and in what struggles and urgencies do you use them?



In the second pair of labs **Alessandra Saviotti, Gemma Medina** and **Owen Griffiths** used a number of exercises adapted from Augusto Boal, founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, and their own tools including 'A Capitalist Reading of our Usual Breakfast' to invite residents to think about 'The Artwork as Toolkit'. This involved identifying tools in their own practice, as well as the conditions under which they may or may not be shared. Can you separate tools from their intended application and if so what ethical guidelines (or instructions for use) might be put in place? We decided that it was the specific use of the tools in context that sharpened them, and in this regard they remain fuzzy or floppy or malleable before use.

The group did some collective analyses of each other's projects through a grid of:

What (is the project/ research name/ short sentence description)

Where (does it happen – in what context/ situation/ place)

Why (what problem/ lack is it addressing, what change does it hope to make)

How (what role[s] for the instigator/ artist)

For/ with whom (who are the audiences/ participants/ stakeholders)

Tools (what methods, materials, techniques are used/ applied)

Gaps/ Obstacles/ Challenges/ Problems (encountered or foreseeable)

It was through this discussion of obstacles and challenges that informed the trace. The group created an 'exquisite toolkit' that could be used to help unfreeze thinking around obstacles they were facing and be adapted to specific contexts of use.

**Yvonne Carmichael's** task was to then help pull these deconstructed parts back into a whole, which the group did through embedding their tools into an aperitivo that involved games and activities. This flipped the exercise on its head and reversed some of the roles and dynamics in the group, ending with a mostly undocumented convivial party.



The fourth group were joined by **Gabriella Riccio** and **Emanuele Braga** from the Institute of Radical Imagination, and then by **Keir Milburn** and **Gareth Brown** from Red Plenty games. Their seminar about 'tools for building the commons' included conceptual or theoretical tools, legal structures, policy and games. It was proposed that the dual movement of 'commoning institutions' and 'instituting the commons' relied on rupturing or breaking with capitalist imaginaries. On the invitation of Keir and Gareth, the group used gameplay (specifically a game called Microscope) to collectively write their own narrative to explain a character's journey to the 'golden age of the commons', and the epochs, events and scenes in this stage that referenced some of their collective tools.



## Reflections: On the Lab Format and Sharpening Tools

The UNIDEE Labs moved wholly into presence, which meant more emphasis on being responsive, improvising and finding ways to stretch time. We found a skeleton structure onto which we could adapt elements or hang other activities as the group decided them. This highlighted the differences between the 2 groups, especially when there was significant crossover in membership between them. It was interesting that the introduction of 2 or 3 different voices would help shift the conversation, which said a lot about the listening and openness to collective ways of working that we were developing.

We created a diverse toolkit of tools and technologies. There was actually very little in the way of 'tech' and more interpersonal methods and approaches. This may have been a response to the times – we were all sick of Zoom and perhaps more interested in reconnecting and slowing down. There was scepticism in the group around the idea of technology as a saviour that will come in and sort everything out. What, then, can we do from here with the tools and assets at our disposal? A key finding was that a tool is only effective or useful when sharpened in context (otherwise it is like a lump of jelly), so we decided not to divorce them from their intended application. As such, the guidelines for their use, maintenance and continued application became essential to their being sustainable, sharp and effective.

## Sustaining Embedded Arts Practice

### Resources, Strategies and Support



## On How to Keep on Keeping On



Concluding the research arc around embedded arts practices, the final residency took place in June 2022 at Cittadellarte, Biella, Italy. As before, the residency was an opportunity for residents to share and unpack their ongoing practice or action research with a group of peers and guest mentors.

Over the course of 2 weeks, 2 groups engaged in a programme of seminars and presentations, group discussions and critiques, workshops, visits and other responsive and informal activities in order to gain multiple perspectives on the work they were undertaking in their locales, with a focus on practical methods for sustaining long-term and durational embedded arts practices.

We used many of the tools and methodologies from previous labs and residencies, keeping the residents' practice at the centre through group critiques and various other methods for sharing, with mentors as guides or mirrors. We formatted the week around a handover where both groups would meet and spend time together with a seminar to facilitate this. Traces were left by both groups as a way to mark the process and also to create flow between the two groups. It was proposed that the group may work, collectively or individually and there was plenty of time for responsive, informal and self-organised activity as a way to embrace the fact of being together.

**Maria Papadimitriou** was unfortunately unable to join us in person, but with every cloud there is a silver lining and we were lucky to be joined by **Aria Spinelli** and **Emanuele Braga** for the first week of mentoring. During this week, we used introductions exercises and group critiques to begin to open up what the shared concerns of the group may be and how they might best work together.

The introductions exercise worked as an icebreaker in the sense that it is a 'first pass' at understanding the practices of each resident, often through an autobiographical lens. In this way it served a dual purpose – both to ease tensions in the group and also to take pressure away from sharing this detail in the group critiques. The groups also began 'harvesting' each other's themes and using the blackboard to make minutes, which began the mapping of projects and allowed us to draw connections between them.

This process was deepened in the group critiques that revealed immediate crossover in themes and concerns, and we started to work out from this what the desires were. We built in some digestion time between and after the group critiques. The group was keen to spend time together exploring Biella and made a number of trips to the local gelateria. We also visited the Let Eat Bi Market and local wine producer Agricola Garella, allowing us to get a different perspective on Biellese territory and be with each other in a more informal setting.

1:1s were offered with Maria and as a group we discussed what useful group exercises there could be. There were a lot of skills and resources in the room and it was suggested that that going deeper into these might help to identify opportunities for mutual support. Borrowing an exercise from *Take Back The Economy* we did an asset mapping/ 'redrawing the economy' exercise using the figure of the vineyard, after winegrower Daniella explained to us that roots make up 99% of the soil.

This revealed the assets that residents shared in their practices but also, interestingly, how they valued these in terms of what was visible, and what should remain visible. We realised that in many of our projects there were ethical issues around visibility and exposing those who were involved. The further questions or places to go with the exercise were around agency and roles within the project. What were our positions, and from this, what would a collective vineyard of our many project-vines look like? The group parked the exercise and began to think about their trace with guidance from Aria.

On Saturday the new group arrived and we began the Handover Weekend with a seminar structured around 3 roundtables, addressing the group's desire to unpack some of the terminology and learn more from the mentors.

11 JUNE 2022  
(10.00-11.00)

## Roundtable

1

This began with **Aria** and **Emanuele** offering presentations about the Italian context. Aria presented her research in squats and informal housing in Rome and the history of occupied social centres, especially looking at the tensions between individual autonomy and the collective. Emanuele talked about his experiences with MACAO and the various methods that had come from this: real fiction, militant research and instituting as media. What became clear from the presentation was the role of independent and autonomous centres as sites for the experimentation and production of radical imagination, or as sites for generating new 'norms' and habits that would help to reconcile the contradictions in desires for individual and collective autonomy.

In the second roundtable **Katherine Gibson** and **Gregory Shollette** shared their concepts and research as economic geographer and art historian respectively. Katherine explained her and Julie Graham's approach to producing new types of subjectivity through new languages to understand and describe economy. A first step in this work involved working with artists and community groups in redrawing the economy – using icebergian economics as way to look at what is visible and what is invisible, to start to shift the discourse – 'a deconstructive move that get people freed up to start thinking about what kind of economies and worlds they want to build'.

**Gregory Sholette** responded to this by outlining some terms and concepts central to his work as an activist and art historian, focusing on the idea of 'dark matter' as a way to describe the informal and (purposefully) unrecognised invisible labour that holds the artworld together. In his words: 'So we can think about dark matter as a surplus archive of practice, individuals, or a missing mass. But in the sense of a surplus archive it can be all of those practices over the years that are trying to come up with an alternative to capitalism, succeeding briefly, mostly failing experiments, all of these things that form this kind of overflow of possibility. And they're not in the art history books'.

In both Gregory and Katherine's figurations a large portion of what sustains the world is unseen and hidden, and the artist's work is partly in recognising and uncovering this mass in order to activate it. The discussion led to questions around where this mass exists – whether it is in a larger ratio or closer to the surface in some places, or at certain times, than others. And that there may be risks in its uncovering through recuperation or co-optation. But as both were keen to explain, the hidden mass is everywhere: 'everywhere is a place that you can do this work and that's the challenge'. From this we discussed Universal Basic Income, the role of aesthetic and sensuous experience in politics and activism, and hauntology as moments of commoning – asking whether now is the peak moment for embedded practice, and, if so, what opportunities and challenges lie within that.

11 JUNE 2022  
(13.00–14.45)

## Roundtable 2



## Roundtable 3



The final roundtable was a series of presentations from **Sue Ball**, **Kerry Harker** and **Maria Papadimitriou**. **Yasan Khalili** had been invited to present but was unable to attend due to urgent matters at Documenta 15. Sue talked about her experience with 2 initiatives, Leeds Creative Timebank and Yorkshire Visual Arts Network, and Kerry relayed her experiences living and working in Gipton with East Leeds Project. Maria presented Victoria Square Project as a case study of sustainable embedded arts practice after its initiation at Documenta 14 with artist Rick Lowe.

The discussion that followed touched upon the various strategies for making these organisations work, from ways in which to keep structures open and porous, through to knowing when a project may have come to the end of its life, how to archive it and move on. The panellists also discussed the complicated relationships with institutions and structures that are necessary to deal with, and on the other hand the importance of support structures and networks of care and trust that need to be built to make projects a success.

The rest of the evening was dedicated to conversations over dinner and drinks. The following morning the residents split into small groups and used a random selection of 3 key words drawn from the seminar as prompts for group discussion. This allowed the residents to start to introduce themselves and situate their practices in relation to the broader discussion and themes of the residency and at the same time propose some areas for further discussion. In the afternoon this handover continued with the first group giving their 'trace' to the second group with an explanation about how they had arrived at it, and their individual and collective experiences. The groups then went for a river walk.

11 JUNE 2022  
(15.15–16.45)

On Monday Week 2 began for group 2 with the same processes and exercises: orientation and introductions in the afternoon, followed by a day of group critiques on the Tuesday (facilitated by Katherine and Gregory) and, on Wednesday morning, a walk and talk to digest whilst visiting Oropa Sanctuary. That afternoon and continuing through until Thursday Sue and Kerry offered 1:1s so that they could learn more about the residents and their practices.

I proposed another asset mapping exercise for this group, based around the idea of creating a 'Common Wallet' of the resident practices (a tool Emanuele Braga had used at MACAO). Using a template from *Take Back the Economy* the residents individually analysed the assets and resources of their projects. They then discussed these as a group to identify any shared or shareable resources (knowledge, skills, contacts, equipment). From this we began to think about situations or scenarios in which these collective resources could be used or applied. In order to do this the group had to decide whether the situation was a fictional or utopian ideal, or based on our given reality.

For me, this brought up a fundamental question of the residency and embedded arts practice in general: to what extent can we, as the Situationists suggested, 'be realistic: demand the impossible'? And how might this form of 'utopian demand' (Kathi Weeks) help 'loosen capitalist subjectivity' (J. K. Gibson-Graham) to unleash the 'radical imaginary' (Cornelius Castoriadis) and create the 'postcapitalist desire' (Marc Fisher) that is so vital to sustaining an embedded practice? After all, it is only through the shared belief that a better world is possible that the bonds of camaraderie and friendship necessary for 'keeping on' are formed.

From this, the group went on to create their trace with guidance from Sue and Kerry – a sound piece where each resident vocalised the assets of their practice in a random chorus, offering dialogue as their collectively shared asset. That night we had a shared meal in the Sala Divani common space, drank in the courtyard and talked about how we could create 'the good life' back in our respective places.

