We Cannot Say That We Have Arrived Somewhere,

A Glossary of Commoning Terms

Yet Neither Can We Say That We Haven't

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Introduction

Does contemporary art have to be exclusive? The negative answer to this question forms the basis of our joint inquiry and exploration, which we have named Art Space Unlimited—a transient cooperative of five European nonprofit art spaces which culminates with this publication. In a shared commitment to inviting and engaging with others, it was clear to us that our efforts should not only aim to engage publics (and counter-publics, i.e., social movements, subcultures, or people that seek to challenge prevailing norms) but also serve as an opportunity for learning. Throughout the process we engaged in discussions and learned a great deal, and we unlearned even more. The culmination of this energy and exploration is captured in this publication containing the terms that worked as guides and reference points for us in the process. These terms are formed into a glossary—a collection of ideas which we found to be fundamental. We aimed for this book to be helpful to cultural workers, mediators, educators, curators, and artists as well as anyone who asks themselves similar questions. Hopefully, the terms we present here will make it possible for others to delve deeper into issues surrounding the invitation of various audiences into art spaces, allowing them to draw their own conclusions based on their unique contexts and situations.

We recognize that many of the concepts that we work with are by nature subject to constant change, and our definition or point of view may be challenged by someone else in the future, perhaps even by ourselves. The aim of the glossary was not to find the lowest common denominator but rather to record the frequent discrepancy between ideas and reality, identifying problematic modes of thinking, acting, and communicating. It was a daunting task as many of the issues we faced had no clear answers or established good practices. At the same time these glossary terms responded to questions we needed to tackle ourselves in order to find what works for us. We also believed it was necessary to provide contexts and introduce projects that inform our understanding of what it means to be hospitable, make alliances, or navigate conflict in the sphere of contemporary art.

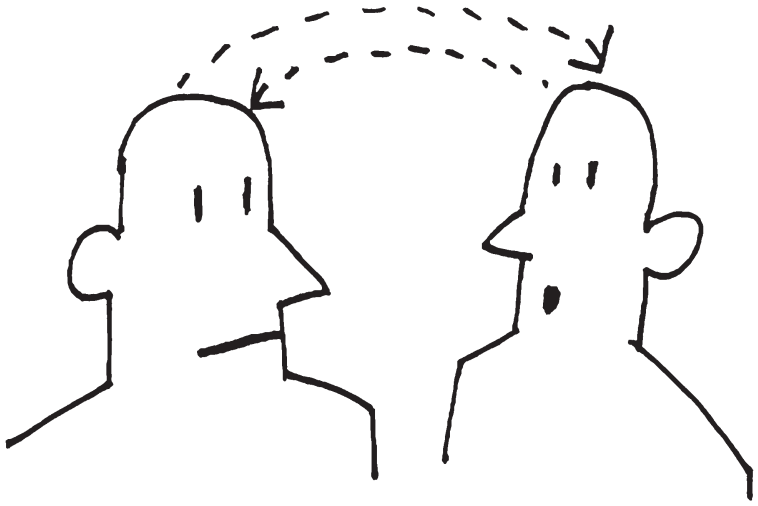
In many ways this has meant translating. Translating from often overused and vague concepts such as inclusion or participation into terms, approaches, and, in a broader sense, a way of thinking that is critical of the discourse that still dominates the cultural debate in the so-called West and the Global North. Translating the knowledge developed and practiced before us into our environments and local contexts. Finally, translating our particular and concrete achievements and failures into words in the hope that they can be a resource for those seeking guidance and counsel in their own projects and endeavors. It is not a translation that aims to be a faithful recreation of the original thought but rather a careful selection. Each of the terms in this publication represents an act of translating the experiences and knowledge gained by an organization through their participation in Art Space Unlimited and other endeavors alongside it.

The book is published in the framework of Art Space Unlimited, which is a project that emerged from the shared desire and effort to open institutions toward people who, for various reasons, have difficult, complicated,disabled, or limited access to art, whether as creators, participants, or viewers. The project was established by the organizations tranzit.cz (Prague, Czech Republic), < rotor > (Graz, Austria), OFF-Biennale (Budapest, Hungary), La Escocesa (Barcelona, Spain), and Foundation 17 (Prishtina, Kosovo), to transform our institutional practice in order to become more empathetic, understanding, and open to people with diverse needs, experiences, and perceptions. This book is an effort to create an imprint of our “hive mind,” offering a language, methodology, and means of social interactions that we hope will prove useful for the empathetic and patient production of cultural events and projects.

We deal with these issues from the perspective of engaged and self-critical cultural workers and practitioners aiming to reach other practitioners working on similar issues. Although informed by academic sources, the terms are primarily based on our own experiences built through practice. Our task has been not to impose fixity but to acknowledge the complexities of thought versus action, to reflect on the various questions that arise within our encounters. We invite you, dear reader, to engage with these terms, to question, to adapt, and to transform them within your own contexts.

The interview was originally published as part of the article “For Adults to Start Trusting Children. Educating Children for Liberation in an Unfree World.” in the online feminist magazine Druhá : směna (www.druhasmena.cz). The text is published with the kind permission of the magazine’s editors.

Being Understood



Contemporary art—meaning art that reflects the current cultural, social, and political climate around the world and encompasses a wide range of mediums—has its own language, its own jargon, just like other fields of human activity. As in many other disciplines, expert language in art helps to save time for everyone involved; things do not have to be explained, and anyone who wants to become an expert must first be initiated into this language. However, expert or academic language has its flip side. Sometimes it is its own legitimization—an end instead of a means. The problem with contemporary art is that it very often speaks in an expert language even when it is supposed to be speaking to non-experts, which has an elitist or alienating effect. In public institutions such as museums, we have entire departments that deal with "translating" the expert language of contemporary art (e.g., mediation, audience development, and education departments). It is a symptom of this situation that these departments are often subordinate in the hierarchy of the institution to an artistic and curatorial program in which they, more often than not, cannot interfere in any way.

For the 2024 edition of the Biennale Matter of Art, the curators and us in tranzit.cz agreed on a common rule: to communicate the biennale in general language, not expert jargon.

The biennale took place in the National Gallery Prague, a large state institution in the center of the city which is frequented in the summer not only by locals but by culture-loving tourists. Tourists cannot be expected to have an expert knowledge of art, but they also often lack a good knowledge of Czech or English. Therefore, the English texts written by the curators for the exhibited works were edited with the intention of simplifying the language. A person who has experience in English language teaching and translation and is also an expert in art had the main say on them. The texts had to be understandable to those with an intermediate level of English and not contain technical words that one would need to look up. The texts, thus edited, were met with resistance from the curators and artists. One of the curators and some of the artists felt that the texts leveled and flattened the ideas expressed by the artworks, despite the fact that we felt we had not changed the meaning of the texts. We and the curators then spent the next month negotiating over the texts. In the end, the texts for the artworks were a compromise, neither fully accessible nor fully expert. Ultimately, they reflected the tensions we had been grappling with all along.

In the discussions, it was clear that for some people "being understood" means thinking more empathetically about the reader or recipient of the text. To others, it was more important that the texts express their ideas precisely, using exactly the right terms. One case in point is an artist called Sráč Sam (Fucker Sam), with whom we as tranzit collaborate. Sam has an a priori trust in her art and in people, and she does not want to make assumptions about what people may or may not understand or make conscious attempts to be understood. However, in her work I Promise she invites her audience to sign a document declaring their trust in art in exchange for a piece of her work. The desire and intention to be understood may manifest itself in various ways, even in the very ostentatious refusal to make concessions so that others can understand you.

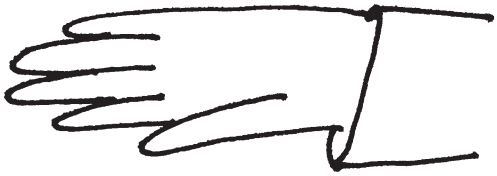
Language is embedded in the social fabric; the language we use reflects our sociocultural and class status. The language of the art field reflects the sociocultural status of the people who are in it. When we were discussing one of our books with the Laundry Collective, an artist collective whose members have experienced homelessness and life on the streets, and we mentioned the term "sex worker," they had a fit of laughter. They asked us: Do you mean "hookers"? Once we invited a Romani activist, a working-class man from a small town, to a fundraising event in the capital to support the grassroots

initiative in which he was involved. Mainly young leftists had arrived at the event, and they were shocked by the language he used. To some of them, it seemed that the Romani activist was using the language of racist politicians.

In activist, academic, or art circles people are often very careful about the language they use with regard to the feelings and the right to self-determination of the people that they are addressing. They are wary about doing harm with words. The position from which I speak is certainly a factor in the use of language. It is certainly different if I use a potentially offensive word to describe my reality or to describe a reality I do not experience. However, communication is a dynamic process. (Mis)understanding is, first of all, subject to the situation and conditions in which we find ourselves. In certain situations, we tend not to want to understand others—for example, on social media or, in general, under conditions we find hostile to ourselves. In other situations—for example, in a face-to-face meeting or in a context that is facilitated toward understanding—it is more possible. Can we learn from this in the events or programs we organize?

In the art world, there should be a place for "hookers" and "sex workers," a place where people can communicate across class or other divides. In other words, in art there should be room for similar discussions and tensions. The language should be diverse. The worst thing is when there is only one language—the expert one which divides into the inside and the outside. It is OK not to understand and not to be understood, to make mistakes or be confused, but this misunderstanding should be a means, a portal, not a dead end. It is OK not to understand each other, but it should be our departure point on a search for new words and a new language, one that bridges over to others across differences.

Making/ Holding/ Giving Space



Cultivating relationships and trust requires not only creating spaces but also intentionally making, holding, and giving them. These three interconnected actions—Making Space, Holding Space, and Giving Space—are fundamental to our approach. This framework helps us foster inclusivity, encourage dialogue, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully. By defining these actions, we create a foundation for deeper engagement and collective growth.

Making Space involves creating opportunities for new experiences and ways of thinking to emerge, designing an environment where creativity can unfold freely. When we opened Galeria 17, we aimed to provide a platform for artistic experimentation and social engagement. However, without the funds to renovate the space, this vision seemed out of reach. It was only through a crowdfunding campaign—supported by artists, curators, activists, and citizens who believed in the power of art and dialogue to drive change—that we brought it to life. Their energy and commitment transformed Galeria 17 into a space for conversations reflecting the complexities of our shared social environment.

Building on this, we created Rezidenca 17, a hub for artistic practice, research, collaboration, and exhibition, located in Prishtina and housed in the former residence of Hivzi Sulejmani—a public building co-managed with the Municipality of Prishtina—offering studios and communal spaces designed for interdisciplinary engagement and renovated with hands-on support from the local community.

