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Study on the opportunities offered by the application of curatorial methodologies in creative urban development and planning processes in contemporary Europe

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT……...4

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS……..6

LIST OF FIGURES……....8

1. INTRODUCTION……15
   1.1 Research questions and objectives……..15
   1.2 Research delimitations……18
   1.3 Methodology ……..20

2. FIRST CURATORIAL EXPERIENCES: HOW RESEARCH STARTED……26
   2.1 *Visioni Veneziane* exhibition in Venice……...26
      2.1.1 The exhibition's themes and objectives……..26
      2.1.2 Curating a scattered exhibition: an alternative display……...29
   2.2 *Without Frontiers* festival in Mantova……34
      2.2.1 The curatorial narratives of *Without Frontiers*……...35
      2.2.2 The curatorial model and its evolution……...41

3. THE CURATORIAL FIGURE AND CURATING ART IN/FOR/AS URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS……48
   3.1 The relationship between artistic practices and urban planning: a review…….48
      3.1.1 The origins of art in public spaces: from the Historical Avantgardes to the 1960s……49
      3.1.2 The turn of the 1970s: «art-as-public-spaces» and the raising interest in urban issues……..51
      3.1.3 From the late 1980s to the early 2000s: culture-led urban regeneration and the rise of «art-in-the-public-interest»…….58
      3.1.4 From the 2010s to today: a review……..67

3.2 Curating art in/for/as urban transformations: history and theoretical framework……79
3.2.1 The expanding field of curating: from curationism to the curatorial……80
3.2.2 Curating in urban spaces: selected exhibitions and projects from the 1970s to the early 2000s……88
3.2.3 A review on curating in urban contexts: from the late 1990s to today……115
3.2.4 Curating art in/for/as urban transformations: an interpretative framework……..148

4. MAJOR CASE STUDY: PUBLIC ART AGENCY SWEDEN……...152
4.1 The Agency's history and Swedish Architectural Policies……152
4.1.1 *Framtidsformer* (Future Forms) policy and the extended mission……..152
4.1.2 *Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer* (Collaboration on the Design of Public Environments) assignment……155
4.1.3 *Konst Händer* (Art is Happening) assignment……160
4.1.4 *Gestaltad livsmiljö* (Designed Living Environment) policy and related assignments……..166
4.2 Project typologies ……170
4.2.1 An example of permanent building-related project: *Future Island*…….171
4.3 The Agency's organizational structure and working methodologies……175

5. MINOR CASE STUDIES……...198
5.1 Germany……...200
5.1.1 Imagine the City (Ellen Blumenstein), Hamburg……201
5.1.2 ZK/U (Kristina Miller), Berlin……219
5.1.3 CURRENT festival (Laura Bernhardt), Stuttgart……227
5.1.4 Floating ~~University~~/72HUA (Gilly Karjevsky), Berlin……..…..238
5.2 The UK……..……249
5.2.1 Situations (Claire Doherty), Bristol……..…251
5.2.2 RELAY (Michael Pinsky), London……..……265
5.2.3 London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth (Anna Vickery and Grace Crannis), London……..276
5.3 Sweden……..291
5.3.1 OPI Lab (Jonas Dahlberg), Stockholm……292

5.3.2 Marabouparken/Baltic Art Center (Helena Selder), Sundbyberg/Visby……300
5.4 Italy……...310
5.4.1 Connecting Cultures (Anna Detheridge), Milan……...312
5.4.2 Lungomare (Daniele Lupo), Bolzano……...320
5.5 The Netherlands……326
5.5.1 Stroom Den Haag (Vincent de Boer), The Hague……327

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH OUTCOMES……...337
6.1 The curator's role in urban planning processes: functions, skills and models……337
6.2 Comparing curatorial methodologies and organizational structures……359
6.3 Ethics and impacts: risks and opportunities of curating art in/for/as urban transformations, and a framework to classify impacts……364
6.4 A new urban profession?.....373

7. CONCLUSIONS……..377

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES……..384

WEBLIOGRAPHY……418

INTERVIEWS RECORDED BY THE AUTHOR……421

FIGURES……...424

ABSTRACT

The thesis aims at studying the opportunities offered by curatorial methods' application to creative urban planning and development practices, in a perspective of innovation and social sustainability. In fact, several influential urban practitioners and scholars agree upon the fact that curatorial practices, even though they can't completely replace conventional urban planning tools, can encourage critical reflection, reveal cities' unexpected characteristics, reorganize the urban system in a flexible way, create sense of belonging and (un)planned interferences. In particular, research has been delimited to case studies located in Europe from the 1990s on, where curators were outlined professional figures, whose practices were not meant to merely decorating urban spaces, but deeply transforming them in synergy with planning processes.

During the literature review phase, it has been found out that contributions about curating art in/for/as urban transformations were rare, and mostly focusing on single case studies. Moreover, in many cases knowledge about projects and practices was hard to preserve and got lost. A second critical layer of accessibility is language: in fact, curating can seem a very elusive concept for those who are not working in the Arts. This has led often to a difficulty in considering its usefulness and potential in concrete planning and development projects, and to not acknowledging and employing these professionals systematically.

The thesis asks three sets of questions: the first is about impacts and ethics of curatorial work in urban planning contexts; the second regards methods and models for curating urban spaces; the third is related to organizational structures the curator works within. By answering these questions, it has two main objectives: the first is to organize the subject for the first time, both from a historical point of view and from a methodological one, in order to preserve the already existing know-how, and to implement it thanks to new practices. The second objective is to foster a more aware use of these practices and their integration in inclusive, innovative and sustainable urban planning processes as a structural long-term element. This would allow also to establish that of urban curators as professionally acknowledged cultural work.

The first chapter is an introduction to the thesis, illustrating its research questions, objectives, methodology and research delimitations. The second chapter describes two curatorial experiences the author had before starting her doctoral research, which paved the way to writing this thesis. The third chapter constitutes the thesis's theoretical framework: after

summarizing the relationship between artistic practices and urban planning, it outlines curating art in/for/as urban transformations by building a history of these practices and by reporting conceptual, terminological and philosophical debates around them. Lastly, it illustrates some pilot projects. The fourth chapter illustrates the major case study, that is Public Art Agency Sweden: it describes its history, main assignments, project typologies, organizational structure and working methods. The fifth chapter contains the description of twelve minor case studies, located in Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy and the Netherlands, analyzed through semi-structured interviews to curators. The sixth chapter makes a comparative analysis of the case studies and illustrates the research outcomes, thus answering the three sets of research questions presented in the introduction: it outlines the role of curators in urban planning processes, their methodologies, organizational structures, and, lastly, the risks and opportunities of these practices. Furthermore, it suggests to create an open atlas of curatorial practices in urban transformations. Lastly, the seventh chapter draws the final conclusions, summarizing the main results obtained by the application of the research methodology to answer the research questions and reach the proposed objectives.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1. *Visioni Veneziane*'s Exhibition map. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan

Fig. 2. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in a shop window. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan

Fig. 3. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan

Fig. 4. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan

Fig. 5. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2023. Source: Irene Ruzzier

Fig. 6. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2023. Source: Irene Ruzzier

Fig. 7. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display at the Jewish Museum. 2017. Source: Luigi Ferrigno

Fig. 8. Fabio Petani, *Cadmium & nelumbo adans & pteridophyta*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2016. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 9. Etnik, *Inside out*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2016. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 10. Corn79, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2016. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 11. Made514, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2017. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 12. Made514, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2018. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 13. Peeta, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2018. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 14. Joys, *Tsunamy*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2018. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 15. Telmo Miel, *Untying the knots that limit you*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 16. Raul33, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 17. Mrfijodor, *Plastic Rain*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 18. Xena – Fátima de Juan, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 19. Andrea Casciu e Kiki Skipi, *Eikasia*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2020. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 20. Aris e Corn79, *Hybrid02*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2020. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 21. Howlers, *Alice in Borderland*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2020. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 22. Tellas, *Agorà*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2021. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 23. Vesod, *Psiche*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2022. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 24. Order55, *Eliptic spectrums*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2024. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 25. *True story* project, Lunetta (Mantova), 2024. Source: Caravan SetUp.
Fig. 26. Flyer of the Dada excursion to Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre on 14th April 1921.
Fig. 27. Constant Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon*, 1961. Source: Het Nieuwe Instituut.
Fig. 28. Alexander Calder, *La Grande Vitesse*, Grand Rapids (Michigan), 1969.
Fig. 29. Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, New York, 1981.
Fig. 30. *Det växer i Skellefteå. Men hur?* exhibition map, 1972.
Fig. 31. Ugo La Pietra, a frame taken from *La riappropriazione della città*, 1977.
Fig. 32. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside*, 1973.
Fig. 33. Archizoom, *No-Stop City*, 1970-72.
Fig. 34. Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Mirror Room,* 1965.
Fig. 35. Archigram, *Instant City,* 1968.
Fig. 36. Rick Lowe, *Project Row Houses*, Houston, 1993.
Fig. 37. Christoph Schäfer, Cathy Skene and other artists, *Park Fiction*, Hamburg, 1994.
Fig. 38. Christoph Schäfer, Cathy Skene and other artists, *Park Fiction*, Hamburg, 1994.
Fig. 39. Apolonija Šušteršič, *Hustadt Project – Community Pavilion*, Bochum, 2008.
Fig. 40. Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The Homeless Projection: A Proposal for the City of New York*, New York, 1986.
Fig. 41. Katriina Soini and Joost Dessein, *Conceptual Framework for Culture and Sustainability*. Source: Soini K., Dessein J. (2016), "Culture-Sustainability Relation: Towards a Conceptual Framework", *Sustainability*, no. 8.
Fig. 42. Colette Miller, *Angel Wings Project*, Los Angeles, 2016.
Fig. 43. Pietro Antonio Martini, *Exposition au Salon de 1787*, 1787.
Fig. 44. An example of white cube display, White Cube Bermondsey gallery.
Fig. 45. Marcel Duchamp, *International Exposition of Surrealism,* Paris, 1938.
Fig. 46. Marcel Duchamp, *First Papers of Surrealism,* New York, 1942.
Fig. 47. Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing #289,* 1976.
Fig. 48. Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs,* 1965.
Fig. 49. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped Reichstag,* Berlin*,* 1971-1995.
Fig. 50. Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 0,* 1974.
Fig. 51. Ugo La Pietra, *Allora: copro una strada ne faccio un'altra trasformo gli spazi originari cambio le condizioni di comportamento,* Como, 1969.
Fig. 52. Mirella Bentivoglio, *Struttura Simbolica (Ovo di Gubbio),* Gubbio, 1976.
Fig. 53. David Hammons, *House of the Future,* Charleston, 1991.
Fig. 54. Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, *Tele-vecindario,* Chicago, 1993.
Fig. 55. Haha, *Flood,* Chicago, 1993.

Fig. 56. Andreas Siekmann, *Square of Permanent Reorganization,* 1993. Two of 159 drawings illustrating the seven different scenarios the project proposed: *Winter Square* (left) addressing the needs of homeless people; *Teenage Square* (right) following the ideas of children interviewed in their classes at school.
Fig. 57. Le Corbusier, *Unité d'habitation,* Firminy, 1967.
Fig. 58. Shigeru Ban, *Paper Dome,* Utrecht, 2003.
Fig. 59. Lucy Orta, *Totipotent architecture,* Turin, 2003-2007.
Fig. 60. Claudia Losi, *Affacci – Aiuola Transatlantico,* Turin, 2008.
Fig. 61. Stecca degli Artigiani, Isola (Milan), before 2007.
Fig. 62. Bert Theis, *Untitled/Untilted,* Isola (Milan), 2001-2007.
Fig. 63. Isola Pepe Verde community park, Isola (Milan), since 2013.
Fig. 64. Jeanne van Heeswijk, *The Blue House,* IJburg (Amsterdam), 2005-2009.
Fig. 65. Raoul Bunschoten, Urban gallery's functioning. Source: Bunschoten R. (2003), "Stirring Still: The City Soul and Its Metaspaces", *Perspecta*, no. 34, pp. 56-65.
Fig. 66. Tammy Wong, The City as a Curated Space Ecosystem. Source: Wong T. (2011), *The City As A Curated Space. A study of the public urban visual arts in central Sydney and central Melbourne, Australia*, doctoral thesis, RMIT University.
Fig. 67. Tammy Wong, Key Actions for the City as a Curated Space. Source: Wong T. (2011), *The City As A Curated Space. A study of the public urban visual arts in central Sydney and central Melbourne, Australia*, doctoral thesis, RMIT University.
Fig. 68. Tadashi Kawamata, *Favela Cafè*, Basel, 2013.
Fig. 69. RaumlaborBerlin, Sauna at Jubilee Park, Gothenburg, 2015.
Fig. 70. Marthe Nehl, Tetrad of Urban Curating. Source: Nehl M. (2018), *Urban Curation. An explorative study on understandings, roles and functions of curating practices in urban contexts,* master thesis, Malmö University.
Fig. 71. *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing URBAN CURATING Now* (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023), seating scheme. Source: Irene Ruzzier.
Fig. 72. *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing URBAN CURATING Now* (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023), scheme for hologram sessions. Source: Irene Ruzzier.
Fig. 73. *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing URBAN CURATING Now* (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023), workshop instructions. Source: Irene Ruzzier.
Fig. 74. Mats Theselius, Håkan Johnsson, *Trafikplats Mölndalsbro*, Mölndal, 1998-2003. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.
Fig. 75. Chandra Ahlsell, Anna Holmquist, *Vanstaskolan in Ösmo,* Nynäshamn, 2011-2013. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 76. Simon Starling, *H+, Loft Lift,* Helsingborg, 2011-2012. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 77. Maider López, *Moving Plants,* Hammarkullen (Göteborg), 2019. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 78. Nasim Aghili, Björn Karlsson, *Şaneşîn,* Hässelby (Stockholm), 2016-2018. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 79. Sandi Hilal, *Al Madafeh/The Living Room,* Prästholmen (Boden), 2016-2018. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden

Fig. 80. MYCKET, *Kepsen (The Cap),* Råslätt (Jönköping), 2020. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 81. Hanna Ljungh, *Curiosity Cabinets: Medicinareberget,* Gothenburg, 2020-2023. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 82. Map13 Barcelona, *Paviljong,* Hageby, 2020. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 83. Katharina Grosse, *bLINK*, Göteborg, 2025. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 84. Urbonas Studio, *The Swamp Observatory,* Visby, 2022. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 85. OOZE, Marjetica Potrč, *Future Island,* Stockholm, 2023. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 86. Julius Von Bismarck, Benjamin Maus and Richard Wilhelmer, *Public Face,* Hamburg, 2018-2020. Source: Imagine The City.

Fig. 87. Terence Koh, *Bee Chapel,* Hamburg, 2019.

Fig. 88. Gerrit Frohne-Brinkmann, *Backdrop*, Hamburg, 2020-2021. Source: Imagine the City.

Fig. 89. Ellen Blumenstein, Requirements for cultural activities according to HCH's Cultural Development Plan. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 90. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: creating spaces for culture. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 91. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: supporting existing cultural spaces and initiatives. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 92. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: establishing cultural uses. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 93. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: active participation in cultural projects. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 94. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP0. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 95. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP1. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 96. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP2. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 97. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP3. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 98. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP4. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Fig. 99. GÜTERMARKT at ZK/U, Berlin. Source: ZK/U.

Fig. 100. *Haus der Statistik*, Berlin. Source: ZK/U.

Fig. 101. Alona Rodeh, *Nighcaps*, Stuttgart, 2021. Source: CURRENT.

Fig. 102. Sylvia Winkler and Stephan Köperl, *Glitch Klitsche,* Stuttgart, 2021. Source: CURRENT.

Fig. 103. SONDER, *URBAN COSMETICS - Strategies for Municipal Conflict Care,* Stuttgart, 2023.

Fig. 104. Bab(v)-El-Yam, *Space Invaders,* Bat Yam, 2010. Source: 72HUA.
Fig. 105. Amoniac, *Fire Island,* Terni, 2012. Source: 72 HUA.
Fig. 106. Birżebbuġa, *How's the Water,* Birżebbuġa, 2017. Source: 72 HUA.
Fig. 107. RaumlaborBerlin, *Floating University*, Berlin, 2018.
Fig. 108. Floating Association: roles and interests 2022-2023. Source: Floating ~~University~~.
Fig. 109. Ruth Claxton, *And My Eyes Danced,* Weston-Super-Mare, 2010. Source: Situations.
Fig. 110. Lara Favaretto, *Without earth under foot,* Weston-Super-Mare, 2010. Source: Situations.
Fig. 111. Futurefarmers, *Flatbread Society,* Oslo, 2013. Source: Situations.
Fig. 112. Futurefarmers, *Flatbread Society,* Oslo, 2013. Source: Situations.
Fig. 113. Regeneris Consulting, Placemaking impacts in King's Cross. Source: Regeneris Consulting (2017), *The Economic and Social Story of King's Cross*, final report.
Fig. 114. Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix, RELAY scheme 1. Source: Delcroix S., Pfannes E. (2015), *Art, Place and Community,* talk part of *CAS Talks - Public Art Forum.*
Fig. 115. Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix, RELAY scheme 2. Source: Delcroix S., Pfannes E. (2015), *Art, Place and Community,* talk part of *CAS Talks - Public Art Forum.*
Fig. 116. Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix, RELAY scheme 3. Source: Delcroix S., Pfannes E. (2015), *Art, Place and Community,* talk part of *CAS Talks - Public Art Forum.*
Fig. 117. Jacques Rival, *Identified Flying Object,* London, 2011.
Fig. 118. Richard Wentworth, *Black Maria,* London, 2013.
Fig. 119. Felice Varini, *Across the Building,* London, 2013.
Fig. 120. OOZE, Marjetica Potrč, *Of Soil and Water,* London, 2015-2016.
Fig. 121. Roadsworth, *Natural Cycle,* London, 2022.
Fig. 122. London Borough of Wandsworth, Arts and Culture Action plan's SMART objectives. Source: London Borough of Wandsworth (2022a), *Arts & Culture Strategy 2021-2031. Delivery Action Plan for 2022-2025*.
Fig. 123. Hanna Benihoud Studio, *The Deconstructed Disco,* Wandsworth, 2022.
Fig. 124. Jaspar Joseph-Lester, *Sound Pavilion*, Wandsworth, 2025. Source: Jaspar Joseph-Lester.
Fig. 125. Jaspar Joseph-Lester, Siyu Chen and Mengshuo Wu, one of the maps of the *Mapping Winstanley* exhibition, London, 2025. Source: Jaspar Joseph-Lester.
Fig. 126. Jonas Dahlberg and Johanna Fager, *Between Walls,* art strategy for Bodø municipality. Source: Jonas Dahlberg.

Fig. 127. Kerstin Bergendal, *PARK LEK,* Sundbyberg, 2010-2014. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Fig. 128. Juri Markkula, *ANNO MMXX,* Visborg, 2021. Source: Baltic Art Center.

Fig. 129. Ingela Ihrman, *Marching on Visborg,* Visborg, 2021. Source: Baltic Art Center.

Fig. 130. Studio Azzurro, *Il segno della memoria,* Imola, 2013.

Fig. 131. orizzontale, *Co-Carts − Vehicles for the Community,* Bolzano, 2020. Source: Lungomare.

Fig. 132. Johanna Dehio, Johanna Padge and Mascha Fehse, *Fiumicina,* Bolzano, 2022. Source: Lungomare.

Fig. 133. Jan van Grunsven and Arno van der Mark, *301 Steps (daylight/tungsten)*, The Hague, 1998. Source: Stroom Den Haag.

Fig. 134. Vito Acconci & Studio, *Park in the Water,* The Hague*,* 1997. Source: Stroom Den Haag.

Fig. 135. Michael Rakowitz, *Be longing*, The Hague, 2024. Source: Stroom Den Haag.

Figg. 136-137. Emotional network session, The Hague, 2024. Source: Stroom Den Haag.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research questions and objectives

This research has aimed at studying the opportunities offered by curatorial methods' application to creative urban planning and development practices, in a perspective of innovation and social and economic sustainability. In fact, several influential urban practitioners and scholars agree upon the fact that curatorial practices, even though they can't completely replace conventional urban planning tools, can encourage critical reflection (Rendell 2006), reveal cities' unexpected characteristics (Chaplin, Stara 2009), reorganize the urban system in a flexible way (Spuybroek 2002), create sense of belonging (Holub 2015) and (un)planned interferences (Schalk 2007). In order to better illustrate what is meant by curatorial methods in relation to planning processes, this chapter begins by recounting a personal experience.

This research was born in and is deeply grounded in practice: the author has always believed that curating is a subject that is not possible to only study in theory, by reading papers at a university desk. It is something you need to experience, to work hands-on in order to manage to understand and give meaning to: otherwise, it may appear very abstract and hard to grasp. The author is introducing this research by saying that because, as an art historian enrolled in an Architecture and Urban Planning PhD course, she has constantly faced the need to be as clear and concrete as possible – not taking any definition or concept for granted – for all the knowledge that she had learned during her studies in the Arts had to be translated and made accessible to target very different publics from the ones she had always been used to. Starting from practice is useful to accomplish this purpose.

The idea of this project came from an experience the author had as an Assistant Curator during the last semester of her Master in Visual Arts at the University of Bologna. Between July and October 2020 she did an internship at the Cultural Association Caravan SetUp, from which she developed her Master's thesis. During that period, she collaborated with curator Simona Gavioli, who has organized *Without Frontiers | Lunetta a Colori* Urban Art festival in Mantova for nine years. The festival focuses on the regeneration of a decaying social housing neighborhood: the municipality and local associations had already started social and architectural actions in the years before, and in 2016 the Arts were involved to contribute as well. This call resulted mainly in public artworks and murals, all linked by curatorial

narratives created by Gavioli. This experience gave the author the opportunity to observe from the inside an example of curating art for urban transformations' (CAUT) organizational, creative and relational processes. Curating is an ambiguous, multifaceted, ever-changing and extremely personal concept: like everyone has their own absolutely individual handwriting, so every curator has their own unique visual writing. In the case of the *Without Frontiers* festival, the curatorial project had particular importance, as it became the driving force of the urban regeneration process through its use of art: in absence of a vision, of an idea, the initiative would have finished without leaving a deep mark. The curatorial project was charged with creating an easily identifiable and noticeable common thread, sticking in the neighborhood's memory and history: this led to obtaining long-term results, thus overcoming the artworks' ephemeral nature and materiality.

This experience brought out a wide variety of questions, linked to this type of intervention on the city and to this new profession, that the author has tried to answer through this research. She formulated three different sets of questions:

a. questions on impacts and ethics: is the curator really a necessary professional figure for this kind of projects and what are its impacts? Can they really take care of the city and transform it (to a deep level, not just of *maquillage*), taking part in urban regeneration processes for instance? If yes, have they the right to do that? Is it possible for the curator to give way to their creativity in this context, or should they give up on it, listening to the city's voices? In the first case, what are the risks linked to the imposition of an individual (never neutral) vision on the urban space? In the second one, do curators risk to lose their professional status to become a kind of social workers?
b. questions on methods and models: what role does the curator have to take on to carry out and coordinate art projects in urban contexts (director, new urban planner, meta-artist, mediator, political activist, social worker)? Are there different curatorial models for working in urban spaces? Does the curator have to approach the urban landscape as if it was a museum exhibition (increasingly recurring is the expression "open-air museum")? What are the specific skills the urban curator needs to work in the urban realm and how do they differ from museum curators? Do they employ specific methodologies and strategies? What is their working process in projects? What is their educational and professional background and how does it affect their way of working as urban curators?
c. questions on organizational structures: what are the organizational structures within which the curator can work (public agencies, non-profit organizations, private

foundations, etc.)? What are the curator's tasks and what support professionals do they need in their team? Where do commissions and funding come from? How does the curator relate with other figures intervening on the urban space, like policy makers, public administrations, urban planners, artists, and citizens?

When the author started doing the literature review regarding CAUT practices, she noticed that contributions were rare, mostly focusing on specific case studies, and mainly coming from Northern European countries (particularly from Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom and Austria). This lack of systematization made it difficult to gather and organize the existing information about curating art in/for/as urban transformations. Moreover, much of the existing material can be found in non-scientific journals and publications, which makes it longer and harder to analyze. As a corollary, she found out that in many cases knowledge about projects and practices was hard to preserve and had got lost, either because information had never been archived, or because it had been archived in ways that are difficult or even impossible to access today (lost paper documents, floppy disks, CD-ROMs, VHS cassettes, offline or crashed websites).

A second layer of accessibility that the author found out to be critical is that of language: as we have already mentioned in this introduction, curating can seem a very elusive concept for those who are not working in the Arts, and during the last two decades it has been put at the center of extremely complex terminological and philosophical discussions. This has led often to misunderstandings and to a difficulty in considering its usefulness and potential in concrete planning and development projects, and to not employing these professionals systematically. As a consequence, this cultural work is often not adequately acknowledged and rewarded, and is in many cases confused with project management or social work.

Starting from here, we developed two main research objectives:

a. The first objective is to organize the subject for the first time, both from a historical point of view (reconstructing CAUT's history and framework) and from a methodological one (analyzing approaches adopted by curators who dealt with the urban context and observing their effects on the city's spatial and social environment). This would happen in the shape of this thesis, but also through the proposal of creating an open archive of CAUT practices, capable of both preserving the already existing know-how, and of implementing it thanks to new practices.
b. The second objective is to foster a more aware use of these practices and their integration in inclusive, innovative and sustainable urban planning processes, not just as a casual element, but as a structural (long-term) one. This would allow also to establish that of urban curators as professionally acknowledged and rewarded

cultural work. This would be possible by making these practices, their methods and outcomes accessible to policy makers, urban planners and other stakeholders dealing with city development in a language they can understand.

1.2 Research delimitations

As researching CAUT in general would be an extremely broad and long endeavor, we have decided to delimit our research within a specific typological, timing and spatial framework. In fact, we have selected practices where curators are outlined professional figures, even if definitions can vary with a certain extent of flexibility: some of them consider themselves as artists, others as urban/spatial practitioners, project managers, Public Art advisors, art strategists, or placemarkers. This is the reason why we haven't included cases such as the French group Urban eXperiment (UX), as the members are not known and act secretly and illegally to improve, restore and take care of hidden corners in Paris. What was crucial in selecting curators was the fact that they were developing artistic projects in relation to (both physical and social) urban transformations, such as urban regeneration or development processes. For this reason, the author was not interested in generic projects of art in public spaces, such as sculptures located in squares, or decorative murals. In fact, her focus was not on aesthetic results, and, as a consequence, not on the decoration and beautification of urban spaces. As a consequence, projects where art was added to the space when the planning had already been done, or when there were no resources for deep planning actions and art was called in as maquillage to hide problems (such projects will be called art-in-urban-transformation), have not been taken into consideration. The research aimed at investigating projects where art was integrated within planning processes (or even started its own transformation), influencing them, and transforming spaces in synergy with them, better if by involving local communities through participation processes (art-for-urban-transformation and art-as-urban-transformation). The word "transformation" has been chosen because it is wide enough to include both top-down urban development, planning, and regeneration processes and bottom-up urban change actions. The author was looking for professionals capable of making these kind of projects possible, of introducing creativity and dynamism in planning processes and of finding innovative tools and methods to work on the transformation of urban spaces. These are the reasons why some famous cases, which might be expected to be found in this thesis, such as *Skulptur Projekte Münster* or street art murals in Bilbao, have been excluded.

As for timing and spatial criteria, we have taken into consideration practices based in Europe from the late 1990s on. Europe has been chosen both for practical reasons, as it was a socio-political context the author knew better and it was easier to visit when looking for case studies, and because most literature about CAUT has been produced in Northern Europe and dealt with European case studies, providing her with a theoretical support framework. She chose to start researching cases from the late 1990s on – even though most of her case studies are more recent – because that decade has been marked by three main developments:

1. Even though arts and culture-led urban regeneration programs had already started in the 1980s, they reached their symbolic peak a decade after, with Glasgow being appointed European Capital of Culture in 1990, Barcelona hosting the Olympics in 1992, the Guggenheim Museum being inaugurated in Bilbao in 1997, and the first study about creative cities being published by Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini in 1995 (Bianchini, Landry 1995).
2. During the 1990s the curatorial figure had a huge fortune, linked both to the rise of independent curators since the 1960s, and to the decline of the art critic as a professional figure: these were the years when the "curatorial turn" (O'Neill 2008) reached its peak, and when curators' names such as Hans Ulrich Obrist, Catherine David and Francesco Bonami's became coveted brands.
3. During these years, a new approach to Public Art was theorized: while, between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s critics and practitioners had already started to talk about socially engaged art in the US, it was in 1995 that artist Suzanne Lacy published the seminal book *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Lacy 1995). There she, together with other theorists such as Mary Jane Jacob and Suzi Gablik, outlined a kind of art that did not aim only at beautifying the city, but at its social and ecological healing, that was "listener-centered rather than vision-oriented" (Gablik 1995, p. 80), and that was capable of creating communities. In particular, at the turn of the century, such artistic approach started to be employed in curating durational public art projects dedicated to social and environmental change, often integrated in urban development processes (O'Neill, Doherty 2011).

To sum up, the thesis and the selected case studies analyze professional curatorial practices in Europe from the 1990s to the present day, as they will be presented in the following chapters.

1.3 Methodology

The two main methodological pillars of this research are interdisciplinarity and fieldwork. An interdisciplinary approach is crucial to study a subject as CAUT, which in its own nature lies in-between Urban Planning, Social Studies and the Arts. Through such approach, the project has aimed at studying the opportunities offered by the curatorial methodologies' transfer from their original terrain – the Arts – to the Urban Planning one. This method has required the adoption of a hybrid perspective, looking for deep connections among art, architecture, society and urban space, drawing tools, knowledge and methods coming from Art History, Urban Planning, Geography and Sociology. Linking subjects that are so different, far from each other and sometimes closed in their own specializations, it has been possible to observe phenomena in all their richness and complexity, through an overall view, thus avoiding the narrowness of monodisciplinarity.

Generally speaking, Urban Studies have represented the framework for the project, giving the possibility of having a wide-ranging vision of the urban phenomena and of overcoming conventional Art History's narrow boundaries. Through the perspective provided by geographers and sociologists such as Vanolo (Vanolo 2018), Harvey (Harvey 1988, 2012), Castells (Castells 1974), Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991, 2014), Jacobs (Jacobs 1961) and Soja (Soja 1996, 2000), it has been possible to obtain a deep understanding of contemporary urban contexts and of their political, economic and social dynamics: particularly interesting from this point of view have been themes like gentrification, touristification, art-washing, city branding, territorial marketing, the idea of control in the postmodern city and the alternatives to neoliberalism provided by self-organization and informal urban practices. The research has been directed towards deepening not just the city's aesthetic transformation processes, representing curatorial and artistic practices' immediately visible implications, but also art-based territorial governance and participation processes. In parallel, also the perception of the city has been investigated through, for example, Kevin Lynch's notion of "image of the city" (Lynch 1960) and Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of "topophilia" (Tuan 1974).

These notions have been flanked by specific Urban Planning concepts and tools, provided for instance by Bianchetti (Bianchetti 2011) and Gabellini (Gabellini 2018), and by attending disciplinary activities organized by IDAUP and the Architecture Department at the University of Ferrara. Tutoring Urban Planning students during the Final Synthesis Laboratory D and directly taking part in Architecture workshops such as the one organized by Polis University in Tirana in November 2021 and by University of Ferrara in July 2022 allowed the author to experience hands-on working methods that are typically used in this

discipline. Then, she tried to hybridize these tools and methods with the ones she had learnt during her Art History studies and that she continued to implement, for example by participating in PhD workshops (September 2022 in Bologna, and September 2023 in Rome) promoted by the PhD course in Visual, Performing and Media Arts of the University of Bologna.

As for the second pillar, as we have already mentioned, this research was born from a fieldwork experience and wouldn't have been possible without a direct involvement in curatorial practices. An important part of the project has consisted in creating a network of urban practitioners, involving them in my research and finding collaboration opportunities. Particularly important from this perspective has been the author's participation in of *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing Urban Curating Now* working sessions (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023): the event gathered about fifty urban practitioners from all around Europe and constituted a precious networking opportunity. In this way, the author has been able not only to discover new case studies, but also to collect unpublished materials and schedule interviews. As for the interviews, we decided to use a semi-structured model, which allowed us to collect comparable data for each interviewee, but at the same time to keep flexibility. We prepared a set of questions valid for all the interviewees, whose order could be changed and formulation slightly adapted to the case. In some cases, we added more specific questions related to particular aspects of the analysed case study. The questions were:

1. What is your educational and professional background and how do you think it affects your work as a curator?
2. How did you start working at [name of the institution/association/project]? Why did you choose to work there?
3. What is your main task at [name of the institution/association/project]?
4. How is [name of the institution/association/project] structured in terms of staff roles and funding? Is it public or private?
5. I am interested in projects, both temporary and permanent, triggering transformations in the urban space. Can you tell me more about the [name of the selected project] project?
6. Which steps do you follow to curate an art project in the urban space such as [name of the selected project] and what methodologies do you use?
7. In projects such as [name of the selected project], how do you relate to other stakeholders (institutions, commissioners, citizens, artists)?
8. What do you think is the main role of a curator operating in the urban context?

9. Do you think curators working in the urban context need specific skills differentiating them from traditional curators? If yes, which ones?
10. What are the outcomes of curatorial work in the urban planning and development projects you have been working on? How has [name of the institution/association/project]'s way of working with art in urban spaces influenced the Urban Planning and Public Art fields?

Interviews have been transcribed and analyzed to compare the curators' answers. All interviews have been collected online for logistic reasons, except for the ones with the team of Public Art Agency Sweden. This was possible because, from February to July 2023, the author did a six-months internship at Public Art Agency Sweden, Stockholm. The Agency was chosen as main case study and mobility destination because, moving beyond the traditional conception of Public Art as a permanent artwork placed in urban public space, has recently developed new methodologies focusing on temporary art interventions and urban development projects. Moreover, the Agency has a specific unit in its organization, which gathers curators having different specializations (permanent artworks, temporary artworks, urban development and community art). Lastly, the Agency has a deep interest in developing methodologies to work with art in public spaces and in spreading them.

During the internship, the author worked hands-on with curator Lotta Mossum on two Public Art projects (*Nya Konst* and *Future Island*) located in Gothenburg and Stockholm, she took part in the Agency's activities (workshops, meetings, public program, studio visits) and in external art events (exhibitions, seminars, art talks) to get to know Sweden's art scene, she interviewed staff members and she did bibliographic and documental research in the Agency's library and archive. This experience allowed her to have an in-depth insight in the Agency's working processes and methods, and to analyze profoundly the projects dealing with urban development carried out during the last ten years.

The fieldwork experience has been preceded and flanked by bibliographic research meant at both preparing a literature review on curating artistic practices in urban spaces and at finding case studies. After a first mapping of the available sources, the candidate noticed that employing a SLR (Systematic Literature Review) methodology would have been particularly difficult and time-consuming for this type of research: in fact, as also other scholars pinpoint (Mangas-Vega et al. 2018), in Social Sciences and Humanities using SLR, a method that was born and found its first field of application in Health Sciences, is complicated due to several factors. Firstly, in such fields there is a wider variety of sources of information and types of publications: journal articles and conference papers are of course

relevant, but they are flanked by other typologies such as book chapters, exhibition catalogues, monographs, articles published in non-scientific journals, and theses. Such diversity of sources generates both a difficulty in terms of choosing which research platform to search through, and in terms of evaluating and comparing the publications according to predetermined criteria. In fact, many of these sources cannot be found if the research is limited to databases such as Scopus or WoS, and require to look also to other systems of dissemination such as specialized social networks (e.g. ResearchGate, academia.edu), theses' repositories, and more. Moreover, these sources are not standardized in terms of structures and data: for example, most of them do not follow the traditional journal article structure (introduction-development and discussion-results and conclusions) which makes it easier to scan and skim useful papers and easily find, compare and evaluate research findings. Many of them neither have abstracts and keywords accompanying them, which makes them harder to find and select: this means that most of these sources require to be analyzed manually in order to be selected or discarded, and subsequently classified. Nonetheless, in such fields it would be very risky to limit the searching of data to a single source, as it would exclude crucial contributions and bias research. The candidate thus kept different sources and adapted her research criteria to the filters available of different research platforms. The second criticality of making SRLs in the Humanities and Social Sciences is that of the lack of a common language: as Mangas-Vega et al. explain, there is no pre-eminence of English as high as in other areas, and large part of the literature is in the original language of the research. This means that some publications may be hard to find or be excluded from the research. To this language problem, the candidate would like to add another one, which is very specific of the subject matter of this thesis: even when choosing one language, for example English, there are very different terminologies that have been employed in literature to indicate similar practices. This can be grasped very well when observing that not all curators working with art in urban development and regeneration processes call themselves the same way: urban curators, public art producers, urban practitioners, art project managers, and creative placemakers represent different shades in the interpretation of this professional practice, partially overlapping with one another but each retaining their own specificities. Of course, the absence of a common terminology and research language made it even harder to find and review all the publications available in the field.

For all these reasons, the candidate decided to not employ the SRL methodology to do the field mapping established in her first research objective, but to take inspiration from it to develop a literature review as much extensive and complete as possible, taking into

consideration the limitations mentioned above. For instance, in order to define the keywords and combine them into queries to search databases, she built the following PICOC framework:

Criteria	**Description**	**Keywords**
Problem	The relationship between artistic practices (with a specific interest in socially engaged ones) and urban transformation processes	Art/Public Art/New Genre Public Art/Socially Engaged Art/Community Art AND Urban Planning/Urban Development/Urban Transformation/Urban Regeneration/Public Space/ Cities/Urban Space
Intervention	The practice devoted to managing and taking care of such relationship	Curating/Urban Curating (Public Art) Production Urban Practice Creative Placemaking (Public Art) Project Management
Comparison	Such practices are compared both with curatorial practices in art contexts (museums, galleries, etc.), and with cases where artistic interventions in urban spaces are not curated at all	Museum Curating/Gallery Curating/Curating Exhibitions OR Artist-led Public Art Interventions/Spontaneous Art in Public Spaces
Outcome	The risks and opportunities offered by such practices	Artwashing/Gentrification/Value Extraction/Risks/ Impacts Inclusivity/Sustainability/Innovation/ Awareness/Long-term Outcomes/Opportunities/ Professionalization

Context	The geographical area and historical period taken into consideration	Europe/Contemporary/from the 1990s on

Table 1. PICOC framework

The candidate used these keywords to formulate the research questions illustrated in chapter 1.1 and combined them in queries such as the following: "curating art in urban development impacts", "urban curating and museum curating skills", "commissioning public art production in Europe from the 1990s to today", and so on. The candidate used mainly Google Scholar, Scopus and WoS as research databases. Selection criteria adopted, when applicable, included: language (English or Italian[1]), publication year (since 1990), and category (Geography, Urban Studies, Urban Planning, Humanities, Art, and Social Sciences). The contributions were classified in two main categories: those providing a theoretical framework on the topic, and on the ither hand the ones focused on illustrating case studies. Even though a full bibliometric analysis was not possible due to the sources' limitations previously explained, the review allowed the candidate to identify the leading authors, the most important publications and the years over which the topic was most extensively discussed. These findings were used to pinpoint the research gaps mentioned in chapter 1.1 and to answer the research questions, jointly with the information coming from the qualitative interviews.

The literature review will be extensively discussed in chapter 3, while the interviews will be used in chapters 4 and 5 to illustrate the major and minor case studies. Chapter 6 will connect all the collected materials through a comparative analysis and illustrate the outcomes of this research.

[1] Valid only for general contributions. Research on selected case studies instead did not discard contributions written in other European languages (specifically, German, Swedish, and Dutch).

2. FIRST CURATORIAL EXPERIENCES: HOW RESEARCH STARTED

2.1 *Visioni Veneziane* exhibition in Venice[2]

As we have already explained in chapter 1, this research is grounded in fieldwork: if the experience at *Without Frontiers* represented the basis to build this project, there is another earlier one that we would like to mention. In fact, between June and August 2017 the author did an internship at Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per il Comune di Venezia e Laguna in Venice, where she flanked architect Silvia Degan in organizing and curating *Visioni Veneziane* photography exhibition. At the time, she was enrolled in a BA in Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Performing Arts Management at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and, when Degan proposed her to work with her on an exhibition spread throughout urban spaces, the idea of engaging in such a peculiar display format sounded very exciting. During that period, the the author took part in the various activities that constituted the curatorial work, such as researching and selecting photographic materials in the archives, conducting interviews, writing texts for the explanatory panels and the catalogue, carrying out on-site visits to the exhibition sites, and negotiating the use of the spaces.

2.1.1 The exhibition's themes and objectives

Visioni Veneziane (Figg. 1-7) was a photographic exhibition displaying in specific areas of the city historical photographs taken between the end of the 19th century and the 1960s, which recounted a minor, authentic and lively Venice, in contrast to today's reality, characterised by the influence of mass tourism. Through the reading of images from the past and the memories of ordinary people, the exhibition was intended as food for thought both to analyse today's reality and the changes that have taken place in the urban landscape in recent decades, and to focus on possible future prospects for the city (Degan 2018).
As curator Silvia Degan recounts, the idea for the exhibition itself arose from a memory:

[2] This chapter is an adaptation of the following paper: Ruzzier I. (2024), "Infiltrazioni negli spazi urbani: curare una mostra diffusa a Venezia. In dialogo con Silvia Degan sul caso Visioni Veneziane", in Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la città metropolitana di Venezia (ed.), *Cronache della Soprintendenza di Venezia. Attività e ricerche. 1–2024,* Venezia, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, pp. 181-189.

> The idea of an exhibition that would tell the story of Venice in the recent past arose from the intuition to tell the story of Venice as it is often described to children who see it for the first time, i.e. a city 'built on water' and on all sides criss-crossed by canals used as roads. This idea, which also derives from a distant personal memory linked to my childhood, has led me to the understanding that today we see a very different Venice that can, however, preserve and revive the memory of how it was through photography.
> Now that I live Venice every day and with the eyes of a Soprintendenza official, I realise that certain situations are no longer experienced or seen, and I also feel a certain nostalgia for the memories I had in the simplicity of a little girl seeing for the first time such a special reality as the churches built on water. And so I thought a lot about the importance of photography in understanding how the city is transformed, the importance of photography as a document. It is also a very important study for our work as officials within the Soprintendenza, because for us it is fundamental to understand how places are transformed and what is the right way to guide these transformations that inevitably occur in the landscape. At the time of this exhibition, I was in charge of the Cannaregio area and, therefore, that was the sestiere on which my research into photography was also focused, trying to evaluate it, beyond romanticism and my own experience, in purely professional terms as an excellent tool to investigate the transformations of the city[3].

The search for these photographic images led the curator to discover how different the Venice of the past was to the reality of today:

> These images told about places and situations that were absolutely unknown, not only in the landscape, but also in the traditions, the way people dressed, how the places were, the atmospheres, how the city was used, the water, the public spaces. Thanks to them I always had great food for thought, even to make some important decisions regarding my daily work. When I then saw the coloured photos, even the colours of the city, and how the citizens lived popular festivals, I realised that it was an extremely different city[4].

The curator's personal impressions were then enriched by the stories told by some of the photographers and inhabitants, such as Gigi Ferrigno, who helped the curator to understand the choices behind the shots, thus providing an opportunity to deepen her knowledge of the city. Degan explains:

[3] Interview with Silvia Degan, 10/04/2024. Translated by the author.
[4] *Ibidem*.

> In recent years, I have had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know some Venetians from Cannaregio, the 'cannareggiotti', who had the fortune to be born and grow up in the lagoon city. I listened with interest to their stories and experiences of how they experienced the city and its traditions, of how Venice was until a few decades ago, before tourism took over everything and most of its inhabitants moved to the mainland. Contrasting feelings emerge from their stories: on the one hand, nostalgia for a past made up of colours, sounds, smells and an all-Venetian familiarity, still imprinted in their memories, on the other hand, suffering for the disturbing present in an alienated city and the strong feeling of being like 'unwelcome guests' at home[5]. (Degan 2018)

The main objectives of the exhibition were therefore, on the one hand, to study the Venetian urban space for professional purposes through the use of an experimental method, and, on the other hand, to share the experience with the public on the occasion of the European Heritage Days 2017 in the form of small guided tours. The intention was therefore to bring users closer to hot issues related to the Venetian landscape, and in particular to the Cannaregio district: according to the curator, photography was in this sense a great means of facilitation for the common citizen, for whom certain issues might be little known or understandable, making it easier to read and interpret urban transformation phenomena. It is very important to emphasise that for the curator, knowledge of the past should not turn into a pretext for nostalgic conservatism, but take the form of a tool for understanding the changes that have inevitably taken place and continue to take place in the present, and for outlining a more sustainable future for the city, currently exploited, consumed and increasingly standardised in favour of mass tourism. In fact, the vision that gives the exhibition its name is precisely that of a recovery of the city's identity, and its regeneration and reinterpretation in a contemporary key. Degan emphasises how, in addition to the citizens, other subjects involved in the initiative also grasped its value and gave it space, for example Grandi Stazioni, the Jewish community and many owners of historic Venetian shops.

Finally, a third important objective emphasised by the curator was to highlight the rich heritage of photographs in Venice's historical archives, including the archives of the Soprintendenza.

[5] Translated by the author.

2.1.2 Curating a scattered exhibition: an alternative display

Degan chose a particular way to tell the story of this unknown Venice: instead of selecting a traditional exhibition space in which to display the fifty or so photographs that were chosen, she opted for what she called a 'scattered exhibition'. In fact, the exhibition, starting from Venice's S. Lucia station, wound its way towards the Guglie bridge and then offered the alternative between passing through the Jewish Ghetto or the San Leonardo area. It then went on into the northern part of Venice, towards the fondamenta degli Ormesini and towards Sant'Alvise, ending at San Marco. Very popular, characteristic and suggestive places were therefore chosen, as Degan explains:

> The choice of locations was made on the basis of both the availability of photos and the desire to go through some specific areas of the city which, in my experience, were less visited by tourists. [...] [Some] areas of Venice are very photographed, very well known, so it did not make sense to put photographs of San Marco Square, which is hyper-known and hyper-photographed. So even in the search for photos, we looked for ones that represented places that were a bit unknown, [...] to do something alternative to the classic photographic exhibitions that have had Venice as a protagonist since the 19th century. [...] In fact, we gave it a much more popular slant, of street photographers, because perhaps they captured some aspects of the city such as everyday life, people, jobs, some aspects that are in any case part of the city's landscape and culture. It was those aspects, therefore, that in the context of this initiative should have been amplified and highlighted because they have now disappeared or are very difficult to trace[6].

The choice of this particular type of display was made mainly for two reasons: the first is that, as Degan makes clear,

> Venice, even within the same sestiere, presents very different situations, and so I wanted the commonplace of a Venice that always looks the same but in reality presents different facets even between neighbouring calli to emerge. Some have remained very similar to the past, the more marginal ones, while those closer to the tourist flows have transformed. Cannaregio, which is the most working-class area of the city, has areas where Venice is still itself, less touristy: it is still inhabited by citizens, it still has clothes hanging from the windows and neighbours still meet to chat, sitting in the courtyard on summer evenings. On the contrary,

[6] Interview with Silvia Degan, 10/04/2024. Translated by the author.

> other areas of the city have bent more to the logics of tourism, they have transformed and are much more homologated to other cities, they have lost some of their traditional connotations[7].

Displaying the photographs in the same places where they had been taken, often even looking for the same point of capture, was approached as a strategy to involve the public more closely and make them participate in the reflection made on the changes taking place in the city. A second motivation was related to the aim of creating alternative tourist routes, compared to the classic one from the train station, along Strada Nuova, to San Marco. Degan explains:

> While searching for the photos, there was not an already well-drawn and delineated path, but it was almost a treasure hunt: so the exhibition took you off the tourist route to discover these Venetian places that are very picturesque, and then it would still end up in the San Marco's area. So it was also a way of taking tourists to discover alternative, more characteristic areas[8].

The curatorial work included various steps, in particular: the selection of historical archives, the research and selection of images in the archives, documentary research on places and traditions (through bibliographic sources, blogs and social media, stories told by citizens and photographers), research and negotiation regarding exhibition spaces (usually shop windows, notice boards and advertising screens, with the exception of the images displayed at the Jewish Museum, which were set up in a more traditional way), the request for rights to publish the images, printing and the final set-up. The choice of the scattered exhibition brought with it positive aspects, but also difficulties. On the one hand, it led to a greater involvement of the city community, which expressed its interest in the initiative. Not only did the local press spontaneously show up at the event during the European Heritage Days, but the initiative was also commented on in the social media groups of citizens, who had been involved during the information and image search phase. This last action was particularly important according to Degan:

> people share these images within social media groups, [and from this] I realised that many places for them are identity-making because they have lived there, they have had experiences or otherwise frequented them, they are part of their history [...] The fact that [a certain] place

[7] *Ibidem*.
[8] *Ibidem*.

> is transformed for citizens could be a detriment: it is the social role that places have, that the landscape has for citizens[9].

In addition to ordinary citizens, the exhibition involved the owners of shops and spaces that hosted the images, in particular the S. Lucia station and the Jewish Museum. Again, there was a significant positive impact linked to the dissemination of the exhibition in the area, as the curator explains:

> Shop owners who received the images were pleasantly surprised, because we brought them information, images representing the place they experience on a daily basis, with respect to which they made discoveries they would not have expected. There was a kind of surprise effect for everyone[10].

Interest was also shown by the fact that some shopkeepers kept the photographs displayed in their shop windows for much longer than the curator had requested, while Grandi Stazioni decided to keep some panels permanently displayed:

> I was interested in them staying at least for the two Heritage Days, then I actually pleasantly discovered that in the end the images had remained on display for up to four or five months in some places. [...] The station also kept two panels, under the billboards, and they would have liked to keep others as well, but there would have been problems with granting advertising space[11].

On the other hand, this type of display brought with it certain problems: first and foremost, the difficulty in finding meaningful images to display in the places considered of interest by the curator. This also led to changes in the exhibition locations, as it was impossible to find photographic material of some locations, although very attractive:

> for example, the area around fondamenta degli Ormesini, a very working-class area, north of Venice... Regarding the Ghetto, we only had Gigi Ferrigno's photos, and we could not find any earlier ones, especially in reference to the post-war period or even earlier, from the 19th century [...] Venice station, as a military area from the 19th century until World War II, could not be photographed, and therefore we found no documentation. Another area that was poor from a photographic point of view was San Giobbe, a very particular working-class area,

[9] *Ibidem*.
[10] *Ibidem*.
[11] *Ibidem*.

> where there were a slaughterhouse and industries: I would have loved to see what the industrial city of Venice looked like, I found it in books but I never saw it in photographs. Gigi Ferrigno used to tell me about it, he used to describe such peculiar smells coming from the Venetian industrial areas. [...] Or the carnival that Gigi always told us about, the first carnivals in Venice: [...] I would have liked to find photos of that too. He himself told me that he had no pictures of the carnival, because it was a party and people were busy doing other things and didn't think about taking pictures. I was sorry about that, I searched a lot and it was difficult, and unsuccessful unfortunately[12].

Finally, there were the difficulties in negotiating the exhibition venues:

> not everyone was willing to take up their shop windows, which are usually dedicated to highlighting the goods for sale. Some saw photographs as an attractor, [...] they received them very favourably and then asked if they could keep them, because someone was really amazed to find an image from a hundred years ago with a glimpse of the building or the context in which they lived [...] instead, someone turned up their nose and so we had to take the photos down and find others[13].

Degan continues:

> even in the train station it was not very easy to display. Because of commercial logics, [...] there are spaces that cannot be used: in fact, we recovered the notice boards, we recovered the 'dead' spaces... [...] There were various negotiations, even for the videos: they needed the screens for advertising and so they gave us those three seconds every so often, which were, in my opinion, too few [...] All the work done to recover the clips, extract them from the videos, ask for the rights, and so on, was lost in my opinion. But they couldn't give us more than that because they sell those spaces for advertising[14].

The exhibition *Visioni Veneziane* represents an interesting example of an alternative exhibition display: compared, in fact, to an exhibition that takes place in a closed and dedicated space, where photography takes on a primarily artistic significance and is addressed to a restricted audience, which consciously chooses to visit the exhibition, the scattered exhibition opens up fruition to a much wider and more casual audience, of passers-by, station commuters, and people entering shops. They discover with surprise that they are

[12] *Ibidem*.
[13] *Ibidem*.
[14] *Ibidem*.

visiting an exhibition, that they can choose which itinerary to follow to visit it, that they can make a direct comparison with the places represented, and that they can appreciate photography not only from an aesthetic point of view, but also emotionally, through the lens of memory and remembrance. It is therefore considered that, given the theme and objectives of the exhibition, the choice of this display was particularly appropriate, even though it brought with it some difficulties.

Visioni Veneziane inextricably connected art and the city, infiltrating the city through the artistic medium of photography and in this way studying its past, commenting on its present and envisaging its future transformations. In this sense, the exhibition represented an example of *ante litteram* CAUT, implemented spontaneously and self-taught, through trial, error and small frustrations, but also passion, curiosity and satisfaction. Comparing *Visioni Veneziane* to other CAUT examples as they will be reported further on in this thesis, it can be observed that their curatorial action is usually characterised by a series of steps, such as a preliminary study of the exhibition context, the creation of a consultation group, the drafting of a curatorial project, the selection of artists, the production of sketches and then of the works, followed by their maintenance. In some projects, citizenship may also be involved, through calls for proposals, public presentations of the projects, the creation of local working groups and educational activities. In these cases, methodological issues are really crucial. In these contexts, the curator is aware that they not only have an organisational role, but that they also work with relational and creative aspects. This awareness makes their role even more incisive and fundamental in order to give life to high-quality projects. Certainly *Visioni Veneziane,* if compared to such examples, is small-scaled and has a very experimental character, so much so that Degan defines it as an «experience-experiment»[15]: the methodology was not clearly defined, but was built up step by step, and the curator assumed above all an organisational and mediating role between the various subjects involved. However, the importance of the exhibition resided precisely in attempting this new path, particularly within a public institution such as the Soprintendenza.

[15] *Ibidem.*

2.2 *Without Frontiers* Festival in Mantova[16]

Three years later, while the author was enrolled in her MA in Visual Arts at the University of Bologna, she decided to start a new internship experience, during which she flanked curator Simona Gavioli, founder of the cultural association Caravan SetUp, in organizing the fifth edition of *Without Frontiers* Urban Art Festival in Lunetta (Mantova) and some collateral events.

Lunetta is a social housing neighborhood built between the 1960s and 1970s in Mantova's north-eastern suburbs, in order to face the economic and demographic boom. Designed on an ambitious urban planning project, due to many economic, architectural, urban planning, social and cultural problems, Lunetta rapidly became a ghetto-neighborhood, the so-called Mantova's "Bronx", avoided by everyone but its inhabitants: there unemployment, decay, petty crime, poverty, ugliness and lack of perspectives were widespread. Nonetheless, during the last twenty years Lunetta has become a laboratory to experiment urban regeneration projects, through integrated architectural, urban planning, social and cultural interventions.

In particular, the turning point was marked in 2004 by the Contratto di Quartiere II, an urban regeneration program financed by the Italian Regions and by the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transports, which blended urban planning and social aspects: specifically speaking, the actions dealt with social housing accommodations, infrastructures, non-cofinanced works and the social sphere. Interventions included the creation of 142 new social housing accommodations, of a Socialization Centre, of a Service Centre, the renovation of a building now hosting one of University of Brescia's venues, the introduction of a new square and of a social concierge (Ferri *et al.* 2018). These actions have been flanked by the work done by ReteLunetta associations' network, by the University of Brescia, by Creative Lab multi-service hub, by Lunattiva's social project and by Segni d'Infazia festival: the actions included an Italian language workshop, reading activities for children, promoting courses and workshops devoted to creative people, community workshops, job placement training courses and emotional mappings of the neighborhood.

[16] This chapter is an adaptation of the following papers: Ruzzier I. (2023), "Maquillage o valore (sociale) per lo spazio pubblico urbano? Arte Urbana e rigenerazione nel caso del Festival Without Frontiers a Mantova", in Belingardi C. *et al.* (eds.), *Agire collettivo e rapporto tra attori nel governo del territorio*, XXIV SIU National Conference *Dare valore ai valori in urbanistica* (Brescia, 23th-24th June 2022), vol. 05, Roma-Milano, Planum Publisher e Società Italiana degli Urbanisti; Ruzzier I. (2023), "Curare l'Arte Pubblica negli spazi urbani. Il caso del Festival Without Frontiers a Mantova", *Ocula,* no. 24(28), pp. 223-251; Ruzzier I., "From Urban Art to New Social Horizons in Urban Regeneration: the Evolution of the Without Frontiers Festival in Mantova", in Monno V., Serreli S., Marotta A. (eds.), *Urban diversities and landscapes in (e)motion*, Springer (forthcoming publication).

2.2.1 The curatorial narratives of *Without Frontiers*

The *Without Frontiers* Urban Art Festival arose in this context in 2016, when Mantova became Italian Capital of Culture, with the principal aim of using creativity to stimulate urban regeneration. The festival has been curated by Simona Gavioli and, during the first four editions, by Giulia Giliberti. The main objectives were to create a sense of belonging, to rebuild social relationships through art, and to bring international artists to Lunetta (Gavioli, Giliberti 2017). At the heart of the festival's curatorial project has been the question of breaking down physical borders between center and periphery, and cultural borders between the different ethnic groups living in the neighborhood[17].

Throughout its ten editions, the festival evolved and adapted to the neighborhood's changing conditions, both in terms of artistic media used, of targeted residents' groups, of selected spaces, and of available working time span.

During the first two years (2016–2017) the festival used both public artworks and murals to open up a dialogue between Mantova's Renaissance history and suburbs' contemporaneity (Caravan SetUp 2020a). The link with Mantova's glorious past is evident from the quotations and re-elaborations present in some of the works created in these editions: in Fabio Petani's work *Cadmium & nelumbo adans & pteridophyta* (2016) (Fig. 8) the geometric shapes «refer to the architectural silhouette of the vaulted portico of Palazzo del Capitano, the typical tiles of the city and the concept of Renaissance order, understood as the set of rules that link parts together» (Gavioli, Giliberti 2018: 7); in the work by Etnik *Inside Out* (2016) (Fig. 9), the artist proposes a critique of the brutalist architecture of western suburbs, metaphorically depicting the concrete blocks that characterise these buildings, but covering them with the textures reminding of Renaissance's Mantova (the skies of the Sala dei Giganti in Palazzo Te, the floors of the Doge's Palace, the interior of the San Giorgio's Castle), which are thus turned on the outside (Gavioli, Giliberti 2018); the work *Untitled* by Corn79 (2016) (Fig. 10), through «a concentric explosion of white light emerging from the black darkness of the wall, represents the idea of rebirth», a reference «to the Renaissance Mantova and contemporary urban regeneration, hence to the enrichment that shapes and colours bring to the lives of human beings» (Gavioli, Giliberti 2018: 6); *Untitled* by Made514 (2017) (Fig. 11) represents the idea of rebirth through the figure of a child surrounded by stylised tongues of fire, symbolising the artist's emergence from a moment of personal difficulty through a return to his childhood world. The involved artists were Corn79, Fabio Petani, Vesod,

[17] Interview with Simona Gavioli, 22/11/2020. Translated by the author.

Bianco-Valente, Etnik, Perino & Vele, Elbi Elem, Made514, Panem et Circenses and Zedz. In particular, Bianco-Valente organized *Come il vento* (Like the Wind), a participative project where artists asked residents to express their feelings about living in a multicultural neighborhood such as Lunetta. Furthermore, Fabio Petani held a workshop with three art students, which ended with the realization of a participated mural artwork. Lastly, Panem et Circenses created two installations and provided Lunetta with an art gallery where relationships between people constituted the artworks (Caravan SetUp 2024a).

From the third edition (2018) on, curators decided to increasingly focus on mural interventions, as they thought it was the most natural way to go on with the project[18]. This happened also because the edition dealt with the idea of giving the neighborhood a new identity (Caravan SetUp 2020a), by using buildings as clear skin made available to be tattooed[19]. This was particularly true for Lunetta's most peculiar and problematic building, the so called C.O.C.E.L., built in 1980 and thus considered similar to a millennial[20]. The edition had as its theme *Una nuova pelle* (A New Skin), taking inspiration from the book *La trace et la peau* (The mark and the skin) by David Le Breton, and recounting the slow but increasing change that was taking place in the neighborhood (Caravan SetUp 2020a). The selected artists were Joan Aguilò, Boogie EAD, Corn79, Ericailcane & Bastardilla, Mach505, Made514, Molis, Peeta and Sebas Velasco. Furthermore, a collaborative mural artwork was created through *Progetto NOVA*, born from the collaboration between ReteLunetta and the art students' group Co-Hum. Lastly, collaborations with other institutions included a photography exhibition, showing photos by students from secondary school Istituto Carlo D'Arco, illustrating Lunetta's transformation, and community laboratories held at the Professional Educators' course of the University of Brescia, located in Lunetta (Caravan SetUp 2018). The concept of skin change has been interpreted by some of the participating artists in this way: the artist Made514 in *Untitled* (2018) (Fig. 12) represents a «metamorphosis through the element of water, symbol of renewal, linked to transformation. The water conceals snakeskin scales, precisely to support the thesis of the change taking place in the neighborhood of Lunetta. Between the movements of the water, a horse's head appears, as a symbol of reacting» (Gavioli, Giliberti 2018: 24); instead, Peeta in *Untitled* (2018) (Fig. 13), interprets the theme through the use of anamorphosis, a technique through which he dismantles and redesigns the architectural surfaces of buildings in the neighbourhood; the most important intervention in terms of the surfaces involved was

[18] *Ibidem*.
[19] *Ibidem*.
[20] *Ibidem*.

Tsunamy (2018) (Fig. 14) by Joys, a work that enhanced the C.O.C.E.L. building, becoming the emblematic example of Lunetta's skin change.

The fourth edition (2019) worked on the concept of quality of life and introduced new murals by Corn79, Dado, Xena – Fátima de Juan, Mrfijodor, Michele Giangrande, Mohamed L'Ghacham, Mach505, Psiko, Rash, Raul33 and Telmo Miel. As in the previous edition, collaborations with the University of Brescia and Istituto Giulio D'Arco were taken forward, while a new Urban Art workshop dedicated to secondary school Istituto Giulio Romano's students was held by Mrfijodor (Caravan SetUp 2019). The edition featured the curatorial project *È sui fianchi delle città che si sviluppa la vita* (It is on the sides of cities that life unfolds), which was inspired by the book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Pirsig, a coming of age novel from which emerges a salvific message that Pirsig assigns to artistic production, showing a world in which art functions as a tool to help improve and change the way of looking at life (Caravan SetUp 2020a). Based on these assumptions, the artists expressed their vision of the world, the experience of art as an interpretation of life, as a moment of confrontation with oneself and the other. The theme has been interpreted in very different ways: Telmo Miel in *Untying the knots that limit you* (2019) (Fig. 15) depicts an elderly man intent on untying the knots on his shoelaces, which prevent him from walking, a metaphor of the limits and preconceptions that condition everyone's life, and an invitation to overcome them (Caravan SetUp 2020b); Raul33 in *Untitled* (2019) (Fig. 16) sees the quality as a rediscovery of one's origins, a contact with one's deepest self, made possible by following the path of symbolism and spirituality (the elements depicted are the basic symbols present in many world religions) (Caravan SetUp 2020b); Mrfjodor in *Plastic Rain* (2019) (Fig. 17) makes explicit reference to social, environmental and ecological issues, depicting an industrial landscape where father and son are so intent on repairing a robot – symbol of solving problems through technology – that they do not notice the rain of plastic bottles that is falling on them (Caravan SetUp 2020b); Xena in *Untitled* (2019) (Fig. 18) represents a bright tropical oasis, where plants, animals and bright colors impose themselves on the gray wall to turn on the spotlight on a space that was once natural, reminding the observer of the importance of taking care of the environment (Caravan SetUp 2020b).

For the fifth edition (2020) – named *Bada al senso e le parole baderan a se stesse* (Care about meaning and words will care about themselves) – Simona Gavioli asked artists to work on surreal imaginaries, inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and by Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*. Artists examined the logic of sense, surface effects, dualities, turns of phrase, ideal games, paradox, thought, humor, and language, in order to bring to life

the ‘wonderful’ atmospheres connecting different ethnicities in Lunetta (Caravan SetUp 2020a). The involved artists were Corn79, Aris, Howlers, Kiki Skipi and Andrea Casciu. Moreover, an artwork was made by Redb and Milay, two young art students. Andrea Casciu and Kiki Skipi in their combo *Eikasia* (2020) (Fig. 19) pay homage to imagination, a powerful weapon that is capable of transforming the world and has a ‘magical’ power, a fundamental tool for flying with one’s own wings and not remaining nailed to the ground (Caravan SetUp 2020b); Aris and Corn79 in *Hybrid02* (2020) (Fig. 20) invite the observer to investigate his own individuality, capturing in the whirlwind of abstract forms and in chromatic lyricism intimate and personal ideas (Caravan SetUp 2020b); the Howlers with *Alice in Borderland* (2020) (Fig. 21) intend to resume the idea of paradox, of indefiniteness and destructuring of the self at a spatial and temporal level, representing the characters – Alice and the White Rabbit – as broken up, but in continuous fluidity with the naturalistic elements of the surrounding environment (Caravan SetUp 2020b).

This edition was important also because the curator decided to start the project’s expansion towards another neighborhood in Mantova, Te Brunetti, with a spin-off initiative called *Piccola Biblioteca Ideale* (Little Ideal Library). The project originated from Te Brunetti’s library, seen as a place safeguarding culture and allowing socialization, integration and the sharing of spaces and knowledge (Caravan SetUp 2020a). Another development introduced in 2020 was the organization of the first edition of *LUNETTA. Anno ZERO* (Lunetta. Year Zero), a series of workshops and seminars about Urban Art, held at Lunetta’s Creative Lab, a multi-services hub devoted to creativity and young people. The initiative aimed at attracting new people and skills in the neighborhood[21]. One interesting collaboration born in 2020 was that between Without Frontiers and SEGNI New Generations Festival, an international art and theater event dedicated to children and teenagers: the initiative revolved around workshops and emotional mappings of the neighborhood, coordinated by Tommaso Franchin and Andrea Dellai (ExvUoto Teatro).

The sixth edition (2021) focused on the conjunction ‘and’, seen as a symbol of connection, relationships, and social exchanges in the neighborhood. The edition was named *“e” – la congiunzione copulativa* ("and" - the copulative conjunction), in reference to the essay *The Agony of Eros* by Byung-Chul Han, in which the South Korean philosopher aims to reconstruct the centrality of love, understood as mutual attention and union, undermined by contemporary individualism. Copulative conjunctions, and in particular the "and", are seen as the only way to radically experience the Other. Synergies, exchanges, and social

[21] *Ibidem*.

relationships are the themes around which the artists have developed their own reflections, capable of transmitting a sense of community and familiarity. Selected artists included Tellas (Fig. 22), David De Limón, Erosie, 108, Corn79, and Antonello Ghezzi. That year, murals were flanked by a performative and participative artwork by Antonello Ghezzi, called *Stringere lo spazio tra me e te* (Tightening the Space Between You and Me) (Caravan SetUp 2021). This edition was key as it saw the birth of a new parallel project, *Lunetta Cultural Camp (LCC)*: conceived in 2018, the initiative aimed at re-opening some of Lunetta's shops, which had been closed since 1986, and at creating a cultural center, available for artist residencies and other cultural activities. Thanks to the financial support given by the city of Mantova, the space has been opened also to other associations for free for three years, so that they could have a location for theater shows, dance and theater courses, and artistic workshops[22]. That year, three artist residencies took place, and an emotional mapping was held in collaboration with C-Change Festival Mantova (Caravan SetUp 2021).

The seventh edition (2022) dealt with themes such as perseverance, loyalty, and persistence – values that had been necessary to take the festival forward for seven years. The title *Per-Durare* (Persisting) recalled both the emotional transport generated by reappropriating spaces, colors and imagination, as well as the concept of temporal end. The artists were Cesare Bettini, Milay, Redb, Corn79, Vesod (Fig. 23), Luca Zamoc, Sara De Lucia, and Elisa Veronelli (Caravan SetUp 2022). As collateral events, a creative workshop about abandoned objects was held by Luca Zevio, and *Fiori d'ortica* (Nettle Flowers) theater show was performed, organized by Sara Moscardini, both taking place at LCC (Caravan SetUp 2022).

The eighth edition (2023) revolved around the double meaning of the Italian word *ancora* ('anchor' but also 'yet/still'), dealing with both the past made up by relationships in Lunetta, and the future that the neighborhood's inhabitants look forward to. On the one hand, the idea of *àncora* (anchor) recalls the path taken by the festival and its commitment to deconstructing the preconceptions about Lunetta, bringing new vitality to the neighborhood. On the other, the *ancòra* (yet) represents the impetus towards the future that awaits the residents of the neighborhood. Participating artists included 4 Vene, Beg, Corn79, Lio Brepi, Giada Pugliese, Luca Zevio, Nice and the fox, Rame13, Scrivimi Presto, Sheko, Supe, Trota, Viola Gesmundo, Clelia Cupelli and Giulia Tavernise, Guillemette Elebaut and Manon Robert, Wendy and Zedz. On this occasion, murals were flanked by the five sculptures created by Lio Brepi to animate the neighborhood (Caravan SetUp 2023). Other

[22] Interview with Simona Gavioli, 25/11/2024. Translated by the author.

interventions were an experiential workshop involving Lunetta's residents, followed by an exhibition named *Lunetta vista con gli occhi di chi la abita* (Lunetta Seen Through the Eyes of Its Inhabitants), organized by Cinzia Pietribiasi, Luca Zevio's two artistic workshops *Ancora una possibilità* (One More Opportunity) and *La natura che colora* (Nature Which Colors), a new performance of *Fiori d'ortica,* and *Carico* (High Card) participative project by Collettivo Borlottee, proposing games in unusual contexts (Caravan SetUp 2023).

The ninth edition (2024) – named *Il Futuro Non è ciò che Accadrà, ma ciò che Faremo* (Future is not what will happen, but what we will do) – worked on actions and relationships, highlighting the importance of working together to build a better future. The title is an answer to a question about the future found in Chiara Mortari's *Affetti S/Connessi | Rigenerare sentimenti e legami nel tempo che divide* (Dis/connected affections. Regenerating emotions and bonds in a time of division) book, where she invites us to conceive new images of the future starting from everyday life, from singular stories, by recomposing affective dis/connections. Invited artists were 13.4.12.7, Collettivo Borlottee, Mono Carrasco, Emilio Cerezo, Corn79, Jasmine Crisp, Nats, Order55 (Fig. 24), Pilo, Silvia Priò, Rambo, Wendy and Vincentheway, Agus Rúcula and Supe. Besides murals, this edition involved a mural workshop led by Mono Carrasco and dedicated to primary school children, a symposium about the word 'future' by Agus Rúcula and Nats, a participative photography project by Silvia Priò and a DJ set with visual projections by Collettivo Borlottee (Caravan SetUp 2024b).