## Reflections: On Learning from Embedded Practice

We worked through the challenges of a post-pandemic landscape that disrupted some of our plans and required that we scale down some of the programme to reduce risk and deal with the possibility of change. This gave an urgency and intensity to the time spent together. The various cohorts embraced the opportunity to work together in presence, often collectively, and with a generous enthusiasm for learning from one another.

Putting the residents' practice at the centre of the programme helped to reveal the common points of interest between them, and meant that, even in a relatively short period, a lot of ground was covered. Focusing on the nuances and specificities of the projects in their context was a useful and necessary mode of research around embedded practice. Mick Wilson noted that in a moment where socially engaged and situated practices are gaining a lot of attention there is a tendency to abstract the methods or the learning that can be gleaned from them, which risks dulling their critical potential. The constant reflection and sharing of practice between residents and mentors – which we described as a 'hall of mirrors' – ensured we were always trying to understand the work in its specific context, to keep it 'sharp and spiky'.

The initial intention with this year of UNIDEE residencies and labs was to deepen and broaden the themes and questions developed in the previous year's hybrid programmes around embedded arts practice. We had envisaged that the cohort for this programme would chiefly be alumni from the 2020-2021 programmes who had not been able to attend in presence due to the pandemic. However, we found that the open calls attracted a host of artists, artworkers and researchers who were new to Cittadellarte and Biella. Despite this, we were able to build on the momentum of the previous programmes as the digital archive from the 2020-2021 programme (the webzines [unidee2020.hotglue.me](http://unidee2020.hotglue.me) and [unidee2020.hotglue.me/groundwork](http://unidee2020.hotglue.me/groundwork)) provided a valuable resource that enabled all the residents to start on a relatively equal footing.

### WEBZINES

[unidee2020.hotglue.me](http://unidee2020.hotglue.me) and  
[unidee2020.hotglue.me/groundwork](http://unidee2020.hotglue.me/groundwork)



That said, across the programme, there were a number of shared and recurring themes, approaches, methodologies and tools that can be understood as contributing to 'best practice' in the area of embedded arts practice:

- \* Some of this was around the emerging role of the artist as an (embedded) researcher and the techniques and methodologies appropriate to this, including deep listening, participatory mapping, co-production and so on.
- \* Some were about ways of working collectively or becoming collective: the tools and techniques that allow communities to form and the emotional labour required to create a solid foundation on which to build long-term projects.
- \* Many alternative approaches to learning and radical pedagogy were shared. Underpinning the programme was a recognition that we need to appreciate and embrace diverse forms of knowledge in order to build new worlds.
- \* Various approaches to creating the infrastructure for community building were presented, from the use of temporary events and interventions to the occupation and long-term securing of buildings and space through Community Asset Transfers or the creation of Land Trusts. Legal structures for formalising modes of co-ownership and co-operative working were shared, as were methods for creating autonomy and sustainability through alternative currencies and diverse economies.
- \* The need to create, maintain and grow networks of care, mutual aid and forms of peer support was a common strategy for sustaining embedded practice. Crucially, it was highlighted that these networks must extend beyond the social to include the more-than-human and the environment.

The toolkits for embedded practice that emerged from the programmes had to deal with the apparent contradiction that once these tools are removed from their specific context or application they lose their edge, become soft or blunt. A toolkit, or indeed a toybox, for embedded practice can only be effective through its regular application or use, which helps to sharpen the tools and generate new techniques. As such, doing embedded practice in an open, playful and experimental way creates the conditions for its own sustainability.

The question we are left with, then, is how to go on? How to continue to create the conditions to do more of what we are already engaged in, and how to continue to share this across the many locales in which we are situated and often siloed? The desire for the groups to continue to learn from one another and offer each other intellectual and emotional support was palpable. The week-long residencies and labs created bonds and friendships that have continued beyond the timescale of the lab and even the programme – sparking new collaborations, collectives and networks.

As Paolo Naldini described in his presentation to the group, embedded and situated practice as a philosophy has always underpinned the UNIDEE programme at Cittadellarte:



'Early on we were aware that the real residency is where you live, here you are transient. We call it a residency from the "artist in residence" but it is back home where you engage and challenge your being an artist'.



Action Research,  
Traces and Learning

Embedded Arts Practice  
in a Post-Pandemic Future

Many of the residents were engaged in projects or research that extended beyond the timeframe of the residency. In such cases the residency was a platform to share and reflect on the practice or action research with others, and perhaps test or trial elements outside of the usual context. This sharing occurred chiefly through group critiques at which the residents would give an insight into what they were doing, where and how, as well as an opportunity to talk openly about the challenges and obstacles they may be facing, especially in light of the pandemic.

These practice-focused discussions further expanded and deepened the notion of embeddedness across a range of contexts, demonstrating how the concrete specificity of the project is what makes it embedded.

For example, **Dafne Salis'** 'Postcards from Home' project began as a simple act of letter sending to relatives during lockdown in Italy, to find ways of tactile connection using analogue photography and writing. This mail art method was imbued with a new emotional weight under the conditions of the pandemic and led her to connect with a wider community around the oftentimes invisible labour of care.

Palestinian artist and activist **Zina Zarour's** project also began from personal and intimate experience during lockdown, working with the diaries she kept whilst her partner was incarcerated by Israeli occupation forces. Through sharing fragments of photographs and text Zina found ways to connect these very specific personal experiences with a wider audience and begin to think about how intimacy can be shared as a foundation for building a socially engaged project. The connection with other artists in the project helped her to appreciate that 'we can share the same pains, thoughts and even practices despite where we live'.

**Francesco Pavignano** also kept visual diaries as comics, documenting his observations of everyday life in the building that he and a friend had opened as a studio and art space. Here drawing became a way of documenting conversations as well as introducing himself as an artist in an existing community. Through the sharing of these drawings Francesco was able to share uncertainties about the role they were playing, opening up to ideas from locals that may help them to embed themselves in a sensitive and useful way. 'Try to draw something while talking to someone... to share the result is quite similar to sharing an idea that you are not entirely sure about'.

**Camila Aguis** used the residency to unpack and test out some methods that could be applied in the context of her work as an art teacher and gallery manager at The American School in Surrey, England. Camila was looking at what the first steps might be in creating a conversation around the use of these spaces, and their potential for alternative forms of knowledge production embedded within a traditional educational institution. Working with paper and her hands to make house-like structures, Camila began to engage with locals in Biella and then in the following weeks with teachers and pupils at her school. 'Can engaging the hands in a simple art activity help facilitate open discussion? How will the activity that I initiate be adapted and transformed as it is passed from one person to the next? How can I track the trajectory so that the people involved can locate themselves in this collective, durational project?'

Elsewhere **Eddie James** joined us from Tasmania to explore how we could reconnect with each other, our environment and ourselves after a period of intense disconnection. 'Walk On' was a project that proposed to 'transport participants somewhere else' and take us on a walk through the Tasmanian Bush. In the group that formed around her 1-week intensive we were invited to listen to a guided walk of the Tasmanian Bush whilst going for a walk in our own locale, and then share our experiences through the form of a photograph and haiku. The exercise raised interesting questions around the nature of embodied experience and how we can appreciate and immerse ourselves, and eventually care about, places that we may not live in or be able to visit physically.

**Catalina Gomez Rueda** from Pereira in 'turbulent Colombia' shared her collaborative project *Viaje al Interior de la Perla*: a pedagogical backpack for children in the rural areas of the city whose isolation was exacerbated by the virus and lack of internet access. As Glom Lab (with Laura Villana), the project was grant funded. The backpacks contained publications, objects, instruments and other materials to provide a multi-sensory narrative that draws upon indigenous knowledge and folklore through the legacy of Quimbaya-Kumba – preserving hidden knowledge. More broadly, through tools to stimulate imagination, it aimed to 'affect the daily lives of children in a positive way by guaranteeing their right to access cultural content and recreational activities designed for their well-being and development'.

Visit [unidee2020.hotglue.me](https://unidee2020.hotglue.me) to read about the other residents' action research

In general the pandemic context for the residency was a reminder that embedded practice is built on a solid foundation of trust and deep understanding of a place and people. A necessary first step in building this foundation is to create a connection. As well as the aforementioned case studies, residents' diverse practices demonstrated innovative modes of connecting in challenging times through:

Growing  
Listening and  
Observing  
Caring  
Communicating  
Learning  
Exploring  
Living  
Dreaming  
Burning



## Traces

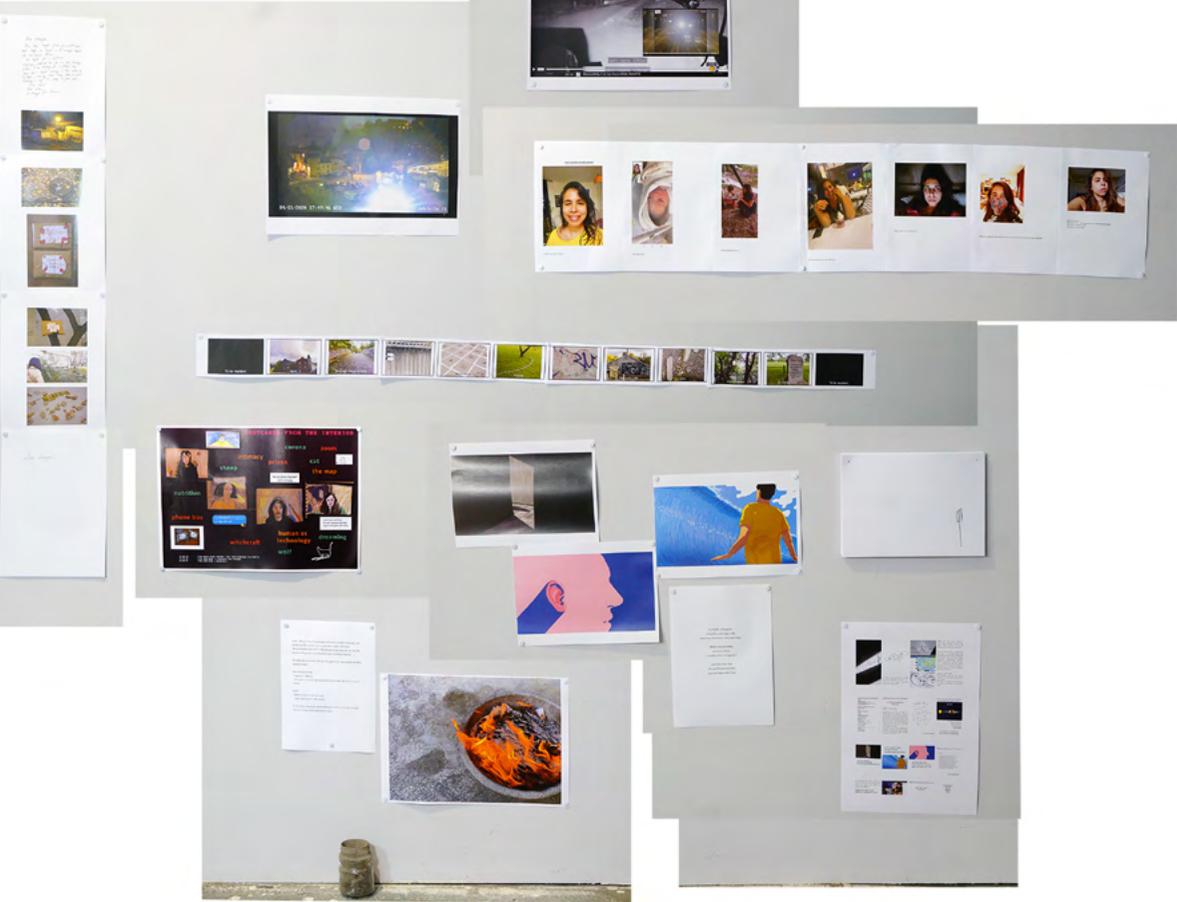
At the end of each group's 1-week intensive the residents were asked to leave a 'trace' that would give a sense of their experience, where they were at with their action research and where they may be heading. The traces were then displayed in the corridor of the UNIDEE project space, creating an iterative and accumulative exhibition that grew over the course of the 10 weeks. As part of the handover sessions the arriving group would 'read' the traces left by the previous group as part of a 'blind group critique'.