Holding Space is the next vital step in this process. Once space is made, it must be held. This means actively listening, being present, and ensuring that all participants feel heard, supported, and respected. It requires a deep commitment to fostering an atmosphere of trust, safety, and openness. In our exhibition Queer Ecology, holding space meant creating an environment where artists could work, experiment, and interact with the public without judgment or constraint. We designed the space so it could be as intimate as it was open, as personal as it was public. It served as a private workspace for artists, offering them the freedom to develop ideas, explore materials, and engage in critical reflection. At the same time, it remained open to the public at key moments—through scheduled visits, discussions, and interactive sessions—allowing audiences to witness and participate in the creative process. This transformation of the space encouraged a dynamic exchange between artists, theorists, ecologists, and community members, bridging artistic practice with environmental and social discourse. By shifting between personal and public modes, the gallery became more than just an exhibition space; it evolved into a working studio, a learning environment, and a site of collective engagement where artmaking became an act of shared inquiry.

Giving Space is about stepping back and allowing others to fully occupy the space with their voices, their stories, and their creativity. It's an act of opening the door and letting others walk through it, creating a shared environment where everyone feels empowered to contribute. At Shtatëmbëdhjetë, an independent cultural organization based in Prishtina, giving space means offering our venues and resources for both short-term and long-term use. Whether it is for a onetime event—a performance, a public talk, or a gathering—or for extended engagements such as artist residencies or collaborative working studios, we open our doors to anyone with something to share. In this way, we not only give space for creation but also for relationships to form and grow.

At Rezidenca 17, this philosophy takes shape through flexible offerings: Artists, activists, and community members can use the space for short-term needs like hosting a lecture or exhibition, but they can also take part in long-term residencies where they have the opportunity to engage deeply with their work and with each other. Similarly, at Galeria 17 the space provides artists and curators with the freedom to conceive, transform, and utilize the space according to their artistic and curatorial visions. This flexibility not only enhances the creative process but also facilitates and includes the audience in a shared experience of communication and growth.

Thus, through Making Space, Holding Space, and Giving Space, we create environments that are both physically secure and emotionally and intellectually enriching. This holistic approach to space serves as the foundation for building trust and lasting relationships among artists, researchers, activists, and community members who engage with our work. Our community includes creatives from diverse disciplines, theorists exploring new ideas, and citizens invested in social and environmental change—all coming together to foster dialogue, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Time/ Resources

When it comes to involving people in the processes of artistic creation and cultural work, the following question should also be considered: Who actually has time to participate? The answer to this question is related to the various motives that can lead someone to contribute their own valuable (free) time to a participatory artistic project or to take part in an art education activity. The exchange of knowledge can be a motive, behind which lies curiosity: I come to an unpaid activity in my free time hoping that I will go home richer in experience and knowledge. Friendly connections can be essential: I join the activity because I know people there with whom I feel connected and expect to have an enjoyable time. A mutual concern can be decisive: I absolutely have to participate in this activity; it is important to me to support the topic through my participation. And finally, financial compensation is a strong motive: Fair payment is offered for participating in an artistic endeavor, which can contribute to my finances.

The topic has come up again and again in our cultural practice with individual participants as well as with organized groups. The latter certainly follow different logics. It became really vivid and tangible in the context of a project with the organization Danaida, an education center and meeting place for women in our neighborhood. The association offers German courses and literacy courses and what is called “basic education,” aimed at migrant women.

This happened some time ago, but it still has an impact today. In 2012 our art center < rotor > proposed a collaboration with the Graz-based artist Maryam Mohammadi. She already had a lot of experience in working cautiously with women and had already thought about what could be done together with the women from Danaida’s courses. However, our friendly inquiry was met with an unexpected response: We’re sorry, we’re so busy with the learning content in our courses that we don’t have time for a collaboration with an artist.

After thinking it over, as the basic interest was there, we wanted to find out whether there might be a possibility for collaboration after all. The solution was to integrate the artistic project into the curriculum of the courses. It resulted in the touching project It's in the hands of women as part of the scheduled courses. In the end, 118 women contributed to the project by bringing along an object they had taken with them on their migration to Austria. The artist photographed the objects in the women's hands. As part of the learning program, the women were invited to talk about the meaning of their object, its personal history, and to describe it in a few sentences. The entire piece was later shown in an exhibition at the Graz Museum, which was visited by many of the participants.

Since then, Danaida's groups with their female course participants have been part of the "regular audience" of < rotor >. We always try to adapt to the needs and existing knowledge of the course participants and provide customized mediation. This was also the case with a workshop for Art Space Unlimited held by Nayari Castillo, a member of the group Forest Encounters. In the workshop a group of women exchanged different views regarding their understanding of a "forest." The participants wrote down their personal experiences of the forest, either in their native languages or in German, and these texts have become part of the collection Forest Encounters Glossary.

What does this story, which begins with a refusal, tell us about the time economy? Well, the NGO we were supposed to work with had a dense course program with clear objectives, and the participants were to be taught certain skills. There was no time for anything else. And the women who were taking part in these courses had their own schedules as well. Many of them were busy looking after children and organizing their daily lives on a tight budget. It would have been difficult for them to find time to work with an artist in addition to the intensive courses they were attending or to take advantage of the cultural program or mediation offerings of an art center on their own initiative. Due to the skillful integration of the contemporary art project into the course, this group of women was able to take part after all.

Reaching Communities

Creating spaces for communication and collaboration isn't just about providing a platform—it's about making sure everyone feels heard, valued, and like they're part of something meaningful. It's about being intentional in how we engage with people, ensuring that our interactions are genuine and not just about getting things done.

Rather than relying solely on formal invitations or public announcements, we prioritize personal engagement when organizing events in Prishtina or elsewhere. This approach ensures that even the voices of those who are often left out are heard and considered in shaping our work. By meeting people where they are—whether in their homes or in the places they frequent, such as community centers or local gatherings—we go beyond digital methods to build deeper connections and truly understand the needs of the community. This allows us to create more inclusive and impactful events.

This personal engagement shapes our work with key spaces like Galeria 17 and Rezidenca 17. From the beginning, Galeria 17 has been committed to involving the local community. In fact, the first group invited to the gallery were the local residents of the neighborhood near the space in Prishtina, who had the opportunity to experience the inaugural exhibition before anyone else. Since then, every exhibition is followed by an educational and outreach plan. This involves reaching out to schools, universities, and various nonprofit organizations and associations working on similar topics and inviting them to visit the gallery. Depending on the theme of each exhibition, we also invite teachers, lecturers, and students to hold classes, discussions, or reflections at the gallery. Additionally, we document and archive all the exhibitions in a 360-degree format, allowing groups who are unable to visit physically, due to various reasons, to experience the exhibition through VR technology.

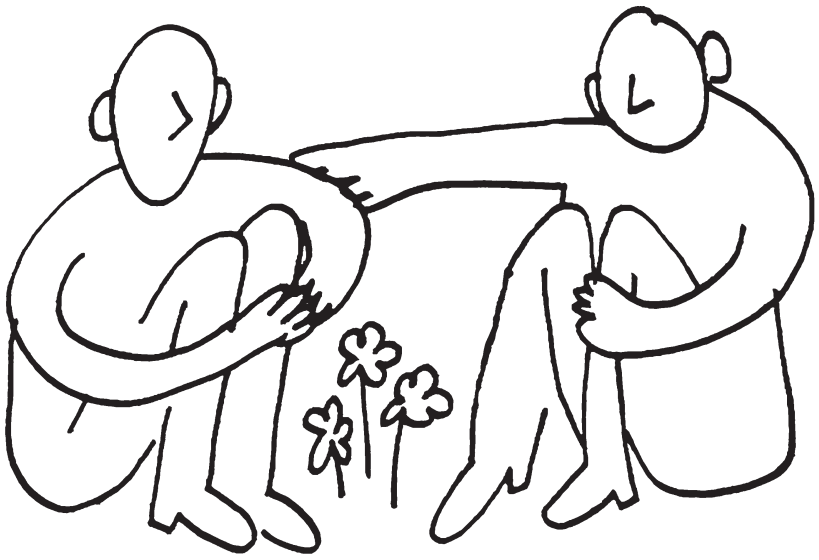
One of the most impactful moments of this engagement occurred when we introduced a VR exhibition to a group of students who had never experienced art in such an immersive way. Many of these students came from schools in Kosovo where exposure to new technologies was limited and opportunities for such experiences were rare, primarily due to a lack of infrastructure and the difficult conditions in many schools. Their excitement was contagious, with one student remarking, "I feel like I'm walking inside the space!" This experience demonstrated the power of new technologies to make art more accessible, particularly to those who might not have the opportunity to visit a traditional gallery due to their location or financial limitations.

Rezidenca 17 follows a similar philosophy in its development. From the outset, we engaged various groups in the restoration of this neglected public space—the former house of Hivzi Sulejmani, which is now home to Rezidenca 17—collaborating with NGOs and students of architecture, art, and design from public and private universities in Prishtina. Regular ongoing community meetings have been key to shaping the residency's programs and services to meet local needs. We have also been involving the neighborhood in the design of the outdoor space. To boost attendance and ensure diverse participation, we personally invite people, explaining our mission and encouraging them to join. This direct approach has led to more spontaneous participation and a broader range of voices in the conversation.

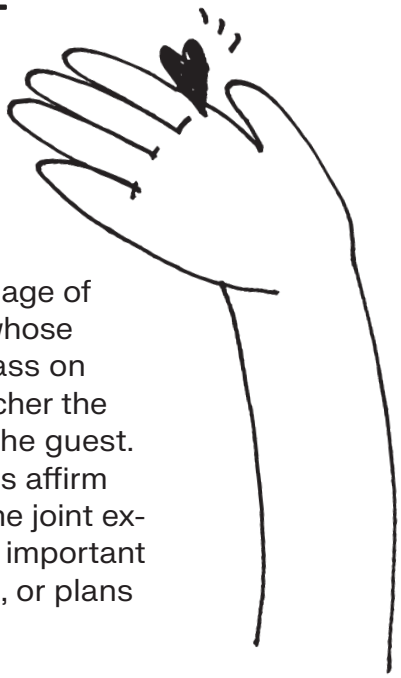
We also make it a point to go beyond the local neighborhood. One of our most important ongoing projects, Metamorphosis, focuses on uncovering the history and collective memory associated with abandoned buildings. In the context of Prishtina, many of these buildings are tied to the city's rapid urbanization and the sociopolitical upheavals that have shaped Kosovo over the past few decades. Following the war in the late 1990s and subsequent political transitions, Prishtina—like many post-conflict cities—has seen a mix of development, neglect, and dislocation. Abandoned buildings reflect this history of disruption and shifting communities. Through this project, we draw attention to the stories behind these buildings and invite the community to share their reflections. This initiative is accompanied by publications and exhibitions that document the contributions of local communities to preserving and interpreting their collective memory. Through Metamorphosis and other site-specific interventions, we literally knock on doors, inviting people to participate in research into collective memory. By engaging them in such research,

we not only create art but also ensure that their experiences and stories are part of the narrative. It's about bringing people into the conversation and making them feel that they have a stake in what's being created.