That year saw the birth of the project *Ceilings Without Frontiers,* in collaboration with University of Brescia and Academy of Fine Arts of Catanzaro, including the two workshops *GameForge Lab* and *ElektroLab,* with the objective of developing a videogame, the realization of the immersive documentary *Oltre i muri: la voce di Lunetta in VR360* (Beyond Walls: The Voice of Lunetta in VR360) and of the virtual reality path *VR Lunetta: la storia urbana prende vita* (VR Lunetta: Urban History Comes to Life) (Caravan SetUp 2024b). Lastly, an important initiative was *True Story* (fig. 25), a participative project consisting in the realization of a mini-series, explaining what living in a peripheral neighborhood like Lunetta means for young people[23].

The tenth edition (2025) was named *Lunetta, il Villaggio in Cui le Cicatrici Sono Diventate Poesie* (Lunetta, the village where scars have become poems) and drew inspiration from the practice of Kintsugi, an ancient Japanese art form, which consists in repairing broken ceramics with gold and silver, thus creating precious craftworks. In Kintsugi, breaking is not

[23] *Ibidem*.

seen as a failure, but as an opportunity. The golden lines that weld the fragments tell the story of the object, making it unique and even more precious. Lunetta is metaphorically seen as a mosaic of identities, a weave of voices, a neighborhood that, through art and the meeting of cultures, finds its strength in its many facets. Gavioli looks at artists as goldsmiths, welding connections between people with creativity. Each artwork becomes a golden thread that connects experiences, each mural an illuminated scar, and each color a testimony of stories, cultures and emotions. Artists involved included 4Vene, ScrivimiPresto, 13.4.12.7, MrFijodor, Pilo, ZeroFluido, Shekone, GiovanniDalloSpazio, Supe, Silvia Priò, Mach505, Corn79 and Collettivo Borlottee (Caravan SetUp website).
Over ten years of activity, Lunetta has seen the realization of 104 artworks and of more than 6000 square meters of painted surfaces, the participation of more than a hundred artists, as well as the organization of workshops, guided tours, conferences, exhibitions, music events, and projects for families.

2.2.2 The curatorial model and its evolution

The curatorial projects are based on an in-depth research Gavioli did on Lunetta, involving also weaving relationships and dialog with its inhabitants, municipal authorities and local associations' network. In Gavioli's methodology, configuring a curatorial idea is the first step in organizing each edition: it works as an underlying common thread linking together different artworks and weaving them into the neighborhood to create a new image of it, as emerged during interviews I had with local associations' network representative Sara Vitali[24] and municipal council member Nicola Martinelli[25].
The importance of the curatorial vision is explained by Gavioli in these terms:

> The curator needs to design a project, because they need to know where they are going. [...] It's not always easy with artists, even if they enjoy it in the end: they don't like the curator, in fact they hate curators, it's a figure they still don't recognise, but they are eventually realizing that it is essential to make a project that works. [...] I would [...] [never] do a festival without a curator. I have always experienced Lunetta's project as the making of an exhibition in a museum or art gallery. Urban Art projects cannot be carried out without a curator, without a curatorial project. Otherwise you'll get a jam […], not urban regeneration. […] If you […] [felt that in a festival] there are wonderful artworks, but that they are not dialoguing with each

[24] Interview with Sara Vitali, 18/11/2020.
[25] Interview with Nicola Martinelli, 26/11/2020.

> other, I would think there is a problem. […] If Mantova will sooner or later have artworks in all its neighborhoods, they must necessarily, in my opinion, dialogue with each other while maintaining their own identity and energy. For those who see them, it all has to click! I think that this has been done in Mantova and that you can feel it. […] I've met many people who - without me telling them about this long five-year process – can feel it, that there is a link between one work and the next. [...] [If there is no project], then it will become urban decoration. […] I don't think that artists want to do decoration: they want to go down in history, and to go down in history a project is needed[26].

Once the theme of the project, which functions as the cornerstone of the entire process, has been identified, the artists are selected: of particular importance in the case of Without Frontiers is the contribution of Riccardo Lanfranco, artist and president of the Turin-based cultural association Il Cerchio e le Gocce, dedicated to urban creativity. Since the festival's inception, he has provided advice on the materials to be used and the artists to be invited. The curatorial project is also an important guide to follow in the selection of spaces, as Simona Gavioli explains:

> There is a logic, and buildings are not chosen because that facade is liked best by Corn, or because that other facade is liked best by Aris. There is a curatorial project, and you [as a curator] draw a route, you print the map, the plan of the area [...] and try to figure out which buildings might work best. And then Riccardo and I confront each other, and we decide together, starting from the curatorial project, the path that we want to take ourselves and make people take in a natural way. (Gavioli 2020)

Even artists, especially younger artists who are less tied to a writing background, are beginning to realize the cruciality of the role of the curator. Artists Kiki Skipi and Andrea Casciu say:

> Behind [a festival] there has to be a person who knows what they're doing, who has studied, a good curator, someone who is in the field. That's very important. The best things are always organized when there is an artist behind the scenes, because they actually know what is needed and what is not. A curator like in Lunetta is perfectly fine: a good curator flanked by a good artist [Corn79], confronting each other. Then the curator can act as a mediator with the municipality, with certain situations. The artist mediates with artists. So you create a good working cycle. [...] Sometimes the curator is seen as a little bit weird, but when between an artist and a curator an important bond is created, for the artist it is very useful. You exchange

[26] Interview with Simona Gavioli, 22/11/2020.

> opinions, and then the curator always has a critical perspective, regarding the art world, and different from yours, that helps[27].

Simona Gavioli, on the occasion of LUNETTA. Anno ZERO's first edition, held in October 2020, recounted the initial difficulties she encountered in curating the Without Frontiers project and the key ideas she needed to overcome them:

> Until January 2016, I had never approached Urban Art, I used to see it as something very far away from me. I also used to look at it with some conceit because I didn't understand, I hadn't looked at the history, I hadn't well connected the fact that – [compared to] my favorite artist, Giulio Romano, or Andrea Mantegna – today's artists do nothing different. [...] How can a curator like me, who is a bit rigid, museum-like, set for art fairs and fancy events, be able to say yes to an Urban Art project that she knows nothing about? [...] I disobeyed myself. The key word is disobedience, disobeying. We have to, in a balanced way, disobey. And I did that in 2016 with this project. I went completely out of my comfort zone to enter a totally different world, which actually then changed my whole way of curating, of designing an exhibition or a show. (Gavioli 2020)

Through the years it has also been possible to see the evolution of the festival and its curating in four different aspects, that are the artistic media used, the targeted groups, the spaces involved, and the available time span.

As for the artistic medium, the festival started with a mix of public and mural artworks in the first two editions, while from the third on it increasingly focused on murals. Nonetheless, during the last two editions, the festival began orienting itself towards different media, such as participative projects, theater, photography, music, and videos. The general idea behind this is to put art more and more in contact with social activities. Simona Gavioli explains:

> From an artistic perspective, I must admit that Lunetta has 85 permanent artworks at this point, and you perfectly know that more than 140–150 artists have worked here. There are almost no walls left to be painted for the tenth edition. From an artistic point of view, maybe there are still two, three or four artworks that we would like to make… Something that has never been done before and that we've been doing for a couple of years now is to call back an artist who had already participated in Without Frontiers, asking him to make a new artwork over his old one, dating back to 2016–2017. Thus, this is not a restoration, but an evolution. This has never been done in the writing or in the Urban Art world. But I have to say that, from an artistic perspective, over these ten years we did everything we could do. Once there are no walls left, what needs to be done and implemented, in my opinion—but this is something we have always

[27] Interview with Kiki Skipi and Andrea Casciu, 19/11/2020. Translated by the author.

> been working on—is to work on involving people, even in artistic terms, through little walls to paint, little workshops or projects for young people. […] Therefore, I believe that in the next years we will have to focus more and more on this aspect. It is a social, participated action[28].

As for the targeted public and the relationship with residents, a crucial change has taken place. In fact, during the first five-six years the festival worked to build a relationship of trust with the elderly living in Lunetta. That was hard to achieve, particularly during the first two editions, as the curators were seen as foreigners (Gavioli coming from Bologna and Giliberti from Naples) arriving in the neighborhood and trying to transform it[29]. Gavioli describes this situation like this:

> I'm not going to lie, the first two years weren't easy. Imagine a person who has been living there for forty years, whom no one ever cared about, who has lived among ugliness and unpleasant situations, who has lived in the dark because there was no safe lighting system, who has lived among concrete: he has lived in a place that wasn't built to be a livable place. This doesn't mean that it was not avant-garde architecture when it was built […]: but objectively Lunetta has always been a place with no vegetation, no public square, no social places for people to meet. […] People had been angry for years, because there were eighteen ethnicities, because people didn't talk to each other, because people threw rubbish in the streets, because of a long series of things: these are the suburbs. You come there and listen to everyone with a lot of patience and passion: we got also very strong words, because when someone is angry, it means that that person loves his neighborhood and has a problem. If he sees someone who listens to him, he will think that it can be a connection with public administration or with someone who can help him. So, these have been hard and turbulent years, complex also from an emotional point of view. There were people saying that they didn't want to talk to me, people who got annoyed when they saw me: but these were all warning signals[30].

Over the years, the relationship with residents became more and more familiar, leaving space for dialogue and collaboration. From 2021 on, thanks to the introduction of LCC, the target changed, and the festival started focusing on three new categories: the first includes children aged 4 to 8 and their mothers; the second one is constituted by teenagers aged 14 to 18 and 19 to 22; the third consists of women who are African or have African origins. These categories have been chosen because they have to cope with peculiar emergencies and thus

[28] Interview with Simona Gavioli, 25/11/2024.
[29] *Ibidem.*
[30] Interview with Simona Gavioli, 22/11/2020.

need more support than others. From a focus on trust, the festival moved to a focus on education of young people, seen as the neighborhood's future[31]. An example of this is the *True Story* project, involving adolescents from 19 to 22, who try to express how easy it is to commit little crimes when living in peripheral areas as teenagers, and attempt to communicate it to younger adolescents (14 to 18) who are part of baby gangs[32].

As for the spaces, there have been both a physical evolution and a more figurative one. As for the first, the festival's heart has always been the space surrounded by the C.O.C.E.L. building, but since 2020 it expanded towards Te Brunetti neighborhood as well, where *Piccola Biblioteca Ideale* has been implemented for four years. The idea was that of an artistic pollination spreading from Lunetta to other areas of Mantova. Moreover, the expansion continued inside Lunetta, in the area behind the C.O.C.E.L. building, which looked somewhat outside the neighborhood[33].

On a metaphoric level instead, the expansion of Without Frontiers meant a widening network of collaborations with other associations, festivals, and institutions. This integration of different competences, skills, and knowledge has always been the core of the project, but it has become stronger during the last editions. Gavioli outlines how crucial this aspect is to make regeneration projects successful:

> I don't think that art alone can change and regenerate a neighborhood. I think it can beautify it. I think it can foster reflections and be the starting point for working together with psychologists, anthropologists, educators, and cultural associations, as it has been done in Lunetta. […] If you don't work with people living on the territory, with the associations working on the area, and you don't work extensively by studying, examining, deepening, organizing workshops and projects with young people […], and weaving relationships with adults and with different nationalities, it is impossible to carry out real regeneration projects. We work together, with all the nationalities, to tear these barriers down. […] These projects need to be done this way: not only through art. I believe that they can't work that way. Art is an important point, huge and visible. Workshops can't be seen in the short term, but they will be seen in the future because they help to grow better people. Otherwise, it's all decoration, it's maquillage, as much as beautiful and wonderful. […] We are trying to build the future starting from art, a future made of better people, starting with children. That is the work you can't see, but that you will see. And it is the most important one[34].

[31] Interview with Simona Gavioli, 25/11/2024.
[32] *Ibidem.*
[33] *Ibidem.*
[34] *Ibidem*.

As for the time span, the radical transformation happened in 2021, with the opening of Lunetta Cultural Camp. In fact, while during the previous editions all the interventions had to be done within the week of the festival, having a physical space available all the year allowed both to work closer to the territory and to have a long-term and steady planning for cultural activities[35]. The project's aim was to make Lunetta a producer of new creative geographies, economies, and identities, by valorizing its internal resources: a goal that has been reached, with Lunetta having become one of Mantova's most important cultural reference points[36].

A first study phase, including Gavioli's 2020 interview, showed how the curatorial model adopted by Gavioli, albeit adapted to the urban context, employed typical modes of museum curating, such as the drafting a priori of a curatorial project concerning a specific theme (as in a classic thematic exhibition), the selection of artists, the selection of exhibition spaces and their subsequent assignment to the artists. On the other hand, specific methodological innovations had also been introduced, such as collaboration with the municipality, which promoted the festival, with the network of neighborhood associations ReteLunetta, with which a monthly steering committee has been established, and with other festivals and cultural initiatives such as SEGNI d'Infanzia, Festivaletteratura and IUVENIS Danza. Another important point of discontinuity has been the involvement of citizens, through public presentations, initiatives such as *Con i piedi per terra*, during which a direct confrontation between artists and citizens meant to be fostered, and participatory experiences, such as Project NOVA, in which students from Liceo Classico Virgilio and Liceo Artistico Giulio Romano were involved, and the project *Come il vento* by the Bianco-Valente. Another important point was the inclusion of the art project within a long-term integrated process of urban regeneration: the objectives therefore were from the beginning not only aesthetic, but also and above all social. Finally, a further difference related to the urban location of the curatorial project was the study of the architectural-urban and social context both by the curators and by the artists, which allowed a harmonious integration of the works with the context itself, fostering the attachment of the inhabitants and the identity-shaping of the neighborhood.

A second study phase, including Gavioli's 2024 interview, highlighted an evolution of the festival and of its curatorial model. In particular, it illustrated a process of learning by doing, where the curator adapted her approach step by step, year after year, monitoring how the project was perceived by residents. Constant presence on site from 2021 on has allowed to

[35] *Ibidem.*
[36] *Ibidem.*

experience the neighborhood's life, thus improving social relationships and collaborations. Studying the territory closer, with the support of professionals from other fields, made it possible to understand the major emergencies, the categories in need for support, to make long-term cultural planning and to adjust ways of working and objectives. When *Without Frontiers* arrived in Lunetta in 2016, it was still Mantova's Bronx: today, after ten years of work, it has become one of Mantova's cultural hotspots. This is the consequence of an aware and skillful use of art, not understood as mere decoration, but as the most visible part of a network of integrated actions and professionals. Over ten years, *Without Frontiers* has not been static, but in continuous evolution from several points of view, keeping up with the transformations happening in the neighborhood: as for the artistic medium, it started with murals to open up to photography, videos, performances, and, in general, to social actions; as for its target, it moved from the elderly to young people, as well as from building trust to educating new generations; it expanded spatially to other areas of the city and to other fields, collaborating with educators, doctors, psychologists, and other professionals to work more efficiently; it expanded in terms of time, as it became a stable entity in the neighborhood, having its venue at LCC. In conclusion, *Without Frontiers'* case shows the importance of working long-term, on site, and in an integrated way to achieve good results in urban regeneration projects including art.

3. THE CURATORIAL FIGURE AND CURATING ART IN/FOR/AS URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS

3.1 The relationship between artistic practices and urban planning: a review

This chapter builds the framework in which CAUT practices were born and developed, which is constituted by all of those artistic practices interwoven with public spaces, and in particular with urban spaces undergoing transformation processes (new development, redevelopment, regeneration, and so on). It introduces how the interest for art in public spaces has grown since the beginning of the 20th century, identifying a common thread that starts from early radical artistic practices and political movements to the most recent policies and initiatives in the field of public art and design of urban spaces in Europe. In order to make this summary, the author reviewed sources coming from both the Arts and the Urban Planning sector. Helpful sources to find pertinent bibliography have been the *Public Art Research Report (2018)* (Caminha et al. 2018), a report on the most relevant literature about public art produced both in the Nordic Countries and internationally and divided by research themes, where a chapter is specifically devoted to public art in planning and urban development, and the *Collectively Annotated Bibliography. On Artistic Practices in the Expanded Field of Public Art* (Wielander, Lucchetti 2020), a collection of book reviews by public art experts. Also collections of essays on specific topics have been useful, such as Barbara Holub and Christine Hohenbüchler's *Planning Unplanned,* dealing with artistic practices hybridized with urban planning (Holub, Hohenbüchler 2015), Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis's *The Practice of Public Art* (Cartiere, Willis 2008), discussing both theoretical and practical aspects of public art interventions, and Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Jarosław Działek's *The Impact of Artists on Contemporary Urban Development in Europe* (Murzyn-Kupisz, Działek 2017), which explores both the patterns and tendencies of spatial concentrations of artists and cultural activities, and the diversity of artists' involvement in urban development. As for journals, the consulted ones include e-*flux* (an art journal where articles can be filtered through categories such as "Urbanism" and subjects such as "Public Space" or "Public Art"), *FIELD* (a journal about Socially Engaged Art practices, where no filters can be used, but it is possible to search articles using keywords), *open! Platform for Art, Culture and the Public Domain* (a platform about art and the public realm, which also

includes the issues of the now extinguished *Open. Cahier on Art and the Public Domain* journal*:* among the tags available for filtering research are "Public Domain", "Public Space" and "Urban Space", but it is also possible to search through keywords)*, Cities* (an international journal of public policy and planning, where several articles about art in public spaces can be found by searching through keywords), *Art & the Public Sphere* (an journal about art in the public realm, searchable through keywords and topics)*,* and *Public Art Dialogue* (a journal about public art, searchable through keywords). Then, the author used specific thematic issues such as "Public Art, Urban Arts: on Aesthetics, Practices and Languages in the City" (Borchi et al. 2023) from the *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes,* or as "Co-Creation and the City: Arts-Based Methods and Participatory Approaches in Urban Planning" (Carpenter, Horvath 2022), from *Urban Planning,* and as "Art in Public Spaces: New Roles for Art and Curating in Times of Transnational Mobility" (Petersen, Nielsen 2022), from the *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*. Lastly, in order to find good examples of these kind of artistic practices, the author used both publications collecting projects such as Angelika Burtscher and Judith Wielander's *Visible* (Burtscher, Wielander 2010) and Nato Thompson's *Living As Form* (Thompson 2012), and online databases such as Public Art Online's, Institute for Public Art's, Spatial Agency's, and urban matters's.

The chapter follows a chronological order, starting from the first decades of the 20th century to the present day: for each decade, artistic practices and exhibitions related to urban spaces and urban development, urban policies involving art, and artistic, spatial and planning theories dealing with this topic will be illustrated. The last part of the chapter contains a literature review discussing the main thematic areas related to the topic, such as the pros and cons of creative placemaking (with a particular attention to risks of gentrification and instrumentalization), innovation and sustainability of art-led regeneration, the roles of the artist in urban planning processes, new terminology introduced to describe these artistic practices, and possible classifications of such practices.

3.1.1 The origins of art in public spaces: from the Historical Avantgardes to the 1960s

The origins of art in public spaces lie in the historical European avant-gardes and the political movements of the 1960s, a period in which artists began to move out of the institutional spaces of art, such as museums and galleries, to work in the urban space: this was related, in particular, to the rejection of the institutional role of the museum in establishing the artistic status of works (Mazzucotelli Salice 2016). In particular, Dadaist artists in Paris «"took to

the streets" in order to reach a wider audience, annexing the social forms of the guided tour and the trial in order to experiment with a more nihilistic type of artistic practice in the public sphere» (Bishop 2012a: 37). They organized two landmark events: the first was an afternoon excursion to Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre (Fig. 26), a medieval church alongside the Seine on the Left Bank of Paris, on 14th April 1921, one year after the long-awaited arrival of Tristan Tzara in Paris in January 1920. He, along with Francis Picabia and members of the Dada group from Zurich, joined the founders of the journal *Littérature*, Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon, and André Breton to organize this event. The second excursion was organized by Breton in May 1924: Breton, Aragon, artist Max Morise, and playwright Roger Vitrac travelled by train 185km south-west of Paris to a town picked at random from a map and had a ten-day journey in the Loire Valley (Marshall 2023).

Following a similar line, the Situationists, a group born in 1957, aimed at integrating art and everyday life: they introduced psychogeography, a method which investigates urban space through the influence it has on human behavior. Psychogeographic explorations usually happened as *dérive*, a term meaning drifting through urban space to explore varied environments. One of the group's founders, philosopher Guy Débord, also gave birth to «unitary urbanism», a kind of planning in contrast with the pragmatism of classical planning, introducing artistic actions as a planning tool for producing spontaneous (tactical) change (Situationist International 1958). Following this idea, architect Constant Nieuwenhuys designed his *New Babylon* (1956-1974) (Fig. 27), a utopian proposal for a global city for a post-capitalist society, designed for *Homo Ludens* – the playful, creative human imagined by Johan Huizinga. The city, a continuous, dynamic environment designed from the flaneur's perspective, was characterized by labyrinthine and dynamic spaces, a focus on play and leisure over utility, a multilevel structure and an emphasis on dialectical life (people shape their environment and are simultaneously shaped by it through radical social participation).

Also the introduction of Joseph Beuys's "social sculpture" (*Soziale Plastik*) theory between the late 1960s and the early 1970s was crucial for art to leave galleries in favor of public spaces: in fact, according to this theory, art has the power to shape society, not only objects. In the mean time, important initiatives that encouraged such practices were born, such as the Federal Art Project (1935) and the Public Art Programs (since 1959) in the United States, and Percent for Art schemes both in the U.S. and in several European countries (among the first ones: Sweden in 1937, Italy in 1949, France in 1951, and the Netherlands in 1951). In particular, the Percent for Art is a public cultural policy that requires a fixed percentage (usually from 0.5 to 2%) of the budget for public construction projects to be set aside for

commissioning artworks. Nonetheless, most of the art produced through this schemes, at least up to the mid 1970s, was not related to the urban context where it was placed: this is what art historian Miwon Kwon calls «art-in-public-places», when she elaborates her three paradigms of art in relation to public space (Kwon 2002). These artworks were usually signature pieces from internationally established artists, and were basically enlarged replicas of works normally found in museums and galleries, having no distinctive qualities to render them "public" except their size and scale (a classic example of this model is Alexander Calder's *La Grande Vitesse* in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1969) (Fig. 28). Kwon explains that

> What legitimated them as "public" art was quite simply their siting outdoors or in locations deemed to be public primarily because of their "openness" and unrestricted physical access—parks, university campuses, civic centers, entrance areas to federal buildings, plazas off city streets, parking lots, airports […] For the architects involved, the art work was usually considered a beneficial visual supplement but finally an extraneous element to the integrity of a building or space. Contrarily, in many artists' views, the site remained a ground or pedestal upon which, or against which, the priority of the figure of the art work would be articulated. Such thinking was predicated on a strict separation between art and architecture (synonymous with the site) as two autonomous fields of practice. (Kwon 2002: 60-63)

The objective of these artworks was basically the amelioration of monotonous environments created by modernist architecture, but actually their inaccessibility often generated indifference in the public.

3.1.2 The turn of the 1970s: «art-as-public-spaces» and the raising interest in urban issues

The situation started to change in the mid 1970s, when an interest towards site-specific art was developed: Kwon's second paradigm was introduced, that of «art-as-public-spaces». This approach is typified by design-oriented urban sculptures such as those of Scott Burton and Nancy Holt, which function as street furniture, architectural constructions, or landscaped environments. These artworks tried to overcome the sense of alienation of urban space by building a relationship with the surrounding context: this attempt corresponded to the idea that the aesthetic quality of the built environment determines the quality of social conditions. Even though several of these artworks were examples of assimilative (or integrationist) site-specificy, meaning that they aligned with the production of public amenities, others positioned themselves as critical (or interruptive), as is the case of Richard Serra's famous

Tilted Arc (New York, 1981) (Fig. 29), which caused much controversy precisely because it was working against architecture rather than in collaboration with it, and it didn't take into consideration the context's social dimension (so much that it had to be removed from its location in 1989).

Besides individual artworks, there were also exhibitions dealing with urban issues, such as 1972's exhibition curated by Gunilla Lundahl in the northern Swedish mining and forestry city of Skellefteå, titled *Det växer i Skellefteå. Men hur?* (Skellefteå is Growing. But How?), referring to the fact that the city was facing a process of urban expansion (Fig. 30). Held in a vacant bingo hall slated for demolition, the project was commissioned by Swedish governmental ministries of Public Administration and the Interior to test methods for citizen influence and democratic participation regarding a national report on land and water management (*SOU 1971:75 Management of Land and Water – Inventories, Planning Considerations for Certain Natural Resources, Forms of National Spatial Planning and Legislation*). Through the initiative, the government aimed at nipping in the bud the 1970s protests regarding authoritarian planning and at anchoring the proposal in a local setting. Lundahl transformed what could have been a dry bureaucratic exercise into a radical critique of urbanism through several key strategies: firstly, she collaborated with designers Björn Ed and Jaan Zimmerman to convert the abstract government planning text into a series of physical, recognizable rooms. These environments, named The cottage (*Stugan*), The Forest (*Skogen*), Industrial Planning (*Industriplanering*), Labour Market Waiting Room (*Arbetsmarknads väntrum*), The School - The Municipality (*Skolan-Kommunen*), Regional Politics (*Regionalpolitik*) and Outdoor life − Tourism (*Friluftsliv-Turism*), allowed visitors to see the consequences of policy shifts in everyday terms. Secondly, to make the planning visible, the team used emotional modes of address. For example, forestry plans were explained via labels attached to felled timber, and housing regulations were stitched directly into home embroideries. One room was dedicated to the controversial plans to harness local rivers for hydropower: it featured a large wall painting of a village tug of war, with the Byskeälven river serving as the rope, representing the struggle between life values and development stakeholders. The exhibition acted as social glue, binding together local organizations, schools, and adult education groups (Zetterlund 2023). Lundahl engaged with such «informal communities, temporarily established around the possibility of an exhibition, as an attempt to break rigid logics of showing and displaying while observing processes taking place beyond the museum» (Ekstrand et al. 2022: 18). Thanks to her «deep understanding of the social and material culture – economics, indigenous communities,

handicrafts, and daily life – she transformed a governmental commission, into a critique of the abstract ideas that usually drive urbanism. Ideas that very often have nothing to do with the reality of places, and the specific needs of their population» (Ekstrand et al. 2022: 18).

The impact of the exhibition was both immediate and long-lasting. It forced the Swedish government to change its communication strategy and find alternative ways to explain urban plans to the public. Most notably, the resistance fostered by the exhibition led to the formation of the River Saviours (*Älvräddarna*), who successfully saved four Norrland rivers from being harnessed. Furthermore, the political fallout from ministerial promises made at the opening regarding jobs for women eventually led to a major trade union battle and the creation of a worker-owned company. Ultimately, the Skellefteå project redefined the exhibition medium as a workroom for action, moving beyond passive display to offer material for collective social change through co-creation and participatory methods (Zetterlund 2023).

Another famous example is *L'ambiente come sociale* (Environment as Social), an exhibition curated by Enrico Crispolti, in collaboration with Raffaele De Grada, at 1976's Venice Biennale. The exhibition sought to redefine art as a cooperative social intervention rather than a collection of static objects, emphasizing democratic participation and urban engagement during a period of intense political reform in Italy. The curators sought to move beyond the linguistic traditions of the individual author, placing art in a cooperative and paritarian dialogue with society. Crispolti's brief introductory text to the exhibition posited as fundamental urgencies of the experiences presented the identification of the urban and social sphere as a field of experimentation (beyond the designated artistic venues), the new demand for participation and self-management of social and cultural space by non-professionals, and therefore the search by artists and intellectuals for cooperative, dialogical and equal working methods. Within the exhibition, a cycle of meetings, debates, and temporary exhibitions called *Documentazione Aperta* (Open Documentation) was organized, featuring contributions from groups like the A/Social Group and artists such as Enzo Mari and Ico Parisi, allowing for a direct testing of intervention poetics in the social sphere. The exhibition project included, among others, the sculptural works of Francesco Somaini and Mauro Staccioli, the urban incursions of Ugo La Pietra, Gruppo di Coordinamento, and Franco Summa, the experiences in the Neapolitan neighborhoods of architect Riccardo Dalisi, the theater workshops of Vincenzo De Simone, the actions of the Collettivo Autonomo Pittori di Porta Ticinese and the Laboratorio di Comunicazione Militante, and the grassroots initiatives organized in Sesto San Giovanni and in the Testaccio district of Rome (Catenacci 2015).

As can be understood from the list of artists and architects involved in *L'ambiente come sociale*, the 1970s were a period of intense hybridization between artistic practices, architecture, urban planning and social interventions. For instance, artist Ugo La Pietra, in his 1977 film titled *La riappropriazione della città* (Reclaiming the city) (Fig. 31) deals with reclaiming the city not so much through physical interventions but through behavioral and mental operations such as drawing maps of the city: he gives directions about how to draw different kinds of maps ("Your city of information", the "City of your itineraries", the "City of your monuments" and the "City of your mind") by connecting several interest points in the city, such as all the places where you have used the phone, all the stations from which you have departed or arrived, all objects that have served you as three-dimensional symbols in your paths, all the places where you have perceived or memorized emotional events, and so on. These four maps overlapped will shape the map of your city: La Pietra suggest to compare it with those made by friends and colleagues, in order to get a series of interrelations having nothing to do with the stereotypes of the city planned by the formalizers and architects (La Pietra 1977).

Another example is that of the Artist Placement Group (APG), founded by Barbara Steveni with her husband John Latham in 1966, with the aim of placing artists in government, commercial and industrial organisations. Artists were also embedded in town planning departments, where they became so-called Incidental Person (IP). Rather than being commissioned to produce a traditional monument or sculpture, the artist was placed within governmental and bureaucratic organizations – such as the Milton Keynes Development Corporation or the Peterlee Development Corporation – to act as a specialized observer and catalyst for change. Bringing an artistic sensibility to decision-making from an outside perspective in planning departments, artists provided an alternative time-base, prioritizing longer-term preoccupations and poetic intuition over the administrative quick fix and immediate commercial exigencies. In these placements, the artist's primary function was to watch the doings and listen to the noises of the organization, as a kind of ethnographer. This involved observing the unconscious rhythms and systems that defined the department's rational order and then intervening with non-verbal intuition to alter the course of events. In 1975, artist Stuart Brisley was placed at the Peterlee Development Corporation (PDC) with the aim of addressing the placelessness of a new town that was being developed. This engagement moved beyond the traditional studio to focus on social engineering and community consciousness: the artist worked to co-produce a sense of community consciousness and designed forums where residents could gather to help the new town cohere as a social unit (Rycroft 2019). Something similar was done also by artist Mierle

Laderman Ukeles, who became the New York City Department of Sanitation's first artist in residence 1977, and who decided to devote her artistic career to the work of taking care of the home and the city, seen as a performative work of art (Fig. 32). To establish this principle, she wrote in 1969 the *Maintenance Art Manifesto 1969! Proposal for an exhibition "CARE"*, in which she invented the role of the maintenance artist. Here, Ukeles claims the necessity to constitute an aesthetic of maintenance and care as key elements for life. In the early 1970s, she performed a series of maintenance art interventions in which she took on the tasks of maintenance workers. In this way, she called attention to invisible labor - work that goes unnoticed and is often underpaid and undervalued, but is nonetheless essential to the upkeep of people and places (White 2020).

From architecture's side, during these years, architects started to work in ways that resembled artistic practices, as is the case of Radical Architecture, whose representatives often created works dealing with concepts that couldn't be expressed through architecture's traditional representation language, but rather used techniques such as photocollage to build their architectural narrations. For example, the Archizoom group presented their *No-Stop City* (1970-72) project (Fig. 33), which started from a reflection on the contemporary city, providing an in-depth analysis that revealed the state of the city as an expression of capitalism and the relationship between city and territory: the model they ideated to showcase their idea, was based on optic illusions given by the strategic positioning of mirrors, resembling the practice of contemporary artist Yayoi Kusama, who had produced her first *Infinity Mirror Room* in 1965 (Fig. 34). The collage technique was used, instead, by Archigram group in projects such as *Instant City* (1968) (Fig. 35), a temporary, mobile city that could be plugged into existing towns, especially small or peripheral ones, to inject culture, technology, and information. Rather than building permanent structures, Archigram proposed a traveling urban event that would arrive via airships, balloons, trucks, and modular units, activate a place, and then disappear.

From a theoretical point of view, the 1960s and 1970s were particularly important because several contributions were published regarding the fact that the production of the urban space was not just a technical matter to be handled by architects and planners with their specific disciplinary instruments, but was a much wider issue, both economic and social, to which many more players could contribute. For example, neomarxist urban studies emerged thanks to scholars such as Manuel Castells and David Harvey, who respectively wrote *The Urban Question* in 1972 (Castells 1974) and *Social Justice and the City* in 1973 (Harvey 1988). According to these theories, urban planning is seen as functional to serve capitalist economy's needs, thus reproducing poverty and inequality. Another crucial contribution was

that of Henri Lefebvre, who published *The Right to the City* in 1968 (Lefebvre 2014) and *The Production of Space* in 1974 (Lefebvre 1991). In the first book, the French philosopher and sociologist introduced the right to the city concept, arguing that city life should be shaped by its inhabitants rather than by market forces, state power, or technocratic planning. The right to the city is a collective political right to produce, shape, and transform urban space and everyday life: basically, a right to urban life, meaning participation, creativity, and appropriation of spaces. With his theory, Lefebvre stated that it was all urban inhabitants to hold this right, including marginalized groups and informal users of the city, thus greatly widening the pool of people who could shape urban spaces. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre introduced the idea of space is not a neutral or given entity, but a social product of political, economic, and cultural processes. Every society produces the kinds of spaces it needs in order to function and reproduce itself. Space therefore reflects power relations, organizes everyday life, and supports dominant economic systems (such as capitalism). Moreover, he distinguished among three different kinds of spaces: perceived space (or spatial practice), which is the space of everyday routines and movements (how space is used and experienced in daily life through its streets, housing and transport systems), conceived space (or representations of space), which is the space of planners, architects, technocrats, and scientists (the dominant, abstract space that organizes and controls society through maps, plans, and zoning laws), and lived space (or spaces of representation), which is space related to the social dimension (not only physical or mental as in the two previous categories). Lived space overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Lefebvre claims that this space is the terrain for generating spaces of resistance to the dominant order, being characterized by limited knowability and radical openness. This space has had an important role for the development of alternative planning practices (as well as for curatorial practices, as will be explained later). A classic example of this is the work done by Jane Jacobs in the neighborhoods of New York, which is usually compared to Robert Moses's large-scale planning practice. While Moses focused on large-scale public infrastructure such as road-building, Jacobs focused on the details, on the street, advocating for a vibrant public sphere where the community has the agency to fight for the health of their own neighborhoods. While Moses's approach was often imperious and master-plan driven, dictating the course of the future from a position of centralized power, Jacobs's teachings encourage citizen participation and the belief that the process matters just as much as the physical result. Jacobs presented her theory in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) (Jacobs 1961), where she argued that healthy cities grow from the bottom up, through social interaction and diversity, not from top-down planning schemes. She claims that healthy neighborhoods

require mixed uses and activity throughout the day and night in order to support safety and vitality, guaranteed also by informal public surveillance. She also encourages to plan short blocks, whose frequent intersections foster movement and social interaction. Jacobs emphasized the importance of local knowledge and the role of residents as active producers of urban order. Other contributions of that time moving away from the technical top-down planning model are that of Paul and Linda Davidoff, who introduced the idea of «advocacy planning» (Davidoff 1965) – rejecting the idea that planners act as neutral technicians in a planning process, and arguing that planners should take into account social and political values in their work by representing and advocating for the interests of underrepresented groups in society and presenting alternative perspectives (an attitude that has been oftentimes adopted also by artists and curators working in public space) – and of Christopher Tunnard, who highlighted the importance of focusing on the needs of the community, rather than on the economic functions of cities, and of considering cities as cultural entities in order to make them more livable (Tunnard 1951).

Lastly, another important contribution, which became very relevant in talking about the design of public spaces, was provided by urban planner Kevin Lynch, who wrote *The Image of the City* in 1960 (Lynch 1960). There, he brought in the concept of «imageability» as a principle to organize the everyday chaos of urban experience: in particular, he defined it as «that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer» (Lynch 1960: 9). Moreover, Lynch claimed that cities should be «legible» to their inhabitants and he proposed to organize their «visual quality» according to five structuring elements, that are nodes, districts, edges, paths, and landmarks. His study has become a milestone and the starting point for later reflections on themes such as placemaking and city branding, together with the ideas of urban designer Gordon Cullen, who theorized the «art of relationship» in his *Townscape* (Cullen 1961): according to Cullen, places are understood differently when put in relationship with their surroundings. In particular, the environment can produce emotions in three ways: through optics (emotions which an urban scene provokes through the visual sense), place (reactions stemming from the position of the body in the environment) and content (reactions related to towns' colour, texture, scale, style, character, personality and uniqueness). On a similar line, human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan studied the perception of spaces, theorizing the concept of «topophilia» (Tuan 1974), or the love of place, meaning the emotional, sensory, and symbolic connections people form with specific environments. Tuan makes a crucial distinction between space (open, abstract, associated with freedom and movement) and place (enclosed, meaningful, associated with security and attachment). Topophilia explains how

space is transformed into place through lived experience, particularly through sensory experience, memory and personal history, cultural symbols and narratives, and everyday practices and routines. The concept is important to understand how landscapes become part of identity and what is the emotional impact of urban change, reintroducing emotion and experience into spatial analysis.

3.1.3 From the late 1980s to the early 2000s: culture-led urban regeneration and the rise of «art-in-the-public-interest»

In the practices presented until now, although the artistic interventions were placed in public spaces, they were not specifically related to urban transformation processes. Things started to change in the mid 1980s, when culture came to be seen as a tool for urban regeneration. If the first urban renewal experiences in the United States date back to the 1960s, in Europe the first urban renewal programs were born in the 1970s, in order to deal with the urban crisis due to economic recession during those years. In the mid 1980s, urban regeneration models based on physical regeneration – focusing on urban voids and suburbs, aimed at giving the city a new image – and on economic regeneration – which, through the promotion of economic activities based on new technologies and advanced services, aimed to improve competitiveness on the global market, attract investment, locate strategic functions, and create place branding that replaced the image of an industrial city with that of a center of innovation – were flanked by cultural regeneration initiatives, based on policies to promote cultural consumption, the new engine of the urban economy in post-industrial cities. This latter model can be divided into three further subcategories: the first is culture-led regeneration, where regeneration is driven by a high-profile cultural institution that creates a center of attraction in a degraded area; the second is cultural regeneration, where the promotion of cultural activities is part of a strategy that also includes initiatives of a different nature, such as environmental, social, or economic initiatives; the third is culture and regeneration, where cultural policy is not integrated into strategic planning nor does it play a role in the regeneration process. Lastly, there is a fourth type of urban regeneration intervention, consisting in an integrated or holistic approach, based on coordinated sets of policies that integrate different sectors and actively involve the target groups. These interventions, which are mostly social in nature, do not aim to strengthen market dynamics, but to promote local development policies that address social exclusion and marginalization (Vicari Haddock 2009). During those years, the European Commission promoted initiatives such as the *European Cities of Culture* (1983), which represented the first occasion for

culture-led and cultural regeneration, as in the famous Glasgow case (which became the European City of Culture in 1990). Nonetheless, this phenomenon reached its peak in the 1990s, with Barcelona hosting the Olympics in 1992, the Guggenheim Museum being inaugurated in Bilbao in 1997 (starting a culture-led regeneration process which became so famous that scholars started talking about the "Bilbao effect"), and the first study about creative cities being published by Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini in 1995 (Bianchini, Landry 1995). Thus, it was both scholarship and key experiences to promote the inclusion of artistic practices in regeneration processes during those years. Besides the work of Bianchini and Landry, it was the economist Richard Florida to reach success at the beginning of the 2000s with his *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* book (Florida 2002): he saw the creative city and the creative class as fertile grounds for culture-led and tourism-led regeneration processes, where creativity and culture were meant to solve problems such as creating social cohesion and inclusion, improving the image of the city, reducing criminal behaviors, promoting interest for the local environment, developing community trust, creating public and private partnerships, exploring the city's identity, developing the place's meaning, engaging citizens, fostering social change and attracting tourism. This approach is linked to the turn of cities towards the so-called «symbolic economy» (Zukin 1995), based on the production of symbols and images to transform the identities of cities, increasing their levels of vitality and vibrancy. In this context, the notion of culture has moved from a form of heritage to be preserved to an economic asset with market value (García 2004). This approach has been acclaimed so much as it has been harshly critiqued not only in terms of instrumentalisation of art, but also in terms of (anti)democratic nature of its outcomes (e.g. the starting of gentrification processes): in many cases, these interventions have been imposed on public spaces through top-down political decisions, especially when revolving around costly and impactful flagship interventions. According to cultural economist Pier Luigi Sacco, the success of creative cities – characterized by high levels of technology, talent, and tolerance – which attract creative classes – in turn characterized by cosmopolitanism, a passion for technology, and an interest in lively, culturally stimulating, and active urban environments – is unfounded from a statistical point of view, so much so that the results of the therapeutic application of this model to degraded cities have often proved disappointing (Sacco 2011). Davide Ponzini is equally skeptical, contesting three points in particular: the so-called "Bilbao effect," whereby spectacular architecture has the power to revitalize declining urban contexts; the use of public art as a guarantee of participatory inclusion of the local population; the belief that the localization of activities and a creative class can trigger

spontaneous processes of urban revitalization (Ponzini 2011). Serena Vicari Haddock (Vicari Haddock 2009), as well as Tim Hall and Iain Robertson (Hall, Robertson 2001), highlight the difficulty of assessing the positive effects of culture-based regeneration processes, both due to the risks associated with loss of authenticity and gentrification, and due to the lack of adequate scientific tools (even though scholarship has recently seen interesting progress in this field, see for example the research done by Maria Cerreta, Ludovica La Rocca and Ezio Micelli, 2022). Ignazio Vinci describes how the results are often poor in terms of employment and spatial and aesthetic impact, even going so far as to refer to a «Disneyland effect» (Vinci 2008). Sacco emphasizes the importance of moving beyond the flagship phase,

with its emphasis on the image and perception of the city, to prevent it from becoming normalized, turning the city into a mere tourist destination or, worse, a place of degradation. It is necessary to move on to the integration phase, during which an increase in social value is reconciled with the economic value of public space, the identity of the local community is developed, and new professional skills related to cultural production and enjoyment are created. Lastly, it is possible to move on to a third phase, that of culturalisation, in which public space can become a platform for relationality and the construction of social networks, to raise awareness on local issues, to fight degradation, to reappropriate historical memory, to experiment and innovate (Sacco 2006).

Besides its criticalities, Florida's theory greatly contributed to put culture and art on the map for policymakers. Not surprisingly, that was the period of the «cultural turn», named so by theorist Fredric Jameson, who used this expression to argue that the social space was completely saturated with the image of culture at the end of the 1990s (Jameson 1998), a theory supported also by George Yúdice, who stated that in that period the uses of culture had undergone an unprecedented expansion not just in the marketplace but also along social, political, and economic lines (Yúdice 2004). Interestingly, at the beginning of the 1990s, there was also a development in the paradigm of art in public space, which allowed to leave behind flagship interventions in favor of more participatory and inclusive projects to be integrated in urban regeneration processes. Going back to Miwon Kwon's models, during those years the third and last approach she describes was born: «art-in-the-public-interest», named as such by critic Arlene Raven and most cogently theorized by artist Suzanne Lacy under the heading of New Genre Public Art (Kwon 2002). These works dealt with social issues and political activism, and engaged communities in collaborative projects. Kwon explains that:

> The emphasis on the social stems from the belief that the meaning or value of the art work does not reside in the object itself but is accrued over time through the interaction between the artist and the community […] What this means is that the artist's assimilation into a given community now coincides with the art work's integration with the site. The prior goal of integration and harmony in terms of unified urban design is reorganized around the performative capacity of the artist to become one with the community. (Kwon 2002: 95)

As Kwon pinpoints, this paradigm was theorized for the first time by artist Suzanne Lacy, in her *Mapping the terrain. New Genre Public Art* (Lacy 1995). Compared to previous paradigms of public art, described as individualistic and independent, with a «non-relational, non-interactive, non-participatory orientation» (Gablik 1995: 80), New Genre Public Art is a kind of art that builds communities, that is «listener-centered rather than vision-oriented» (Gablik 1995: 82). During this period, several expressions were born to describe this kind of practices: for example, critic Grant Kester introduced the term «community art» in his 1995 text *Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art* (Kester 1995)*;* later on, Kester used the term «collaborative art», in his famous book *The one and the many. Contemporary collaborative art in a global context* (Kester 2011); «socially engaged art» was instead a term born in the U.S. between the late 1980s and early 1990s; critic Claire Bishop talked about «the social turn» in her article *The Social Turn: collaboration and it discontents* (Bishop 2006), and about «participatory art» in her book *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (Bishop 2012b), to designate an artistic orientation toward the social and overturning the traditional relationship between the art object, the artist and the audience. In these practices, the artist is no longer seen as an individual producer of objects, but as a collaborator and producer of situations, the work of art is no longer a finite and commodifiable product but a long-term project, and the audience is no longer a viewer, but a co-producer and participant.

Examples of socially engaged artistic practices related to urban development (many times resulting in hybrid artistic-architectural practices) emerged between the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s: one of the most famous ones is Rick Lowe's *Project Row Houses* (Fig. 36), started in 1993 to make the redevelopment process of Third Ward, a black-community neighborhood in Houston, more socially sustainable. He worked against the traditional scheme according to which the area is defined as derelict (not only in physical terms, but also in terms of the character of its inhabitants, whose displacement becomes less objectionable), and instead tried to revive the cultural traditions of the neighborhood, ensuring that improvements of redevelopment would benefit everyone. Lowe, while working

in a community center in Third Ward, found 22 abandoned houses in bad conditions, mostly shotgun-style cottages built between the post-civil ar period and the 1930s: he saw them as a link to the history of the neighborhhod and argued for their preservation. Through funding of National Endowment for the Arts and private foundations, he bought the houses and worked with students of Rice University's School of Architecture to renovate them into prototypes of affordable housing. He set aside 7 houses as transitional houses for single mothers in Third Ward – who were provided with education, assistance and training for 1-2 years – while other 8 houses were used to establish an artist-residency program. Then, Lowe and his collaborators expanded the project by establishing a Community Development Corporation and started buying and renovating more houses to expand the stock of affordable housing (Kester 2011). Another interesting project is *Park Fiction*, developed by artists Christoph Schäfer and Cathy Skene (but later also Simone Borgstede, Margit Czenki, Dirk Mescher, Thomas Ortmann, Klaus Petersen, Ellen Schmeisser, Sabine Stoevesand, Axel Wiest and Günther Greis) in Hamburg's Hafenstraße neighborhood in 1994 (Figg. 37-38). Building both on a tradition of organized political resistance in the area around Hamburg's harbor, dating back to the occupation of the Hafenstraße neighborhood in the 1980s, and on the tradition of participatory planning emerged in the 1960s in opposition to the top-down traditional planning of the 1950s, the project not only critiqued the gentrification of Hamburg's waterfront, but organized a parallel planning process, beginning with the creation of plaforms for exchange among residents (Kester 2011). In place of high-rise apartments and office buildings – barricading the neighborhood from its waterfront – proposed by the city development community, the artists designed a new public park for the residents' community, and in collaboration with them. The artists facilitated a parallel planning process, undermining bureaucratic hierarchies of conventional planning, while retaining a sufficient level of organization and political coherence to operate within existing circuits of public policy and decision making. *Park Fiction* mobilized residents through presentations, film screenings, musical performances, exhibitions and other events, allowing them to make wishes and proposals for the site. It reinvented the planning process like a game, constructing a planning container filled with planning tools (such as a clay modeling office, a phone hotline, a wish archive, a mobile planning action kit with questionnaires, maps, and an instant camera): this way, it demystifyed the technical complexity of planning. The collective held community forums to select the final projects and organize the design and construction process with residents, the administration and an architect (Kester 2011). After ten years of struggles the park was inaugurated in 2005, with a Teagarden Island or Palm

tree Island featuring artificial palm trees to hang hammocks, three Open Air Solariums and a Flying Carpet, a wave shaped piece of lawn bordered by an Alhambra-inspired mosaic.

Another famous project is Stalker collective's *Immaginare Corviale* (2004), which dealt with a huge social housing building designed by architect Mario Fiorentino in 1972 as a self-sufficient satellite neighborhood of Rome. The project, financed by the Municipality of Rome and coordinated by Fondazione Olivetti, aimed at changing Corviale's stereotypical image as a negative symbol of the Italian suburbs. To do so, Stalker led an experimental research and artistic production intervention. They organized different sets of activities, such as mapping workshops with University Roma Tre, architecture talks, a condominium workshop (*Laboratorio condominale*), and a tv format to reclaim Corviale's spaces (*Corviale Network*). The neighborhood tv aimed at involving residents in telling the story of Corviale, using tv formats that were common in cooking and entertainment programs of that time, such as *C'è Posta per Te.* The condominium workshop revolved around management and self-organization practices, dealing for example with the reuse and participatory redesign of the building's fourth floor (which, in the initial project, was meant to host commercial activities and communal spaces, but was squatted and converted to flats even before the spaces were assigned), and the development of urban gardens (*Orti urbani*) in the green area in front of the building (Gennari Santori, Pietromarchi 2006).

One last example is Apolonija Šušteršič's *Hustadt Project* (2008) (Fig. 39), where the artist was invited to make a public art project in Hustadt, a suburban neighbourhood of Bochum city, built in the late 1960s as a model neighbourhood following general urban standards. The area was intended to be a *Universitätsrahmenstadt*, that is a residential area framing the campus of the Bochum University, built to offer professors, students, academics, and public employees nearby housing (Apolonija Šušteršič's Official Website). Nonetheless, over the years, Hustadt gained a ghetto reputation, being characterized by high unemployment and lengthy integration processes of its multicultural community. Šušteršič's project was initially planned to last only nine months, but it turned into a three-year process of negotiations, discussions, and actions. It evolved into a self-organized initiative together with local activists and provoked a huge discussion within the city legislature. The *Hustadt Project* was finally accepted in the urban regeneration plan for Innere Hustadt as part of the Urban Regeneration Program for Hustadt. The project consisted in a research phase, through formal and informal meetings, discussions, and workshops with residents, and then the planning of several activities for the neighbourhood in order to test the location, to encourage residents to act on and react to present conditions, outside of official social institutions. The process led to the drafting of a proposal for and the eventual realization of the *Community Pavilion*

– *Brunnenplatz 1*, a multifunctional infrastructure for the main square in Hustadt, a meeting place for inhabitants (Apolonija Šušteršič's Official Website).

Of course, many more relevant practices could be presented, such as that of Jeanne Van Heeswijk (see *The Blue House*, Amsterdam, 2005), of transparadiso (Barbara Holub and Paul Rajakovics; see *Paradise Enterprise*, Judenburg, 2012), of muf architecture/art (Liza Fior, Katherine Clarke and Juliet Bidgood; see *Shared Ground*, London, 2001), of public works (Sandra Denicke-Polcher, Torange Khonsari, Andreas Lang, Kathrin Böhm and Stefan Saffer; see *Islington Resident Infrastructures*, London, 2023), of raumlabor (Andrea Hofmann, Axel Timm, Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius, Christof Mayer, Florian Stirnemann, Francesco Apuzzo, Frauke Gerstenberg, Jan Liesegang, and Markus Bader; see *Kitchen Monument*, Berlin and other locations, 2006), of Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée (Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu; see *Passage 56*, Paris, 2006), and many more.

These kind of practices have significantly contributed to urban design, particularly because urban planning methodologies were becoming more interested in social regeneration and participatory processes: for example, artistic projects were developed as part of the European *URBAN I* (1994-1996) and *URBAN II* (2000-2006) programs, established to provide support to selected projects submitted by the Member States aimed at assisting socio-economically deprived urban areas. The initiative placed an emphasis on an integrated approach, supporting business creation, improving infrastructures and the physical environment, providing customized training, actions for equality of opportunity, and social amenities. *URBAN* programs aimed to act as a catalyst in a broad-based approach, by undertaking key schemes to help deprived urban areas achieve a lasting improvement in living standards for their inhabitants. The programs took action to launch new economic activities, ensure employment of local people, improve social, health and security provisions, and improve infrastructures and environmental conditions linked to the previously mentioned measures (within this set of eligible measures was also the rehabilitation of public spaces, the reclamation of derelict sites and contaminated land, and the provision of cultural, leisure and sports amenities) (CORDIS European Union Official Website). *URBAN* programs were a collaborative planning tool, moving beyond traditional, top-down planning to build institutional capacity through the involvement of all relevant stakeholders: they shifted the way common interests were managed by moving toward collaborative governance models. This involved creating forums for dialogue where active discussion could overcome the conflicts inherent in urban decision-making. For this reason, a central goal was the devolution of power to local communities, making them responsible for urban decision-

making and implementation. This process was intended to foster empowerment by treating local, non-expert knowledge as equal to expert knowledge (De Gregorio Hurtado 2015).

Besides the economic theories of Landry and Florida that have been already discussed, new spatial theories were introduced between the 1980s and the 1990s, which favored the integration of artistic practices in urban development processes. Among the most relevant ones is Michel de Certeau's distinction between urban strategies and urban tactics in his 1980's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (De Certeau 2010), where he demonstrated how urban life is shaped not only by the urban visions of planners, architects, or cartographers, but also through the everyday actions of inhabitants. In many cases, grassroots artistic interventions have been seen as urban tactics – temporary, opportunistic, improvised – used by individuals or groups without power in order to inhabit and subvert urban space from within, while on the other hand top-down (flagship) interventions are examples of urban strategies, operating from a position of power and control, defining the space from above and producing the official narratives of the city. Tactical artistic interventions in particular can be seen as a way to hijack traditional urban planning and its rigidity: drawing inspiration from Michel de Certeau's, Tactical Urbanism was born, an approach to the construction and activation of public spaces through modular, agile, short-term, low-tech, and low-cost interventions and policies (Lydon, Garcia 2015).

Equally important have been the reflections developed by geographer Edward Soja about the concept of «Thirdspace», he introduced in his book *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (Soja 1996). Soja brought in a new idea of spatiality, claiming that historical, social and spatial dimensions are inseparable and interdependent. He also stated that a new open logic was necessary to understand the complexity of contemporaneity, which he called «thirding-as-Othering», meaning a creative process of restructuring to open new alternatives, and a strategy to respond to binarism which characterized the 20th century (eg. modernism vs. postmodernism, historicality vs. sociality, and so on). Soja's third alternative is not just a combination of in-between positions but a radical shift from dialectical to trialectical thinking, aiming at continuously expanding knowledge. Soja recalled Lefebvre's three paradigms of space, saying that his Firstspace corresponds to Lefebvre's perceived space, his Secondspace to conceived space, and Thirdspace to lived space, described as «a space of radical openness, a site of resistance and struggle, a space of multiplicitous representations […] a meeting ground, a site of hybridity» (Soja 1999: 276). This concept is important because it has been borrowed by curators and later spatial theorists to talk about art in relation to public spaces: for example, Claire Doherty and Paul O'Neill described durational art projects as thirdspaces, providing a space

of interrelations, always in the process of being made and remade, not only materially but also socially (O'Neill, Doherty 2011).

During those years, important contributions were also emerging from feminist Geography studies, investigating how men's interests have structured what counts as legitimate geographical knowledge, and how women and other subjects have been marginalized in spatial and planning discourses: some examples are the studies by Gillian Rose (Rose 1993), Doreen Massey (Massey 1994) and Linda McDowell (McDowell 1983), which influenced many later artistic, curatorial and planning practices aiming at making cities more inclusive and just (see for example the work of Gilly Karjevsky presented in chapter 5.1.4, and of the feminist planning theorist Leslie Kern, who explains how in feminist city planning, the lived experiences and perspectives of diverse groups of people are central to the planning process, and decision-making is informed by understanding how the built environment affects different communities differently, recognizing the importance of creating cities that are safe, accessible, inclusive, and equitable for all residents, regardless of their gender, race, class, sexuality, or ability (Kern 2020)).

Lastly, three important contributions from the planning field and regarding art and planning hybridization are that of Greg Young, Leonie Sandercock, and Emily Talen & Cliff Ellis. Young, in his *The culturization of planning* (Young 2008), talks about the culturization of planning, which can be read as an increased awareness of the merits of integrating culture into planning practice, although he does not specifically mention planner-artist collaborations as a means to achieve said culturization. Instead, Sandercock specifically engages with the issue of planner-artist collaborations as a means of broadening the horizon of planners and developing contemporary planning practice, in her 2005's article *Interface: A new spin on the creative city: artist/planner collaborations* (Sandercock 2005). She argues that the demographic shift toward multicultural «mongrel cities» requires a fundamental transformation of the planning imagination. Moving away from the rigid, technical, and regulatory focus of the 20th century, she advocates for a new professional sensibility that is transparently political and courageous enough to embrace risk. The new planning she outlines is characterized by four key qualities: it is political (not a neutral technical activity), audacious (not inflexible, rule-bound, obsessed with order and certainty as in the 20th century), creative (by developing visionary leadership, a good environment for creativity, and working collaboratively with artists, seen as a way of bringing marginalized groups into the urban conversation, as well as introducing new forms of expression and new ways of thinking into planning processes), and therapeutic (because many planning disputes are about relationships, and therefore emotions, rather than conflicts over resources, and thus

planners need a language and process of emotional involvement and resolution) (Sandercock 2004). Emily Talen and Cliff Ellis called for a renewed exploration of the inter-connection of art and urban planning, a link that broke in the mid 20th century with modernist planning: according to these scholars, this connection needs to be reinvigorated through new ways of thinking (Talen, Ellis 2004).

3.1.4 From the 2010s to today: a review

Over the last two decades, further initiatives have fostered the integration of artistic practices into urban transformation processes. Among them, the New European Bauhaus (NEB) deserves a special mention: it is an EU initiative launched in 2021 that connects design, architecture, sustainability, culture, and social inclusion. Its goal is to rethink how people build and live in Europe by making green transformation beautiful, inclusive, and sustainable. NEB works by engaging people at a grassroots level, focusing on neighbourhoods, by providing tools and guidance, by offering tailor-made solutions for different communities, by incorporating the views of various stakeholders into the process of design and implementation, and by prioritising people and social inclusion but also the economy to boost competitiveness and EU strategic autonomy (New European Bauhaus Official Website). NEB funds pilot projects (housing, public spaces, schools, neighborhoods), supports research and innovation, encourages co-creation between citizens, artists, engineers, and policymakers, and awards prizes for exemplary projects. Culture and design are at the center of policy, constituting one of its three main pillars: aesthetics (meaning high-quality design and beauty in everyday spaces). They are very important for NEB projects designing inclusive public spaces with local communities and reusing abandoned buildings. The program works alongside other initiatives, such as Creative Europe, a European Union funding programme launched in 2014 that supports the cultural, creative, and audiovisual sectors across Europe (Creative Europe's Official Webpage). Moreover, the EU contributed by funding research projects about art in contexts of urban transformation through the Horizon program: some examples are the *SPACEX (Spatial Practices in Art and ArChitecture for Empathetic EXchange)* research project, led by Andy Hewitt, Mel Jordan, Emma Mahony and Socrates Stratis, and *CreaTures (Creative Practices for Transformational Futures)*, a research action coordinated by Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture. *SPACEX's* aim is to «test, map, analyse and communicate the ways in which spatial practices effect public exchange and opinion formation in urban spaces, and promote empathetic and inclusive ways of living together» (SPACEX's Official

Website). Among the contributions produced are Barbara Holub's *Wie Viel Kann Empathie In Der Künstlerisch-Räumlichen Praxis?* (How Much Can Empathy Be Used In Artistic-Spatial Practice?) (Holub 2025), Benedetta Bronzini's *Site-specific Performances and Community Activation: Participative Theatre in Florence beyond Overtourism and Gentrification* (Bronzini 2024), and Mel Jordan, Marley Treloar and Andrew Hewitt's *Learning from Critical Social Art Practice: Disassembling and Reassembling the Social* (Jordan, Treloar, Hewitt 2023). *CreaTures* investigates the potential of creative practices in art, design, and related cultural fields to support positive eco-social change. The project revolves around four questions: «What are the specific qualities of transformational creative practices? How might artistic and transformational aspirations and aims be aligned in practice? What are the ways to measure and communicate the impact of such practices? How might we encourage and support future transformational creative practices from the individual to infrastructural level across Europe and beyond?» (CreaTures's Official Website). Researchers mapped and analysed 140 transformative creative practices (a collection of them is available of CreaTures's website), and built a Framework, a resource developed for creative practitioners, policy makers, funders, and researchers, setting out how creative practices can stimulate action towards socially and ecologically sustainable futures. The Framework is articulated in four curated paths – Research, Policy, Creative Practice and Funding – each offering a collection of resources charting the key concepts and terms, processes, tools for evaluation, and resources for various stages of creative practices. Besides the framework, they produced several other creative resources, such as a set of workshop cards useful to discuss the evaluation of creative pratices, a glossary, a collection of learnings from transformative creative practitioners (*Messages in a Bottle (Open Creative Practices Training Guidelines)*), a catalogue of experimental artistic productions developed within the project, and a documentary.

During these years many more studies about the relationship between art and public spaces have been carried out: while critiques towards traditional planning and the need for alternative and more open forms of urban design and organization have continued to be expressed (Spuybroek 2002, La Cecla 2015, Cellamare 2019, Bianchetti 2011, Sendra, Sennett 2022, Holub 2015, Stokman, Bajc 2023, Urban Catalyst 2007, and more), artistic practices have increasingly been seen as an interesting opportunity to make urban transformations more inclusive and sustainable. In particular, they have been seen as key in urban regeneration and placemaking processes: while modernist planning have produced many «non-places», which are not capable of generating identity, relationships and history, but only loneliness and similarity, and which exist only in relation to a specific use such as

transportation or trading (Augé 1993), artists have the power to promote relationships and a sense of identity, and to collaborate in designing open, flexible and polyvalent spaces, that encourage the emergence of informal and unplanned uses, stimulate cultural expression, and create an atmosphere of tolerance towards difference by building common spaces where people can interact and share interests (Sendra, Senett 2022; Baum, Vogl 2024). The discourse regarding placemaking had already begun with the studies by Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen, but was further taken on by William H. Whyte – who examined how urban infrastructure affected the behaviour of people in urban spaces, and through these analyses was able to recommend how urban environments can be improved by architects, urban planners, and engineers to encourage better use of the space and thus better interaction by people using the space (Whyte 1988) – and Ronal Lee Fleming, who saw art as a way to enrich the meaning of places by enhancing the functional forms of urban design as identity markers and place settings (Fleming 2007). More recently, Marichela Sepe has done a mapping of placemaking practices, introducing new approaches designed to address the simultaneity, fragmentation, and instability of the contemporary city: the virtual approach, the lateral approach, the people-oriented approach, the multi-scale approach, the configurational approach, and the complex-sensitive approach. In particular, this last one is Sepe's own integrated method (named PlaceMaker), which seeks to capture the totality of place identity by combining tangible and intangible data (Sepe 2013). Elena Granata describes the qualities of placemakers, detaching them from professional profiles:

> He regenerates, reinvents, and reconnects spaces. He understands and feels cities by looking at them from below, combining imagination and entrepreneurial skills […] He is not a scientist, but he is driven by the desire to observe reality in order to understand it. Nor is he an artist in the traditional sense, but he looks at the world with empathy. He is not an architect, politician, or entrepreneur, but he has the ability to transform an idea into a project, to think of impossible things and, above all, to make them happen[37]. (Granata 2021: vii)

The potentiality of artists for placemaking is recalled in many other studies, holding a transformative power (Agostinelli 2023) and the ability to suspend norms in order to guarantee a new malleability in the fruition of spaces (Cottino 2003): Miwon Kwon claims that practices enhancing differences and uniqueness of places are a response to the homogenization of space in our capitalist society, nonetheless she also suggests that «wrong places» – that are places where one feels one does not belong, places that are unfamiliar,

[37] Translation by the author.

disorienting, destabilizing, even threatening – can be useful as they sometimes allow people to recognize themselves and the conditions of their own estrangement (Kwon 2002). Roberta Comunian introduces a duality, sayong that if on the one hand art can foster a new sense of place for the local community, on the other hand it also works as territorial marketing to attract tourists: these two situations don't exclude each other but need to be managed wisely (Comunian 2006). Regarding the relationship among placemaking and city branding, interesting is the analysis of Alberto Vanolo, who explains how creative cities are a brand aimed at changing or moulding the attitudes of subjects with reference to a city, thus recalling the idea of sense of place: though place attachment is not always positive because it can produce exclusions of other groups (as happens in the displacement-gentrification mechanism). Vanolo also links city branding with spatial identities and with the promotion of urban imaginaries: it is not just what is made visible and officially displayed, but also invisible, absent and ghostly presences, that make the imaginary of places (Vanolo 2018).
Several scholars have discussed the sustainability of these artistic interventions and their side effects: among them are Ezio Micelli *et al.*, who talk about the sustainability of small cultural interventions and initiatives, activated by citizens or local cultural and social organizations, that generate, promote, and sustain processes of regeneration by, for instance, improving the quality of public spaces in a neighborhood or promoting local heritage conservation and enhancement, departing from Katriina Soini and Joost Dessain's three roles of culture in sustainability (culture in sustainability; culture for sustainability; culture as sustainability) (Soini, Dessain 2016). According to Micelli *et al.*, these kind of interventions, which have been on the rise in Europe since the 2008 financial crisis (which led to a form of «austerity urbanism», as it was named by Jamie Peck 2012), allow regeneration processes to fully realize the sustainable development potential of culture by holding together economic and social dimensions, especially if compared with flagship interventions and cultural distict approaches (Micelli *et al.* 2024). Also Elizabeth Strom highlights how the arts «have a special role in urban innovation […] because of the ways in which artistic activity leads to new uses and increased values placed on otherwise economically obsolete urban spaces and structures» (Strom 2020: 492), though their socially transformative potential is limited by the complex relationship between arts production/consumption and market relationships (Strom 2020). Dan Eugen Ratiu claims that the role of artists and the arts in achieving urban creativity and sustainable development lies in starting a rules-breaking process against a given practice or order, which intrinsically involves critique and leads to social change, and in fostering a wider and sustainable sense of place and of community (Ratiu 2013). Joar Skrede critiques the modern trend of using culture as a tool for economic growth, arguing

that such instrumental policies often prioritize financial profit over the preservation of cultural integrity, an approach that neglects social and cultural sustainability, potentially leading to the destruction of historical landmarks and the marginalization of the public interest. Ultimately, he calls for a new policy framework that recognizes culture as a distinct pillar of sustainability, protecting it from being entirely swallowed by the logic of capital (Skrede 2015). The most common risks identified in including art in urban regeneration are those of instrumentalization, artwashing, gentrification and exclusion: Malcom Miles says that art can either be an accomplice to or resist to urban development. In the first case, it aestheticizes, through decoration and urban design, the division between success areas and failure areas in the city, fostering social fragmentation; in the second case, it contributes social critique and tries to change urban experiences according to ideals of social justice and community, also through participatory methods (Miles 1997). Rosalyn Deutsche, in her collection of essays *Evictions. Art and Spatial Politics* (Deutsche 1996), underlines how the dominant urban-aesthetic paradigm, along with its most influential critiques, is structured by exclusions and by attempts to erase the traces of these exclusions (even though it mobilizes a democratic rhetoric of openness and accessibility of public space). She writes: «Exclusions are justified, naturalized, and hidden by representing social space as a substantial unity that must be protected from conflict, heterogeneity, and particularity» (Deutsche 1996: xiii). She thus exposes the authoritarian strategies that construct unitary images of social space, and say that these politics justify themselves through artistic interventions, thus producing gentrification. Though, she suggests also that art can resist and contrast these dynamics, as in the case of Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection: A Proposal for the City of New York* (1986) (Fig. 40), a confrontation with the official Union Square redevelopment program: he made visible the sociospatial conflicts that the statues put in the square were employed to conceal and attempted to create a democratic public space in the redeveloped city (Deutsche 1996). Similar concerns are expressed also by Sharon Zukin (Zukin 1982), Stuart Cameron and Jon Coaffee (Cameron, Coaffee 2005), Pier Luigi Sacco (Sacco 2011), Martha Rosler (Rosler 2011), Irmgard Emmelhainz (Emmelhainz 2013), and Cecilie Sachs Olsen (Sachs Olsen 2017). Claudia Seldin (Seldin 2025), Oliver Wainwright (Wainwright 2017), Stephen Pritchard (Pritchard 2020) and Ana Vilenica (Vilenica 2021) have talked about the risks of artwashing, a strategy where developers and states use cultural projects to mask the displacement of working-class residents. This is particularly evident in the case of privately owned public spaces (POPS), where private companies strategically exploit artistic labor and the cool aesthetic of street art to rehabilitate their corporate images and drive up property values. Charlotte Gould suggests that, in oder to avoid this problem, artists move

away from being decorative tools for gentrification and instead embrace ephemeral, sound-based, or activist interventions that challenge historical injustices (Gould 2022).

However, it is important to emphasize that, even if artists have sometimes been used as a sort of expeditionary force of gentrifiers, with the aim of pacifying border areas before the arrival of new residents, transforming the meaning and value of the space, including at an economic level, gentrification is a much more complex process, primarily commercial and financial in nature (a phase of reinvestment of capital in cities or neighborhoods that have previously experienced forms of disinvestment). It involves a large number of diverse actors (construction companies, real estate developers, owners, financiers, government agencies, real estate agents, political actors, the media, university students, cultural institutions, professionals, merchants, families, businesses, sports clubs, etc.) and has its roots not in art, but in the real estate market and its speculative operations (Semi 2015). Many scholars have also introduced ways artists can try to contrast instrumentalization and involvement in gentrification processes: Edi Muka suggest firstly that artists allow their practice to be useful by opening it up to the specific issues and contexts at hand, and secondly that they use the supporting institutional frame to instill potential or even real change (Muka 2022); Andrea Baldini says that art can contribute creating «subjunctive spaces» (Baldini 2014: 175), that are spaces for action (in contrast with spaces for mere contemplation) and dialogue in particular. In pluralistic democracies, the outcome results in a promotion of political participation and tolerance according to Baldini. Irmgard Emmelhainz sees artistic practices (especially socially engaged ones) as a way to restore contact with reality and community, thus contrasting the sense of alienation which is typical of the Western contemporary world, that she defines as post-political, meaning that its politics aspire to a «superficial democracy that neutralizes antagonism and denies democracy's limits and mechanisms of exclusion» (Emmelhainz 2016: n.p.). That artistic practices can challenge the post-political view that there is no alternative to the present order is an idea claimed also by Chantal Mouffe as part of her agonistic model of democracy. She invites to visualize forms of artistic resistance as agonistic interventions within the context of counter-hegemonic struggles, in particular when it comes to public spaces: «Public spaces are always striated and hegemonically structured. A given hegemony results from a specific articulation of a diversity of spaces, and this means that the hegemonic struggle also consists in an attempt to create a different form of articulation among public spaces» (Mouffe 2013: 91-92). From this perspective, art performs its critical function in public spaces by «making visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, and in giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony» (Mouffe 2013: 93). According to Mouffe,

this is possible because it induces emotional responses and is able to reach human beings at the affective level.