At the end of the residency we asked each resident to submit a 'final trace' that would plot the journey they had been on over the course of the residency.

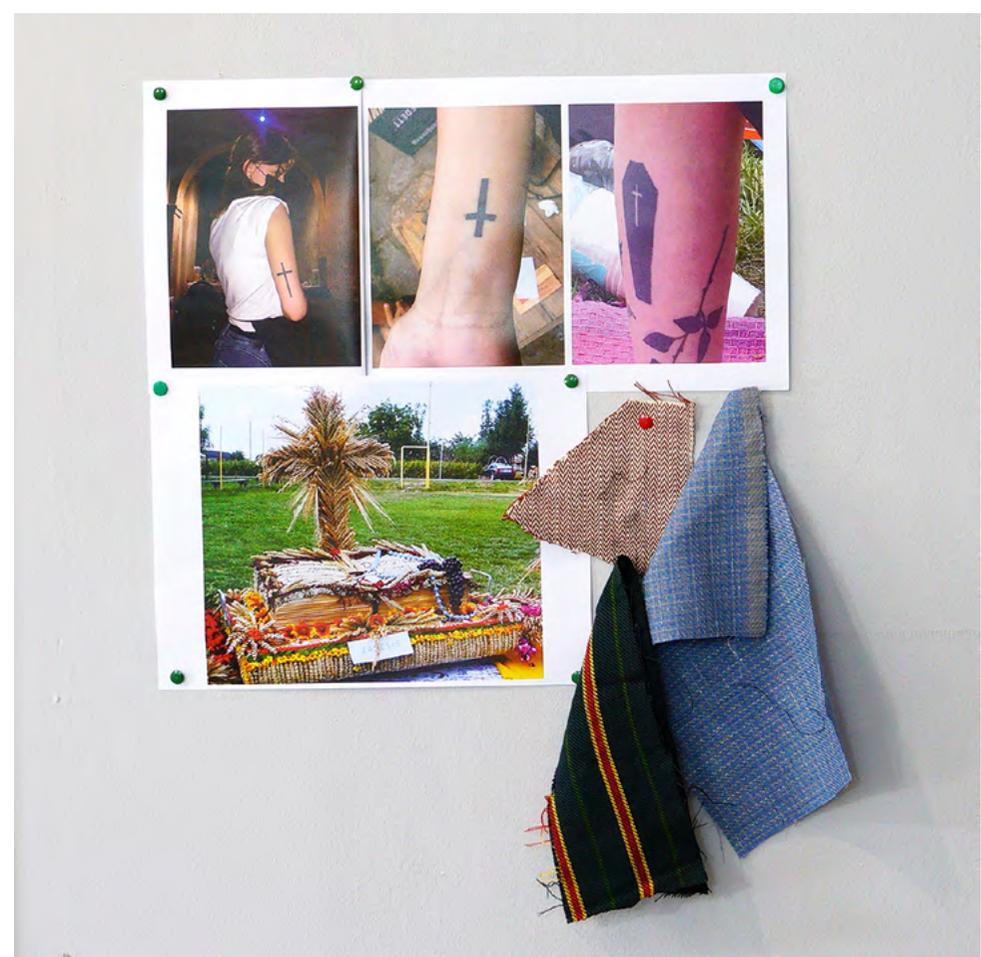
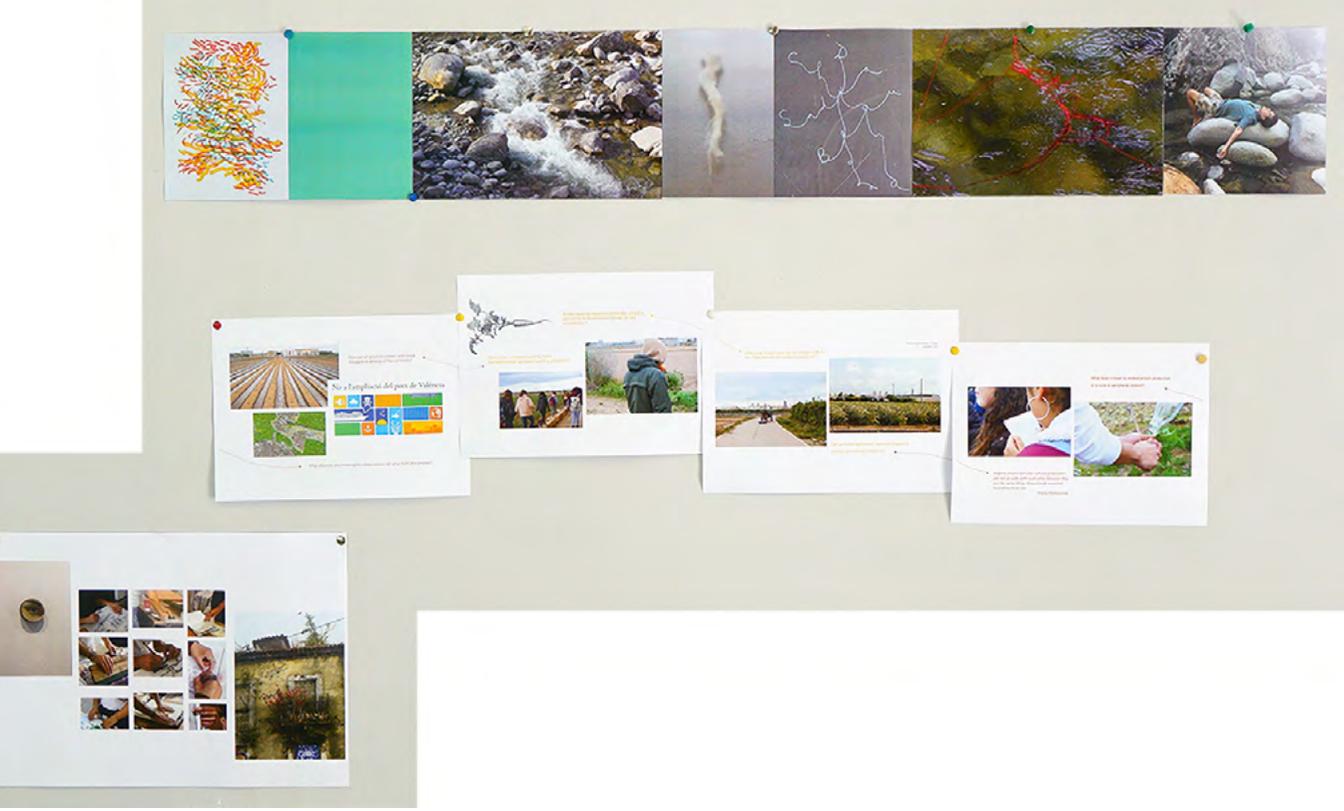


Traces from the Residencies  
2020-2021











Action Research, Traces and Learning—Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future

## Resident Discussions

Through the collective conversation of the residency, grounded in learning-through-doing and lived experience, we identified shared tools and methods as well as concerns and questions that we would take forward in our ongoing projects and practice.

Learning and themes emerging at the residency mid-point

There have been a few themes recurring in the group critique and discussion sessions. Surprisingly these are not about the direct effects of the pandemic/ lockdown/ social distancing, but should also be understood as part the background. In general there are 6 areas of conversation:



- \* **Time/ Duration**  
What is the time scale necessary to do a 'good' research-based project and/ or artistic social intervention? How do we start on projects of this scale? Also there are different temporalities created by responses to the pandemic; not everyone is experiencing the same 'post-pandemic future' in synch.
- \* **Embodied/ Embedded**  
Can practices that aim to have some socially transformative effect be nomadic (embodied in the artist) rather than embedded (in a place)? How can we begin from where we are?
- \* **Fragility/ Fragmentation**  
What does it mean to be doing this sort of practice in places where you are not based, or not from? What is the risk of exploitation and/ or of progressing colonial traits, especially when the asynchronicity and inequality created by the pandemic has widened the gaps and cracks?
- \* **Collaboration/ Contamination**  
How do we collaborate whilst working on very specific projects? How can we be open to 'contamination' by the other in this process? What does collaboration look like when distanced, across time zones and temporalities?
- \* **Intimacy/ Care**  
How can we continue to build and maintain intimate/ close relationships that are the foundation for the trust necessary for embedded arts projects, especially in a socially distanced and increasingly remote world? What new forms of care are emerging in the face of adversity?
- \* **Ecology/ Environment**  
What can we learn from the land? Has the pandemic changed our relationship to the environment and our understanding of more-than-human species?



## Questions to Take Forward

What is, was and could be the future for socially embedded practice now that lives, work, institutions and communications are mediated by technology, glitches and fragmentation?

How do we move from personal ideas and projects to connections with others?

How can we create sustainability, for ourselves and our worlds?

How do we document, make visible and preserve living (and changing) processes of work?

How do we support each other in our work?

How do we demand or create new methods and channels for our own voices and experiences?

How do we trace the impact of change, pandemic and lockdown on our bodies?

What is the future for artist residencies and collaborative work?

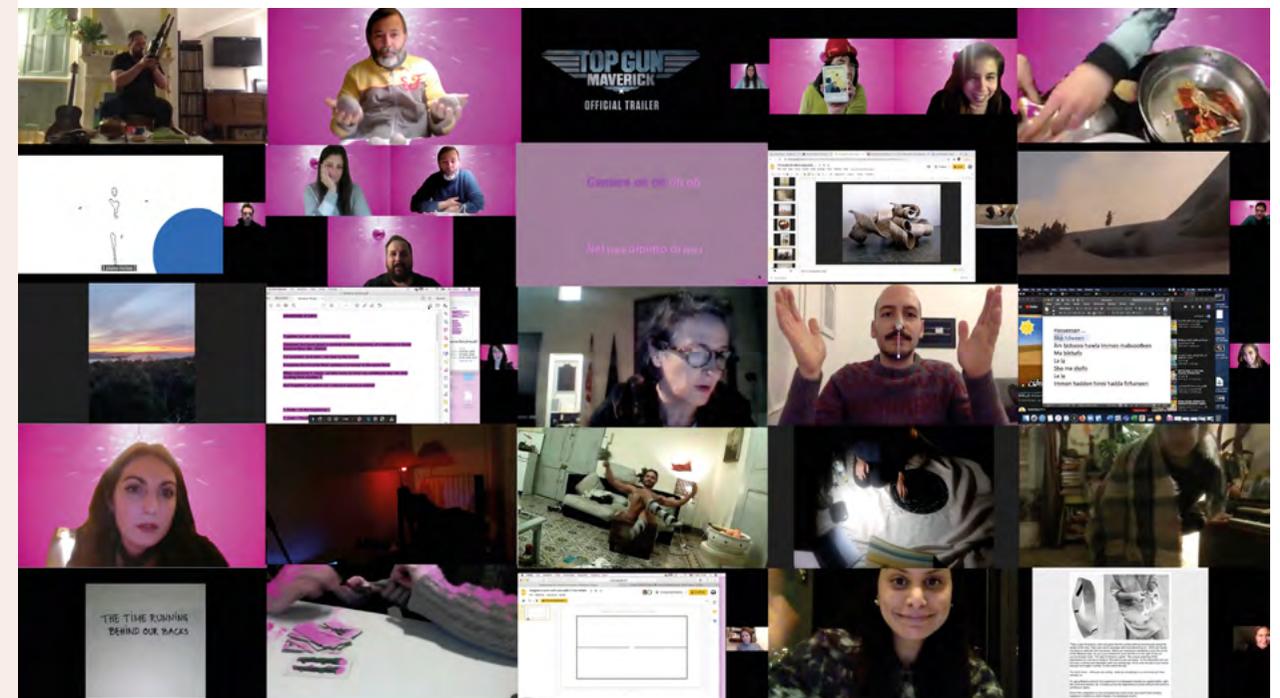
Special thanks to Eva Rowson for her work in identifying and formulating these questions from the residents' 'final traces'.