Through this personal outreach and collaboration, we create environments where communication leads to collaboration, and collaboration leads to transformation. This is how we bridge divides—between people, ideas, and opportunities—and create lasting, meaningful impact.



Hospitality



Hospitality draws and makes tangible a possible image of this world which for many is increasingly rare and whose encounter determines what we take with us and pass on to others. Hospitality is a resource that becomes richer the more we use it. And, of course, it is not just about the guest. Those who welcome guests and share what is theirs affirm and strengthen their own belonging and identity. The joint experience of sharing can be about everything that is important to us, be it traditions, customs and passions, ideas, or plans but also failures, fears, and experiences.

In 2020, OFF-Biennale was invited by the curators of documenta fifteen, ruangrupa, to participate in the lumbung community that was shaping the program for documenta. The lumbung, the name of which comes from the Indonesian word for a communal rice barn, had become the central metaphor and modus operandi of this edition of documenta: a space of hospitality. ruangrupa invited communities from all over the world to collaborate—thus subverting Western hegemony—and asked them to share their own agendas, commitments, and experiences of how they operate with each other and with the documenta audience and to create a radically different economic and collaborative mode of operation for the fifteenth edition of this prestigious event of the Western art world. Friendship became the basis for cooperation, and it was on the basis of these economics that the institutional framework of documenta was redesigned. Invitations gave rise to further invitations: The communities involved by ruangrupa were given the opportunity to invite others, thus unlocking the foundations of centralized functioning.

This is how OFF-Biennale Budapest was able to host a number of artists and artistic initiatives, redistributing and multiplying the resources offered to it. The first challenge to this radically new way of operating, which tested the concept of hospitality, was the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented face-to-face meetings and the possibility of getting to know each other on site and initiated more limited forms of hospitality through referrals. In Zoom talks, sometimes attended by hundreds of people, we made friends in ways we had never done before: We met online, played games, played music, and partied

to ease our bitterness and fears while trying to shape the framework for the next documenta and the foundations of a community that would work afterward as well.

It was noticeable that while for some, hospitality is a more culturally embedded gesture that defines everyday life, for others it is a learning process with which they can engage in very different ways.

This learning requires less of a formal education and more experience. Those who are hosted—and thus experience different ways of being welcomed and accepted—become more open to passing on these experiences. When we enter into someone's own environment—their "home"—we are welcomed not only by those people but by the entire milieu. In recognizing and understanding cultural differences, the multifaceted experience of being in the environment helps us to grasp the points of connection. We had a limited opportunity to do this as the sensory experience, the immediacy, and the nonverbal gestures came to us through an inhibiting medium (distance, meditation, time, and the uncertainty caused by Covid) that dampened the power of the messages.

We travelled in our heads, in front of monitors, and after many months, with the slow lifting of restrictions, when we could meet in small groups for the first time in Kassel, we looked for familiar faces behind the masks. Even with the end of the epidemic, there was still enough of a challenge; hospitality ran up against the strong walls of maintaining the status quo of big art shows. documenta could not transcend its own shadow, and many of those who came to visit left bitterly, even earlier than planned.

However, it also allowed us to experience many of the joys of being a guest and hosting guests, which opened up new perspectives beyond the given situations. Solidarity between communities was the main factor in ensuring that they did not return home with their heads down, as victims of the attacks that subverted the foundations of this edition of documenta. In response to the difficulties, it was important that they also had positive experiences, many strong commitments, responsibilities, and consolations. For OFF-Biennale, this visit brought new friends, allies, knowledge, and a number of themes, communities, and creators as well as the important feedback that the way of working that we have envisioned and lived is fundamental for many global partners, so we are not living naive dreams but rather another shared reality.

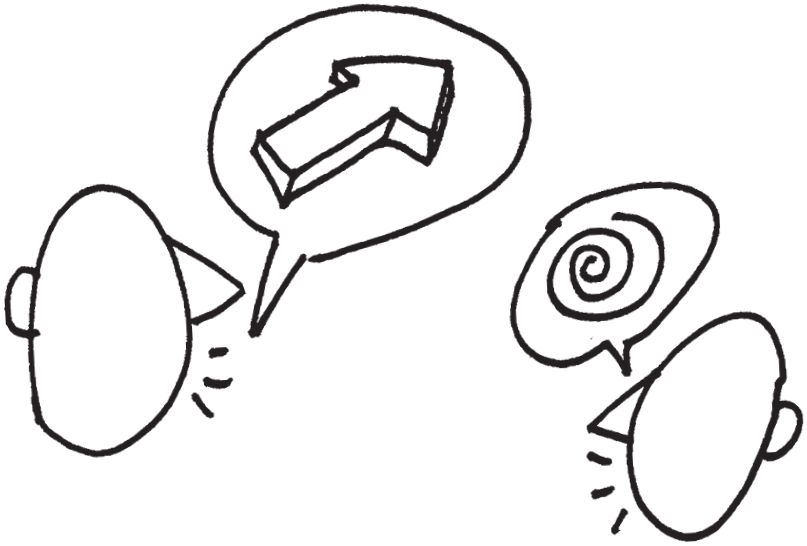
We were guests, and thanks to the generosity of our hosts, we were hosts ourselves—both in the stately rooms of the Fridericianum, brought to life by the lumbung school, and in the boathouse Ahoi! (another venue of documenta fifteen) on the banks of the Fulda, where in the framework of a project thematizing playgrounds we invited everyone who considers play a way of life.

The bridge we built with Recetas Urbanas (the Allesbrücke, the Everything-bridge), which led through the boathouse building into the realm of fantasy, was a tribute to the hospitality of the students of a local school. We invited them, and they welcomed us by letting us into not only their school but also their visions, the shortcomings they had experienced, as well as their ideas and plans. All of this was lifted to the sky by the Everything-bridge, whose life continued in the schoolyard even after documenta.

It was the generosity and trust of the host that opened up the possibility to invite our guests. And here the complex web of the host–guest relationship was revealed: As ruangrupa, our host, was already a guest in Kassel, we were their guests, while at the same time we were also guests of the city and of the local communities. After a while, it becomes difficult to follow who shares what resources, which of them they consider their own, and what privileges they recognize and renounce. The renunciation here does not mean loss but rather transmission and thus enrichment. Also, to a certain extent, it means letting go of their control over the process since this kind of trusting camaraderie, the escalation of hospitality, does not allow for the all-seeing control of the central gaze. With this freedom we were not only given opportunities but also a sense of responsibility for our guests, which, however, must not become a means of control and censorship, a means of diminishing the autonomy of the guest.

We came back from this trip with a lot of baggage—a lot of experiences, lessons learned, and also doubts—and the hospitality we experienced from the lumbung members, the artists, and the children, which we are committed to passing on, is perhaps the most important of all.

Navigating Differences



Between children, as well as between adults, communication requires work. Whether we are striving for understanding, for friendship, to set boundaries, or just to get a message across, this process requires care. It is important for us to help adults and kids from different social and cultural backgrounds work through it. The process of navigating differences is continuous and constant, even though it most often comes to light if a conflict arises. We asked Tereza Havlínková for an outside opinion on how to navigate differences. She photographed the creative camp for children The Great Land of Small, which took place in Prague, Czech Republic, in the summer of 2024 as part of the Biennale Matter of Art organized by tranzit.cz.

Tereza S.: Did you have any idea beforehand what you were going to photograph?

Tereza H.: I knew that it was a children's camp and that I was supposed to photograph group camp activities. I knew that there would be children from Prague and Ostrava, and I knew that the kids from Ostrava came to the camp as a group. But I was mainly worried about how I was going take pictures inside—what kind of light there would be and so on.

Tereza S.: It was actually three groups. There were the children from Prague 7, who were registered by their parents, then there were the children from Ostrava, who we got in touch with thanks to the TV Páteř collective, and then the Ukrainian children.

Tereza H.: Oh, I only noticed the difference between the children from Prague and the ones from Ostrava. The kids from Prague were brought to the site by their parents, but the kids from Ostrava came in a group, and it was clear that they were Romani and that their parents didn't come with them but the guides did. At first the guides didn't want me to take pictures. Even though they knew that I was with tranzit, I sensed a wariness and a fear for the children being photographed—a fear of exploitation or abuse if the photographs were published online. But at the same time, it didn't make sense to leave the Romani children out of the photo shoot. If I were to photograph everyone except the Romani kids, then I would just be excluding them too. But I understand that the women were responsible for the children, and so they were careful. But then the opposite happened. I quickly became the most interesting person there, and it was mainly the kids from Ostrava who were curious about me. They were drawn to the woman with the huge camera, and they thought it was funny to have their picture taken. I had to explain to them that I had to take pictures of the other people too. So, I went from trying to figure out whether it made sense to exclude the Romani children from the photo shoot to trying to avoid only taking pictures of this small group of kids the whole time. But even in the group from Ostrava there were kids who were more shy and who held back. But in general the interaction with the Ostrava kids was easier—they were more interested in me, they wanted to know what I was doing there, what I was photographing and how I was photographing it, where I lived, where I came from, and so on. They talked to me more.

Tereza S.: Was there anything else you noticed?

Tereza H.: What was revealed—as is the case in any similar learning space—was the background of each child: how much they were able to cooperate, to understand what was being asked of them. You could see that some children were used to similar activities and others less so. But the age and personality of each child can also play a role.

Tereza S.: How would you describe the relationships between the children?