Another idea is that proposed by Cecilie Sachs Olsen, who looks at socially engaged practices as key for «opposing the technocratic vision of the city as a product of experts» (Sachs Olsen 2017*:* 2) and for their power to facilitate the negotiation of taken for granted spatial orderings and provide alternative urban imaginaries, thanks to the subversive force of aesthetic engagement with space and to the re-interrogation of the role and position of the subject in this regard (Sachs Olsen 2018: 5). A similar view is provided by Cara Courage, who uses the term «social practice placemaking» to describe artistic practices where citizens are activated and specialization is diffuse. According to Courage, these foster place attachment (as a result of spatial meaningfulness and sense of connection to people and place), which in turn activates a collective citizenship (e.g. desire to socialize with neighbors and take action to improve the place). Like Sachs Olsen, Courage sees the need for social and aesthetic hierarchies being made horizontal, so to replace formal participation (consultation) with real participation (co-production) in order to obtain immediate and tangible results (Courage 2017: 196). The idea of co-production is also crucial to Claire Doherty, who claims it leads to an increase in social capital and community capacity. Moreover, she explains how important it is for her as a curator not to just promote positive place identity through art, but to create agitations, dislocations and new stories in order for people to reconsider set notions of space (Doherty 2017: 86). Doherty suggests that artists shape a «creative illusion», that is the ability to act and think as if things were different, thus responding to the encroachment of corporate interests on public space, to the diminishing opportunities for social cohesion and freedom of speech and to the invisibility of the displaced and dispossessed in public life (Doherty 2015: 15). Pascal Gielen adds that art is not only artists are capable to present an imagined world, but they can also make people experience that world, thus showing their extra political potency. Artistic civil actions activated by emotions create experiences of possible utopian imagination charged with positive energy, which are not usually present in traditional social criticism (e.g. protests and petitions). Moreover, according to Gielen, art can act also on a communication level, creating communal space for political discussion and activism, and at the level of de-privatization, in cases where citizens initiate actions, appropriations and occupations (Gielen 2022). Another fascinating (and bold) perspective is that offered by Jonathan Metzger, who argues that art could be used as a democratizing technology, creating cool forums for discussion in politically charged social processes such as urban planning ones (Metzger 2011). Teddy Cruz sees art as possible instrument to construct procedures transcending socio-economic

injustices, for instance shaping new conceptions of cultural and economic production and reorganizing of social relations. Cruz then looks at artists as designers of political processes, of alternative economic models and collaborations across institutions and jurisdictions: the essential precondition to perform this democratic function is what Cruz calls «radical proximity» in working with socio-political and economic domains (Cruz 2012). A different way is that suggested by Charles Esche, who suggests a third way to follow for art in contexts of gentrification: for him, art has another option between submitting to the tyranny of the visual and questioning it in avant-garde-like way. The most appealing artistic strategy in these contexts is, according to Esche, that of intimacy (Esche 2022). Piotr Juskowiak claims that artists contribute to making wealthier social groups, public authorities and decision-makers more aware of problems faced by particular quarters and communities, and participate in anti-gentrification tactics and creative sabotage, voicing disagreement with the corporate vision of the neoliberal city (Juskowiak 2012). In these contexts, artists are both privileged actors and carriers of big responsibilities (Bain 2006), and hold multiple functions: they turn perspectives on places (Pietroiusti 2011; Bruzzese 2022; Guida 2022), act as catalysts of transformations (Kagan, Hahn 2011; Anzaldúa 2015), promote critical thinking and discussion (Rendell 2006; Mazzucotelli Salice 2014; Ophrat 2023), connect people and facilitate their dialogue and creativity (Waters 2000; Hawkes 2001; Mackay 2009; Baldini 2014;), contrast alienation by restoring contact with the reality of places (Mitchell 2015), mediate and give advice in complex urban projects (Runting 2013; Meschini 2021; Miao, Phelps 2024), shift planning institutions' ways of working (and overcome their limitations) both by making space for the unfamiliar and the unpredictable, and by engaging specific local publics (Miles 2005; Vivant, Arab, Özdirlik 2017; Bobadilla, Goransson, Pichault 2018; Wiberg 2020, 2022; Carpenter, Horvath 2022). Steven Dang describes three roles that art can have in urban planning processes: firstly, it can act as a window, providing planners «not only deep insight into a community, but ready-made and powerful means of communicating them. Through the process of creating art together, skilled artist-facilitators can also help communities examine complex issues, bring forth personal and collective stories, and deliver a poignant message» (Dang 2005: 124). Secondly, art can act as dialogue, as, «in revealing and exploring a community's stories, planners and artists can be powerful allies in facilitating public dialogue on important and sensitive issues» (Dang 2005: 124). As a means of conversation, the arts can be more accessible and inclusive than the standard town hall meeting or open house. Lastly, art can act as a doorway, offering a less intimidating, more appealing invitation for many citizens

to deeper, long-term involvement in community and community planning processes (Dang 2005).

According to Oliver Marchart, when artist operate in public contexts, they do that in three phases: disrupting (disconnecting people from common beliefs), expanding (propagating new visions of the world), and instituting (organize a framework in order to make the new vision survive over time). Moreover, outlines the role of curators for the production of art in the public sphere, saying that curating means taking up a position, either serving the hegemony or setting emancipatory counterpolitics (Marchart 2019). Markus Ambach pinpoints how art projects in urban spaces need to have three characteristics: be context-specific, revolve around cooperation rather than participation (which he criticizes because of the hierarchy it establishes between active actors and reactive participants), and be free and independent (Ambach 2015). Similar features are described by Renée Tribble, who adds to co-production and local-specificity the building of alternative realities and the happening of a positive moment of legitimization and democratic discussion of the practice. She moreover claims that these practices «shouldn't be absorbed by urban planning administrations but should be acknowledged as a neighborhood development strategy with an outcome that has the same relevance and importance as an urban development concept or master plan commissioned by the municipality» (Tribble 2018: 162). Tribble explains that these interventions can be considered as urban development tools having four advantages: 1) they can often be implemented much more quickly than projects following the usual planning processes; 2) they are exploratory and allow to break existing planning patterns; 3) being temporary, they can act outside existing policies and regulations or at least explore how much these can be stretched under the given circumstances, helping define and test new regulations; 4) they often have a participatory character (Tribble 2018). Often subversive in nature, they not only comment on and critique formal planning processes, but also but also have a reflexive and productive role (Tribble 2022). Jason Kovacs and Jeff Biggar suggest four insights which are can be useful for practitioners and policy-makers who want to integrate artists in planning processes: they need to have a risk-taking mentality, work with long-term planning frameworks and clear guidelines, formalize the artistic practice in the planning process, and organize long residency periods (more than three months) (Kovacs, Biggar 2017). Barbara Holub coined the term «direct urbanism» to indicate the incorporation of artistic strategies and art projects into socially inclusive long-term urban planning projects, and presented a series of strategies that can be used in this kind of projects: unlearning, shifting roles, anticipatory fiction, shifting the context, expanding the context, research through practice, dialog and polylog, conflict as a productive force, and open space

or the urban reserve (these concepts will be better described in chapter 3.2 with reference to curatorial practices; Holub 2015). With reference to practices that create performative situations for dialogic action with the aim of questioning norms and crossing boundaries in urban public space, she also introduced the expression «silent activism» (Şenova 2023). Jane Rendell, instead, coined the term «critical spatial practice» in order «to draw attention to the importance of the spatial and the critical in public art practice and to consider how art and architecture might be related as well as theory and practice» (Rendell 2015: 72). With this definition, she on the one hand recalls the critical theory of the Frankfurt School to address «the work of all those whose thinking is self-critical and desirous of social change, who do not only reflect on existing conditions but also imagine something different – to transform rather than describe» (Rendell 2015: 72-73), on the other hand she refers to the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel De Certau, which had a great fortune in the 1990s. Moreover, she describes three categories of hybrid practices, taking inspiration from Edward Soja's distinction between the spatial, the temporal and the social: as for the first category, she investigates artwork dealing with the relationship between site and non-site, with Rosalind Krauss′s notion of an «expanded field», and with the possibility, following de Certeau's notion of space as a practiced place, for creative interventions to transform places into spaces of social critique. As for the second category, she highlights «the importance of the temporal dimension of "a place between", specifically, the relation of past and present in allegorical, montage and dialectical constructions and the time of viewing and experiencing art and architecture» (Rendell 2015: 74). As for the third category, she shifts «emphasis to the social aspect and examine the spatial construction of subjectivity in feminist and psychoanalytical theory, investigating the relationships people create in the production and occupation of art and architecture» (Rendell 2015: 75). Another term that was coined to indicate the expansion of art into the planning field is that of «art wordling»: Juliet Crawshaw developed it departing from John Dewey's idea of continuity and from Donna Haraway's idea of «wordling». According to her, the continuity approach doesn't see agency attributed to single entities, like planners and artists, but to relationships (Crawshaw 2022).

Besides Rendell categorization, there are other classifications that have been proposed: a distinction made according to funding is made by Tammy Wong (1) Artist self-curated and self-funded projects; 2) Government funded projects; 3) Independent festivals of the arts industry; 4) Privately-funded public art projects; 5) Gallery/institutional public projects; 6) Research artists in academia) (Wong 2011). Bjorn Ehrlemark and Carin Kallenberg, instead,

distinguish eight types of practices, according to the role of the artist: 1) the artist as planner; 2) the artist as mediator; 3) the artist as medium; 4) the artist as attraction; 5) the artist as tool; 6) the artist as authority; 7) the artist as negotiating partner; 8) the artist as final inspector (Ehrlemark, Kallenberg 2019). One of the most interesting classifications proposed is that of Thomas Borén and Craig Young, who explore how artists are engaging with policy-makers and planners in attempts to produce new conceptual spaces in which urban policy and planning practice becomes a process of knowledge and policy co-production. Their objective is to «develop new scenarios in which the different imaginings that artists bring to understanding and shaping urban development can be brought into the planning process to support a more progressive and imaginative planning system, one which is more in touch with the diversity and exclusions which are increasingly marking the twenty-first century city» (Borén, Young 2017: 301). In particular, they identify and discuss five types of conceptual spaces for artist-planning interactions: in the first space the planner includes artists in the process, learning from their expertise and methods in order to reach planning objectives (the focus stays on planners), as is suggested in Leonie Sandercock's contributions; in the second space, artists contribute dialogue in both direct and indirect ways to forming the perception of possible solutions, they become part of the conceptual phase of planning projects, and thus get a more equal standing and a new, more prominent role in the interactions (Borén and Young bring the *Samverkan Uppdraget* as an example, see chapter 4); in the third space, artists create cool forums, creating
a different setting for thinking about planning (as suggested by Jonathan Metzger); in the fourth space, artists are uninvited, but sometimes welcomed, participant in planning and policy making, taking a more political role and engaging with the very structures of urban governance and planning (here the objective is to make space for art in planning processes); in the fifth space, the artwork itself is the interaction and what is created are the relations, content, and ideas that develop from the interactions, with the purpose of initiating change (here, the objective is to affect the planning system through art) (Borén, Young 2017).
Drawing inspiration both from Boréen and Young's conceptual spaces and from Katriina Soini and Joost Dessein's paradigmatic roles of culture in sustainability (culture in sustainability; culture for sustainability; culture as sustainability) (Soini, Dessein 2016) (Fig. 41), the author elaborated a new framework could to distinguish different artistic practices according to their relationship with urban development. She decided to do so because for the aims of this research the distinctions made by Borén and Young are slightly redundant, so she merged some of their categories into wider ones.

Category	Type of commission	Art-Planning collaboration	Transformative power
Art-in-urban-transformation	Top-down	Ex-post, Superficial	No (Decorative)
Art-for-urban-transformation	Top-down	Early, Decisive	Yes (Integrated art-planning interventions and methodologies)
Art-as-urban-transformation	Bottom-up	Ex-post (if any), Legitimization	Yes (Artistic interventions)

Table 2. Art in/for/as urban transformation categorization

The first category is that of art-in-urban-transformation, meaning those artistic projects which are brought in urban development contexts, but do not have themselves a significant impact in transforming spaces, acting in a decorative and/or add-on way. This is the case, for example, of destination-murals (or selfie-walls), murals that can be usually found in gentryifing neighborhoods, usually commissioned by businesses and real-estate developers to signal the transformation of the place, content-neutral and conflict-negating (see for example the *Angel Wings Project* by Colette Miller in the regeneration of Downtown Los Angeles) (Fig. 42) (Yago 2019). The second category is that of art-for-urban-transformation, indicating those projects where artists collaborate with planners in developing urban areas (better if from its early phases), thus art becoming an integral part of the project (be it because it shifts planning methods, or because artistic intervention hybridizes with the planning one). Examples of this could be Apolonija Šušteršič's *Hustadt Project,* which has been described above. The third and last category is that of art-as-urban-transformation, which includes those practices where art in itself activates and promotes urban transformation, even going against planners and developers' ideas: see for example *Park Fiction* and *Project Row Houses'* examples. This categorization will be further developed in the next chapter in reference to curatorial practices.

To conclude this review, it can be said that most scholars agree on the fact that art needs to be integrated with planning in holistic approaches, where architectural, artistic, and social interventions go hand in hand (Pioselli 2011; Mazzucotelli Salice 2014), where art is not seen as a mere tool serving urban planning's needs (Bruzzese 2022). This hierarchical and outdated perspective (art-in-urban-transformation) could be replaced with a new horizontal

logic, recalling what Sylvia Lavin describes with her «kiss» metaphor: planning and art work collaboratively, in a mutual experience of transformation (Lavin 2011). This perspective (art-for-urban-transformation), coupled with a more robust policy framework regarding art/planning collaborations, could help coping with some of the problems embedding artists in urban planning is facing, such as the instability of funding, the lack of dedicated specialist officers and the ongoing tension regarding the public's perception and democratic production of art (Pollock, Paddison 2010). Moreover, planners could also try to learn from artists in successful art-as-urban-transformation practices, because, in those cases, artistic engagement succeeded where traditional planning methods failed to give voice to local needs and urgencies.

This chapter has reconstructed the history of artistic practices in/for/as urban development, bringing examples of artworks, exhibitions and urban policies, and has presented a review of contributions of art, spatial and planning theory related to this topic. The next chapter, instead, will be devoted to curatorial practices for urban development. In fact, parallel to the artistic dynamics illustrated in this chapter, the idea that interventions of this kind should be curated by specialized professionals, just as is the case with exhibitions held in museum settings, has increasingly emerged. Thus a new professional figure has taken shape: the curator who leaves traditional exhibition venues to work in urban space.

3.2 Curating art in/for/as urban transformations: history and theoretical framework

This chapter will outline the figure of the curator working in urban transformation contexts, both conceptually and historically. Firsly, it will give a definition of curating and an insight into terminological debates related to this topic. Secondly, it will trace a short history of the rise of curatorial practices and of their expansion into the urban field, also by presenting some pilot projects. Lastly, it will make a review of the literature regarding curatorial practices for urban transformation.

In order to write this chapter, particularly useful sources have been Barbara Holub and Christine Hohenbüchler's *Planning Unplanned,* which not only collects artistic practices, but also seminal essays regarding curating in urban contexts (Holub, Hohenbüchler 2015), the proceedings of *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing Urban Curating Now* working sessions (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023) (Tohermes *et al.* 2023), Magdalena Malm's *Curating Context. Beyond the Gallery and into Other Fields* (Malm 2017), and Sarah Chaplin and Alexandra Stara's *Curating Architecture and the City* (Chaplin, Stara 2009). Moreover, useful have been journals specifically devoted to curatorial practices, such as *OnCurating*

Journal and *The Journal of Curatorial Studies*, and thematic issues such as *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes*'s "Curating the City: Artistic Practices and Urban Transformations" (Trentin, Rosellini, Djalali 2020). Lastly, helpful have been some theses on the topic, such as Sand Helsel's *A search for common pleasures: CURATING THE CITY* (Helsel 2009), Tammy Wong's *The City As A Curated Space. A study of the public urban visual arts in central Sydney and central Melbourne, Australia* (Wong 2011), Marthe Nehl's *Urban Curation. An explorative study on understandings, roles and functions of curating practices in urban contexts* (Nehl 2018), and more.

3.2.1 The expanding field of curating: from curationism to the curatorial

Curator and art critic Hans Ulrich Obrist, in his *Ways of Curating* (Obrist 2015), explains that the word curating has its origins in the Latin *curare*, meaning to take care of. In ancient Rome, *curatores* were civil servants who were responsible for overseeing public works, such as the empire's aqueducts, bathhouses and sewers. In the medieval period, instead, the *curatus* was a priest who took care of the souls of a parish. By the late eighteenth century, *curator* came to signify the task of looking after a museum's collection. According to Obrist, «different kinds of caretaking have sprung from this root word over the centuries, but the work of the contemporary curator remains surprisingly close to the sense in *curare* of cultivating, growing, pruning and trying to help people and their shared contexts to thrive» (Obrist 2015: 28). Obrist, then, pinpoints how museum curators have four functions: firsly, they preserve cultural heritage; secondly, they select new works to be admitted in museum collections; thirdly, they contribute to art history by studying collected works; lastly, they display art by organizing exhibitions. Obrist says that this last function is the one that most characterizes contemporary curatorial practices, and he even coins a new term to indicate that type of curating activity: to distinguish it from curators' traditional caretaking role, he uses the term «*Austellungsmacher*», or exhibition-maker (Obrist 2015: 29). The first exhibition-makers at a museum were the Louvre's *décorateurs* in the eighteenth century, artists that were in charge of organizing and hanging artworks for the annual exhibitions of the Academy, and who began to standardize the practice of installing museum collections in order to best display both historical developments and thematic similarities. In these *salon style* displays (Fig. 43), paintings were tightly juxtaposed in packed formations going from floor to ceiling, their gilded frames almost touching: things changed with the birth of Impressionism, which initiated an epoch in art history in which the horizontal painted surface, rather than the vertical depth of representational images, was primary. Each artwork

gained unique importance, and space between artworks increased: the spectator was encouraged to observe the work free from the distraction produced by the proximity of other ones. At this point, curators even started to remove frames, as the gallery itself became a framing mechanism: the *white cube* was born (O'Doherty 1986) (Fig. 44). As the gallery itself began to be understood as the frame for visual art, artists began to innovate and invent display features within this expanded format, as in the examples of Marcel Duchamp's *International Exposition of Surrealism* in Paris (1938) (Fig. 45) – for which he hung 1200 bags of coal from the ceiling of the hall, darkening the space and dominating the exhibition with a radical display feature – and *First Papers of Surrealism* (1942) (Fig. 46) – in which he garlanded the space with spiderweb-like fibres. In both cases, Duchamp's work functioned both as an installation and curatorial project, where the gallery was lo longer intended as a blank space displaying artworks, but a context for developing artistic work (Obrist 2015). The real turn, though, happened in the 1960s with the birth of independent curators. During those years, in fact, new artistic currents such as performance art, conceptual art, body art, and land art were on the rise: all of them had as a common thread the shift from a focus on artistic objects to a focus on artistic ideas, processes and attitudes. For example, in the case of Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawings* (late 1960s) (Fig. 47), it was not the final drawing to represent the artwork, but the instructions that the artist had written to produce it and that anyone could try to replicate. In the case of Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) (Fig. 48), it was not the description of a chair, the picture of a chair and the actual chair to be displayed in the gallery to be the artwork, but the artist's reflection on art's conceptual nature, which he tried to communicate to the public by means of such everyday objects. In even more radical cases such as Christo and Jeanne-Claude's wrapping of public buildings (see *Wrapped Reichstag*, 1971-1995) (Fig. 49) and natural elements (see *Surrounded Islands,* 1983), or Marina Abramović's performances (see *Rhythm 0*, 1974) (Fig. 50), there are no artistic objects produced or displayed at all. As curator and critic Lucy Lippard pinpointed, what happened was a process of dematerialization of the art object, which expressed artists' concerns about art being consumed and packaged by the bourgeoisie (Lippard 1973). Though, the price to pay was an art that was often harder to appreciate and understand for audiences: in this context «curating emerged as a creative, semiautonomous and individually authored form of mediation and production structuring the experience of the work of art» (O'Neill 2012: 4). Sohrab Mohebbi explains this as the «curatorial gap»: «in order to maintain curatorial specificity and authority, there should be a gap between the artwork and what it means, and the curator is the person who helps the ignorant viewer cross the gap, step by step, via curatorial mediation, through the context/knowledge that the

curator provides» (Rus Bojan *et al.* 2010: n.p.). Another reason for the rise of independent curators is presented by Anton Vidokle, who suggests that it is linked to the increasing privatization of the cultural field: these curators, according to Vidokle, were no longer representing public interest, but rather were private agents led by self-interest. This is the reason why they started to adopt authorial characteristics, while still retaining a claim for objectivity in evaluation of art (Vidokle 2010). In fact, in the era of conceptualism, curators went from being objects' conservators to having multiple roles, such as connoisseurs, interpreters, mediators and managers of the artistic landscape, as well as, sometimes, real meta-artists. This is well represented by the case of Harald Szeemann, the «the father of modern curating – or creative curating, if you will», as is described by Jens Hoffman (Balzer 2014: 59). Having a background in theatre as a set designer and actor, Szeemann became famous with the exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) at Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland, where he asked artists to respond to the exhibition space: for example, Lawrence Weiner chipped away a square in the plaster on a wall, while Michael Heizer smashed the concrete on the sidewalk in front of the building. According to Seth Siegelaub, such actions «demystified» the conditions of exhibition, deconstructing the gallery or museum space (O'Neill 2012). In the same year, he founded an agency called *Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit im Dienste der Visualisierung eines möglichen Museums der Obsessionen* (Agency for Spiritual Guest Work in the Service of Visualising a Possible Museum of Obsessions). He used the Museum of Obsessions as a curatorial concept: «employing the notion of the museum as a fictional institution, Szeemann brought it close to the actually existing institution as part of the institution of art, implicitly positioning himself as a museum director» (Richter 2013: 46). Few years later, he became director of *documenta 5* (1972), one of the most important exhibitions of contemporary art in Europe, taking place every five years in Kassel. Szeemann saw himself as a meta-artist, utopian thinker, or even shaman, catalyzing artistic actions, a magnetic and charismatic presence keeping together the exhibition: as David Balzer has later defined it, a «star curator» (Balzer 2014). Szeemann saw himself as author, and he considered the exhibition to be an image of one single worldview. This attitude didn't come without any criticism, especially from artists: in particular, a group of exhibiting artists with whom Szeemann had previously worked (Carl Andre, Hans Haacke, Donald Judd, Barry Le Va, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Dorothea Rockburne, Fred Sandback, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson) petitioned in *Artforum* and other places, including the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.* The artists objected to being exhibited in thematic classification without their permission, and were opposed to Szeemann's application of an overarching theme concept

to selected artworks in an exhibition that also included non-art materials-such as pornography, science fiction, comics, political propaganda posters, and advertisements (O'Neill 2012). Famous are the words by artist Daniel Buren, who wrote in the exhibition catalogue: «The exhibition is tending increasingly towards the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art and no longer as an exhibition of works of art» (Buren 1972: 29). As Beatrice Von Bismarck later argued, this gesture of resistance was an early reaction against a role change for curators and artists. What was at issue in this moment of antagonism was the power to shape the public appearance of art (Scharf, Schirmer 2005).
Like it or not, Szeemann introduced a completely new way of curating which had great success in the next decades, in parallel with the decline of art critics: curating became a

> strategy for the production of meaning, a way of thinking and working across the complex field of cultural production […] What emerges from curating is a specific way of tracing connections between different materials, bodies of knowledge, stories, places, and people. Curating emerges from an interaction of connections and levels that are usually opposed or placed in unusual relationships. This process shapes a specific public space where one can encounter, experience, and critically compare forms of cultural production that bring a sense of urgency to the present and are relevant in the broader social sphere[38]. (Meta Bauer 2019: 33-34)

The peak of the curatorial fortune was reached in the 1990s, when what has been called by Paul O'Neill the «curatorial turn» happened (O'Neill 2008). With such expression, he indicates that:

> The primary discourse around art-in-exhibition began to turn away from forms of critique of the artwork as autonomous object of study/critique towards a form of curatorial criticism, in which the space of exhibition was given critical precedence over that of the objects of art. Curatorial criticism differed from that of traditional western art criticism (i.e. linked to modernity) in that its discourse and subject matter went beyond discussion about artists and the object of art to include the subject of curating and the role played by the curator of exhibitions. (O'Neill 2008: 13)

In the 1990s, curators took the place of art critic, generating a form of «'neo-criticality' by extending the parameters of the exhibition form to incorporate more discursive,

[38] Translated by the author.

conversational and geo-political discussion, centred within the ambit of the exhibition. The ascendancy of this 'curatorial gesture' in the 1990s (as well as the professionalization of contemporary curating) began to establish curatorial practice as a potential space for critique» (O'Neill 2008: 13-14). During those years, the respectability of curating grew together with the number of large-scale, international exhibitions, especially biennials. The debate around curating intensified so much that the verb "to curate" appeared, while beforehand it was jus a noun, to respond to a need to identify this new point of discussion (Farquharson 2003). Moreover, the new verb also suggested a shift in the role of the curator, now working with artistic production. Thus, curators started participating in the production of cultural value of artists and art, as Pierre Bourdieu put it (Bourdieu 1993). As O'Neill explains, «exhibitions are, therefore, contemporary forms of rhetoric, complex expressions of persuasion, whose strategies aim to produce a prescribed set of values and social relations for their audiences» (O'Neill 2008: 15-16). This phenomenon came to be defined also as the «rise of the curator as creator» (Altschuler 1994) and «the curator's moment» (Brenson 1998), which resulted in the «supervisibility of the curator» (O'Neill 2012). In the 1990s, the curator moved from eccentric, enterprising amateur – as it was in the 1960s – to professional necessity, becoming agent, ambassador, organizer, facilitator and provocateur. With their exhibitions, they were setting trends and giving meaning to artistic work, but were also negotiating with institutions in favor of forms of art which were hard to sell, such as performance and video art. That of the curator was becoming a professionalized role, along with specific curatorial education being born: the first examples were the postgraduate curatorial training program l'Ecole du Magasin at Le Magasin in Grenoble (1987), and the Curatorial and Critical Studies course at the Whitney Independent Study Program (1987). Besides having become such a necessary figure, critiques arose regarding the role of curators in marketing art exhibitions: David Balzer talks about «curator porn» (Balzer 2014), recalling a blog post by journalist Nadja Sayej about Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, curator of *dOCUMENTA (13)* exhibition, whose press-preview kit featured, on an enclosed disc, nineteen photographic portraits of her «in a forest, lounging on a lounge chair, wearing business blazers, working hard, hardly working, throning it and more» (Sayej 2012: n.p.). Another critique is related to the fact that curators need to gather contents produced by others in order to produce value: for this reason, David Balzer talks about them as vampires, borrowing the term from curator Germano Celant, who said «curators are the best vampires» at a lecture about *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013* at the Reel Artists Film Festival in Toronto in February 2014 (Balzer 2014).

Slowly, curating started to expand into other field than the artistic one, so much that it has become a dominant way of being and thinking in the contemporary world: the fact that today every aspect of our lives seems to be "curated" in some way (from restaurant menus to influencers' Instagram profiles), has been described as the new era of «curationism» (Balzer, 2014). Balzer explains:

> I contend that, since about the mid-1990s, we have been living in the curationist moment, in which institutions and businesses rely on others, often variously credentialed experts, to cultivate and organize things in an expression-cum-assurance of value and an attempt to make affiliations with, and to court, various audiences and consumers. As these audiences and consumers, we are engaged as well, cultivating and organizing our identities duly, as we are prompted […] Our obsession with the curator as an 'imparter of value' […] has implications for everyone, inside the art world and out. Complicit in this matrix of value-making, we (often unwittingly) take on new personal and professional responsibilities. (Balzer 2014: 8-9)

Panos Kompatsiaris, in his his study on *Curation in the Age of Platform Capitalism* (Kompatsiaris 2024), he says that the

> usage of the word "curating" in the English- speaking world has increased by more than fivefold since 2010 and by 16- fold since 1985. In broader culture, similar references span from low to high; the "curator boyfriend" was the hottest accessory of the year 2020, according to the women's magazine *Elle* (2019), while the film *The Square*, featuring a museum curator as the main hero, won the Palme d'Or at the 2017 Cannes Festival. Recently, hit audiovisual productions grapple with the exclusive, curated worlds of consumption, including hospitality services in *White Lotus* (2021–), luxury cruise ships in *Triangle of Sadness* (2022), high gastronomy in *The Menu* (2022), and the wellness industry in *Nine Perfect Strangers* (2021–2022). (Kompatsiaris 2024: 3-4)

He also adds that, in the academic world, the number of subjects that can be curated in the past ten years has increased in an astonishing way, including opera, architecture, pop, contemporary music festivals, dramaturgies, worship, pilgrimage, (post-)socialist environments, oral histories, the future, and more. The selection of cultural items operated by authorized experts aims at placing these items within organized narratives, which in turn are legitimized by the authority of experts (specific persons who enjoy symbolic capital, or companies, institutions, and platforms). According to Kompatsiaris, the spread of curation is linked to «a logic of value

production which, via forms of selection, narration, and expertise, mediates labor practices, self- identification, and patterns of consumption intertwined with techno- social affordances and the impositions of platform capitalism» (Kompatsiaris 2024: 5). Among the reasons why the term became so successful also outside the art field is the fact that «curation is a free-floating signifier sounding vaguely positive (similarly to say "creativity"), the employment of which indicates a progressive, forward- looking activity. Curation is an art- related concept that suggests sophistication and up- to- datedness and thus potentially generates customer desire across media markets» (Kompatsiaris 2024: 5). This conception is direcly related to the shift in the curatorial role which had happened with Szeemann (the curator-as-author). Secondly, curation is able to spread the logic of value production, self- presentation, and performance – once mostly confined to the corporate world of branding and advertising – to sociality at large, sprawling «from presentations of the self in social media, ranging from posting texts, photos, and videos to mentioning, tagging, and location- sharing, the boom of industries of positivity, life coaching, and mindfulness, the sharing of cool imagery of traveling, art openings, and other "exceptional" moments, the potentially constant updating of friends, followers, and fans, the gearing of aesthetics and design to attention- grabbing quests and the overall commodified ratification of life» (Kompatsiaris 2024: 6). Thus, «curation […] is a term that [..] combines the seemingly opposed tendencies between creativity and organization, which are injunctions that shape a dominant ideological horizon of neoliberal capitalism […] Curating, curation, and the curator […] are both inspiring and rational, fun and organized, creative and reasonable» (Kompatsiaris 2024: 7-8). In conclusion, «the curatorial logic inhabits the imperative of *what to choose* amidst the extremes of mass conformity and informational chaos that are both accelerated outcomes of the internet economy» (Kompatsiaris 2024: 6).

Similarly, Michael Bhaskar claims that curating has become so necessary since, with the shift from analog to digital approach, there has been a radical change in the quantity of data that can be stored and transmitted. Before, information used to be rare. Creating, collecting, storing and transmitting data was time-consuming, expensive and difficult. Nowadays there's such a huge amount of data available (not all of them being good-quality or relevant), that it has caused an overload in which it's becoming harder and harder to find out what information is really useful. According to Bhaskar, curating has become necessary in order to select and arrange content, and to fight against this increasing overload (Bhaskar 2016). This overload phenomenon, of course, has been visible also in the art world: while, up to the 1980s, the history of art was made up of clearly distinct art movements (eg. Cubism, Dadaism, Nouveau Realisme, Arte Povera, and so on), after it became increasingly

fragmented and focused on individual practices rather than collective ones. Moreover, also thank to the spread of international biennials and large amounts of non-Western artists coming into play for the first time, the panorama of art history has widened unprecedentedly: once again, curators were necessary to navigate this complexified world.

The expansion of curating into other fields, though, was also theorized in different ways, less oriented to its extractivist outcomes, and more looking into curating as a method and field of knowledge blurring divisions with other disciplines. This is the debate revolves around a new concept that was introduced in the 2010s, «the curatorial»: theorized by Beatrice von Bismarck (von Bismarck, Schafaff, Weski 2012), Irit Rogoff (Rogoff 2013), Paul O'Neill (2015), and Maria Lind (2012, 2021), the curatorial is a multidimensional methodology and philosophy that goes beyond the technical act of organizing exhibitions. While "curating" refers to the technical craft or modality of making art go public, the "curatorial" is an event of knowledge – a staging ground where different ideas, artifacts, and spaces are brought into relation to spark new insights (Lind 2021). While curating entails acting as a caretaker, middleman, or exhibition maker, the curatorial is about «making constellations» in space and time: von Bismarck says that the curatorial is a dynamic constellation of objects, people and information, constantly in motion, where a process-oriented approach reflects on their subject and object positioning. From this perspective, the curatorial is inherently equipped to reflect upon its own operating mode and to establish a nonhierarchical relation with theory (von Bismarck, Schafaff, Weski 2012). While curating aims at presenting finished works to an audience, the curatorial wants to create friction and to address epistemological crises (Rogoff 2013). Jean-Paul Martinon tries to summarize some definitions of the curatorial:

> The curatorial is an act of jail breaking from pre-existing frames, a gift to see the world differently, a strategy to invent new points of departure, a practice of creating allegiances against social ills, a way of caring for mankind, a process of renewing one's own subjectivity, a tactical move for reinventing life, a sensual practice of creating signification, a political tool outside of politics, a procedure to maintain a community together, a conspiracy against policies, the act of retaining a question alive, the energy of retaining a sense of fun, the device that helps to revisit history, the measures to create affects, the work of revealing ghosts, a plan to remain out-of-joint with time, an evolving method of keeping bodies and objects together, a sharing of understanding, an invitation for reflexivity, a choreographic mode of operation, a way of fighting against corporate culture, etc. (Martinon 2013: 3)

The curatorial acts in an «expanding field», a contemporary environment in which traditional definitions of artistic practices, institutional frameworks, and support systems have shifted and blurred. Rather than being confined to a single discipline, practitioners in this field participate in multiple practices and draw from varied knowledge bases (Rogoff 2013). The expanding field is generated by an epistemological crisis, a fertile ground that – instead of thinking of competing interests – allows to identify absent knowledges and to witness a «cumulative proliferation of modes of operating» (Rogoff 2013: 45). Nina Möntmann describes the curatorial as a transdisciplinary method to address and influence real-world social and political issues: it transcends mere display, acting instead as a form of mediation that bridges the gap between artistic theory and active systemic social transformation, challenging power structures and provoking public discourse by navigating informal zones of knowledge (Möntmann 2017). In short, the notion of curating as expressed by the curatorial has become widened in scope. It is no longer solely related to putting together, showing, or displaying works of art or museum objects, but it also includes conceptions of «enabling, making public, educating, analyzing, criticizing, theorizing, editing, and staging» (von Bismarck, Schafaff, Weski 2012: 8). The shift to understanding curation in a broader sense has been described by anthropologist Philipp Schorch as a trend to «liberate […] curation, as a method and practice, out of its predominant confinement to museum institutions, while deploying it, as a conceptual and analytical lens, to consider and study the process through which an idea […] becomes spatialized, materialized and visualized» (Scorch 2021: 22). This notion is well reflected in Hans Ulrich Obrist's conception of curating: «the act of curating […] at its most basic is simply about connecting cultures, bringing their elements into proximity with each other – the task of curating is to make junctions, to allow different elements to touch. You might describe it as the attempted pollination of culture, or a form of map-making that opens new routes through a city, a people or a world» (Obrist 2015:1). A notion that is particularly interesting in the perspective of this thesis, since curatorial practices here are seen as methods to use in urban planning contexts.

3.2.2 Curating in urban spaces: selected exhibitions and projects from the 1970s to the early 2000s

The first examples of curated exhibitions in urban spaces (and on urban spaces) date back to the 1970s. In this account, exhibitions of art-in-public-spaces are not going to be dealt with, starting the chronology with examples of exhibitions of art-as-public-spaces (site-specific)

and of art-in-the-public-interest. In the exhibitions presented, artworks were created in direct relation to the urban context. One of the first examples is *Campo urbano. Interventi estetici nella dimensione collettiva urbana* (Urban field. Aesthetic interventions in the urban collective dimension) (Como, 1969), curated by art critic Luciano Caramel. The exhibition brought together approximately forty artists, architects, and designers to perform interventions in the urban dimension. Moving away from the rationalist parts of the city, the event took place within the walled city and along the lakefront, utilizing streets and squares as a stage for experimental practices. According to the exhibition's press release, the objective was to take the artist into direct contact with the urban center's collectivity and with the spaces where it lives (Pioselli 2015). The exhibition aimed at contesting artworks' aesthetic independence, claiming that they need to build a relationship with the urban fabric and its inhabitants. This approach established *Campo Urbano* as a seminal moment for public art and social design, as it focused on site-specific interventions that reacted to the social and physical context of the city (De Paolis 2020). Among the main artistic interventions were: Ugo La Pietra's *Allora: copro una strada ne faccio un'altra trasformo gli spazi originari cambio le condizioni di comportamento* (So: I cover a street and make another one, I transform the original spaces, I change the conditions of behavior), where the artist covered a central street with a triangular structure to displace the observers and challenge their perception of urban reality and consumer behavior (Fig. 51); and Giuseppe Chiari and Franca Sacchi's *Suonare la città* (Playing the city) was created by stretching wires between the main square and its bell tower to create a giant harp, amplified to produce a cacophonous but engaging symphony. Unfortunately, the artists encountered some difficulties in dealing with the organizations promoting the event, and thus could not make any changes in the city's structures or buildings. Most of the artworks were provocations suggesting alternative behaviors and perceptions about the urban space (Pioselli 2015).

Other examples are the exhibitions curated in the 1970s by Enrico Crispolti in Volterra and Gubbio. From 15th July to 15th September 1973, Crispolti opened an exhibition named *Volterra 73: Sculture, ambientazioni, visualizzazioni, progettazione per l'alabastro* (Volterra 73: Sculptures, settings, visualizations, design for alabaster), which evolved from a traditional sculpture show into a complex series of urban and social interventions: it aimed to move beyond the mere placement of art objects in space, seeking instead to engage with the city's social, physical, and economic fabric (including the alabaster industry, the local agricultural sector, the psychiatric hospital, and even the judicial prison). The event was designed as a collective experience, involving not just established artists but also students from the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and local artisans. The exhibition featured

retrospectives of Lucio Fontana and Mino Rosso, and included interventions from a vast array of artists, such as Mauro Staccioli, Agostino Bonalumi, Hidetoshi Nagasawa, Ugo Nespolo, and Nicola Carrino. Interventions were distributed throughout the historic center and surrounding areas, including Piazza dei Priori, the Cathedral's bell tower, the Psychiatric Hospital, and the city walls. Intended to stimulate social awareness rather than serve as a mere cultural shop window, *Volterra 73* functioned as an open field of experience where the boundary between the artist's intervention and the community's daily life was intentionally blurred, weaving the creative process directly into the town's historical and economic identity (Crispolti 1973).

In 1976 Crispolti curated Gubbio's contemporary art biennial, titled *Gubbio '76. Biennale della ceramica, metalli, tessuti e altri materiali* (Gubbio '76. Biennial of ceramics, metals, fabrics and other materials), where he decided to innovate the exhibition model shifting from the traditional single-venue exhibition to an exhibition spread across various locations in Gubbio, thus transforming the city into an open-air exhibition. Thanks to an agreement with the Municipality of Gubbio, the city's art schools were involved, providing a significant contribution to the section dedicated to *Urban Intervention and Animation Projects*, which saw around fifteen artists and collectives creating installations in the urban space, among which *Struttura Simbolica (Ovo di Gubbio)* (Symbolic Structure: the Egg of Gubbio) (Fig. 52), created by Mirella Bentivoglio with the contribution of the Università dei Muratori in the open space of Via Appennino (and relocated in 2022) (Pratesi 2023).

One year later, in 1977, one of the most famous art exhibitions in public spaces was initiated by Klaus Bussmann and Kasper König in the German city of Münster. *Skulptur Projekte Münster*, which from that moment on has taken place for a hundred days every ten years, represented a large-scale experiment for a new radical approach in making the city a place of discussion and adapting to its development over the decades. The 2017 edition's exhibition catalogue makes clear that «The international artists invited to take part undertake a vigorous exploration of the space as found, at the same time bringing in their own personal narratives. The artworks that emerge from this raise questions, casting the familiar in a new light or revealing something that was hitherto unknown. Art not only gets us to experience our city again and again in a different way, it also offers us a rare opportunity to discuss and dispute our own images of Münster» (König, Peters, Wagner 2017: 102). Among the artists invited in 1977 were now-famous names that have now become part of the canon of twenty-first century art, such as Donald Judd, Claes Oldenburg, Carl Andre, Ulrich Rückriem, Richard Serra, Richard Long, Michael Asher, and Joseph Beuys. Particularly interesting, also in a curatorial perspective, was the second edition (1987) of the project, as König invited

64 artists to visit the city and, only after that, he asked them to send a proposal for the creation of a work. The project aimed to reinterpret the history and social narratives of the city by engaging not only with the works created in the previous edition, but also with citizens.

The initiative was taken as an inspiration by independent curator Mary Jane Jacob, whose *Places with a Past* in Charleston (1991), on occasion of the Spoleto Festival USA, inaugurated the season of curating socially engaged art in urban spaces[39]. With this exhibition, she revolutionized curatorial practice by shifting art from the isolation of museums (*lieu de mémoire*) into the living memory of Charleston, South Carolina (*milieu de mémoire*). By utilizing the city's streets and derelict buildings as a «curatorial commons» (Jacob 2016) – that is a space where art is a shared experience that connects people across racial and social lines – the project allowed artists to engage directly with suppressed histories of slavery and racial tension that had been omitted from the city's official tourist narratives. By doing so, originality and authenticity were relocated from the art work to the place of its presentation, meaning that art was utilized to promote uniqueness of places (Kwon 2002). The projects inhabited liminal spaces, where there was little separation between historical trauma and everyday life. The exhibition took into consideration hundreds of potential sites – including churches, schools, stores, and the harbor – to create multisensory, multi-referential experiences. Notable projects included David Hammons's *House of the Future*: built on a vacant lot in Charleston's historic East Side neighborhood, the structure resembles a Charleston "single house" – a traditional local residential form – but scaled oddly and built from found and reclaimed materials from nearby renovation and demolition projects (Fig. 53). It functioned more as a symbolic, miniature teaching model than a real dwelling, amplifying social and cultural narratives, especially around African American history and community. Other artworks were created by Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler (*Camouflaged History*), Antony Gormley (*Field*), and more.

Jacob, recalling the words of historian Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, viewed every intervention into the city's past as an intervention into its present, where history is embodied, narrated, and transmitted through daily existence. Jacob characterizes this approach as a process-oriented dialogic process, an organic and non-hierarchical collaboration between curator, artist, and resident that prioritizes site-specific installation over rigid theoretical mandates. She explains:

[39] Even though she didn't work in Europe, her practices are of such importance for European curators working in urban spaces that it is impossible not to mention them as pilot projects.

> For me, working as a curator also means holding open the space of art making, expanding the sense of time and staying in the flow. A continuous series of reflective exchanges threads through this speculative, nonlinear, organic process. Ideas are talked about over and over and tried out as trials. At times I might propose something to an artist, but it is not important if the idea is taken up; even when bypassed, it may serve to keep things going, and even when accepted, it is inevitably transformed. My suggestions are open gestures, while artists' willingness to offer inchoate concepts is part of the generative give-and-take. This dynamic is different from that of artist-as-curator and curator-as-artist, notions that arose in the 1990s. Rather, to me, it is a shared, co-creative activity: curating as a dialogic process. (Jacob 2016: 156)

This methodology sought to transform art into a lived experience, fostering deep personal connections and long-term social impacts that traditional institutions often fail to achieve. In her 2016 article about *Places with a Past*, Jacob argues that when art functions as a shared space for collective opening, it possesses the unique power to heal historical wounds and validate the identities of marginalized communities. Despite its local success, the project faced criticism from figures like Lucy Lippard, who argued that «parachuting» outside artists into local communities could be exploitative if the artists lacked a deep, long-term connection to the site (Lippard 1997). Jacob tried to solve this point by working for a long time period with artists on site in her next seminal exhibition, *Culture in Action* (Chicago, 1993).

Culture in Action focused on social practices in public spaces, through open-ended exploratory processes and openness to new, non-specialist audiences: compared to *Places with a Past*, it was not only about socially engaged art, but also about co-creating with local communities. The exhibition's name recalled both the ideas of culture and action: the first word is linked to how art could influence culture (especially in the period of the so-called culture wars), and to the role of the public in that. As for the second word, it is related to what it means for art to be alive and to have an effect, to produce change (Jacob 2014).

Starting in 1990, the project developed within the institutional framework of Sculpture Chicago, an art organization started in the 1980s dealing with outdoor sculpture programs, where Jacob sparked a debate on the nature of public art, audiences, and the relationship between art and culture, finding fertile ground. *Culture in Action* was conceived as a critique of art institutions and traditional public art in general: in fact, Jacob questioned the disconnection between public art and urban communities, saying that conventional public art seemed remote from their economic conditions, social realities and cultural values. She explains: «To my mind, as a curator and a private citizen, there was a lot of public art, too

much, that failed for one reason or another. Did it have to be this way? I asked myself, what if the art was located where people live and work, on the street rather than in parks, where they, at best, go for recreation? What if it dealt with the things that concern them in their everyday lives? Most of all, what if we let them in on the process?» (Jacob 2014: 172). To do so, it was paramount to change the classic commissioning processes which were usually employed by governmental agencies (entailing selection panels naming shortlists of artists by looking at slides and not visiting the sites): «It seemed to me that things could be done another way, and that practices of curating, rather than administering, could be applied to the commissioning of public art» (Jacob 2014: 174), says Jacob.

Culture in Action eliminated the role of architects and design professionals from the art production process, collaborations that in the 1980s were a must: it instead cast the community as the authority figure on such matters, privileging its role in the collaborative artistic partnerships forged by the program. Much of the work in *Culture in Action* was defined not in terms of material objects but by the ephemeral processes of interaction between the local participants and the artists. This was in line with Jacob's idea of curating as a «mindful practice of caring for process», which means «keeping the aim of the programme in mind and clarifying that aim as you go along» (Jacob 2014: 180). The projects were shifting the attention from objects to people's lives, were challenging ìnstitutional power by fighting stereotypes, were connecting people and empowering people who weren't used to museums by enhancing street culture (Brenson 1995). Also the timing was different from traditional public art projects: they «tended to develop slowly, with inconstant results – primarily accessible to those who happened to be there at the time, an audience that would also often be an active co-producer of the work, and secondarily to those prepared to attend, equally slowly, to the documentation of the projects, which emerged through artists' word of mouth, a catalogue and published critiques» (Morris, O'Neill 2014: 9) The exhibition was meant to let questions emerge rather than to give answers regarding the role of art in society. The objectives were to integrate art and culture, to make art part of people's everyday life, to push the boundaries of public art, and to be audience-driven and relevant (Olson 1995).

Jacob wanted to shift the role of the viewer from passive spectator to active art-maker. Moreover, she aimed at involving audiences that were not the usual museum publics: these are the audiences, uninformed and accidental, she calls «unfashionable» (Jacob 1995). Thus, the project, besides being institutional, sought to «dissipate its top-down institutional identity within the vernacular flows of the city by deploying artists to help facilitate the self-organised empowerment of particular urban residents» (Decter 2014: 16). In short, it coupled a hierarchical institutional structure with a community-driven ethos.

Unlike previous exhibitions such as *Places with a Past*, for which Jacob adopted more traditional methods (she solicited proposals, worked through them, found sites, made site visits and made the exhibition), the curator decided to follow an open strategy: in fact, she did not start with a clear idea and then call on the artists, but contacted twelve artists with whom she established a dialogue, from which the project developed over the next two years. Another difference was that *Culture in Action* took distance from touristic areas and entered neighborhoods where museums were seen as inaccessible fortresses: previous exhibitions, even though they had left institutional art spaces, were responding to a need in the art world to listen to forgotten histories and outsider voices, and were still dependent from romanticized conceptions of cities (Brenson 1995).

The artists, supported by Jacob, worked closely with communities in Chicago, creating eight socially engaged art projects. Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle produced *Tele-vecindario*, a neighborhood media initiative in West Town that trained young people to produce video works about their own streets, cultures and issues of place (Fig. 54). The project included installations, public screenings, TV broadcasts and a street block party featuring community videos. It also favored the formation of Street-Level Video youth collective. Haha (Richard House, Wendy Jacob, Laurie Palmer, John Ploof) created *Flood*, a storefront hydroponic garden in Rogers Park growing vegetables and therapeutic herbs for local HIV/AIDS service groups (Fig. 55). It also served as a community space for dialogue about health care, mutual aid and living with illness. Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, in *Eminent Domain*, worked with low-income public housing tenants, co-developing a set of custom paint chips whose colors and names referenced the history and lived experience of public housing, melding aesthetics with social identity. Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio, in *We Got It! The Workforce Makes the Candy of Their Dreams*, collaborated with workers at a Nestlé chocolate factory and the Bakery, Confectionery & Tobacco Workers' Union to conceive and produce (outside Nestlé) a custom chocolate bar symbolizing labor pride and collective imagination. Daniel J. Martinez, for *Consequences of a Gesture / 100 Victories, 10,000 Tears*, made a public installation and organized a multi-ethnic parade connecting diverse neighborhood groups that addressed social movement, displacement and neighborhood change, especially in places affected by urban redevelopment. Suzanne Lacy's *Full Circle* project honored women's cultural contributions, realizing a hundred limestone monuments placed around Chicago's Loop and an associated dinner event spotlighting global women leaders. Robert Peters in *Naming Others: Manufacturing Yourself* interactively explored social labeling and classification, collecting Chicago slang, stereotypes and naming practices. Responses were made accessible via a public telephone line and community engagements. Mark Dion

worked on a year-long ecological field station project linking art, nature and urban environments, bringing groups together to engage with local ecosystems, environmental education, and community science (*The Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group*).

The exhibition received several critiques, such as those by Miwon Kwon and Hal Foster, among the most famous ones: Kwon takes *Culture in Action* as an example to explain «how new genre public art can exacerbate uneven power relations, remarginalize (even colonize) already disenfranchised groups, depoliticize and remythify the artistic process, and finally further the separation of art and life (despite claims to the contrary)» (Kwon 2002: 6), and heavily criticizes the community rhetoric she accuses Jacob of employing. Foster instead critiqued the exhibition for activating gentrification processes (Foster 1996). These critiques have been largely discussed by other scholars, such as Joshua Decter (Decter 2014), and are not going to be further analyzed here because the focus of this chapter is on the curator's role rather than on the outcomes of the artistic projects. However, there have also been critiques specifically directed towards the role of Mary Jane Jacob: in particular, Miwon Kwon reported the case of an artist – Renée Green – that was initially invited to participate in *Culture in Action* but then abandoned the project because of disagreements with Jacob. In fact, Jacob was expecting her to engage with the codes of African American identity and took her to an African American neighborhood to meet with representatives of local cultural organizations, but Green appeared to be not interested in that kind of topic and collaboration. Kwon took this case as an example to explain the risk of «curatorial anticipation», meaning that the curator delimits not only the possible community partners for an artist but also the type of project that might be developed between them. «The matchmaking mediation of the sponsoring institution, inevitably motivated by the presumption of an artist's interests and the anticipation of a particular kind of collaborative project, often reduces, sometimes stereotypes, the identities of the artist and the community group» (Kwon 2002: 141). It needs to be said, however, as also Joshua Decter points out (Decter 2014), that such disagreements are not only exclusive to exhibitions with a social or participatory focus and are quite common within curator-artist relations: even if curators try to keep the process as open as possible, it may happen that they don't get along with certain artists. When working with exhibitions, curators have their own vision, and this can bring both advantages and disadvantages: if on the one hand Jacob did not match with Green's artistic idea, on the other hand she was able to pave the way for artists that were not usually taken into consideration in public art programs and to innovate public art commissioning processes from the inside.

Another critique regarding Jacob's role is that by Joe Scanlan who, in his review for *frieze*, claimed that she was superfluous:

> It is to Mary Jane Jacob's credit that all of the artists in "Culture in Action" were already personally involved in alternative art forms, politics and community activism. But did Sculpture Chicago's more sophisticated relationships with cultural funding institutions necessarily translate into more intelligent and effective public artworks? Or would these projects have happened anyway – on smaller scales definitely, perhaps in different places and over longer periods of time – just minus all the hoopla and hype? I think so. And if that's the case, Sculpture Chicago was only responsible for making them happen on a massive scale, together, adding little to the projects themselves, but certainly following recent (government) guidelines that art be useful and have immediate, measurable effects. (Scanlan 1993: n.p.).

Scanlan, departing from an idea of corruption of a hypothetical authentic scene of community based art, makes Jacob's curating just a matter of scale and doesn't take into consideration its role in empowering and spreading alternative artistic practices also in institutional contexts, thus inaugurating a new season of art-in-the-public-interest commissioning. Jacob, as a curator, «created an urban platform for artists to research, develop and implement innovative projects that reimagined art as an instrument for new modes of social participation and community engagement» (Decter 2014: 14). Even if some projects could have happened independently from the exhibition's frame, though it remains their principal incubator and frame: «With "Culture in Action", I worked from the belief that the exhibition was a format that could be expanded, adapted, even transformed, to follow what artists do, and to enable them further. The projects of "Culture in Action" were not the first of their kind, to be sure, but practices of their kind were given a boost by having a frame placed around them. The frame was the exhibition» (Jacob 2014: 178). This kind of curatorial function as sounding board is expressed by Zoran Erić and Stevan Vuković in an article in *Manifesta Journal*, where they say: «the task of the curator might be to link together all the individual acts so as to generate a critical mass of voices that will resonate all the more fully by being orchestrated in a common frame, thus ultimately producing a more powerful effect by exposing certain problems and raising various issues about the society» (Erić, Vuković 2004: 72). This is well expressed by the words of a participant in one of the projects, Naomi Beckwith: «At that time, we didn't understand what a curator meant. We just knew she was an impresario that was pulling everything together. She was very active in making sure the right conversations happened with the right people at the right time. She's very good at that» (Ekstrand, Neagu 2022: 162). Moreover, Jacob's role was helpful in terms of finding funding for projects whose outcome was not predefined: «For funders, the lack of

demonstrable outcomes was problematic – so I made up plausible outcomes when I needed to in order to get the grant written and get the money to move ahead. Funders do not value organic, responsive, evolutionary processes» (Jacob 2014: 180). Also in this sense, the curator was key in making space for artistic practices that would have struggled to find institutional support and resources. Lastly, her role was important in perpetuating the memory of the exhibition and advocating for it, for example through the catalogue, which, in a way, became even more influential than the exhibition itself (Olson, Brenson, Jacob 1995). To sum up, *Culture in Action* represented a crucial learning process in terms of planning, negotiation and implementation for new forms of public art, and has been a groundbreaking event in the curatorial world because it started to «naturalise models of social participation and localized community engagement as formulae for curating» (Decter 2014: 21).

In the same year, two other seminal exhibitions were organized in Europe: *Sonsbeek 93* in Arnhem and *Project Unité* in Firminy. Even though these exhibitions haven't been as fortunate as *Culture in Action*, still they deserve to be mentioned in this context. *Sonsbeek 93* – originally an open-air sculpture show in the city park started in 1949 – curated by Valerie Smith, signals the transition between 1980s conceptions of site-specific work and the forms of non-monumental intervention and socially engaged art that emerged in the 1990s. In contrast to her immediate predecessor Saskia Bos, who in 1986 had opted for a return to the park and to a more traditional display of (postmodern) sculpture in glass pavilions, Smith decided to go beyond these boundaries and reach out into the urban structure of Arnhem. The thirty-eight international artists and collectives involved in the exhibition were invited to explore the city for at least 24 hours and engage with its social fabric. Among the artworks produced was, for example, Andreas Siekmann's *Square of Permanent Reorganization,* which reflected on urban planning policy by projecting seven alternative strategies for the use of a neglected square in the city center, each addressing the needs of a different section of local society (Fig. 56). Smith explains she sees *Sonsbeek 93* as a laboratory or experiment:

> I knew that I wanted to approach the exhibition in a certain way, and the approach was to make it a research project. I was looking for artists who were not making concrete objects, [artists] that were able to deal with the site that they chose. That they were able to either create their own world, or that they were able to take that world, that information, out there and integrate or ameliorate or construct something […] For me, the result is not the goal. It is really the way artists approach their w ork. It's the methodology that is for me the most interesting, it's the

> process! And I think most of the art world can't deal with that here because they are locked in formalism. So, I think there are these transitional periods in which the surroundings, the situation is seeping into the viewer's consciousness, and you see that. And you see the city, the park, the polder in relation to the work. And I think it's much more than just one single object in a room crammed with five other objects. It's you, moving through that space, to something you have to also experience, and you can't just experience by looking at it and forgetting it in a split second. (Lehmann 2022b: 196-197)

Smith also says that working with such a process strategy

> is risky and represents more work, more discussions. Everything about it is trial and error and results are not guaranteed: as curator, you hope that something poetic will come out and you place a lot of power and faith in the artists, because it is impossible to be on top of so many artists all the time, nor would I want to be. You must support the artists, as a facilitator in a way and make the conditions the best possible for them. There are always projects that could fail hard, which generate criticism of the curator. (Floris, Lehmann 2022: 205)

Unfortunately, despite the search for points of connection between the artistic and social discussion and Smith's idealistic goal of reaching out and creating a link to the social reality of Arnhem, this expansion into the everyday was met with the suspicion of cultural elitism and, in part at least, a fierce rejection from the (local) audience and press (due to the wide dispersion of the exhibition's locations across the city, insufficient guidance from the maps and guidebooks distributed to viewers, and the often visually inconspicuous character of the conceptual works). This revealed not only a lack of understanding or openness to the latest art practices, but more importantly the need to build an audience over time. Its visionary character was recognized only by individual critics at the time, but, with some delay, it also became an important subject of research into exhibition history (Lehmann 2022).

Project Unité exhibition was organized by curator Yves Aupetitallot following the proposal of artist Christian Philipp Müller of making an exhibition in the uninhabited apartments of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, a monumental block of low-income apartments wedged into the hills surrounding the small city of Firminy in central France (Fig. 57). The town of Firminy had suffered from severe pollution and lack of planning due to the steel and mining industries, earning it the nickname "Firminy-Noir" (Black Firminy). To counter this, city administrators launched a plan to move the residential zone to the outskirts to create a healthier environment known as "Firminy-Vert" (Green Firminy), and invited Le Corbusier to design the site in 1953. Completed in 1967 as part of a larger complex including a youth

center, a stadium, and a church, the Unité d'Habitation was intended as a visionary response to the economic disenfranchisement caused by rapid industrialization. Continuing recession, however, has sharply reduced the local population, and many of those who remain prefer individual residences. In 1993, the building was half-uninhabited, it hosted marginalized categories such as single mothers, laborers, and immigrants, and was in threat of demolition. The curator aimed to use the building as a laboratory rather than a museum, attempting to integrate art, architecture, and social politics, and shifting the focus from finished art objects to a participatory, site-specific process (De Lena 2019). He brought together a diverse group of artists (including Renée Green, Mark Dion, and Philippe Parreno) who shared an interest in participatory practices and social themes. He assigned 40 artists to 29 unoccupied apartments in the building's north wing, effectively turning the domestic space into a staging ground for ideas. The aim was to integrate the artists into the social fabric of the residential complex. All of them began their research on the city and the building more than a year in advance: the results of their investigations and their dialogue with Aupetitallot helped to give the project its final shape. This approach was modeled after Aupetitallot's 1984 project, *Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés*, where he placed art in private homes to challenge institutional frames and establish a stronger bond between art and social data. Drawing on Mark Rakatansky's idea of Spatial Narratives, he encouraged artists to view the building not just as physical space, but as a site saturated with social and psychological histories (De Lena 2019). If compared to *Sonsbeek 93*,

> Aupetitallot's show constituted a considerably more radical attempt to escape institutional limits into the "extrinsic" social domain, by replacing the art institution with a functioning community – one that already symbolized, within a living monument to an unfulfilled utopian pragmatics, a grand, if flawed, integration of art, architecture, design, national culture, economics, politics, and the social. In effect, the participants were asked to assume the role of inhabitants and to reflect upon "collective" living within the machinery of Corbusier's social architecture. Each apartment became a symbolic space for cultural exploration as well as a surrogate studio or gallery, while the building as a whole was transformed from a residence into a laboratory (re: Bauhaus) that doubled as a readymade museum. (Decter, Zahm 1993: 92)

Though, the exhibition was criticized by several crititcs such as curator Stefan Germer, who viewed the project as a failure because Aupetitallot's attempt to unify disparate contextual practices actually highlighted their individualism and incompatibility, and Joshua Decter, who argued that by placing artists in an uninhabited wing, Aupetitallot failed to create

authentic relations with the residents, potentially turning the project back into a traditional gallery experience (Decter, Zahm 1993). Besides these critiques, the project should be recognized as one of the first attempts to investigate the specificity of a place and to immerse the artist and his practice in the social context (De Lena 2019).

These exhibitions, besides having socially engaged contents and operating in urban spaces, were not directly involved in their regeneration or redevelopment. This is one more step that happened at the turn of the century, when art-led urban regeneration was on the rise, as was analyzed in chapter 3.1. This is also linked to a terminological change: from this moment on, these curatorial practices are addressed as programs or projects rather than as exhibitions (Jacob had already tried to introduce this new terminology in *Culture in Action*, but it needed some more time to catch on). These terms contributed to a change of paradigm in curating art in urban contexts because they shifted the focus from the act of assembling different artistic practices together for a short period of time to the one of working on/with stories, values and images of a place in a durational manner (not meaning permanent). These approaches differ both from traditional permanent public art interventions and from temporary exhibitions: in fact, even though their outcomes are not necessarily permament artworks, they are not as ephemeral as temporary exhibitions. These projects can both last over a quite long period of time (years, not months such as exhibitions) as processes and cumulate in a places across time, and thus are more compatible with transformative and long-term results. Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty talk about «durational approaches to public art» to present cumulative and long-term approaches adopted by curators (or producers, as they prefer to call them) as an alternative to the short-term model seeing curators and artists as nomads wandering from exhibition to exhibition, from biennial to biennial around the world (O'Neill, Doherty 2011). This concept is also expressed by Nato Thompson, who refers to it as a «strategic turn»: the strategic turn implies works that are explicitly local, long-term, deeply rooted in community relations and motivated by a commitment to political change (Thompson 2012). It is not a case if there were several recurring artist names within the exhibitions presented until now: for example, in the same year Mark Dion, Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler participated in *Culture in Action* in the US, in *Sonsbeek 93* in The Netherlads, and in *Project Unité* in France. They claim that «a spatio-temporal constellation of artworks and projects over time might be the best possible solution to the exhaustion of the site-specific curatorial model» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 11). While exhibitions such as *Skulptur Projekte Münster* can no longer be experienced as cohesive exhibitions of art in public space due to the multiple temporal and discursive modes in which artists are now working, there is still room for a model of curating in place over time which allows for a

cumulative engagement between artists and specific places, and which raises questions about the promotion and analysis of curatorial projects within the context of global cultural tourism (Doherty 2007). If compared to exhibitions, «durational projects could be considered as 'discursive exhibitions' that evolve over time, but, instead of prioritising the moment of display, or the event of exhibition, they allow for open-ended, accumulative processes of engagement» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 14). O'Neill and Doherty illustrate five durational art projects started since 2000, presenting the following characteristics: they demonstrate an individual commissioner's investment in maintaining a committed, long-term, durational approach to commissioning contemporary art in a specific place, generating a public manifestation; they have had a commissioning process and outcome which lasts for more than 100 days (the standard time-span of an international large-scale exhibition); and they involve the engagement of local residents (O'Neill, Doherty 2011). They recall Clare Cumberlidge and Lucy Musgrave's *Design and Landscape for People: New Approaches to Renewal* (Cumberlidge, Musgrave 2007), to say that these projects share some key principles: they propose renewal as a continuous, open-ended process; they take a holistic, multidimensional approach to their designated situations; they maximise resources – material, human and economic; they use local distinctiveness as a starting point for a vision of the future; and they engage professionals to work outside their normal sphere of practice and share an awareness of symbolic value (O'Neill, Doherty 2011). O'Neill and Doherty moreover claim that the significance of curators for implementing this kind of projects has emerged from their studies:

> One of the most prevalent characteristics of commissioning practices that has emerged through our research is the significance to each project of charismatic agency, whereby a key element of an individual's curatorial practice is the visionary means they use to engage participants and visitors and to secure funding. In this way, while authorship of specific facets of the project — such as particular architectural interventions, residencies or texts — might be clearly attributed, ownership of the project as a whole invariably becomes shared. (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 7)

Of course, their role is not the same as that of traditional curators of exhibitions: «Such projects necessitate a shift in our consideration of the curator-producer from an individual focused on the unearthing or endorsement of an existing historical sense of place through the commissioning of autonomous, permanently sited artworks to a creative praxis characterised by complicit participation in the making of place through a series of cumulative

and dispersed encounters over time» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 14). In these projects, commissioners employ their charismatic agency through networked models of sociality to allow for co-habitational time: the open-endedness of the process is employed as a means of resisting the instrumentalisation of art (Rossiter 2011). Also the participatory component is important for these projects to avoid the spectacularization of social relations and risks of pseudo-ethnographic parachuting of artists and curators work with passive target groups deprived of agency (seen in the case of *Places with a Past*). Lastly, one of the reasons why these projects last in time is that they generate subsidiary audiences – beyond the initial participants or co-producers – through the dispersion of the narrative of the project by its participants and lead commissioner/producer over time. In this way, the projects transcend their immediate relations and «are translated and extended into the future, whether that is through artists' work or through residual resident initiatives that endure beyond the project lifetime or as something which is discussed in subsequent art discourses» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 10).

One of the first examples of durational practices is *Beyond*, a project curated by Tom van Gestel in Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht, from 1999 to 2009, which is also described by O'Neill and Doherty. It was designed as a ten-year program of temporary public art commissions aimed at promoting forms of urban life in Leidsche Rijn, a suburban extension of the city of Utrecht which was built almost entirely anew as part of the City of Utrecht's major urban renewal program, began in 1997. Tom van Gestel from SKOR (Foundation for Art and Public Space) was invited by the city to propose a special art strategy for the region in 1999, who collaborated with Peter Kuenzli, former Director of Property Development in Leische Rijn who proposed astrategic plan for the area. Van Gestel accepted the main curatorial advisory role in the belief that a program of temporary art projects could offer an alternative to the approach of project developers to a city plan of such scale, which usually overlooks the provision of local amenities and cultural infrastructure. Van Gestel was interested in challenging the planners and identifying gaps in the planning process, making them visible through the arts program, thus promoting urbanism and avoinding trying to solve the problems of master planning (O'Neill, Doherty 2011). In 2000, Kuenzli, Van Gestel and their team wrote the *Beyond* strategic plan, open to changes and adaptation during implementation. The plan's aim was to focus on the relationship between the urban development plan, the landscape, the construction schedule and the role of contemporary art commissioning during the period of Leische Rijn's development and construction. The curatorial structure was from the outset meant to evolve through a series of chapters, akin to the acts of a film script (O'Neill, Doherty 2011). The curatorial program, departing from an

evaluation of the characteristics of Leidsche Rijn development, critically reflected on the conventions of the building program and questioned the relationship between development and contemporary art through the occupation of space, trying to influence the experience of living and working in Leidsche Rijn and to promote forms of communal social life. The program revolved around six categories: 1) looping (dealing with the communication with residents about the program); 2) parasites (dealing with the siting of light, mobile and experimental forms of architecture with a social or participatory function); 3) artists' houses (artists need to think about living in Leidsche Rijn); 4) white spots (dealing with sites that had been taken out of the master plan and used for parallel and future temporary art projects, with curators acting as property developers); 5) action research (artistic interventions were a way to undertake research-based interactions including participation, reflexive practices and observational responses to the evolution of Leidsche Rijn); 6) directing artists (artists contribute to the infrastructural design of Leidsche Rijn). The curatorial team developed the commissions through regular meetings and correspondence with city planners, developers and artists. They invited artists to participate in one of the six strands listed above, they assessed proposals on the basis of their artistic merit, appeal to local public and feasibility within the overall plan for the region. The commissioning process tried to always stay flexible.

Among the developed artistic project was the work of N55 group, which laid claim to a 300 sqm plot of land, consisting of a small pasture, eclosed by a moat with its own bridge. The artists wanted this area to not be built upon, so it remained unaffected by the development around it. It was one of the few free-accessible public spaces that would remain undeveloped in the area, available for residents to use as they wished. Another example is Shigeru Ban's *Paper Dome*, a large architectural structure made of paper, cardboard and bamboo covered by a polyester cloth, which hosts cultural activities, performances and events (Fig. 58). Several of the artistic interventions continued even after the official end of *Beyond* in 2009, adapted by local agencies for various cultural activities or integrated in the physical and social spaces of Leidsche Rijn. In their survey of the project, O'Neill and Doherty say that «*Beyond* has resisted the prevailing tendency, arising from commissioning in urban renewal contexts, to restrict art to either short-term social impact or to problem solving» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 261), and they connect the project to a new form of urban creative practice, «which aims to establish a new way affecting and forming a more co-productive built environment through partnerships, with art playing a major part in questioning the form that could take» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 261). One of the reasons of its success and stability over time was the fact that it was not a separate foundation with its own statutes and bank

account, but was directly linked to the City of Utrecht's cultural department: in this way the municipality was accountable for funding and protection of the continuity of the program. Nonetheless, it was also able to keep some independence from the administrative infrastructure: in this way it did not have the kind of externally imposed limitations often assosciated with city development initiatives. In this way, Van Gestel and his team could focus on adding meaning to the arts rather than on getting social results for the neighborhood and the city, through their open-ended, durational and art-as-means approach (O'Neill, Doherty 2011).

In the 1990s a new series of important public art commissioning project was initiated: that linked to the New Patrons (or *Nouveaux Commanditaires*) protocol. Conceived by artist François Hers and implemented by Xavier Douroux, founder and former director of Le Consortium art center in Dijon, France, this model was conceived as a means of intervention in rural and urban Burgundy, with the intention of preserving and rehabilitating the region, and as a countermovement to the accelerated urban development in it. Even though conceived in 1991, the protocol was formally published in 2002 by Hers (Hers 2002), followed in 2012 by a joint publication with Xavier Douroux, *Art without Capitalism* (Hers, Douroux 2012). The method is based on the delegation of authority and responsibility for a given project by authorizing one or several individuals (patrons) – a local representation of residents, entrusted with the role of setting the process in motion and supporting it, with the art center's mediation. The program is based on the principles of participation, sharing, and the use value of works of art, which aims to produce a sense of appropriation and identification. The artists involved need to first listen to the places and their inhabitants, understand the stories connected to them, and bring them to light, contributing to the understanding of the social changes that communities are undergoing (Alicata, Pietromarchi 2008). The protocol introduced by Hers relies on a network of mediators – oftentimes embodied by curators – who facilitate collaboration between patrons and artists. According to the protocol, the artist is commissioned by the mediator to work collaboratively, to propose a concept for a work of art and devise its visual appearance. The mediator is not supposed to resolve conflicts and mediate between the patron and the artist, but is required to be familiar with all the political, social, and administrative aspects of the project on the one hand, and with its artistic and design aspects, on the other. In addition, he should make the artistic tools accessible to the patron, and champion the project's potential to effect change. Being acquainted with the political field (the sponsors and project partners – such as the authorities, relevant government ministries, institutions, and local leadership), he issues contracts for both the patron and the artist, expressing each party's commitment to

execute the project, guarding the interests of each player (including the sponsors), and regulating copyrights. The mediator is required to enable the democratic process without interfering with or influencing the creative process. He may interfere with the patron's choice or oppose it, if he believes it is inappropriate, irrelevant, or impracticable, but beyond the choice of artist, he is not the project's curator in the creative sense that has emerged with Szeemann. He should assess his selection critically and examine whether and how the patron's artistic selection serves the public interest.