## Wrap Party & Zoom Cabaret

To conclude the residency, **Orecchie D'Asino** proposed an online party in the form of a virtual cabaret where residents each performed a 'turn':

'So as the cabaret is a form of entertainment that combines theatre, song, comedy and dance, we would like to give each of you up to 3 minutes of free Zoom stage in which you could entertain us, bore us, demonstrate, take us for a walk, have fun, stress us out, show us your work, listen to music, watch a video, cook, or maybe surprise us. In short, do as you like. It is called BLUNDERET because it is a cabaret that embraces mistakes, errors and sharing/ doing things we're not entirely certain of or very good at.'

The line-up for the evening included improvised 'danger-music', the sharing of a sunrise, a striptease, Hollywood film trailers, spoon balancing, showing of work, cooking, sing-alongs, chance-generated collective story writing, clay making and tarot card reading.



# Groundwork for Embedded Practices

Visit [unidee2020.hotglue.me/groundwork](https://unidee2020.hotglue.me/groundwork)  
to read about the residents' action research

## Residents' Action Research

Towards the end of the residency some of the common concerns, practices and methodologies within the cohort were discernable, including:

### Digital Spaces, Tools and Play

Many of the residents were experimenting and playing with ways in which digital space, tools and platforms could be repurposed to create the groundwork for embedded art and socially transformative projects. **Marco Antelmi** researched how to create an independent platform for delivery riders through the use of blockchain. Both he and **Gilson Schwartz** were creating new platforms and interested in the disruptive potential of cryptocurrencies. **Conjunction** – a collective from Ireland – were using an online platform for their meetings and harnessed the residency to explore how this virtual space, so often associated with work and productivity, could also be a space for rest. **San Zagari** explored the potential for taking a dancing game, developed during lockdown for Instagram, into the real world to create moments of vulnerability.

## Sustainable Food Production/ Growing and Botanical Knowledge

**Chiara Sgaramella** was embedding her art practice in a rural and peripheral context through the use of a belt of land for eco-artistic projects, amounting to political and cultural resistance (against the neoliberal narrative of the city). Making links between organic production and cultural production, **Chiara De Maria** aimed to rediscover the connections between native plants, the territory and local knowledge through a series of workshops in her 'Greenery Project'. **Jamie Allen** was interested in bread and baking as a way to call into question discourse around human rights. **Evy Jokhova** created a foraging association in Portugal and **Sophie Minervini** used natural dyes as a starting point for conversations about weavers in Glasgow.

## Institutional Reform/ Critique

**Paria Goodarzi** and **Francesco Llinas**' research involved hacking institutions to decolonise cultural spaces in Glasgow. In trying to find cracks and spaces in institutions like Glasgow School of Art, they were finding them difficult to break into. **Miguel Amado** brought questions about how he might (re)position his institution (SIRIUS in Cork, Ireland) as an agent of change, **Abed Alrhman Shabaneh** was using poetry as a form of resistance to cultural institutionalisation in Palestine, and **Suzannah Henty** explored the potential for transnational solidarity and accountability in arts institutions.

## Self-organisation and the Creation of Counter/ Alter Institutions

**LUMIN's** reflection on their print and digital syllabus led them to think about self-organisation as a method for addressing real and present needs, as opposed to the colonial approaches of institutions wishing to include or engage universally. **Ella Appleton** in Glasgow shared her experience of setting up a welding collective for women, trans and non-binary metalworkers (from beginners to experienced members), and **Josie Tothill** explored ideas of radical care as a step toward creating a union for carers. **Ligia Fernandes** used the residency to explore ways in which socially engaged practice might be sustained in Portugal, a country where it is not recognised as a practice, and **Rachel Marsden** planned the design of a creative space in Berlin.

## Artist as Creator of New Networks and Organisational Forms

**Sue Jeong Ka** shared and developed her Banned Books List, 'which collects hundreds of thousands of titles of books censored and rejected by American prisons', as a way of finding or creating a network. **Mae Aguinaldo-Mapa** also looked at creating a network around acts of kindness and care through a 'tapestry collection'. **Tomasso Vali** reflected on his role as a member of a 3-person collective working out how to sustain themselves by avoiding the 'tyranny of structurelessness'.

## Building the Commons as Resistance to Gentrification

**PLoT** created a Radical School around Community Land Trusts through mobile cart units, allowing participants to inform the curriculum around how they would like to see urban land used in Cork (Ireland) in the future. In Malta, **Kristina Borg** developed a project with the locals of a town facing gentrification by exploring the emotional connection with the sea. In Leeds, **Lauren Hollowday** reflected on whether acts of civil disobedience have a role in place-making, and how she could make an intervention into the place in which she lives whilst being aware of her own complicity in the gentrification processes.

## Artist as Policy Maker and Organiser of New Forums

Both **Louise Carver** and **Ludovica Guarnieri** were interested in how to create interdisciplinary networks, meetings of art and science, and policy makers, from which new epistemologies may emerge. In Moscow, **Maria Kuzmina** explored the potential for alternative funding networks and in-kind support to create networks of freelance and creative workers.

## Alternative Approaches to Pedagogy/ Education

**Hassan Issah** described working collectively in Ghana in spaces without infrastructure or funding, which included the use of libraries and investing in the youth as a form of future building. **Krisztián Török** reflected on his experiences working with the collective Minitremu in Transylvania to think about the radical potential of co-design in education. **Diego Gutierrez Valladares** applied the agricultural principles of 'milpa' as a pedagogic model, and pondered how this could be applied in a mainstream educational institution (his university).

## Collective, Co-produced and Participatory Artistic Methods

**Lexie Owen** used listening and participatory research methods to explore the 'idea malls' of Oslo as public spaces, and how to relate very personal individual projects through the social. **Studio LOKA** from France set up a bed in a public space to gather perceptions on museums and cultural institutions. **Ekarasa Doblancovic** in New Zealand created a participatory artwork and workshop to explore connection with land and soil, and in Poland **Alicja Wysocka** developed projects that included a rural festival and artist collective.

Across these projects careful attention was paid to organisational form and an appreciation of the planning that goes into them. At the same time it was important to recognise the improvisatory and 'feeling out' methodology required to move beyond the paralysing fear of getting something wrong, and into the open and experimental position Katherine Gibson mentioned in the plenary seminar.

Again, what is learned from this is the porosity and malleability of the spatial and temporal aspects of 'embedded practice'. Many of the projects demonstrated a necessity to work across different scales and spaces of embeddedness (from the individual to the social and the structural) simultaneously. Furthermore, there are layers of varying tempos and meters that require a polyrhythmic 'feel' in order to appreciate their complexities. Art, like life, is not always in 4/4 time.

The residency again helped to create a network of solidarity for participants to help each other ride these clashing tempos and waves and give time for reflecting and generating the collective energy necessary to move forward projects that are often at risk of becoming 'stuck'.



## Questions to Take Forward

How can sharing our embedded practices strengthen trans-local and trans-temporal solidarity?

What productive tensions exist between the formal and the informal, the structured and organic, and the institutional and self-organised?

Are we part of the problem?

Can we avoid extractive dynamics in socially engaged art?

How can we work within, against (and beyond) existing structures?

When to let go?

What is the shelf life of a project, collective or organisation? What would it mean to 'disappear' or merge into the social fabric?

How can we harness 'negative' emotions of anger, guilt and sadness as 'energy for action' research in our locale?

How might we work across different scales and spaces of embeddedness: from the individual and the social to the environmental/ structural?

How can we create intimate and embodied connections in digital spaces?

What new possibilities might emergent technologies afford for embedded practice?

What role does collective imagination, subjectivity and love have in 'useful art' projects?

From what conditions might new forms of knowledge emerge: how do we foster, recognise and validate these?

How do we build in the need for slowing down, reflection, self-care and being 'non-productive' in embedded artistic action research?



# Tools and Technologies for Embedded Practice and Sustaining Embedded Arts Practice

## Residents' Action Research

The practices and projects that residents brought to share throughout the 2021–2022 labs and residencies were diverse and wide ranging, but many shared common traits and interests, either thematically or formally, including:

### Collectivising, Peer Support and Mutual Aid

A number of residents participated in order to share and reflect upon their experiences as part of networks, collectives or communities of interest. These included groups that already existed and were undergoing change, or that they were in the process of forming or expanding. **Josie Tohill** proposed a young carers club in Manchester (UK); **Lígia Fernandes** and **Nicole Sánchez** aimed to create more opportunities for meeting and learning from artists in Lisbon (Portugal); **Ginevra Ludovici** and **Giovanni Paolin** planned an artist residency programme in a farmhouse in the Venice lagoon region (Italy); **Caterina Stamou** shared her experience exploring feminist experimental writing and self-publishing networks in Athens (Greece); **Kasia Sobucka** created a platform for Polish artists looking to critically explore national identity; **Rachel Botha** researched care, support networks and alternative economies for artists in Ireland; **Adele Jarrar** shared her experiences setting up an online platform for Palestinian artists; **Maria Kuzmina** reflected on various artist support organisations within and outside institutions in Russia; and **Aysel Akhundova** shared her work as part of a feminist artist collective in Azerbaijan.



NOVEMBER 2021,  
MARCH 2022 & JUNE 2022



## Community Events and Spaces

Related to this, many residents were working specifically with creating spaces – either permanent physical buildings or temporary events – that would catalyse, galvanise or otherwise support different types of communities. **Jojo Hynes** talked about her experience running community festivals in Tuam, a rural town in Ireland; **Cristina Picco** (Italy) shared her proposal for creating an intergenerational community event in Luxembourg; **Nicholas Ferrara** showed us the former and future cultural spaces of his collective Hydro in Biella; **Calcagno Cullen** (USA) talked about Wave Pool centre in Cincinatti at a juncture in its development; **Rachel Marsden** (Germany) was creating a creative space in Berlin; curator **Elizaveta Butakova** presented natural wine shop and art gallery Imaginary Wines (UK); and **Alisha Doody** reflected on her experiences with the Stairlings LGBTQ+ history collective in Ireland.

## Alternative Education and Knowledge

Alternative or radical pedagogy and forms of knowledge were another common interest across many of the residents' projects. **Diego Gutierrez** (Costa Rica/ Poland) presented his alternative education programme that draws upon indigenous practices of milpa; **Krisztián Török** (Hungary) outlined his experience as a curator working within an alternative education project in Transylvania, and **Kristyn Lopez** (USA) used the lab to get feedback on her proposal for an alternative art education programme on a university campus in Florida.



## Environment and the Rural

Many of the residents were based, or working within, rural contexts and this was a key component of their embedded practice: **RL Wilson** (UK) shared his experiences working in the North West of England; **Opiemme** (Italy/ Sweden) proposed a project that would apply street art methods in rural contexts; and **Angelica Bollettinari** (Italy) outlined an artist research residency programme between London and rural Italy.