Tereza H.: There was a language barrier. Some of the children were speaking Ukrainian—I think it was easier for them—and the others didn't understand that. I think in general the groups didn't intermingle much—except for one boy from Prague, who had great leadership ambitions and was trying to manage everybody there, so he communicated with everybody. He tried to give me tasks and control me too. :)

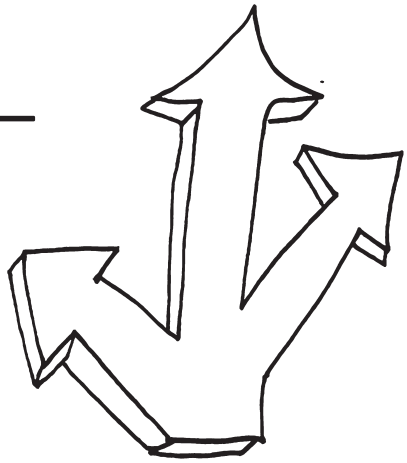
I have a heightened empathy for people who seem somehow disadvantaged in society. That's why I was especially worried about the kids from Ostrava. I was more maternal toward them, more watchful of how they were treated, how I treated them myself. But then I was upset that they started making fun of a girl from Prague who had short hair. They shouted at her that she was a lesbian, and they meant it as an insult. It seemed to me that this was something they didn't know what to do with, something they had never encountered, so they reached for something they had heard somewhere in the public space in connection with short-haired women. And in that way they decided to confront her with the fact that they found her weird. I felt that it wasn't my role to interfere in any way—after all, I was there to take pictures. But on a human level I felt it was wrong and that I should intervene. It's also because I have short hair myself, and I know how uncomfortable it is when people comment on it. It happens to you at thirteen as well as thirty, and men, women, and children all comment on it, so it's not the kind of attack that comes from a specific group of people. I saw it as an insult and an expression that these kids were somehow irritated by the way the girl looked. At that point, I switched back to empathy for someone who is facing an attack just because of the way she looks, which, I thought, is something the girl probably isn't even aware of. In the environment she's in, some Prague community, it's probably not that remarkable that she has short hair.

Tereza S.: As far as I know, it was the first time in her life she had heard the word lesbian, and she was very confused by their behavior. She didn't understand it. But she also told me that children in her school commented on her hair too and it wasn't so new to her.

Tereza H.: I sensed that she might be angry with someone who in turn had no tools to understand and realize what they were doing. You don't want to see anyone as a predator—you don't want to think of people as evil because you can trace where that type of misunderstanding probably arises. And you can't really do anything about it here and now.

And, furthermore, in your role you're not even in a position to relate or intervene, nor do you have the know-how to do so. You know it has to be handled somehow, but you're not the person in charge—I'm not prepared or trained for it. The situation reminded me of two documentaries I've seen: The Impossibility and Dajori. Both films are unbearable; they're about how people are faced with problems that are not in their power to solve. Both of those films are about Romani families, but they were made by white people. My situation was different; I didn't have to deal with the ethical issues that filmmakers do—I had a job and that was it. But as a non-Romani filmmaker, do you even have a mandate to portray such stories in cinema? You're interfering in someone else's life, forcing them to confront their situation, which maybe they don't even have the strength or capacity to do. What possibility do they have to represent themselves in an audiovisual production? I had all kinds of questions. Isn't this social engineering in the cultural sphere double-edged? Does it have the meaning and reach we would like? Is it not mutually unhelpful, sensitive, dangerous?

Intersec-tionality



To define the term intersectionality, we have translated an excerpt from La Escocesa's feminist protocol, which addresses gender-based violence, discrimination, and conflicts related to gender. It was written by Genera, an association that defends sexual and gender freedom and rights and specializes in feminist consultancy.

Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. It is a tool that allows us to analyze how structural oppressions intersect in a given social context. Its objective is to provide a more complex vision than an analysis focused only on one separate issue (such as focusing only on gender as the explanatory axis of everything), while at the same time serving to analyze the different forms of power dominance. Thus, intersectionality provides us with a perspective to understand how new social categories emerge and how inequalities and/or social advantages are formed at their intersections. This shows us where social actors are situated within power relations in specific sociohistorical contexts and how they have different points of view on different social issues.

- Intersectionality helps us understand how differences also configure trajectories of gradual exclusion/inclusion and are therefore established asymmetrically through systems such as patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, classism, racism, or ableism.

- What does intersectionality entail, and how can we work with it within an institutional or collective framework?

- Take into account which axes of domination emerge as relevant in cases of violence or harassment. It is not about locating intersectionality in the people but rather about paying attention to how different structural factors affect the case, such as sexism, classism, racism, or citizenship status (origin and administrative situation), among others.

- Understand and address vulnerability by focusing not only on the person but mainly on the structures that generate the specific vulnerability of gender, race, sexuality, or health and their relationship with the rest of the power structures.

- Understand that the way in which interventions and services are proposed, as well as the way of understanding violence and women's recovery path, is socially and materially situated and often responds to criteria established according to the needs of women whose situation is viewed as "normal" (usually the most privileged).

- Pay special attention to the accessibility of your services, learn about material and symbolic barriers, and think about the necessary actions to approach those most at risk.

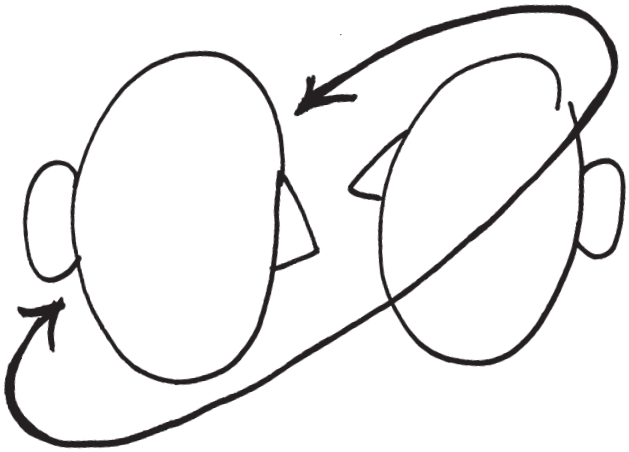
- Understand the need to analyze violence in intersectional terms, especially in relation to the economic conditions, housing, and administrative situation experienced by those who suffer violence.

- Make sure you acknowledge all the factors that may be affecting the person being cared for (such as public services that are failing them due to prejudices, fear of police presence due to lack of legalized administrative status, etc.).

- When focusing on one person, take into account what intervention strategies may reproduce existing power relations. It is necessary that the tools we develop are not built on harmful patterns of systemic violence but create space for agency and empowerment.

The feminist protocol aims to be a tool for transformation and social change, not only in relation to specific situations that may arise at La Escocesa but also for any cultural agent promoting the ideas of feminist and transformative justice. This approach allows, on the one hand, for any affected individual to be placed at the center of the intervention and, on the other, for the defense of principles we consider the most ethical and beneficial for individual care and social and community transformation.

Alliances



Whether you are an artist, a cultural worker, or an art institution, you cannot go far on your own. And certainly not if you are active in participatory, socially committed projects. In order to pursue your goals, it is advisable to enter into new alliances constantly. These can be alliances with like-minded people or deliberately complementary positions. Alliances are formed for different time spans; some simply last until the project is completed, while others develop over longer periods of time, perhaps with an open end. In any case, alliances require attention and need to be nurtured.

If you are the one who initiates an alliance, there is a good chance that you fully share the goals. However, if you are invited to participate in an alliance, many more questions arise, and you have to clarify whether the objectives are compatible with your own approaches and values. Another issue is how much of your own time and energy you are willing or able to contribute.

As this is a topic where we really wanted to examine the perspectives of several allies, we decided to explore this term with multiple voices. This is an excerpt from a longer conversation between Ajete Kezqeli from Foundation 17, Anton Lederer from < rotor >, and Tereza Stejskalová from tranzit.cz on the topic of alliances.

Ajete: When it comes to alliances, we approach them with a sense of balance, ensuring we are neither fully immersed nor completely detached. We aim to stay engaged enough

to understand the dynamics but also maintain the necessary distance to retain clarity and perspective. We see our alliances as a long-term, stable framework that provides mutual support over time. While we are always ready to respond in times of urgency, we remain committed to keeping a broader, more strategic view. As a foundation, we seek to collaborate with groups that are proactive—those who act with intention, anticipating needs rather than simply reacting. Given the complexity of our responsibilities, we try to be mindful of the risk of burnout as it can impact our ability to contribute meaningfully and sustain our efforts.

Anton: We were now speaking about more complex alliances with lots of players and long-term development. This is different from our joint project, Art Space Unlimited, which has a certain time frame. The activity takes place and then it is over. But these alliances we are speaking about—we never know in the beginning how long they will actually last. I think, for instance, that the alliance against the far right might be needed for a very long time. Then you have to consider your personal investment, how much you can contribute—not to be present just for a month but maybe for years.

Tereza: I have an image of what both of you are speaking about; it is the metaphor of the absent father. The absent father is not there, but then he suddenly shows up, brings all these presents, fulfills all these wishes, is a lot of fun, but then he gets tired quite quickly and disappears for a very long time, maybe forever. Meanwhile, the mother is there constantly, and she is not so much fun; she is quite strict and has clear boundaries of what she can do for you, but she is there.

Anton: Am I the mother?

Tereza: Yes, because you now contribute only in small ways perhaps, but you are a reliable presence—people know that you will be there long-term.

Ajete: I view alliances as dynamic partnerships. Each party brings its own unique perspective and priorities, but there is a shared foundation that continually draws us back together for long-term collaboration. Temporary partnerships, while valuable, can be a step toward building stronger, more enduring alliances. True alliances go beyond a single goal or immediate reaction, focusing on sustained cooperation over time.

Anton: A friend of mine, the artist Isa Rosenberger from Vienna, speaks about “temporary alliances.” This is a strategy

she developed in her collaborative projects with women. She says that with some of the women she might become friends after the project, and maybe they do something again. Such temporary alliances last a couple of months, maybe a year, and then you have an outcome. But then it may continue and a temporary alliance may become a long-term alliance. Once, we invited a feminist center here in town for an artistic project. Back then we could not speak of an alliance, but now we have been very close to this institution for many years, and so in the end it turned out to be some kind of alliance. In other cases we invite people for a collaboration and nothing happens afterwards, for various reasons.

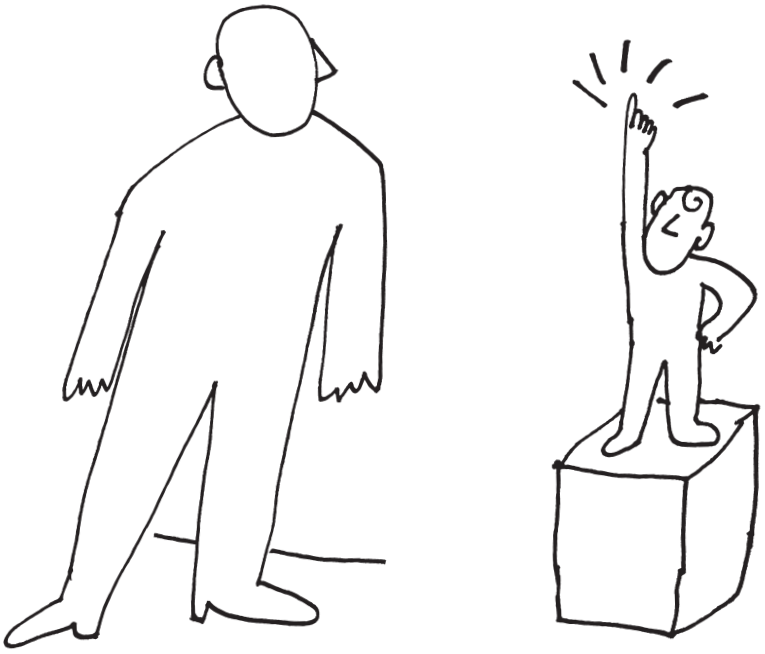
Tereza: How strict should we be in our alliances? Should we always stick to our core values, or should we be more flexible? Do you see differences between alliances with people from the art field and people from other fields?