The artist presents the patron with a proposal (pre-project), which is then modified or elaborated in accordance with the patron's comments and reservations. This stage of the proposal's development, including technical research, planning, and the patron's final approval, takes at least one year, and at its conclusion, the artist receives a payment. The average duration of a project to completion is two years. The community becomes the primary owner of the project, but owners may also include entrepreneurs and other partners, such as a museum, non-profit organizations, foundations, a municipality, a regional council, and so on.

Since the model's drafting, over 500 projects have been carried out, approximately 90 of them with Xavier Douroux as mediator, most of them focusing on the restoration of Burgundy's rural space. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the protocol expanded in the United States, Spain, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. Interestingly, these projects often interwined within larger urban regeneration projects: for example, in the Italian case, it contributed to the regeneration of Mirafiori Nord neighborhood in Turin, as part of the *Urban II* European initiative (see chapter 3.1). The program (2001-2009) was promoted by Fondazione Olivetti and mediated by curatorial group a.titolo (Giorgina Bertolino, Bianca Polledro, Francesca Comisso, Nicoletta Leonardi, Lisa Parola and Luisa Perlo). The commission resulted in four artistic works: Lucy Orta created *Totipotent architecture*, a cell-shaped large habitable sculpture commissioned by a group of high school students who needed a place to meet and talk (Fig. 59); Massimo Bartolini designed *Laboratorio di Storia e Storie*, a lab and archive open to schools in an 18th century chapel; Stefano Arienti created *Multiplayer*, a multifunctional space for playing football, basketball, volleyball, and other games, commissioned by a group of children residing in a nearby social housing complex; Claudia Losi designed *Affacci*, a large green area equipped with seating and plants conceived collaboratively with a group of social housing residents (Fig. 60) (Fondazione Olivetti Official Website). Critic Alessandra Pioselli explains that in this project «artistic design was effectively integrated into territorial regeneration, relevant to the various departments responsible for urban planning or suburbs […] Framed within a procedural context, rather

than being superimposed at the end of the development works as is often required, artistic practice can serve to push for the representation of ideas that are not considered a priority by institutions»[40] (Pioselli 2015: 150). The project's planning framework initiative, *Urban II*, developed through three main areas of intervention: the Green Axis, dealing with physical regeneration and environmental sustainability; the Blue Axis, focusing on infrastructures and economic development; and the Red Axis, working on social integration, exclusion, and cultural growth. Massimo Bartolini, Stefano Arienti, and Claudia Losi's projects were linked to the Red Axis, while Lucy Orta's with the Green Axis. The project, besides its importance in the Italian art/planning collaboration landscape, still shows some criticalities, as art was subordinated to urban planning and not expressing its full potential (Meschini 2021). Though, it is an interesting example of an alternative mode of curatorial practices, in contrast to the rise of the creative curator presented in this chapter: a.titolo, in fact, took on a mainly mediatory role, locating itself as a buffer between artists, commissioners and other stakeholders. The curators explain in a press release:

> What does "mediating" mean in a public art program such as Nuovi Committenti, which is based on a close relationship between art and territory, artists and communities, places, habits, and norms? Neither attributable to the sphere of teaching nor to that of education, cultural mediation, in its various interpretations, is first and foremost a practice based on relationships, which makes the presence of a third party – the mediator – the possibility of "other" solutions, obtained above all through storytelling, dialogue, and discussion. Associated in Italy almost exclusively with the activities of linguistic-cultural operators of different nationalities and present as a service mainly in the social sphere, cultural mediation has, in recent years, gained ground in the field of contemporary art and in particular in museums. Moved from the protected space of the exhibition to the public space, as in the case of Nuovi Committenti, cultural mediation tends to transfer art into the sphere of politics, administrative legislation, sociality, its problems and conflicts, giving rise to an experience that, as it unfolds, has no fixed location but is elastic and flexible. In Mirafiori, once the groups of patrons had been identified, the work began with a listening phase followed by joint reflections on feasibility, economics, the function assigned to the work, its possible relationship with the rest of the community, its use, management, and future preservation. From then on, work intensified on the 'empty' spaces intended to accommodate something that did not yet exist – and would not exist for all the years it took to build it – but which a small community of people already saw and about which decisions were made, forms assigned and technical solutions found. In this process of prefiguration, mediation became fantasizing, imagining, designing, actively

[40] Translation by the author.

> participating, with artists and patrons, in a creative process, each with their own role but in an open situation of active and conscious co-authorship. Over time, through meetings and narratives, the relationship between patron, mediator, and artist was thus projected onto an object that was still invisible but which, even before taking its final shape, began to function as a catalyst for relationships, ideas, and imagination. This long process is the added value of the method used: addressing problems and issues in relation to the function of an object intended for the community, preceded by a process in which mediation means above all valuing weak signals and encouraging reflection on not being used to proactive citizenship practices[41]. (a.titolo 2008: 9)

In this conception, curating is a relational and dialogical practice, which enables and facilitates others through its storytelling, discussion and imagination tools: but it's a form of active mediation, meaning that a.titolo were not just transmitting information from one subject to another without contributing to the discussion, but were instead considering themselves co-authors in the process. Moreover, as a.titolo say in this excerpt, curatorial mediation accompanies art in the sphere of politics and sociality, and makes space for it out of museum spaces.

Flanking these experiences, there were also cases where an artist was taking on curatorial and coordination roles: it is the case, for example, of Kerstin Bergendal in *Trekroner Art Plan* in Roskilde, Denmark (2001-2013), Bert Theis in *Isola Art Project* in Milan, Italy (2001-2016) and Jeanne van Heeswijk in *The Blue House* in IJburg (Amsterdam), The Netherlands (2005-2009). All of these cases are interesting but, since the cases that have just been described – *Beyond* and *Nuovi Committenti Torino Mirafiori Nord* – were commissioned top-down by municipalities, a bottom-up case seems more suitable to be illustrated at this point. From this perspective, *Isola Art Project* is particularly fascinating, as an example of resistance to gentrification processes and safeguard of public spaces. Isola is a historic neighborhood north of Milan's city center that earned its name due to its physical isolation, cut off from the rest of the city by railroad tracks and the Naviglio Martesana canal. This physical separation fostered a vital, self-contained microcosm where family businesses, markets, and a dense network of social centers (squats) thrived. Its history is a narrative of transition from a proletarian industrial hub in the early 1900s, to a Partisan stronghold during World War II, and finally to a modern battleground for urban regeneration and gentrification since the 2000s. Already in 1965 some of Isola's factories started to close, leaving only their

[41] Translation by the author.

ghostly presences as empty buildings. Twenty years later, artists began occupying abandoned spaces for experimental works. At the end of the century, the Isola of the 1900s no longer existed: the factories had all been abandoned and dismantled. Only one building remained of that great structure: the so-called "Stecca degli Artigiani", flanked by two green areas that, with time, became neighborhood parks (Fig. 61). In 2000 the center-right coalition of the mayor Gabriele Albertini decided to relaunch an urban plan for the area, with the goal of creating a "City of Fashion". The administration set operations in motion to approve the construction of one million cubic meters of offices, hotels and residences: a Master Plan was developed by Milanese architect Pierluigi Nicolin, which linked the neighborhood directly to the city center, cutting the neighborhood in two with a highway, eliminating the park and demolishing the Stecca degli Artigiani (Theis, Brizioli 2013). In 2000 a group of young architects from the Milan Polytechnic formed Cantieri Isola, an association with the aim of creative intervention in this imminent urban transformation, through a campaign of information that would make it possible to understand the program. Cantieri Isola wanted to put the various segments of the neighborhood into contact with each other, to have an impact on urban planning decisions. Artists Stefano Boccalini, Mariette Schiltz and Bert Theis, who also lived in Isola for some time, decided to cooperate with Cantieri Isola, which in turn was already in contact with the architects and artists of the group A12. A small group was thus formed, which decided to activate a contemporary art project for the long term, temporary and closely connected to the situation of conflict that was arising between the residents of the neighborhood and the city government and the contractors. The group designed *Isola Art Project 1*, a series of interventions done in the gardens of via Confalonieri (June 2001). For example, Theis created *Untitled/Untilted*, a 100 meters long fence, built to protect the gardens, at the point where the planned street would cut them in two (Fig. 62). The work was also composed of three bench modules offered to the neighborhood as a place to relax, and made with the help of about thirty local residents. The role of Theis is described in the Visible platform as multiple: «as an artist he realized several artworks linked to the context, as sub-curator he curates and co-curates shows and projects, as an activist he is involved in petitions, meetings and actions, as a gardener he is working in the community park, and so on» (Visible Official Website). Theis, regarding this first phase, says:

> When I started working on the Isola in 2001, you could already sense the tension and protest in the neighborhood against the plans for urban redevelopment. In this precarious situation, I thought it would be interesting to create a long-term contemporary art project that would be able to establish a dialectical process with the inhabitants of the neighborhood and promote

> the creation of alternatives. I had no preconceived ideas about what approach to adopt – it all needed to be invented. In 2001, I created the first collective operation with the groups working at the Isola. This was a one-hundred-meter-long palisade in white wood – a sort of symbolic barrier that would give tangible form to where the road dividing the neighborhood in two would pass. But the symbolic barrier wouldn't have lasted a minute against the power of an earthmover. So it was quite clear that this symbolic barrier also had to be accompanied by a social, political, and cultural barrier. And that was something that could not be done by a single person. To start off with, there were just a few of us – Stefano Boccalini, Gruppo A12, Marjetica Potrč, and Thomas Hirschhorn as foreign artists, and Marco Scotini, Roberto Pinto, and Emanuela De Cecco as curators – but many others joined us later. (Gandolfi, Theis 2010: 150)

In that same year Cantieri Isola occupied a multifunctional space on the ground floor of the Stecca, opening also the building's first bar. In November 2001 the group organized, together with Mario Gorni of Careof, *Isola Art Project 2: Art and the City*, a video program on the first floor of the building. A slide show explaining the meaning of Isola Art Project was projected in the courtyard. In 2002 Theis introduced *out (Office for Urban Transformation*), an open platform supporting the struggle of the neighborhood against top-down urban planning, using artistic means. The *out* office was above all a working method, to develop a new type of urbanism from the ground up. Its guidelines were «to understand the city, to dream of the city and transform it, combining the artistic sensibilities of many professionals (architects, philosophers, photographers, designers, lawyers, researchers and others) with the everyday urban experience and intuitions of the inhabitants of the city» (Theis, Brizioli 2013: 64). The *out* office occupied a space on the first floor of the Stecca, and prepared to activate it with encounters and exhibitions. In June 2002 there was *Isola Art Project 3*, during which the group of architects Actiegroep presented a model showing a possible restructuring of the Stecca, connecting the two parks by means of a passage that crosses the building. This was followed by a debate on *Art as service/Art as social organization*, with Actiegroep, Gruppo A12, Stefano Boccalini, Bert Theis, the curator Marco Scotini and the critic Emanuela De Cecco, which was the start of a long dialectical process, aimed at bridging the gap between artists and inhabitants in motion. In November 2002 *Isola Art Project 4* was organized, which opened the *out* office on the first floor of the Stecca. In 2003 the association of social promotion Isola dell'Arte (IdA) was founded, with Grazia Toderi and Bert Theis as president and vice-president, aimed to create a credible contemporary art center within the Stecca degli Artigiani to give the neighborhood more political clout against real estate speculation. In that year, the space occupied by the group

organized many more activities (cycle of events *One Thousand and One Nights*, cycle of conferences *Selfurbanization*, cycle of exhibitions *Picnic*, and so on). In 2005, the center was officially inaugurated as Isola Art Center. In 2004 *out* contributed with local group Comitato I Mille to present an alternative planning proposal for the Stecca degli Artigiani: it was a community-led counter-plan designed to save the historic building and its surrounding parks from demolition under the official master plan. The proposal sought to shift urban development from a top-down speculative model to a "City from Below" that prioritized the needs of local residents. The alternative plan, formalized in a petition signed by over 3,000 residents, outlined several key demands: restructuring the Stecca instead of demolishing it and making it a gathering place for residents and a permanent center for art, culture, and crafts; saving the parks; maintaining the existing road network, explicitly opposing the highway idea. To visualize this alternative, the *out* office used an artistic and participatory method based on an "archive of desires" (taken from the *Park Fiction* example): residents and associations were given empty silhouettes of the Stecca on A3 paper to draw or write their own visions for the building's future. These contributions were then synthesized into a «design of a collective dream» (Theis, Brizioli 2013: 88), printed on a massive PVC sheet and hung on the Stecca's facade to communicate the community's counter-proposal to the media and the city. Though the municipality went straight on its way, even when the group appealed on a legal level to the Regional Administrative Court (TAR Lombardia). In April 2007, after years of tension, the Stecca was evicted by police and, shortly after, the developer began to demolish the building, destroying many artworks and assets of the center. The area was redeveloped making space for high-end projects like the Bosco Verticale by Stefano Boeri, luxury apartment towers where apartments which have become one of the most famous symbols of a fancy and wealthy Milan. After that, the center became a dispersed entity, using neighborhood bars, shops, and public squares for activities. From 2007 to 2012 this new form of presence made possible for the group to be more active in the life of the zone. Thanks to the *Isola Rosta Project*, the center used the storefront shutters as a new exhibition site, allowing art and criticism of urban projects to be displayed in public space. The dispersed center had fight-specific objectives, denouncing gentrification processes, and collaborating to gain a self-managed green community area. After losing the two parks and the 1500 sqm exhibition spaces in and around the Stecca, the struggle for green areas and a self-organised community centre continued through a new project, started after finding an abandoned lot owned by the city administration in Via Pepe (2013). Together with the Isola Pepe Verde association, Isola Art Center worked to create a community park in this area with a pavilion for art and neighbourhood activities (Fig. 63). Its central location

in the neighbourhood and its proximity to primary and secondary schools makes it ideal for responding to the emergency due to the lack of nearby green space in the area. Isola Art Center works in the new green space, to promote it in the neighbourhood and make it into a place shaped by participation and sociality (Theis, Brizioli 2013). Even though, unfortunately, the initiative did not succeed to change the municipality's plans for Isola, still it had impact in that it helped stop several invasive road plans and inspired the Art Workers movement and the occupation of the Galfa skyscraper (and the establishment of Macao art and community center) from 2012 to 2021. It remains a model for self-management, refusing stable institutional funding to avoid censorship and the greenwashing of corporate interests. The group always refused collaborations with developers and tried to avoid cooption, even though the real estate company later integrated some of their ideas into its project, for example creating a playground for children, offering activities for families, constructing a new art center and working with artists on the fences of the construction site. Theis addresses these actions as consensus-building and denies any possibility of pacification (Esche *et al.* 2013).

Bert Theis worked for the initiative up to his death in 2016, and contributed with important theoretical ideas, in particular that of «fight-specific art», of «dirty dube», and of «dispersed center». As for the first term, Theis explains:

> We originally coined the term fight-specific art to describe forms of art related to our urban fight. Our work focused on the Isola district has undoubtedly been site-specific. But the decision of siding with the movement and supporting the alternatives suggested by citizens, of fighting against the neo-liberal policies promoted by the political leaders and building speculation, made it necessary to extend the site-specific concept to the new fight-specific one. For us the decisive elements of a site are the people that live and work within the site itself. If the people begin to organize and to take action, fight-specific art becomes possible. Fight-specific art depends on a "warm" situation, meaning a situation of conflict and struggle. Thanks to its contribution, art can help to turn a "cold" situation into a "warm" situation. (Esche *et al.* 2013: 266)

With «dirty cube», Theis wants to take distance from the classic «white cube» of museums and galleries:

> The occupation of the "Stecca" site allowed artists, critics, curators, philosophers and inhabitants to experience a new type of center in architectural conditions we have called the dirty cube to differentiate it from the white cube which is the neutrality standard of

> contemporary art display. The industrial site that we cleared and made accessible was left intact, on purpose. The reason was not nostalgia but the choice not to cancel the traces of the past, and to make the artworks and other activities interact with this situation […] The dirty cube concept is strictly connected to the platform concept, a form of open organization allowing artists, activists, curators, theorists, individuals, different persons and collectives to freely carry out their own proposals and projects in a fight-specific frame. The platform is not a collective having defined members: collectives have joined the platform either sporadically or over the long term. Neither is it an "artist-run space". As a matter of fact, there is no director or curator who has the last word on the program or the projects to be carried out. Decision-making is horizontal and rhizomatic. (Esche *et al.* 2013: 273)

Lastly, as for the «dispersed center», he says:

> Having lost the battle to preserve the Stecca and the gardens, Isola Art Center's reaction was to adapt itself to the new situation, and to shift from being a dirty cube to the idea of a dispersed center hosted by friendly sites in the neighborhood, like shops, bars, a restaurant, a bookshop, cultural associations and private spaces. Dispersed center is derived form the concept of dispersed museum coined by Charles Esche. From 2007 to 2012 this new form of presence has made it possible for us to be more active in the life of the zone, as compared to the past. (Esche *et al.* 2013: 276)

Theis's position as a curator is different from what was presented in the previous case studies: he acts not so much as a creative (except for when he makes artistic work) nor as a mediator, but rather as a manager and as a gluing-and-oiling agent keeping together all the aspects of the project and making sure that the engine works smoothly. Critics Gerald Raunig and Charles Esche describe it as a «joker position» and a «service provider role» (Esche *et al.* 2013: 275). He defines his role as that of a «sub-curator»:

> My role in this project is that of a sub-curator, not of a curator, but as somebody who makes sure that everything is working. For example, when Adrian Paci decided to curate of a show that took the name of Tania Bruguera's piece "Revolution is on hold", and he organized everything himself, I had to do practically nothing. I could help him with communication and other aspects. But sometimes nothing happens, sometimes nobody has an idea, and then I have to do a lot. If the platform doesn't work, then I have a big job to do. (Esche *et al.* 2013: 275)

Also Jeanne van Heeswijk curated *The Blue House* as an artist: it was a pioneering durational art project situated in the IJburg district of Amsterdam that functioned as a hub for urban

research and community engagement from 2005 to 2009 (Fig. 64). The project repurposed a large cobalt-blue residential villa – after taking it off the private housing market – into a laboratory where an international network of practitioners – ranging from architects to activists – collaborated with local residents to address the gaps in rigid urban planning. The project began when van Heeswijk was invited to consult on a minor entrance design for a housing block: she rejected the limited scope and instead commissioned herself to create a more radical, durational intervention. She spent 18 months securing the site, defined the mission, participated as an embedded observer (living in the space for the first six months, and managing the project's legalities, public permissions, and outside forces), acted as a facilitator (inviting practitioners, creating the conditions for participation), and collaborated as an artist.

The project was governed by The Blue House Housing Association of the Mind, an ever-changing group of 91 local and international practitioners. It operated as a horizontal, decentralized network where decisions were made through dialogue and consensus rather than a strict hierarchy. This self-organized network fostered civic art through diverse interventions like community libraries, radio broadcasts, and edible gardens, emphasizing a dialogical process where the artwork is the social interaction itself. The project is as a model of sociality, whose four-year commitment allowed for a sustainable dispersion of knowledge that continues to influence how the transformation of public space and collective living is conceived. The *Blue House* categorized its 900 events and numerous research projects into three main pillars: Histories (focused on the transformation of public spaces: projects included an archive of social research with residents and a 12-meter periscope that documented the sea view disappearing as construction progressed), Instant Urbanism (which addressed gaps in urban planning by creating temporary facilities such as an edible public garden, a *Chill Room* for local youth, and the *Parade of Urbanity,* which featured a community restaurant, a library, and an outdoor cinema), and Hospitality (which explored ethics and social relationality: notable projects included *Frida*, which researched the role of illegal cleaners and hospitality labor, and *ALMOSTYOU*, a role-swap between the artist and a project funder to question power dynamics). The project was designed to resist the over-planned and pre-regulated nature of IJburg by providing a space for the unplanned. While not funded by city planners, the project maintained a feedback loop with them: for instance, it successfully demonstrated the need for cultural spaces, influencing the city's decision to build a permanent cultural center in the neighborhood (O'Neill, Doherty 2011).

Apparently, it was van Heeswijk to coin the expression «urban curating» during the 1990s, to characterize her role shift from a traditional artist to a facilitator who constructed social frameworks for others to inhabit and evolve. In an interview, she explains:

> I am interested in immersing myself in a specific situation and stimulating a set of interactions between the people involved. In order to start to work on a certain location, I create what I call a "field of interactions." I pose a set of questions that circumscribe particular problematics or tensions, and when this field is defined, I step inside! For my work, this is a fundamental procedure. I am not curating the project, nor do I write a conception and produce a project. Instead, I become part of the field. This is where my work lies and is also the biggest challenge: how to be completely inserted within a collectivity. (Gandolfi, van Heeswijk 2010: 134)

She clarifies that she usually identifies a group of people that she calls «experts on location», that are people with knowledge of a place and who usually live there, work there, or carry a certain knowledge that is needed for that specific place. They are entry point in order to understand the latent potentials of a specific condition and to activate a response. She further adds:

> When I insert myself in these processes of "experts on location," I insert myself as an amateur. At the moment I am extremely interested in this notion of the amateur in a field of experts. I am not directing, and being an amateur means being completely open as much as you can, being submissive to anything you can learn, and being reactive to anything a person wants to bestow upon you and wants to teach, even with things that you think are unnecessary to learn […] You have to let go within your subjectivity, and that is something that as an artist I try to practice all the time. When we all attempt to lose our subjectivity, it is, at least partly, the precondition for generating something between us that is actually an agent of change. (Gandolfi, van Heeswijk 2010: 136)

As for *The Blue House,* van Heeswijk refers to it as a kind of «un-curated space» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 53), a «self-organising, self-growing mechanism», akin to a found object as *gesamtkunstwerk* – an artwork without a central figure (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 53). According to O'Neill and Doherty's analysis,

> her desire to formulate a decentralised curatorial approach establishes commissioning practice as the production of a space of potentiality in which the organisation and the framing of research, cultural activity and production are brought about through a more open-ended series

> of principles and possibilities. Here, place-bound curating is about initiating and providing an open structure, where 'preparing an empty space and then allowing different things to enter it' is essential. As a curatorial model *The Blue House* stresses the necessity for a space for the unplanned within urban developments, a space that enables both artists and local residents to engage with the development process, particularly within an overly determined environment. (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 53)

Her main role is described as «primarily focused on constructing frameworks. Then I guide the processes happening inside that frame, although I don't enforce anything. At most, I create conditions where moments could emerge which intervene with perception, so that new images or frameworks might come into being» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 56).

3.2.3 A review on curating in urban contexts: from the late 1990s to today

Besides Jeanne van Heeswijk, the history of urban curating as a term can be traced back to the architectural practices of Raoul Bunschoten (studio CHORA), atelier d'architecture autogérée, and Atelier Bow-Wow. Bunschoten developed in the late 1990s a new profile of the professionalized architect as urban curator, capable of creating metaspaces called «urban galleries», interactive digital databases that can be used as potential planning tools. Bunschoten reimagined the modern city as a dynamic life-form or a «second skin» that requires a sophisticated new methodology for management and design. He introduced the concept of metaspaces, which are virtual or physical environments – such as the Urban Gallery (Fig. 65) – designed to help urbanists observe, simulate, and organize the chaotic, ephemeral emotions of urban life. This framework operates through a systematic toolbox comprising a database of mini-scenarios, innovative prototypes, and scenario games that allow diverse stakeholders to negotiate and test possible futures. By employing Urban Curators to orchestrate these interactions, Bunschoten argues that planning can evolve from static blueprints into a flexible, participatory process capable of adapting to global shifts like migration, ecological change, and technological growth. Ultimately, he presents a vision where the intertwining of individual desires and systemic forces creates a «dynamic masterplan» that sustains the evolving soul of the city (Bunschoten 2003).
In 2005, Doina Petrescu from atelier d'architecture autogérée in her essay *Losing Control, Keeping Desire* (Petrescu 2005) – a sort of glossary of participatory architectural practices – described urban curating as such:

> Urban curating is a new planning tool, discussed and experimented with by a number of contemporary architects by analogy with current practices in contemporary art. An architect who acts as 'curator' defines their professional location in the middle, in between institutions, clients, and users. Rather than a master, they are a mediator […] The curator draws on others' creativity: on that of users or clients who provide frameworks for its fulfilment. He or she is a caretaker and a connector of people, things, desires, stories, opportunities, 'a person who scans and lays out a new field by making new readings of "things", which she identifies and contextualises'. (Petrescu 2005: 60-61)

In 2006, the idea was used also by Japanese architecture studio Atelier Bow-Wow (Momoyo Kaijima, Junzo Kuroda, and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto) to talk about their urban research on unplanned spaces in Tokyo. In their *Made in Tokyo* (Kaijima, Kuroda, Tsukamoto 2006) architectural guidebook – an unconventional survey of the city's «*da-me*» (no-good) architecture, focusing on strange, nameless buildings that prioritize functional hybridity and economic efficiency over traditional aesthetics – they present urban curating as a method of researching, selecting, and presenting the bare reality of the city to reveal its hidden logic and potential. The authors document a unique urban ecology where unrelated programs – such as a department store beneath an expressway or a golf range atop a warehouse – coexist within single, high-density structures. They redefine these «shameless» compositions as a positive resource for understanding how Tokyo's pragmatic spirit overcomes spatial constraints. Their vision of curating deals with identifying this kind of architectures, going through several steps: firstly, they identify anonymous buildings with no clear author and give them nicknames (e.g., "Pachinko Cathedral" or "Golf Taxi Building"). This act serves as a signature, training these found objects to become recognized pieces of architecture within the urban discourse. Secondly, they zoom back to view the building and its surrounding environment as a single, physical unity. Lastly, they connect convincing examples and identify shared patterns or commonalities across the city's expanding field. A central tenet in this practice is looking at the city «flatly»: this means eliminating the divisions between high and low culture, beauty and ugliness, and good and bad taste to see objects without pre-conditioned meanings. Bow-Wow utilizes the guidebook format as a specific curatorial tool to organize their findings: unlike a traditional museum exhibition, a guidebook has no clear beginning, end, or mandated order. This endless format mirrors the never-ending construction and destruction of Tokyo. They also view the guidebook as a form of software that organizes how the city is used and understood, effectively turning research into a tool for future urban planning. Ultimately, Bow-Wow conceives the urban curator as

someone who finds «breathing space» within the limitations of construction and density. By curating these "accidents" of modernization, they aim to provide a «worm's eye view» for future urban planning (Kaijima, Kuroda, Tsukamoto 2006). Through practices such as those of Bunschoten and Bow-Wow, curating was taken out of the artistic context not only in term of location, but also in terms of content: curating became a methodology that could be applied to other fields without necessarily having to deal with artistic interventions.

One year later, urban curating was theorized my architectural theorist Meike Schalk in her essay *Urban Curating: A Critical Practice Towards Greater Connectedness* (Schalk 2007). In this text, Schalk introduces urban curating as an alternative, collaborative platform that challenges the rigid boundaries of traditional city planning. She quotes art critic Måns Holst Ekström to explain that «there is one thing that makes curatorial practice very different from urban planning. Curating has come to mean making readings through exhibitions that in some way or another are cutting edge. The exhibition is by its very nature temporary, hence cutting. Urban planning is traditionally intended for an indefinite period of time» (Schalk 2007: 156). What is missing in traditional urban planning is a «greater connectedness» between different activities, spaces, and relations between planners and users. Schalk claims that:

> There is no standard procedure for a curator. The crucial difference from dominant planning practices lies in the gathering of urban knowledge that often remains unheard or is overlooked. This approach is based on the understanding that there are always multiple strands besides the official 'story', and that other and new perspectives must be found and produced. In this sense, urban curating is meant to work as a critical practice, a parallel and sometimes interfering movement to urban planning and design. It does not replace the traditional planning process, but it may trigger new modes of cooperation, interest groups, information and ideas. It therefore has the potential to consider the 'new', which differs from a traditional planning practice that mostly follows professional conventions, and orients itself on precedents, and often stereotypes. (Schalk 2007: 162).

Schalk explains that her experience with urban curating started in 2000, with the Alvar Aalto Academy inviting her and other eleven participants to a workshop – headed by Raoul Bunschoten – on the issues of the post-industrial city of Jyväskylä in Finland. In the program, Bunschoten's role was defined as guest curator, while the participants were expected «to act as connectors of things and ideas, perhaps as curators» (Schalk 2007: 157). In the workshop Schalk, together with artist Karin Willén and architect Helena Mattsson, decided to test the process of urban curating and created a platform called *urban curating*,

and invited more than a hundred practitioners to take part in the network. In the platform, she described urban curating as such:

> As an independent cultural worker, she escapes what we would call limitations, the 'myth' of the artist-architect whose authority is based on professional judgement and authorship, institutional bureaucracy that is founded on the building law and abstracted knowledge, and economic limits that are determined by the developer and the market. The curator moves in between. Official instruments for urban planning are strict and not especially flexible. There is need for interference, which may take different faces, and which must be constantly redefined. We felt strongly that a curatorial practice could make a difference here. (Petrescu 2005: 60-61)

Schalk and her collaborators were providing information, leading dialogue with the participants and creating a map to orient the visitor in a web-version of Jyväskylä, seen as an open platform to connect individuals and interest groups.

The year after, she tested the practice of urban curating in a studio course conducted by her and Markus Aerni at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm. The course dealt with the nature of institutions both as organizational bodies and as related to a certain site. They worked with a website as a collaborative platform, where information, research and findings were shared among the members. As a consequence of this studio work, she and Aerni were invited to participate in a parallel commission for Stockholm's harbor together with other five architecture offices (Stockholm, 2001-2002). By examining the case study, the author illustrates how a curatorial approach shifts the architect's role from a solitary creator to a mediator between diverse actors, narratives, and spatial possibilities. In Värtahamnen, researchers were invited to provide alternative visions alongside traditional architectural firms. The site housed a container harbor, oil and gasoline storage, and active ferry traffic to Finland and the Baltic States: city planners were attempting to reintegrate the harbor into the city, but were met with a veto from harbor authorities who felt urban activities and port functions were mutually exclusive. Traditional planners proposed using the 19th century city block as a universal solution for housing, which the researchers argued ignored the enormous scale and unique public character of the harbor environment. Rather than acting as traditional architects, the team acted as «designing researchers» and «guest curators», working with two strategies: narrative strings (simulating how different agents – such as visitors, workers, residents – would encounter and use the site; and a toolbox (developing a set of instruments and prototypes called loops/connectors, nodes/attractors, and urban warehouses/variables to organize the space). Then they experimented with the

sounds of the harbor, seeing it as an active feature rather than as a nuisance to be blocked. So, while traditional planning was defensive (using noise barriers to protect citizens), the curatorial approach was to actively experiment with the noise of the harbor. The team proposed using built structures as acoustic absorbers and reflectors to create hot spots of activity alongside quieter zones, allowing for a lively milieu that included both industrial ferry traffic and new TIME-oriented (Telecom-Information-Media-Entertainment) companies. The project highlighted a critical friction between official planning and curatorial practice, emphasizing the importance of connectedness, and advocating for a practice that integrates situated knowledge and experimental methods – such as soundscape analysis and public workshops – to bridge the gap between abstract professional regulations and the lived experience of the city. Ultimately, Schalk presents this methodology as a critical practice designed to disrupt conventional bureaucracies through its interferences, and foster more inclusive, flexible urban environments (Schalk 2007).

During these years several scholars started to talk about creative (or arts-based) placemaking, addressing not only artistic, but also curatorial practices. Placemaking is not a recent concept, has has already been illustrated in chapter 3.1, and is connected particularly to the success of the creative class and creative city ideas introduced by Richard Florida (see for example the writing of Fleming 2007 presented in chapter 3.1), and to the culturization processes outlined by Sharon Zukin (see chapter 3.1). Creative placemaking is the standard policy paradigm through which art in urban development contexts is funded or procured, holding many meanings and being extremely adaptable. The term creative placemaking was defined by American economist Ann Markusen and arts administrator/urban planner Anne Gadwa in the following way: «In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighbourhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired» (Markusem, Gadwa 2010: 3). This approach has largely been criticized, for example by Hjørdis Brandrup Kortbek, who argues that when participatory public art is used as an instrument for urban development, it inevitably engenders contradictory encounters that challenge the goal of democratizing art and culture, and that curators – seen as mediators and stage managers caught between the consensual goals of municipal policy and the agonistic reality of urban life – contribute to these contradictions, being part of the hegemonic order. The risk for curators and artists is that their work often becomes merely a symbol of democratizing art rather than a practice that

actually challenges existing power dynamics or produces structural change. She suggests that, in order «to prevent the participating citizens from being merely actors in a democratic play staged by the municipality, the curators, and the artists, the organizers in power have to make room for an unexpected outcome to the process. If participatory public art projects include the inherent struggles of placemaking, the projects have the possibility of developing new democratic notions of urban cultural policy and public art in challenging encounters between adversaries» (Kortbek 2019: 42). Andrew Zitcer argues that creative placemaking is a fuzzy concept defined primarily by top-down funders, which often creates a disconnect with the local practitioners and residents who have been performing similar work for decades. Ultimately, he advocates for a more inclusive, equitable approach to urban practice that prioritizes local knowledge and addresses critical concerns regarding gentrification and displacement (Zitcer 2020). Stephen Pritchard argues that creative placemaking is a «Trojan horse» for gentrification, a state- and local-authority-led policy that is inextricably linked to corporate partnerships and neoliberal ideologies. As a rebuttal to these neoliberal practices, Pritchard advocates for «place guarding», meaning collective acts of resistance intended to protect existing people and cultures from the neoliberalism and displacement (Pritchard 2019). According to Eleonora Belfiore, creative placemaking is predicated on a notion of cultural value, though the celebratory rhetoric of adding value through art avoids declaring or questioning whose ideas of cultural value drive decisions over investment and funding. Creative placemaking claims public benefits through adding cultural value, but the distribution of cultural authority is deeply unequal (Belfiore 2020). Cara Courage tried to introduce an alternative to creative placemaking through the idea of «social practice placemaking»: such term indicates placemaking practices where artists and community members are seen as equal experts in the process. She underlines that in her case studies social practice placemaking art practices resulted «in a sense of unity in an area, a territorial specificity from gathering as a micropublic in place led to a spatial meaningfulness and a sense of connection to people and place, and this activated an active, and collective citizenship. This active citizenship took the form of a desire to socialise with neighbours and to talk about local issues (and in some cases this talk led to affirmative material action to improve place)» (Courage 2017: 193). Courage also pinpoints that in these interventions «social and aesthetic hierarchies are made horizontal and formal political participation is replaced by a more localised, directly relevant participation with more immediate and tangible results» (Courage 2017: 196): for this reason, they can be successful only if they are initiated from the bottom up. «If these interventions come from the top down, discursive agency is rendered redundant as part of a pseudo-participative model» (Courage 2017: 196).

In 2009, two years after Schalk's paper and Fleming's book, the first anthology on urban curating was published by Sarah Chaplin and Alexandra Stara, titled *Curating Architecture and the City* (Chaplin, Stara 2009). The anthology widened the scope of urban curating, including not only architectural practices, but also reflections on film, photography, maps, installations, city tours, interactive podcasts, archives, and more. Furthermore, the essay by Tim Gough (Gough 2009), in outlining the relationship between curating and architecture, draws a parallel with artistic installations and the space they occupy, thus re-establishing the connection between art curating and urban curating that was a bit below the radar in Bunschoten, Bow-Wow and Schalk's theorizations. In their introduction, Stara and Chaplin define curation as an act of «care and responsibility» (Chaplin, Stara 2009: 1) that has undergone a profound transformation. While the traditional 20th-century curator was defined by managing and maintaining museum collections, the role has shifted toward display and interpretation, independent of specific sites or collections. Referring to the curatorial turn, they say that the contemporary curator functions as an «artist-at-large», utilizing a wide variety of media and locations to provide sense and direction within a culture oversaturated with stimuli. They also add that, «at its most extreme, this reinvention of the idea of curation could be criticised as yet another fad of consumerist postmodernity, requiring everchanging ways of selling everything. Indeed, there is affinity between the arts of packaging, branding and curating, deployed in equal measures across the department store, the gallery and the museum» (Chaplin, Stara 2009: 1). They describe the city as a layered palimpsest where fragmented stories are constantly overwritten, making them highly resistant to totalising analyses and narratives: mainstream urbanism relies on statistical and measured analytical tools that often fail to grasp the «qualitative complexities and ambiguities» of the city (Chaplin, Stara 2009: 2). Instead,

> Approaching the city as a collection to be curated, whether through representations or *in situ*, opens up new possibilities for exploring and enriching the urban fabric and the urban condition as a whole. The architectural exhibition, the public gallery, the regeneration project, as well as the city tour, the heritage archive and the urban art installation, can reveal unexpected aspects of the city and ways of inhabiting it. Far from being self-fulfilling activities, such curatorial acts translate as poetic interpretations – that is, creative interventions through interpreting and, conversely, invitations to critical engagement through making. (Chaplin, Stara 2009: 2)

Particularly interesting is the third section of the book, which explores cultural heritage and public space as realms where a broadly defined curatorial sensibility can offer new insights

and enrich both historical understanding and everyday experience. In this section, for example, Carol Mancke presents the case of the art triennial in the rural region of Echigo Tsumari in Japan. The project specifically targets the region's crisis of depopulation and aging by transforming abandoned farmhouses (*minka*) into site-specific artworks to attract new residents to the region, fusing art practice with community regeneration. A primary curatorial goal is the «co-mingling» of urban and rural culture, with the curators seeking to help rural farmers recognize their agricultural work as a cultural production of equal value to the art found in cities and expanding the common notion of publicness. Collaborative practice between artists, residents and visitors makes a convincing proposition for an ongoing, multi-layered curatorial approach that challenges conventional preservation practices (Mancke 2009). The essay by Marie-Paule Macdonald, instead, takes up the theme of urban regeneration in an urban context, through a critique of neighbourhood branding in Montréal, Canada. Macdonald proposes branding as a market-exaggerated counterpoint to curatorship, and juxtaposes the two approaches through an investigation of two contrasting plans for the redevelopment of the Quartier des Spectacles in Montréal: the one finally executed (the 'branding' project), and the proposal by dAb collective, made in response to a public competition by the city (Macdonald 2009). One last interesting contribution from the book is Catharina Gabrielsson's, which focuses on the redevelopment of the main square in Kalmar, Sweden, by architects Caruso St John and artist Eva Löfdahl. Gabrielsson talks about project organizing (or management), a role which is a hybrid of curatorship and commissioning, involving the definition of artistic assignments, the selection of practitioners, and the navigation of the financial and political structures required to create permanent urban interventions. She talks about the necessity of distance for curators/managers, which she defines – by borrowing Robert Smithson's words – as a «consciousness devoid of self-projection» (Gabrielsson 2009: 220): distance allows the curator to detect subtle spatial qualities that have been suppressed by the «familiarity of everyday life». Distance is also intended by her as abandoning subjectivity, preventing the curator or artist from simply imposing their own subjective feelings onto a public space. Thus, drawing on Claude Lefort, she suggests that the curator should maintain the «emptiness» of public space to allow social differences to remain visible, rather than filling it with fixed, celebratory meanings. The curator exists in a state of remoteness that is not an outside position of absolute knowledge, but a border situation that enables the creation of new forms of thought. Gabrielsson also takes distance from the therapeutic approaches where curators and artists heal neglected urban areas, and from mediating approaches where curators mediate the reception of art, saying that their task is rather to «multiply the site»

(Gabrielsson 2009: 230) – widening the imaginary and material context so that the space is experienced in multiple, sometimes contradictory, ways. Lastly, from a pragmatic point of view, the project manager uses techniques like framing or shifting the scale of a project to resolve social conflicts and alter how a city is perceived (Gabrielsson 2009).

During those years, urban curating became the topic of some innovative doctoral theses, such as Sand Helsel's in 2009 and Tammy Wong's in 2011. Sand Helsel, in her *A search for common pleasures: Curating The City,* explores her own architectural practice as a transition from designing static objects to curating dynamic frameworks of experience and observation, exploring the processes and systems that define cities. She sees curation as an alternative to urban design, describing the architect as a «curator of the built environment» (Helsel 2009: 11). By examining diverse projects – from the physical stainless steel grid of the Korean War Memorial to the ephemeral audio narratives of *Five Walks* – Helsel highlights how conscious reflection transforms collections of fragments into meaningful lectures and exhibitions. A central theme is the foregrounding of gaps and accidents of site rather than seeking total control, allowing for a «simultaneous reading and writing of place» (Helsel 2009: 24) that invites public participation. In fact, she sees the curator as someone who collects, structures and arranges voices and stories, who works through an «act of enablement of others rather than as design in a conventional sense (of objects and buildings)» (Helsel 2009: 23). She further adds: «I can design the opportunities for the narratives, but do not need to control their content. I become a collector of others' voices, and a curator of traces; my goal is to give this activity authority» (Helsel 2009: 23). By broadening public engagement, she says that « as a curator one can design the city by shifting the mindset of those who are designing and devising policy, and those who live within it» (Helsel 2009: 28). Ultimately, the work serves as a manifesto for an inclusive, laboratory-like practice where the architect identifies hidden structures within the city to reveal the common pleasures of our shared urban environment.

The thesis by Wong, instead, is written from the perspective of an art curator. Her *The City As A Curated Space. A study of the public urban visual arts in central Sydney and central Melbourne, Australia*, proposes a reimagined vision of the city as a curated space, where urban environments serve as distributed galleries that facilitate artistic expression outside traditional museum walls. According to the author, the city as a curated space is an ecosystem where different actors interact and develop projects, including audiences, educators, urban planners, property developers, architects and landscape architects, sponsors, local authorities, curators, artists, sites and artworks (Fig. 66). «Each aspect of the system is inter-dependent on another, and the dominance of a particular group in the project

may change its emphasis, depending on the aims or outcomes of the particular industry» (Wong 2011: 143). According to Wong, the model framework of the city as curated space is able to offer cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits to urban society, in particular in terms of encouraging accessible culture, an open dialogue in the public sphere, increased community health, and economic and social benefits to the local urban areas. She presents different versions of the functioning of the ecosystem, based on what actor initiates the process (government authority, artist, gallery/festival, community). She also presents a set of key actions providing recommendations towards the development of the curated city ecosystem (Fig. 67): assess the curated city; define a role for the artist; inform educate and build capacity; mobilize community partnerships and networks; policies, plans and programs; employ competent managers of the curated city; assess effectiveness; and research new innovations. Within these actions, the sixth one is particularly relevant for this research, as it claims for the importance of employing

> competent staff that understand the complexity of the curated city ecosystem. Staff should have the professional skills and experience required for working with artists in the public sphere and understand the constraints of the curated city. Trained staff managing the curated city need to understand its complexity. This is crucial for being able to assess, identify and structure the directions of programs of the curated city. They play an important role as connectors, as they are the main point of contact for artists to local government authorities and to other potential agents in the process" (Wong 2011: 358)

In the urban context the individualistic notion of curating would not be suitable: «In curating urban sites, a shared space of a community, it seems more appropriate that curating is viewed as a shared process, therefore placing the focus back towards the artwork, and treating the experience of art as a communal practice» (Wong 2011: 43). Wong also outlines different curatorial models (or models of public art in practice) for the curated city: 1) commissioning processes, generally determined by a panel of advisors who might comprise members of the local community and experts in particular aspects of the urban field; 2) urban planning models (art as urban design); 3) percent for art (local authorities influence the public sector, assigning property developers as commissioners of public art); 4) community development models (local authorities involve artists to engage communities in need for development); 5) biennale/temporary festival model; and 6) street art management and prevention models.
By examining the social, political, and cultural influences that shape public art, the author develops a methodology to assess how creative urban ecosystems can foster community

identity and social cohesion. The text utilizes comparative case studies of Sydney and Melbourne, alongside international examples like Shanghai and San Francisco, to contrast how different urban planning strategies and historical backgrounds affect the presence of both sanctioned commissions and organic street art. Ultimately, the work advocates for a new museology that moves beyond the singular voice of the institution to embrace multiple narratives, empowering a diverse range of agents to transform contested public areas into inclusive sites of intercultural dialogue (Wong 2011). In a later paper (Wong Hulbert 2020), she dealt again with curating cities, exploring how socially engaged artistic and curatorial practices can foster participation and representation for marginalized urban communities. Here, she also redefines the role of curators, saying that they «are not only carers of art collections, but also carers of social relationships with living artists, participants and audiences» (Wong Hulbert 2020: 50). In her projects, the curator acts as a collaborator who contextualizes work within historical and theoretical frameworks, develops industry and community partnerships to support participants, and frames meaningful narratives that allow the voiceless to be represented in the public sphere (Wong Hulbert 2020).

Between 2010 and 2011 some important collections of artistic projects in public space where published, dealing also with curatorial aspects: Angelika Burtscher and Judith Wielander's *Visible. Where art leaves its own field and becomes visible as part of something else* (Burtscher, Wielander 2010), a research project exploring how contemporary art can function as a catalyst for social and political change, presented curatorial dialogues, artist biographies, and project case studies arranged in nine thematic sections, each overseen by a curator. O'Neill and Doherty's *Locating the Producers* (O'Neill, Doherty 2011), which describes five durational art projects with a specific attention to their curation, has alredy been introduced in this chapter. Though it is interesting to remark here that O'Neill and Doherty introduced there the term "producer" instead of "curator": this term detaches from the idea of museum custodian and highlights the active involvement in the production of artworks. Doherty explains that «in the spirit of the traditional definition of a curator then, we do "take care" of place, time and people, but, aligning ourselves with the dynamic performing arts producer, we also contest place, interrupt time, and galvanize people» (Doherty 2017: 92). Doherty's idea of public art production will be further illustrated in chapter 5.2.

A further different perspective about urban curating was given in the same year of Wong's thesis by Jekaterina Lavrinec, in her essay *From a 'blind walker' to an 'urban curator': initiating 'emotionally moving situations' in public spaces* (Lavrinec 2011). Here, the curator is no longer seen as a professional figure – either coming from Architecture or the Arts – but

as a passive resident, described as a blind walker, who transforms into an active subject (an urban curator), who reimagines his surroundings. By utilizing methods such as flânerie and psychogeography, the author argues that individuals can break free from routine behaviors to develop a reflexive distance from the city's automated rhythms. These urban art interventions, including flash mobs and spontaneous rituals, serve as tools to reactivate public spaces by fostering emotional connections and social solidarity among strangers. Ultimately, the text positions these «emotionally moving situations» as a way to challenge the social order embedded in urban space, turning the city into a site of constant creative reconceptualization (Lavrinec 2011).

Probably the most prolific theorist of urban curating – who started to write about it at the end of the 2000s – is Elke Krasny: one of her first contributions dealing with this topic is *It isn't about Pretty Pictures: On the Art of "Urban Curating"* (Krasny 2008). In this contribution, Krasny explores the concept of urban curating as a transformative practice that merges artistic, architectural, and urban research. She frames urbanistic art projects not as isolated events, but as part of an international field that challenges traditional city planning and the globalized currency of events. Krasny's essay emphasizes that urban curating is a method for navigating the chaos and complexity of contemporary cities through several key strategies: firstly, urban curating overcomes the spectacle of event urbanism (the use of art as a temporary, marketing-driven attraction) in favor of artistic processes of becoming, where participation creates long-term, contagious effects on urban transformation; secondly, urban curating embraces unplanning to find potential in hybridized uses and «Micro Public Spaces» (while traditional urban planning seeks to regulate space); lastly, urban curating, through collective storytelling practices, can foster community resistance nd memory building. Krasny says that urban curating can stimulate new innovative practices in art and architecture: «It is exciting to see what begins to develop when architects use the term "urban curator," or to see what happens when artists apply "unplanning" concepts to their "urban curating" practices, feeding them into urban transformation patterns participatively and playing them back» (Krasny 2008: 68). Ultimately, Krasny argues that the role of the urban curator is to make relational realities by listening to individual voices and tapping into the space of urban possibilities. In 2010 she published an analysis of the praxis of urban curating under the title *Ma(r)king a difference: Strategies of urban curating*, part of a volume edited by Veronica Hekking, Sabrina Lindemann and Annechien Meier (Krasny 2010). In 2014 she published the essay *Urban Curating: Once Again(st)* (Krasny 2014), where she explores the evolution of urban curating as a specialized practice that moves beyond traditional museum walls to engage directly with the social and physical fabric of the city. Compared with her

2008 publication, urban curating is no longer so much linked to art interventions: here, she identifies the curator as a public intellectual whose primary responsibility is to nurture communal spaces and navigate the complexities of the unplanned. She explains that «public influence enables not only the generation of economic, cultural and symbolic capital, but above all its critical use. Curating deals in, through and with constellations, meaning that it involves various parties, not only taking a stance with regard to these, but also making public the relationships between positions as alterable constellations» (Krasny 2014: 224-226). Krasny seeks to establish a critical genealogy for this work, finding historical precursors in the radical activism of Jane Addams – the founder of Hull House in 1889's Chicago – and the commemorative art of Suzanne Lacy (*Full Circle*, 1993), both of whom prioritized social intervention over detached observation. Krasny identifies the value of the unplanned as the common thread of all these practices: «The political, cultural and aesthetic value of the unplanned is relevant to all actors involved in praxes of urban curating and can therefore be identified as the connecting relay enabling the various strategies of intervention in urban development and research to be presented as comparable» (Krasny 2014: 226). While in van Heeswijk, Bow-Wow, and Bunschoten's practices the unplanned was seen as method with which to oppose the (master)plan, Krasny argues that working within the unplanned allows practitioners to move past the binary logic of planned vs. unplanned, reflecting postmodern and postcolonial theories. Instead, it reveals a «becoming-hybrid» state where contradictory elements co-exist without needing to be identical or assimilable. The unplanned facilitates an «unexpected community of the supposedly incompatible» (Krasny 2014: 228) – groups or functions that follow no prior plan but co-exist through the daily praxis of use. Within this context, curating is «active position of the in-between» (Krasny 2014: 228) and is characterized by «activist ethics based on concern for others» (Krasny 2014: 232): for Krasny then, curating means responsibility. She further adds:

> Involvement encourages responsibility, which is not without risks or (side-)effects. The subjects who act as urban curators prove their care for others by confronting the criticism directed at them for the alliances, into which they enter. They are frequently criticized for their taking sides, for running the risk of co-option, or for their use of strategic essentialism. Involvement means taking part in the not-yet-decided, which again brings me to the unplanned. With the not-yet-decided and the unplanned, I mean the state of the urban as characterized by constant transformation. As soon as one begins to involve oneself, one abandons the apparently secure position of discrete distance and cares to join others in their

> concerns. This requires affirmation, the dropping of reserve, taking a stance through mixing, and accepting the unexpected communalities that emerge. (Krasny 2014: 232-234)

Ultimately, the text argues for an involved ethics of transformability, where curating serves as a powerful tool for promoting social justice and fostering connections between diverse, often contradictory, urban populations.

One year later, she published a further developed genealogy of urban curating in her essay *Urban curators at work. A real-imagined historiography* (Krasny 2015). Here, she defines urban curating as a conceptually open and radical relational practice that connects diverse fields like art, social activism, and urban planning to address issues of spatial justice:

> Urban curatorial labor forges connections between the aesthetic, the economic, the cultural, the social, and the political. In short, it relates to the urban from within […] I understand urban curating as a radical relational practice, which can take on the form of art, of communication, of building, of discourse, of community organizing, of legal action, of supportive self-organization, of exhibition making, of protest, or of any other form relevant to the case at hand. This radical relationality abounds with the aesthetic and political consciousness of solidarity and its far-reaching alignment with the struggle against urban injustice and social movements striving for urban redistribution. It connects back to anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, and looks forward to the production of an urban citizenship that includes aesthetic, poetic, or even fictional practices. (Krasny 2015: 119-120)

She argues that because the role lacks a fixed job description – and is thus «conceptually open, marked by the politics of dis/continuous self-re/invention» (Krasny 2015: 119) – it is uniquely positioned to mirror the ongoing transformation of global cities through a "real-imagined historiography" that links current struggles with historical precedents of resistance:

> By keeping the position open, in both theory and practice, it becomes a programmatic equivalent to urban transformation processes that are permanently ongoing in different scales and different temporalities, as well as to the eternal changes of social evolution. The openness is therefore structural, not temporal. Keeping the position open makes opening, relating, and positioning part of the urban curating job. An urban curator's work is at best never done and dis/continuously incomplete. (Krasny 2015: 119)

Krasny describes once again the experiences of Jane Addams and Suzanne Lacy, whose activities included residency, research, reform, activism in the field of spatial and work-

related issues, and art, and embody the concept of service, central to urban curating practices. These are considered by Krasny to be trans-historical elements through which today's urban curating can be understood (Krasny 2015). She then presents some new cases such as that of the Urban eXperiment group, which, since 1980, has participated in the improvement of degraded areas of Paris, and that of the MG3.0_Masterplan Mönchengladbach association, which in 2012 presented citizens with a masterplan developed through participatory processes, which was then adopted as a guideline for the development of the city of Mönchengladbach, and, finally, that of the *Favela Café*, a site-specific project created by Japanese artist Tadashi Kawamata at the Basel Art Fair in 2013, which was then occupied by local artists and activists until it prompted police intervention (Fig. 68) (Krasny 2015). All the approaches to urban curating described are distinguished by a fair amount of unruly, untamed, and migratory knowledge, which Krasny describes by borrowing the concepts of hybridity, developed by Homi K. Bhabha, and the concept of *mestizaje*, developed by Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa. She uses these terms to move beyond traditional urban dichotomies, advocating for a post-binary negotiation of city life that challenges established divisions between private and public, formal and informal, planned and unplanned, bottom-up and top-down, DIY and austerity. Ultimately, the text positions the urban curator as a contemporary agent who navigates the contested borderlands of the city to turn historical knowledge into a transformative tool for the common good (Krasny 2015).

This contribution was part of a seminal publication in the field of urban curating, which has already been mentioned several times: Barbara Holub and Christine Hohenbüchler's *Planning Unplanned*, a collection of essays that examines the ways in which artistic-urban strategies can actively intervene in urban development resisting the dominant neoliberal logics and gain ground in new, socially oriented added value that benefits the community. The text advocates radical innovations, well aware that one must desire the impossible in order to push the boundaries of the seemingly feasible (according to Holub's «anticipatory fiction» strategy) (Holub, Hohenbüchler 2015). The authors express the need to urgently rethink urban planning, in a way open to the unplanned and the unforeseeable, where traditional roles and disciplines are overcome. To do so, they introduce the transdisciplinary concept of urban practice, which is fluid and undefined, and makes superfluous to trace lines between artistic, social, and architectural practices. The collection includes essays by scholars and practitioners that are key to understand urban practices (and urban curating), such as Jane Rendell, Kerstin Bergendal, public works, atelier d'architecture autogérée, Paul Rajakovics, Mick Wilson, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Paul O'Neill, and more, besides Barbara Holub and Elke Krasny. Here, the main theoretical concepts introduced in this publication

will be outlined. Holub's contribution advocates for a radical shift in how art is positioned within urban processes, moving away from temporary event culture toward a fundamental integration into long-term city planning. She outlines the limitations of master plan approaches, which deal with physical categories but not with social problems, and claims there is need for a transdisciplinary approach between art and urbanism to bridge the gap between the current demands on urban design and urban development and the inadequacy and insufficiency of the conventional urban planning tools. These practices, according to her, still don't have found their place in established planning procedures: art is usually called in just with a short-term, temporary perspective. She argues that – while architects are trained to respond to commissioners' requests and competitions, and are thus not encouraged to take action and contradict – artists are used to that instead and can thus bring in innovative perspectives. Holub, with her transparadiso studio (founded by her and Paul Rajakovics), works both as an artist and curator in urban development contexts, and has developed a set of methodologies for that. The first concept she introduces is that of «unlearning», which indicated the process through which «planners as well as other experts, commissioning parties, urban planning departments, and stakeholders involved in urban planning forget their known procedures and become open to unexpected results. These new procedures should not demarcate a clearly defined chronology of sequential steps or instructions, but instead open up a field of interrelated steps contributing to an open-ended process» (Holub 2015: 32). This is a way to overcome the desire to control – not just urban development but also the way people use space – which prevents different approaches. The second strategy is shifting roles: «Roles are switched according to the requirements of the process – regardless of the role in which a person has been trained: from the "artist", who is usually not taken very seriously (often even seen as a "crazy person"), the "negotiator" (a professional), the "architect/planning expert" (who understands the interests of developers), and many more» (Holub 2015: 42). The third strategy is anticipatory fiction, which

> takes the envisioned final outcome of a process and assumes it has already become reality. This conviction helps overcome barriers and can achieve much more in the long run than dealing with any "expected" difficulties. Anticipatory fiction goes beyond the production of desires or the creation of visions. It works by developing narratives that transgress the seemingly doable, involving poetic moments as well as introducing new values other than that of the prevalent neoliberal governance. (Holub 2015: 42)

The fourth strategy is shifting the context: «Similar problems often arise in different cultural, societal, and political contexts. We can learn from these contexts and look at the means, methods, and tools they produced, to expand our vision and produce ideas beyond what our imagination usually perceives as doable (a limitation that often can lead to self-censorship)» (Holub 2015: 42). The fifth strategy is expanding the context, meaning that the problem stated by the commissioning party oftentimes needs to be reconsidered from a broader perspective in order to arrive at the core of the problem. The sixth strategy is research through practice, meaning that new tools, strategies, and techniques must not only be theorized but also tested in direct situations, opening up space for unexpected knowledge through direct experience. The seventh strategy is dialog and polylog, that entails building non-hierarchical discussion situations to bring people with contradictory interests together as active participants and offer situations for them to communicate. These new situations and encounters on an eye-to-eye level can facilitate the leaving behind of familiar territories, overcoming confrontational oppositons and presumptions of non-understanding. The eighth strategy is conflict as a productive force, which means reconsidering conflict and starting to develop a "culture of conflict" as a possible productive force for changing single-minded attitudes, instead of aiming to eliminate conflict altogether. The last strategy is Open space or "The Urban Reserve", which entails exempting certain areas from urban development in order to maintain a space as an urban reserve for unplanning: urban reserves supply the potential to adjust to processes and unforeseen changing parameters (Holub 2015).

Jane Rendell in her contribution titled *From Critical Spatial Practice To Site-Writing* (Rendell 2015) presents the ideas of critical spatial practice – which has been illustrated in chapter 3.1 and was firstly theorized in her 2006's book *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (Rendell 2006) – and of site-writing, taken from her 2010's book *Site-Writing. The Architecture of Art Criticism* (Rendell 2010). With this concept, she establishes a new form of art criticism that replaces the traditional objective distance between the scholar and the artwork with a spatial and subjective engagement, and demonstrates that writing is not merely a report on a location, but is itself a situated practice that constructs new meanings through the encounter between the critic, the reader, and the site. This ability can be reconducted to what critic Simon Sheikh calls the «constitutive effects» of curating (Sheikh 2007). Sheikh explains that in the past curating was involved in the writing of specific colonial and national histories, but also in the circulation of certain values and ideals (of the bourgeoisie), thus constituting a specific (class-based) collective subject. For the future, he suggests a different use of this potential, which seems aligned with Rendell's site-writing idea: he suggests to rethink curatorial practices in order to be able to change society, by using

new structures and formats. In particular, his proposal revolves around three key notions: the first is articulation, claiming for a positioning of the project, of its narratives and artworks, both in and out of the art world (as the in-between practices illustrated by Rendell). The second is imagination, dealing with the idea of imagining another world through curating (this recalls both the site-writing practices and Holub's anticipatory fiction). The third is continuity, which suggests to work long-term, «doing the same in order to produce something different, not in the products, but in the imagination» (Sheikh 2007: 184) – an idea that reminds of O'Neill and Doherty's durational art projects.

The idea of spatial practice, besides by Rendell, is used by Meike Schalk and Doina Petrescu. Petrescu in her 2007's anthology *Altering Practices. Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space*, defines spatial practices as «altering practices», a term that emphasizes the active, dynamic processes of transformation and the affirmation of difference as a positive quality. Rather than seeing these practices as static methods within the field of architecture, she views them as «becomings» (Petrescu 2007: 3) – transitory and changeable forces that establish material and semiotic connections among subjects within specific historical and critical situations. Petrescu moves away from traditional architectural definitions toward other spatial practices or practicing «otherwise». This involves a shift from the «practices of the other to practicing «otherhow», which allows practitioners to escape the «straitjacket» of binary oppositions (such as being strictly for or against a system) to produce unknown and transformative outcomes (Petrescu 2007: 6). Petrescu defines these practices through the act of «collective re-construction»: this involves «doing and undoing» or «making and remaking» space according to altered rules and values (Petrescu 2007: 5). She also characterizes these as practices of «curating» or «care taking», acknowledging the ethical and emotional labor involved in reproduction and reconstruction work, historically associated with women (Petrescu 2007: 5). Lastly, spatial practices for Petrescu function as a form of «thwarting» (a term she draws from Jacques Rancière), which means interrupting the continuity of dominating rules (in academia, professional practice, and public life) to make room for alternative worlds (Petrescu 2007: 12).

Meike Schalk talks about spatial practices in the introduction of the volume *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*, saying that «'Spatial practice' is a broad term for architectural, artistic, design and other disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices engaged in studying and transforming space» (Schalk *et al*. 2017: 14). She traces back the origin of the term to Jane Rendell, but then makes a distinction between her «critical spatial practices» and her own «feminist spatial practices»: «While critical spatial theory may generally examine how a particular social-spatial order is

constructed, and critical spatial practice may work to destabilize that order, feminist spatial practice questions and opposes, but it also projects, activates, and enacts alternative norms or ideals» (Schalk *et al.* 2017: 15), for example through Petrescu's «practicing otherwise». These practices can manifest themselves in many different forms, among which:

> silent protest, sharing-counteracting-connecting, commoning, navigating through intersectionality, carnivalesque intervention, re-doing heritage, urban caring, instructing conversation, rehearsals, writing around the kitchen table, making time, mapping otherwise, making hard things soft, acting out, flirting, transversal pedagogy, mimicking, producing spaces of feminist anticipation, rewriting a city vision, urban curating, introducing counter-narratives, critical fictions, ludic resistance, foregrounding new and old radicalisms, decolonizing thought, constructing alternate futures and exploring non-representational modes for architecture production. (Schalk *et al.* 2017: 15)

Coming back to *Planning Unplanned*, Paul Rajakovics, in his essay *Das Künstlerische Handeln In Einer Neuen Praxis. "Urban Practitioners"* (Artistic Action In A New Practice. "Urban Practitioners") (Rajakovics 2015), tries to outline the figure of the urban practitioner, a term that he derives from Michel de Certeau's «everyday practices» (de Certeau 2010), but which has even deeper origins in the 20th century, as Kim Trogal points out in her MPhil thesis, supervised by Doina Petrescu: according to her, the expression urban practice originates from the expansion of specialized professional fields, such as architecture and art, into the broader social, political, and everyday dimensions of city life. Rather than being strictly service-led or client-oriented it represents a shift toward engaging with the city as a lived environment (Trogal 2009). A primary origin of the term in this context is linked to Henri Lefebvre's concept of the urban as a way of life, presented in his 1970's *The Urban Revolution* (Lefebvre 2003): this defines practice not just as a site of work (like an architectural office), but as a set of behaviors, habits, and values that constitute urban existence. Trogal also reconnects the expression to the related term spatial practice, used by Jane Rendell and Doina Petrescu to expand architectural work to include marginalized groups and everyday spaces that were historically excluded from the professional canon. According to Trogal, the development of urban practice was further shaped by specific social and educational movements, such as the "Non-Plan" tradition (Price, Banham, Hall) in the UK, Colin Ward and Anthony Fyson's concept of «streetwork», and activist movements of the 1970's (ncluding feminist, gay rights, and black civil rights movements) (Trogal 2009). According to Rajakovics, the urban practitioner

> requires a holistic overview that also includes an assessment of political and urban development. However, unlike politicians and urban planners who are directly involved in the process, they are always dependent on the skills and cooperation of the local community. They must be able to work on an overall strategy as well as pursue concrete tactics. The urban practitioner uses artistic strategies and deliberately induced paradigm shifts to open up new thematic areas. They must be aware of aesthetic discourses in order to make projects communicable in the first place. They rely on multiple authorships and participation without abandoning the clear direction and signature of projects. In summary: They must be able to pursue planning and action simultaneously[42]. (Rajakovics 2015: 137)

He defines the urban practitioner as «a transdisciplinary role model that is located as a missing link between art, design, urban design, urban planning, and social work. This role requires very different skills to cope with the continuous change between different scales as well as the the ongoing discrepancy between planning and concrete action in specific areas of action» (Rajakovics 2015: 137-138). He claims that collaborative planning procedures can be a way to establish the initial professional positioning of urban practitioners, allowing them to assume a significant creative-social role in both planning and action. Moreover, he adds that, in order to become well established in practice, urban praxis needs to be precisely defined and studied: he suggests to make it a new branch of study in art academies, mixing artistic training, urban planning, and sociology (Rajakovics 2015).

The concept of urban practice is recalled, besides Rajakovics and Trogal, also by Kristin Lazarova and Renée Tribble. Tribble, whose thinking has already been outlined in chapter 3.1, sees urban practice as a «methodology enabling urban practitioners to produce urban space in the sense of Lefebvre's right to the city» - which entails determining the space, transforming it, and finally using it – which has its origins in urban art but «which is no longer applied exclusively by artists, but by multiple disciplines intervening in urban space» (Tribble 2018: 157). According to Tribble, «urban practice uses urban interventions as a methodology, and therefore offers qualities that are crucial for successfully implementing a truly local, supported, and successful neighborhood planning process» (Tribble 2018: 162): as such, it «shouldn't be absorbed by urban planning administrations, but should be acknowledged as a neighborhood development strategy with an outcome that has the same relevance and importance as an urban development concept or master plan commissioned by the municipality» (Tribble 2018: 162). Lazarova, instead, is a member of Urbane Praxis

[42] Translation by the author.

e.V. in Berlin, a platform supporting urban practitioners, and allowing them to exchange knowledge, develop common projects and get funding for artistic projects. The organization provides useful tools, such as a *Glossary of Urban Praxis* (Becker *et al.* 2021), and *The Just City* zine, dealing with different aspects of urban practice (Young Urban Practice, Climate-Friendly Urban Practice, Queer-Feminist Urban Practice, Solidarity Urban Practice) (The Just City zine's Official Website). Lazarova describes urban practices as community driven, self-organised, trans- and post-disciplinary practices of communing addressing urgent socio-spatial issues through artistic appropriation and transformation of urban underused spaces. These practices are based on civic and spatial agency and aim at bridging the gap between urban politics, the administration and citizens. Urban practitioners act by creating unexpected connections between different disciplines like architecture, art and planning, but also among spaces, actors, resources and practices. They use artistic means based on creativity and curiosity to engage with places and citizens in the co-production of space. Urban practices challenge the status quo of urban planning processes by exploring alternative realities and unlocking unexpected possibilities and opportunities. Urban practice works situationally, closely with local communities and users, resources and knowledge, that is created from what exists on site. She adds that while planning processes search for solutions to predefined problems, urban practice is explorative, remaining open to the unexpected, activating possibilities that would otherwise not been considered (Lazarova 2023).

In 2017, two years after *Planning Unplanned*, another important anthology was published: *Curating context. Beyond the Gallery and into Other Fields,* edited by curator Magdalena Malm. The objective of the book is to articulate the curatorial methodologies and considerations in the production of art in non-traditional contexts. The book contains eight essays and descriptions of projects by different curators, some of which dealing with urban transformation contexts. To describe the role of curators in these projects, Malm says:

> being brought to new locations, producing new collaborations, entering into new areas of knowledge, the curator in this field needs to constantly learn new things, to negotiate with theater directors, property developers; to clear permissions with local authorities; to understand legal structures under Napoleonic law. Each project demands new knowledge, but skills can be learned and accumulated. Collaboration and negotiation are central. Yet, the most important skill perhaps is to keep the artistic intention of the project extremely clear, while swiftly being able to shift the route in the moments when obstacles appear on the road. (Malm 2017: 11)

According to Malm, one thing that emerges in all the practices in the book is the idea of *lyhördhet*, that is listening with an ear to the ground, with empathy, being involved: this is a key sensibility for contextual practices. Working in these contexts means working in a continuous process of relation and learning: for this reason, curating context is a laborious process requiring an infinite passion for problem-solving and reconsideration.

Among the essays, there's Claire Doherty's description of the artistic and curatorial project meant to regenerate Oslo's old port – which will be analyzed in chapter 5.2 – and her metaphorical vision of curators as negotiators, smugglers, storytellers and air-traffic controllers (Doherty 2017). In their conversation on making socially engaged art projects in urban spaces, Suzanne Lacy describes how it was for her as an artist to work within the institutional framework of Creative Time – a New York-based art organization founded in 1974, organizing public art projects in urban spaces – and curator Nato Thompson comments on that. Lacy explains how the institution provided more art world visibility, social capital, and legitimacy for the projects, but at the same time limited her possibilities in terms of fundraising and staffing. She also adds that curators working with this kind of projects need to go through a learning curve to understand the processes of a deeply developed long-term social practice, in order to facilitate artists rather than obstruct them (Thompson, Lacy 2017). The dialogue between curators Jessica Segerlund and Joanna Zawieja, instead, presents *Jubilee Park* in Gothenburg case, situated in the city's old port, that was being transformed in a residential and business district: the project is an example of process-based planning, «where temporary tests may be made permanent or lead to reconsiderations, and where the production for the curator means understanding and docking into the heavy legal and logistical processes of planning and building» (Malm 2017: 12). Segerlund explains how, in contrast to usual planning processes which usually start from infrastructure, housing and connections, in the case of *Jubilee Park* the process started with the activation of common spaces. She suggested the municipality to work experimentally with the gap in time between the vision for the neighborhood and the building process to test prototypes for three to five years, an approach she calls «temporary permanence» (Zawieja, Segerlund 2017: 114): through this approach, a sauna by RaumlaborBerlin (Fig. 69), a beach by MYCKET, and a playground by Akay and E.B. Itso were tested. Zawieja says that in her opinion that of the urban curator

> is a role that rather than being about designing buildings is about creating connections and processes in the fabric of the city, in order to meet the dynamic systems of cities but also often

> to include several voices in the planning and create places and processes that can harbor diversity and complexity. I think that the term "urban curator" includes an understanding of our built environment as an effect of many events and fields of knowledge, where bureaucracy, law and economy have almost as big an impact as the physical structures. It is also a term that describes most of the feminist-inspired architectural practices well. (Zawieja, Segerlund 2017: 116)

Segerlund outlines what is curating for her:

> My way of working is based on a kind of curatorial process but in another setting, scale, and situation; it involves the compilation of objects, communication of thematics or an idea, and the interpretation of meaning. But it is also a process in which one has to depend on the unfinished, handling the fact that one doesn't know the answers from the beginning. A curatorial method in which one consciously allows space for new interpretations and new forms of expression, interventions, and relations is of central importance. When this is transposed onto a greater scale it is also incorporated into the municipal administration. In my role, which at the moment is that of a process director, I see myself in many ways as a facilitator. I facilitate the ideas of, amongst others, the architects, artists, voluntary organizations, and the public. I also facilitate political documents, finances, development, planning, and a kind of urban planning heritage in the form of previously conducted dialogue etcetera within in the organization I work for. I only think of the role of the curator as a kind of backdrop to making the temporary assumption of my position possible. A role from which to test different positions and possibilities. (Zawieja, Segerlund 2017: 117)

She sees herself as an "infraperson", taking on a hybrid role, mediating in favor of artistic and architectural practices. As a curator, she provides artists and architects with a framework to work with, a broad theme that is open to interpretation:

> The framework is based on extensive preparatory work in which we took into consideration budget aspects, political lobbying, and the work involving the gathering of ideas and conversations that preceded it. Hence we provide a framework but do not control the aesthetics, other than helping them with the interpretation and making sure that laws and regulations are followed. I would say that the framework comes from my employer but that we create the framework for the prototype. This means that we provide a kind of interpretation that gives the artists and architects greater scope to work conceptually. (Zawieja, Segerlund 2017: 121)

For Segerlund an essential difference from working as a curator in the arts stands in working with time. She says: «In a large urban development project it is crucial to be able to utilize and retain the knowledge and skills generated within the organization. What we have attempted to work with, and finds methods for, is to create positions within the city and the municipality that have the knowledge of precisely this sort of work. To facilitate and point towards, for example, the prototype as a supplementary urban development method» (Zawieja, Segerlund 2017: 118). This is particularly important as it allows the tests to live on and be adapted further after the invited team has left.