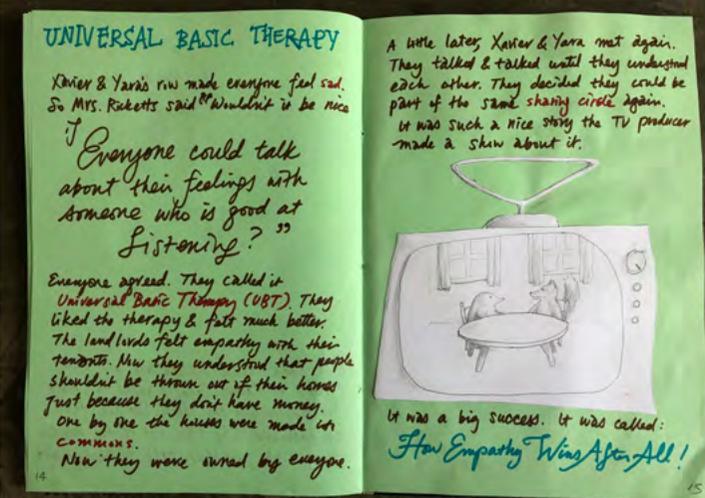
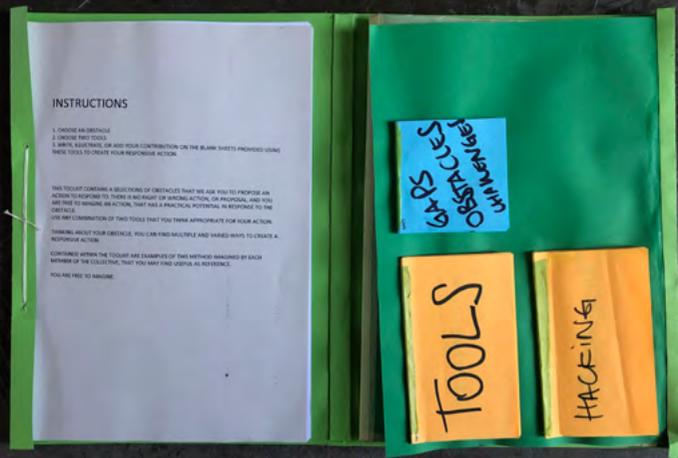
## Degrowth, Climate Justice and Ecological Sustainability

A number of the participants in the labs and residencies had an interest in embedded practice through the lens of climate change and sustainability from a more-than-human perspective: **Roberto Nino Betancourt** (Columbia/ Italy) shared his films exploring ecological issues and the Anthropocene; **Olena Iegorova** (Ukraine/ Switzerland) presented her strategies for promoting recycling and upcycling through sculpture in Ukraine; **Hwa Young** (UK) relayed one of her games for social change that explored climate change with young people; **Anouk Beckers** (Netherlands) presented a toolkit as an alternative to fast fashion; **Alexandra Papademetriou** (Greece) shared a degrowth toolkit developed in Gothenburg; **Kristina Borg** shared an ongoing food and growing project working with young people and local producers in Malta; and **Rachel Grant's** (UK) curatorial project explored post oil futures/ imaginaries in Aberdeen.

## Artistic Action Research

Other residents were using their artistic practice as a form of embedded research, either in their own locale or as part of a durational project: **Claire Bouffay** (France) used sculpture as artistic research into alternative currencies in the Biellese territory; **Tizo All** (Brazil/ Germany) used his performance art as social research around drug use in LGBTQ+ club culture in Berlin; **Alice Pedroletti** (Italy/ Germany) explored residents' relationship to water and the metaphor of the island; **Marina Castledine** (UK/ Cyprus) shared her research methodologies around textile making in Cyprus; **Ana Tuazon** (USA) reflected on her methods for writing with and about underrepresented artist collectives; **Victoria DeBlaise** (Italy) used her sculptural practice to prompt conversation about food waste in Florence; and **Vukasin Nedeljkovic** (Ireland) looked to develop his practice of reflecting asylum seekers' experiences of detention centres through photography.

Traces for the Toolkit  
Nov 2021 & March 2022



'The Exquisite Toolkit' (interactive publication) and 'Xavier's Journey to the Golden Age of The Commons' (children's storybook)



Tools and Technologies Archipelago (wall based mind map)



Tools and Technologies Aperitivo Menu (event and print)

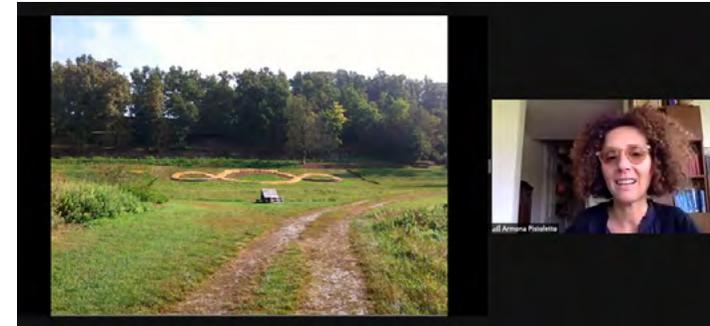
Traces from the Residency  
June 2022



Our Common Wallet (audio work and QR code)



Enjoy a Gelato on Us (vouchers and drawing)



As part of the residency we connected with local initiatives in Biella, attempting to tailor these visits to group interests that related to the themes or practices of that week. These included visits to and from Marchi and Fildi (a sustainable yarn producer), Bon Prix (online shopping company and distribution warehouse), PaceFuturo (a migrant support non-profit), Lanificio Fratelli Cerruti (wool factory and fashion house) and Oropa Sanctuary. As part of the programme we also hosted a Q+A with **Manuele Cecconello** (director of the film *Il Patto della Montagna*) to help us understand the history of Biella as a textile city.

Visits to Oropa and the wool mills especially helped to provide some grounding for residents in terms of the history and landscape of Biella, as well as providing some valuable time for informal learning and chats with mentors. We also included visits and talks with other initiatives from Cittadellarte including Ruggero Poi and Alessandra Bury's Learning Environments project, and the Let Eat Bi market, so that residents got an insight into the wider structures and work of the foundation.

**Armona Pistoletto** gave a presentation to the group about Let Eat Bi: a project dedicated to connecting people through food and growing, which aims to encourage people to think and act more critically about what they eat and where it comes from. Let Eat Bi ('Bi' stands for Biella and is pronounced 'be') grew from the 'Nutrition Office' that was one of the original offices within Cittadellarte's interdisciplinary structure. Armona presented on 4 projects that make up the overall Let Eat Bi programme.

The first was Terreabondonate, an initiative matching abandoned fields with people that would like to cultivate them. This is achieved through a website and direct conversations with landowners, farmers and residents to broker a money-free exchange of time, labour and land in the community. For example, a person who would like a field to grow vegetables can register what they would like to grow and where they live, and Let Eat Bi would connect them with the person who has land and that was willing to help. In return, the grower would give some of the produce they cultivate to the landowner. It has been a slow process as the landowners need to build trust that the people will look after their fields, but the model for this very local project could be expanded to other territories in Italy and beyond.



Again, it has been a slow growing project that has required a lot of persistence, but Armona is happy that over time more of the Biellese people are becoming aware of it and understanding the philosophy behind it – that eating locally is better for the individual, society and the environment. For her, it is a lesson in keeping going with projects that you love and believe in.

The last project presented was Let Eat Grow. Started in 2017 it involved working with local associations to create a field-to-table food production that has social benefit, working across fields of mental health, immigration and physical disability. Let Eat Bi partnered with 3 associations in Biella to evolve the project in stages: a mental health organisation helped a group of 10 people to grow vegetables; another supported a group of immigrants to take a course on jarring and bottling, and then to package the produce; and a third worked with people with physical disabilities to then label the jars. The end products were sold at the Let Eat Bi market and the proceeds shared with the growers, packers and labellers. For Armona, this demonstrated how different associations could be connected and support one another. There will be a Let Eat Grow 2.0 that will involve participants of Terreabandonate, creating crossover between the different Let Eat Bi projects.

The Accademia Verde (The Green Academy) started in 2015 and is a programme of meetings, seminars and talks about food sustainability open to the partners of the Let Eat Bi association. Events are held at the cafeteria in Cittadellarte and include drinking and eating a meal together to create a convivial atmosphere. The subjects have included 'responsible food buying' (i.e. how to buy local and natural food without going to big supermarkets), how to understand different methods of agricultural (from biodynamic, organic, integrated, permacultural etc.), and others that draw on local knowledge and point towards what is going on, not just in Cittadellarte but in the wider territory.

Let Eat Bi Mercatino is a weekly market held in the car park of Cittadellarte for local producers to sell wares and meet each other. It was set up in 2015 and happens every Wednesday morning. It focuses on seasonal products produced in a natural way including fruit and vegetables, meat and cheese, honey, rice, bread, and drinks including wine. It is advertised to the Biellese community through posters and social media. As well as selling wares it provides opportunities for the various producers (there are normally around 10 to 18 producers) to socialise and become friends.

## Local Initiative PACE Futuro

Andrea Trivero presented his work with PaceFuturo to the group. PaceFuturo is an association formed in 2004 with a mission to 'create a peaceful world'. It is based in Pettinengo, a small village of 1,500 people in the mountains of the Biellese territory, that was formerly an old textiles town. Here, since 2006 they have run Villa Piazza, 'a mid-1800s mansion owned by the community of Pettinengo, surrounded by a 25-acre park'. They collaborate with Pistoletto and Cittadellarte – they have one of the first installations of The Third Paradise in the form of a garden and share values around the 'transformation of society'. The work they do involves cultural activity (meetings, exhibitions, concerts, get-togethers) to promote peace and the future, engaging with the territory, landscape and heritage, and working with vulnerable citizens including disabled, unemployed and homeless people, and those seeking international protection.

It was the third aspect of the work that Andrea focused on, especially the work they do with migrants and asylum seekers, which falls under 'Pettinengo, welcoming town'. In 2014 PaceFuturo became the local organisation to propose a solution for the (national) asylum seeker problem in the local area. They began working with 15 asylum seekers from Mali and now, 7 years later, provide 20 houses for over 150 asylum seekers (around 15 to 20 families). Andrea sees the core of the work they do as creating a new imaginary for these people.





As well as this work, PaceFuturo also has a textiles laboratory in Villa Piazzo where waste material from factories is processed using traditional handlooms. This creates both a space where the residents of the village can preserve and pass on these skills to the asylum seekers, and products that are sold to generate income, alongside honey and jams from the garden. It is here that Andrea identifies a challenge, as it is difficult to find a sufficient market for the products.

Andrea also explained the centrality of artists to their work. Over the last 6 years they have worked with theatre, music and multi-media practitioners, as well as filmmakers. This includes the creation of, with Michael Constantini, a 'creative box' in the cellar of one of the houses in which residents can go to reflect on themselves and their journey.

When they started in 2014 there was a lot of resistance and negative feeling towards asylum seekers in Italy, but PaceFuturo's work has been hailed as a best practice model for inclusion for small mountain communities and has received national and international press attention. Andrea feels there has been three key factors that led to the success of the project:

- \* The involvement of local people and residents of the village, not just on a cultural level but also at an operational level. They employed 25 people from the village where a lot of people had lost work after the industry had collapsed; it was an important step to create jobs in Pettinengo.
- \* They did a lot of social work. They began doing street cleaning to challenge the myth that migrants arrive and do nothing. This gives asylum seekers visibility in the local community.
- \* They used sport, particularly football, as a space in which asylum seekers and locals could meet and find a common ground. The football pitch became the place where young people would play, and this worked to challenge negative perceptions and created friendships and bonds.



## Local Initiatives

### Cittadellarte, Office of Demopraxy and the Demopractic Method

Cittadellarte's director Paolo Naldini presented on the origins of the Demopraxy Office, one of the ongoing projects of the foundation. He began by telling us a bit about himself and his path to Cittadellarte in the early 2000s, which had started when he was living in the UK in the late 90s and learned of Pistoletto's first steps in the creation of Cittadellarte. At this point Pistoletto had already begun to buy the former mill buildings in Biella to 'regenerate them with purpose', and Paolo's background and training in economics and reclaiming abandoned urban spaces was put to good use.