Anton: There may exist a certain kind of unconscious tension with colleagues from the field of culture, especially with those working in the same city. We operate in the same field, we access the same resources and funds, we share part of the audience. I try hard to overcome this atmosphere, but it is sometimes present. When I was a young cultural worker, I felt it more; the tension used to be quite high, but in recent times it has gotten much better. The younger generations show more solidarity and believe more in alliances. Collaborating in alliances with organizations from other fields—like from education or youth, culture or migration—entails many advantages. You are more curious about each other, and there is the very feeling that you learn more from each other.

Tereza: Well, you know the field you are operating in, but you may not know so much about other fields. In the cultural field you may take things for granted or assume things. In other fields, it is a process of learning. You learn about how it is elsewhere; you listen and learn and do not assume so much.

Ajete: What truly matters is the shared urgency and commitment behind the alliance. If the goal is a top priority for both sides, then the field we come from—whether art or another sector—becomes secondary. What drives the collaboration is the shared determination to act.

Against Adult-Centrism



Children are a different generation; to be with them is to be present as such a generation is born. No one today has a recipe for how to equip children for life in a world that is spiraling out of control—how to better equip them for a future that is completely in the mist. Perhaps today we have no choice but to listen and be influenced by the children themselves. This idea is not new; in fact, it was central to two radical twentieth-century institutional and pedagogical experiments in our region—Janusz Korczak's children's home in Warsaw and the postwar Gaudiopolis Republic for war orphans in Budapest. Both of these initiatives also sought the emancipation of children by publishing children's newspapers, which children themselves contributed to and organized. These publications were a way for children to communicate their own visions, ideas, and attitudes to other children and adults. Giving children a public space to express themselves in whatever way they saw fit was emancipatory for both the children and the adults in these initiatives. These were attempts to challenge the traditional dynamic between adults and children. The following conversation follows in the same spirit. In it, my ten-year-old daughter interviewed her friends, showing how children's voices can still offer insight into their world today.

N (age 10): What do you think liberation is for children?
Ni (age 7): First, there would be no school. Second, we wouldn't have to be ordered around by our parents. Third, we would have everything for free—but only the children, not the adults. Toys would be free, but not for adults. There would be no homework.
N: What school subject do you like the least?
Ni: Czech.
N: What would be instead of school?
Ni: Vacation. And after the vacation, more vacation.
N: And what would you do during your vacation?
Ni: I'd be bored on vacation, I'd be lying down somewhere. And if it wasn't possible and there had to be some school, at least we should be able to choose the subjects, and there would be no homework. We could take Czech, for example. And there could be a break during the class.
N: And about the toys—what would you do if your parents wanted free stuff too?
Ni: I'd have it all for free and I could give it to them.

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N: J, what would freeing the kids mean to you?
J (age 7): It would be liberation for me if there was no school, no homework. There would be vacation all year round, and we could have the toys we want, the rooms we want—everything for free. Or school would only be on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. And the vacation would be a bit longer, maybe four months—June, July, August, September.
N: And what would you do on your vacation?
J: I would go to my friends', go on trips, go to castles, museums, the theater, visit my grandmothers, and celebrate my birthday.
N: And what toy would you want if you could have any toy?
J: A parrot doll. I had a bird and its head broke off.
N: And what is your least favorite subject?
J: Math.

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N: L, what do you think children's liberation would look like?
L (age 8): Everyone would take the children from the orphanage home, and they would get enough money and food. They would belong to families again and have things that would make them happy. The children would be able to learn what they want. The teachers would ask the children, "Children, what do you want to learn today?" And the children would choose for themselves.

N: So you would like to go to school, but you would like to choose your own subjects. And what is your least favorite subject at school?
L: Probably Czech.
N: Does the liberation of children mean anything else for you?
L: The poor would get money. Things that are too expensive would be banned because there are kids who can't have them, and then they're too sad. Like, what if you want to go to an amusement park and sleep there, and it would cost a hundred thousand, and some of the poor want to go?
Oh, no! I wouldn't want us to be jealous. I'd also like it if adults had respect for children—they wouldn't be mean to them. They should be very nice to them. I wish there were no more thieves.
N: What would it look like if your parents treated you better?
L: I like the way they treat me now. They are nice to me, but they are also strict. Kids can't be spoiled; they should wash the dishes sometimes too. It doesn't have to be just the parents who do it.

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N: V, what would the liberation of children mean to you?
V (age 8): Outside of school, outside of everything, I hate everything. I don't like Czech, I don't even like math. I like gym and breaks—that's it. I don't like anything else at school. I would like to travel instead of school.

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N: T, what does the liberation of children mean to you?
T (age 4): I wouldn't go to kindergarten. That's probably the worst thing in the world.
N: You don't enjoy it there?
T: No.
N: What would be instead of kindergarten?
T: The kindergarten would be demolished by a giant concrete ball.
N: And what would you do if you didn't go to kindergarten?
T: I'd buy a very powerful monster-dragon on my dad's phone and play it.
N: You'd play monsters on your phone all day?
T: I don't know. I've run out of ideas.

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K (age 14): I wish the adults would start to trust kids. They should stop saying they're just little kids with too much imagination.

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Ni: N, and for you?
N: I'd like two years of vacation. And I'd like us to have everything for free. So we could buy whatever we want. I'd like to be able to paint on the walls of my room—I'd really like to paint my room.
T (age 43): And what would happen after two years of vacation?
N: Then there would be another vacation.
T: So it would be an endless vacation?
N: Yeah, that would be great.
T: And what would your day look like?
N: I would wake up, brush my teeth, have breakfast, get dressed, and then maybe go out with my friends. We'd go to Gutovka park, where we'd play. Then we'd go home and have lunch...
T: And who would cook it for you?
N: Mom and dad. Then we could go for bubble tea with my parents, and then we could go for a walk.
T: And your parents wouldn't work then?
N: No, they wouldn't work because money would be raining down from the sky.
T: Cool. And what would they do?
N: They'd spend more time with us kids. We'd go to the disco in the evening and dance and then go to bed. But we could also go somewhere. We could travel.
T: Where would you like to go?
N: Italy, Germany, Vietnam, or Japan

The interview was originally published as part of the article "For Adults to Start Trusting Children. Educating Children for Liberation in an Unfree World." in the online feminist magazine Druhá : směna (www.druhasmena.cz). The text is published with the kind permission of the magazine's editors.

Prefiguration

Prefiguration is a social practice in which various civil organizations and political and social movements not only seek to change the existing institutional system but also live the imagined world of the future in the present. They are not drawing up a distant utopia but weaving into the fabric of everyday life the principles and structures they wish to live by. The desired world is not a goal to be achieved but a reality in the making.

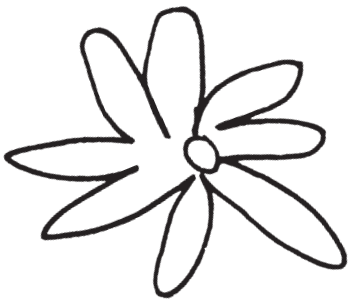
Imagine a garden that you are building for the future—one in which plants that are adaptable to environmental changes and tolerant of extreme weather conditions live and survive. To create a garden, we need to take a piece of nature and transform it according to our own imagination. By enclosing it, we create not only a physical but also a symbolic boundary between nature and our manmade environment. We build a world of our own inside the fence, linked to the outside world by a thousand invisible strands: the communication between microorganisms in the soil and the roots of plants reminds us that the link between garden and nature—between the outside world and the inside world—does not cease with the enclosure. The garden is (like) a playground—a place where an imaginary world and reality meet. Both are a kind of world model, the rules of which can be shaped according to what we think about the world and ourselves in it or how we imagine that world. It is a fantasy space where everything is as real as it is unreal but still a little different. Can we look at the garden as a model of prefigurative organizational functioning that is sensitive to the social and environmental changes around it, where the living world, relying on its internal laws, realizes practices of resilience, cooperation, and solidarity?

Since its foundation in 2014, OFF-Biennale Budapest has attached importance to themes such as freedom, play, community-building, democracy, solidarity, and the independence of creative work. Using prefiguration as an operating strategy, it works to develop a model where it challenges existing social norms, entrenched mechanisms that tend to compromise, and plans for the future, which it does by building from the

present despite an uncertain institutional environment. It is searching for practices regarding how to imagine things differently.

The OFF-Playground, built as part of the project WHATIFS AND WHYNOTS: OFF-Playground at documenta fifteen in Kassel in 2022, while creating the conditions for a shared adventure, was also a serious experiment. It experimented in prefigurative politics by believing that, within the fence, a playground of spaces, practices, and thoughts proposed by the artists—an interlocking web of interactions—can be created not by transcending reality but in fact with the intention of creating reality by turning a dream into an experience. By creating an "imaginary" space and doing our thing in it, we offer others the opportunity either to take their place in it or to create new islands, spaces of their own. We can hope that these islands will one day be connected. The rules of the game create common ground, and we hope that like-minded people will join us. OFF "plays" institutionally through various curatorial and artistic projects and visions, through social collaborations. We behave as if we were a large-scale, international art institution with a solid financial and human resource base and a supportive environment. We "perform" and "prefigure" an independent institution whose strongest capital is in this shared vision.

Prefigurative politics, as in the case of the playground and the garden, are used to bridge the gap between "imagination and realization," which is to try to build an imagined future change in a small, model-like way, here and now. However, this always-on, imagination-alert mode inevitably gets tiring at times, and the engine slows down. The contours of the vision fade, and the imagination is exhausted. To recharge the batteries, it is essential that the individual ideas—the little islands—not only move toward something but also hold together. So that the flowering of the garden is not only noticed and felt by a narrow circle but also by others. So that people peering curiously (or suspiciously) from the outside world enter this world. At the very least, this requires that as many of us as possible imagine a garden and see it as a strategic tableau tailored to the everyday world, which, even if it takes small steps, can set up tangible alternatives to the current system.