In 2018 urban curating was further explored by Marthe Nehl in her master thesis *Urban Curation. An explorative study on understandings, roles and functions of curating practices in urban contexts* (Nehl 2018): this is a first attempt to make a review of different concepts of urban curating and problematizing the concept, and has been an important point of departure for developing this research. She summarizes the positions on urban curating through a tetrad that identifies four main interests in different authors: Arts, Architecture, Creative Entrepreneurship and City Management (Fig. 70). Practices can not be associated with only one field. She explains that

> While management and control relates to ordering physical materiality, the architectural approach is involved in the production of physical structures following the call for participation. For the creative entrepreneurship perspective urban space is where art is expressed through visible results of improvement. It implies that material space can be arranged, controlled or used as a stage for display, as an important representation of (creative) economic activity. This includes eventization, activation and animation practices often promoted through cultural planning and placemaking consultancies […] [Other cases] show established forms of art in location development where 'artists as urban curators' do not believe that the request from the authorities or a housing corporation hinders depth of artistic practice, and say there is nothing wrong with art being the starting point of thought and action. (Nehl 2018: 25-26)

For example, the Arts orientation can be recognized in Jeanne van Heeswijk's approach, and the Architecture's in Bunschoten's. As for the Creative Entrepreneurship, she refers to the case of Lia Ghilardi and her London based consultant company NOEMA Research and Planning, dealing with cultural mapping and planning, with the aim to imply culturally sensitive place branding and marketing. As for the City Management approach, she finds it in Jesper Magnusson's doctoral thesis, titled *Clustering Architectures. The Role Of Materialities For Emerging Collectives In The Public Domain* (Magnusson 2016). Here, he

highlights similarities between management (maintaining) and curating (planning). He uses the term urban curating «to imply the ordering and management of material elements as well as processes and social activities connected to these artefacts. Understood thus, curating constitutes a highly regulative (top-down) approach to life in urban space, aiming for a detailed administration of where, what, and how certain events take place» (Magnusson 2016: 243). However, the author of this thesis feels that Nehl's categorization lacks the inclusion of those practices which are not necessarily artistic, nor architectural, whose outcome is social from a grassroots perspective: see for example the practice of Jane Addams, presented by Krasny as urban curating. Moreover, in most cases it is particularly difficult to understand to which category an author belongs, because their practices are extremely hybrid and variable. Lastly, the four categories considered are not on the same level: in fact, while art and architecture are usually means to achieve a certain outcome in terms of value production, city management and creative entrepreneurship can be seen as outcomes. The author of this thesis thus suggests another classification, based on outcomes rather than on means (that is, what is curated: art, architecture, other creative activities, etc.), which will be presented at the end of this chapter.

Another important contribution published that year is Stephan Kampelmann, Michael Kaethler and Adrian Vickery Hill's article *Curating complexity: An artful approach for real-world system transitions* (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018). The paper advocates for a curatorial approach to navigating the complexity of urban sustainability transitions and social-ecological systems (such as urban neighborhoods), which are characterized as wicked problems that cannot be solved by traditional, neutral planning methods. The authors argue that a curator-planner must reject professional detachment to act as a knowledge broker and caretaker, intentionally framing the process to prioritize meaning, personal attachment, and diverse ways of knowing. They explain that «a curator-planner is not neutral but cares for the subject matter and proposes her own interpretation of the social-ecological system and its potential trajectories, notably by framing the planning problem in an oriented, meaningful way. At the same time, a curator-planner cannot impose this interpretation onto the audience but rather aims to solicit personal reactions and engagement» (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018: 2). Curating according to the authors – with its focus on meaning, activating multiple ways of knowing and moving between the particular and the whole – is able to address three main problems of system transitions: the first is that of knowledge, which for curators is not hierarchical, but multiple and articulated in different ways; the second is that of the actors involved (planning processes involve a wide range of actors that have to be concerted, convinced or consulted: curatorial approaches may help develop

personal attachment with the context where the planning takes place); the third is that of scales (changing urban form typically affects functioning at multiple scales: the curator works on different scales, such as the artwork and the big picture, when he curates an exhibition, so his expertise could be helpful in urban contexts as well). By applying a six-step curatorial cycle – ranging from framing to positioning – planners can help stakeholders move between individual experiences and structural systems to unlock stagnant conflicts. Using a case study of a peri-urban agricultural site in Rome, the text demonstrates how this artful approach can transform entrenched stakeholder positions into a sense of collective identity and shared vision. Ultimately, the purpose of the study is to provide a practical and transparent framework for managing societal transitions by integrating emotional significance with systems thinking, identifying two complementary strategies:

> First, by rethinking the role of planning professionals as "curators" whose interventions are guided by the principles of creating meaning, caring for the context, fostering diverse ways of knowing, and oscillating between the particular and the whole. The curatorial here provides a unique set of instruments for dealing with different knowledge parcels as well as a useful metaphor for thinking of the role of the planner in ecological projects – as a caretaker and guardian. Secondly by embedding the curatorial approach in a system perspective, actors are encouraged to simultaneously think in terms of individual and structural actions that are necessary for sustainability transitions (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018: 11).

In 2018 landscape architect B. Cannon Ivers published *Staging Urban Landscapes. The Activation and Curation of Flexible Public Spaces* (Ivers 2018), a collection of essays and projects on public space design and curatorial programs (events) taking place within those spaces. In one of the essays, Sergio Lopez Pineiro explains that «the future performance of public spaces, via the curation of the events that will be taking place within them, is now playing a role in the conception and design of public space. It could be argued that, according to this trend, public space is no longer considered to be only physical space but, rather, it is seen as a combination of physical space with a curatorial program» (Lopez Pineiro 2018: 66). He moreover sees curating as a tool to foster equality in public spaces:

> The continual superimposition of temporary occupations by different publics can avoid a single, permanent and exclusive public. For this reason, the curation of a constantly changing set of spatial opportunities can be an appropriate technique for enabling heterogeneous and contradictory publics — a critical condition for an open and pluralistic society. It may be argued that a curatorial plan could potentially guarantee equal access to all types of publics,

> especially to those who might feel intimidated or at a disadvantage under normal circumstances. (Lopez Pineiro 2018: 66)

On the other hand, he highlights some drawbacks of these practices, among which the main one is that in these curated spaces the definition of publicness rests upon the curators themselves, while it should be defined by a multitude of people (Lopez Pineiro 2018).
The collection of projects features examples such as King's Cross in London, the High Line in New York, and many more, constituting a practical, research- and precedent-driven design tool to serve design teams in their pursuit of mastering the execution of staging public spaces.
In the same year, Joanna Warsza and Patricia Reed curated a substantial volume on city curating, put together on occasion of 2018's Munich public art biennial. The initiative was launched in 2013, and the second edition – ongoing from 30th April to 27th July 2018 – was curated by Joanna Warsza with the theme *Game Changers*. The three-month project analyzed historical situations and personalities from Munich's past and tried to identify which one sought to change the game, questioning routines of thought and action, and presenting alternatives. According to Warsza, the manifestation attempted to put forward questions on art's role in the construction of the public sphere, and of society at large, departing from Munich as a case study. In her curating, she brought forward an idea of publicness as a form of temporary public gathering, an assembly or a lived experience, also thank to the fact that she invited artists to produce performances rather than objects: in this sense, she talks about «art in minutes, not square meters». The volume both zooms in the projects through their documentation, and zooms out through essays, interviews, and a glossary dealing with the grammar and concept of the public sphere. In her introduction, Warsza suggests to extend the beneficial outcomes of the biennial through durational practices of curating and art, starting from the example of Munich's Olympic Stadium, that was re-activated through the inaugurational performance:

> A lot of money is spent on keeping it going, and "It needs to rethink itself," as I was told by city officials in the Munich building department. Would not artists, I immediately thought, be the right people to throw some ideas on the table on how the Olympic Stadium could have a new lease on life? Or differently phrased: what artists' and curators' ideas could help it adapt and grow over time? Would it not be interesting to ask them to be part of this re-invention process and the public debate around it, over a longer term, not for one project but for a process of a few years? This is what I would call city curating, finding a way in which artists and curators could have agency in dealing with gentrification, community building, restoration – or anything else really? (Warsza 2018: 25)

Warsza proceeds by recalling the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles at the Sanitation Department in New York, to say that city curating could be a useful public service:

> Why not go down this path and make space for city artists and curators, who will not only become city experts for short and exciting projects, but who will help shape, build, and sustain life in the city. City curating and more deeply contextualized public art would be an exciting public service. It could become a process of mapping problems, issues, and needs, connecting artists and communities, without the sensation of emptiness after an artist has left. Public art of the city curating could bring the promise of being something more than art, breaking out of its bubble, countering the feeling of things changing for the worse. This means not only asking questions but being there shaping our ideas of politics and public life. And it would, of course, take much more time than the life span of a biennale. (Warsza 2018: 25)

This is a process that has been seen since the 1960s, with artistic experiences such as that of the APG group: though, the idea of curating as a durational public service is innovative, as most public art curators work freelance and wander from city to city curating different projects. Public service instead requires continuous presence on site and stability over time, for example by being employed in a public agency or government body: a kind of practice which is still quite rare in Europe, though with some exceptions, as will be seen in the next chapters.

In 2020, an issue of the *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes* was devoted to urban curating, titled *Curating the City: Artistic Practices and Urban Transformations* (Trentin, Rosellini, Djalali 2020). Annalisa Trentin, Anna Rosellini and Amir Djalali, in their editorial explore the evolving role of curatorial practices as a primary force in shaping and managing urban environments. Making the opposite examples of Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Harald Szeemann, the authors examine the dual nature of the curator, contrasting the idea of maintenance and care for the city's social fabric with the more assertive, often parasitic, extraction of value from cultural assets. By framing the modern world as a pervasive architectural exhibition, the text argues that curating has moved beyond museums to become a fundamental tool for urban planning, digital labor, and the construction of collective memory. The series of scholarly articles in the issue investigate how artistic interventions and platform urbanism can either serve as tactical strongholds for community justice or as instruments for gentrification and economic exploitation.

In the same year, Johanna Tuukkanen discussed urban curating practices in her doctoral thesis titled *Curatorial Practice Embedded in the City. A Case Study of Curating New Genre Public Art in a Festival Context* (Tuukkanen 2020). She analyzes four art festivals – Metropolis (Copenhagen, Denmark), Steirischer Herbst (Graz, Austria), IHME Festival (Helsinki, Finland) and PLACCC Festival (Budapest, Hungary) – and comes to three main conclusions: first, curatorial practices of new genre public art in a festival context can be defined as a performative and non-representational practice embedded in the city. As a practice, it is thoroughly dialogical and based on an ongoing dialogue between the curator, artists and the city. Secondly, there are three political agendas of the studied festivals: the art world, the sociopolitical, and the urban agenda. Although overlapping, they demonstrate that in the festival context, curatorial practice reaches to these three areas because it is informed by the festival's political agendas. The third key result is that the curators' aims to create encounters holds a potential for politics. These encounters, immersed in the everyday, connect curatorial practice to ideas of potential, possibility and experimentation. To sum up, Tuukkanen reconnects urban curating to the tradition of dialogical/relational and socio-politically engaged practices (Tuukkanen 2020).

In 2021, Patrick James Adler discussed his thesis titled *The Curating City: A Functional Account of the Agglomeration of Creative Industries* (Adler 2021). The study looks at curating from an economic perspective, as it is an act of facilitating choice among symbolically-differentiated products either by directly choosing products on behalf of clients or otherwise lowering choice costs, in a context characterized by uncertainty, ascertaining what is worth valuing or even deciding what will be valued. Adler explains how curators are becoming an essential part of creative cities and contribute to their planning and development: he demonstrates how these specialized workers cluster in urban agglomerations like Los Angeles to exchange information, create socialized evaluation systems, and establish the "buzz" necessary to legitimize new products. In this sense, Adler suggests that urban planners might make cities more successful if they court curators (seen as reviewers, programmers, and evaluators). Developing a critical mass of these evaluators is what creates a lasting "starmaking machinery" for a region (Adler 2021). Unlike the cases of creative placemaking already presented in this chapter, for Adler curators produce economic value, but in an indirect way: they do not necessarily act on the urban context through their projects, because what really counts as valuable is simply their presence in that context.

Anne Ring Petersen and Sabine Dahl Nielsen, in their paper *The reconfiguration of publics and spaces through art: strategies of agitation and amelioration* (Petersen, Nielsen 2021),

examine «how artistic and curatorial modes of address contribute to the creation of new public spaces and new forms of publics and assemblies attuned to today's culturally pluralized and transnationally interconnected societies» (Petersen, Nielsen 2021: 2). They discuss art's capacity to intervene into, or, alternatively, negotiate, social conflicts, and how this change has gone hand in hand with an increasing artistic and curatorial use of participatory strategies ranging from the ameliorative to the agitational. By utilizing the *4. Berliner Herbstsalon* as a primary case study, the text illustrates how a curatorial function can organize a counterpublic that challenges nationalist and patriarchal ideologies. Ultimately, the source argues that art serves as a vital site of contestation in culturally pluralized societies, enabling the development of radical democracy through collaborative and activist engagement.

In 2022, Claire Louise Staunton discussed her doctoral thesis titled *The Post-Political Curator: Critical Curatorial Practice in De-Politicised Enclosures* (Staunton 2022), investigates the problems and possibilities for critical curating in 21st century new towns, proposing that the newest settlements are apparatuses through which a post-political consensus is constructed and reproduced. Firstly, she argues that the conditions of a new town and the policy paradigm of placemaking pose a great risk to critical curatorial practices of subsumption and instrumentalisation. However, she also makes the case that there is a strength in curating, as it is perceived as a benign threat to the hegemonic order. The curated project is in fact strong enough to hold a space open for the public to safely come together and build solidarity. Curators need thus to decide if they want to sustain or resist depoliticization processes in urban contexts. Secondly, Staunton sets up the argument for conceiving a new form of politically engaged curatorial practice that does not uphold the processes of de-politicisation. Lastly, she claims that a curator who seeks to work politically in the new town must also adopt a post-political analytical framework if they are to discern latent political formations: in this sense, the curator can work with critique to discern the post-political condition and the emergent dissensus that it attempts to foreclose, with the aim of facilitating its growth. According to Staunton, this curatorial figure, which she calls post-political curator, is «a critical practitioner who harnesses the visibility and publicness of curating and weaponises their privileged access to resources. The post-political curator is primarily a protector of the political, and they consider the ways in which they can disguise it through manipulating temporalities and aligning their practice with community organising» (Staunton 2022: 159-160). According to Staunton, curating in these contexts is a practice that holds a deep social and political value.

In the same year, Juliet Carpenter and Christina Horvath possibly referred to curating when they talked about co-creative «arts-based methods», saying that if on the one hand they must not be idealized and will not always be able to disrupt power hierarchies, on the other hand they can help address the translation of issues between urban planning and art, and raise the issue of voices that are less audible, if there is enough will to listen (Carpenter, Horvath 2022).

In 2023, one more thesis regarding urban curating was discussed by Aislinn White, titled *Un-curated Projects: Strategies Towards A Socially Engaged Curatorial Practice in Sites of Urban Change* (White 2023). In acknowledging the curatorial as a fundamentally collaborative and dialogical praxis, White explores strategies for a socially engaged curatorial practice, that is entangled in the changing city and involves co-production with communities to create small, yet critical sites for discourse and exchange. She conceives these temporary sites as *un-curated* rather than spaces controlled by a curator as a mediator of civic and cultural engagement: the idea of un-curating is akin to concepts of unlearning, and can be considered to focus on experimentation and experience that can replace established knowledge and structures. It is a generative process, through which the configuration of the process cannot be a pre-determined product, or curated a priori. This means that in social projects embedded in urban sites, curators need to start with the constructed and established narratives and ideas of place as the terrain to renegotiate (White 2023).

In the same year, Hadas Ophrat devoted a chapter of his *Art Intervention in the City* (Ophrat 2023) to urban curating, explaining that curators could be the solution to solve a problem in artistic urban interventions: in fact, on the one hand, public administrations are worried because artistic processes can’t be fully controlled, artists are not qualified building professionals, the quality of materials they use may be not up to standard, the construction process might be improvised and unreliable, and most of the interventions are limited to the short-medium term, making future maintenance hard; on the other hand, when it comes to long-term projects, there is a likelihood that artists will lose interest, and professional forces (administration, production, social work, and related professionals) will be required to replace them. The artistic energy that inspired the project will thus be reduced, and the intervention will lose its uniqueness. Ophrat suggests that art insitutions and their curators might help balance this situation by taking responsibility for promoting a project not only in terms of its production, artistic consultation, and mediation to the authority, but also in terms of the initiative to identify hazards and failures and to set the process in motion (Ophrat 2023).

Lastly, 2023 saw the organization of some study days specifically devoted to urban curating, named *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing URBAN CURATING Now* (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023). Organized by PARKS and Social Design Class HFBK Hamburg, the gathering drew on local and European networks of urban curating practitioners. Taking distance from traditional and formal conference formats, it was structured through small scale conversational formats and working sessions, with rituals, holograms, workshops and assemblies (Figg. 71-73). The focus was on encounters and knowledge exchange at an informal pace. Drawing from case studies and concepts from Hamburg and beyond, the gathering looked at the expanded field of urban curating and its correspondence with performing arts, critical spatial practice, urban practice, organizational system thinking, community based planning, and cultural planning, among others. The German title *ALLES IST SCHON DA* meant "everything is already here": it indicated that every site in the city already includes a set of given materials, conditions and questions that might be needed for it to be understood and activated. In this sense, urban curating is seen as a practice in relation to a site, with the responsibility to care for its past, present and future. There were no paper presentations, but hologram sessions – a peer-to-peer protocol used to talk about urban curating questions: the protocol foresaw introductions (5 mins), assigning roles (10 mins), input (20 mins), dimensions of practice (emotional/strategical; physical/structural; social/cultural; 45 mins), and summarising (10 mins). The questions were provided by a set of introductory papers distributed to each participant at the beginning of the gathering, which work as something similar to conference proceedings (Tohermes *et al.* 2023). There were also several workshops: *Landscape Architecture as Curatorial Practice*, led by Katarina Bajc and Antje Stokman; *Pedagogies for Urban Curating*, led by Jennifer Aksu, Anna Hentschel, and Gilly Karjevsky; *Was ist die Parkmeister: innen-Position jetzt und in Zukunft? Herstellen einer fiktiven Stellenausschreibung* (What is the position of the Parkmeister now and in the future? Creating a fictional job advertisement), led by Julia Englert and Johanna Padge; *Welche Voraussetzungen, Ressourcen und Instrumente sind erforderlich um eine Struktur zu schaffen, die Urban Curating bzw. Urbane Praxis ermöglicht und auf ressortübergreifende Wirkung in die Hamburger Senatspolitik abzielt?* (What prerequisites, resources, and instruments are necessary to create a structure that enables urban curating or urban practice and aims to have an interdepartmental impact on Hamburg Senate policy?), led by Marius Töpfer, Lisa Zander (Mikropol e.V.) and Dorothee Halbrock (PARKS) (PARKS, Social Design Class HFBK 2023).

The gathering's Welcome pack contained question papers by the following urban curating practitioners: PARKS, Jane Rendell, Elke Krasny, Jennifer Aksu & Gilly Karjevsky, Suy

Lan Hopmann, Meike Schalk, Doina Petrescu, Barbara Holub, Jesko Fezer, Britta Peters, Masha Fehse & Licia Soldavini, Antje Stokman & Katarina Bajc, Marjetica Potrč, Fran Edgerley, Rebecca Wall, Kristin Lazarova, Stefan Hilterhaus, and fem_arc. Among these, particularly interesting were Meike Schalk's and Jennifer Aksu & Gilly Karjevsky's contributions. Schalk's *Where and how urban curating can act?* (Schalk 2023), where she presents urban curating as strategic approach with a focus on re-reading the city, and illustrates three key notions related to urban curating: temporariness, re-reading and re-learning of spaces, narrative and careful approach for creating connective and protective stories. With the first idea, she explains that urban curating could register changes in urban space and critically accompany them – a quality that the long-term and structure-focused practice of urban planning does not achieve – even when working with temporary actions. Schalk says that many groups and communities who have had little access to mainstream attention capital (representative buildings and institutional spaces) have always been using performative ways of appearance in public spaces (for example, squatter movements, migrants' experiences, and activist practices). In this sense, temporariness can also be desired: temporary actions can affect long-term changes through the reproduction of knowledges and practices by learning and pedagogies. As for the re-learning and re-reading of space, she opposes the creative opportunities of urban curating with the violence of capitalist discourses: she makes the example of reinterpreting the Swedish Right to Public Access in order to see urban spaces otherwise (everybody has equal access to landscape and nature, connected to the responsibility of handling them with care), and to explore the rights and responsibilities of environments. As for the narrative and careful approach, she recalls her previous idea of urban curating's connectedness and relationality, and says that «narration can act as a strategy of urban curating that promotes a careful approach to our environments and supports the maintenance of open land» (Schalk 2023: 18).

In Jennifer Aksu and Gilly Karjevsky's *As urban curators, can we live the imagined worlds of our projects?* (Aksu, Karjevsky 2023), the authors see urban curators as dreamers, imagining models alternative to the dominant structures in society, pointing to different ways of communities to make decisions and live together. Their work is deeply relational and site-specific, fostering connections between people and institutions, people and people, people and places, places and histories, and so on. To work in such a way, they suggest three hypotheses: firstly, that urban curating needs legitimation in order to lend as much power as possible to its actors and processes; secondly, that legitimation comes with professionalization, which in turn comes with education; and lastly, that urban curating's matters can be better taught if they are reflected upon and evaluated. They particularly insist

on the importance of evaluation of urban curating – something that is missing in most cases – in order to better understand them and consequently better integrate them into urban transformation processes (Aksu, Karjevsky 2023). Other contributions include Jane Rendell's reflection on describing as a transformational and curatorial act – in line with her refletions on site-writing which have already been illustrated in this chapter (Rendell 2023), Elke Krasny's on curating as a practice of taking care of what is already there on site (Krasny 2023), Doina Petrescu's on urban curating as reinventing urban commons (Petrescu 2023), Barbara Holub's on silent activism as an artistic strategy to address citizens and city administration to encourage socially committed urban planning (Holub 2023), Antje Stokman and Katarina Bajc's on urban curating applied to the field of landscape architecture (Stokman, Bajc 2023), Rebecca Wall's on the role of uncertainty for allowing more sustainable urban transformation processes (Wall 2023), and Kristin Lazarova's on serendipity in urban practices (Lazarova 2023).

3.2.4 Curating art in/for/as urban transformations: an interpretative framework

This extensive literature review has allowed to understand that there are multiple terminologies and meanings for curating in the urban context: urban curating (Bunschoten 2003; Petrescu 2005, 2023; Kaijima, Kuroda, Tsukamoto 2006; Schalk 2007, 2023; Krasny 2008, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2023; Lavrinec 2011; Zawieja, Segerlund 2017; Nehl 2018; Aksu, Karjevsky 2023; Ophrat 2023; Rendell 2023, Stokman, Bajc 2023), city curating (Chaplin, Stara 2009; Helsel 2009; Wong 2011, 2020; Warsza 2018; Trentin, Rosellini, Djalali 2020), curating context (Malm 2017), curating complexity (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018), (un)curating urban change (White 2023), post-political curating (Staunton 2022), curating public spaces (Ivers 2018; Petersen, Nielsen 2021), city embedded-curating (Tuukkanen 2020), direct urbanism (Holub 2015), (critical) spatial practice (Rendell 2006, 2010, 2015; Petrescu 2007; Schalk *et al.* 2017), urban practice (Trogal 2009; Rajakovics 2015; Tribble 2018; Lazarova 2023), creative placemaking (Fleming 2007; Markusen, Gadwa 2010; Kortbek 2019; Pritchard 2019; Zitcer 2020; Belfiore 2020), social practice placemaking (Courage 2017), durational public art production (O'Neill, Doherty 2011; Doherty 2017), public art management (Gabrielsson 2009), and arts-based methods (Carpenter, Horvath 2022) are different ways to indicate methods and practices for the production of various types of value, be it cultural, social, or economic. Some of these definitions are broader than others – such as spatial practice, urban practice, or creative placemaking – and can include curatorial practices, but also other typologies, such as artistic,

architectural or social practices. Others, on the contrary, are extremely specific. Another finding which emerged from the review is that not all authors using a certain expression attribute the same meaning to it: see, for example, the case of urban curating, which is seen by Bunschoten and Schalk as an architectural practice, by Krasny as a social practice, and by Ophrat as an artistic practice.

Earlier in this chapter, the classification model introduced by Marthe Nehl was illustrated and its criticalities were outlined. Here the author of this thesis would like to suggest another classification, based on outcomes rather than on means (that is, what is curated: art, architecture, other creative activities, etc.). Urban curating practices all have in common the production of value, be it cultural, social or economic: in the case of cultural value, art and architecture are seen as cultural manifestations that are valuable per se. Curating in this sense is a method that allows this value to emerge, such as in the case of Bow-Wow, where curating is a method to find «breathing space» within the limitations of construction and density, or in the one of Schalk, where curating is seen as a method to interfere in planning practices and make them more explorative, or in that of Wong, where curators work in urban spaces as if they were distributed galleries in order to facilitate artistic expression outside traditional museum walls, or even in that of Magnusson, where curating is an operative tool to address complex socio-material conditions of urban sites currently under development. In the case of social value, art, architecture and other practices are seen not as as end, but a means to reach social goals, such as fostering inclusion, enhancing sense of community, allowing people to intervene in public decision-making, and so on. It is the case, for example, of Elke Krasny's texts, where she presents examples such as Jane Addams and Suzanne Lacy's practices, addressing issues of spatial justice, or of Cara Courage's, whose social practice placemaking practices, through artistic means, foster place attachment and activate a collective citizenship. Lastly, in the case of economic value, curating is seen as a method aligned with creative city ideas, since it contributes to make places more attractive for tourists and capital more in general. Creative practices of all kinds are thus a way to generate direct and indirect income for cities, also thanks to curatorial expertise. This is the case of Ronald Lee Fleming's and of Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa's texts on creative placemaking. Of course, theorists and practices can pertain to more than one of these value categories: for example, the practices outlined by Jeanne van Heeswijk, Sand Helsel and Barbara Holub both have a cultural and social value, while the ones outlined by Sarah Chaplin and Alexandra Stara both have a cultural and economic value.



Scheme 1. Word Cloud of Curating art in/for/as Urban Transformations.

For the scope of this thesis, the author decided to investigate a specific kind of curatorial practices, which are characterized by working with artistic actions (such as in the case of durational public art production, public art project management and arts-based methods) in a critical way (as in the case of critical spatial practices) to transform urban contexts (such as in placemaking practices and direct urbanism) through professional curatorial competence. Initially, the author was thinking of referring to these practices as urban curating, but after making this review she preferred to address them as curating art in/for/as urban transformation: in fact, while urban curating is an umbrella term that might generate misunderstandings because of its diversified use, CAUT indicates a very specific type of practices. Moreover, it allows the author to connect back to the distinction that was made in chapter 3.1 regarding art-in/for/as-urban-transformation: linking curatorial actions to the artistic intervention they are guiding, it is possible to distinguish different types through the categories that have already been presented (top-down/bottom-up commission; real collaboration/subordinate relationship with planning, related to early/ex post engagement; transformation/maquillage). In this sense, curating art in urban transformations indicates initiatives that are commissioned top-down, when the planning decisions have already been made and in some cases even executed before involving curators and artists, and the outcome

is that of maquillage (decorative add-on solutions). This is the case, at least in part, of *Nuovi Committenti Mirafiori Nord*. Curating art for urban transformations indicates initiatives that are usually top-down, but where curators and artists are involved early in the planning process, and can contribute substantially to the transformation process. Looking at the pilot case studies presented, that is the case of *Beyond*, for example. Curating art as urban transformation indicates those initiatives that are usually bottom-up, where the curator (often embodied by an artist) starts himself an initiative of urban transformation, and can (but not always) later involve planners and local authorities in the process: in this case, especially if curators and artists are later able to engage with authorities, projects can have a radical transformative power. Otherwise, the risk is that of not being able to make interventions last over time. Looking at the cases, *Isola Art Project* is a good example. This framework will be useful to better analyze the case studies, which will be presented in chapter 4 and 5.

This chapter has reconstructed the history and theoretical framework of curating in urban contexts, by making an extensive literature review, providing examples of pilot projects and an interpretative framework. The next two chapters will be devoted to illustrating selected case studies, through the presentation of project documentation and qualitative interviews with curators.

4. MAJOR CASE STUDY: PUBLIC ART AGENCY SWEDEN[43]

4.1 The Agency's history and Swedish Architectural Policies

4.1.1 *Framtidsformer* (Future Forms) policy and the extended mission

In Sweden, the history of Public Art saw an important achievement when, as a result of questions about allocating state funds for art being raised already at the turn of the XXth century, the Parliament adopted the One Percent rule as a model for financing public art in 1937. According to this rule, approximately one percent of the total budget for new public constructions, renovations and extensions is allocated for artistic design. Through this rule, a stable and more long-term economic space was created for the arts, despite an increasingly industrialized planning and construction process. At the same time, Public Art Agency Sweden was established, with the mission of providing artists with work opportunities, of collecting artworks to be placed in state-run workplaces and of creating inspiring examples of public art in connection with state-commissioned building projects. The Agency applied the rule from 1937 to 1947, while afterwards it received an annual grant to purchase art for public buildings (Public Art Agency Sweden website). In 1998, Sweden introduced its first architecture policy, *Framtidsformer* (Future Forms), which became the starting point for implementing new approaches in working with architecture and public art. At the time Sweden had recently joined the European Union and wanted to stress the importance of architecture. The policy drew inspiration from architectural policies developed in the UK, Finland, Norway and Denmark. By establishing a national policy for architecture, design, and craft – the first coordinated initiative in these fields – the government aimed at embedding aesthetic considerations in public infrastructure planning and building laws (roads, rail, planning) so that design quality became an explicit priority, at making the State a role model, by having governmental agencies adopt architecture and design quality

[43] This chapter adapts and expands the following papers: Ruzzier I. (2024), "Future Island on a "broken planet": una risposta artistica agli scenari apocalittici della crisi climatica", in Borselli D. *et al.* (eds.), *Oltre la catastrofe. Ecologie, visualità e immaginari nelle arti contemporanee,* Milano, postmedia, pp. 194-209; Ruzzier I. (2024), "How It's Made: Behind the scenes of Public Art production at Public Art Agency Sweden", *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes,* no. 6(2), pp. 74-91; Ruzzier I., "Democratic Urban Transformations through Socially Engaged Art: Utopia or Reality? The Case of Public Art Agency Sweden", in Tunali T. (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Art and the City: The Aesthetico-Political Contestations in the Urban Space*, Routledge (forthcoming publication).

programs and adjust procurement processes, and at delegating national responsibilities to organizations like ArkDes, Public Art Agency Sweden, and the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, to advance architecture and design. Two further objectives were to encourage architectural competitions, particularly open calls, to increase innovation and achieve high-quality results, and to foster international collaboration, positioning Swedish architecture and design in dialogue with global trends. These goals were to be achieved through legal amendments (the Planning and Building Act, Road Act, and Railway Act were revised to ensure aesthetic values are explicitly part of design and planning), procurement reforms (governmental ministries and State agencies were tasked with developing their own quality programs emphasizing architectural design), the establishment of competition protocols (recommendations were made that public clients use architectural competitions – ideally open – to maximize diversity and quality; decisions on format were left to case-by-case discretion), and institutional assignments (organizations such as ArkDes, Public Art Agency Sweden, and the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning were given formal roles in implementing the policy). In particular, Public Art Agency Sweden was given the role of stimulating improvements in both indoor and outdoor public environments (Swedish Ministry of Culture 1998).

Within the policy, the agency was commissioned by the government to work with an extended mission to work with art in non-governmental environments, which involved collaborating with non-governmental actors, such as municipalities, county councils and private developers (1997-2009): this became the occasion for the agency to test one of its first urban development projects (Mats Theselius, Håkan Johnsson, *Trafikplats Mölndalsbro*, 1998-2003), in collaboration with the municipality of Mölndal and the Swedish Transport Administration (Fig. 74) (Public Art Agency Sweden website). Project manager Ulf Kihlander described describes the project in this way:

> I thought it was absolutely impossible to do something so big as my first project. I didn't really understand how I was going to manage it. It was the time when the Public Art Agency had started working on the so-called extended mission [*vidgade uppdrag*], and the area I was going to work on was initially much larger than it later became – even though it became big anyways. The application was for the Åbromotet[44], which was to be built at the same time as the E6 motorway through Mölndal was being rerouted. So the first thing I did was borrowing a car and driving a few laps […] And I realized that none of what I knew as public art would work.

[44] Åbromotet is a key road interchange in Mölndal, connecting the E6 motorway with Pepparedsleden and other local roads.

Any sculpture would just be a small stick. It was absolutely necessary to think in a new way, but I was so stuck in what was the usual way of thinking about public art at the time: sculpture, painting, textiles…Then I saw an exhibition at the Museum of Architecture, as it was called at the time, on Skeppsholmen in Stockholm, which was about new landscape architecture […] The Swedish Road Administration had started doing different projects and inviting artists to collaborate. It struck me – what if we were to do the opposite? What if we choose an artist who invites the landscape architect to collaborate?

This was a long time ago but, as I remember, everyone was on board right away. The Public Art Agency, the Swedish Road Administration, the municipality and Wingårdhs, who were to design the travel center. Overall, in my memory, it was a collaboration that worked smoothly all the way, with a good conversational climate and high expectations.

We soon realized that it was already too late to work on the entire Åbro Bridge and decided instead to enter the project's second phase, Mölndalsbro, which would also entail a new travel center. And there we got early. There was time, also to stop and think […]. By choosing this direction, the construction costs for the art could also be borne by the construction project. The money that would otherwise have had to be used to install the art could be spent on the design […] Mats Theselius and Håkan Johnson got the job after a parallel sketch assignment. When we selected those who would be invited, Mats Theselius was chosen as the artist, partly because he could see the site as a design assignment but also because he was very versatile; an inspirer and creator. He, as one of several artists, got to go and see the exhibition at the Museum of Architecture and choose the landscape architect. It was Håkan Johnson who had just graduated at the time, and had just started his own studio. It was a perfect match! […] This gave a resilience, creativity and total fearlessness that was needed in this project. Just like me, they wanted to go out into an uncharted territory, try something new and see what would happen! At the risk of driving into a ditch, but still […] The area, when we started working on it, was completely cluttered with information. Road signs, flower boxes, cherry trees, flagpoles – a real motley. One question was, how much information can we remove without getting lost? […] Mats Theselius and Håkan Johnson approached the project more or less like a land art project. We started from the infrastructure with roads, footpaths and cycle paths and worked with the ground in between as undulating lawns […] We made retaining walls, sculptural, in concrete. And a fountain too: it was important for the municipality to connect to Mölndal's identity through its location by the water, the Mölndalsån. The municipality was really nervous when the proposal was to be presented to the public: removing things is always a sensitive matter. Especially parking spaces and flowering cherry trees. But it went well. We wrote in the maintenance instructions that nothing can be added, no advertising signs, flagpoles or

flower boxes […] The only maintenance required is mowing the lawns[45]. (Public Art Agency Sweden website)

4.1.2 *Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer* (Collaboration on the Design of Public Environments) assignment

When the extended mission was completed in 2010, it was expanded through a new assignment - *Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer* (Collaboration on the Design of Public Environments) - which consisted in collaborating with the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish National Heritage Board and ArkDes to develop and strengthen a holistic approach to the planning and construction of public environments. The assignment's objective was to create greater collaboration around the design of shared environments, based on artistic, architectural, cultural-historical, and social perspectives, spreading good examples of how site-specific artistic design can contribute positively to an overall planning of public places and buildings. The mission resulted in thirteen collaborative projects located all over Sweden, which involved municipalities, private property owners and consulting companies, as well as professional groups such as architects, artists, engineers, planners and designers. The cooperation between all these parties has been the basis for method development in the assignment: to try out different forms of cooperation in public environments (Public Art Agency Sweden website). The projects regarded environments such as travel centers, schools, residential areas, parks and hospitals. All projects took the location as their starting point and, through cooperation between different actors, they aimed at achieving designs that interacted with the history, use and meaning of places. Moreover, some of the projects were developed in dialogue with citizens, thus including new perspectives on public living environments (Orrje *et al.* 2013). What distinguished the thirteen collaboration projects was their aim to provide new perspectives on the implementation of planning and construction processes, the communication between different parties involved, the interaction of different skills and the documentation of the processes. In fact, documentation was meant at contributing to the continuity and transferability of the gained experience. The biggest challenge of the assignment was to bring about a general change in terms of approach to design and its qualitative effects on people's living environment. The objective was to transfer the

[45] Translation from Swedish by the author.

knowledge acquired through these experiences to general policy instruments at both local and national level (Orrje *et al.* 2013).

The application procedure was open to all public and private actors who commission, plan, build and manage public environments. Two open calls were made in the spring and autumn 2010. About thirty applications were received, eleven of which were granted financial support. In addition, the authorities initiated two further projects. The projects received financial support up to 50% of the cost for hiring design experts and in some cases – depending on the type of project – up to 50% of the production cost. The application process took place in two stages. Based on an expression of interest, the authorities jointly decided which projects would present a more detailed account of the projects' implementation, content and finances. To produce these in-depth documents, the collaborative partner was supported by a consultant from the Public Art Agency. The most detailed accounts had the prerequisites for integrating the design into the planning and construction process. They also showed what economic, technical, social and cultural-historical limitations and opportunities there were. The final assessment of the applications was based on a number of aspects: the ambition was to achieve a geographical extension across the country, as well as to include public environments of different nature and varying scale. The projects would also promote innovative visions about design and be anchored at management level in the respective organization. The projects' timetables and budgets would be adjusted so that different design skills could work integrated with other professional groups in the planning, design and construction stages. A question that was also assessed was which methods the various actors would use to achieve citizen engagement. The projects would also be of general interest in that working methods and experiences could be transferred to other contexts and other actors (Orrje *et al.* 2013). Selected projects were: *Vanstaskolan in Ösmo* where artists Chandra Ahlsell and Anna Holmquist redesigned a schoolyard in Nynäshamn in collaboration with Nynäshamns Naturskola and Nynäshamn Municipality (Fig. 75); *Solsystemet, Husets kärna, Sitthinkar, Utkastare*, where artists Karlsson Albin, Weibull Sofie, and Åberg Mikael designed Ås and Sånghusvallen schools' environments with attention to sustainability and green energy production; *Tuvesviks färjeterminal, Orust* where artists Leo Pettersson and Mia Fkih Mabrouk designed the outdoor environment of a ferry terminal in Orust; *Gummifabriken Värnamo* where artists Carl Richard Söderström, Malin Bogholt, David Svensson, Kajsa Mattas, and Stefan Johansson worked to transform an old rubber factory into a new cultural center in Värnamo; *Resecentrum Nora* where artists Carlén Magnus and Tyrefors Karin contributed to the design of a travel center in Nora; Ansiktet- Skälens spegel where artist Katarina Vallbo contributed to redesign four courtyards in Badhusberget

(Lysekil) residential area, with the objective of residents feeling a sense of community, joy and pride in their living environment (design activities were moved into the building complex to involve residents); *Att se och synas* where artist Katarina Löfström designed new lighting for the courtyards of the Kvarngärdet residential area in Uppsala, owned by Stena Fastigheter; *Kvarteret Valnötsträdet* where artist Päivi Ernkvist designed a square based on the old town plan of the medieval town of Kalmar; *Vasaplan* where artist Poste Restante made a performance in which, during a personal city walk, a telephone operator guided the caller through changes in the urban landscape in Umeå, giving them the opportunity to reflect on how their life choices are visible in the city; *Loggbok, Lysmasken* where architects Markus Aerni and Boel Hellman developed a proposal for how the boundary between Kiruna's mine and Gruvstadsparken city park could be designed, while artists Sofia Sundberg, Karl Tuikkanen and Ingo Vetter developed a design proposal for the other three themes ("Identity Creation", "Historical Traces" and "Change"); *PARK LEK* where artist Kerstin Bergendal, through conversations with the residents and long-term presence in Hallonbergen and Ör neighborhoods (Sundbyberg), made together with them proposals for an alternative way to densify the involved residential areas where new apartment buildings were to be built; *Akademiska sjukhuset* where artist Marianne Jonsson aimed at enriching Uppsala's University Hospital environment; *H+, Loft Lift* (Fig. 76) where artist Simon Starling explored how Helsingborg, a large-scale harbor area, was being transformed into an area with housing and offices, through a project in which three abandoned pigeon lofts were lowered into an abandoned warehouse building through a hole in the roof with the help of a helicopter.

In making these projects, though, the agency's role was still pretty marginal, providing organizational support through its consultants, while the responsibility for the projects relied mostly on municipalities, property companies and county councils.

Experiences throughout the assignment have shown that it usually takes a long time to develop and establish common approaches and working methods for how design issues can be pursued. This happens because the matter is breaking established patterns of thought and find new ways of working together, and subsequently creating a new continuity in the way of working without falling back into old patterns. Also for this reason, the collaborative projects have confirmed that it is an advantage to address design issues already in the early planning stages: in fact, in the late stages it is often difficult to establish new collaborations or introduce new issues (Orrje *et al.* 2013).

The assignment has also shown that artists, in collaboration with other professional groups as well as citizens, can contribute to the design of public environments, by creating images

of alternative futures and by drawing attention to the place's qualities, people's relationship with the place and its various cultural-historical layers. Some of the collaborative projects challenged the traditional idea of artists adding artistic decorations in the final stage of the planning project, by fostering openness to artistic method development and participation during the early planning stages. From this perspective, crucial is the need of a figure at management level dealing with the design process with continuity. This also allows a deeper site analysis, presence on site, and collaborations with residents, countering the praxis according to which oftentimes those who are responsible for the development and design of public environments lack a relationship to the place, as well as to people who live and work there. This way, it is easier to achieve long-term sustainable solutions (Orrje *et al.* 2013).

In several of the collaboration projects, it has become clear that the presence of artistic competence can have an important role in the communication between different groups. The artist can contribute to establishing dialogues that are perceived as meaningful for everyone involved, enabling an exchange of experiences that results in a deeper analysis and broader perspective. Artists' involvement in early stages has contributed to different perspectives being weighed together, and to the design being quality-ensured. In this way, design programs can be drawn up in parallel with the planning process. These strategic documents provide support for the management and development of the public environment and can constitute the basis of future planning work. It is an advantage if the design program is linked to an implementation description (Orrje *et al.* 2013). This communicative role of the artists is important as to which the meeting between different professional groups does not automatically lead to an in-depth collaboration. Collaborations need to be organized at an early stage and concretely practiced in such a way that it continues throughout the entire process. Collaborations that are integrated into the process right from the start provide prerequisites for the knowledge of different competences to be used fruitfully. It is also important to leave space for the unforeseen: in fact, the collaborative projects that developed in unexpected directions are those which have created new design solutions. To do this, having a preliminary dialogue through by developing a routine for meetings, working processes and communication to avoid misunderstandings is of utmost importance. The project manager's role is often central to ensure that design-related issues in planning and construction projects are prioritized from their conception to implementation. In several of the projects, it emerged that their personal qualities were important in achieving a successful collaboration. Successful project management is based on establishing relationships between the participants to bridge knowledge, beliefs and habits associated with different areas of expertise. Another key factor for collaborations' success is that all actors agree on the

guidelines for the design work and jointly formulate overarching objectives at an early stage. Matters to be discussed include budgets, timetables, what skills the various participants contribute, what role they should have, what routines should be followed regarding how information is shared and what are the project's objectives (Orrje *et al.* 2013).

Lastly, it is important to involve residents and audiences more in general: in fact, the public's involvement is an essential basis for political decisions dealing with changes of public environments. Citizens' needs, thoughts and dreams should be integrated into future visions for public spaces. Many citizens see planning as something remote from themselves: it is thus needed to develop methods and new approaches to establish dialogues with different groups of citizens. Decisive for the final result is that the commissioner is prepared to set aside the time and funding required, and that there is support from a majority of politicians and decision-makers. When inviting citizens to participate it is important to make clear what opportunities, but also what limitations, exist for them to influence decisions that are made (Orrje *et al.* 2013).

To sum up, the governmental assignment has emphasized that shaping the public environment is an important social issue, by creating space and legitimacy to discuss the importance of design in public environments, what competences are important for the it and how planning and construction processes can be organized and carried out to achieve a good design. It has shown that new approaches to shaping public living environments are needed to promote quality, that public spaces must be considered in a broad perspective to achieve sustainable planning solutions, that different competences complement each other and create synergistic effects that deepen the quality of public environments, that cooperation may initially take time, but allows for better results, that methods to implement artistic design in planning and construction need to be developed, and that knowledge of what artistic design means needs to be developed and spread to many different stakeholders. In projects this means working to build an early and versatile collaboration between creative competences and other actors, starting from the place, its history, conditions and function, involving citizens and their knowledge, needs and wishes regarding their living environment, and being aware that artists in dialogue with other professional groups can open up new solutions (Orrje *et al.* 2013).

4.1.3 *Konst Händer* (Art is Happening) assignment

One step further was made in 2016, with the *Konst Händer* (Art is Happening) assignment, which was part of a wider governmental investment in art and culture in certain neighborhoods called *Äga Rum*. This assignment caused controversy as it was formulated in a problematic way, stating that the artistic projects should increase democratic participation and primarily target low-voting turnout areas, thus creating fertile conditions for power asymmetries and tricky stigmatizations (Bornemark 2021). The idea that culture should be democratized and cultural activities contribute to the development of democracy has deep roots in Sweden's cultural policy tradition. Sweden's three cultural policy bills (1974, 1996, 2009) have established that culture should make people participate in society, and contribute to solving social and political problems. When cultural and democratic issues were gathered in the same ministry after the 2014 election, the view that culture and democracy are intimately connected also began to be reflected as an organizational reality (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2019: 29). Within this tradition, in June 2015 Minister of Culture Alice Bah Kuhnke submitted an assignment to the two main Swedish governmental art authorities, Kulturrådet/Swedish Arts Council and Statens Konstråd/Public Art Agency Sweden. In this document, she asked them «to prepare an initiative for cultural activities in certain residential areas with a focus on artistic expression in 2016-2018». She added that «the content of the initiative must be based on the residents' needs and knowledge of the place, and be characterized by broad citizen influence». The aim of the initiative was to «create good conditions for increased influence, participation and a range of culture and artistic expression in certain selected residential areas», reaching all age groups and increasing democratic participation in areas with low-voter turnout (Swedish Ministry of Culture 2015: 1)[46]. The initiative was called *Äga Rum/Taking Place*, and involved the allocation of SEK 104 million to the Swedish Arts Council and SEK 26 million to the Public Art Agency.

[46] Translation from Swedish by the author.

While the Swedish Arts Council's objective was to allocate funds for local cultural production, the Public Art Agency's was to use artistic design to create meeting places and more engaging living environments, and to work with local civil society organizations to develop practical examples of how the so called 'Million Program' housing neighborhoods could be enriched artistically (Public Art Agency Sweden website). The Million Program consists in Sweden's late modernist dwelling areas built between 1965 and 1974, and was chosen by the Public Art Agency for several reasons: firstly, because during the previous *Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer/Collaboration on the design of public environments* assignment (2010-2014), the participating authorities emphasized the necessity to continue cooperation with a focus on the Million Program areas; secondly, these areas are considered as low-voter turnout by the Election Authority's statistics; thirdly, there were some parallel government investments for the renovation of residential buildings and schoolyards in those areas, and Public Art Agency saw the opportunity to work in synergy with them; lastly, there was strong local commitment in many Million Program areas according to the Public Art Agency (Sand 2019: 17-18). These areas were chosen also from an urban history perspective, as no new art had been added there for fifty years and the urban fabric needed to be revisited[47].

The assignment has been deeply criticized under many aspects, one of them being the fact that it was not clear why areas with low-voter turnout would be in need of such an initiative (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2019: 13). The assignment's formulation, moreover, went against a deeply-rooted Swedish principle, called *armlangds avstånd* (arm's length distance), according to which politicians should create possibilities for art without imposing their own idea of what art has to be. As a consequence, many lamented the assignment's instrumentalization of art, as it was trying to use art as a replacement for structural solutions to social problems in low-political-priority areas (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2019: 84). The Public Art Agency had to work with such a formulation, but tried to reinterpret it in a less instrumental way by looking at a broader meaning of what 'democratic participation' can be. Art's democratic potential is seen, according to the Agency's interpretation, in the fact that it «contributes to developing our critical thinking, our openness and our receptivity also to the unknown. Art, regardless of genre, therefore contributes profoundly to developing us as democratic beings» (Public Art Agency Sweden 2015: 4). During an interview, one of the curators of the project says:

[47] Interview with Joanna Zawieja, 31/03/2023.

> We chose to speak of it [democratic engagement] as a chance to produce public art in places where there had not been additions of new public art during the previous 50-60 years, and to work with existing areas and existing infrastructures […] For me it was exciting to enter into existing situations and try to understand them, and work context-specifically[48].

Also then-director Magdalena Malm explains her point of view regarding the democratic outcomes of the assignment:

> That's what we got: does it mean that those projects will increase the voter turnout? Is that an implicit idea that we should deliver? That will never happen. And then we actually decided ourselves to focus on the Million Program, because they are in a situation where they need redevelopment. So, from an architectural and city development point of view, we thought "this is good, this is going to be our focus". And it was also less instrumental than saying it was a low-voter turnout area, but it also overlapped with that. Then, we were very clear to say that if you ask for individual art projects to increase democracy, that will never happen […] What you can say is maybe that from a welfare-distribution point of view, in those areas there is much less access to publicly funded culture than in the city centers. So it's a wealth distributional policy[49].

The Agency's project, which took the name *Konst Händer/Art Is Happening,* aimed at producing examples of what forms public art can take in this specific urban context, at creating new meeting places through artistic production and at developing new methods for citizens' participation and agency in the processes leading to the creation of public artworks (Katz Thor and Zawieja n.p.). This was really a turning point for the agency, as the project introduced the opportunity to work on contexts which were already both spatially and socially defined, without any building-related commission and in close dialogue with the civic society. Fifteen projects to implement were chosen all around Sweden, which were managed by Public Art Agency during three years, also thanks to the development of new methods and formats (Harri 2021). The artworks included: *De Som Sår (Those Who Sow)* by Saga Gärde and Athena Farrokhzad in Amiralsstaden (Malmö), in collaboration with the Urban Planning Office of Malmö; *Förhandlingen (The Negotiation)* and *Marmorlinjen (The Marble Line)* by nna Högberg and Johan Tirén in Gamlegården (Kristianstad), in collaboration with the housing company ABK, Kristianstad's Art Museum and Urbana Hembygdsgården; *Mirakel (Miracle)* by Santiago Mostyn and *Gärdeåsens sju Underverk*

[48] *Ibidem*.
[49] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.

(The Seven Wonders of Gärdeåsen) by Kalle Landegren in Gärdeåsen (Ljusdal), in collaboration with Ljusdal's municipality, Ljusdal's International Women's Association, and the housing company Ljusdalshem; *Paviljong (The Pavilion)* by Map13 Barcelona in Hageby (Norrköping), in collaboration with the organization Portalen, the housing company Hyresbostäder, Norrköping's Museum of Art and Norrköping's municipality; *Moving Plants* by Maider López in Hammarkullen (Göteborg), in collaboration with the City of Gothenburg, local women, and the housing company GöteborgsLokaler (Fig. 77); *Hur (How)* by Roxy Farhat in Holma (Malmö), in collaboration with HUR-the social entrepreneur; *Şaneşîn* by Nasim Aghili and Björn Karlsson in Hässelby (Stockholm), in collaboration with the Council of Unified Creoles and the City of Stockholm's Traffic Office (Fig. 78); *Kulturhuset Mitt Framför Näsan (The Cultural House Under Your Nose)* by muf architecture/art and *Alondra* by Wojciech Pindur in Jordbro (Stockholm), in collaboration with Jordbro World Orchestra, the youth center Ung 137, Haninge municipality and the company Blå Vägen; *Kollektiva Kroppen (The Collective Body)* by Johanna Gustafsson Fürst in Kungsmarken/Mellanstaden (Karlskrona), in collaboration with Mellastaden's Folkets Hus och Parker Association, the housing company ABK, and Karlskrona municipality; *Jaguars Can't Be Heard, And Yet They Sing* by Carla Zaccagnini in Lindängen (Malmö), in collaboration with Gatukraft Lindängen and the City of Malmö; *Al Madafeh/The Living Room* by Sandi Hilal in Prästholmen (Boden), in collaboration with the non-profit regional art gallery Havremagasinet, the housing company BodenBo, the Military Museum of Boden and Boden's municipality (Fig. 79); *Råby Planet* by Michael Beutler in Råby (Västerås), in collaboration with Västerås Art Museum and Konstfrämjandet Västmanland; *Kepsen (The Cap)* by MYCKET and *In Purple* by Johanna Billing in Råslätt (Jönköping), in collaboration with Jönköping's municipality, Mix Dancers, the housing company Vätterhem and the local recreation center Stadsgården Råslätt (Fig. 80); *Gul (Yellow)* by Lina Sofia Lundin in Tjärna Ängar (Borlänge), in collaboration with Borlänge municipality, the association Tjärnkraft and Borlänge Energy; *Ljuslinje för Tyrolen (Light Line for Tyrolen)* by Aleksandra Stratimirovic in Tynnered (Göteborg), in collaboration with the youth center Tyrolen, the City of Gothenburg and Trygg Vacker Stad Gothenburg.

The top-down nature of the initiative created a series of problems, which have been widely analyzed by several researchers: for example, Jonna Bornemark analyzed the project in terms of power asymmetries between civil society and State institution (Bornemark 2021). Edda Manga, instead, explained how the split between the roles of commissioner (civil society) and financier (institution) inhibited citizen empowerment (Manga 2021). Monica Sand shed light on a gap between power and responsibility in the projects, as usually responsibility (to

choose sites and issues to address) was handed over, while real power (above all, economic power) was not (Sand 2019: 129-132). Sofia Wiberg illustrated how the assignment's nature created a duality in the project, as, on the one hand, it resulted in a power factor and capital of trust, which made it easier to deal with municipal institutions, on the other it led people to think about art as a distraction from burning social issues (Wiberg 2021). What emerges from these studies is that, in spite of a positive general framework regarding the opportunities of art in urban transformations as outlined in chapter 3, the assignment basically constituted a real minefield to work on for curators and artists involved in the project. Nonetheless, the Agency worked extensively to overcome these difficulties and to obtain the best results possible both in terms of artistic quality and civil society's engagement, for example by reinterpreting the assignment and developing new methods for working with civil society. Unluckily, these methodological achievements have not been adequately investigated, except for some sporadic cases (Harri 2021), and have not been given wider international resonance, because most follow-up research focused on the governmental assignment and power positions derived from it[50]. The meta-structure of the project, with a particular attention to how professionals at Public Art Agency Sweden worked and developed methodologies in order to foster more democratic decisions and collective artistic outcomes, will be analyzed in chapter 4.3.

Generally speaking, the project has been described as successful: the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis outlined an increase of participation within the residents and the emerging of new networks among them. Moreover, it highlighted that the investment has had a status-raising effect on the area (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2019: 103). The result's section in the Public Art Agency's final report regarding the project gives examples of positive outcomes obtained: the «right to express your own voice» is claimed in the case of *Şaneşîn* in Hässelby, where an association of creole residents collaborated with artists Nasim Aghili and Björn Karlsson to create a 'stage' to express their identity. The result of creating new meeting places is highlighted through the example of *Kollektiva kroppen* in Mellanstaden, where artist Johanna Gustafsson Fürst contributed creating a safe public space in front of a cultural center. The initiative also strived to protect already existing meeting places, such as in the case of *Kulturhuset mitt framför näsan* by muf architecture/art in Jordbro, an artwork aimed at pointing out the value of a cultural center in danger of demolition. Other results were making public environments more equal, as in the cases of *Kepsen* by MYCKET in Råslätt and *Moving Plants* by Maider López in Hammarkullen,

[50] *Ibidem*.

where friendly environments for young girls on the one hand, and women on the other in contexts dominated by male presence were designed. Another positive outcome was that of employing skills brought in by newcomers such as foreigners and immigrants, as in the cases of *Al Madhafah/The Living Room* by Sandi Hilal in Prästholmen, and *Paviljong* by Map 13 Barcelona in Hageby, where residents created new public spaces by using their own expertise (as architects, for example). Other results include strengthening identity and visibility, preserving cultural heritage in the area, and listening to usually unheard voices (Public Art Agency Sweden 2019: 25-33).

The Agency also pointed out to some unforeseen positive consequences of the project, in cases where art served as a catalyst within larger urban development projects, by initiating both changes to ongoing projects and completely new initiatives. For example, in Hageby a grassy area was transformed into a park as a result of the work done by Map 13. In Mellanstaden, the temporary speed bumps that the artist and residents obtained permission to install temporarily have been made permanent, making the nearby area safer to use as a meeting place. In Råslätt, the municipal housing company Vätterhem has chosen to create a dance space in the area (Public Art Agency Sweden 2019: 33-34).

Nonetheless it must be said that certain projects have been portrayed with an excess of positivity in the report: in the case of *Şaneşîn,* for example, the Creoles' Union, which had commissioned the artwork, dissolved during the process, and, according to researcher Edda Manga, this outcome was linked also to their participation in the project (Manga 2021: 71). Monica Sand describes, instead, how the work done in Jordbro could not prevent the cultural center to be definitively closed and demolished (Sand 2019: 82). It is interesting to notice that these cases are two out of three the selected applications coming from already organized associations, which clearly had in mind what they wanted from the artistic process and how they wanted it to be made (Sand 2019: 35). This led to unmet expectations and disappointment. What comes to mind is the question if projects such as those generated by *Konst Händer,* and their related organization and curation by the Public Art Agency, would be more useful in cases where civic society hasn't built a strong engagement yet. If high levels of engagement lead to more commitment and participation on the one hand, on the other they make negotiations and delegating to external actors (such as the Agency and artists) more difficult: engaged people, in fact, want to take action directly and have as much control as possible over the situation. Moreover, they already know what they want, thus clashing with the idea of step-by-step and open-ended processes led by artists coming from outside and bringing in different practices and ideas: the risk of becoming frustrated by the process is thus pretty high. In other cases, instead, some partners appreciated the fact that

the Public Art Agency managed the projects, so that the local community didn't have to spend time on that, thus making involvement easier (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2019: 96).

4.1.4 *Gestaltad livsmiljö* (Designed Living Environment) policy and related assignments

In 2014 a government inquiry was appointed to look at how *Framtidsformer* could be updated and renewed. The following year, the investigator in charge, Christer Larsson, presented the report *Gestaltad livsmiljö – a new policy for architecture, craft and design* (SOU 2015:88). The focus of the inquiry was architecture, craft and design, a fact that was criticized in the reviews made by experts together with governmental authorities and agencies. Among others, the Public Art Agency Sweden perceived designed living environments as a broader concept, in which public art and cultural heritage also play a role. The Agency, together with the Swedish Cultural Heritage Board pushed for – and obtained – public art and cultural heritage's inclusion in what was about to become Sweden's new unified policy for designed living environments (*Gestaltad livsmiljö* – Designed Living Environment). The policy bill (Prop. 2017/18:110) was jointly presented in February 2018 by the Ministers of Culture, Environment and Housing. The policy was unanimously accepted by the Swedish parliament and adopted in 2018. It is based on a holistic approach taking into consideration not only physical spaces, but also social aspects. This policy involves four state institutions: the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish National Heritage Board, ArkDes and Public Art Agency Sweden. Through the new policy, the One Percent rule has been once again inscribed as a guide for government agencies and administrations building and renovating public spaces. The policy aimed at creating more sustainable and less segregated communities, also through art, a goal that was to be achieved through six methods: 1) economic profit shall not be favored in spite of sustainability and quality in design processes; 2) knowledge about architecture, crafts and design should be developed and spread; 3) public companies and agencies should make good examples in applying the policy; 4) aesthetic, artistic and cultural heritage's values shall be take into account and be developed; 5) designed living environments shall be designed to be accessible to everyone; 6) working together and cooperation shall be prioritized to develop the field of designed living environments nationally and internationally (Ministry of Culture 2018). Within the new policy, the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning was commissioned to produce guidelines for the policy to be implemented and to create a network of regional architects in Sweden, stemming inspiration to design school and

healthcare environments. The Swedish Cultural Heritage Board was commissioned to create a method to include public art in the Swedish cultural heritage, in order to regulate its safety. ArkDes was commissioned to make a yearly report about how the policy was being implemented all over Sweden, and to create creativity nodes all over the Country (Ministry of Culture 2018).

The Public Art Agency received three commissions within *Gestaltad livsmiljö: Offentlig konst som kulturarv* (Public Art as Cultural Heritage)*, Kunskapsnav offentlig konst* (Knowledge Hub for Public Art) and *Hur bild- eller formkonstnärlig gestaltning kan integreras när staten bygger* (How visual or artistic expression can be integrated when the State builds). *Offentlig konst som kulturarv* resulted in a 2019 report named *Byggnadsanknuten offentlig konst* (Building-related Public Art), which examines the conditions for the supervision and management of building-related public art, seen as cultural heritage. Building-related public art is defined in the report as art that has been commissioned or purchased for permanent, site-specific placement in a public environment and that has mainly been acquired through the One Percent rule. The Cultural Heritage Policy Bill (Bill 2016/17:116) states that it is important to strengthen the conditions for preserving building-related public art from the 20th century. The Public Art Agency was therefore tasked with investigating the need for knowledge-raising measures within the supervision and management of building-related public art and, if necessary, proposing measures that can contribute to positive development in the area (Ku2017/02582/LS). The Public Art Agency has collaborated with the National Heritage Board in this assignment (Ku2017/00942/KL) (Public Art Agency Sweden website).

Kunskapsnav offentlig konst was instead reported in 2020, in a volume named *Vi förändrar varandra* (We Change Each Other). During the years 2018-2020, the Agency collaborated with other actors across Sweden to strengthen knowledge development in the field of public art and the design of shared living environments. The purpose of *Kunskapsnav offentlig konst* was to meet the needs of municipalities and other stakeholders, both in terms of skills' development and concrete advice, as well as in terms of support in working with public art as part of community planning and construction. Art stakeholders who collaborate with the local community were also included in the target groups that the assignment was aimed at. The mission was built on collaboration and was based on the premise that knowledge is developed and disseminated in the encounter between different people and professional groups. *Kunskapsnav* was launched with three calls for proposals: one of these targeted smaller municipalities and regions that lacked experience in working with public art, and another one municipalities and construction companies that were involved in larger urban

development projects that lasted several years. The selection process resulted in cooperation agreements with thirty municipalities and regions spread across Sweden. Among them, particularly interesting are eight art projects: in Borås, the Borås Art Museum, the Recreation and Public Health Administration and the artist Apolonija Šušteršič mapped the involvement and potential in the Kraftsamling Sjöbo district in close dialogue with the residents; the municipality of Sundbyberg created an app containing an art quiz and five art tours based on different themes to strengthen knowledge about the municipality's public art; in Sundvall, the artist duo Bastarder studied the city's bus network and how this structure could be used in alternative ways, while choreographer Stina Nyberg created a performance telling the story of the city from a dog's perspective; in Örebro, artists Jenny Berntsson and Ruben Wätte were called to investigate how to design co-creative processes to strengthen children's influence over playground environments; in Gothenburg, artists were called to prepare a preliminary study regarding Backaplan, that was to be developed from a 100-hectare commercial area into a mixed city with housing, culture and places for recreation; in Falkenberg, artist Olivia Plender was commissioned to investigate the conditions for artistic expression before the municipality procured the responsible landscape architect to design a new city park; again in Örebro, the artist duo AKCG investigated together with a landscape architect how to manage Olaus Petriskola's schoolyard, which had been designed by the artist group Love and Devotion, and thus bears artistic values. Among these projects there was also *Art in Urban Development Visborg*, where Region Gotland collaborated together with the Baltic Art Center, a project which will be illustrated more extensively in chapter 5. In the third call, the Agency decided to follow twelve art actors spread across Sweden. All of them worked with art in public spaces on their own initiative and not within the framework of the One Percent rule. The self-organized associations often worked collectively and with participant-based methods. Several of the projects operated in rural Sweden and therefore brought art to places that often lacked contemporary art, thus contributing to social sustainability (Public Art Agency Sweden 2020). Among them was also *Konstnärliga avsmyckningar av Norra Djurgårdsstaden* (Artistic Undressings of the Royal Sea Port), curated by Moss Exhibitions.

Hur bild- eller formkonstnärlig gestaltning kan integreras när staten bygger, reported in 2021, dealt with providing methodological support for public commissioners in using the Percent for Art. The objective was to find methods and models for collaboration and financing of visual arts in public environments: one of the results has been an increased interest from State property owners in bringing art early in planning and building processes (Public Art Agency Sweden website). This was achieved both by establishing routines for

collaboration and agreements regarding art with four of the main state property owners (Akademiska Hus, Swedish Fortifications Agency, Jernhusen, National Property Board) (Public Art Agency Sweden 2021) and by producing a practical handbook for government commissioners, describing working processes to make and maintain public artworks (*Offentlig konst. Handbok för statliga beställare* – Public Art. Handbook for State commissioners). The book illustrates the importance of public art, its integration in designed living environments, public art funding in Sweden (One Percent rule), procurement forms, working processes (consultation groups, art programs, etc.) for permanent, temporary and urban development's art projects, the curator's role, and artworks' maintenance (Lindholm, From 2021).

Later on, in 2024, a handbook for municipal commissioners (*Offentlig konst. Handbok för kommunala beställare* – Public Art. Handbook for municipal commissioners) was published as well, presenting a more detailed account of the documents and processes needed to work with public art (From *et al.* 2024). The book is structured in eight chapters: the first "Financing", presents funding models for public art (One Percent rule, project funds, etc.), explains how to work with budgets for art projects (sketching fee, artist's salary, external artistic expertise, advertising, communication, inspection, etc.) and illustrates the basic requirements for working with public art (building permits, permit to divert traffic, digging permit, land lease agreements, etc.); the second "Organization", explains how to organize the working process related to art production and how responsibilities should be assigned; the third "Cooperation", illustrates how to establish collaborations in long-term construction processes; the fourth "Steering documents", illustrates all the documents on which art projects shall be based (international and national goals included for example in the New European Bauhaus and UN's New Urban Agenda, policy for designed living environments, municipal policies) and those that are needed to complete the project (procedure documents, security requirements documents, art programs), and remarks the principles of artistic freedom and arm's length distance; the fifth "Procurement", illustrates forms of open or direct procurement, bureaucratic selection criteria for artistic propositions (non-discrimination, equal treatment, proportionality, openness, mutual recognition) according to the Public Procurement Act (2016:1145), and contracts for artists and external curators/project managers; the sixth "Artistic commissions and processes", guides the reader along the process to produce public art (sketch assignment, preliminary study, process for permanent and temporary art, co-creation, final inspection); the seventh "Art in social development", talks about the use of artistic competences for community development and

planning processes; the eight “Maintenance”, explains how to do maintenance of public artworks, also in relation to copyright matters (From *et al.* 2024).
This review of the agency’s main assignments allows an understanding of its position in Sweden’s public art scene and of the institution’s interweaving relationships with city planning agencies.

4.2 Project typologies

The Agency is currently working with several different project typologies. In fact, as mentioned before, besides collecting public artworks to be located in governmental buildings, the agency has carried out several site-specific public art projects. At first, these projects were aimed at the production of mostly building-related permanent artworks, thus adhering to a more traditional – though site-specific – idea of public art. An example of this category are the two art projects Alba Baeza, Peter Hagdahl and Björn Norberg curated for University of Gothenburg’s new Natrium building, as part of the art program *The Intimacy of Strangers* (2020-2023): in this context, for instance, artist Hanna Ljungh's *Curiosity Cabinets: Medicinareberget* (Fig. 81) proposal consists of a free-standing monumental salt stone cabinet and of five smaller cabinets with minerals that have been integrated into the walls of the building (Public Art Agency website). Today, these projects continue to be part of the agency’s work, but they have been flanked by new formats, trying to stretch the borders of a by-now outdated idea of public art. In fact, many projects are no longer related to governmental buildings, but to wider public spaces and infrastructures such as squares, parks, nature reserves, whole neighborhoods and railway lines (urban development projects). For this reason, some of these projects are not relying on Percent for Art commissions, but on a dedicated public budget. They can deal both with local micro-scale and with national macro-scale. As for the micro-scale, the projects within the *Konst Händer* assignment (2016-2018), curated by a team consisting of Inger Höjer Aspemyr, Lena From, Peter Hagdahl, Marti Manen and Joanna Zawieja, can be taken as examples: for instance, Map13 Barcelona’s *Paviljong* (Fig. 82) in Hageby resulted in the creation of a wooden pavilion in the neighborhood for people to meet, in collaboration with a group of newly arrived architects and engineers (Katz Thor, Zawieja n.d.). As for the macro-scale instead, an important project that is currently being carried out is *Västlänken: Kronotopia* (2014-ongoing), curated by a curatorial team, initially led by Lotta Mossum thereafter by Ann Magnusson: in collaboration with the Swedish Transport Administration, the agency is working on a colossal infrastructure development project involving four sites, three train

stations in Gothenburg (Haga, Centralen, Korsvägen) and a grade separation in Olskroken (Public Art Agency Sweden 2016a). As for the site in Olskroken, for instance, artist Katharina Grosse designed *bLINK* (Fig. 83), a massive pink sculpture to be installed on a new railway bridge and allowing maintenance staff to access it and work on it through an internal system of stairs, heating, lighting, drainage and railings (Lindholm, From 2021). Moreover, both for building-related and non-building-related projects, artistic outcomes can be either permanent, temporary or take hybrid forms. As for temporary projects, an example is *Out of the Sky, into the Earth* (May-September 2022), curated by Edi Muka and Helena Selder: in collaboration with the Baltic Art Center, the agency produced two temporary artworks in Visby, *The Swamp Observatory* by Urbonas Studio (Fig. 84) – an AR app that visitors can use to observe and imagine new species or habitats in Visborg's ponds – and *Brakfesten/La Grande Bouffe* by Anne Duk Hee Jordan and Pauline Doutreluingne – including a sculpture made of elm tree branches, creating a banquet for insects, birds and other organisms, and a film (Public Art Agency Sweden website). As for hybrid formats, this means that projects can either start with temporary interventions and take a permanent form afterwards or the opposite, that a permanent commission can be flanked with temporary artworks, or that artworks can take up semi-permanent forms. For example, the temporary interventions *Walk, hands, eyes (Gamlegården)* and *What can we know in such darkness?* by artist Myriam Lefkowitz in Kristianstad (2016) were the starting points for the permanent artworks *Förhandlingen* (*The Negotiation*) and *Marmorlinjen* (*The Marble Line*) by Anna Högberg and Johan Tirén in the same site (Katz Thor, Zawieja n.d.). Another example is the *Liquid Interfaces: Open/Closed Gateways* project Lotta Mossum is curating for the University of Gothenburg (2023-ongoing), whose aim is to develop a semi-permanent project with a focus on digital art, that is an artwork which has a longer life than temporary projects – usually lasting only few days or months – and needs thus to be able to evolve and change over time (Public Art Agency Sweden 2023).