Paolo explained the core philosophy of Cittadellarte as 'art at the centre of the responsible transformation of society' and how this was explored in the early days of Cittadellarte through the initial UNIDEE residencies in 1999 (1 month long) and then in 2000 (4 months long). The idea with these was to provide a discursive and theoretical environment, but also to go beyond this through 'acting out' as demonstrated by the early 2000s exhibition 'Critique is Not Enough'. This exhibition showcased art practices engaged in directly addressing and tackling issues including abortion (Women on Waves) and providing assistance for people experiencing homelessness and drug addiction (Wochenklausur), for example.

Another element in the grounding of Cittadellarte was Pistoletto's 'Progetto Arte' manifesto from 1994 in which he proposed that the artist's role in society could be as a connector, joining different fields of human activity, culture and even epistemologies. From this came the idea of founding a school to explore how to put different fields into dialogue with one another, and provide an education that would increase the capacity of the participants to make an impact where they are based. As well as artist-mentors like Jeanne van Heeswijk, Calk and myself (Andy Abbott), there have been many people from different walks of life including designers, social designers, mathematicians, and so on. Even cardiologists have applied and been invited to take part.

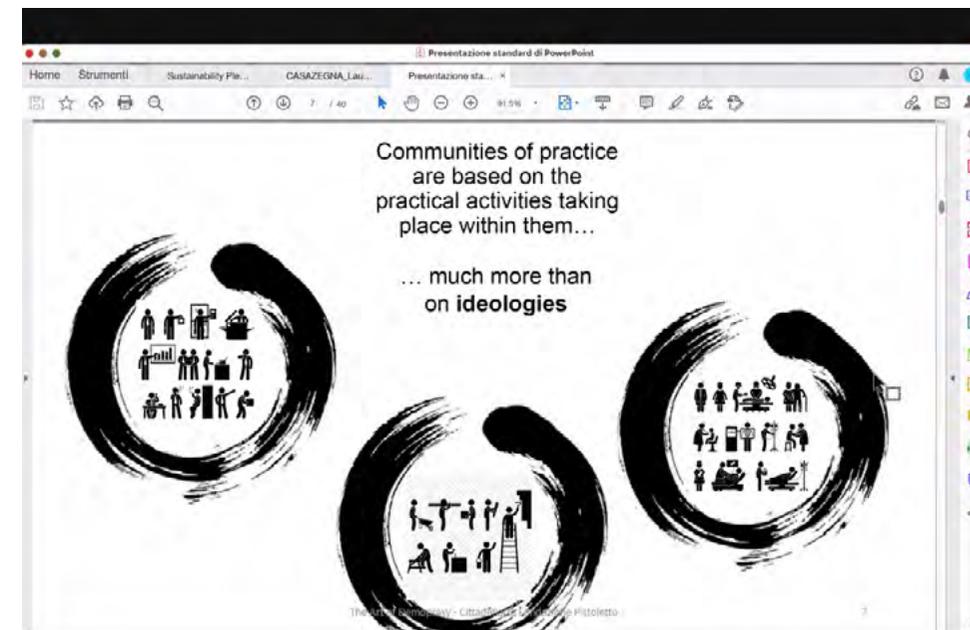
Alongside this development of the UNIDEE programme was the idea of offices. Paolo explained that Cittadellarte conceived of itself as an artwork; 'not just an institution for art but by art', as Charles Esche commented. This means that Cittadellarte is under constant redefinition, questioning its own status and purpose. So, a structure was developed that would allow a deeper digging into the fields they wanted to connect with, starting with economics, spanning food and nourishment straight through to law, and beyond.

Among these early offices was an (Art and) Politics office, initiated with the idea to create an Inter-Mediterranean parliament: a trans-national party called Love Difference. But before anything had been written down or announced, a journalist from a right-wing newspaper asked Pistoletto whether he was 'right' or 'left', and so for this and a number of other reasons it was thought better to conceive of Love Difference as a cultural movement rather than a political party.

Through this project Paolo was struck by the wealth of practices of engagement, from alternative currencies to energy grids and permaculture experiments that were happening in places as diverse as New York, the outskirts of Tunisia and the mountains in Italy. And whilst none of these offered a panacea, the famous line 'another world is possible' started to take on plausible meaning; it was really happening. In 2015 Cittadellarte was invited to create an international forum event and decided to use open space technology and other methodologies to gather local intelligence.

Starting from an acknowledgement that people don't live in isolation but rather operate in communities of interest and practice, Paolo and the Demopraxy office wanted to explore the potential for the power embedded in these organisations to be oriented towards the responsible transformation of society. In Cuba they began by mapping out over 100 organisations that were already acting in a sustainable and socially responsible way, and invited these to a 3-day forum around tables arranged in the shape of Pistoletto's symbol of The Third Paradise. Paolo explained that the forum

'put the sustainability issue at the centre and demonstrated the idea of opposites coming together in synthesis. The aim of it was to ask "what can we do to address the issues that you found as priorities?" People came up with a list of actions that made sense to them. These different voices could then be assembled like an exhibition. And then there was a year-long workshop where everybody went back to their organisation – be it an NGO or town council or enterprise – and negotiated the implementation of the actions that had been brought up as problems. A final stage in the process happened through the juncture with institutions, to move from practice to policy. And, of course, this is the most difficult part!'



## Local Initiatives

Cittadellarte, UNIDEE  
and Biella Archipelago City

Paolo Naldini offered the residents and mentors of the Sustaining Embedded Arts Practice residency a tour of the Biella Archipelago City exhibition that was showing on the ground floor of Cittadellarte. This also afforded the opportunity to provide some background to UNIDEE and expound on some of the methodologies developed and put into practice through the Demopraxy Office.



A transcription of the talk is provided here:

Thank you for accepting this invitation for the guided tour. I'm going to be with you for the first half an hour. I was very keen to introduce you to how Cittadellarte was instituted and why. I will start by focusing on one of Pistoletto's obsessions, which is collaboration. You will see his early works, the mirror portraits. There he started his quest into being with others. Obviously, the mirror accepts everything and everyone that happens in front of it – even the non-human. That was the starting point of his research. He moved into theatre and performance in the streets in the late 1960s. Here in Italy, Pistoletto was active in leaving the institutions and reclaiming the streets, and working along with whoever was already there. This brought him to relevant and symbolic events in the art world like the Biennial of '68 where he invited people to come to his space to collaborate and co-operate – and not only people from the visual arts. In the late 70s in the United States he initiated these co-

creation programmes, meeting Cage and Feldman while working in supermarkets, stores and the city fabric.

In the 1990s Pistoletto was invited to be sculpture professor in the academy in Vienna, and that was the founding moment for Cittadellarte. He had to face the grim reality that the art system was totally not up to the task of changing the world. On the contrary, the world was changing art more and more. He worked with groups of artists and students, whose vision, passion and enthusiasm was all there, but he was well aware that the art world was not in the position to work with this youth. So he was in a crisis in a way, and he put down this 2-page manifesto called 'Project Arte' where he claims that the role of art could be to put into communication the existing elements of society.

Then, in 1994, he began to understand it could not happen in an academy it had to be in a space. When you want to start a Utopian project – to give it a place makes it real. So in this area in Biella, where he was born, he spotted these abandoned buildings. In the 90s there was this sense of abandonment in this area that had once thrived in the 60s and 70s (off of Leeds and other areas in the UK, and like China did in the 90s and 2000s, this race to the bottom for low wages). So here in Biella it is the heart of the wool fabric-making industry that works for the fashion world. Fashion is not far from here (in Milan), but it's not here. This is not a cool place. This is where fashion is fabricated. So he started this programme to give a place to this utopia. And once again the question was 'che fare?' – 'what to do?'

What he came up with was this idea of a university, an open school where we might share practices and deepen visions. And try with one another to reinforce the ability to make change in our context. It all started with that idea of a summer school, a 4-month residency programme for up to 20 people from many different countries. Collaboration was one of the underlying issues. Working with collective practices was the founding root.

Then we began to grow our understanding of the approaches and practices. The little Biella town was invaded by these very active and engaging practitioners that we would accompany. They would identify trade unions, or ethnic communities, or localities in the neighbourhoods where they could practice an exercise.

And now a couple of other passages to bring us to the exhibition, which is the core of our effort now. In the early 2000s we were working with metaphors of the symbol of The Third Paradise. Of course it already existed – the idea of opposites coming together in a synthesis of many cultures. The point mostly was why shall we now put it in the centre of the conversations? Why is it relevant to talk today of opposites and conflicts coming together in a generative manner? That brought us to engage many communities throughout the world starting from the art approach. You can draw it in the sand. It is a vector to have a conversation with the other. There are about 200 people that have asked to use this symbol and its rhetoric to do things in their contexts. Most from the education world but also from economics, agricultural, energy manufacture and others. So there is this community of ambassadors that talk to one another and their locals to advance the possible ideas that lay behind this symbol.

And another element that I think is crucial is that from the early 2000s I began to travel and meet the community of engaged social practice and was amazed by the variety and intensity, and often times effectiveness, of their work (think of transition towns in the UK, for example). And year-by-year we would invite some of these practitioners to talk about the methodologies that they were using. What was really coming out as a clear problem was the inability to be seen, and to interconnect in a way that could counterbalance the trend. In these years I would also work closely with the United Union's structured dialogue programme. And the way they would work was mostly Open Space Technology, tracing back to

the World Social Forum in Latin America in the early 1990s. So we were with one eye seeing the amazing reality of these practices, and with the other seeing the methodological possibility for working with hundreds of organisations to create a clear action plan for engaging everyone together.

In 2010 we had the chance to do something in Cuba. An independent curator had seen The Third Paradise symbol and she was moved to relate it to her context in Cuba when the situation was so clearly a confrontation between two polarities, and she wanted to come introduce a third way. So she invited the project to the Cuba Biennial – often the art system is the way to initiate things for us. They made an incredible work along with a Cuban artist who works with the boat metaphor and with communities and schools. They made this wonderful event with 70 boats in the sea in the shape of The Third Paradise. And the following day Obama called Castro to say we should reopen our relationships. Obviously that was not the reason he did that but for us we had to read this synchronicity. So along with the others we asked what should we do? One idea that came along was to create a big event or forum. We should invite people to discover one another. And then we moved towards Open Space Technology and eventually did a 3-day event in an underground theatre. People there could talk, and talked freely.

So then we – ourselves with Laura and the others – began to develop this practice. We saw that it might help in addressing those difficulties about connecting. We began to explore this elsewhere and eventually we came back to Biella, which in 2019 was declared a UNESCO Creative City using the symbol of the Third Paradise. Most constituencies from the city united under this programme. They were beginning to lose their future, affecting everything in not only the city but in the province which has about 200,000 inhabitants. So this was useful for us to start this chapter of this

programme in Biella. We reflected upon the very notion of democracy, and had lots of talk, and came up with this rethinking of democracy. We realised there are so many practices that were already engaging with 'what is government', 'who rules', 'why can't we call ourselves a government in our community of practice?' So we came up with this word of 'demopraxy' where we try to put the focus on practice.

Eventually we came to the exhibition. The exhibition is a tool of the first phase of this methodological approach. The mapping, and then what you have mapped you move into a place, and then you invite the context to take view of the richness and intensity of the practices that are already happening here. Then the exhibition becomes more of a disposition – from 'to see' to 'to move'. Through the basic Open Space Technology you begin to have focus groups, thematic working groups that come up with visions and actions plans for everyone who would like to engage. Which is a liturgy that we can see in many practices, not only socially engaged art. In this second phase you have things like what is happening now – groups of people in conversation that give themselves the name of 'the learning archipelago'.