Emotional Labor

In the contemporary art world, there is a tension between artmaking and caregiving. tranzit.cz is a feminist institution that is dedicated to supporting individuals with caregiving responsibilities. The aim is to create an environment where artmaking remains possible despite the demanding realities of parenting. This exploration delves into the complex dynamics that unfold when artistic ambition collides with the practicalities of family life, shedding light on the emotional burdens that often accompany such endeavors. There is a toll this can take on both artists and institutions, revealing the urgent need for structural solutions.

Imagine that, as an institution, you are collaborating with an artist who has a two-year-old child and a baby. The artist is coming for a month-long residency; however, since her two-year-old child is staying at home with her partner, she divides the residency into shorter periods. Her residency consists of a series of meetings, for which she needs a production assistant—someone to help her coordinate the appointments. She also needs childcare for the baby. The artist usually comes for the weekend, but she often cancels her trip at the last minute. This is a problem for the production support as they are not able or flexible enough to change plans quickly. You quickly look for someone else, but then both the curator and the artist get nervous because that person needs to be briefed, which is extra work. The production assistant is frustrated because he is constantly booking train tickets and canceling them again, booking and canceling accommodations. The whole project is more demanding than it initially seemed. The artist's children are constantly ill, and then she herself falls ill. She misses deadlines, she's nervous and upset. As the project grows, she delegates any extra work to the production assistant—which is beyond the agreed terms—because she doesn't have the capacity herself but at the same time she cares very much about the project and wants it to be the best. One day she comes to Prague with her baby, who has a cold. The artist is nervous that it's not just a common cold.

She wants to go to the emergency room, but of course she needs someone to accompany her, an interpreter. It's Friday afternoon and the team of the institution has other plans for the evening. They already feel that they are supporting the artist completely beyond their means, and the artist doesn't show much appreciation—after all she hasn't slept for months. I too have other plans, but unlike my colleagues, I am also a mother. I know what it means when you have a sick child in a foreign country. I go with her. We spend several hours in the emergency room among sick and crying children. The nice doctor says it's just a common cold. It's late in the evening, and we're both completely exhausted, so I take her home. I know we've formed a friendship and she's very grateful to me. My partner and my children aren't so enthusiastic.

The artist is successful and ambitious. This isn't the only project she's working on. She has two small children, both under three, but she wants to work like she used to, or as much as she used to. And why shouldn't she? It's her right.

I'm exhausted from this collaboration, and so is everybody else. The artist is, of course, completely drained. And I think about the fact that taking care of babies and small children generates extra work, and the extra work is thrown around like a hot potato. No one has the time and energy. We are a feminist institution, we want to cooperate with parents with small children. We organize childcare, we rent bigger apartments for residents, we buy extra train tickets. Even if the grants don't have a category for it, we're creative—we always find a way. But when it comes to sick kids and ambitious and demanding projects, even we're stuck.

Feminist theories of care say that care should be distributed fairly in society; however, that is not the way things are, so it falls to one person or a few people, who may or may not have their own resources—and if they don't, then tough luck. They cannot make art or they fall on their faces and suffer physically and mentally.

The experiences of artists and institutions navigating the challenges of parenthood highlight a critical gap in the art world's support systems. tranzit.cz endeavors to form an environment conducive to art and care, yet the reality of managing artistic projects amid the demands of childcare exposes the limitations of current institutional frameworks. Until systemic changes are implemented to address these disparities, both artists and institutions will continue to grapple with the burdens of unrecognized labor, risking burnout and undermining the very creativity they seek to nurture.

Anti-Ableism

Anti-ableism refers to active opposition to ableism and the practices, attitudes, and structures that perpetuate discrimination against individuals with disabilities. It encompasses a commitment to recognizing and addressing the systemic barriers they face, advocating for their rights, and promoting inclusivity and equity. Anti-ableism seeks to dismantle the social, cultural, and institutional systems that privilege able-bodied individuals while marginalizing those with disabilities.

Anti-ableism also aligns with the principles of crip theory, a critical framework that challenges normative assumptions about disability and embodiment. It critiques societal expectations of "normalcy" and celebrates disability as a site of cultural, political, and personal significance[1]. By embracing crip theory, anti-ableism moves beyond merely accommodating disabilities to actively questioning and restructuring the systems and ideologies that enforce ableist norms. Crip theory advocates for a reimagining of societal values, emphasizing interdependence, accessibility, and the celebration of diverse embodiments.

La Escocesa, in collaboration with artists Hac Vinent and Tatiana Antoni Conesa, has developed a series of concrete accessibility measures and undertaken staff training to make sure they could be implemented. This process has meant a significant change for the institution and beyond, fostering a shift in mindset regarding participation and diversity in the arts. These measures highlight the importance of slowing down, using accessible language, and integrating flexible participation methods for public activities. It also emphasizes the necessity of proactive planning, such as providing accessibility request forms, ensuring clear communication, and fostering collective care practices.

If participation in cultural spaces is currently a privilege, then we must ask: Who is being left out, and why? Accessibility should be the default, not a special request. True accessibility is not just about ramps and language interpreters. Creating accessible spaces requires not only rethinking their content, programming, and institutional approaches to inclusion but also putting them into practice.

1 It is also relevant to highlight the intersectionality of disability and queerness, emphasizing how both challenge hegemonic structures of power and normativity (see Robert McRuer, Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability). Alison Kafer expands on this in her book Feminist, Queer, Crip by proposing a political and relational model of disability that prioritizes coalition-building and social justice.

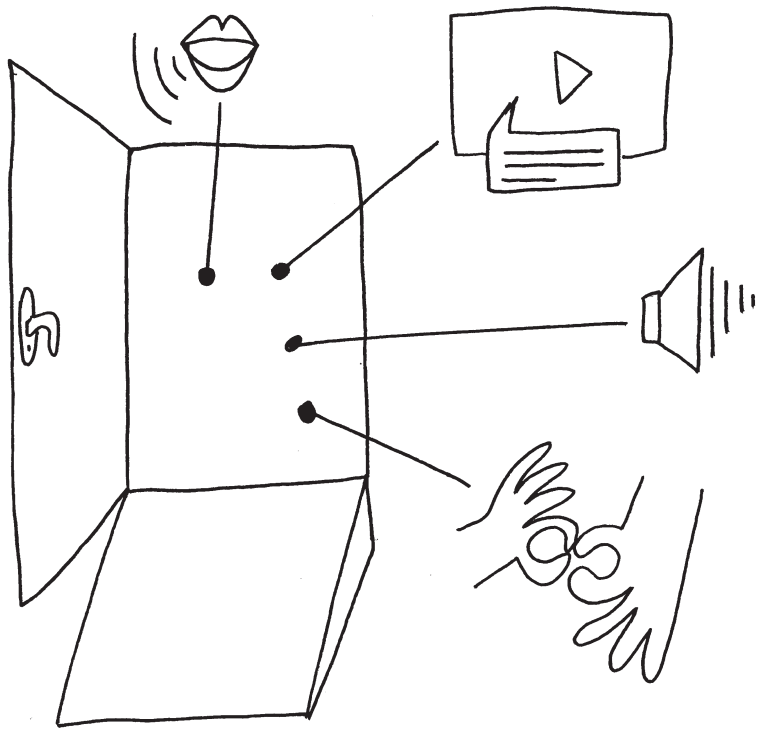
Some considerations for making activities more accessible:[2]

- Use clear and simple language in all communication materials and throughout the activity, avoiding academic jargon to ensure inclusivity across different social realities.
- Avoid presumptions. Many simple accessibility measures are overlooked because we assume that all bodies and needs conform to a single standard.
- Provide a form where participants can indicate specific accessibility needs prior to a visit or activity to allow necessary adaptations. If registration is not required, an email address should be provided in the event's communication materials so that individuals can contact the team.
- Present the activity and explain its structure so that participants can set personal boundaries and decide their level of engagement. A pre-event meeting can be offered for individuals who need to familiarize themselves with the space or discuss upcoming dynamics.
- Design activities with flexible participation levels, allowing attendees to engage in different ways. Remain open to modifying the structure to ensure participation.
- Offer the opportunity to address the group before the activity begins in case anyone wishes to explain their situation. Support should be provided if needed.
- Facilitate a respectful and inclusive group dynamic, ensuring that all accessibility requirements are honored. Provide additional assistance, if needed, with designated team members.
- Avoid infantilization, overprotection, and pity. Treat adults as adults. For example, when interacting with a deaf person and their interpreter or if someone is accompanied by a personal assistant, address the individual directly, not the interpreter/assistant.
- Always ask if you're unsure about how to provide assistance or accommodate certain needs.
- Clearly communicate available accessibility measures in all promotional materials. Since most activities are not inherently accessible, individuals with functional diversity may not assume inclusivity unless explicitly stated.
- Describe images posted on social media. This can be done using the "alt text" feature or by including a written description in the post.
- Provide subtitles and/or audio descriptions for videos posted online or screened during an activity.
- Include content warnings for potentially distressing themes, allowing individuals to make informed choices about their exposure.

2 This is an excerpt from the internal work and practices implemented at La Escocesa. For more information, visit our website: https://laescocesa.org/en/La%20Escocesa/accessibility.

Some examples of accessibility measures for institutions and activities:

- Access ramps
- Spacious elevators (if the building is multistory)
- Wide, navigable hallways
- Accessible restrooms
- Seating with backrests
- Sign language interpretation and space for lipreading (reserved seating near speakers)
- Live captioning and subtitled videos
- Audio descriptions for visual content
- Good sound quality in the space
- Adequate lighting
- Clear and loud articulation (without shouting or exaggerating pronunciation)
- Providing texts in advance for talks or readings
- Structured turn-taking with a moderator
- Adapting materials to digital and easy-to-read formats
- Projected text with high contrast, large fonts, and paragraph divisions
- Tactile or color-coded indicators for navigation
- Quiet rest areas
- Clearly stated event duration, dynamics, and expected number of attendees
- Virtual participation option
- Facilitate access for parents, caregivers, and children by providing separate play areas and baby changing stations.
- Clearly indicate whether an activity is child-friendly or not.



Self-Empowerment

The process of empowerment is about supporting a person or group in such a way that they eventually manage to stand on their own two feet. In terms of the artistic and cultural field, the aim of an empowering process should be to enable the person or group to continue an initiative or an artistic or cultural project under their own power. If this process happens on its own initiative and entirely or largely under its own steam, then the word self-empowerment is appropriate.

At the beginning of serious support for an empowerment process, regardless of whether it is initiated from outside or started by the empowerers themselves, there is a commitment. Namely, it is the will not only to communicate the methods of artistic and cultural practice but also to share access to the available resources and to pass on the know-how acquired through practice and experience for independent action. One should not be afraid of providing too much information or passing on too much knowledge and even becoming superfluous at the end of the day. For if people not only learn a skill but are also able to take responsibility for their own actions, then it is only logical that they will ultimately no longer need the “instructors.”