4.2.1 An example of permanent building-related project: *Future Island*

The project, curated by Lotta Mossum and Johan Tirén, started in 2014, and opened in September 2023. It was developed in collaboration with Nivå Landscape Architecture, Akademiska Hus, and Svenska Bostäder, and with advice from Science House (SU), Bolins Centre for climate change (SU), and Stockholm Resilience Center, and was realized in Albano, next to one of Stockholm University's campuses. Albano had already been the focus of a detailed urban plan from 2001 to 2012, inspired by a research report called *Q-Book*

Albano 4, which aimed to make it a unique example of sustainable urban development. The plan was the result of the work of an interdisciplinary research team that, through collaboration between the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and the architectural firm KIT, explored new strategies for integrating social and ecological research with the university campus's planning: the issue was particularly relevant because the area to be developed included a large urban park of national interest (Nyblom *et al.* 2010: 7). The area, seen as a place with dual potential – both as a strategic site for scientific research and as a recreational destination for the city's residents – was subsequently made protagonist of an art program curated by Public Art Agency Sweden, focusing on the concept of Anthropocene: in particular, the curators asked artists to problematize the nature/culture opposition, to work on different time scales and on holistic perspectives including the nonhuman. The goal was to explore how art could contribute to creating a socially accessible environment that was in harmony with animals and plants (Public Art Agency Sweden 2016b: 8-9). Marjetica Potrč and studio Ooze interpreted the program by creating a rocky artificial island in the middle of a narrow waterway that runs alongside the university campus. The island is about 45 meters long and 17 meters wide, while its height varies. The size of the stones used to build it varies from small pebbles to large boulders more than 2 meters in diameter, which form a sort of rocky ring on the edges of the island, protecting the flora and fauna within the three micro-valleys they create. On the south side of the island is another environment, where some micro-fjords generate a wetland (Ooze, Potrč 2019: 8). An important aspect in the artwork is the narrative related to the use of the stones with which the island has been built: in fact, on the one hand, a large boulder that was used turned out to be 1.8 billion years old, thus harking back to the prehistory of the place and contrasting the short-term thinking of humans with the length of geological eras; on the other hand, rocks from the construction work of the university campus were reused, thus investigating what happens at construction sites. The rocks are described by the artists as each having their own unique character, a fact that led to choosing their exact location within the work. Native plants were then added to the landscape, carefully selected with the help of a horticultural specialist[51].

In the artistic proposal, *Future Island* (Fig. 85) is defined as «a micro-ecosystem, a biotope of native plants and animals that constantly adapts to the slowly changing conditions» (Ooze, Potrč 2019: 2). The island, divided in half at latitude 59°21'20.32" N, maintains in the southern part the temperature of the surrounding environment, while in the northern part it

[51] Interview with Ooze and Marjetica Potrč, 04/05/2023.

is artificially heated by 5 °C through a system of pipes, connected to a heat pump, according to predictions regarding climate change for the next hundred years. In addition, sensors are planned to be installed on the island, that will send collected climate data to the nearby House of Science, where they will be analyzed and made available for educational purposes: the idea is to monitor environmental and climate developments in the Anthropocene in real time. The island – excluding the micro-fjords – is, moreover, a protected area, access to which is restricted so as not to interfere with its delicate miniature ecosystem: however, small groups carrying out educational activities organized by the House of Science can access it. Maintenance of the work is entrusted to Akademiska Hus and Svenska Bostäder, through the instructions provided in the maintenance manual, which includes restrictions regarding flora and fauna, as well as procedures, use, and behavior to be maintained on the island to preserve the artistic integrity of the work (Ooze, Potrč 2019: 19).

Future Island creates a miniature natural theater, that can be approached from different perspectives, and on whose the stage the drama of climate change will be staged for a century, stimulating continuous and active reflection on the issue. Within the artistic program, the curators expressed the desire that one could experience the work also physically, not only by observing it from a distance: this is also why, in the artistic proposal, Ooze and Potrč emphasize how the design of the work was guided by the human scale; in fact, the length of the island was determined by the distance at which two people can stand without losing sight of each other (Ooze, Potrč 2019: 19). To further mark the idea of immersion in the landscape, during an interview, Sylvain Hartenberg, talking about the various sizes of rocks used, invites us to imagine shrinking in scale and having the exciting experience of exploring the island's landscape from this Lilliputian perspective[52]. However, this stands in contradiction with the restricted accessibility of the artwork, which is problematic from a conceptual point of view: how is it possible, in fact, to give a representation of the Anthropocene and the changes caused on the planet by human action, when human access to the work is interdicted? Curator Johan Tirén, during an interview, admits that the resulting image is distorted, and that if access had been allowed, it would have been more truthful. However, he also adds that other aspects of the work would have been lost, in particular there would have been a risk of destroying the fragile ecosystems that were designed for the island. It should also be emphasized that this inaccessibility is only partial, as the area of the micro-fjords is instead accessible to the public, and also the island is accessible to small groups during educational activities of the House of Science. Thus, the

[52] *Ibidem*.

curators emphasized that this problematic aspect is mainly the result of pragmatic issues, such as the vulnerability of the island's fauna and flora, but also of the security measures imposed by the developers in compliance with the Swedish legislation[53]. However, as much as this limited accessibility is justified by these assertions, we believe that it brings out a further problem, namely that of the publicness of the work: the work is indeed embedded in a public space, which, however, is strictly regulated from above and does not allow for active participation by the public, except at the level of their imagination (a fact that is also determined by the institutional nature of the work, which certainly makes collaborative and non-aligned artistic operations more difficult).

In order to represent slow and lengthy events such as climate change, the artists chose to carry out the experiment for one hundred years. Eva Pfannes points out that this long duration led the artists to study how the work might have evolved over time along with people and other species, considering the relationship between geological time and species' life cycles[54]. Indeed, one of the most important peculiarities of the work, as the curators point out, is its extended temporality, its living and transformative nature, and the load of uncertainty and imagination it carries with it[55]. Because of this extended time-span, artists have described *Future Island* as a «narrative landscape» (Ooze, Potrč 2019: 2) able to tell the story of climate change, opening «a window into the past as well as a window into the future»[56].

Moreover, *Future Island* can be included in the category of eco-dystopian narratives, because, as pointed out by the research team at Posthumanities Hub, the work builds contrasting scenarios – through the method of back-casting – in order to create a sense of readiness both for possible and seemingly impossible or unexpected events (Åsberg *et al.* 2022: 6). On a narrative level, *Future Island*, with its dilated timeframe and small scale, depicts the effects of climate change in the everyday, without spectacularization. In the artwork, the theme of climate change is intertwined with other topics, such as an interest in the life cycles of plants and animals, a reflection on the breadth of the time spans of geological eras, and the violence of human action on the landscape. In this way *Future Island*, offers a complex understanding of the Anthropocene and its effects on ecosystems. The events that are staged in this miniature natural theater are intended to stimulate reflection and action against climate change, showing nature not as a frightening and vindictive entity, but as something to care for. Indeed, although the living conditions on the island will create

[53] Interview with Lotta Mossum and Johan Tirén, 18/01/2024.
[54] Interview with Ooze and Marjetica Potrč, 04/05/2023.
[55] Interview with Lotta Mossum and Johan Tirén, 18/01/2024.
[56] Interview with Ooze and Marjetica Potrč, 04/05/2023.

a potentially catastrophic scenario, leading us to explore our climate anxiety and the feeling of mourning related to the extinction of species and the loss of entire ecosystems, what the artists are interested in is not to provide the audience with consolation related to a possible post end-of-the-world palingenesis. They explained in an interview how important it is for them to see the work as an «anchor of hope»[57], especially since the main users of the work will be young students and children. Although the artists themselves said that they experienced a phase of disillusionment with the early stages of the project, in 2016, when they still had the idea that they could turn off the island's heating system in case global warming came to a standstill, they strongly argue, echoing Rebecca Solnit's thinking, how important it is not to give in to catastrophic prospects, but to start taking action to shape a different future[58]. As much as *Future Island* does not fall into the trap of the consolatory narrative, however, it fails to overcome the *impasse* of catastrophist rhetoric and attribution of responsibility to the individual, which is typical of what Daniel Borselli calls «*tristi tropi*» (sad tropes) (Borselli 2023), to provide a proposal that actually goes beyond the catastrophe instead of tying itself once again to the hope that somehow it can still be avoided through collective effort: a proposal that could be developed through art's power to question familiar perspectives and narratives.

4.3 The Agency's organizational structure and working methodologies

Having outlined Public Art Agency Sweden's history and projects' typologies, we will now take a look behind the scenes, illustrating the agency's working structure and methodologies, in order to explain how artistic practices in public spaces can be implemented. As for this, interviews with staff members – including curators Alba Baeza, Peter Hagdahl, Lotta Mossum, Edi Muka, and Joanna Zawieja, head of the Art Unit Lena From, director Patrick Amsellem and former director Magdalena Malm – have been crucial, providing precious insights into the agency's functioning.

Up to ten years ago, the Agency was described by Magdalena Malm as a very bureaucratic, administrative institution, where most of the staff didn't have artistic competences and where there was no artistic vision, a problem that sometimes affected negatively the quality of its artistic production[59]. When Malm was appointed director in 2012, she thus decided to carry out a radical re-structuring of the organization, based on a strong idea: art must be the core

[57] *Ibidem*.
[58] *Ibidem*.
[59] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.

of the institution, making the agency one of the first and few examples of this working model in the public sector in Europe. Malm explains:

> Imagine a Kunsthalle that was part of the administration and didn't have an artistic leader: that would be behind the development of contemporary art. […] The reason why public art has become so much behind contemporary art in general - I mean, now we're catching up slowly - is because it's not been artistically-led, because it was part of the administration[60].

At the time, the agency used to hire external project managers to develop artistic projects, with the outcome of, on the one hand, being unable to produce projects and contents internally and thus commissioning everything outside the organization, on the other hand of not building knowledge from past projects, as external project managers where constantly shifting[61]. For this reason, Malm decided to permanently hire a team of full-time curators with artistic competences, which became the heart of the agency. This choice was very important for several reasons: first, it allowed a process of learning and building competence to work with art in public spaces, also thanks to the different backgrounds and perspectives of the curators who were selected (Edi Muka and Lisa Rosendahl were specialized in temporary projects and biennials, Joanna Zawieja was an architect, Lotta Mossum and Peter Hagdahl used to deal with permanent art projects)[62]. Secondly, having full-time curators made it easier to relate to and engage stakeholders, especially in long projects lasting several years[63]. Lastly, the curatorial unit started to do strategic work, which would have been impossible for external curators, as clarifies Peter Hagdahl:

> In projects, if you're a consultant or if you're an employee, it is pretty much the same, because it's about producing a public artwork. The difference is what we do in the Art Unit: we talk quite much about the future and how we should work with strategies for the coming years, what kind of fields we should jump into and what kind of typical projects we should develop. As an employee, you're pretty much part of that strategy work, so that's the main difference[64].

Besides introducing the curatorial team, Malm decided to make decision-making processes within the agency more transparent by appointing a head responsible for each of the

[60] *Ibidem*.
[61] *Ibidem*.
[62] *Ibidem*.
[63] Interview with Lotta Mossum, 03/04/2023.
[64] Interview with Peter Hagdahl, 27/03/2023.

Agency's departments (art projects; mediation & communication; supervision, collection & administration)[65].

One of the most important changes introduced by Malm was reshaping the role of project managers into that of curators, which was perfectly adherent to her idea of art as heart of the agency: it's key to clarify that this was not just a terminological shift, but an attempt to confer new and increased value to highly-specialized professional skills, which have had a hard time being credited during the last decades. Malm explains:

> There wasn't this awareness of the curatorial position then, they didn't even call people curators. They were project managers or project leaders. So that was also a very important mark for me to say "this is an artistic profession, it's not someone who just coordinates a project". If you are a good curator in public space, you create artistic value. It's an artistic profession, it's not about the technical coordination of a project[66].

Curator Alba Baeza pinpoints sharply the difference between the two roles, besides the many common tasks:

> For me there is a nuance in between these two notions that is critical, because of course a lot of our work is project management: we handle budgets, we handle administration, we do a lot of mediation between different parts, we write agreements, we do a lot of politics almost, implementing policies and so on. But the curatorial dimension has a very significant added value which is the creative and critical reading of a context and of a certain situation. I think that is absolutely key for the quality of the resulting artworks[67].

Moreover, despite several similarities with the work done by museum curators, all the interviewed curators were firmly convinced that curators working in public spaces need specific skills to carry out their projects and tried to outline the most relevant for themselves. Among the most mentioned, were socio-relational skills, such as the ability to mediate, translate and negotiate between artists, commissioners and audiences (Baeza, Muka, Zawieja, Mossum, Hagdahl):

> Our closest collaborators are people who do not have a professional background in the Arts. They are officers from other public administrations working with, for instance, university

[65] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.
[66] *Ibidem*.
[67] Interview with Alba Baeza, 03/04/2023.

infrastructures, transport infrastructures and other kinds of publicly owned buildings and environments. So, I would say, a core aspect of our job is to mediate and to apply a pedagogical approach in how we explain the role of art and the role of artists in a public or urban context […] When I think about mediation, I think for instance about the job I do when I talk to the commissioners – for instance, someone who works at the Public Transport Administration – and then I translate their interests to the artist who will then develop a proposal; and the other way around, when I translate the artistic ideas to the public officers that are commissioning the artwork […] Mediation is also key when conveying everyone's needs during the commissioning process. Afterwards, of course, comes a more classical mediation, when you present the works and you prepare the materials to communicate it to the broader public, but in the case of Public Art Agency Sweden that task is rather in the hands of the communication unit. As curators, we focus more on internal mediation during the commissioning process[68].

I agree with Doina Petrescu when she says that to work as an urban curator is to work as a mediator rather than as a master. It is about weaving together different needs and desires, rather than representing a distant view in a computer drawing[69].

If you're a curator working in the public realm, then I think one thing you need to be quite good at is negotiating with the different kinds of people and talk about art. You can have different approaches, but you really need to engage people in these processes, because, even if you work with long-term permanent building-related public artworks as we do, you always interact with a reference board, that consists of people having none or little experience in contemporary art. So you have to be able to communicate with them your ideas, what the project could be, what the result would be, and the money needed[70].

Other relational skills include building trust with other institutions and/or civic society (Baeza, Hagdahl):

As for the institutions, I would say that the core aspect is building trust with them, because we often work with groups that do not necessarily have much knowledge about contemporary art or previous experience in commissioning contemporary art in the public space, which is quite a specific practice, even for cultural workers. So, the aim of having these recurring meetings and these reference groups we work with is to build trust, to anchor an unserstanding of how the process works, and to try to engage them in a constructive dialogue process[71].

[68] *Ibidem.*
[69] Interview with Joanna Zawieja, 31/03/2023.
[70] Interview with Peter Hagdahl, 27/03/2023.
[71] Interview with Alba Baeza, 03/04/2023.

> People from civic society [during *Konst Händer*] were really suspicious about the State: the only connection that they have with the State is with the police or the firefighters… and then suddenly the Public Art Agency came there and wanted to produce art together with them. Then you needed to build up a certain kind of trust, also in terms of giving out power to these individuals or organizations. We couldn't work the ordinary way, posing artworks out in the public space: they had to be part of this process[72].

Another skill is to facilitate and support artists (Baeza, Muka, Hagdahl, Malm):

> When it comes to artists, our work consists of helping them navigate a context where their visions need to fulfill a number of requirements, because we are working in public space and not the least in Sweden, which is one of the most bureaucratically regulated countries I've seen. So it's very often about explaining how the whole bureaucratic process works[73].

> My role as a curator is to facilitate artists, first in the research, then in the production, and then all long, but especially afterwards, making sure how the artworks can be experienced. Because, as for art in the public space, what you do with it after creating it is always a challenge […] So the challenge is how anchor it and how you talk about it[74].

> As a curator, I think you need to be on the artist's side, trying to make them provocative or convincing them that they should be more relying on themselves to articulate an artwork that is the best they could do. That's the main principle that I have. If I choose an artist, and if they are accepted, then my mission is to have this artist producing the best artwork that they could produce for this situation and in these conditions[75].

Then, relational skills include also being open-minded, listening and learning with humbleness (Zawieja, Mossum, Malm, Hagdahl):

> You need to be open-minded towards the people you work with, and listen to what comes up in the specific processes. Since it is a collaborative process, you have to be skilled in including people and groups. If you think that you have the right answer within you: it would never

[72] Interview with Peter Hagdahl, 27/03/2023.
[73] Interview with Alba Baeza, 03/04/2023.
[74] Interview with Edi Muka, 29/03/2023.
[75] Interview with Peter Hagdahl, 27/03/2023.

> work, according to my experience. You can have a strong curatorial vision, but you need at the same time to be open-minded. You have to be skilled in co-creation[76].

> I think what I learned the most [from *Konst Händer*] was to be very humble. You step into situations where you don't know where you are, and you just have to listen and learn. We knew some things, but we had to be really listening, learning, adapting […] So it's about having your ear to the ground, understanding questions that you didn't understand before, and bringing in people to have dialogue and understand. I think for me that was the most valuable aspect: to really make sure that we understood the questions in the right way, and to understand how we could be responsible[77].

Moreover, to know when to hold on with stubbornness and when to let go (Zawieja, Mossum):

> Of great importance is the ability to listen, to dare to try out things and to hold on to them, to not give up […] You have to be stubborn. But you have to pair stubbornness with humbleness[78].

> You need to understand when to insist and when to find another solution. Sometimes you have to find another way around. Sometimes you have to find another direction, that's the way of working[79].

Others are to be co-creative (Mossum, Zawieja), to be provocative and challenge artists (Hagdahl), and to create space for art and to safeguard artistic perspectives (Mossum, Hagdahl): «when it comes to artists, I appreciate very much how they manage working with complexity and the unforeseen. As a curator I want to create space for this in society»[80] says Mossum. Lastly, relational skills are to do pedagogical work (Baeza, Zawieja, Malm, Hagdahl), to anchor art within its context (Muka), to be transparent (Zawieja), and to act with responsibility (Malm).

Another set of competences regards more creative aspects, such as being able to create connectedness between artistic practices and specific contexts (Baeza, Muka, Zawieja, Mossum): «Going back to my role, it is this that of a facilitator and mediator, but it's also a

[76] Interview with Lotta Mossum, 03/04/2023.
[77] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.
[78] Interview with Joanna Zawieja, 31/03/2023.
[79] Interview with Lotta Mossum, 03/04/2023.
[80] *Ibidem.*

connecting point between ideas, artistic practices and context […] So in a way you try to not simply curate the artwork, but to curate also all the relations around it»[81] says Muka. Very important is also the ability to critically interpret contexts (Baeza, Zawieja):

> As a curator at large, I would say critical thinking is one of the core aspects. That goes hand in hand with what we can call mediation, and it's mainly about connecting different things, connecting people, connecting ideas, connecting thoughts, connecting people with places, connecting artworks with audiences. Curating consists of establishing these connections, and even more so when you work in public spaces, as the network of points to connect becomes much more complex when you leave the white cube. Because in public space there are a lot of forces that escape the controlled environment of an exhibition room[82].

Another skill is finding common threads and building narratives on projects (Zawieja, Mossum, Malm): «many times when you do an exhibition, you put artworks together so that something happens in between. That's, I would say, the core of curating: it's not to have a beautiful artwork and another beautiful artwork next to each other. It's about how the in-between starts to act, it's about creating a common thread and interconnectedness»[83] says Mossum. Other are being able of embracing context's complexities (Mossum), and keeping openness in projects to foster integration of artworks and context (Mossum):

> In the art program [*Kronotopia*] we talked about integrating art, not putting art on an already-completed structure. We wanted art to influence its own conditions. I really worked hard for not in beforehand deciding specific places for the art within the stations when we, within the competitions, invited the artists to make a proposal. We asked the artist to make a not too elaborated proposal, a draft, deciding for themselves what would be the best places for their artwork. In this way they could, after winning the competition, elaborate their concept during the planning phase, together with all the other professional skills involved, with architects, engineers, etc, and also integrate their artworks better in the stations. This was extremely important, because none of the four projects would have occurred, had we decided on the site beforehand[84].

Lastly, working against social contexts' mainstream (Mossum), and doing problem-solving (Malm):

[81] Interview with Edi Muka, 29/03/2023.
[82] Interview with Alba Baeza, 03/04/2023.
[83] Interview with Lotta Mossum, 03/04/2023.
[84] *Ibidem.*

> When you're in the public space, things happen all the time and you have to embrace conflict, so the earlier in the process you understand that and identify the conflict, the better. And if you're afraid of conflict, it will totally not work. So, I think also problem solving is one of my driving forces, and I think it has to be if you work in the public space, because there will always be something on the way, and you will always need to find a new solution that doesn't compromise the artistic quality, but makes it better[85].

Finally, the interviewees have framed a set of socio-spatial competences, such as being able to understand the needs of the context and its specificity (Baeza, Zawieja):

> Site-specificity is key […] When you work in the public space or in an urban space, you have to take into account the context. Everything begins there, with the reading of the context, with meeting the agents in the project and with actually being able to grasp the needs of that context, the key issues that need to be addressed. Only after that investigation has taken place can the curatorial conceptualization begin, and from there, everything that follows: the curatorial vision, finding an artist, making it happen[86].

Others include working with a site-specific process-based approach (Zawieja), being able of understanding city planning processes, the role of different public institutions in society and of grasping the urban/architectural scale (Zawieja), and adapting to different contexts (Mossum, Malm, Hagdahl):

> When you work with urban spaces, it's also important to work with diversity. What I many times find problematic about big planning systems is that successful projects often are cloned. You take a successful idea or a notion and you copy-paste it […] While you never in advance can know what to do. You have to be very agile in the working process to find the specificity. You have to adapt to every context[87].

In the Agency's 2021 handbook for State commissioners, a chapter is devoted to the curator's role and competence in public art projects, stating that their most important task is to balance the planning and building process's need for rational efficiency and the artistic process's need for sensitivity, testing, revision and reflection, in order to secure the artistic quality of the result. The book compares the curator to a spider, whose web links together

[85] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.
[86] Interview with Alba Baeza, 03/04/2023.
[87] Interview with Lotta Mossum, 03/04/2023.

all the professional figures and competences working together on art projects embedded in planning and construction processes. This means introducing what art can be to consultation groups and project managers who may not have had much experience with art before, translating and bridging language barriers between the different professions involved, and drawing attention to and contributing to solving any conflicts, if such arise during the course of the project. Curators create consultations groups, develop curatorial visions, propose and select artists, support artists and are responsible for artistic quality in projects. According to the handbook, curators' expertise is needed in such projects because they create space for art in planning processes, so that art does not get caught between the many other urgent moments and needs of the planning and building process, and because they ensure high-quality results. It is also said that they should have specialized knowledge of both contemporary art and art history in general, and of national and international public art, have good knowledge of the planning and construction process, and be well versed in discussing how to shape public environments in a broad perspective, which also gives room for social sustainability aspects. Through work with consultation groups, they should also know how to include the wishes and needs of different user groups in the art, planning and construction process. The manual also suggests that curators should be hired to work with art in the planning process as early as possible: in fact, the earlier any work with art gets started, the greater the opportunities for coordination between art and construction, and for creating commitment among the users. In short, the conditions for both material and social sustainability increase (Lindholm, From 2021).

Going back to the changes introduces by Malm, internal discussion and collaboration in the Art Unit have been fostered: while beforehand every project manager used to work on his/her own project, a more organic way of working started to be implemented, as clarifies Lena From:

> I think the way we brought the discussion into this Unit - our way of working more journalistically in a way - has brought on a quality to the Unit, so that everyone's aware of what everyone else is actually working with for the time being. So you know that this group is a resource that you can use regardless of what project you want to bring to the table. And that wasn't quite the atmosphere before[88].

This was taken to the next level when curators started working in teams, a method that was tested for the first time during *Konst Händer:* in fact, working with the civic society, curators

[88] Interview with Lena From, 25/04/2023.

had to work during weekends and evenings in order to allow citizens' participation. This led them to look for more sustainable ways of working, allowing members of the team to always have a backup in case they were ill or unavailable for any reason[89]. Lotta Mossum explains that she pushed for extending this way of working also to other projects, in particular *Västlänken: Kronotopia,* as during the first years she had a hard time to curate such a large and complex project by herself[90]. Baeza explains that now every project is managed by at least two curators, three in the case of more complex ones, and describes this as a triangular rotating structure:

> We meet once a week and we inform each other of what has been going on in our respective areas of responsibility. When we are out in the field, each of us takes different meetings and then we inform our colleagues. […] And then maybe once a year or every six months we reassess how this team structure is going. […] So it's an ongoing discussion all the time about what works best. It's a very responsive methodology because we try to adjust and adapt to the necessities of each project on a regular basis[91].

Another crucial methodological shift has been the introduction of new project formats, together with changing the workflow for permanent projects in order to produce higher-quality artworks. In particular, Malm introduced temporary projects for the first time and integrated urban development projects permanently in the agency's working, after the conclusion of *Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer* assignment. To do so, she hired new curators with specific expertise: Edi Muka and Lisa Rosendahl for temporary projects, and Joanna Zawieja for urban development ones. For these kind of projects, special budgets were introduced in order to be able to work without a commissioning institution. Moreover, essential was the importance of both *Konst Händer* assignment and *Västlänken: Kronotopia* project, as they required the agency to learn how to work both with civic society's small scale and with urban infrastructures' grand scale. Malm thought that this was a way to open up new perspectives on what art in public spaces could be, unlocking resources that were usually devoted to very traditional public artworks and creating new production opportunities for artistic ideas that were seldom funded at that time. Through publications, projects and events such as the *Creative Time Summit: Stockholm* (2014), perspectives on public art in Sweden started to change and artists who would have never applied for public

[89] *Ibidem*.
[90] Interview with Lotta Mossum, 03/04/2023.
[91] Interview with Alba Baeza, 03/04/2023.

artworks before started submitting proposals to the agency[92]. The introduction of temporary projects fostered experimental approaches and asked curators to reverse their usual way of working, as Edi Muka explains:

> In coming to the Public Art Agency, what was intriguing for me was that it was a new challenge. It was about getting involved in something that was not there, because the institution didn't work with temporary projects before. […] The permanent projects that we do are usually art in connection to buildings. […] The building gives the context, gives both limitations and possibilities, because the artwork has to be connected to the architectural drawing, to places that are assigned. Sometimes it's possible to negotiate, sometimes it's not, but the artistic process follows a structure, so to say, and then you try to find the freedom within that structure […]. In temporary projects it's the opposite. We try not to work within the structure. I mean, the structure exists there in terms of ideas, in terms of histories, in terms of context that one wants to investigate, but it has no foreclosed parameters when it comes to what is possible and what is not. So the freedom for the artist is much bigger to really try and test and do whatever they have in mind. And that was also the idea why we started with the temporary projects: it was to try to provide this as-big-as-possible freedom for the artist to see what's possible to do and also to work with the question "what can art in public space be?"[93].

Muka also points out that *Konst Händer* represented a turning point to start merging working methodologies, to open up processes and create new hybrid formats. In fact, these projects were not fully adherent to temporary nor to permanent building-related formats and thus gave the opportunity to test new solutions, as aforementioned examples show. *Konst Händer* represented a new challenge for the Public Art Agency as it required to work on contexts which were already both spatially and socially defined, without any building-related commission and in close dialogue with the civic society.

The production was divided into three clearly defined phases: preparation, in-depth preliminary investigation and implementation. Firstly, the Agency worked on creating a strong internal project organization, by putting together a multidisciplinary curatorial team, consisting of Lena From, with a background in journalism, Emma Engström, dealing with administrative tasks, Peter Hagdahl, an artist and curator of permanent art projects, Inger Höjer Aspemyr, with a background in pedagogy, Marti Manen, a curator of temporary art projects, and Joanna Zawieja, an architect and curator of urban development projects. Part of the team was also the Agency's director and curator Magdalena Malm. The Agency also

[92] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.
[93] Interview with Edi Muka, 29/03/2023.

appointed an external reference group, meant to act as a support and discussion partner in designing the assignment and in the projects' selection (Public Art Agency Sweden 2019: 14-15).

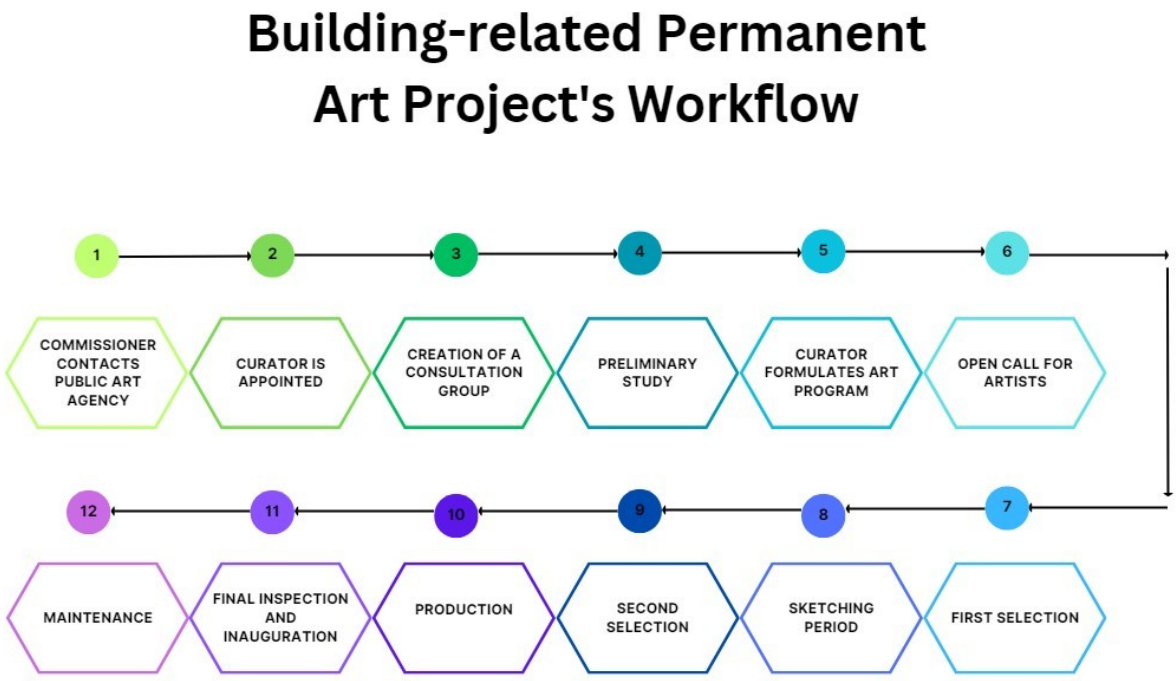
During fall 2015 the team started to do research about civic society's organizations to create partnerships and ways to interpret the government's assignment. After that, an open call was published for civic society to submit ideas about places or topics local society or residents would like to collaborate around with an artist in their living environment. The call addressed both civil society organizations, housing networks, and municipalities. The application process was made as simple as possible in order to lower the threshold for participation. To present the project, the team arranged fifteen meetings and information sessions at various locations throughout the country, contacted organizations, municipalities and other local actors, and advertised the project through live radio appearances, news and debate articles by the local press and social media. The call opened on January 28th 2016 and closed on March 1st. The Agency received 153 applications. The team evaluated the applications with the reference group and 28 proposals were selected for an in-depth investigation. During this phase, the Agency also researched possible national and international artist partnerships and created the so-called Knowledge Bank, an advertised opportunity for artists and architects to announce their expertise and interest in working with art in the Million Program (Public Art Agency Sweden 2019: 14-15).

The investigation phase ran from April 27th 2016 to October 3rd 2016: in this phase, the external project organization was built, in order to ensure that civil society would own the initiative throughout the entire process. Local project groups were formed in each location, which had the task to, together with representatives from the Agency, influence decision processes, hold negotiations with municipal representatives, disseminate information about the project and seek permits for the implementation of artworks. They also facilitated artists' preliminary studies by, for instance, participating in workshops, seminars, performances, and other activities. This six-months period also provided time for building trust and social relationships. The phase ended with a selection of 15 projects to implement: choices were made by the Agency after consultation with the external reference group, the local project groups, and in coordination with the Swedish Arts Council and the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning.

The implementation phase lasted from October 4th 2016 to December 31st 2018. Every case has been unique but, in general, the team developed pedagogical processes with the local project groups, and several artists were presented in relation to the chosen topics and sites. After that, artists were selected by the curatorial team in dialogue with local project groups.

Then, the sketching period started, where artists worked together with civic society, the artistic engagement varying depending on the type of practice and context. Lastly, the artwork was produced and reported, with slightly different approaches to every site. Outcomes and formats varied very much, including both permanent installations and temporary artworks, for a total of 19 artworks.

This process was pretty different from the traditional building-related permanent art projects' workflow (Scheme 2): this is not a fixed model and can vary even in the case of permanent art projects, looking at it can be useful to understand how it was deeply revolutionized by *Konst Händer.* The process usually starts with a commissioner – usually a property owner planning to erect a new public building – contacting the agency to ask for artistic work.

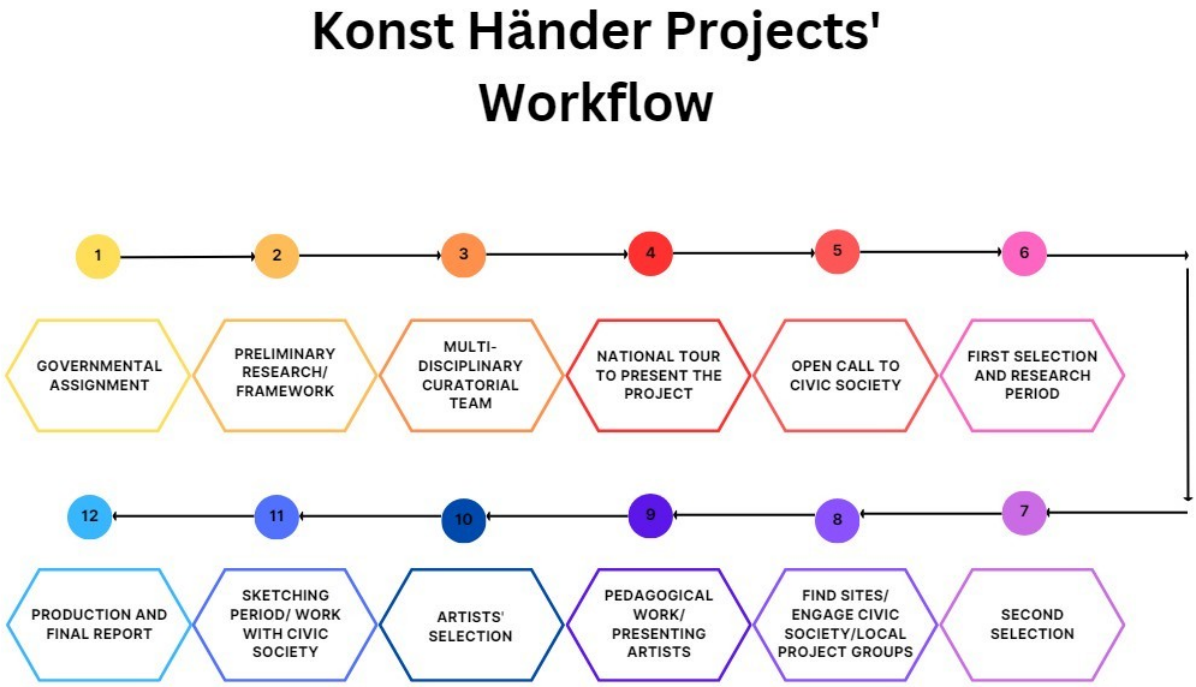


Scheme 2. Building-related Permanent Art Project's Workflow.

Then, the preparation phase starts with a curator (or curatorial team) being appointed and a consultation group being gathered. The agency claims that curators should be included in the planning process as early as possible in order to obtain a better integration between art and architecture and that they are both needed because they add artistic perspectives to the building process, and they create space for art during the process, avoiding it to be caught in between the many urgent necessities of the planning procedure, and because they can

balance the building process's need for rational efficiency with the artistic process's need for sensitivity, securing high-quality results. The consultation group includes representatives of the various stakeholders involved in the project, such as architects, property owners and future users. In case of complex projects, the consultation group can have an advisory role and delegate the project's practicalities to a working group. If a project comprehends more than one art intervention (each with its consulting group), a steering group is formed to make overall financial and strategic decisions. Then the curator carries out a preliminary study with the group, assessing the opportunities for artistic expression, considering different procurement forms, investigating future maintenance possibilities, and establishing a preliminary budget. The curator then formulates an art program, a support document containing purpose, socio-spatial context analysis, curatorial vision, timeline, budget, distribution of responsibilities among the actors involved, typology of procurement procedure, artistic formats and other special conditions (Public Art Agency Sweden website). After the program is discussed with the consultation group and approved, an open call for artists is published, after which they are valued both through a set of bureaucratic and financial criteria and a set of qualitative criteria, such as the relevance of the artistic expression in relation to the curatorial vision, feasibility and artistic quality. In the past, procurement procedures used to be simpler, as artists were often invited directly to produce artworks: nonetheless, for transparency reasons, during the last few years, open calls have become predominant. The head curator reads all the applications, while other curators in the Art Unit read a certain amount each: everyone makes a longlist, which is discussed during an internal meeting in order to come to a shortlist to present to the consultation group and to a meeting gathering all the agency's staff (production meeting). Usually two or three artists are selected and invited to work on a sketch, for a period which lasts at least three months. One or more mid-sketch meetings can take place, where the artist can ask questions to the curator and consultation group. At the end of the sketching period, the sketches are presented both to the consultation group and at the production meeting, and one of the artists is selected to produce the final artwork. As a last step, the artwork is produced, inspected and inaugurated. The production process, in large projects especially, can be very complex and last for many years (Public Art Agency Sweden website).

In *Konst Händer* (Scheme 3), as well as in temporary projects, there was no initial commission and no specific site.



Scheme 3. *Konst Händer* Projects' Workflow.

To sum up the process: a multidisciplinary curatorial team was created, which started doing research about civic society's organizations to create partnerships and ways to interpret the government's assignment. Then a tour through Sweden was organized to present the project. After that, instead of writing an art program, an open call was published for the civic society to submit ideas about what citizens would like to change in their living environment. Among the 153 received proposals, 28 were researched by the team for six months and 15 were finally selected to be implemented. From that moment on, the curatorial team started working in dialogue with the civic society on site, with local project groups for example, to find effective ways to engage citizens in participatory projects (traditional meetings not being the best solution) and to find sites. The team developed pedagogical processes with the local project groups, and several artists were presented in relation to the chosen topics and sites. After that, artists were selected by the curatorial team in dialogue with local project groups. Then, the sketching period started, where artists worked together with civic society, the artistic engagement varying depending on the type of practice and context. Lastly, the artwork was produced and reported, with slightly different approaches to every site.

Outcomes and formats varied very much, including both permanent installations and temporary artworks[94].

Konst Händer was not only important for changing the Agency's working process, but also for developing new strategies, as the project's final report illustrates. Firstly, it describes how the curatorial process was changed by handing over the initiative to local civil society. Curators acted mostly as facilitators for civil society to define burning issues and sites and implement the process together with artists. Malm says:

> The curators in this project had to work very much with their personal connection with people, talking about how they were also mothers, for example. Philosopher Marina Garcés says that when you enter the scene, you will change the scene. That means you also have to change yourself. So this was our departure point for this project. We are entering their turf. We are in their space. We have to be humble and understand that we need to change how we work […] We also selected the curators we felt would have the best possibilities to connect with civic society […] So it was a totally different competence than just the artistic competence, it was a social competence and a much wider view on how society works and other experiences that we needed in those curators […] You step into situations and you don't know where you are and you just have to listen and learn […] I think for a State agency that's a very healthy process[95].

It was also important for curators to be accessible in a way that was not familiar to them before: much of the work took place during evenings and weekends to allow people to participate, meetings were held on site as much as possible, and civil society members were paid by the Agency when activities could not be arranged during evenings and weekends. Looking for more sustainable ways of working, curators started working in couples: this allowed members of the team to always have a backup in case they were ill or unavailable for any reason. Project manager Lena From also underlines how the curatorial team became a real place for discussion during the project:

> I think also the way we brought the discussion into this unit – our way of working more journalistically in a way – has brought on a quality to the unit, so that everyone's aware of what everyone else is actually working with for the time being. So, you know that this group

[94] Interviews with Lena From and Joanna Zawieja.
[95] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.

> is a resource that you can use regardless of what project you want to bring to the table. And that wasn't quite the atmosphere before[96].

Secondly, the report illustrates how the Agency attempted to reverse power relations in favor of civil society, letting it define the context of action and influence the artists and artworks' selection, instead of being mere user-representatives. From explains:

> We could have made an agreement with Folkets Hus och Parker or the Red Cross and we would still have delivered what the government asked for, but we chose to work in a more dynamic way, very deliberately, with the support of our director and with her actually wanting to push the boundaries of what public art can be to everyone. And I think we gained a lot from this. It was less convenient, but we gained a lot personally, professionally, for the Agency and not least for the audiences living in these dwelling areas[97].

Curator Peter Hagdahl explains how it has not always been easy to work with civic society:

> It's extremely hard to work with the civil society. When we do our ordinary projects […] that's easy. All roles are defined, because you work with other employees, they have their missions and their setting and their responsibility. It's super easy to come to mutual understanding of projects. But when you work with the civil society, not so many are willing to sign a contract containing what they will give and what they should do […] Local working groups can change, depending on situations, or disagreement, or engagement, or time. It's more fluid on the other side […] Since these projects are quite long in commitment […] to have people inside engaged during such a long time needs thought about how you do that. And people are as they are: we are super engaged to a certain point, and then we get completely bored by this thing. But at the Art Agency we can't be bored, we have to push things through[98].

Thirdly, the report describes how the curators developed a step-by-step methodology, which allowed for more flexibility in setting goals and visions, so that the limits of what is possible are not set too firmly and too early, keeping open questions about art's format, theme, site and future management, and being able to constantly re-adjust the project's direction. Furthermore, the Agency states the importance of selecting artists and artistic proposals in context together with local project groups, through a process of trial and error which led sometimes to change artists and proposals along the way. Then, the Agency claims the

[96] Interview with Lena From, 25/04/2023.
[97] *Ibidem*.
[98] Interview with Peter Hagdahl, 27/03/2023.

importance of setting realistic expectations with the civil society, in order to avoid misunderstandings. In an interview, curator Joanna Zawieja says:

> It's important to have a transparency around the project in terms of how many times we will meet, what is the budget, and the most important thing is to be clear from the beginning that this will become art. Even if you think that this is clear, when you work in places where there's not so much official money coming in, and there are big urges, needs, desires for, you know, whatever taking care of the square, taking care of the schoolyard, even if people know it's art projects that they enter, they might still somewhere in the back of their mind have an expectation like 'we want a new swimming pool or a new playground'[99].

From talks about the difficulties faced in communication:

> Once we made the announcement, we were criticized for not being clear as to what 'influence' in the art projects would mean […] Sometimes there is a confusion: what do you feel when you sing in a choir? That's experiencing art in one way. Listening to a professional concert is experiencing art in another way. We are to give the experience of 'hearing' qualified art, and not to make possible experiencing art doing the artwork yourself. And I think the hope and the expectation from some of the participants in our projects were that they themselves, to a higher degree, would perform the artwork themselves, create the artwork themselves, painting, building, being more concrete. Whereas we hoped to give, and thought that we gave, the possibility of informing the artwork working in direct contact with the artist […] We are handing out our competence and commissioning artists to do the artistic work, in this case together with people living in these dwelling areas, but we were not handing out money directly to people living in these dwelling areas in order for them to do artworks. And that was crucial to us because we really realized that it's not only us bringing knowledge to these places, but it's also these places providing knowledge to us, making us a better Agency, hopefully[100].

Moreover, the Agency's report highlights the importance of working with a long-term perspective, for example by spending as much time as possible on site and by assessing opportunities for future collaborations beyond the assignment's period. Zawieja, referring to one of the projects, explains:

[99] Interview with Joanna Zawieja, 31/03/2023.
[100] Interview with Lena From, 25/04/2023.

> It was me being on site, getting to know the people that had applied, getting to know the needs and desires of the site, and then trying to organize all the relationships around it to make it possible, to find the site, to find more money, to build a narrative around this project that actually made it happen. I don't know what more to say than you have to be there in body and spirit and heart […] It's an extremely long process to start with a grassroots initiative and end up in this. It took 40 visits[101].

Lastly, the Agency reclaims the need for time for reflection and commitment, because time is needed to listen, explore contexts, mature ideas, find working methods and establish trust (Public Art Agency Sweden 2019: 8-12).

Also by looking at the outcomes of the project illustrated in chapter 4.1.3, we can assess the methods used in *Konst Händer.* One first remark we can make is that the structured nature of the Agency's internal organization can, from this perspective, be considered a strength point in projects where engagement still has to be built and there's need for guidance, on the other hand it can be too intrusive in cases where engagement is already high. Another problem that emerged in the Agency's working processes is that of local artistic competence not being valued enough: the Agency, for its mandate, has the mission to assure high artistic quality, which is obtained by working with professional artists. Again, in a socially engaged art project, this can be something helpful whether participants have no knowledge in the field of art, but on the other hand can be interpreted as narrowing down too much the options for artistic practices to be involved and inhibiting real participation, especially if participants have any artistic knowledge (then, they should not be considered only as carriers of knowledge about the social and spatial context). Malm made an extremely good point about this in her interview, saying that she thinks local projects such as these would be better led by local independent art actors. The Public Art Agency could rather have a guiding role, by having a broader view of how to integrate cultural heritage, history, art, and architecture, and providing help and advice to local actors in doing their projects[102]. This is the direction the Agency is following now, which is testified by the publication of a practical handbook for municipal commissioners (From *et al.* 2024).

One more point that can be made is the gap existing between the good practices that the Agency ideally perpetrated and the concrete limits it had to face in doing so: this was, for instance, what happened in the case of transparent communication. On the one hand, the Agency claimed the importance of always being clear from the start with civil society, on

[101] Interview with Joanna Zawieja, 31/03/2023.
[102] Interview with Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.

the other it turned out hard to be fully transparent when there are so evident power asymmetries and thus knowledge on certain topics (e.g. budgeting) cannot be shared. Another limit is that of time spent of site: the Agency repeatedly underlined the importance of being present on site, but when, during the final selection, 15 projects were chosen instead of 5-10, as it was initially prospected, it became evident that being constantly present on each site would be impossible for a centralized institution as the Agency. One more limit was that of time: the Agency claimed how crucial it was to take time for reflection and relations during the process, but the assignment's timeframe made this complicated, and required sometimes to accelerate production processes, without leaving enough time to enable real co-creation (Jahnke, Lööf 2021).

Konst Händer has represented an incredibly challenging assignment for the Public Art Agency to deal with, offering interesting opportunities but also risky pitfalls. In the final report, the Agency claims to have learned some important lessons to take into consideration in future similar projects, such as the necessity of really being clear from the start, of enabling local ownership, of taking enough time for the project, of listening, of being present on site and of inviting more actors in the process to broaden local interest (Public Art Agency Sweden 2019: 34-36). These lessons have been integrated in the Agency's working methodologies for urban development community-driven art projects and improved. For example, Lena From names a project in collaboration with Folkets Hus och Parker, where the process was improved by taking a longer time, having three-curators teams instead of two-ones and expanding the way for artists to work more freely with communities on site, without having to go through the process of applying and submitting reports or sketch proposals[103]. *Konst Händer* also opened new possibilities for the Agency to work in new contexts, as From says:

> After *Konst Händer* we've tried to keep our ability to create projects that are run by us and initiated by us and the civic community. So we get a lot of phone calls, for instance, now. People living in dwelling areas reach for our contacts and we listen to them and are able to create projects from that point of departure in a different way now than was previously possible[104].

To sum up, despite being criticized for not always being able to meet the hopes for participation from the involved dwelling areas and for introducing less stable working

[103] Interview with Lena From, 25/04/2023.
[104] *Ibidem*.

conditions for artists, *Konst Händer* has led to many positive results in terms of creating change though art and weaving relationships with the civic society, but most importantly it represented a turning point for the agency in opening up its working processes and experimenting new formats and methodologies, strengthening site-specific and collaborative aspects[105]. The Agency has demonstrated its openness to revolutionize traditional procedures for the production of art, in order to widen participation, work specifically and start from civil society's urgencies and demands. This has been made difficult both because of the assignment's formulation and limits in general and, in some cases, because of the contrast between the Agency's structure and mission and the organization and needs of certain civic society groups. Nonetheless, the generally positive assessment of the outcomes obtained in terms of both artistic quality and civic engagement shows how the Agency's learning and negotiation processes have been able to determine good results and can be taken as an example for future artistic initiatives aiming at generating more «accommodating»[106] public spaces.

In 2020, Patrick Amsellem was appointed as new director of the Public Art Agency, kept the new working model introduced by Malm, and decided to introduce further improvements, such as creating more synergy between different departments by co-creating projects and sharing information, and as pushing the staff to have a more holistic perspective. Moreover, Amsellem is interested promoting projects dealing with a higher degree of publicness, favoring accessible public environments on governmental buildings, and co-financed projects. Lastly, one of his main goals is to make the agency open to a wider audience, lowering thresholds and making people more comfortable in approaching public art: for this reason, great efforts have been made in activating the agency's collection through social media, in communicating with an accessible style and in designing a public program that could attract non-specialized audiences[107].

In 2024, Amsellem left and Henrik Orrje became the acting director at the Agency. In an interview with the Swedish Artists' Association (*Konstnärernas Riksorganisation*), he explained how, during these last three years, the Public Art Agency has worked to implement the Percent for Art rule, focusing on long-term collaborations with State property management authorities and companies: this has led to artistic expressions and formats developing rapidly in both large-scale permanent projects, residence programs, and temporary projects. He says:

[105] *Ibidem.*
[106] Interview with Joanna Zawieja, 31/03/2023.
[107] Interview with Patrick Amsellem, 22/03/2023.

> [Public art] commissions have increased due to the fact that the government has developed new methods since 2018 to apply the One Percent rule in, for example, the new construction of military regiments, universities, courts and other governmental buildings […] Over the next 3-5 years, I see that the State's role as an art commissioner will continue to be strengthened, not least through the work that the Public Art Agency has been conducting since 2018 to develop and clarify the state's application of the One Percent rule. Deepening closer collaborations with State property management authorities and companies, as well as regions, municipalities and private actors, has led to more systematic and long-term planning, and this development is expected to continue. This means that the financial framework for commissioning public artworks within the State is growing, as more construction and renovation projects include art at an early stage. More stable and predictable financing lays the foundation for a larger and stronger artistic perspective than before in both small and large scale projects throughout Sweden. As the economy of public commissioned art grows, opportunities for a wider range of artistic expression open up […] Overall, this means that the State's role as an art commissioner is becoming both more extensive and more innovative – with greater capacity to support different artistic practices and create art experiences in many types of environments across Sweden[108]. (Orrje 2026: 32-33)

The analysis of Public Art Agency Sweden has allowed to pinpoint both this model's strength points and weaknesses, from a methodological and structural perspective. On the one hand, in fact, the presence of an institution dealing with public art on a state level brought about crucial achievements in the Swedish public art field, such as the opportunity to work on large-scale projects that could be hardly feasible for local actors, to stimulate public art's legitimization in the contemporary art's scene, to introduce new ideas about what public art can be, to act as a model for working methodologies to be spread all over the country, to build knowledge, to develop new working processes for public art, to support small municipalities lacking budgets and experience to work with public art, to empower small local partner institutions, to work with few high-quality projects and high-profile expertise thus setting standards, to have more financial stability than independent actors and to push for public art's inclusion in governmental policies and urban development processes. On the other hand, weaknesses include difficulties for a state institution to work with local contexts' specificities and to engage citizens, civic society's suspicion towards public institutions, dependency on political shifts and governmental assignments (which can be problematic in

[108] Translated by the author.

terms of content but especially of timing and funding), and a need to be transparent and responsible which doesn't always lead to top-quality artistic outcomes.

To conclude, Public Art Agency Sweden constitutes a complex and interesting example of how it is possible to work with art in public space: in fact, these processes can often look vague and unclear from the outside. The present chapter, through a detailed analysis of its working structures and methodologies, aimed at clarifying how art in the public space is produced by the Swedish leading public art institution, outlining both the bright and dark sides of this model. The case study investigation has given an insight into public art production procedures that have been unveiled by the author through months of fieldwork and original interviews, with the objective of making them more accessible internationally.

5. MINOR CASE STUDIES

This chapter will be devoted to illustrating minor case studies, as for which the author had the opportunity to interview curators, but not to work with them, as she did instead at Public Art Agency Sweden. The case studies are respectively located in Germany (4), the UK (3), Sweden (2), Italy (2), and the Netherlands (1). The case studies are: Imagine the City in Hamburg, curated by Ellen Blumenstein; ZK/U in Berlin, where curator Kristina Miller is employed; *CURRENT* festival, curated by Laura Bernhardt in Stuttgart; Floating University in Berlin and *72HUA* festival curated by Gilly Karjevsky; Situations in Bristol, founded by curator Claire Doherty; *RELAY* art program, co-curated by Michael Pinsky in King's Cross, London; the collaborative initiatives led by London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth's Art and Planning Offices, curated by Anna Vickery and Grace Crannis; OPI Lab in Stockholm, founded by Jonas Dahlberg; Marabouparken konsthall and the Baltic Art Center in Visby, directed by Helena Selder; Connecting Cultures in Milan, founded by Anna Detheridge; Lungomare in Bolzano, co-directed by Daniele Lupo; and Stroom Den Haag in the Hague, where curator Vincent De Boer is employed.

Many more cases would deserve to be analyzed, but it has not been possible due to time concerns and/or difficulties in reaching out to curators. Nonetheless, we would like to briefly mention some of them, as an inspiration for future research: Consonni, founded in 1996 and directed by Maria Mur Dean since 1999, is an independent publishing house and cultural space, which curates artistic initiatives in public spaces in Bilbao (Consonni Official website); *Jubileumsparken*, curated by Jessica Segerlund, is a project in Gothenburg where artists were invited to collaborate in a new park's development (2013-2023) (Galimberti 2022); Artangel, founded in 1985 and directed by Mariam Zulfiqar since 2022, is a cultural association in London aiming at producing art in unexpected places both inside and outside the UK (Artangel Official website); Stadtkuratorin Hamburg (City Curator Hamburg) is an independent curatorial format for producing public art in Hamburg, designed in 2013 and led by Sophie Goltz (2013-2016), Dirck Möllmann (2018-2020) and Joanna Warsza (since 2024) (Stadtkuratorin Hamburg Official website); Mobile Art Production was a no-profit organization founded in 2007 by Magdalena Malm aiming at producing art in alternative contexts and outside the white cube (Malm, Wik 2010); Dynamoscopio is a cultural association, founded in 2010 by Erika Lazzarino, working on culture-led urban regeneration projects in Milan (Dynamoscopio Official website); *Emscherkunstweg* (Emscher Art Trail)

is an art project born in 2010 and related to the regeneration of the Emscher river in the Ruhr area (Emscherkunstweg's Official website); founded in 1983 and directed by Alexis Nys since 2023, Lieux Publics - European and National Center for Artistic Creation in Public Space in Marseille is the leading national creative center in France and founder of the European platform for artistic creation in public space IN SITU (since 2003) (Lieux Publics's Official website); Moss Exhibitions is a non-profit association founded in 2004 in Stockholm by Tova Rudin-Lundell and Stella d'Ailly, which aims at making art outside gallery spaces and which led from 2019 to 2022 the program *Konstnärliga avsmyckningar av Norra Djurgårdsstaden* (Artistic Undressings of the Royal Sea Port), related to one of the biggest urban development sites in Stockholm (Moss Exhibitions' Official Website); City Mine(d) is a non-profit organization based in Brussels, founded in 1997 by a group of artists, architects and urban activists, blending innovative design with change towards a more sustainable and fair city (City Mine(d)'s Official website); KÖR - Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Wien, founded in 2004 on the joint initiative of the City of Vienna's three administrative units Culture, City Planning and Housing, produces art projects in Vienna's public spaces (KÖR's Official website). As for national art agencies, the work done by KORO - Kunst i offentlige rom (Norway), SKOR - Foundation for Art and Public Domain (the Netherlands, closed in 2012), and the Arts Councils of Ireland and England could be investigated. Particularly interesting would also be to research the work of Manifesta biennial: Manifesta is a nomadic European biennial, founded in 1996, which has since its first editions been analyzed for its action on urban contexts (Vanderlinden, Filipovic, 2005) and whose next edition will take place in the Ruhr area in 2026. Every two years, Manifesta takes place in a new European Host City, exploring the local, cultural, urban and environmental conditions while re-imagining with local citizens and communities how we live, work and see our future in Europe (Manifesta Official website). Over thirty years, Manifesta has transformed the very essence of its model, from being a biennial of contemporary art and a producer of exhibitions to an interdisciplinary platform of co-creation, incorporating artistic creativity and social commitment for social, urban and cultural change. This new model functions both as a base to experiment with artistic practices, and as an incubator for long-term sustainable interventions in each host city. With this new strategy, Manifesta turns towards co-creation with artistic communities, local citizens, grassroots organisations and institutional partners and towards the transformation of cultural infrastructures. Manifesta is thus developing itself as a platform for European cities that are seeking more social-cultural inclusion for their communities and citizens (Manifesta Official Website). Every edition begins with pre-biennial research work done by

Manifesta's team, and, since the twelfth edition in Palermo, incorporates comprehensive urban research projects created by renowned international architectural firms, such as OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture), MVRDV and CRA (Carlo Ratti Associati). Manifesta has integrated architecture and urban studies into its curatorial process, employing them as visual tools to understand the city and to leave a legacy. The Urban Vision serves as a pre-biennial investigation and blueprint, aiming to identify potential strategies, nodes, communities and significant themes for the Host Cities. This multifaceted approach ensures a thorough understanding of urban development and enables the formulation of long-term plans (Manifesta Official Website). After this phase, a curator – known as Creative Mediator – is selected to identify the concept, the main interventions, and the artists to be invited. Interestingly, the Creative Mediator has a broader role than that of a traditional biennial curator, as they must work in collaboration with architects, urban planners, and local communities to establish a dialogue and a shared process that leads to the integration of art into the urban and social context. Particularly interesting to investigate would be the last four editions (Manifesta 12 in Palermo, 2018; Manifesta 13 in Marseille, 2020; Manifesta 14 in Prishtina, 2022; Manifesta 15 in Barcelona, 2024), as they represent the ones where the link with urban planning has become stronger.
All of these cases represent further interesting examples to investigate. Minor case studies where the author had the opportunity to interview curators will now be analyzed.

5.1 Germany

Public art policies and their corresponding funding mechanisms in Germany are defined by a deeply rooted cultural federalism and a landmark tradition known as *Kunst am Bau* (Art in Architecture). This system reflects a commitment to cultural freedom, decentralization, and the integration of artistic expression into the built environment. German cultural policy operates under the principle of cultural sovereignty of the federal states: this decentralization means that cultural funding and policy formulation are primarily the responsibility of the 16 individual states and their municipalities, not the Federal Government. The Federal Government's role is largely restricted to projects of national or international significance, or to general framework conditions. With this aim, the German Federal Cultural Foundation (Kulturstiftung des Bundes) was established in 2002. This foundation primarily provides project funding (not institutional operational funding) for non-commercial contemporary art and cross-disciplinary projects with a strong national or international focus.

The *Kunst am Bau*, sometimes referred to as Percent for Art, stipulates that a certain percentage (historically around 0.5% to 2%) of the construction costs for new public buildings (especially those of the federal government, state governments, and often municipalities) must be allocated for the commissioning and integration of a work of art. The current federal regulation is part of the *Guidelines for the Execution of Federal Building Tasks* (RBBau K7). While the federal guidelines apply only to federal buildings, the individual states and numerous municipalities have adopted their own corresponding policies for state and local construction projects, creating a broad, albeit fragmented, stream of funding for site-specific public art across the country. To these sources, indirect public support (such as the Artists' Social Security Fund (Künstlersozialkasse- KSK), which ensures artists have access to social, health, and pension insurance, with the Federal Government covering half of the contributions) and private funds can be added (The Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends Website).

5.1.1 Imagine the City (Ellen Blumenstein), Hamburg

Imagine the City was a five-years artistic project curated by Ellen Blumenstein from 2017 to 2023 in HafenCity, Hamburg, and commissioned by the municipal development company HafenCity Hamburg GmbH (HCH).

HafenCity one of Hamburg's districts, located on the Elbe river island Grasbrook, on former Port of Hamburg area. It was formally established in 2008 and includes also the historical Speicherstadt area, which since 2015 has become an UNESCO World Heritage Site. The main landmark of the HafenCity is the Elbphilharmonie concert hall. The area is object of an urban regeneration project, aiming at revitalizing the former harbor with new hotels, shops, office buildings, and residential areas. The project is considered the largest urban redevelopment project in Europe, expanding the city area by 40% (Imagine the City 2019a). After the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Iron Curtain, Hamburg passed from being a city on the easternmost edge of the Western World, to being a crucial hub in Central Europe with a great potential for development. As port capacity had been built up south of the River Elbe, centrally sited areas on the north banks of the river were left either idle or under-used. HCH was set up in 1995 to manage the development of HafenCity, by preparing and selling sites located in the area, planning and building public spaces as well as infrastructure, contracting real estate developers and users, and managing public relations and communication (HafenCity Official Website). In 1997 the city's former first mayor Henning Voscherau presented the new vision for HafenCity to the public, which was focused on the inner city

regaining its waterfront. The master plan for HafenCity was was approved by the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in 2000: it had been designed by the Hamburgplan team with Kees Christiaanse and ASTOC. The plan was then reworked between 2008 and 2010, before approval by the Senate as the Revised Masterplan in 2010: the revision was due to the fact that the first version lacked an adequate planning basis for the three eastern quarters, Oberhafen, Baakenhafen and Elbbrücken. In addition, whereas eastern HafenCity had been regarded initially as a suburban city area, it had evolved in the meantime into part of the new core inner city, partly due to previously unforeseen new subway connections. Key points of the master plan were the intensive interaction between existing and new buildings and the water, the elevation of buildings as a flood protection concept, the public character of many ground-floor uses, and the fine-grained mix of uses. Moreover, it aimed at building several new neighborhoods in HafenCity. The plan was an attempt to develop as a model for the European inner city of the 21st century. The project is expected to be completed between 2025 and 2030 (HafenCity Official Website).

Since the beginning of the development, culture has been taken on board in the project: in fact, being part of the free port, HafenCity was long a big blank spot on their map for most of the Hamburg population, as the Hamburg Port Development Act ruled out any uses unrelated to port activities. The developers asked themselves how to develop a new urban space without established users, and how to create a district that would remain lively over time. Besides, the idea of mixed uses and the intensive support for social processes in the quarters, an important contribution was to be that of art and culture, seen as the precondition for socially relevant urban development (HafenCity Official Website). The first projects started in 2001, grew in 2003 with the lifting of free port status and in 2005 with HafenCity Hamburg GmbH and Hamburg's Ministry of Culture providing financial support and institutional establishment of cultural activities in HafenCity. In 2013 discussions started about how to frame artistic interventions in a more sustainable way and, in 2017, an open call for becoming HafenCity Curator was published by HCH, with the objective to develop a five-years cultural program. Ellen Blumenstein participated in the call and won. Blumenstein has a background in theatre, musicology, journalism and communication studies, and, after a first experience at documenta X in Kassel in 1997, started to work as a curator and project manager in several institutions such as KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin and ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe (Imagine the City 2019b). Because of her background, in an interview she states that:

> I spent twenty years in the visual arts, but always as somebody who came from the outside […] and I think that informed my interest and it informed the way I've worked until today, because I do think art is a great tool to bring people together, to understand society and to take a step back from daily life. But I think it can be much more than *l'art pour l'art*, seen from the inside. I always see art as a tool in society, and that's maybe what brought me eventually into the city and into city development: because, in a positive way, I view art has a function there. And, you know, many people from inside the art world would say: oh my god. Art has not a function. Art needs to be free, it shouldn't be functionalized in a negative sense […] But for me it has a function in the sense that I need to know what I am doing something for: be it bringing people together or claiming a new way of seeing things, or claiming spaces in the city for the people and not for business, and so on. So in that sense, function is a very important term for me: it's a red flag for many, but if I'm trying to position art within the broader city development context, I think the function of art plays a very important role[109].

Blumenstein also adds how participating in the open call had been challenging for her, as the format adopted was that typical of architecture competitions:

> The application procedure was completely different or, in a way, counterintuitive to cultural production, that's also where the challenge started. Because, even if you work between the cultural disciplines, let's say, between the performing arts and the visual arts, you have misunderstandings in the translation between the two languages or between the two understandings of what you're doing. And when you have much more different fields such as visual arts and city development, then the misunderstandings are much bigger[110].

Once won the competition, she started fundraising by presenting her concept draft *Dimensionen des Menschlichen – 5 Projekte in der HafenCity* (Dimensions of the Human – 5 Projects in HafenCity). The concept draft claimed the importance of culture in the development process, linked to its capacity of strengthening affective and emotional bonds, and identification with the built environment and social space. The first independent cultural program of HafenCity was about revealing unexpected viewpoints that do not appear in public discourse, attracting media attention and public interest both within the urban fabric and beyond, and further strengthening HafenCity's position as a cultural location in the international context (Blumenstein 2017). Blumenstein proposed to design at least five projects, engaging with selected locations on a long-term basis (at least six months, ideally

[109] Interview with Ellen Blumenstein, 15/04/2025.
[110] *Ibidem*.

one year). According to the draft, «the basis for the content and formal orientation of all projects is the need (formulated by HCH and the stakeholders) and their potential to create long-term structures that anchor culture in HafenCity beyond the next two years, generate synergies with existing activities, and work towards a concept of culture that transcends existing institutional conventions»[111] (Blumenstein 2017: 3). The program was meant to engage with different kinds of audiences, not only the ones that usually attend museum exhibitions. The idea of dimensions, referred to in the proposal's title, recalled the spaces and structures in which people live together, which are always also a reflection of the society that created them and thus provide information about how the relationship between people and the city is conceived in a specific historical and geographical context. Furthermore, the title relied on the idea of the social dimension of coexistence: «every generation faces the challenge anew of creating an urban space that organizes large populations in a confined area in such a way that people can live together as peacefully as possible and develop a stable emotional relationship with their surroundings» (Blumenstein 2017: 4). Lastly, the topic also encompassed the relationship between people and their environment on a scientific and economic level (for instance, microbial pathogens influence the conditions under which people live, as do global capital flows). After describing the concept, the draft illustrated the five proposed projects: 1) Seute Deern (a former seaside resort ship) as a cultural practice and site of discourse, aiming at activating the ship not only as an office and work space for the HafenCity curator and her team, but also as a new meeting place for Hamburg cultural actors; 2) *HafenCity by Night,* focusing on activating HafenCity during the evening and night hours; 3) *Imagine the City,* commissioning five artists and creatives to explore the history, present, and future of HafenCity in new productions in public space; 4) *Explore the City*, organizing exhibitions in non-cultural locations such as hotel rooms, supermarkets and lawyer offices; 5) a research center based at HafenCity University, reflecting on the curatorial work in HafenCity and exploring topics such as the cultural use of ground floor spaces (Blumenstein 2017).

Later on, the program was reshaped into *Imagine the City* project, funded by the independent, non-profit association Kunst und Kultur in der HafenCity, founded by HCH, Hamburgische Kulturstiftung and the Körber Foundation as a funding body to initiate and provide financial support to artistic projects in public areas. HCH provided the funding through public competitions the non-profit applied for. Establishing the working structure was one of the

[111] Translation by the author.

most difficult tasks in the project, also because of misunderstandings with the commissioner company:

> The development company thought that I would have a business, and with that business, I would produce culture. And that I would take the money that they had for the project and make more of it, because it was clear that it was not enough to produce projects. And, that I would come back with a program, that generally generated money, like a profitable business […] That the kind of culture they were asking for would not be for profit was obvious, but nobody thought about it. If we are doing projects in the public space that are accessible for people for free, where shall the profit come from? It took a long time to find a work structure: at least half of the energy and of the work in different phases of those five years that I that I did to develop Imagine the City, served to find ways to bridge those gaps between the city development understanding and necessities and the understanding and necessities of people who work in culture. It's the banal background stuff, but it proved to be extremely important because it's new ground. There were no models and there were no pilots that we could refer to. So we had to figure it out ourselves. Even if there had been a model, you'd always have to adapt it to specific situations in the place you are at, and to the specific structures that are on-site where you're working. So that was much more challenging than I had expected[112].

Blumenstein describes how she started to build the project organization:

> When I started, it was just me. I had no office. I had no structure. I had no people. I had no money. So, the first thing I did was […] moving from Berlin to Hamburg. I started calling everyone I knew and then everyone I thought would be interesting, and then everyone that was mentioned in my conversations. So for half a year, I did not much more than understanding the situation and building an idea, which was a bit tough because the development agency expected me to produce projects from the beginning: how do you do that, if there is no structure in place? I realized a major problem was that there was a structure handicap from the start: I had enough money to either pay a person or to produce a project. And the problem, of course, is you can't produce a project without a person. But if you have a person, you can't make projects.
>
> If you look way back to the earliest projects, I was lucky that I found a guy […] who was from Hamburg and had a boat in the harbor in HafenCity, and didn't know what to do with it, and he allowed me to work in there. So at least I didn't have to spend money for an office space, which is so expensive there that all my money would have been gone if I just rented an office in the usual way […]

[112] Interview with Ellen Blumenstein.