The archipelago is the last concept I'd like to introduce. The whole exhibition is called Biella Archipelago City – which is another metaphor we want to grow. We have worked with the University of Milan and Turin Urban Studies to explore this area. It came out that the history of urbanisation in this area is different to the typical industrial urbanisation, which tends to be circular. Here you have from the mountains 5 valleys where pre-industrial settlements were founded. And then in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they say the first mechanical loom was smuggled. So actually the urbanisation followed mostly these 5 branches. Still now, the area feels itself not as a city but as a wider assembly. The idea was not to invent something from scratch but to allow the emergence of what was always there, which is this wider territorial regional identity.

And the archipelago came along as the metaphor of a holistic ensemble – it is more than the sum of its islands. Of course, we are not in the sea – here the sea is the nature. You have seen the rice fields, the woods, and even the mountains. So there's a lot of nature that to some degree interconnects the human settlements. In pandemic times this became a wonderful metaphor as there was a lot of conversations about the relationship to the countryside.

So, what about the future? Bringing together this metaphor and the demopraxy?

In a way this brings us a long way from the 1960s, where you have us as Cittadellarte directors, liaising with the constituencies of the city. And then opening up, like a public utility, the exhibition, inviting people to take a position within this conversation and this planning. There are a few tables or groups that have emerged, like the learning archipelago. There is the energy one, looking at sustainable energy sovereignty for the area. There is a food one that is mostly connected to an artistic experience, looking into climate crises and food chain productions with Cooking Sections. There's the water – which here is super relevant. We have had floods and droughts. There is the slow tourism programme. So now when we go and see the exhibition you will spot some elements related to this concept. The mapping has been done through youth organisations that have explored the area for 6 months. Also, you will see a project that was initiated within Cittadellarte, making use of abandoned land, called Let Eat Bi. This is pretty much the introduction and with the rest of the tour you will see Pistoletto's works and The Third Paradise and you may also move to the other building to see the Sustainable Architecture Office.

# Residents, Guests and UNIDEE Team

## Embedded Arts Practice in a Post-Pandemic Future

### Residents

Residents were selected from an open call and included Francesca Fiordelmondo (Italy), Federico Pozuelo (Spain/ Italy), Alice Pedroletti (Italy), Dafne Salis (Italy), Tatjana Schaefer and Catalin Pislaru (Germany/ Uzbekistan and Moldavia/ Romania), Camila Aguais (USA/ UK), Elena Blesa Cábez (Spain), Sophie Skellern (UK), Rachel Grant (UK), Francesca Carion (Italy), Katja Verheul (Netherlands), Laia Ventayol (Spain), Irene Angenica (Italy), Miriam Rejas del Pino and TBD Ultramagazine (Spain/ Italy), Livia Daza Paris (Venezuela/ Canada), Reyhaneh Mirjahani (Iran/ Sweden), Daniela Delgado Viteri (Ecuador/ Spain), Stefano Volpato (Italy), Christine Mackey (Ireland), Tiara Jackson (USA), Orecchie D'Asino/ Ornella De Carlo & Federica Porro (Italy), Eddie James (New Zealand/ Australia), Kirila Cvetkovska (Macedonia), Jade Blood (UK), Lauren Hollowday (UK), Tizo All (Brazil/ Germany), Antonio di Biase (Italy), Weronika Zalewska (Poland), Annabelle Craven-Jones (UK), Ginevra Ludovici (Italy), Giulia Menegale (Italy), Zina Zarour (Palestine), Aadita Chaudhury (India/Canada), William Rees (UK), Francesco Pavignano (Italy), Sarah Dixon (UK), Andra Nedelcu (Romania), Erica Ferrari (Brazil), Aida Diop (France), Ayesha Mukadam (South Africa), Yuliya Say (Ukraine/ Italy), Marco Ranieri (Italy), Henry Palacio (Colombia), Catalina Gómez Rueda (Colombia) and Marilou Van Lierop (Belgium).

### Mentors

Invited guests mentors included architect and researcher Sandi Hilal, (Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency, Stockholm, Sweden), Arte Útil curators and researchers Gemma Medina Estupiñán and Alessandra Saviotti (Spain/ Italy), curator and organiser-as-artist Eva Rowson (Bergen Kjøtt, University of Bergen, Norway), professor of art Mick Wilson (Hdk-Valand Academy/ University of Gothenburg, Sweden), researchers Nadia Moreno Moya and Fernando Escobar Neira (working on the interstices between the art and politics in Latin America at the School of Arts, National University of Colombia), independent researcher and curator Aria Spinelli (Rome, Italy), as well as embedded arts organisations In-Situ (East Lancashire, UK) represented by Paul Hartley and Rauf Bashir, and South Square Centre (West Yorkshire, UK) represented by Yvonne Carmichael and Alice Withers. With contributions from Visible Project, Jasmeen Patheja (Blank Noise) and STEALTH.unlimited. We were also joined by Paul O'Neill (PUBLICS, Helsinki) and Claudia Zeiske (Deveron Projects, Scotland) for the plenary seminar and first week.

## Groundwork for Embedded Practices

### Residents

Residents explored these themes and questions through their own ongoing situated (artistic) action research. They shared their progress through an online virtual studio space, and through a programme of group critiques and self-organised workshops and activities. The cohort included:

Marco Antelmi (Italy); CONJUNCTION public art curatorial collective (EU/ North America); Sue Jeong Ka (USA/ South Korea); Abed Alrhman Shabaneh (Palestine); Evy Jokhova (UK/Russia/ Spain); Josie Tothill (UK); Jamie Allen (Canada/ Germany); Suzannah Henty (Australia); Miguel Amado (Portugal/ Ireland); Kristina Borg (Malta); PLoT collective (UK/Ireland); Rachel Marsden (Germany); Louise Carver (UK/ Germany); Alhassan Issah (Ghana); Sophie Minervini (UK); Maria Kuzmina (Russia); LUMIN (UK); Krisztián Gábor Török (Hungary); Alicja Wysocka (Poland); Ahmed Mongey (Egypt); Diego Gutierrez Valladares (CR/PL); Chiara Sgaramella (IT/ES); Chiara De Maria (IT); Lígia Fernandes (Portugal); Mae Aguinaldo-Mapa (Philippines); Lauren Hollowday (UK); Lodovica Guarnieri (Italy/ UK); Johanna Klingler (Germany); Lexie Owen (Canada/ Norway); Kaushal Sapre (India); Ella Appleton (UK); Paria Goodarzi and Francisco Llinas (Iran/ Venezuela/ UK); Gilson Schwartz (Brazil); Ekarasa Doblanovic (Italy/ Croatia/NZ); Studio LOKA (Columbia/ France); Tommaso Valli (Italy); San Zagari (France).

### Mentors

A weekly programme of seminars and guest presentations helped frame and reflect the residents' action research. Invited guests included economic geographer and co-author of *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities* Professor Katherine Gibson (Australia); artist Jeanne van Heeswijk (Netherlands); community economies platform The Interdependence (artists Kathrin Böhm, Kate Rich and Bianca Elzenbaumer), with researcher and curator Aria Spinelli; Decentralising Political Economies (presented by researcher/ curator Alessandra Saviotti and artist Owen Griffiths); artist, academic and curator of the feminist DIY virtual collective Ladyz in Noyz, Marlo De Lara (USA); nomadic postcapitalist think-tank Institute of Radical Imagination (represented by artists and academics Massimiliano Mollona, Marco Baravalle and Emanuele Braga); I Mexico City collective Cráter Invertido; worker's co-op/ cultural venue Wharf Chambers Co-operative Club in Leeds (UK); Pyramid (Leeds), a collective of 150 artists with and without learning disabilities; artist-facilitator, museum professional and academic Jade French (UK); and artist, activist and author of *Art as Social Action* and *Dark Matter* Gregory Sholette (USA).

The programme also included workshops and discussions with Beirut-based comic collective Samandal and organisations in Cittadellarte and Biella including Let Eat Bi, Art of Demopraxy, Hydro, Learning Environments and PACE Futuro.

## Tools and Technologies for Embedded Practice

### Residents

'Tools and Technologies for Embedded Practice' Lab: Josie Tothill (UK); Diego Gutierrez (Costa Rica/ Poland); Ligia Fernandes (Portugal); Roberto Nino Betancourt (Columbia/ Italy); Jojo Hynes (Ireland); Stephanie Hanna (USA/ Germany); Claire Bouffay (France); Tizo All (Brazil/ Germany); Ginevra Ludovici & Giovanni Paolin (Italy); Alice Pedroletti (Italy/ Germany); Krisztian Torok (Hungary); Olena Iegorova (Ukraine/ Switzerland).

'Artwork as Toolkit' Lab and 'Tools for the Commons' Lab (21 March – 2 April and 21 – 26 March 2022): Kristyn Lopez (USA); RL Wilson (UK); Caterina Stamou (Greece); Hwa Young (UK); Cristina Picco (Italy); Kasia Sobucka (Poland); Nicholas Ferrara (Italy); Anouk Beckers (Netherlands); Nicole Sánchez (Portugal); Rachel Botha (Ireland); Calcagno Cullen (USA).

### Mentors

The first two labs in November 2021 were opportunities to share, unpack and apply ongoing practice or action-research with a group of peers, the UNIDEE Residency Programs team and guests including artist Jeanne van Heeswijk (Netherlands), curator, writer, artist and educator Paul O'Neill (PUBLICS, Helsinki), artist, educator, researcher Mick Wilson (HDK-Valand, Gothenburg), and artist and curator Yvonne Carmichael (South Square Centre, Bradford, UK).

The 2 labs that ran in March 2022 (after a postponement due to Covid-related travel restrictions) were opportunities to share, unpack and apply ongoing practice or action research with a group of peers, the UNIDEE Residency Programs team and guests including researcher-curator Alessandra Saviotti (Italy/ Netherlands), art historian, independent researcher and curator Gemma Medina Estupiñán (Spain/ Netherlands), artist Owen Griffiths (UK), artist, researcher and activist Emanuele Braga (Italy), artist-choreographer, curator, activist and researcher Gabriella Riccio (Italy/ Spain), writer, researcher and political activist Keir Milburn (UK), and freelance cultural worker Gareth Brown (UK).

## Embedded Arts Practice and The Future of Biella

### Young Experts from the Biella area

Anna Robino, Arianna Coppa, Matteo Boretto, Valentina Paolini, Chiara Negro, Younis Benmimoune, Ofelia Genipro, Rebecca Chigioni and Samira Kouhail.

### Artists

Camila Aguais, Chiara De Maria, Chiara Sgaramella, Francesco Pavignano, Dafne Salis, and Stefano Volpato.

### Mentors

Bianca Elzenbaumer is a design researcher based in the Italian Alps, a founding member of the design practice Brave New Alps, and co-president of CIPRA International, an environmental NGO spanning the alpine arc. Her 40-year research plan focuses on supporting and creating community economies and commons starting from the places she lives in. She is a co-founder of Comunità Frizzante – making drinks to make community.

Agro-ecologist Carlo Bettinelli and social worker Chiara Mura co-lead the project Comunità Frizzante (Sparking Community). They mobilise participatory methods to produce fizzy drinks with thought-provoking flavours as a means to question and practically reinvent relations amongst humans as well as between humans and nature. In 2021 they were shortlisted for the Lush Spring Prize.

Forno Vagabondo is an itinerant social oven that travels through the villages of Alta Vallagarina (Tunisia?) on an electric bicycle and becomes the scene of practical-creative activities on the components of the 'bread system' (ingredients, elements of nature, environment, community, transport).