When the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine broke out in February 2022, together with tranzit.at in Vienna and the Künstler*innenhaus Büchsenhausen in Innsbruck as well as the Austrian Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service, and Sport, < rotor > in Graz launched Office Ukraine – Shelter for Ukrainian Artists. From that moment on, numerous artists and cultural workers from various artistic disciplines found a safe place to stay in Austria. The team at Office Ukraine in Graz provided support to displaced persons, primarily in the Graz area and in the province of Styria, assisting them in finding accommodations, dealing with administrative issues, and coping with everyday life. The longer-term goal was and is to connect the new artists living in the city and province with the local art and culture scene and to make it easier for them to access all the services and programs offered by public bodies and independent organizations.

So-called Open Houses were organized almost every fourteen days, alternating between < rotor > and various other institutions from the fields of art and culture, social affairs, health, labor, and so on. Experts from the respective fields reported on their activities and revealed the working methods of Austrian organizations and institutions. For example, the participants of the open houses were able to familiarize themselves with the logic of the institutional landscape, the structure of funding opportunities, and the processes involved in setting up their own institutions or starting their self-employed artistic activity in Austria. The majority of the activities were aimed at making it easier for new members of the Graz and Styrian art scene to start their everyday lives as artists and cultural workers.

At the time of writing, the full-scale war in Ukraine has been going on for three years, and Office Ukraine has been in existence for just as long. There is no end in sight for the war, but a new perspective is emerging for Office Ukraine Graz. For a few months now, the Ukrainian art community in Graz has been creating its own place for art production and presentation, called ZIEGEL. And Office Ukraine Graz can consider itself fortunate to have accompanied and logistically supported a project from the very beginning that is based on the self-organization of its Ukrainian colleagues within the Austrian art and cultural landscape. And perhaps the ZIEGEL project will develop in a direction in which the activities of Office Ukraine Graz could flourish. The future will show whether this vision has been fulfilled.

(Un)learning

Unlearning is the ability to think and act differently, to leave behind routines and ways of knowing that are fixed and often prevent us from moving on or adapting to new situations. It does not mean forgetting but rather letting go of previously acquired knowledge and experience. Since learning is usually a long and complex process, so is unlearning. The certainty of the familiar is replaced by the uncertainty and risk of the unknown, but the perspective of new experience—the possibility of change and transformation—reinforces this challenging process.

OFF-Biennale is a self-organized civil collective, born in 2014–15 as a response to a crisis situation. The centralization of the Hungarian state art institutions, their political exposure, and their distance from professionalism made it impossible for many of us to continue to imagine our work within this framework. We therefore started something radically different despite not really knowing where to start, how to organize ourselves, how to become a responsible and self-identified community that would bring together and amplify critical voices, new ways of working together, and new spaces for doing things differently. We rode the bike while we were fixing it, we used to say.

By this time, some of us had considerable professional experience, having done projects here and there, but the strongest foundation of our knowledge and experience came from our institutional work—years spent in museums, galleries, universities. For all their difficulties, internal tensions, and increasing financial insecurity, most institutions still provided a strong knowledge base and predictability—a base from which we

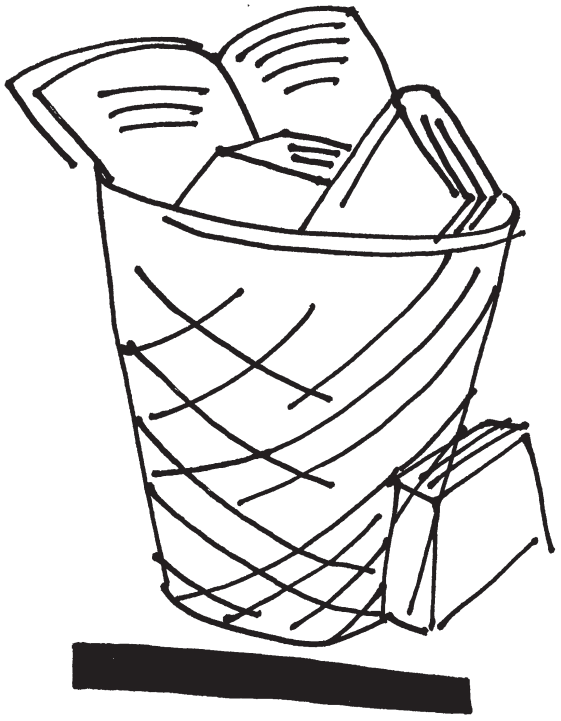
could push ourselves. The institutions' operations were fairly fixed, with certain rules laid down in advance, and flexibility and change were confined within invisible frameworks. We did a lot of adapting, and we learned to do it because, from an early age, adapting to institutions was a basic condition for survival.

When the political climate in the country became increasingly difficult, when the representation of the values we cherished became institutionally impossible, when systemic repression became more widespread, we tried to imagine a different reality. And not only to imagine it but to live it and to transmit it. To pretend. As if it were possible to build an international biennial on our own, without secure resources and infrastructure. We pretended and so we built it together. It worked, but to do so—as we realized in the process, sometime later—we had to let go of a lot of knowledge and experience, to recognize and stop the habits that presupposed the existence of a framework above us giving us a sense of security and a sense of being bound, because we were now drawing the framework ourselves, often anew. We have learned a lot from our institutional work; we have been efficient, disciplined, and strict with ourselves, but now we have not moved forward along these lines. We have abandoned, among other things, the state and municipal support that was previously taken for granted and are starting to work on a new funding structure based on international cooperation and (to a lesser extent) the still weak but emerging domestic private support system. We have had to learn anew how to work as a community in the making, to develop forms of decision-making, a delicate and sensitive system of cooperation in which we move without dominance, in many different ways, with detours and dead ends but in one direction.

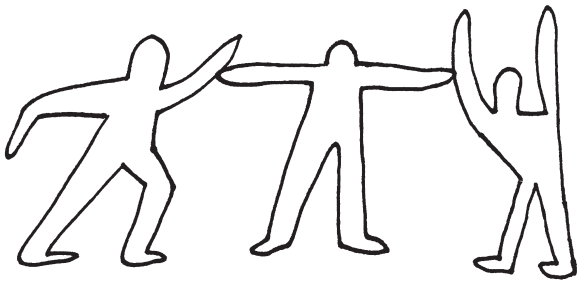
In the context of a women's collective such as OFF-Biennale Budapest, learning also means critically examining and rejecting the norms and practices that maintain patriarchal structures and recognizing and accepting women's different life experiences. Community functioning presupposes listening to and understanding each other's stories and accepting differences in identity. This small thread from many sides is woven together in collective learning. The balance of learning is not negative; knowledge is not lost, but it is shifted, translated, transformed.

This process has been going on for a decade. We cannot say that we have arrived somewhere, but we cannot say that we have not. Although we ourselves perhaps would not have thought it, not only have many aspects of institutional knowledge had to undergo a process of unlearning but so too have many of the ways of working that we have developed ourselves. Even after many years, we are still learning again and again how to cooperate, how to communicate, how to adapt, and how not to adapt. And all to our own detriment and delight. And there is still more to unlearn.

Without long-term funding, a stable organizational base, and legal certainty, NGOs' resources are the personal commitments without which change will not happen but which are not necessarily enough to reinforce change. When we think of a seemingly secure background, we no longer think of institutional networks but rather of the alliances based on professional work, solidarity, and friendships that we have built up over the past decade. And this is a background which, it should be added, is constantly threatened precisely because we place too great of a burden on it. We set expectations for ourselves that lead to self-exploitation, burnout, and exhaustion, consuming personal and community resources. Perhaps this is yet another habit that we will have to unlearn to sustain ourselves.



Facilitate to De-Escalate



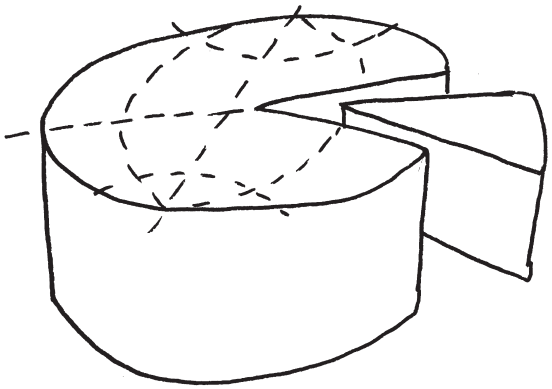
In any environment in which a group of people are collaborating, conflict is a natural occurrence. Whether in work collectives, community discussions, or educational settings, differing opinions, personalities, or worldviews lead to tension. However, all of that does not have to be detrimental. This is where the role of a facilitator becomes relevant. A facilitator's objective is to make sure that all participants feel heard while guiding the group toward common goals, aims, and paths.

Disagreements are a natural part of group dynamics. Facilitators can prevent conflicts by supporting a culture of active listening, encouraging participants to understand each other's perspectives before jumping to conclusions. When misunderstandings occur, a facilitator can clarify or summarize positions to prevent misinterpretations and enable mutual respect. By identifying common ground and clearly articulating areas of disagreement, facilitators can help participants remain focused on shared objectives rather than differences. In instances where emotions run high, a facilitator can de-escalate tension by simply acknowledging the conflict. Naming the issue allows participants to step back and gain perspective. Facilitators can also suggest breaks so that individuals have time to cool off and reflect. If necessary, they can facilitate individual conversations to better understand conflicting viewpoints, fostering a sense of being heard and valued. Most importantly, however, as Elja Plíhal and Zuzana Kašparová taught us during a workshop on facilitation, the crux of facilitation lies in the belief that the behavior of one is a symptom of a dynamic of the whole. The role of the facilitator is to decode and navigate that dynamic. The facilitation we learned about provides an alternative to excluding, turning away, or punishing an individual without involving the community concerned. That is why it plays an important role in restorative or transformative justice.

The summer camp in the context of the 2024 Biennale Matter of Art was attended by children from different social classes: children from Prague 7 (a very gentrified part of the capital), children of Ukrainian refugees, and children from the neighborhood of Přívoz in Ostrava (a socially problematic area of the city). Inevitably there were conflicts, which only mirrored society-wide tensions. The conflicts that took place between the children were resolved through facilitation techniques and the restorative approach of the camp counselors. The conflicting parties were given space to tell each other their side of the story, then those affected by the conflict could describe the impact it had on them, and finally both sides could work together to devise ways in which they could continue to function and communicate with each other. All this took place under the guidance of adult facilitators. Thanks to them, not only were a girl from an upper-middle-class background and a girl from a very marginalized background who struggled to understand each other able to coexist and work in a group, but the whole group did not fall apart as a result of their conflict.