> I decided to use the money that I had for one person, and found somebody who wanted to work with me as an assistant, in order to at least have a partner to think through projects and do research, and so on. We worked on the boat with our laptops. Then we decided to write funding applications in the visual arts because a) that's the biggest funding pots in Germany, and b) I knew the structures best. And c) as media or communication tool, they work much better than, let's say, community work or so. What we needed, was visibility to create acknowledgment, to create more funding options, or to build on stuff. That was a very long process[113].

In parallel, she started to think about an administrative structure for the project: after long negotiations with HCH, she decided to create a non-profit association with the help of the jury members who had selected her. Having this structure, better allowed Blumenstein to ask for additional funding and widen her staff. Even though she successfully raised more than 3,000,000 euros over the years, she still describes the situation as frustrating because of the precariousness of contracts due to this kind of funding system and to the project not being actually integrated in the development company's structure and project. Moreover, she explains that more structural stability would have given her the opportunity to develop more long-term relationships with local people:

> It was much more about working with visual artists than what could have happened if we had had the proper structure in place: at the same time, of course, we worked with local people, with communities on-site and with collectives of artists non artists that are interested in specific topics in Hamburg…. that all worked in parallel. The projects we realized worked more on that scope, because the other aspects would have taken more long-term relationships to develop, and they were cut short because we finished the money and I was no longer there. That would have reflected more the long term processes of the city development: the experiences on-site of us and of other people who came into relationships that are long term and that are also implemented in the city's structures. Five years have been not enough for that. I mean, if you take away two years just to create a basic work structure, then it was three years of programming, and that was just not enough to follow-up on that. There are a lot of open threads, or loose ends, that we could not continue[114].

The project is described as such in the official website:

[113] *Ibidem*.
[114] *Ibidem*.

> IMAGINE THE CITY elaborates representative new formats at the interface between culture and urban planning. We incorporate artistic perspectives into the HCH's urban projects in an illustrative way. We look at the city from a user perspective and enable encounters with, in, and through its built-up environment so that, together, we can reformulate society's expectations of culture. In doing so, we target an aspect of the city that planning cannot 'plan' for: informal urban spaces highly charged in terms of both narrative and imagination. (Imagine the City Official Website)

According to this description, the project tried to go beyond traditional art in public spaces approaches: «for the first time, we deliberately took action in a systematic, long-term, cross-project and cross-genre way, specifically in those areas where the course for our future lives together is being chartered, i.e. urban development areas. This orientation calls for new concepts, new alliances and new infrastructures that mediate between culture and urban development, stakeholders and clients, representation and activism» (Imagine the City Official Website). Blumenstein wrote in an article that the project «was unique and unprecedented, in so finding out how culture can be systematically integrated into central and strategic urban planning processes of an entire urban area» (Blumenstein 2022: 40). She explained that the project «juxtaposes the more or less visible infrastructures with an imaginary space that brings the area to life: the wishes and fears, the memories and goals of its residents and visitors. In doing so, the project aims to simultaneously operate at a high level of expertise and contribute to the current discussion on how cultural concerns can be made accessible to a diverse public» (Blumenstein 2022: 40). According to her, this goal was achieved by distancing herself from concrete situations and reflecting them back into the public discourse by finding images or narratives and focusing on aspects of reality for which there is no room in everyday life (Blumenstein 2022).

From 2017 to 2023, Imagine the City realised more than twenty projects involving almost 100 participants, and co-operated with eight cultural institutions. Among these projects, some of the most relevant are *Public Face* by Julius Von Bismarck, Benjamin Maus and Richard Wilhelmer (2018-2020) (Fig. 86), *Bee Chapel* by Terence Koh (2019) (Fig. 87), *Backdrop* by Gerrit Frohne-Brinkmann (2020-2021) (Fig. 88), and *How To Live In The Echo Of Other Places* by Annika Kahrs (2022).

Public Face was the first project to be proposed by Blumenstein: erected on Kibbelsteg Bridge, the eight-meter-high sculpture made of steel and neon tubes was able to smile, look sad, or appear neutral. Located the old bridge connecting the city center, Speicherstadt (Warehouse District), and HafenCity, it was clearly visible from the public, the subway, and

cars. The smiley's mood was based on the facial expressions of people in HafenCity, which were transmitted by surveillance cameras to a facial recognition software developed by the artists. *Public Face* aimed to reflect not individual feelings, but rather the collective emotional state of the people in HafenCity: for this reason, it had the potential to foster a sense of community, because theoretically everyone is responsible for the atmosphere in the district, while simultaneously drawing attention to the surveillance tools that target public spaces (Imagine the City 2019b). The main reason why this topic was chosen was explained by Blumenstein in an interview with journalist Christoph Twickel: «the human factor is somehow missing in HafenCity. Buildings and infrastructures are being built here, but the feeling for the people that are moving around here in an unplanned way is still missing» (Imagine the City 2019a: 4). The artwork symbolized then an attempt to bring the importance of the human element in the newly developed public space.

Bee Chapel was one of Imagine the City's most successful projects: in August 2019, Canadian artist Terence Koh set up a utopian garden on Störtebeker Ufer, in the busiest part of HafenCity. He built a small chapel hosting a bee colony, big enough to accommodate one person at a time, allowing intimate encounters with the bees. The installation also incorporated an herb and flower garden for the bee colony, the brewing of a selection of teas, and a makeshift kitchenette. He lived outdoors with the bees for one month, welcoming visitors to the chapel (Blumenstein 2019). For three years after Koh left, the bee chapel found a new home on the roof of the HafenCity Ecumenical Forum. Then, in autumn 2022, it relocated to the Woods Art Institute before taking up permanent residence in its tree-lined parkland as of spring 2023 (Imagine the City Official Website). Blumenstein describes why the initial location was selected, and the impact of the project:

> [Koh] developed the idea of a bee chapel […] at this cross section very close to the headquarters site. It was a lunch place underneath three big willow trees. But it was also a non-place: on one side there was a construction site, on the other side there was a big street. On another side there was water. Then there were office buildings and nothing else. In that part of HafenCity, there are very few places where you can spend time without having to consume. That was basically the structural observation that started the project. And there is no interaction between the different user groups there. So you would have, for example, apartments for migrants and for refugees. You would have offices for people who go in and out HafenCity from everywhere else in the city in the morning and leave in the evening. You would have inhabitants. And you would have tourists. There were no structures and no places where those would come together and interact. And that was the starting narrative for that project […] The bee chapel was a great object, but it was also the hook that he used and that was used by people

> to go there and spend time. And I think the actual function of that place was bringing all those groups of people together, without knowing what the intention was. There was no purpose, and there was no function. And for people to be there without knowing what the purpose of the time spent there was incredible, because he made everybody so comfortable […] People felt so attracted and so comfortable that they started spending hours and hours there, starting to talk to strangers, starting to talk to other bee lovers […] My secret goal worked: what happened is people understood you need those kind of places in cities. If I come back to your question of what is the influence of the project, I think everybody that was involved in that project understood intuitively that a city needs those kind of places. And I think that is a huge success, and it's something that is very difficult to measure, because it's a sensitivity that is created that might not have been there before[115].

Backdrop consisted in a metal screen painted in style of a fairground ride, depicting a prehistoric underwater landscape. The artwork was located in an underground car park under the Überseequartier, the main shopping arcade of HafenCity, a non-place par excellence, occupying the space intended for two parked cars. The location was chosen because every building has it underground parking in HafenCity, they are hardly noticeable unless you're looking for parking spot: they are part of the hidden urban infrastructure. That is the kind of place people go to only for a very specific reason: the artist wanted to change that. Blumenstein recounted how she had the car park idea:

> I decided […] to work in a parking garage because, in HafenCity, the subconscious of the neighborhood develops underground, since half the city is built underwater. In all the places they have built, they have digged into the ground, and there's always a threat of flooding. So, one very important piece of infrastructure is those floodgates. So, simply put, if you have a city that has high tide and low tide, you have two options: you build a dam or you build floodgates into each and every building. It was a main decision in the beginning not to build a dam, because a dam would have cut off the new district from the city center, as it is on the other side of the city. And you wouldn't have had access to the waterfront because the dam would have blocked it off. That was a very early decision in the city planning, that structures the space without people knowing: it very much structures the experience of the ground level, because wherever you walk, you have floodgates. These big steel gates are very hermetic and physically offensive as a pedestrian: you feel it, but you don't think about it […] The project was addressing that subconscious in a parking garage. And in a way, it was so difficult, for example, to explain that to the city developers because they said: in a parking garage we're not

[115] *Ibidem*.

> being visible […] That was the difference in approach. For me it's not about drops or public sculptures. It's about addressing the subconscious of the city and the narratives of the city[116].

From this aspect derived the idea of choosing to represent an underwater landscape: in fact, the work picks up on the imagery references throughout Hamburg and other port cities. In HafenCity there are quayside walls where the brickwork is clinckered in fish patterns. The artist was inspired by the fact that, during the development works, all the harbor sheds were taken down except the Harbor's Master Office and two quayside warehouses which became the Elbphilarmonie and the Maritime Museum: «on the one end, they erase the history of the location; on the other, they create a harbor atmosphere with restored cranes that were never actually there. That was a starting point for me in terms of content; I wanted to work with a historical image while making a totally absurd leap back in time, much further back in the past» says the artist (Blumenstein 2021: 13). According to Blumenstein, the most relevant impact of the project lies in its imaginative level «in terms of making visible something that you feel but don't see, and also of creating stories different from the usual catastrophe stories, that are very common… for example, in fifty years from now, it's not sure if HafenCity will still exist, because when the sea level rises, they will have a big problem […] I think the objective of the project is also to change narratives, or to open new perspectives. So that's a checklist every project has to fulfill in a way»[117].

How To Live In The Echo Of Other Places was a sound and video installation focusing on the charged atmosphere of Schuppen 29 on Baakenhöft and making the last unplanned area of HafenCity accessible to the public for the first time since 2017. During the day, visitors were able to stroll along an 80-minute audio trail in the former cocoa warehouse, to the sound of compositions by ten Hamburg musicians. At dusk, a 14m wide projection onto the front elevation began, featuring anonymised text fragments that evoked sunsets at various locations (Imagine the City Official Website). The importance of the project lied in opening a new space for culture in HafenCity:

> As an experience both inside the administration and the development agency, and for cultural practitioners, it opened that space for further fantasies. So right after we did that project, somebody else did a project there. And then they kept on using that site for cultural projects, also because we had organized permissions, and we had found out how to arrange them with the harbor company, and so on. So we did a lot of groundwork at the site, that was very difficult

[116] *Ibidem*.
[117] *Ibidem*.

> to access and to program. And I think that had a big resonance within the city […] That's the only spot that everybody found interesting in HafenCity, because it was the last not developed, because it was historically charged, because it has this vantage point from which you can look onto the other side of the river back to the developed city, but also towards Elbphilharmonie, for example. And it is on an imaginary axis towards the old city center […] What I wanted to do there was to open the space and to show how important culture can be in those kind of spaces. I never thought that it should remain a cultural place forever, but I thought that to open that space up for cultural usage would be a big benefit for the time being. So that happened[118].

Blumenstein explains that she faced many difficulties in working with the project, not least because of preconceptions linked to working with developers:

> There were many traps, impossibilities and old enmities built into that project, which burned possibilities that could have been much bigger for the project. In this specific situation, there were many people in the art world who were not willing even to discuss the question of what could the function of culture be, because the automatism was that they would accuse me of working for developers, for example. I was a bridge, or the only person inside this world that was advocating for their interest, but that's not the way I was perceived. So, even within the art world or the culture world, it was difficult for me to open that space to think together of what that could be[119].

Moreover, another problem was that «it is difficult to refute the frequently voiced criticism of favoring a privileged district, even though the specific starting point is to intervene precisely where the city is undergoing fundamental and lasting change, i.e. to integrate culture strategically whenever the course is being set for the future of the community» (Blumenstein 2022: 41). Being in this halfway position in-between the Arts and urban development was tricky: it would require very high-profile competences and knowledge on both sides, which are very hard to get in the absence of specific education paths.
According to Blumenstein, her role as a curator entailed crucial mediation skills:

> In that role, you need somebody who is not identifying with a specific position, but who tries to think of everybody's position. It's really like a coach or a mediator in psychology, or so. You need somebody who understands the needs of the public or of the user of the city, you need to consider and understand the position of the creative person, and you need to understand

[118] *Ibidem*.
[119] *Ibidem*.

> the necessities, needs and urgencies of city makers and everybody who's on that side. So, your role is mediating and, if you wanna take sides, you need to be on the side of the public as a general, nonspecific or abstract group, in the sense that you try to figure out the future usage and function of the site, for as many people as possible. Thinking about that space as an artist or as a person is different from thinking of it in terms of how it works for the broad audience. At the same time, you don't have to think of the typical HafenCity inhabitant, because it might be a privileged white cis person with a high income and enough opportunities to create spaces for their well-being, etcetera. So you try to maintain a complexity as high as you can, to sync those factors together and then to come up with specific points of intervention for places where you think something does not work, and that could be an opportunity to show the makers, practitioners and users that something with a potential can happen. You think about sites, you think about people, and you think about structures[120].

Social skills are very important to build relationships with the various stakeholders involved in the projects: she recounts as, after two years, she was able to install *Public Face* on Kibbelsteg Bridge thanks to the personal contacts she had in a manufacturing company. After initially struggling to find someone who was available to make the safety static calculations to lift the installation on the bridge, she found a company which transported the work to the bridge, lifted it up and got permissions for that.

> They had built a big bridge in Hamburg, so they provided a contact in the administration who would give me permission, so that we could put the work on the bridge in the first place. And then we needed seven more permissions to make it happen. After two years, that came in place because of one chance contact, and that's how everything else works […] So the more projects you have done, the better the experiences are. The more people have seen what you do, the more they like what you do, the bigger the network of people who feed in that, and that's on a practical level[121].

Another level of relationships involved in Imagine the City was that of the HafenCity Network, a network of inhabitants of the neighborhoods with high identification in their district, organizing infrastructure and culture groups. Blumenstein says: «They were a natural partner in a way, even though their goals were much more concrete and much more identity-making than ours. But, we started working with them on a summer festival in the park, for example. Those people in a way were totally open to our work. They did not think

[120] *Ibidem*.
[121] *Ibidem*.

territorially, thinking that we were invading their territory. They were very cooperative, but with a much more limited idea of what the culture was there»[122]. According to Blumenstein, though,

> a much more productive relationship happened with the church. The church is in Hamburg an important cultural actor, which is much less so in Berlin, from my experience at least. It's a protestant tradition in a way: the culture is a means of working with communities, on different stakes than on spiritual questions. There is an ecumenic forum in HafenCity that brings different Christian communities together, and they are extremely engaged and invested in the plans and really interested in culture. So they were natural collaborators. They helped us on many levels on a day to day basis. Had we stayed longer, I think we would have ended up doing much more and much bigger projects together[123].

Blumenstein also adds how in the context of urban development it is important to be creative rather than just critic in a sterile way: «the project doesn't have to be about critique. This is another friction with the art world, because they are convinced that critique is a mode of working. If you are working in the city, critique is not an option because critique doesn't lead you anywhere. You need to create, and it's not about positivity, not about ignoring the problems. It's about creating counterimages or creating alternative versions of seeing things»[124].

Blumenstein explains that, when she needs to start a new project, she starts thinking about possible funding sources, then about artists that could be interested in such a project, and about sites, stories and specific points of intervention. The next step is to invite the artist to visit the location, to «show them places and tell them stories that a) you think they would be interested in, and b) you think would lead into a project that does something that you want to make happen»[125]. Blumenstein believes that «that the groundwork is to understand the practice of an artist very well, and then to extract potential interests, present them and give the artist enough time, space, and encounters»[126].

In terms of impacts of the project, Blumenstein describes them saying that the project partly failed because the HCH's CEO who had pushed for it retired during the pilot phase, and the relationship with his successor wasn't particularly good. The problem of staff's turnover is very thorny for Blumenstein, as continuity is the condition needed to preserve memory and

[122] *Ibidem*.
[123] *Ibidem*.
[124] *Ibidem*.
[125] *Ibidem*.
[126] *Ibidem*.

know-how. On the other hand, she believes that the project created a precious pool of knowledge, that she tried to pass on by writing the preliminary project for HCH's Cultural Development Plan (2024). Even though not all of Imagine the City's projects have been successful or have produced a direct impact on the planning of public spaces, its most important contribution to the field is that of having developed structures and methods for working with art in public spaces. Many of these achievements have been condensed in the draft for the Cultural Development Plan (CDP), whose objective is to integrate culture in urban planning to achieve overarching city-wide, social, identity-forming, economic, and tourism-related objectives. The central theme of the preliminary project developed by Blumenstein is therefore to identify points of contact between culture and urban development and to formulate principles for integrating them into HCH's planning processes in the future in a long-term, strategic, and situation-specific manner (Blumenstein 2024). The document establishes three different phases to create a CDP: preliminary project, process and implementation.

The preliminary project, finalized in the document presented by Blumenstein, consists in: a) identifying the cultural goals and the mission statement (including vision, mission and guiding principles); b) defining the fields of action, with relative goals and tasks; c) creating a scalable organizational model that formulates requirements, illustrates building blocks in a diagram, and delineates areas of activity; d) designing work packages, which include the stakeholders to be involved and specify the goals, scope and result of the respective activities to be carried out.

The document then proceeds to apply this working scheme to HCH. In terms of vision, the following is formulated: «Cultural activity strengthens community building, the experience of new (urban) spaces, and their appropriation (placemaking). It offers a special access to the complex interrelationships of urban development (mediation). This gives rise to ideas for the city of the future (innovation). Therefore, culture is an integral part of HafenCity Hamburg GmbH's approach to sustainable and future-oriented urban planning»[127] (Blumenstein 2024: 7). The mission instead contains general and specific principles that are derived from the vision for the entire team and its daily work: in the case of HCH, «Create (free) spaces for cultural activity; Initiate and support social initiatives, make cultural activity visible in areas and advocate for their accessibility; Implement your own projects and cooperate with local, national and international actors; utilize the special potential of cultural projects for participation and appropriation processes; (If applicable) Enrich planning

[127] Translation by the author.

processes with the perspectives of independent creatives» (Blumenstein 2024: 7). Principles of action take into account the special conditions for cultural activity in urban development at various levels and translate these into concrete tasks, identifying objects of interest, strategies and procedures:

1.Object:

- The city in all its facets (built environment, social structures) is at the center of our work.
- Our topics are derived from and contribute to the overarching regional and planning objectives.

2.Strategy:

- We systematically and with a long-term perspective (from goal development to start of use), integrate cultural concerns into planning and implementation processes across projects and genres.
- We take into account that, as an urban development company, we are only active in an area for a limited period of time.

3.Procedure:

- Cultural activity is also oriented towards the common good and serves social cohesion.
- We integrate expertise, build a cultural network that includes stakeholders in the same sector, colleagues in authorities, institutions and funding bodies at the local, national and international levels. (Blumenstein 2024: 8)

The document then gives an example of matrix, clearly outlining the requirements for cultural activity: it can help both employees and external stakeholders make an initial assessment of whether a specific activity is suitable for HCH's cultural program or not (Fig. 89). Within the four functions pinpointed in the matrix, the document develops a series of tasks:

1) placemaking:

- Unleash social energy
- Appropriate places
- Prevent vacancy
- Revitalize the city center
- Make the potential of (future) places perceptible
- Reduce conflict potential / Increase sense of security

- Integrate places into people's everyday practices
- Make spatial transitions visible and tangible
- Make Hamburg more attractive as a creative hub and travel destination

2) innovation:

- Develop new ideas and narratives
- Enable alternative approaches and experiences
- Create a unique urban quality through sustainable building and open space design

3) mediation/communication:

- Increase interest in urban development
- Convey existing solutions
- Make the complexity of a city tangible
- Make perceptions of the city that are not present in public discourse visible/audible.
- Contribute to the image building of the respective area

4) architectural culture/historical heritage:

- Respect the historical heritage
- Contextualize buildings and their history
- Maintain a connection to existing and/or previous uses
- Preserve and make accessible historically significant buildings/ sites
- Generate attractive locations for visitors/tourists.

As examples of the fields of action, the document identifies: 1. Create spaces for culture 2. Establish cultural uses 3. Support existing cultural spaces and initiatives 4. Provide infrastructure that allows for independent cultural activity 5. Active participation in cultural projects. The functions described in the preceding section, in conjunction with the fields of action, form a next-order matrix that enables a complex discussion on potential cultural activity. Filling this abstract level with concrete ideas, priorities, and projects is a central component of the next, second phase: the process. For each of these fields, the document establishes a scheme indicating the strategical tasks, the realization tasks, and the operative tasks. Lastly, it lists the tasks of the curator and of the project manager (Figg. 90-93).
Once the first step is over, the process phase begins, which formulates strategic and systematic foundations: 1. To initiate/promote cultural activity in all phases of development; 2. To gather ideas for projects and programs; 3. To encourage and involve third parties; 4.

To initiate collaborations and alliances; 5. To communicate urban development processes to non-experts and to positively influence the image of HCH. A key outcome of the process phase is the formulation of a target vision for cultural activity at HCH. As part of the CDP process, a cultural program and a related implementation plan need to be developed based on the fields of action. The plan will outline needs and potentials, define priorities, and identify potential stakeholders. The timeframe and funding must also be set. The phase entails three sub-phases: 1) preparation: the team is assembled, infrastructure and legitimacy are ensured, the implementation plan is developed in detail (including cost and time planning), and funds are obtained; 2) implementation: this phase involves additional stakeholders, ranging from further HCH staff (in a minimal scenario) to officers at least within the Office for Culture and Media and School of Business (in a medium scenario), to external cultural stakeholders (in a full cultural development scenario); participatory processes are planned and implemented for each of these groups, and the results are compiled in an interim report; this report includes short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations for a cultural program, as well as a cost estimate for implementing the individual components; this phase is considered successfully completed when key stakeholders are involved in planning the participatory processes, internal and public workshops have been successfully conducted, concrete results from participatory events/formats are available, priorities and collaborators for future cultural activity have been identified, and initial cost estimates for the short-, medium-, and long-term aspects of the cultural program have been derived; 3) results: in the final phase, the results are compiled and an internal and/or public final report is prepared. The document schematizes work packages for each of the three sub-phases (Figg. 94-98).

During the third and final implementation phase, the HCH Culture Team develops a cultural program based on the target vision, in which: 1. Priorities are translated into concrete projects; 2. Own and external projects are coordinated; 3. Budgets and schedules are created and integrated into the overall plan; 4. Teams are assembled and participants involved; 5. Cultural activity is accompanied by communication and public relations.

The document also has an annex table, schematizing all the steps.

In the CDP draft, the final section is devoted to the description of the organizational structure. Firstly, it expresses the need to have a culture team, holding project management and curatorial expertise. The team will take on two key tasks: on the one hand, it will ensure that cultural activity is already planned in the strategy phase in HCH areas, on the other hand, it will develop a cultural program that defines in the long term for each area where and to what extent culture is planned. The prerequisites for systematically building a team include,

on a practical level, planning certainty (that is, a commitment to a cultural strategy) and a budget from which staff, external commissions, and internal projects can be financed. In the team there are three basic positions, having the following tasks:

1. Head of Culture: they translate the principles formulated in the CDP into a concrete strategy for culture in urban development and ensure its implementation. They present HCH's cultural program to key stakeholders, such as government agencies, institutions, and cultural professionals. More specifically, they: strenghten cultural concerns internally (e.g., in innovation processes, decision-making criteria, administrative regulations, financing models, space allocation), set the agenda, develop projects, hold the team's leadership, oversee the budget, and do lobbying and networking.

2. Curator: even though this expertise can initially be acquired externally (ideally on a long-term basis), it is strongly recommended to retain this practical knowledge internally, since practical experience improves the quality and the chances of success for future projects. For this reason, it's important to establish a permanent position for this role. The curator translates overarching goals into projects, handles lobbying and networking at the operational level, contributes ideas and suggestions from these communication processes, and develops concrete projects. Specific tasks include translating the CDP or overall strategy into concrete activities, initiating cultural activity (e.g., initial communication about projects and partners), developing topics, formats and projects (including research and writing proposals, if necessary), encouraging submissions, reviewing project proposals, producing texts, text modules, and text templates, mediating between HCH and stakeholders, and holding representational power in certain situations (e.g., participation in subject-related events).

3. Project Manager: the ideal candidate should have a background in the cultural sector to assess and manage production processes, time management, and budget calculations. Experience with urban development processes would be highly beneficial, as effective interface management can be crucial to a project's success. The project manager controls the CDP process, manages and controls internal and external processes (e.g. with cultural stakeholders, service providers, authorities, and possibly funding providers), implements the internal integration of cultural concerns, sets up and manages open calls, processes inquiries, provides advice on implementation and accessibility, deals with lobbying and networking at the working level, holds representational power in certain situations (e.g., participation in subject-related events), and handles grant applications.

Some tasks of the culture team can be shared with other HCH departments, such as Communication/Marketing (communicating the process and results of the CDP; building a

narrative interface between urban development and culture; producing texts; communicating own and external projects; building a cultural distribution network and advising third parties in the field of communication), Events (ideating and implementing events and communication formats, e.g., conferences, workshops; supervising external temporary cultural projects on HCH premises), Participation (developing, supporting and implementing participatory formats), Existing buildings (developing the construction of creative buildings; managing assets and renting spaces for cultural uses), Financial accounting & Controlling (accounting, filing; accounting for third-party funds; cost control) and Purchasing (public procurement and contracts) (Blumenstein 2024).

5.1.2 ZK/U (Kristina Miller), Berlin

The ZK/U – Center for Art and Urbanistics is an independent art residency and project space, established in 2012 in Berlin Moabit. The ZK/U organizes a variety of in-house projects and practices, focusing on artistic research and social innovation. These activities include regular formats, as well as EU partner projects and neighborhood formats. All projects aim at strengthening the connection between art and society and at deepening the understanding of urban dynamics. ZK/U is led by the non-profit organization and artist collective KUNSTrePUBLIK, consisting of Matthias Einhoff, Philip Horst, and Harry Sachs, who are actively involved in shaping public spaces and exploring art as a means of communication. The collective promotes the exchange between art, research, and urban daily life, and is involved in the selection of resident artists and partners at ZK/U. Additionally, it is committed to developing urban infrastructure and supports hybrid spaces for various social groups. ZK/U is located in one of Berlin's former railway depots, and offers living and working spaces for the residency, event spaces and workshop rooms for large and small events, projects and plans from the neighborhood (ZK/U Official website).
Curator Kristina Miller presents the organization in this way:

> ZK/U has an international residency program, which is run by our own department. We have a residency manager. We have an artistic direction constituted by three artists, that are responsible for the whole ZK/U. They didn't study financial subjects, or history, or fine arts. They're really coming from the practice of making art. This is why our space is a bit different from what you could expect coming from a more theoretical background. Then, next to our residency program where we host up to fifteen people, we also have this huge space, which is an event space or project space. We do concerts there, we do exhibitions, we have a club, we

> have even a rooftop now. So we are quite flexible in any kind of formats. And I am working in-between the residency program and the public program. So I'm always looking at the perspective of who's in the house currently living with us, and what's going on within the city and what kind of request we get[128].

As for ZK/U's organizational structure, she explains that it consists of fifteen people, including also interns and two people who are responsible for the park where the building is located. There are three artistic directors, two people dealing with communication, and one dealing with the financial part. The residency program is led by a devoted manager and two interns, while another person takes care of the educational program. Miller is the only staff person identifying herself as a curator, but she explains how working at ZK/U requires continuous contaminations between different fields:

> We work in a way that everyone works with everyone. Also, our offices are open. So, in the morning, I just sit somewhere where I think I can sit, and, then a colleague joins me, but everything is totally mixed. This for a lot of people is super intense, because there are no rules in a way. There are no rules at all. We from the team always try to organize a structure, but because this building is so huge and many of the people involved are external, things can get really messy. And this is the big challenge: it's up to you to focus on priorities and to talk to your colleagues about what they are working on, so that you can link something. So, everyone works in their own department on paper, but in practice everyone does everything, from cleaning the terrace to helping out in the events[129].

ZK/U has established three regular formats, according to which work is organized: OPENHAUS, GÜTERMARKT, and FOOD AND FOOTAGE. OPENHAUS is a bi-monthly event where artists in residence and current project partners are invited to open their studios to the public. Rather than showcasing final results, the format focuses on works-in-progress, allowing visitors to interact with the artists and learn about their artistic journey. GÜTERMARKT (Fig. 99) is a bi-monthly local flea market, bringing together second-hand goods, local crafts, repair stations for bicycles, electrical devices, and woodworking, as well as services such as tailoring and hairdressing. The Gütermarkt emerged from *Moabiter Mix* research project, which explored social diversity in Berlin's Moabit district. Due to gentrification, public spaces were at risk of losing their diversity, and neighborhoods were becoming increasingly segregated. To counteract this, a community

[128] Interview with Kristina Miller 24/03/2025.
[129] *Ibidem.*

market was created, with the aim of connecting the neighborhood and providing a platform for local goods and handcrafted items. FOOD AND FOOTAGE, curated by Miller, is a format that blends together independent movies and food: filmmakers and chefs come together every week to combine moving images with a three-course meal, thus bringing current social, cultural and political topics literally to the table (ZK/U's Official website). Miller explains how the formats address different audiences:

> ZK/U is located in Moabit, which is not in the city center of Berlin, but a bit far from the areas where old art institutions are located in the city. For this reason, the formats that take place here are more dedicated to the neighborhood in general, or we try to address them to the neighborhood. But, depending on what kind of program it is, or what kind of curatorial evening I developed, we invite also people from the city. When it's about the *Openhaus*, I think that the audience is more likely coming from the art scene. For *Food and Footage* it is a bit in-between. The target group is the neighborhood, and I then invite people from the community, in the neighborhood, to cook or to do something. I always try to find a link with the neighborhood, but still, sometimes the film is a bit too artsy and then different kinds of people are more interested. *Gütermarkt* […] is a little market where people sell stuff they did themselves, but it's also a platform for communication and for learning. We also offer workshops within this program format. And this is really linked to the neighborhood. So, no one from Kreuzberg would come because, you know, every neighborhood in Berlin has, hopefully, those kind of things. So, we are definitely seeing ourselves as a hybrid space, where we work together with local people and bring in content from the international world. I think this is what for institutions like ZK/U […] is really unique[130].

ZK/U works through four narratives (*Planetary Agencies, Augmented Aesthetics, Commons Cosmodrome,* and *Relational Urbanism*), which show the main approaches of the organization in leveraging art and culture as catalysts for transformation in public spaces. Narratives are cultural frameworks that convey meanings, values, and identities, with the aim of fostering sustainable and inclusive urban development. Narratives allow to make complex realities more understandable and to integrate diverse urban voices into decision-making, helping balance citizen-driven decisions with expert knowledge. Through artistic research and intervention, ZK/U reimagines urban spaces as sites of encounter and experimentation: from this perspective, site-specific artistic projects become prototypes for

[130] *Ibidem.*

broader change, empowering artists and others players to engage in urban and political discourse (ZK/U Official website). Miller explains:

> The narratives are developed in a continuous back and forth between working together with artists in residency, and also having a local focus on the neighborhood, and at the same time on Berlin as a city, as a huge city, as a city where all the world comes together. So, we're always bouncing between local and international […] Narratives help us to structure our work. When we look for example at *Planetary agencies*, then we're interested in nonhuman actors and the Anthropocene. And within that frame, we think about how we can link our own projects into a wider perspective. And it's also important for us, of course, to work with other institutions. So we have realized it makes sense to always have packages: of course they don't have a boundary, they can be fluid. But still when we're talking in the team, we say: ah, we just got a request from the Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, and they are interested in nonhuman actors. And then we say: okay, we're working on this field too. We call it *Planetary agency*. So I'm gonna send this over to my colleague who's responsible for that, and then we will arrange a meeting. This is how we use these narratives. It's a communication language both inside the team, but also with the outside […] And then, when I'm curating a certain program [like *Food and Footage*], I'm always saying: oh, okay, this is a nice film. This could be part of *Planetary agency,* or this might link more to the *Commons Cosmodrome* one. So this also helps us to filter knowledge in the team. We have four narratives, but we don't work in a way that we say: this person is responsible for this narrative, and this is for this other one. The narratives are above the house, and everyone who works in the team just takes what they need, but they can also reframe it, change it, develop this narrative. So actually, it's something to help us and also the others to understand our work and our focus[131].

Narratives are then used both to structure and organize curatorial work, and to link people, institutions and projects. As for the narrative's content, *Planetary Agencies: Reimagining Coexistence in the Anthropocene* explores a paradigm shift for the future, according to which the traditional anthropocentric perspective is rejected in favor of a decentered positioning of humanity within the ecological network. This shift paves the way for a conceptual expansion of the term "agency," meaning the capacity to influence the conditions and dynamics of a shared living environment: active agency is attributed not only to humans but also to non-human actors, be they animals, plants, or artificial intelligences (ZK/U Official website). *Augmented Aesthetics: Algorithms, Attention and Assemblies* analyzes the role of art within democratic structures and questions how artistic practices can serve as catalysts for political

[131] *Ibidem.*

participation and societal change. Within this narrative, the application of game theory to collective decision-making processes allows to better understand the complexities and dependencies underlying political and artistic actions (ZK/U Official website). *Commons Cosmodrome: Balancing Power and Participation in Hybrid Spaces* explores the digital commons and public space's transformation in the era of digitization: in this context, art often serves as a means to divert attention from the dominant mechanisms of the attention economy. By opening up alternative perspectives and introducing unexpected experiences, art enables reflection that transcends economic constraints (ZK/U Official website). *Relational Urbanism: From Segregation to the Interweaving of Urban Spaces* challenges conventional urban planning frameworks that rigidly segment cities into isolated zones defined by exclusive uses and user groups (pedestrians versus vehicular traffic, commercial versus residential, and so on). The city becomes an assemblage of disconnected domains, where relations are either incidental or oppositional rather than generative or cooperative. The narrative challenges this paradigm by shifting the focus from separation to connection, from static zoning to dynamic relationships: the city thus rearticulates itself as a complex web of interdependencies. The emphasis is placed not on the delimitation of spaces but on the articulation of interfaces, that are liminal zones where diverse activities, communities, and environments intersect. These intersections are seen as places of exchange and mutual enrichment (ZK/U Official website). Narratives change over time, adapting to changes in society and the city: previous examples included creating models for cooperative urban development, revisiting urban infrastructures and rethinking resilient cities in post-migrant societies.

Projects at ZK/U are site-specific and process-related, as Miller explains:

> ZK/U always works process-related, so we don't expect an outcome on our side in the team. That means that if we have projects going on, we're not always presenting something that is final, that is finished. We're more focusing on the process, and this is also what we ask our residents, scholarship people in residency: to just try something out […] [Work] is really place-related. We usually don't do projects somewhere else. We usually develop them at ZK/U and develop them over the years, depending a lot on who's coming in from the residency, but also on what Berlin and the neighborhood ask[132].

ZK/U has organized many initiatives throughout the years, such as *Citytoolbox,* an online-learning platform encouraging citizen-driven actions in the urban landscape, or *Active*

[132] *Ibidem.*

CITY(zens), which involved creating new prototypes of culture programming to rediscover public spaces. One the most relevant projects ZK/U has taken part in is *Haus der Statistik,* a model project for public-interest urban development born in 2015 (Fig. 100). The project aims at re-appropriating and reusing a 50,000 m² building complex from the 1980s, located in Alexanderplatz, which had been empty for over a decade. The building was put on sale and meant to be demolished, but during 2015's Berlin Art Week a group of artistic initiatives including ZK/U affixed a large banner on the building and took over it. This movement generated the *Haus der Statistik* initiative, a collaboration between artists, architects, cultural workers, and politicians. Through creative actions, high-profile campaigns, and city-wide networking meetings, the initiative succeeded in halting the previous plans and developing an alternative vision (Haus Der Statistik Official website). The vision for the project is firstly to fight real estate's short-term speculation, and to promote the long-term use of public space as a place of social interaction, cultural production and democratic participation. Secondly, the project aims at providing an affordable space for a broad range of users, through establishing 290 State-owned rental apartments, inclusive forms of housing provided by social organizations, and spaces for art, culture, social affairs and education. Thirdly, one of the vision's pillars is to foster a broad participation of the urban society: since 2019, so-called "pioneer uses" have been creating diverse spaces for art, culture, social affairs, education, food and climate protection. Furthermore, the project sees urban development not as a top-down decision, but a collaborative process, where public administration and civic society work on the neighborhood's development as equals. Moreover, the project aims to not be an isolated case, but a pioneer initiative to be taken as an example in future urban developments in Berlin. Lastly, it aims at implementing ecological, economic and social sustainability by preserving the existing building, and creating publicly accessible open spaces and inclusive play and sports areas (Haus Der Statistik Official website).
Miller explains the relevance of ZK/U's in Berlin's urban context in this way:

> ZK/U works with a lot of cooperation partners on long-term projects, also with funding that goes along for years. So, projects that are long-term are also prototypes […] And I would say this is the sustainable part of it. But then, of course, doing art in public space is also always a question of what's the outcome in the end. I think that one of the strongest aspects of ZK/U is its ability to link fine arts with social debates, political debates, and to work interdisciplinary. This is something that many institutions in Berlin are not doing properly. Everyone says they're working interdisciplinary, but ZK/U really lives it in a long-term perspective. And then, often there are developed artworks that don't look like proper artworks. For some people this might

> be frustrating, but ZK/U has its own vision of how an artwork could look like. And we don't work in a white cube, which drives me crazy sometimes […] I always have to figure out how to use spaces […] That's what's special about our work[133].

Linking to this vision, Miller explains what means for her to curate art in public spaces:

> I understand curating as a discourse and as a process. I don't understand curating as an answer, even though I would wish to work more often like this, to be honest. Because having everything open makes also quite difficult to curate. I personally would want to focus more on aesthetics, but the artistic directors of ZK/U are not interested in the aesthetic outcome of a work. They are more interested in the function, and the mediation. And if it looks nice, it's good. But, I think ZK/U has a totally different understanding of art production, and art markets (or denying art markets) […] This is the way we approach topics: you will never find a super highly clean, educated, or curated show, because we're focusing more on function, and also artworks are often used in a way as for which they're not in a secure surrounding[134].

Miller has a background in Fine Arts and Sociology, and has specifically studied in a Master's Degree named Spatial strategies, investigating the question of space from a political, historical and sociological perspective. The work at ZK/U perfectly allows her to employ these different kinds of expertise. When asked about the process of curating her projects, Miller says:

> To be honest, I would lie if I said we work [following precise steps]. Of course, when we work with public funding, we have to follow a time schedule and we have to do reports and paperwork. But I don't think that we have specific steps to work. We just start with a project, and we finish it when it's finished. Of course, when we work with authorities or municipalities, we know how art and public space work. So we have to double check everything in advance. We have to work with architects, with authorities, and also with people who are involved in statics and similar stuff […] Or also when we're working with funding from the Senate, of course, we know how to work with that. But we don't have a manual of how to start a project. Everyone of us has their own idea of how it should be, and then we form a team […] We, of course, try to split our resources on what we think we can do best, but it's so different having to work with several formats. I'm just doing what I think I have to do. I get the money from the funding, then I call people I know or I want to work with, or ask my colleagues if they got a nice request or knew someone who would be interested in working with me, then I reach out

[133] *Ibidem.*
[134] *Ibidem.*

> to them. Then I deal with all the financial things, and then we start to produce. And, of course, I work with time schedules, but at ZK/U we're all working really intuitively. It's more like working starting from feeling and experience gained within long projects. ZK/U is not a place where we work with a lot of structures, to be honest. You know, we try, but it doesn't work out. This is also sometimes super frustrating for the team, to try again and again to work with structures. Structures help people to know what's their work, and also to set a limit to their work at the end of the day. But it's just up to you, you don't have a lot of control from the above. The artistic direction doesn't control you. Once you're in the team, you can do it your way. Of course, when I have questions, I talk to the directors, but they let me curate wildly free. This also goes along with a lot of trust, I would say. I've been working for ZK/U for almost seven years, and everyone here works in their own structure. The big challenge is to come together at a certain point[135].

Miller says that this very free way of working also depends on the fact that, even though relying on public funding, ZK/U is an independent organization:

> We are not bound to federal money. We are really autonomous and flexible, and we are happy to work like this because we have all the chances you can have. We are really lucky to work like this, and we know that it's a privilege not to be controlled all the time. And that makes ZK/U so interesting because you never know what the next day will be […] We can always try things out. There are no rules. You can be very experimental[136].

Nonetheless, Miller explains how public funding has been important in establishing a stable structure at ZK/U:

> ZK/U has been funded within over the last three or five years from the Berlin Senate, in a way that we have this *Basisförderung*, a basic funding which is dedicated to keep the structure of the organization from year to year. I think it's about €250,000 per year. This assures us that people who work in 2024 on a project, will also be able to work on that project in 2025. We use that money to pay ourselves. This is something that five years ago we didn't have, so I was working for ZK/U only when they had funding. Thanks to this basic funding, I know already at the beginning of the year that there will be money that has been saved for me, so that I can work all year for ZK/U. This is something that has totally changed the situation[137].

[135] *Ibidem.*
[136] *Ibidem.*
[137] *Ibidem.*

Miller points out the importance of collaborations with other institutions, from which they receive many cooperation requests: she says that it is very important to establish a good network and to work in synergy with people employed in public authorities. ZK/U is also part of the Urbane Praxis network, a platform supporting urban practitioners in Berlin, and allowing them to exchange knowledge, develop common projects and get funding for artistic projects. The association provides urban practitioners with helpful tools to work with self-organized city-making, such as toolboxes, glossaries, recommendations and more (Urbane Praxis Official website).

5.1.3 *CURRENT* festival (Laura Bernhardt), Stuttgart

CURRENT – Art and Urban Space is a biennial transdisciplinary festival in Stuttgart, which aims at developing exemplary formats to experimentally explore artistic forms, strategies, and practices in the context of the city. Stuttgart is an example of a city in transition, where massive infrastructure projects with long-term construction phases, the development of new districts, and a dynamic urban society present opportunities and challenges for public space. The festival wants to discuss and strengthen the role of art and culture in the future development of cities, working toward the long-term integration of artistic perspectives into urban development processes. In particular, it has contributed to redefine the Art in Public Space program of the city of Stuttgart. The festival has been funded by the City of Stuttgart since 2020 and, since 2022, has become part of the city's new program for art in public space (CURRENT Official website).

Laura Bernhardt is the founder and has been the artistic director and curator of the festival CURRENT since its foundation in 2020. She has a background in product design, visual arts and interrelated media, with a deeply interdisciplinary approach.

Prior to the festival's inception, she developed a national and international portfolio that explored the intersections of curatorial practice, art, and urbanism. In 2014, she initiated *JUST Episodes*, an exhibition project situated in a vacant Stuttgart shopping mall that interrogated the necessity of dedicated artistic production spaces within the urban fabric. Her trajectory continued in 2017 as a project coordinator for *Ideas Fest: CITIES FOR PEOPLE* at the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore. By 2018, her role as a curator for *MakeCity Berlin* further solidified her engagement with urban planning discourse. Consequently, her practice operates at the nexus of artistic, curatorial, and design strategies, driven by a commitment to establishing the structural conditions necessary for work and discourse. During that period, she conceived the idea of an art in public space festival, which

could represent a structure to provide space and production support for artists, in a space that is particularly complex and difficult for individuals to interact with. She wanted to create spaces for experimentation, and looked for funding at the City of Stuttgart. Bernhardt explains:

> The starting point to found *CURRENT* was to direct to *Kunst am Bau* – the German "Percent for Art" program. Essentially, it mandates that one to two percent of the construction costs of public buildingsgo toward art. At the federal level in Germany, that's a requirement, but on the local level? It's up to the local authorities. Stuttgart actually had a program like this, but the pulled the plug in the early 1990s. At the same time, the mid 1990s kicked off a massive building process around the city's main station. It's a multi-billion-euro urban development project called *Stuttgart21*. It's supported by Deutsche Bahn, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Baden-Württemberg, the Stuttgart Region, the City of Stuttgart, and Stuttgart Airport. Both the costs and the financing of the project have been the subject of intense and controversial debate. Since the project's initial presentation in 1994, the projected costs have been revised upward several times and have now more than doubled. This project opened up all this new spaces for development, but because the funding had been cut, art was absent from the conversation on the city's level.
>
> I was interested in thinking about a new funding structure for art in the context of urban development, or just within urban space more broadly. And it worked! I managed to convince the city to fund our first edition in 2021. I founded the festival in 2020, and right after we started to work on the first edition. For me, it wasn't just about the art; it was about making this whole discussion visible to politicians and citizens alike. I wanted to provide a 'proof of concept' for what a current program could actually look like. It landed well – not just politically, but also with the Cultural Office. They were extremly interested, and saw it as an opportunity to reimagine what a new art program for Stuttgart might become. [138]

Another starting point was the forthcoming international building exhibition (*IBA*) in 2027:

> I knew that in 2027, the IBA would be coming to Stuttgart, essentially turning an international spotlight on our local architecture and urban development. To me, that felt like the perfect timeframe to pitch a festival for art specifically within the context of urban space and transformation. My goal was to develop a 'proof of concept'—something that could eventually evolve into a permanent institution or a long-term project. I've always viewed this entire period as a phase of experimentation, a real chance to test different ways of integrating artistic

[138] Interview with Laura Bernhardt, 29/05/2025.

> practices into the urban fabric If our funding continues, we'll be launching our fourth edition in 2027, which will be alongside the IBA '27. That would be a milestone. It would be the moment when we'll be able to look at how the festival has evolved and what it might become in the future. But, of course, nothing is set in stome yet. Like many places, Stuttgart is likely facing cuts in cultural funding. Since our funding is still project-based, we remain quite vulnerable to those kinds of shifts.[139].

The festival has already had three editions. The first one, in 2021, was devoted to the theme of porosity, the unforeseen, and the ever-unfinished nature of urban spaces: in this context, the urban is conceived as a porous space in which artistic practices constructively reflect and mediate the everyday. The festival consisted of a diverse program of artistic interventions in public spaces – from large-scale installations and performances to workshops– a magazine, a symposium, and cooperations with local institutions and initiatives. The curatorial concept is described as such in the festival's website: in Stuttgart,

> large-scale construction projects depict future scenarios, with the promise of an ideal and completed city. Gaps, wastelands, empty spaces, the unplanned, the fragile, the provisional or even the ruinous, are perceived as obstacles to their myths, because they imply the *unfinished*. Crises, however, disrupt the once considered, straightforward plan. Uncertainty encourages eventualities, that call for a constructive approach to the unplanned, demanding cohesion more than ever. Recognizing the urban as porous, as means of productively engaging with the unplanned and the permeable–within the continually incomplete city. (CURRENT Official website)

Artworks produced are: Alona Rodeh's *Nighcaps,* dealing with the problem of excessive lighting at night in cities (Fig. 101); Begleitbüro SOUP's *BRASILIEN,* an installation recalling the code name of a mock military installation built during Warld War II to trick British pilots trying to bomb Stuttgart; Constructlab's *Bestiarium14 – Towards a new mythology of the Bundesstraße,* an exploration of human and nonhuman agents along the inner-city highway B14 in Stuttgart; Haseeb Ahmed's *Pattern of Turbulence,* reflects on the city's unique wind turbulences, which also influence city development; HONF (House of Natural Fiber)'s *Ungovernable structure,* an installation building an architectural infrastructure by using living organisms, as they respond to the existing built environment in Stuttgart; Julien Fargetton & Benjamin Frick's *Fühlerskop*, a handmade recording device

[139] *Ibidem.*

for exploring the urban; Sylvia Winkler & Stephan Köperl's *Glitch Klitsche,* a temporary cinema built with reused materials in Stuttgart's Leonhardsvorstadt. It served as a spatial commentary on the disapperance of the city's former municipal cinema (Kommunales Kino), positioning itself at the center of the current debate regarding the establishment of a new House for Film and Media (Fig. 102); Valentina Karga's *ISLAND or Infrastructure's infrastructure,* an installation reflecting on the sustainability of building materials.
The second edition of the festival, in 2023, had "Stay agitated!" (*Unruhe bewahren* in German) as its motto. It addressed the transformation of inner cities, the influence of digital technologies on physical public space, and the use of resources. Bernhardt explains the concept this way:

> The exclamation "Stay agitated!" seems contradictory. But it isn't! The word "Stay" emphasises the positive aspect of agitation and unrest. In this context, we understand agitation as a signal – one that demands our attention, and helps to create new perspectives. Habits and routines are brought into question. So, it's about our perception, sensitivity, and ultimately also about an environment for confronting our status quo. That is why *Unruhe bewahren!* is neither "keeping calm" nor "creating unrest". In order to overcome crises, we have to engage constructively with the future so as not to be overwhelmed and fall into resignation and – on the other hand – not just react hastily, or even panic. So, *Unruhe bewahren!* becomes a space for creating. If we transfer this to urban space, and discuss it in connection with urban development and planning, then, for me, the art in these processes which maintain the sense of unrest! (CURRENT Official website)

The edition focused on the Stuttgart district of Bad Cannstatt, characterized by a mixture of old and new, small-scale and large-scale. Bernhardt explains:

> The old town – with its half-timbered houses, small-town structure with retail shops, and Cannstatt as a 'spa town' – contrast with the Wasen's large open air event area and large sports facilities such as the Mercedes Benz Arena, or industrial complexes such as the central waste incineration plant. The social structure of Cannstatt is also very diverse. All this is reflected in the cityscape, and makes Cannstatt the most mixed district in Stuttgart. But it is also a district in which urban development is undergoing a number of changes, and will continue to play a major role in the future. (CURRENT Official website)

Again, the festival included artistic installations and performances, a magazine, local collaborations and a symposium. Artworks produced include: allapopp's *HYPERLOVE,* an

audiovisual performance to be experienced through an AR app; COMODODO (TinTin Patrone and Toben Piel with Martina Wegener and Frédéric Ehlers)'s *Delivery Center,* a delivery service for intangible goods that creates performances, sound, text, concepts, and ideas on demand and delivers them within 20 minutes within the neighborhood; Kestutis Svirnelis's *Biotope,* a kinetic installation set in motion by air currents, giving Wilhelmsplatz, Cannstatt's main traffic hub, a new dynamic; Lucia Graf's *Just listen to the water,* a sound installation at Cannstatter Veielbrunnen fountain; and SONDER (Peter Behrbohm and Anton Steenbock)'s *URBAN COSMETICS - Strategies for Municipal Conflict Care* (Fig. 103), introducing a combination of innovative cleaning techniques and vandalism-reducing replicas in Stuttgart to reflect on the conflict-laden balance of mutual disorder and its organising disruption that has developed over decades.

The third edition, opening at the end of June 2025, will focus on air in all its social, political, ecological and material forms. The festival will examine how air flows through and shapes the city of Stuttgart. The challenge is to preserve air as a collective good with universal accessibility. The main concept is further divided into three themes: the first, *Air as Commons: Reclaim Air*, «highlights the notion of the commons and examines how air eludes territorial boundaries and individual appropriation. Air is an omnipresent component of urban space, raising important questions of accessibility, distributive justice and responsibility» (CURRENT Official website); the second, *Materializing Air*, explores the material qualities of air:

> As a complex mixture of oxygen, nitrogen and other gases, air forms an essential component of the biosphere and is indispensable for life on Earth. As a physical substance, air has specific material properties: it transports sounds, smells, temperature and particles. Beyond this, air is manifest in the guise of foam, it makes trees bend, cools cities and carries pollen, dust and other suspended particles. Air not only influences physical phenomena, but also social and political processes. In the digital age, air has attained a renewed significance as a carrier for immaterial data streams. The so-called "cloud" not only stands for digital storage and processing infrastructures but also functions as a metaphor for the decoupling of data from physical space. Air is also a medium of exchange between human and non-human actors: It connects, separates, distributes and transforms. Plants use it for photosynthesis, insects for locomotion, fungal spores for dispersal. At the same time, environmental pollution, climate change and atmospheric transformations reveal the interplay between technological progress and ecological responsibility. (CURRENT Official website)

The third theme is *Driving, Dreaming, Drifting,* and deals with the influence of the car on the environment and urban architecture:

> Urban spaces themselves are changed by emissions, particulate matter and heat, whereby air becomes a political actor: as a carrier of pollutants, an indicator of socio-spatial inequality and a medium revealing the inequality of mobility. Public space is typically conceived along binary thought patterns, as it is construed along mechanisms of exclusion and social hierarchies. The car symbolizes individualization, ownership and control. In this context, the term *petromasculinity* demonstrates the close intertwining of fossil fuels, patriarchal structures and masculine relations of dominance. Through queer-feminist perspectives based on fluidity, corporeality, appropriation of patriarchal systems and ideas, as well as collective participation, the artistic contributions within the festival offer novel possibilities for more equitable and inclusive imaginaries of mobility and public space. (CURRENT Official website)

Artistic projects will be presented at various locations, from Stuttgart's Pragsattel to the central station, to Marienplatz and the former *Luftkurort,* or climatic spa at Degerloch.
Laura Bernhardt was asked about the organizational structure of the initiative, she explains that *CURRENT* is still a project, even in terms of funding:

> At the moment, I really see that it is difficult to continue as a project. With the festival, we have reached a scale that requires the structure of an institution, one that is also supported by institutional funding and therefore provides stablity, wehreas we currently have only project-based funding. We don't have a team that is continuously working on the festival: it grows half a year before it starts. Then, we build a team to work on the production. This makes it sometimes difficult to really continue the work in between the festivals. Besides me, the core team consists of Nora Unger – who has been working with us since the beginning – Natalia Sartori, who joined for the seconed edition, and Marenka Krasomil, who came on board for the third edition. However, all of them are also involved in their own projects, work for other institutions, and are not permanently based in Stuttgart. People working on the team are usually freelancers, working in different contexts and for different clients and institutions. This is also due to the limited scope of our funding. But I really think we need a more stable structure; we need to become an institution that receives institutional funding[140].

Besides keeping continuity and gaining stability, being an institution would allow also easier access to funding:

[140] *Ibidem.*

> We receive most of our funding from the City of Stuttgart. But at the moment, we don't know if this will continue. The budget negotiations for the city's upcoming double budget will take place at the end of this year, and they will determine whether funding for the project CURRENT continues. Most of our funding is public. This year, we've only received public funding. In the past, we sometimes had sponsors. We also receive funding from foundations. This year, we have a federal funding from the Kulturstiftung des Bundes, German Federal Culture Foundation. We also get support for travel expenses – for example, in the past the Netherlands funded artists with a connection to the country. As I mentioned before, we're not receiving institutional funding, which makes it a bit more complicated to raise money from third parties or to apply for funding, especially at the federal or European level[141].

Not being an institution also makes it difficult to relate to planning offices:

> Urban development has long term processes, breaking into these processes is difficult if you work in short term and temporary mode. At the moment, we're only touching or scratching the surface. To really engage you need strong ties to the administration and planners. On top the different departments with in the administration that are involved aren't smoothly communicating. In many of our projects, a big part of our job is simply getting different administation offices to collaborate with each other. This is where I see the true power of art and culture, especially in the context of public space: it creates a space for stakeholders to align and work together, but also confronting them with challenges that aren't usually part of their daily routine and that require new ways of thinking. It's a hidden part of our work – you won't see it in the program, but it's built into the production process. In that way, we're challenging the administration through our projects. I hope we can influence their approach to doing things, eventually opening up new perspectives and enouraging them to look at our urban space through a new lens[142].

Bernhardt explains how she relates to different stakeholders in the art production process: important are both the symposiums, and practical work during projects.

> The first symposium we organized was really about bringing different stakeholders together – especially people from the administation – and creating space for discussions and working groups. That turned out to be very fruitful. But we also create those connections through projects themselves. Sometimes you have to bring people to the table, you know. For example,

[141] *Ibidem.*
[142] *Ibidem.*

> in the last edition we had placed one project on a private construction site, owned by LBBW, which is a big developer in Stuttgart, but also a bank. We had to convince them to install this huge inflatable installation on the site. Working with with a private stakeholder is very different from working with the public sector, but in some ways it's actually easier. In the private sector, decisions can be made much more quickly and things can simply become possible. […] This year, we're collaborating a lot with institutions, which also helps us connect to the administration and gain access to spaces. One example is the Lapidarium. It's an open-air museum combined with a historic park, a collection of fragments of the city's architectural and cultural history. It's not a public space as a public square would be, but it's open-air and publicly accessible. It's a very poetic place, and for us it's excitng to place contemporary artworks there. By doing that, we create a kind of contrast, a rupture. And at the same time, it's much easier to manage the artworks in that context, because it's still a museum – there's securiy, there are regular opening hours.
>
> Sometimes it's difficult to work with public administrations, especially at the State level, because everything is very bureaucratic. And as a festival not tied to a big institution, we're sometimes not perceived as entirely reliable. So you have to find ways to work around that. For instance, we once approached the State Opera and proposed a cooperation. Through that partnership, we were able to implement an installation in front of the opera house. In cases that are difficulte to realize, that's one of our strategies: we look for strong partners who can give us leverage in discussions with the administration, and in the end, that helps us find ways to make projects in public space possible [143].

The festival also works with engaging local people and, in some cases, with participatory projects:

> For me, public art should inherently carry an interactive quality, which it can manifest in many different ways. For the festival, it's important to us that the works are accessible, through formats such as walks or workshops – so that residents can engage with them and feel included. In most cases these formats/activations are developed and carried out by the artists themselves, which make it as a part of their projects.
>
> Some works are also developed through participatory processes. In such cases, we consider it essential to collaborate with local institutions, initiatives, and communities, or to integrate existing projects by these groups into the festival. We believe that these groups are more deeply rooted in their contexts and have already established strong community networks[144].

[143] *Ibidem.*
[144] *Ibidem.*

Bernhardt then illustrates the process for curating the festival: a first step is to find a curatorial concept, which can happen also jointly with other co-curators such as, for the third edition, Nora Unger and Marenka Krasomil. Nonetheless, Bernhardt is the one having the deepest knowledge regarding Stuttgart, its issues and development: for this reason, she's the one making strategic decisions.

> I usually start by thinking about where the festival should take place, because each edition happens in a different part of Stuttgart. In the first edition, we focused on the main station and the city center. For the second edition, we concentrated on one particular neighborhood, which actually feels like a small city of its own. That was a completely different experience, working so closely within one particular area. And for the most recent edition, we decided to come back to the city center and to look at Stuttgart's relationship with cars – which is, of course, a big topic here – and more broadly at infrastructure, transformation, and ecological issues. From that starting point, we began developing specific themes. We eventually chose to focus on the idea of air. Air understood not just as something environmental, but as a kind of public space in itself. So that's more or less our process: first we decide which part of the city we want to engage with, then we develop a theme, and through that theme we identify the places that make sense within the narrative. But the choice of locations is also something we develop collaboratively with the artists. This year, for example, we traced the air flows through the city. The city of Stuttgart sits in a valley, so we started at a higher point and then moved down through the city, following the public infrastructure toward the main station, passing the large traffic intersection at Charlottenplatz, and ending at the public square, Marienplatz. We identified various locations along the way and eventually continued up to Degerloch, which used to be known as an air retreat area. That really fit our narrative. […]
> Of course, our route doesn't literally follow the exact air currents of Stuttgart. But air circulation is a very sensitive and important topic here. Urban development is actually regulated in relation to it — for example, skyscrapers aren't allowed in Stuttgart because they would disrupt the airflow through the valley[145].

After creating a narrative and selecting places, artists are invited both through open calls and direct invitation, also depending on the specific project.

> For this edition, we launched an open call for specific formats — things like flags and billboards.

[145] *Ibidem.*

> […] this format is meant to experiment with advertisement in a broad sense […] to reclaim public space in a way. We were interested in how artistic interventions can occupy visual spaces that are usually dominated by commercial messages. In addition to that, we selected two more artists for two separate projects. And then there's one larger project called *Driving, dreaming, drifting* which focuses on cars and air. It's almost like a project within the project — it stands on its own, but it's also part of the festival program. That one involves ten or more artists and includes a substantial performance program.
>
> We also have a focus on young adults, which is connected to a different funding stream. That's actually one of our structural challenges — we often have to combine different sources of funding. As a result, we sometimes develop side projects that are integrated into the overall festival program.
> In this particular case, the project with young adults will continue for two more years. It starts with the festival, but it will run until 2028. So there isn't one single procedure for selecting artists, because the festival is really a combination of different projects under one umbrella. Sometimes we work with open calls, and other times we invite artists directly through a curatorial selection process and ask them to develop a project with us[146].

After that comes the production phase:

> We support artists, as curators, in the process of developing the concept and in the production, of course. We do the on-site production, for example by talking to property owners. We also support them with their research: for example, an artist collective wanted to approach a specific building and they needed to have access to an apartment. That's an example of support we do, but we also do the technical production[147].

At the end of the festival, Bernhardt makes an internal assessment of the edition:

> At the end of the festival, we always do a wrap-up with the team where we look at how things went — what worked, what didn't, what needs to change, that kind of thing. For example, working with billboards and flags came out of previous experiences. We were asking ourselves how we could create formats that were easier to maintain and could be on display for a longer period. In line with that, we also decided to extend the festival this year to a full month, whereas in past editions it only lasted eleven days[148].

[146] *Ibidem.*
[147] *Ibidem.*
[148] *Ibidem.*

In parallel to the festival, Bernhardt decided to also publish a magazine, which acts both as a documentation for the festival, and as a space for further artistic production and critical reflection.

When asked about the role of curators in artistic projects related to urban development, she answers:

> I see my role as bringing in concepts or discussions that look at urban space from a different perspective. Urban development is often driven mainly by economic interests, but as curators, I think we can offer another way of seeing the city — one that really considers the citizens and the coexistence of a diverse society. For me, art acts as a mediator; it makes issues that concern us tangible, visible, and open for reflection. The first two editions of the festival were very influenced by philosophical questions around urban space, while the third edition explores public space through the theme of air. […] For me, it's very important to have an abstract philosophical approach to urban themes […] Porosity, the theme of the first edition, is really about questioning the limits of urban space and asking questions like, "where do we find spaces for experimentation and creativity?". It's connected to art in terms of what it can contribute to public and urban spaces — almost as a form of experimental thinking. From that perspective, the theme of the second edition, *Stay Agitated!,* is also relevant, because it reflects how art constantly pushes us to question the world around us.[149].

Lastly, Bernhardt lists also a series of skills that are important to her to work in the urban space as a curator:

> I think you need an understanding of the space itself. And, what I think is also important is to know the city, Stuttgart in my case, very well. For me it's important also to be connected to the administration, to really build relationships […] Moreover, it's important to be aware of what's happening in the art discourse. You need to understand the broader conversations, but at the same time, it's equally important to work with artists who are based in Stuttgart and bring local expertise. They work in a completely different way from artists that come from other contexts. But it's also important to combine that local perspective with outside viewpoints. For me, it's also really interesting to see how we can help establish connections between the artists we invite and other local institutions, so they can come back to Stuttgart to continue collaborating, or take the project further in a different context. A good example of this is Alona Rodeh: she developed a project for CURRENT and later brought it to Berlin.

[149] *Ibidem*.

> Now it's permanently installed there, and I find it fascinating to see how projects can evolve and transform over time[150].

5.1.4 *72HUA*/Floating ~~University~~ (Gilly Karjevsky), Berlin

Gilly Karjevsky is an independent curator based in Berlin, working at the intersection of ethics of care and the curatorial, looking at languages of practice, in relation to site and situation. She has been co-director at *72HUA* festival for eight editions (2010-2019), and curated *Climate Care* festival at Floating ~~University~~ in Berlin (2019-2023) and *Jardin Essentiel* project for Parkdesign biennial in Brussels (2016), among many others.

72 Hour Urban Action was an architecture festival and political experiment, a kind of bureaucratic hack aiming to transform the city through grassroots and hands-on urbanism. Founded in 2010 by Kerem Halbrecht at the Bat Yam Biennale of Landscape Urbanism, *72HUA* editions have taken place in Bat Yam, Stuttgart, Terni, Roskilde, Witten, Istanbul, Birżebbuġa, and Jena. During the festival, teams of architects have three days to design and build interventions responding to local needs. The festival tests interventions on the ground, showing that change in public space can be quick and inclusive. One of the aims of 72HUA, was to facilitate a mutual empowerment and enablement between municipal and governing institutions and civic society. The directors mention working with municipalities to provide them with tools that empower residents to intervene in the design of their surroundings, supported by outside experts. The aim is to transform the public realm and create ambitions among residents and municipalities for higher-quality public space, while demonstrating that this need not be costly, nor taking very long time (Halbrecht, Karjevsky 2021). Directors also state that the festival works in the context of «critical spatial practice», a term coined by Jane Rendell to talk about practices between art and architecture (Rendell 2006). These practices are characterized by the fact of being critically engaged, working in relation to dominant ideologies but also questioning them. They explore disciplinary procedures of art and architecture while drawing attention to wider social and political problems. In this perspective, 72HUA works with given systems, but also changes systemic flaws (Halbrecht, Karjevsky 2021).

Every edition of the festival started with a local partnership, an invitation either by a bottom-up initiative or top-down such as a municipal department. A preliminary research process lasting 18 months followed, during which the directors/curators identified issues to address

[150] *Ibidem.*

and sites, including a central production camp and five to ten microsites. These spaces were too small or problematic to merit the attention of a developer or public agency, but big enough for a community to use and enjoy (Halbrecht, Karjevsky 2021). Karjevsky explains the process this way:

> What was nice about 72HUA, and about the editions that came after the first one, was that they started from invitations to come to a place and work with it. People were inviting us, or commissioning us, and they became the local team that we collaborated with. So, we were given a place, and then we took our methodology, looked at the place together and saw how to adopt the methodology locally. You have to talk to a lot of people who are working on the site. You have to do a lot of research, but you also have to feel the place through your own methods and your own perspectives, in order to see what in the site can work within your methodology and what conditions for working on site you have to accept. And that's the beginning of the narration. Normally, we would look for productive contradictions on the site to see where points of tension could be considered and, through the festival, made into interesting topics and themes for people to deal with. So that's a long process of research and mapping. And in this mapping, we start identifying microsites that we are interested in working with, where those tensions and those dramas are driving a place more easily. To give an example, we see that a patch of neglected space between two buildings represents the tension between the neighbors due to certain reasons. That patch is an area to intervene in, and we write a brief for a team that would come into that area, addressing all the issues around it. Together with writing that brief, narrating the story of, and asking a question about this place, we also identify a neighbor we want to work with. We write the brief for the team in an open way, so that the team can come and plan their own design for the place: for example, during the first edition, for the Northern Gate, the mission was to establish a lively entrance to the business district to accommodate diverging uses. In another case, the mission was to create a nonjudgmental courtyard, addressing the fact that there was judgment between different groups. Because the team is coming for a very short period of time, we try to provide them with as much information as possible. And, of course, that information holds in it our perspective on the place. Then, we provide connections to neighbors and to people who are working in the neighborhood, so that the team can also have access to other people to get their narration of what the place can be. Then, we have an open call to get the teams in. During all this time, we work to make a public program that will be part of the festival.[151]

Karjevsky also explains how 72 HUA selected the sites and connected them:

[151] Interview with Gilly Karjevsky, 06/05/2025.

> We start with a longlist of sites in the neighborhood, around fifty, and then we have to choose ten among them. So we always keep those ten, first of all, in relation to the camp, and then to create an interesting walk through the neighborhood, highlighting the neighborhood in different ways. What we think about when we create these walks are two user groups: one consists of the participants, so we make sure that they will be able to reach it by walking, so that, within the 72 hours, they can go back and forth easily. The second group are the visitors, who are coming to see all of the events. We want to create an experience of the neighborhood for them that provides them with a different narrative of the neighborhood. And then, we also place events in-between the sites and on the sites, and we invite families, neighbors, and people from the district to come. We also invite a lot of local cultural actors into the parameter of the ten sites. And when we invite the public on the last day, we activate the whole neighborhood with events and interventions. The HUA teams and installations are part of what people get to see. So they get to see the neighborhood as a living space and as a working space, as a work-in-progress place. And they also see the potential for transformation. That's the most visible story that we are telling: we show that transformation is possible, that you can do it quickly, and that it can also be fun[152].

Participants were recruited through an open call, addressed to individuals and groups up to six people. Then, teams of twelve participants were put together. Half the spots were reserved for local applications, with the intention to bridge the local-global divide and look for situated knowledge (Halbrecht, Karjevsky 2021). Over the years, many projects have been implemented, such as *Space Invaders* (Bat Yam, 2010) (Fig. 104), with the aim of defining civic order of a public open space between the sidewalks and the backyards of low-rise houses on the parallel street; *Toy Parking* (Stuttgart, 2012), with the aim of creating a non-judgemental courtyard in an area where local residents were clashing with guests of a famous tango dance studio, coming there to park their cars; *Fire Island* (Terni, 2012) (Fig. 105), where a common outdoor kitchen was built to generate a sense of shared ownership among residents; *The Grill* (Roskilde, 2013), where a mudslide was created as a creative space in-between different "cities" of Roskilde music festival; *Avant-garde Platz* (Witten, 2014), where an installation between foosball and miniature gold was installed to establish an intercultural communication zone; *Bull Square* (Istanbul, 2014), where a public percussion kit was built to create a platform for dissidence; *How's the Water* (Birżebbuġa, 2017) (Fig. 106), consisted in terraces filled with gravel, above which an old fisherman's

[152] *Ibidem.*

boat is hanged, fitted with a lighting garland, to create a dreamy space (Halbrecht, Karjevsky 2021).

The project criticizes the urban planning system, highlighting the uncreative and rigid approaches through which cities are designed, as well as the inflexible nature of public institutions. At the same time, it is grounded in the belief that alliances can be formed with individuals working within these institutions—those who strive to create the best possible public spaces and seek to challenge and transform the system from within: this concept is called «critical complicity», a concept introduced by Julia Moritz and Lisa Mazzo (Halbrecht, Karjevsky 2021). Karjevsky explains how important it is to work in synergy with determined people, engaged in local issues:

> If the person who invites us is an artist/activist in the neighborhood having a lot of energy and connections, being a good politician, knowing how to tell the story, knowing how to convince people, and staying with the project unconditionally, then the project will live on. Same, if the person in charge of the project works in the municipality. The outcome really has nothing to do with if it comes from the bottom or from the top. It has to do with the people, their skills and their ability to carry the project forward. The success of whatever you're trying to do is people-based, period […] It has everything to do with the energy, smartness and political ability of the people behind it[153].

Such commitment is an example of the "loving" and passionate attitude described by Karjevsky in *The Love Tactic*: in that text, she draws inspiration from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire,* where love is interpreted as a means of collective self-transformation, allowing people to rule themselves democratically, to highlight how love carries in itself a transformative power in the political sphere (Halbrecht, Karjevsky 2021).