## Sustaining Embedded Arts Practice

### Residents

Group One: Rachel Marsden (Germany), Alexandra Papademetriou (Greece), Adele Jarrar (Palestine), Elizaveta Butakova (UK), Maria Kuzmina (Russia), Kristina Borg (Malta), Marina Castledine (UK/Cyprus), Ana Tuazon (USA).

Group Two: Victoria DeBlaisse (Italy), Lígia Fernandes and Nicole Sánchez (Portugal), Rachel Grant (UK), Vukasin Nedeljkovic (Ireland), Alisha Doody (Ireland), Aysel Akhundova (Azerbaijan), Opiemme (Italy/Sweden), Kristina Borg (Malta), Angelica Bollettinari (Italy).

### Mentors

Guest mentors included artist and co-leader of the Victoria Square Project Maria Papadimitriou (Greece), economic geographer and co-author of *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities*, Professor Katherine Gibson (Australia), artist, activist and author Gregory Sholette (USA), cultural producer and director of the creative regeneration practice Media and Arts Partnership (MAAP), Sue Ball (UK), and curator, writer, researcher and artistic director of the East Leeds Project Kerry Harker (UK). We were also joined by previous mentors Aria Spinelli and Emanuele Braga in place of Maria Papadimitriou, who was unable to attend in presence.

## UNIDEE Team

### Director

Juan Esteban Sandoval

### Visiting Research Curator

Andy Abbott

under the supervision  
of Paolo Naldini

### Programme Coordinator

Clara Tosetti

### Programme Assistant

Annalisa Zegna

## Partners

UNIDEE patrons are Regione Piemonte,  
Compagnia di San Paolo, CRT Fondazione  
Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, illycaffè S.p.A.  
UNIDEE AIR partner is A.M. Qattan

**Juan Esteban Sandoval** (b. 1972), head of projects and director of the Art Office of Cittadellarte since 2002. As an artist, he has exhibited internationally since 1994. He is the cofounder of 'el puente\_lab' art collective in Medellín, a platform for artistic and cultural production, which uses contemporary art as a tool for social transformation. He has directed 13 *Arte al Centro* exhibitions within the Foundation's premises and a number of exhibitions in other locations, such as the MuKHA in Antwerp, San Servolo Island for the 50th Venice Biennial, The Galleria Civica of Modena and MAXXI Museum in Rome, among others. He co-curated the exhibition *Cittadellarte. sharing transformation* at Kunsthaus in Graz, the first 2 editions of the seminar 'Methods-research project on art-society relation' and 2 workshops of shared interdisciplinary planning in Venice and in Gorizia, Italy. Juan is a former resident of UNIDEE (2000).

**Andy Abbott** (b. 1980) is an artist, writer, curator and arts organiser who lives in West Yorkshire, UK. He has exhibited and performed internationally as an individual artist and in various collaborations including the art collective Black Dogs. He has undertaken exhibitions, commissions and residencies for Tate Modern, London; MK Gallery, Milton Keynes; SWG3, Glasgow; Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead; Museum of Oxford; and Yorkshire Forward; and has completed residencies for Gasworks, London; in PiST, Istanbul; and Convivio, Oaxaca. He is an alumnus of the UNIDEE residency at Cittadellarte, which he completed collaboratively with his partner Yvonne Carmichael in 2006. In 2012 Andy was awarded a practice-led PhD from the University of Leeds with a thesis on 'art, self-organised cultural activity and the production of postcapitalist subjectivity'. His research interests are in Do-It-Yourself culture, artist-led initiatives, alternative economies and postwork futures. Recent and forthcoming writing includes articles and book contributions on the creative case for Universal Basic Income. As an arts organiser and curator he has produced a public programme for the embedded arts organisation In-Situ in East Lancashire, piloted the Centre for Socially Applied Arts at the University of Bradford, and was a director of the Community Interest Company, Art in Unusual Spaces. In 2020 he co-founded the UBI Lab Arts group to explore ways in which artists may help 'broaden and deepen the conversation about Universal Basic Income'.

**Clara Tosetti** (b. 1989) was Programme Coordinator for the UNIDEE Residency Programs. She is a graduate of Architecture (Polytechnic of Milan, 2014), and in 2016 obtained a Masters in Economics and Management of the Art and Cultural Heritage at the Business School of the Sole 24 Ore, specialising in the areas of communication, organisation of exhibitions and cultural events and educational programmes. She co-curated the exhibition *Legàmi* at the Carcano Theatre in Milan that probed different types of bonds between women. She worked for the Studio Art&Co. in Turin, collaboratively organising the exhibition *Sigmar Polke* at Palazzo Grassi in Venice, and has advised upon and catalogued prestigious private collections. Clara has always been interested in the links between art and public space and how this might relate to individual and collective growth, and create community identities that are both local and global.

**Annalisa Zegna** is the assistant director and curator of UNIDEE Residency Program (2016-2019). She is an artist, researcher and cultural practitioner working with visual and performative languages and focusing on collective experiences and collaborative practices. She develops artistic projects immersed in daily life experience from the specificity of different socio-geographical contexts. She is co-founder and collaborator of Spazio HYDRO (Biella) and co-founder of Osservatorio sul Torrente project. She has a Masters in Performing Arts and Community Spaces from the Roma Tre University and Mattatoio in Rome (2020-21), a Masters in Visual Arts at the IUAV University of Venice (2016), and a BFA in Painting from the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts in Turin (2013). She was an artist-in-residence at Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa in Venice in 2015 and researcher at the VSMS Lab of the University of Technology of Limassol in Cyprus in 2016. She worked as an Assistant Curator at Art Laboratory Berlin, with a focus on interdisciplinary projects between art, science and technology (2016).

**Paolo Naldini** has been director of Cittadellarte since 2000. In 1996 he completed his degree in Economics at Turin University/ Turin Polytechnic University of Architecture with a dissertation on urban derelict buildings and lands. As a writer, in addition to texts on art and its role in societal fabric, Paolo has published short fiction and founded a web project dedicated to exploring creative collaboration by meeting and writing in nomadic and interwoven patterns. He has conceived and developed the theory and method of the Art of Demopraxy.

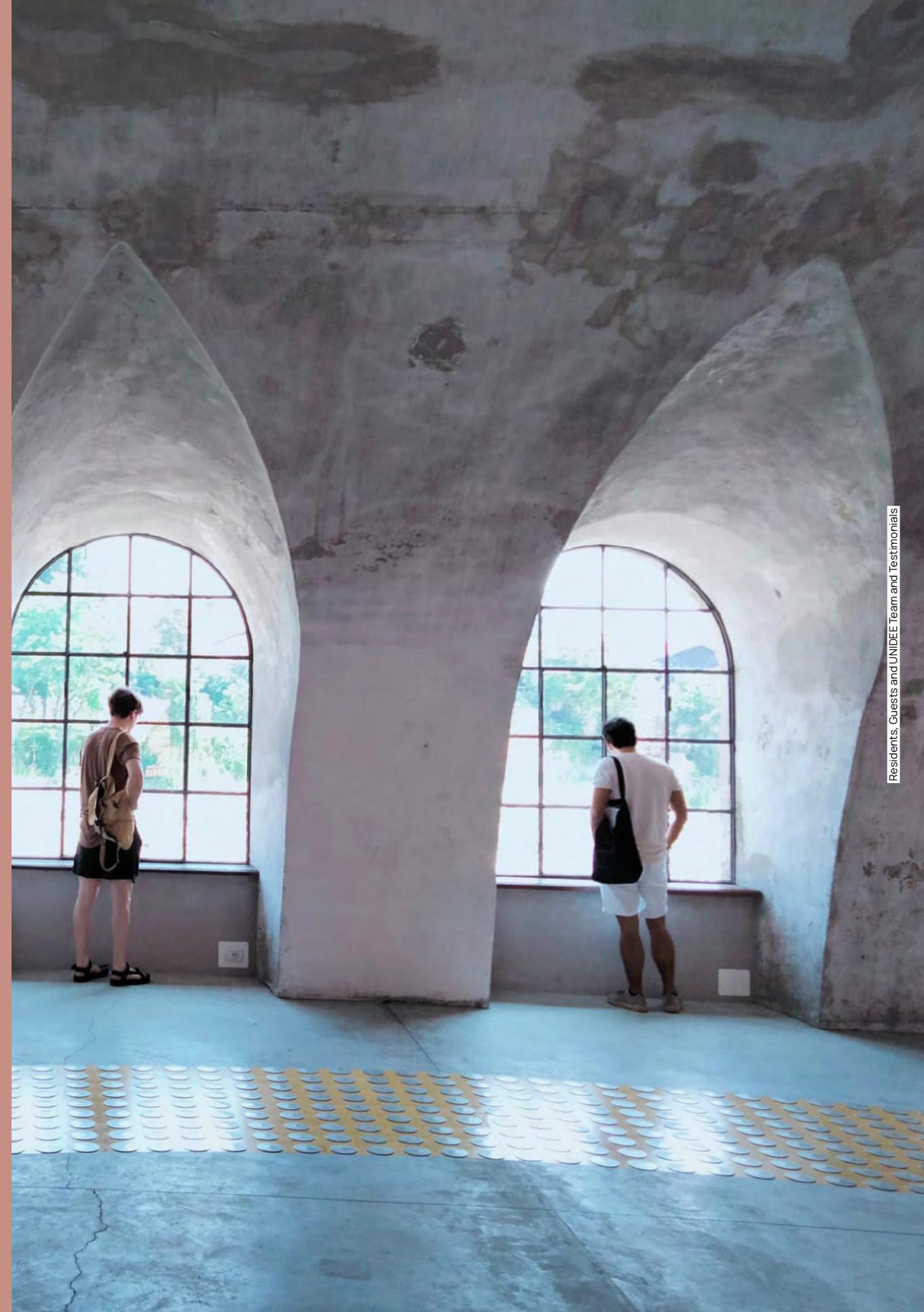


Residents, Guests and UNIDEE Team and Testimonials



'I can only express how grateful I am for being selected for this residency, which was one of the most important marks of my last 2 years. Without this residency, I don't know if I would have been able to transform the projects where I'm working now. I was working based on intuition, but UNIDEE provided the framework, tools and support networks for the projects to grow. All the projects evolved and gained structure, and I passed from working alone to working with several dozens of people across 5 collective ongoing projects, creating a real transformative impact in the local communities and a personal transformation at my end. Thank you for your work.'

Ligia Fernandes — Resident

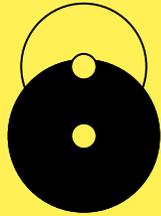


Andy Abbott  
2023

Edited by  
Lara Eggleton,  
Corridor8

Designed by  
Ashleigh Armitage  
ashleigharmitage.co.uk

Produced in partnership  
with Corridor8  
corridor8.co.uk



UNIDEE 2020-2022 was made possible thanks to the collaboration and support of:



CITTADELLARTE - FONDAZIONE PISTOLETTO  
**UNIDEE** RESIDENCY  
PROGRAMS



Fondazione  
Compagnia  
di San Paolo



Fondazione  
CRT



Fondazione Zegna



REGIONE  
PIEMONTE



مؤسسة  
عبد المحسن  
القطان  
AM QATTAN  
FOUNDATION



INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS  
ITALIA



This handbook accompanies the 'Reflections on Embedded Arts Practice' publication and collates the curatorial statements, curator's notes, traces and other information from the UNIDEE Residency Programs 2020–2022.

The Handbook is available  
in print via LULU





VULNERABILITY

LET GO STOP THINKING ENJOY THE RUSH

DECONSTRUCT THE PERSONAL

MAKE AS THEORY MAKE AS RESISTANCE MAKE AS FREEDOM

HORE

RAW EXPRESSION



# Handbook