We found the way in which our mediators / summer camp counselors approached the conflict to be very inspiring at a time when we feel that the survival of cultural organizations is a question of cooperation and agreement with a wide range of people, initiatives, and organizations. Finding common ground and navigating perceived differences seems to us to be important not only in the cultural sphere but also within society at large. In our societies—for reasons such as gentrification, educational systems that reproduce social inequality, or the unequal distribution of resources in big cities versus other regions of the country—there are fewer and fewer spaces where people from different class backgrounds can meet and interact. Through the camp we created a space for children from different cultural and class backgrounds to encounter each other. After the camp, when I asked one girl from Prague her opinion, she called the kids from Ostrava “weird,” “strange.” It may seem that this was a failure of the project, the reinforcement of social stereotypes, racism, and so on. However, I remember meeting and coexisting with children in elementary school that seemed “different” and “strange” to me—kids from very different backgrounds. I only made sense of their behavior and attitude years afterward. But do the kids of today, who move in class-homogeneous spaces, encounter such unfamiliarity at all? Is the experience of such discomfort not important in order for our public space to be democratic, heterogeneous, and inclusive? Should we not also learn to live with people we think are “strange”? Is this the role of culture today when other institutions fail at it?

Global Majority



The term “minority” often implies subordination or lesser importance, reinforcing stigmas or stereotypes deeply rooted in colonial legacies. In contrast, “Global Majority” acknowledges that people of African, Asian, Latin American, and Indigenous descent make up the majority of the world’s population. This shift in terminology challenges Eurocentric views that position these groups as minorities, despite their numerical and cultural significance. It also exposes how colonial frameworks have historically erased and abused non-Western epistemologies, reinforcing systemic oppression.

The term invites the application of a decolonial perspective in order to dismantle the colonial structures embedded in cultural institutions and rethink how artistic mediation can serve as a tool for resistance and reparation.

The term arose during an event at La Escocesa as part of Trenza. Designed by the Lumbre collective within the framework of Art Space Unlimited, Trenza (braid) is a mediation program whose intention is to generate an opening call for La Escocesa to be home to communities that do not currently inhabit it.

Trenza focuses on migrated people from the Global South who are involved in the production and practice of art and culture and who, due to structural inequality, are not yet part of the city’s contemporary art circuit. This mediation program is structured through the development of tools and meetings, both open to the public and closed for specific groups.

Migration is a process of uprooting, not only territorial and emotional but also professional. Upon arriving in the “host territory,” economic survival and administrative bureaucracies related to immigration documentation take priority. It ordinarily takes time to build emotional and support networks, which is why professional careers initiated in the country of origin

often remain on standby. Working in the field of art tends to be especially complicated as each place has its own implicit dynamics and languages that, upon arrival, involve translation processes that can be very frustrating.

This mediation project proceeds from this reality, positioning migrant artists outside the traditional categories of emerging, young, or mid-career artists. Migration redefines artistic trajectories, measuring careers not by conventional standards but through the shared experience of crossing from the Global South to a European territory.

One significant moment in the project was when Lumbre shared their perspective on the term “minority” and pointed out that the word carried the weight of colonialism; the concept of Global Majority, on the other hand, shifted the focus to a critical perspective.

Adopting the term Global Majority in cultural and artistic spaces is not just about language; it is about shifting the way we engage with communities and about dismantling colonial legacies in artistic mediation. In Trenza, this approach meant questioning institutional practices that often tokenize diversity rather than fostering genuine cocreation, revealing how many cultural policies remain complicit with colonial frameworks of power.

By centering Global Majority perspectives, projects like Trenza challenge the structures that continue to marginalize certain groups while offering models for more equitable and meaningful cultural work. A decolonial approach not only shifts terminology but also disrupts the colonial gaze, making space for new narratives and transformative practices that move beyond symbolic inclusion to the actual redistribution of power and resources.

About the Organizations

tranzit.cz
The initiative for contemporary art tranzit.cz was founded in 2002 in Prague, Czech Republic. The initiative organizes exhibitions, artist and curatorial residencies, and discursive programs, all with the aim of contributing to the accessible and participatory development of critical culture. Since 2020 tranzit.cz has been organizing the Biennale Matter of Art and since 2023 a biannual festival of performance art as well. In 2017 tranzit.cz initiated the creation of the Code of Feminist (Art) Institutions. tranzit.cz has also published Czech translations of texts from the fields of critical theory, philosophy, art theory, feminism, and prose (by authors such as McKenzie Wark, Sophia Giovannitti, Sophie Lewis, Audre Lorde, Frantz Fanon, Bruno Latour, Marcel Duchamp, and others).

As part of the project Art Space Unlimited, tranzit.cz organized a series of mediation workshops and a summer camp for children ages 9 to 14. These events were a part of the Biennale Matter of Art 2024. The mediation project entitled The Great Land of Small aimed to help children from various social backgrounds find a distinctive way to think about art and exhibitions and gain the confidence to express their own opinions. Children experimented with various ways of capturing and sharing their thoughts, opinions, dreams, and ideas—from audio recordings to newspaper contributions to drawings. Participants were guided by the artists and educators Eva Koťátková, Bára Šimková, Mary C, Magda Stojowska, and Tadeáš Polák. The project resulted in the publication of the children's newspaper This Is Not Baloney, which comprised interviews, reports, drawings, and photos created by the children.

< rotor >
Founded in 1999, < rotor > Centre for Contemporary Art is based in Graz, Austria. The institution's program is grounded in the visual arts and focuses on artistic works that explicitly deal with social, political, ecological, and economic issues

of the present day. The independent art center is structured as an association and pursues an educational mission. Mediation to a broad public is therefore of great importance. Promoting cooperation and networked action are essential elements of the < rotor > philosophy. This concerns networking efforts within the art field but also the involvement of people and organizations from different backgrounds. The search for convincing methods of collaboration and possibilities of participation in artistic processes is another topic of importance. An important concern is the inclusion of people who previously had little access to contemporary art. For < rotor >, the public space is an important setting to make art happen. The action of leaving the art space is used to promote and review artistic practices in front of a wider public, to publicly negotiate relevant themes, and to actively bring people into contact with art.

As part of Art Space Unlimited, < rotor > has intensified the collaboration between artists and cultural workers and several target audience groups. The projects carried out were aimed in particular at women, children and young adults, and people with migration backgrounds. In three consecutive exhibitions, some of the artworks presented were produced in a participatory manner, and workshops and art education programs were also offered. The exhibition Wild Spots was about the relationship between city dwellers and "wild nature"; for SEDIMENT, Turkish-Kurdish artists and curators focused on endangered riverscapes; and Mostly Mined Out reflected on the war-induced migration of Ukrainians.

La Escocesa
La Escocesa is a contemporary visual arts organization and residency space managed collectively through the artists' association Associació d'Idees EMA. We focus on supporting artists and cultural agents, offering workspaces and resources for the development of their projects. We provide studios and workshops for over thirty resident artists, alongside a free public program of events, open calls, and training opportunities. As a space inhabited by the artistic community, we focus not only on the production and creation of works but also on the mutual generation of knowledge, networks of care, and new ways of building and operating cultural institutions. The associative nature of the center enables the active participation of the artists, generating the horizontal collective structure through which the center is managed.
As a feminist institution, our values arise from an intersectional, emancipatory, cooperative, and inclusive position, which advocates for sustainability, experimentation, collaboration,

and the development of community artistic projects. We understand our values not only as a series of statements but as commitments that must be put into practice through a collective process of constant learning and reflection.

In the framework of Art Space Unlimited, La Escocesa developed Trenza, a mediation program designed by the Lumbre collective. Its aim is to create an open call for La Escocesa to become a home for communities that do not currently inhabit it. Trenza focuses on migrants from the Global South who are involved in the production and practice of art and culture and who, due to structural inequalities, are not yet part of the city's contemporary art circuit. The proposal is organized into three threads: Fire, Earth, and Alliances. These threads, separate, but interdependent, aim are meant to be woven within and around the community that inhabits La Escocesa in order to establish alliances.

OFF-Biennale
OFF-Biennale Budapest is a grassroots initiative that provides a platform for progressive, critical contemporary visual art. Within the last ten years OFF-Biennale has established itself as the largest independent contemporary art event in Hungary. It aims to strengthen the local independent art scene and contribute to the public discourse on social, political, and environmental issues, with the intention of promoting a culture of democracy through art. In a political climate not conducive to civil and cultural self-organization and activism, OFF remained one of the few art NGOs in Budapest still actively working on creating and maintaining ground for free speech, reinforcing independence, and prefiguring a model for a transparent and autonomous art institution which gains resilience from its wide-ranging local and international networks.

In the framework of OFF-Biennale 2025 we invited Recetas Urbanas—an international collective of architects and activists—for a collaboration in Budapest. Based on their methodology promoting socially engaged architecture through participatory design and community inclusion, we will realize a community architecture project together with local civic organizations and communities in the multicultural neighborhood of District VIII, at Kálvária Square. The planned structure will not only be codesigned and constructed with the participants, but they will also determine its function and operation growing out of their needs and visions, turning deficits into opportunities. The construction, which also reflects on the central theme of OFF 2025, is more than just a physical structure—it is a process. Since December 2024, workshops and

collaborative events have been bringing together different communities that live in, work in, and use the neighborhood: local Romani communities, district civic groups, migrants and refugees, and children and adults from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Shtatëmbëdhjetë (17)
Shtatëmbëdhjetë (17) is a cultural foundation based in Prishtina, Kosovo, dedicated to fostering social change through artistic and educational initiatives. Established in 2018, it envisions a society where all citizens participate freely and meaningfully in public life through culture, education, and activism. The foundation's work focuses on cultural activism, public space, policymaking, advocacy, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and human rights. Operating through its key spaces—Galeria 17 and Rezidenca 17—Shtatëmbëdhjetë (17) serves as a hub for education, activism, and bold artistic exploration.

In the framework of Art Space Unlimited and as part of its commitment to inclusive cultural mediation, Shtatëmbëdhjetë (17) has facilitated exhibitions and community events such as Queer Ecology, an exhibition exploring environmental issues through queer theory, a poetry workshop on queer narratives, and a hands-on session on recycled paper as a medium for artistic expression. By creating spaces for collective learning and critical engagement, the program strengthens connections between art, activism, and local communities.

We Cannot Say That We Have Arrived Somewhere, Yet Neither Can We Say That We Haven't
A Glossary of Commoning Terms

This book was also published in Albanian, Czech, German, Hungarian, and Spanish. All language versions are available as EPUB and printable PDF downloads at www.emotional-labor.eu

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Matter of Art

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