Karjevsky describes the organizational structure of the project and the type of funding:

> 72 HUA was always funded by public funding. Except for Roskilde Festival, which is a nonprofit organization. The organization of 72HUA was very small: I came as a curator. Kerem is an architect. And two people who were working with us, both named Zahi and Zachi, are also architects. So I was the only non-architect thinker within that mix. And then during each edition, we had a local team, that was also normally coming from architecture, but not only. So, we kept growing and shrinking, depending on the moment of the year, and depending on the specific collaboration we had and what was needed. But the core team consisted in me,

[153] *Ibidem.*

Kerem, Zahi and Zachi. There were people who kept working with us in every edition, like the photographer, Mor Arkadir, who is responsible for creating the visual identity of 72HUA. I mean, this energy that you can can see through HUA's images is Mor's work. We create the content, and she frames it in such a way that she has her own credit on the festival, through her visual storytelling. Within that group, each of us had different tasks. I was more in charge of understanding the neighborhood on a macro level, connecting to academies, and communicating with the municipality. I was more interested in those aspects of urban curating. Kerem, being a detail-oriented architect, would study the sites, understand them, create all the briefs, and also create the work camp, where you need to provide the infrastructure for rapid prototyping, design and construction. And then, when the festival was happening, we would go together to visit the teams and provide ways of thinking about the neighborhood and thinking about the design in detail. So, we were always complementing each other in this very important balance, having different personalities and backgrounds[154].

Karjevsky also outlines the curatorial methodologies developed through her work at 72HUA:

We were always looking for both top-down and bottom-up interventions. If we were invited by grassroots initiatives, we tried to bring in the local authority. If we were invited by the municipality, we tried to bring civic society into the game. This was definitely a proclaimed and very conscious strategy for us to always bring both to the table.

In another project, *Jardin Essentiel* in Brussels in 2017, curated together with Judith Wielander, we were establishing a new community garden. From the first meeting we had with the community, we said the garden would stay. The producer told us that we couldn't make those promises to the community because we didn't know if we would be able to keep them. That was risky. And we answered: if we don't say that the garden is going to stay, then the garden is not going to stay. If you want to make everybody work towards it, you have to set your intention by saying it. Setting a very clear intention and communicating it repeatedly to everybody is important. I'm also a strong believer in sharing your research and being very open and generous about everything that you learn. Ownership of ideas is so toxic. People are really struggling with the fact that ideas are created in collaboration, that no idea is pure or no idea belongs to one person. This is just not real. Your thoughts are sensors, responding to everything that's around you. So, no thought that you have is unconnected to the surrounding environment. At the end of the day, a festival is a research tool. You gain so much knowledge just by building the process of the festival. It took us several editions to understand that we needed to find ways to pack that and to share it. One of the outcomes of the festival is that you know so much more about the place after you've done the festival. In the last edition in 2019

[154] *Ibidem.*

in Jena, part of the public program was an exhibition about the space, that was created by students. We had a fanzine, that was written by students. We had two departments from two different universities, Sociology and Urbanism, looking at different aspects of the festival. We had PhD students coming in and working within the public program of the festival. And then you take all of this knowledge together and you give it back to the city.

The last thing is that the festival builds partnerships. Some initiatives were both in the same city, but they had never worked together. We put them together during the festival, but we also wanted them to continue working together. What can we give you in the collaboration to make sure that your work will continue after we leave? How can we build your partnership through the festival? In the last edition, we had an amazing advisory committee that was bringing together so many different departments of the city once a month to discuss the production of the festival, because you need permits, you need to build a camp, everybody needs to be safe, you need emergency services, you need education, and you need the community relief… My suggestion was that this working group is formalised, and made into a permanent structure inside of the municipality, operating across departments to deliver cultural projects in public space. Despite recognising the potential of such a structure, the municipality was not ready for such a thing […] So, we had civic society organizations sitting with the fire department, with the culture department, with the building permit department, with the logistics and infrastructure department, and with education and welfare, all together, talking about the neighborhood for three hours every month. That's political power. They could have done so much with it[155].

Now, the festival is over, but it has left important legacies:

There are different legacies of the festival. So, there's the legacy of the installations: some of them have stayed. The winning installation from the Stuttgart edition is the longest-staying installation in the festival. Secondly, there's a legacy towards planning authorities, because they've learned a lot about the neighborhood through this event, and they've learned a lot about producing such a festival and working with such installations, which is really important because this is a prototyping tool. Thirdly, there is the legacy of the participants, because they have had intense experiences in the festival. They have engaged with people they had never met before, both in the team that they were working within, and in the place where they were working. Then, there are legacies in the neighborhood, because neighbors got to learn and to see their own places in a different way[156].

[155] *Ibidem.*
[156] *Ibidem.*

While coming to the end of 72HUA, Karjevsky started working at Floating ~~University~~ Berlin, a project for urban practice in the rainwater retention pool of former Berlin Tempelhof airport. According to 2008's plan for redevelopment of the former airport area, the rain water retention pool serving the terminal building would have been moved in a park, in order to make the area available for construction. In 2014, a public referendum in Berlin denied the development plans of the Templhoferfeld, with the desire of opening it to the public. Then many architecture studios and firms were called to map what kind of civic actions and activities can be held on site, among them was the architecture collective raumlabor that found the retention basin site as part of their mapping process (Fig. 107). About three to four years were employed to raise funding and obtain permits, and then in 2018 Floating ~~University~~ opened as an off-shore campus for cities transformation, with its major program co-curated with Dorothee Halbrok, 25 universities and artistic interventions. The site is seen as a hybrid space, representing a water infrastructure, an open site for the public, an artistic place for production, and a thriving ecosystem. It represented an opportunity as an aesthetic laboratory for post-anthropocenic, post-industrial and post-artistic practices. Karjevsky was invited to be part of artistic interventions, and after the first year also part of establishing the Floating association, that organizes activities on site (Karjevsky 2024). Floating association is a self-organized space and group, where practitioners from a wide range of backgrounds meet to collaborate, co-create and imaginatively work towards futures. Its mission is to open, maintain, and take care of the site while bringing non-disciplinary, radical, and collaborative programs to the public (Floating ~~University~~ website). Floating association is organized in working groups, that work on specific tasks and topics driven by interest and desires (Fields of Knowledge and Action): from maintaining and developing the site to gardening, cultivating collaborations and taking care of neighborhood connections (Floating ~~University~~ website) (Fig. 108). Karjevsky explains:

> Floating is a big association. It's very horizontal, and it's constructed around working groups. There is an assembly once a month where we report to each other and inform each other, but most of the work is done in small groups because you can't design projects by committee. And everybody follows their interests. The thing that brings this huge group together is keeping the site open for our own projects, but also open and available for anybody in Berlin that wants to do a project there, within the value set of Floating. Some members of the association say we

> are custodians. I don't fully agree with this. But we generously make the site available for Berliners who want to come and work on site[157].

In particular, at Floating ~~University~~, Karjevsky co-curated a research festival called *Climate Care*, together with Rosario Talevi. *Climate care*'s curatorial scope rose from Karjevsky's research into ecological practices in arts and design, as exemplified in the *Jardin Essentiel* project (2015-17) and their intersection with ethics of care. Moreover, this interest further grew in a period where movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion were becoming a global phenomenon, and the curators wished to speak about the climate breakdown in a way that was not so fatalistic and related to climate depression and anxiety. They wanted to talk about the Anthropocene in a way that included having tools and practices that could repair the broken relationship with the environment. The festival's first edition in 2019 wanted to engage practices of care and repair in relation to the Anthropocene. The program was responding also to the conditions of the site, taking inspiration from it for the topics, formats and tools of care to apply. The edition of 2021 instead, responded directly to the landlord's wish to renaturalize, or rewild the infrastructure. The idea was to remove the asphalt floor that had been there for ninety or more years and to replace it with a filtering layer that would allow water to sip into the ground, instead of being pumped in a canal. The concept of rewilding became a metaphor to understand the attempt to reshape human relationship with the environment and nature, both in an urban setting but also on the planetary scale (Karjevsky 2024).
Karjevsky explains that she started working at Floating ~~University~~ because:

> I was really interested in questions of eco-philosophy, I wanted to curate slower, in more fixed situations, and I wanted to expand my curatorial strategy toolbox […] I was diverging and being attracted by other kinds of questions. Going to Floating was on the same line as this need for curating slower and more sustainably than before. I was searching for collaborations set up with an eco-feminist lens and methodologies. At 72HUA even though we were always counting how many women were in the participants and who we worked with, and we were very conscious about these choices, it still wasn't set up as a feminist project, and I wanted to be more explicit in this direction[158].

[157] *Ibidem.*
[158] *Ibidem.*

Karjevsky states that Climate Care had the function of shifting Floating ~~University~~'s focus from pure urban planning, architecture and design to urban ecology: the narratives of Floating ~~University~~ as a hybrid infrastructure and natureculture learning site were born within the festival. Nonetheless, she says that, unlike 72HUA, Climate Care has been relevant to the local art scene, but hasn't had a big impact on the local community of residents. This is not the same as the whole project of Floating, which has made strong ties within the city with schools and neighbours through various programs such as KidsUni and the Nachbarschaftstages.

One of the things that emerged within the Floating ~~University~~ experience is the importance of rotation of roles, responsibilities and intensity of engagement within the association and various working groups. That's a very caring principle to apply both within the organization, and the material culture of the site. For this, transferring knowledge to continue develop roles in the association is crucial (Karjevsky 2024). Karjevsky explains the reason why she has decided to often work with the festival format:

> I've often been working with festivals: in Brussels, in Berlin, in Hamburg… They are a very good tool for strategy, for planning, for research and of course for curatorial practice. If you're a planner and you want to test if something is going to work, if a neighborhood is going to respond to your idea well, you have to prototype it and test it with people. It's an approach that should be a normal part of planning. And this is different from consultation, which tells you nothing. Consultation is a political tool, a communication effort disguised as: we're listening to you. Much of it is designed to already transmit the message of the planner, and so little of it is designed to actually take in the needs and wishes of the local residents. Instead, prototyping is honest about what it wants to test. I choose what to prototype, and immediately after, I get to know if it works or not… If people are coming, if people are interested, if people are responding, if people are burning it down because it makes them angry. You immediately get a reaction. This entails more work than showing a map and a fancy rendering, and then listening to what people think about it, knowing that you've already spent €50,000 making that rendering. So, let's admit the reality that the plan is going to go forward whether neighbours like it or not. This is the most common process of consultation and participation that is done in urban planning.
>
> As a research tool, you start with the site. I give lectures about urban curating titled: The site is half the work. Urban curating is a methodology that brings artists, observers, researchers and designers together, to map the site. You understand the site together, and then you identify a theme and engage with it. And the festival is also a communication tool because it's a moment to bring attention to something and to see how people respond to what you're communicating

> to them. When we were planting the community garden in Brussels, it was amazing because we were doing a lot of school meetings and community meetings, we went to bars, and we were talking about the festival that was coming. We had normally ten, twelve people there. The moment we were on-site starting something, the amount of neighbors that came by and were asking what we were doing and what was going to happen increased drastically. It was much more effective than any community center meeting that we could have had[159].

In another interview, Karjevsky talks about festivals as ritual moments, placed outside the routine, made of maintenance, care and repair: they represent a special effort, to open the site in a special way to the public. This interplay between routine and ritual is very important to work in a caring way to provide alternative spaces in the city (Karjevsky 2024).
Karjevsky also talks about the meaning curating has for her as a practice of caring towards a designated community or place. She quotes Patricia Reed's *Letters to Joan* in saying that you cannot care without adequate observation of what you are caring for and without training for the thing that you are observing. To care for something, you need to know it very well: knowledge production that can come through cultural formats is a very important initial stage in caring for a site (Karjevsky 2024). Karjevsky also refers to Elke Krasny's definition of urban curating, by saying that it is a relational practice with no predetermined format, responding to what is there, in solidarity with spatial justice movements (aiming at a fair redistribution of space within cities), and in relation to anticolonial discourses. This definition from 2011 is further elaborated by including the planetary discourse: urban curating is intertwined with ecological thinking and recuperating, remediating and taking care of land and open spaces in the city. Urban curating is an interdisciplinary practice, in-between planning, eco-management and the arts. It brings together artistic approaches to working with planning, zoning, remediation and land management, but it does it from a different approach than the planner. It sets itself aside from the conservation approach of green in cities: it opens up policies and practices by suggesting alternative modes of zoning, conservation of green spaces, of organizing within the arts (Karjevsky 2024).
Karjevsky outlines the most important skills to work as a curator in urban development processes:

> Collaboration is a dying, rare and beautiful skill to have. When I teach, I really focus on collective practices, and it's sad to see how lost that skill is. It's a soft power that we're losing for all kinds of reasons, and we need to relearn it urgently. A good urban curator is

[159] *Ibidem.*

> collaborating all day long. Collaborating, negotiating, participating, conversing… You have to be a social person. You have to be a good listener. You have to be a person who compromises. You cannot be a purist in this position, not politically and not in other ways either, which I think for some people is quite difficult at the end of the day, because we all see ourselves as the moral high ground. We all see ourselves as constantly right. You need to have a high level of self-awareness. You have to be a good storyteller. You also have to be a really good manager, which is the opposite of all the social skills that I just mentioned: there are management methods and approaches that are service-based, but there are many situations where you really have to put your foot down and be resolute. Sometimes it's even in order to protect people: I saw situations, especially in 72HUA, where I had to intervene for the safety of people and to say: I can see where this is going, and it's not going to be safe, so now we stop this, and we do what I say, even though this is a participatory project. You have to be able to hold these contradictions all the time[160].

When asked how she copes with contradictions, she answers:

> Working with contradictions is made possible by moving away from binary thinking of situations. This is a feminist methodology. You replace the "versus" with an "and". The example I just gave It's participatory *and* hierarchical. You find ways to negotiate how situations represent both things together, and see how it works to be in the spectrum between those two things, without necessarily choosing one or the other. You don't have to be an absolutist or a purist, again. So, even when you say that a process is participatory, it is not *purely* participatory because it is bound by different real conditions. There's always someone building the narrative in which you're participating, and so on and so forth. So, letting go of this idea of purity and absoluteness is a good trick to manage contradictions[161].

Lastly, Karjevsky explains the importance that narratives have for her as a curator, which has been influenced also by her studies. In fact, Karjevsky took part, after an interdisciplinary BA, in the Creative practice for narrative environments MA at Central Saint Martins in London, a practice-based design curriculum where she had the opportunity to work with several architects for the first time. During that period, she also had practical experience by doing three placements, the first at a cultural planning office, the second at Open House London, and the third at a city branding agency in Zurich. In all these experiences, she could see how art was being taken into urban planning policies, in a period when culture-led urban regeneration was peaking, at the end of the 1990s, in the UK. She concludes:

[160] *Ibidem.*
[161] *Ibidem.*

> Everything that we do is the creative act of telling a story. You're making something visible. When you become aware of the fact that what you're doing is storytelling, it also holds a lot of responsibility. Over the last six years, I've been also interested in how collective narratives are formed and how collective writing and collective storytelling can happen. What are the techniques and what are the methods for telling plural stories? Or, how does a group find an agreement on a narrative (which is very hard to do)? Of course, as an urban curator, you have many tasks, which are also management, production, and all these kind of very practical things. But what really differentiates a curator from, for example, a project manager is this narrative and storytelling act. When you tell a story, you're making up the world and you're making up the perspective of it. This is basic linguistics. The sign, the symbol and the meaning do not exist in reality. We are making the connections. We are signifying, symbolizing and narrating things. And you cannot claim to be telling a *perfect* story, you cannot claim to be telling the perfect truth about something. What you can provide is a truthful perspective. We can only be as truthful to our own perspective as possible, and to believe that the other perspectives are also truthful to themselves. And then, we need to negotiate the differences between the perspectives and to see what is actually possible for action between perspectives that are maybe contradicting each other or not aligning. That kind of in-between position is very much critically informed. And it is this narrative, critical and often also pedagogical dimensions of curatorial thinking that sets curating apart from production-based work, even though administrative and bureaucratic work are a huge part of the job[162].

5.2 The UK

The central policy framework for the Arts in the UK is largely set by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), but the primary distribution and strategic development are handled by Arts Council England (ACE) and its counterparts in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. ACE operates as the main national development agency for culture. Policy objectives for public art often extend beyond mere aesthetics, emphasising goals such as leveraging art to attract tourism and investment, thus promoting economic growth, using art to reflect community values, foster civic engagement, and address social issues, and enhancing the physical and visual quality of the public realm and contributing to a unique local identity (Arts Council England Official Website). Support for artistic projects is provided through Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants: the grants range from 1,000 to 100,000 pounds and are open to individuals as well as organisations. Other forms of

[162] *Ibidem.*

support are the *Developing Your Creative Practice* fund, which provides support for independent creative practitioners with the aim of creating more pathways for artists of different creative practices, and National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), a program according to which a select number of arts and cultural bodies receive multi-year funding to support their ongoing programmes, which often include public-facing and outdoor works (The Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends Website).

Another source of funding for public art is generated through the local authority planning process. This mechanism includes section 106 agreements, according to which planning contributions are secured from private developers as a condition of granting planning permission for major building developments. These contributions can be specifically earmarked for public art, a common iteration of the Percent for Art model. Secondly, it includes Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds: while primarily for broader infrastructure, these funds can be allocated to public art projects when considered part of the necessary community and environmental improvements associated with new developments. Lastly, there are sponsorships, prizes, and donations by individuals and foundations, such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation or the Rothschild Foundation. The period of austerity started with David Cameron's mandate (2010-2016), has had a significant impact on funding models in the UK, reducing significantly local public funding, and leading to a shift in cultural business models with organisations having to rely more on mixed revenue generation than before (The Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends Website). This way, the UK further took distance from European models, based mainly on public funding, and looked at the US's philanthropic culture as a source of inspiration, maximizing private contributions within a mixed economy (Gould 2019).

In national policies for planning and development, Public Art is rarely mentioned, although there is an emphasis on achieving design quality within the built environment. The National Planning Policy Framework devoted chapter 12 to the importance of achieving well-designed places: «The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities» (British Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024: 39). The document adds that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments «are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping» and «establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit» (British

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024: 39-40). In order to deal with this issue, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), an executive non-departmental public body of the UK government, was established in 1999. Until its merging with the Design Council in 2011, CABE was the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space in England, and had a crucial role in public art commissioning. For example, Chris Murray, Director of Learning and Development at CABE, claimed that

> art and artists can contribute to the development of a better built environment, promoting a higher quality of life. This is not simply through placing art in public spaces, but by involving artists as part of creative teams transforming places. CABE supports this new kind of approach, bringing creativity back into the design of new urban spaces, but also into regeneration and renewal schemes, helping to put excellence back into the ordinary and the everyday as well as the iconic. (Public Art Online Website)

CABE's period of activity largely coincides with Tony Blair's mandate as prime minister (1997-2007): after a period of state disengagement from culture during Tatcher's mandate, Blair decided to increase again public investments in art and culture, with the objective of rebranding the country in the post-industrial period (e.g. the idea of "Cool Britannia"). In particular, the government was interested in art's potential impact on urban regeneration. At the same time, spending on culture had to be legitimized, by measuring the activities' adherence to political (economic and social) objectives, with subsequent critiques of instrumentalism (Gould 2019). Public art policies and strategies are set out at the more local level by Unitary Authorities, and County, Borough and District Councils: they adopt Local Development Frameworks, within which public art issues can be covered (Public Art Online Website).

5.2.1 Situations (Claire Doherty), Bristol

Situations was an arts organization based in Bristol, dedicated to producing and commissioning arts projects in the public realm and unconventional locations, both in the UK and overseas. The organization was founded in 2002 by Claire Doherty, a curator and researcher at the University of the West of England in Bristol. Up to 2011, Situations functioned as a public art commissioning program embedded within the university, which employed Doherty as Senior Research Fellow. Then, thanks to the support of the

Breakthrough Award conferred by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Doherty transferred Situations out of the university and made it a non-profit independent limited company (Situations Official website). From 2014, Situations received the Arts Council of England's regular funding, which represented the basis to which other forms of funding related to specific projects were added. Situations worked up to 2017, when Doherty decided to leave to take up the directorship of Arnolfini.

Doherty has a background in Art History and Curating, and had always been fascinated by artists working outside studios:

> One of the most influential experiences in the early 1990s, when I was studying Curating in London, was that Rachel Whiteread's *House* was installed in East London. And my encounter with that began to alter my thoughts around how artists might work outside of the studio or of gallery installations. And then, I became a curator at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham […] Whilst the gallery moved to new premises, it closed its premises for eighteen months and we did a number of commissions across the city. That started my interest in working in site-specific ways. Even though we then reopened the gallery and I curated a number of exhibitions there, I got the bug for commissioning outside of gallery buildings. And subsequent to that, I set up Situations and began to create a program of site-specific and off-site commissioning and research[163].

The program was not only an occasion to commission art projects, but also to do research, which resulted in conferences, lectures and publications. In particular, Doherty focused on durational public art projects, the idea of "situation" and "producer", which then shaped her curatorial practice. With her first publication related to Situations, *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation* (Doherty 2004), she set the question of how artists respond to a context outside the studio. She explains that «by 'situated', we refer to those artistic practices for which the 'situation' or 'context' is often the starting point» (Doherty 2004: 8). Later, in *Situation* (Doherty 2009), she suggests to use the notion of situation, meaning a set of conditions in time and place, to replace that of site, which had been commonly used in the arts to talk about art designed for a specific context (Kwon 2002). The book is an anthology divided in five chapters, collecting texts illustrating the limits of site as a concept, the idea of fieldwork and the risks of working through a pseudo-ethnographic approach, the intersection between artistic actions and public space, the notion of place as something in a constant sense of becoming, and curatorial models related to situational art practices. In

[163] Interview with Claire Doherty, 04/04/2025.

particular, in the last section, Doherty explains how the rhetoric of place-making has led to the dominance of place-based event-exhibitions and public art initiatives. According to her, the rise to prominence of such curatorial ventures can be traced to the early 1970s, from *Sonsbeek 71*, Arnheim, and the first *Skulptur Projekte* in Münster in 1977, through the mid 1990s with *Project Unité* in Firminy (1991) and *Places with a Past* in Charleston (1992). Doherty says:

> If we understand place as an unstable, shifting set of political, social, economic and material relations, and locality as produced and contested through a set of conditions that we might describe as situation, our experience of works which truly produce remarkable engagements with place will be a sense of dislocation – encouraging us no longer to look with the eyes of a tourist, but to become implicated in the jostling contingency of mobilities and relations that constitute contemporaneity. (Doherty 2009: 18)

This idea had already been developed in an essay published in 2007, titled *Curating Wrong Places… Or Where Have All the Penguins Gone?*, where she explains that the centrality of places for curating emerged from the convergence of three commissioning models, in particular the scattered-site international exhibition which preceded the recent swell of biennials, the research-based project program, and the residency model with its concentration on engagement, process and encounter. Context-specific international exhibitions have become allied to urban regeneration and cultural tourism since the 1990s: the duties of curators in such contexts are to support artists in the production process, to support and engender encounters with participants, viewers and collaborators, and to engage with places before selecting the artists. Doherty criticizes international scattered-site exhibitions as appropriate contexts to consider place through the commissioning of new artworks. «Most significant place-responsive or context-specific projects, whether they unsettle and provoke a sense of the wrong place or work collaboratively to effect social change, need flexible time-frames and tend to emerge from different kinds of motivation than a group exhibition rationale» argues Doherty (Doherty 2007).

Doherty, in her research, is interested in durational public art practices as well as one-off interventions and events. Durational public art practices represent the core of the research she published with Paul O'Neill in 2011: *Locating the producers: Durational Approaches to Public Art* (O'Neill, Doherty 2011). The book investigates five case studies (*The Blue House/ Het Blauwe Huis*, Ijburg, the Netherlands; *Beyond*, Leidsche Rijn, the Netherlands; *Trekroner Art Plan*, Roskilde, Denmark; *Creative Egremont*, Cumbria, UK; *Edgware Road*

Project, London, UK), which had been chosen because they demonstrated an individual commissioner's investment in maintaining a committed, long-term, durational approach to commissioning contemporary art in a specific place; they took place since 2000; they had a commissioning process and outcome which lasted for more than 100 days (the standard time-span of an international large-scale exhibition); they engaged local residents. The objective of the research was to contribute to a deeper understanding of what is at stake in commissioning place-based artworks, to test out a new vocabulary to qualify curatorial methods and, potentially, to propose a set of recommendations for changes to public and cultural policy (O'Neill, Doherty 2011). Once again, in this text Doherty highlights the misalignment between event-based public art commissioning and the evolution of the understanding of the notion of place:

> There was clearly a disparity between the affirmation of place — as advocated in cultural policy documents, consultancy briefs for the commissioning of artworks within the context of regeneration, and, to some extent, in the curatorial rhetoric surrounding place-based exhibitions and projects — and the productive, contemporary, lived experience of place proposed by geographers such as Doreen Massey and Tim Cresswell and archaeologists such as Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. In affirmative strategies and policies, place was being promoted as an existing, stable (perhaps historically embedded) entity to which artists were invited to respond, or as something which could be rebranded through commissioning whereby location (and consequently place-based artworks) would be aligned with cultural tourism. By contrast, in the academic sphere, place was increasingly being recognised as 'a constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus (...) which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local'. And at the heart of this contradictory pull between a stable, knowable place and a state of flux, an event-in-process, was the curator-producer. (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 2-3)

Doherty explains how she aimed at showing that «a fundamental shift in thinking about the 'time', rather than simply the 'space' of public art commissioning is required to effect change at the level of policy» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 7). Doherty then introduces the necessity to work on duration of art projects to problematize the time component of art's engagement with publicness and civic responsibility: «we can discern a shakeup of the temporal limits of extant models for curating public art, which must be conceived as part of a cumulative process. The significance of duration does not lie, therefore, in a single extended project, but rather in the relationship between projects in place across time» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 11).

Doherty prefers to use the word "producer" instead of "curator", because this term detaches from the idea of museum custodian and highlights the active involvement in the production of artworks. She explains:

> It's interesting thinking about the word curating, and what that now means […] I tend to use the word producer now. I don't mean to diminish the term. I guess I'm very much more aware now of the art historical curator […] I think there's a spectrum of how you work as a curator. On the one hand, there are those who are facilitators, historians, archivists and conservators. So there's protection and care work. And then, there are those curators, and I'm probably one of those, who are much more like artistic directors. They're bringing a thematic approach and a narrative approach to working with artists. And in that sense, they're much more like artistic directors and producers […] When you're commissioning artists in the public realm, it's a very different curatorial process, because you're managing a new context, and a set of stakeholders. You're working out how the artist might contribute to building a sense of place. Over the last two decades, there's been a huge increase in placemaking and in conversations around placemaking. But I think what I was always interested in is the imagination: the creation of new encounters, new stories, new senses of place. And so in that way, I guess that what I'm taking in terms of curating from the traditional sense of that, is you have to be profoundly aware of what the artist can bring […] You're looking for not only the practical experience, but for the spark of a kind of new encounter[164].

She adds: «In the spirit of the traditional definition of a curator then, we do "take care" of place, time and people, but, aligning ourselves with the dynamic performing arts producer, we also contest place, interrupt time, and galvanize people» (Doherty 2017: 92).
Doherty says that while the charismatic agency of the curator is important to engage participants and visitors and to secure funding, at the same time the ownership of the project as a whole needs to be shared. The analyzed projects also show the importance of political will behind them, whether they have been supported by a specific policy, local council or individuals with a vision for public art in their region. Commissioners' charismatic agency is employed through networked models of sociality in order to allow for co-habitational time. In this way, the open-endedness of the process is employed as a means of resisting the instrumentalisation of art. She also explains how in durational commissioning processes, co-productive and socially-engaged modes of operation are employed to move away from the spectacularised mode of social relations. Moreover, she claims that

[164] *Ibidem.*

> a durational approach encourages subsidiary audiences to form, beyond the initial participants or co-producers, permitting others to receive the project anecdotally through the dispersion of the narrative of the project by its participants and lead commissioner/producer over time. In this way, all of the projects discussed in this book transcend their immediate relations — between time, place and their temporary constituent publics — to consider that what has happened will live on not only in the memory of those who took part and experienced it. Projects are translated and extended into the future, whether that is through artists' work or through residual resident initiatives that endure beyond the project lifetime or as something which is discussed in subsequent art discourses. (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 10)

Doherty closes the book's introduction stating that «durational projects could be considered as 'discursive exhibitions' that evolve over time, but, instead of prioritising the moment of display, or the event of exhibition, they allow for open-ended, accumulative processes of engagement» (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 14). As a consequence,

> such projects necessitate a shift in our consideration of the curator-producer from an individual focused on the unearthing or endorsement of an existing historical sense of place through the commissioning of autonomous, permanently sited artworks to a creative praxis characterised by complicit participation in the making of place through a series of cumulative and dispersed encounters over time. (O'Neill, Doherty 2011: 14)

In one of her next publications, the essay *Relation to citizen. Participation beyond the "event" of the public artwork* (Doherty 2012), she takes one of the projects led by Situations as an example to practically show how participation goes beyond the co-production of the artwork. In 2010, Situations became part of the ENPAP (European Network of Public Art Producers) network, a four-years research project looking at institutional frameworks and methods of six partner organizations: Baltic Art Center in Visby, consonni in Bilbao, Mossutställningar in Stockholm, Situations in Bristol, SKOR - Foundation for Art and Public Domain in Amsterdam and Vector in Iasi. Their work resulted in a final publication titled *Out of Time, Out of Place. Public Art (Now)* (Doherty 2015), which is an attempt to survey and compare different approaches to public art over the previous decade. While she describes public art is still oftentimes seen as an uninvited guest or mass entertainment tool, judged against its ability both to galvanize popular opinion and to contribute positively to place-making on the basis of immediate impact, new public art approaches have contributed to changing the field by employing media, materials and processes previously thought

unsuitable for the public realm, incorporating dynamic curatorial methods, and exchanging single-sited permanent outcomes in favor of dispersed interventions or cumulative curated programs evolving over space and time (Doherty 2015).

Going back to Situations, over fifteen years many projects were developed, pushing the limits of what public art could be. A common set of approaches reoccurred in Situation's work: a) playing with time as medium and structure; b) unsettling place identity; c) creating gathering space for temporary communities; d) rethinking how we remember; e) creating opportunities for co-creation and participation (Situations Official website). Moreover, Doherty and her team established a set principles called New Rules of Public Art, which she describes as one of Situations' most influential achievements:

1. It doesn't have to look like public art. Art can take any form.
2. It's not forever. Places don't remain still and unchanged, so why should public art?
3. Don't make it for a community. Create one. Don't predefine the audience.
4. Build space for the unplanned. Be open to accidents, failures and experiment.
5. Withdraw from the cultural arms race. Towns and cities across the world are locked into a one-size-fits-all style of public art: in a culture of globalized brands and clone towns, create unusual places.
6. Demand more than fireworks. Believe in the quiet, unexpected encounter as much as the magic of the mass spectacle: it's often there that transformation occurs.
7. Don't embellish. Interrupt. Public art can do so much more than decorate. Interruptions to our surroundings or everyday activities can open our eyes to new possibilities.
8. Share ownership freely, but authorship wisely. Public art is of the people and made with the people, but not always by the people. Artists are skilled creative thinkers as well as makers: trust their judgment, follow their lead and invest in their process.
9. Welcome outsiders. Outsiders challenge our assumptions about what we believe to be true of a place.
10. Don't waste time on definitions (e.g. sculpture, visual art, etc.).
11. Suspend your disbelief. Art gives us the chance to imagine alternative ways of living, but it is not a History lesson. Be prepared that it might not always tell the truth.
12. Get lost. Artists encourage us to follow them down unexpected paths (Situations Official website).

Over the years Situations worked also with a number of urban planning projects, such as the ones curated in Weston-Super-Mare and in Oslo. As for the first one, Doherty was called in a small town along the coast of England, which was a Victorian seaside resort, but had

suffered from the decline in the seaside holiday in the late 20th century. The initiative, titled *Wonders of Weston,* was a program of temporary and permanently-sited artworks, part of the national Sea Change initiative (2008-2010), which aimed to support the revitalization of British seaside towns (Situations Official website). The curatorial statement highlighted the importance of connecting to layers of personal histories in order to make long-lasting contributions to the identity of a place, and the need to open up a process of mass imagination among citizens. Doherty was intrigued by the potential of exploring Weston-Super-Mare as a place of escape and wonder, and so she took the word 'Wonderland' as the spark for her vision (Situations 2010). The artworks produced included Ruth Claxton's *And My Eyes Danced,* a sculptural installation emerging from the former Model Yacht Pond and changing its appearance depending on light and tide (Fig. 109); Tim Etchells's *Winter Piece,* a neon light work on the façade of the Winter Gardens Pavilion, inviting us to reflect on the seaside as a place of childhood memories and adult contemplation*,* and *Shelter Piece,* a text in fragmentary scenes, witnessed by the artist during a 24-hour period in Weston*;* Lara Favaretto's *Without earth under foot,* a night-time occurrence of phosphorescent material appearing on the Marine Lake causeway, which dissects the sea from this artificial lake (Fig. 110)*;* Tania Kovats's (in association with Grant Associates) *HOLM,* a miniature sculpture of the nearby Steep Holm island*;* raumlaborberlin's *Silly Scope,* a temporary kaleidoscopic structure encouraging visitors and residents to see the world anew. Two other parts to the project, a fanzine and videos made with local young people, could be seen in the station waiting room*;* and Wrights & Sites' *Everything you need to build a town is here,* a constellation of signs throughout Weston (Situations 2010).

The second project where Situations dealt with urban development was in Oslo, where Doherty was invited to create a strategy for art in public spaces within Bjørvika, the city's former container port. As part of a significant waterfront development named *Fjord City* (conceived in the 1980s and approved in 2003), the port was facing radical structural change. In particular, changes involved the relocation of the central highway under the fjord, the construction of a central business district and thousands of new waterfront apartments, and the dedication of public spaces in-between the buildings as *allmenningen* (commons) (Doherty 2015). The objectives of the redevelopment were that Bjørvika had to contribute to developing Oslo as Norway's capital and as an attractive international destination; that Bjørvika had to be a key element in reconnecting the city with the fjord; that Bjørvika's waterfront was made accessible to the city's population; that Bjørvika became a lively and attractive place to live, work and visit. For this reason, the district's development should have a distinctive character, given by high aesthetic quality; that Bjørvika became a

sustainable urban quarter (Situations 2011). In 2009, the commissioner, development company Bjørvika Utvikling AS (BU), had adopted an art strategy regarding its areas of responsibility across the seven *Allmenningene* and on the promenade along the waterfront: the *Art Booklet*, co-edited by Tone Hansen, Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk, Marius Grønning, Therese Staal Brekke and Anne Beate Hovind. The strategy's principles are that art in the public sphere should contribute to the creation of a lively and multi-faceted urban environment; that artworks should contribute to Bjørvika's identity and create a cultural content that will give a sense of co-ownership to the diverse groups of people who will be using the site; and that art should be supported for its own intrinsic value as art (Situations 2011). BU adopted the following measures in order to approach the art strategy: to promote both permanent and temporary art projects; to initiate and establish Kunsthall Bjørvika, an organization and a platform for art programs; to spend a total of 20 million NOK on art, a little more than 1 % of BU's investment budget (Situations 2011). Within this context resides Situations' curatorial vision for Bjørvika – *Slow Space*. The vision set ambitions for the involvement of artists within the development of Bjørvika towards the formation of a program which addressed both the objectives for the Bjørvika development and the Bjørvika art strategy. The vision established a series of principles:

> a) to support the creation of remarkable forms of public art in Bjørvika which contribute to the life of the area, supporting Oslo's ambition to be a world-class city and Bjørvika's ambition to be engaging and accessible to all; b) to build on Bjørvika's existing cultural and environmental assets and to be sensitive to the specific social, economic, climatic and geographic conditions of Oslo; c) to suggest, but not prescribe, the use of public space throughout Bjørvika, with a particular emphasis on the promotion of non-commercial activity; d) to respond sensitively to the aspirations of the developers and potential tenants, whilst also taking into consideration the needs and desires of visitors and Oslo residents from other parts of the city, especially the East; e) to promote orientation to and around the harbour, engaging new visitors to the area; f) to create meeting and talking points which contribute to the ongoing and progressive identity of Bjørvika; g) to be committed in the long-term to sustainability. (Situations 2011: 4)

The vision's concept refers to the Slow Movement, a counter-cultural movement promoting better connections between people and place. Public use of the Opera House's roof in Bjørvika was seen as a strong indicator of the desire for spaces in which slow activities – walking, climbing, meditating, protesting, contemplation and picnics – could take place on the edge of the city harbor. The vision then presents aspects of slowness that would be

interesting to take into consideration: *Samling* (organized gatherings and meals), *Dugnad* (collective gardening projects), *Pavillon* (pavilion), *Vekst* (durational aspect), and *Eng* (cultivation of wild areas of land within urban environments). This came along with a series of recommendations and a draft timeline. The recommendations stated that: a maximum of three projects should be developed one after the other, rather than across multiple sites at the same time; one or more aspects of slowness should be considered; projects should be developed through collaboration with existing organizations or communities within Oslo to ensure long-term ownership and in some cases, programming and maintenance for the projects; the lifetime of projects should be considered both in social and physical terms; shortlisting of artists should take place through the recommendation by the Situations Curatorial Team and then should involve the invitation of three shortlisted artists per project rather than by open competition; location and budget should not be specified in advance of the appointment of artists. Rather the selection of location should follow through the artists' research visits and consultation with all key stakeholders and budget should be determined through the testing of the viability of proposed projects (Situations 2011).

Doherty explains the process of working with Slow Space:

> Over the years, we've worked in a number of ways, supporting cities to write strategies, with no expectation that we would then have the opportunity to commission the work. So Oslo began like that. It began with an invitation to come out and write a strategic vision for how you might commission artists for Bjørvika, which was the old harbor development. And through that, as often these things begin, I looked for something in that place that told me something about how that place was working or not working. And in the case of Oslo, it was how people were going to the Opera House's roof and using that space. I was interested in that people were almost coming out of the city center, which was very noisy, and going onto that space and using it like a mountain top. They were sitting there looking out. And I started to think about slowness, and there was a lot being written at the time around slowness. This was probably 2011, I think. And then, I wrote a set of principles. And often when I'm writing a strategy, I will try and define a set of themes or principles, reflecting on previous artist's work. So it gives the client sense of where it might go. We defined these three areas, and then, they asked me to select a longlist of artists. We brought four artists and artistic practices through a series of days called *Slow Days*. We had talks, dinners and discussions around the work. And then we got four proposals, and they chose two out of them. And one was *Future Library* by Katie Paterson, and the other one was the bakehouse by Futurefarmers on the banks of the water […] One had to do with the land, growth and time slowing over that period of time and

> the connections through the *Bakehouse*. And the other, had to do with the hundred years ahead[165].

The first selected project, *Flatbread Society* by Futurefarmers (Figg. 111-112), is a growing constellation of farmers, oven builders, astronomers, artists, soil scientists and bakers, gathering in an experimental community bakehouse in Loallmenningen. This later developed into what was called Losæter, a modern park with edible plants and a vibrant community, involving the use of common land. The structure is in contrast with its surroundings in terms of its shape, colors and materials, signaling that it represents point of resistance in the highly planned and controlled public space of the harbor. The bakehouse is a place where handmade clashes with machine made, giving away products for free contrasts the power of market, where people slow down in a system that constantly speeds up. The second project is *Future Library* by Katie Paterson, which consisted in planting a hundred trees in a region north of Oslo, which will be cut in 2114 to provide paper to print a hundred unpublished texts by different authors. The project involves the establishment of a Trust to commission selecting a new writer each year to produce an unpublished text which is held in a specially designed room in the National Library every year for the next 100 years (Doherty 2015).

Doherty describes the organization of Situations this way:

> It changed over the years, but in the years 2012-2017 it was really fully functioning. I was the artistic director and the CEO. I led the artistic direction in terms of the program, the projects, the curating, working with artists, etcetera and research, supported by a producing, engagement and marketing team. I oversaw the communications, and with the Executive Director managed the business planning. As the company grew they took on the financial, HR and operational aspects of the company. And then we had a finance manager. We had two or three producers. We had an assistant producer. We had a communications manager. So we had a core staff of about eight or nine people. And when we had to deliver projects, then we would bring on a freelance team. So we would go up to maybe 30 people when we were delivering a particular project. We also had an engagement lead and engagement producers. The whole team were incredible. And as Situations developed, I would often begin a project and then we would co-lead and co-design the projects, and the producers would be working with the artists directly. So I would oversee the projects, but artistic producing was shared[166].

[165] *Ibidem.*
[166] *Ibidem.*

When asked about the skills needed to work as a curator in public spaces, she answers:

> In terms of what I took with me [from working in galleries], I think the skills which have to do with a respect for artistic practice. When you're working with living artists in particular, rather than collections, you have to have a rigor around a studio visit, an understanding of how that artist works, their personality, the speed at which they work, how they connect, how they like to work, whether they're research-based, whether they like to engage with people or not. I think the other thing is around production values. I've worked now a bit more in theatre and there's a completely different process. So I would say the gallery context, as a curator, is all about the production values: when the exhibition opens, you might say it is at its perfect moment. Whereas in theatre, you go through rehearsals, previews and further iterations. It's a really long process. So, often your audience is seeing something that might be rough and it changes every day. But in a way, what I took with me into the public space is that you have to really shape a project so that it's in its ideal state when it's encountered by an audience or perhaps it is changed by the audience and you have to prepare for that. And the other thing that I took from galleries is that you have to care about the audience. You have to care about how people are meeting this work. But the big difference when you're working outside galleries is that you have a complete lack of control in the public realm. You have no control over how the public are going to react, how the public meets the artwork, what other things are going on in that space. It's a spontaneous kind of space. And there's lots of other things that are going on, that are far more important than what you're working on. So, whether that be traffic, police, residents, it doesn't matter. I think that you have to let go of the ego. It's not your space. You're a kind of visitor to it. The other thing is that engagement is a huge part of it. The curator becomes a kind of artistic director role, in that you have to build a team with the skills to deliver what you need. So, in some projects, there'll be far more community engagement. In others, there won't be. I always really love doing projects that were unannounced, that would occur without any warning. I've always loved those projects because it was so exciting to see the impact you could have. So you need the ability to talk to anyone and persuade anyone to allow the artist's work and your collective vision to take place. So you're not you're not really working within the art world. You're talking to the officials, planners and residents to pull something off. The other big thing is that the communications or marketing campaign around it will fundamentally be different. Every single time we did a project, it was new. It was a new place or a new site. So you can't rely on a returning audience. So that's always a big difference. I think the overriding skill I came away with after Situations

was storytelling, actually. I think there was something about the ability to tell the story of a project and create some magic around each project in places. That's beautiful[167].

Regarding her ways of relating to other players in the urban context, she adds:

I would say you're always learning. Early on in my career, I would have used a different language, I would have found it difficult, because you think: well, we love this, why don't you love this? But over the years, I understood that you had to really understand what were the priorities for them, and then try and find a way of creating this bridge between the artists or the project and those other actors in public space. So, a good example of that would be to really understanding what their strategic priorities are, and what are their concerns, what are their fears, and what are the risks, so you really understand that you can make sure that you're on their side, that you're helping them through it. Often, what happens is people will often say: well, I don't know anything about art. And so, you have to be really careful about the language you use. You have listen and to be really respectful and also not use academic art language. So what I try and do is to have a conversation, and talk about what they hope it will achieve. If we ignore what the form is, what does success look like? What does that feel like? What will change as a result of it? And once you start having a conversation about that, what's easier to do is then say: we bring a different form in. I can still deliver that for you, but it might not look like what you thought it might look like. The biggest thing when interviewing artists or appointing artists or working with people or bringing a project to them is to say: this might not look like what you think public art looks like. But I can guarantee you that it will deliver what you want it to do. So it could be that they they're interested in community cohesion, in connecting people, in a place becoming alive again, in dealing with social misbehaviour, or any of those things. I'm really interested in projects that shake things up. So I'm also an advocate for art not solving the difficulties of a place, but asking questions, instead of providing you with or illustrating a history. Maybe, actually, it's going to show you something that is unheard or unsaid, which is always really interesting. So in a way, it's rather questioning places rather than making places. For me one of the most interesting things an artist can do is to question, and to recover perhaps a lost history. I think there's an interesting question around monuments and statues. And even now, there's still a movement to say: we need to replace male statues with female statues. My view is maybe we just don't need any more statues. Maybe there's another way of telling those stories[168].

In one of her essays, Doherty states that she does not aim at promoting positive place identity,

[167] *Ibidem.*
[168] *Ibidem.*

but at creating dislocations, agitations and new stories. Her idea is of an audience that sees anew, reconsiders received notions of place, and of an art that contests rather than asserts place-branding. In these cases, developing work requires translation between stakeholders, participants and artists: producing new artworks may be determined by the producer's ability to find a common language for developing and promoting the work as a contribution to a progressive notion of place with partners and stakeholders, whilst holding the artistic integrity of the artwork. She states:

> This requires skills of a seasoned negotiator in conflict resolution, the charm of a wily smuggler, the flair of a story-teller to compose a compelling picture of the potential outcome, but perhaps most importantly, concentration akin to that of an air traffic controller to move from horizon-scanning to focused detail and back again, navigating the field, listening to feedback and changing priorities where necessary. (Doherty 2017: 86)

When reasoning about curatorial models, Doherty says:

> The first thing to say is sometimes you don't necessarily get to choose a model […] In Torbay, we did a project called *The Tale*, and that began as a festival model for the Geopark organisation, and then it became a dispersed narrative model, because we discovered that Torbay is a place rich with stories that have yet to be told. It was a series of temporary commissions over three towns. You follow an experience, like a sort of mini biennial. But in other projects, it's clear what model is required: for example, we did a project with Mark Wallinger, which was on the site of the signing of the Magna Charta, and that was a permanent work. Mark knew exactly what he wanted to do: that was a case of us just making sure that he could make what he wanted to make in collaboration with Studio Octopi. I think maybe that's the difference between a commission that comes out of a public art agency and a commission that comes out of an arts organization. There's a subtle shift in artistic agency in the producer modela[169].

Linked to the narrative model, is Doherty's idea of «creative illusion», which is the ability to think and act as if things were different, modeling possible alternative worlds, and responding to the encroachment of corporate interests on public space, to the diminishing opportunities for social cohesion and freedom of speech and to the invisibility of the displaced and dispossessed in public life (Doherty 2017: 92).

[169] *Ibidem.*

5.2.2 RELAY (Michael Pinsky), London

RELAY was an art program curated by Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix from 2010 to 2012, and related to the redevelopment of King's Cross, London. King's Cross was a formerly industrial area which acquired particular importance since the 1820s, when manufactures and companies such as Pancras Gasworks established their venue in the area. Moreover, with the construction of Regent's Canal in 1820 and the construction of King's Cross Station in 1854, the area became London's conduit to the industrialising cities of the north. The are became particularly important as a storage spot for grain, potatoes and coal to be distributed in London. Residential buildings were built in this period as well, which were occupied mainly by railway and industrial workers. Nonetheless, with the decline of freight by rail and London's transition to a post-industrial economy, the area fell into decline by the late twentieth century. Many buildings were derelict, and problems of crime, unemployment and a poor quality environment undermined the area. In the late 1990s though, it became known for its nightlife and was a hub for artists and creative organisations. At the beginning of the 2000s, significative investments in infrastructure such as St Pancras station were made, with the decision to move the Channel Tunnel Rail Link from Waterloo to St Pancras: this became the catalyst for further development and has helped change perceptions of King's Cross. The landowners – London & Continental Railways Limited and Exel (now DHL) – decided to develop the land. In 2001, Argent was selected as the development partner. Intensive studies and consultation with the local community, government and other stakeholders were made to start the process, resulting in a vision for the development named *Principles for a Human City*, from which the masterplan evolved (King's Cross Official Website). The vision was centered around ten principles: 1) A robust urban framework; 2) A lasting new place; 3) Promote accessibility; 4) A vibrant mix of uses; 5) Harness the value of heritage; 6) Work for King's Cross, work for London; 7) Commit to long-term success; 8) Engage and inspire; 9) Secure delivery; 10) Communicate clearly and openly. In particular, the first principle outlined the importance that public spaces would have in the final project, a structure made up of streets, squares, parks, plazas and gardens enabling urban life to continue to prosper in changing circumstances: «the attractiveness and quality of these connections and spaces generate economic, as well as environmental value, because they influence and define the spatial pattern of human life, the places where people most want to be» (Argent St George, London and Continental Railways, Exel 2001: 13). Important aspects in the definition of these spaces were defined as: the size, scale and density of the urban block, that is the generic arrangement of buildings and land uses, between the streets,

squares and other defining spaces; the grain of the resulting built environment, the composition of solid and void; permeability and legibility. According to the vision, this framework would shape the overall sense of place at King's Cross and provide the conditions to optimise economic value. Moreover, principle 4 included in the mix of uses also the creation of spaces devoted to community and leisure, and principle 5 highlighted the importance of enhancing historical cultural heritage in creating a new image of the neighborhood (Argent St George, London and Continental Railways, Exel 2001).

The plan was prepared by Allies and Morrison, Porphyrios Associates and Townshend Landscape Architects, and in 2006, outline planning permission was granted: the permission allowed for circa 50 new buildings, 20 new streets, 10 new major public spaces, the restoration and refurbishment of 20 historic buildings and structures, and up to 2,000 homes. As part of the planning process, Argent developed a Regeneration Strategy for the site in 2004, which identified a number of priorities, including stewardship to secure long-term, sustainable success of the project, promoting local employment, community safety, enhancing diversity and culture and committing to childcare and education.

In 2008, Argent, London & Continental Railways and DHL formed a joint partnership: King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, which was the single landowner at King's Cross. Early infrastructure works began in June 2007, with development starting in November 2008. In September 2011, the University of the Arts London moved to the Granary Complex, and parts of the development opened to the public for the first time. Residents started to move in, and new commercial activities to be opened. The historic Coal Drops have been redeveloped as a shopping destination, and companies such as Google, Meta, Universal Music and Havas have chosen to locate here. New public streets, squares and gardens have opened, among them Granary Square, Lewis Cubitt Park, Lewis Cubitt Square and Gasholder Park (King's Cross Official Website). In the final report about the economic and social story of King's Cross, a chapter devoted to the impacts of the project presents a sub-section dealing with the impacts in terms of placemaking (flanking impacts in terms of construction works, new homes, commercial activities and community wellbeing). Delivered results include 26 acres of open space and 10 public parks and squares, and more than a hundred events taking place each year: in particular, the report claims that «assuming that the provision of public space in which to hold arts events has enabled more local people to participate in the arts, we can assume that Argent's investment in public realm has helped contribute towards arts derived well-being for local people» (Regeneris Consulting 2017: 34) (Fig. 113).

As part of Argent's development strategy, a curator brief was published in 2010, in order to find professionals able to take care of King's Cross art program. The brief states:

> The role of public art in placemaking was identified in the King's Cross Central Public Realm Strategy in 2004. The strategy recognised that activated, animated, welcoming public spaces are critical to the success of the development and that the public realm should be conceived as a series of 'pleasure' areas – well connected, integrated to areas outside the sites, inclusive and accessible, with recognition of the heritage of the site. Play and art are to be integrated in design to create such 'pleasure' spaces. For art, this means integration in to the public realm in such a way as to encourage play – or creation of public art that is 'playful' – whilst recognising the different characteristics and uses of different areas within the site. The strategy suggested the forms the art could take, such as trails through the site, or for some of the potential themes, such as cycles of time, digital, children or nature. Indicative locations for public art were identified in the King's Cross Central Revised Landscape Proposals Plans in 2005. Although the commitment to supporting art at King's Cross Central remains, we are reluctant to specify locations or forms of art in an overly restrictive way. At this stage our focus is on the development of a framework that will provide sufficient flexibility to encourage art that responds to the development process itself whilst providing sufficient guidance to ensure a coherency across the site. (Argent 2010: 6)

There had been several artistic initiatives going on in King's Cross since the start of its development, but this would have been the first cohesive art program. Argent wanted to make King's Cross a destination for arts and to develop a more comprehensive approach to arts through the appointment of a curator or curatorial organisation to the site for consecutive periods of three years. As part of this process, Argent established an Advisory Panel that helped identify objectives and advised to develop a curatorial role at King's Cross Central to ensure a coherent approach. The panel also had the role to ensure quality of the works and consistency in approach. It was made up of representatives from the developers, the master planners of the site, the British Council, Flora Fairbairn projects, Camden Arts Centre, ArtAngel, University of the Arts London and the artist in residence. The panel had a rotating membership and met three times a year. The selected curator would have had to deliver artworks, installations, exhibitions and performances nationally and internationally relevant, to support truly innovative approaches to incorporating art in to the landscape and built environment, and to develop an arts programme that created a dynamic and ever-changing destination. The curator had to report to the Advisory Panel. According to the brief, the curator would work alongside the King's Cross Central team to deliver the arts programme.

As well as setting out the framework and overseeing the programme, he/she would take the lead on identifying and commissioning artists and managing all artistic input. The curator would also enhance opportunities by building relationships with external partners, secure funding and ensure value for money, align activities with other London projects and link with local initiatives where possible, maximise the opportunities of London 2012 (Olympics), create strong linkages to Argent's community and regeneration programme and ensure complementarity with their lighting, play and wayfinding strategies, and thoroughly brief the next curator. On the other hand, the King's Cross Central team would help to shape the programme and manage delivery. The team would provide support around planning advice, health and safety, logistics, on-site management, access to design teams, marketing, PR, and so on. The team would also provide the link to the site and ensure that any opportunities, or constraints, that emerge as a result of the fast moving construction and commercial environment are communicated to the curator (Argent 2010).

Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix sent an expression of interest to Argent and were selected as curators for the program. Pinsky is a visual artist graduated from the Royal College of Art, while Delcroix was a PhD fellow, freelance writer and arts manager. Before the program for King's Cross, Pinsky had curated other art events and programs in public space, the most relevant of which was *Lost O*, a programme of installations, interventions and performances by international artists, which took place in Ashford as the Tour de France passed through the town in 2007. In particular, the program commented on the urban transformation of Ashford, whose four lane ring road was transformed into the largest Shared Space scheme in Europe, changing completely the perception of the city (Michael Pinsky's Official Website). When talking about this project in an interview, Pinsky said:

> The *Lost O* was really the first time I was asked to work as a curator: I think they called me director of public art projects or something like that. And I still made my own work there. What's interesting is that kind of role as a lead artist: you have your work, and then you develop a kind of artistic rationale around that, that then could be amplified by the other artists and the other artworks. And *Lost O* was certainly like that. I was really interested in that kind of reclaiming of the space. That brought in a lot of other artists who were kind of half activists, half artists as well. In several cases there, the people that I commissioned, like Roadsworth for example, had never actually been commissioned to do an artwork […] So there were some people who were a little bit difficult to track down […] who were working kind of on the fringes, quite out of the system. That interested me[170].

[170] Interview with Michael Pinsky, 30/04/2025.

During the interview, he also explains the relevance of his artistic background in his curatorial projects:

> I think there's something about being an artist, where you actually understand how things are made and what's actually possible, and your conversations with artists are different types of conversations. On the one hand, an artist might try and pull the wool over your eyes and go: well, it's going to be like this and this. And I'll just say: well, it's not, because I know you can't do this. But on the other hand, sometimes I can be a bit more robust and say: well, have you thought about doing this sort of thing here? I try and get inside the practice of the artist and think: well, what would get them excited?[171]

Pinsky pinpointed that Argent's development strategy was very interesting to work within:

> What's interesting about the way Argent developed it, is they really focused on the public realm space first. That became very high quality, like Granary Square with its fountains, all built before the buildings were built. So they always focused on the public realm, so you could start to get through the site. That increases the value of the buildings that they're building, that they mostly don't sell. Most of it is leasehold, so they build them and they lease them out. And they could do that because they have a fifty-year investment plan on King's Cross […] So they can plan much further ahead than a council can, or a city can in most cases, because they're not subject to the same kind of political scrutiny that you would get as a council[172].

Pinsky and Delcroix proposed a program called *RELAY*: «inspired by the continual carrying and preserving of the Olympic flame, and by King's Cross Central as an international transport hub and a place in transition, *RELAY* plays with the notion of the human chain, the transfer from one means of transport to another, and the phasing of the development scheme» (Pinsky, Delcroix 2010: 5). The outlined objective was to shift «the perception of King's Cross as a point of interchange to enter and exit rapidly, and suspend the passing of the baton to mark the immanent transformation of King's Cross to a place to stay and spend time in» (Pinsky, Delcroix 2010: 5). The curators then proceeded to describe the methodology they would apply, and divided it into four key points:

1) embeddedness: The RELAY curatorial team would embed itself into the Argent team, functioning as the curatorial arm of Argent's operations and approaching other partners and

[171] *Ibidem*.
[172] *Ibidem*.

organisations under the Argent umbrella. The RELAY curatorial team would establish a working base at Argent offices and move around other Argent locations as required by the different stages of the commissioning process. The RELAY team was attuned to the complexities of King's Cross, as it had lived in the area for the last fifteen years.

2) transparency, regarding three aspects: a) internal communications: The RELAY team would schedule recurrent meetings to keep Argent Development and Communications staff and the Art Advisors informed on the development of the commissions. In collaboration with these two parties, it would assess the best format and frequency of these meetings. This would ensure that all parties are up-to-date and have the opportunity to feedback before important decisions are made. In addition to this, RELAY would also present its progress to the wider community of Argent staff members. It would operate an 'open door' policy and be available at Argent's offices to informally introduce staff to the programme and keep it up to-date; b) on-line: A members-only blog space would be created in which the information about the development of the commissions should be shared and stored. This space would be used as an internal resource to announce upcoming meetings, artist's interventions and interesting projects, and to report on research trips and site visits. This blog would be for the use of members of the Argent staff and of the Art Advisors and possibly invited artists. This shared space would be regularly archived and would contribute to the legacy of the project; c) on-site: physical presence on-site was key.

3) passing on knowledge: the long-term legacy of innovative artworks and curatorial thinking is as important as the programme itself, otherwise the contacts, goodwill and good practice would be lost. After the initial three year-period, the first RELAY team would hand the following over to the next appointed curator: framework/strategy, production folders, web2.0 platforms, documentation, commissions (plans for future, maintenance, decommissioning), contacts established with all stakeholders, ongoing programmes, publicity (circulation and dissemination of printed material, catalogues and of the RELAY online platforms).

4) building phases: to correspond to the phasing of the building work, the artistic programme would be deployed to mark the stages of the development (Pinsky, Delcroix 2010).

Then, the curators formulated an artistic program based on four ideas, each supported by artist proposals: 1) creating the heritage of the future; 2) the city as a place to play in and to play with; 3) return to sustainable mobility; 4) site-responsivity.

The following sections of the document presented communication and engagement strategies, possible partners, possible funding sources and the project's timetable. In terms of legacy of the project, the document states that RELAY would adopt a Münster Sculpture

Project model and consider some of the temporary commissions to become permanent features. For this reason, the team would work in close collaboration with local stakeholders and Argent to identify suitable sites for the temporary artworks and ensure that that the sites used for potentially permanent pieces aren't encumbered with plans for future use. Moreover, RELAY may suggest the relocation of temporary artworks to a suitable permanent site when the original site cannot be preserved due to development (Pinsky, Delcroix 2010). Pinsky described the importance of choosing to work with temporary art: «firstly, it means you can be much more ambitious about what you're creating. And secondly, if you take it down after six months or a year, that's not a failure. That was the expectation. It was changing the expectations of what the program would deliver. I think that's quite important as well, especially on a site that's in development: you don't know how it's going to pan out in the end»[173].

During a conference of the Contemporary Art Society, Delcroix explained that after winning the commission, the curators started studying the history of the site and built the RELAY scheme: they took some ingredients like the Olympic games, the fact that the site was dominated by the stations, the fact that it was a construction site, and mixed them (Fig. 114). Three themes came out as departure points: they wanted to keep the idea of city play, which was part of King's Cross public art framework, and also wanted to work with sustainable mobility and future heritage. They decided to focus on temporary artworks and make four commissions. The idea was that every artwork would hand over to the next one. They also knew that they were the first curatorial team in a nine years' program, so they would hand over to the next curators: so they decided to work on a manual/know how of the place to pass on to the next team. They proposed not to work only on the concept, but also on the management and production. They wanted artists to work freely and to be inspired by the site, and were thinking about how to stitch the old King's Cross with the new imagined King's Cross (Figg. 115-116) (Delcroix, Pfannes 2015).

During their three-years mandate (2010-2012), Pinsky and Delcroix curated four artistic interventions. The first was Jacques Rival's *Identified Flying Object (IFO)* (Fig. 117), an oversized birdcage containing a swing which could be used by the public. The structure was designed not only to be moved, but also to be hung from one of the many cranes working on the development. The suspension of the cage emphasized the dramatic shifts of scale happening on the site, from small additions of street furniture to the concrete lift cores towering overhead, and at the same time the swing brought a surprisingly playful and human

[173] *Ibidem*.

element to the industrial scale of the development (Pinsky 2013). The objective of the artwork was to shift the perception of King's Cross from that of a dangerous place, to that of a place where people could come and play[174]. The second artwork was Richard Wentworth's *Black Maria*, in collaboration with the young Swiss architectural practice GRUPPE (Fig. 118). The work consisted in a temporary structure in which the atrium which conjoins the historical Granary Building and the new Central St Martins College designed by Stanton Williams was embedded within a vast billboard-like structure. The space created functioned like a town square hosting a multitude of events (Pinsky 2013). The third artwork was Felice Varini's *Across the Buildings* (Fig. 119), that the artist produced by projecting geometric forms at night on several buildings pertaining to the development, using a very large and antiquated PIGI projector. He then marked out the projected shapes in pencil and filled in the spaces with silver foil, creating a new visual identity for the neighborhood (Pinsky 2013). Moreover, a vantage point was built to look at the artwork, which secured the sale of a portion of King's Cross to Google: from that moment on, other vantage points were built in the site[175]. The last artwork was Ooze and Marjetica Potrč's *Of Soil and Water*, which was inaugurated with some delay in 2015 (Fig. 120): taking inspiration from Camley Street's natural park, Regent's Canal and site itself, the artwork created a micro-ecological environment with a natural swimming pond at its centre (Delcroix, Pfannes 2015). The pond was free of chemicals, the water being purified by natural processes using plants, nutrient mineralisation and a set of filters to supplement natural filtration. Once cleaned, the water looped back in to the pond to complete the water cycle. The daily number of bathers was restricted by the amount of water the system was able to clean. The elevated pond was a stage where the swimmers performed the balancing act of coexisting with nature. From there, they could watch the evolution of the surrounding neighbourhood and the ever-changing city (Ooze Official Website). The project increased King's Cross reputation as being somewhere creative, risk-taking, out on the edge[176].

When asked about his methods and objectives for curating art in public spaces, Pinsky answered:

> I think public realm curations are about a perfect marriage between an artist practice and the site, in the broader sense of both being a physical site, a social site, a political site and an economic site. What's fairly unfortunate about a lot of curation, I think, is that curators just

[174] *Ibidem*.
[175] *Ibidem*.
[176] *Ibidem*.

> want to get big names, and it doesn't really matter so much. You'll get an artist in and they'll do their signature work, but it could be anywhere. It just happened to be there. My ambition for curating artists is that it's going to be a seminal artwork for them. It's a major opportunity for them. It's a chance for them to try something new, but something that they'd be excited in doing. So there's some risk involved there […] The platform of a public space is unique and exciting and biased, and only certain artists can respond to certain sites, and see the potential in that. So that's really an important part of what a curator does, I think[177].

It was key also to weave relationships on site:

> Because there was a lot of building available, we proposed that we moved in. I moved my studio there. I was working as an artist and as a curator in what now is called the Art Fund Building, I think, and that was really great because you meet people in corridors then. And there was a lot of builders there. So we developed relationships with not just Argent, but the building companies as well. And especially with Jacques Rival, we got a lot of support from the actual builders on the grounds. And, that worked very well. So we were just kind of omnipresent […] The real interest of a public artwork is that it interacts with as many people as it can [178].

Pinsky then recounts the story of *IFO*'s development*:*

> Because Jacques Rival sent these very lovely, but not at all structural drawings, I had to draw it up technically to something that was buildable […] The idea was that that could be lifted up by a crane and moved around […] I had a lot of drawings in my sketchbook that I then talked through with structural engineers from the builders' team. And then we needed their support because they were the ones liaising with the crane operators, who also had to input and say: well, I could move this, but not that. And: have you thought of this? And then it even got to the point where on the opening, the launch, there was some sort of building work where they were releasing gas, because we were very near to a gas exchange. The smell made it completely impossible to be there. So one of the heads of the building company just went down there and went: look. If you stop working for two hours, I'll buy you all pizzas and a drink. We bought them drinks and pizzas, and they sat there while we had the opening. Then they could carry on. So having that kind of very intimate relationship with the building companies was really beneficial. A lot of what we did was on based on goodwill rather than payment. It's just getting people excited and involved. And that's how I always like to work, if

[177] *Ibidem*.
[178] *Ibidem*.

> I possibly can. So that people are motivated by the project. Everyone's unique bits of expertise and knowledge come to bear on the project, just because they're really excited by it. There's a deeper involvement[179].

As for the process employed by Pinsky to curate projects, he explains that, after writing the scoping text or strategy and selecting the artists, he usually asked them to come visit the site. Then, the artist is required to produce a sketch: if it is approved by the advisory board, then feasibility studies are made. Then budgets were given to the curators and projects were implemented. There was a substantial project management part of the work:

> You have to manage it because there's a lot of quality control going on. For example, in Varini's case, we were told that the Art Fund building wouldn't have any scaffolding on it. And then we were putting up some of the scaffolding on it. You have to work out how to deal with that. We are there all the way to the end and beyond to ensure that the vision stays intact. Sometimes we are a lot more demanding than the artist, as in that case. I would always think that to curate is to take care, and that is the most important role of the curator. It's to take care of the artist. Take care of the artwork. Take care of the client. Make sure everything's taken care of[180].

In order to curate projects in the public realm, curators need

> to have a sense of architecture, building, the flow of people through a space […] In public space, you have to think about all of those practical things that you don't need to think about necessarily as a gallery curator. A good curator in the public realm is someone who's obsessed with how cities work, and loves cities and loves urban situations, unless they're curating in landscape, in which case they've got to love that. So they've got to love that condition in the first place. If you come from a gallery, kind of white cube background, and you don't take on board what the public realm offers, then you end up with a certain sort of response that isn't as interesting as it could be. I'm obsessed with cities, so it suits me well[181].

Pinky pinpoints how crucial is the role of curators to develop successful projects in public space, because of their professional artistic expertise (matchmakers between artists and sites), and because of their advocacy role in making art projects possible.

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[179] *Ibidem*.
[180] *Ibidem*.
[181] *Ibidem*.

The appointment of curators for the second phase of the program was delayed to 2016, when Tamsin Dillon and Rebecca Heald were selected. They commissioned *No.700 Reflectors* by Rana Begum, *Aleppo at King's Cross* by Tess Jaray, *Does the Iterative Fit* by Tatham O'Sullivan, *Almost Everybody* by Tobias Rehberger, *Zanzibar* by Céline Condorelli, *Rhapsody in Four Colours* by Rasheed Araeen and *Semaphores* by Amalia Pica (King's Cross Official Website). The last artwork installed was *My World and Your World* by Eva Rothschild (2020). However, compared to the first phase of the art program, the second was more conservative in approach, focusing mainly on sculptural installations and decorative design pieces. This discontinuity also stemmed from the fact that one of the objectives of the first phase had not been reached: the transmission of curatorial knowledge. Pinsky explains:

> What happened was it took [Argent] too long to employ the next curator, so there was no overlap whatsoever […] We came to the end of our thing, and no one was lined up yet. They hadn't got their head together around it, and they didn't see that as important. And in my general experience, this idea of passing on knowledge is never valued enough. People don't seem to learn, and they keep on making the same mistakes over and over again. I don't think we even had to write a report at the end. A lot of learning had gone on. There was no proper debrief at the end, lessons learned, things that are valued that need to be taken forward […] So that was quite a big part of our pitch, but that just fell through[182].

In 2022, Argent wanted to return to a more radical way of curating and asked Michael Pinsky to come back again with a new five-years program (2022-2026), elaborated together with curator Clare Phillips and called *X Marks the Spot.* However, only one artwork was implemented: *Natural Cycle* by Roadsworth (2022) (Fig. 121), an interactive installation devised as a sort of mini-city painted across the pedestrian expanse of Granary Square and down into Coal Drops Yard. It was a giant cycling track that mimicked real London road systems on a smaller scale, with streets, crossings and roundabouts. The installation's purpose was to help children become confident cyclists in a safe environment before they went into a real-life situation and to promote sustainable travel from a young age (King's Cross Official Website). After this first project, the program was sadly withdrawn. Pinsky explains his motivations: «I found it absolutely impossible to get any projects off the ground. All the people at Argent had changed, and that whole sense of taking a risk was just completely lost. There was no one really taking a lead or advocating for the art program.

[182] *Ibidem*.

After two and a half years or something, I said: this just isn't working»[183]. Not only the fear of risks brought the commissioner to change their mind on artistic proposals such as Michel de Broin's, but there were also explicit requests to instrumentalise artworks for economic return, in particular with the aim of promoting Coal Drops Yard's shops. The working process became very bureaucratic and stuck, so much that it became impossible to produce new artworks: and, as a curator, the real thing to do is making things happen, says Pinsky. Also having to deal with a larger team, including not only designers and builders, but also the business department, made it harder. Moreover, compared to the first phase of the program where curators were working on site, in this case relationships with stakeholders were more traditional, and there was no advisory panel supporting the curators[184].
The case of King's Cross art program clearly shows the cruciality of continuity in approach (both of curators and commissioners) and know-how for the success of a project: it is not sufficient to deliver good artworks, but also to work synergically towards shared and clear goals on a long-term perspective.

5.2.3 London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth (Anna Vickery and Grace Crannis), London

London boroughs are local authority districts, also known as councils: there are 32 of them, which together with the City of London, make up the administrative area of Greater London. Within each council, there are different teams working in different thematic fields, such as healthcare, childcare, finance, housing, transports, and so on. Among them, there are also the Arts & Culture Service and the Planning Service: in Richmond and Wandsworth's boroughs, these two teams have strengthened their collaboration to embed artistic practices in planning and policy development, thus introducing multidisciplinary collaboration, experimentation, and bringing diverse perspectives into institutional decision-making. This approach, implemented by Grace Crannis (Principal Planning Engagement Officer at Richmond and Wandsworth Councils) and Anna Vickery (Strategic Lead for Cultural Placeshaping at Wandsworth Council), was born from a desire to improve planning through a people & place centred approach, bringing fresh insight and expertise into teams, and highlighting and reflecting on issues that might not be prioritised (Crannis, Vickery 2025). Even if their role is not labelled as curating, their tasks, methods and objectives in producing

[183] *Ibidem*.
[184] *Ibidem*.

artistic projects appear very similar to that of curators: what is particularly interesting about this case is the direct link between art and policy planning.
The two officers have very different backgrounds: while Crannis studied Architecture and Design, while Vickery is specialized in Fine Arts, Contemporary Art Curating and art commissioning. Crannis explains the roots of their collaboration:

> Before I worked for the public sector, I worked for a collaborative design charity. It's aims are about empowering residents, educating design professionals on how to collaborate, and different types of design processes. I joined the council through a scheme called Public Practice, which was about trying to get people from diverse design backgrounds into local authorities. My work at the charity and my design education has had a lot of impact on the type of work I want to do. It's definitely influenced me to work closely with Anna on these types of projects that are more about using creative methods, using our practice, and trying to connect that with policy objectives, because I think it makes them far more interesting […] There's a lot of opportunity there to rethink the way that we typically write policy or engage with residents in the wider community about that[185].

Within her team, Crannis's main objective is to creatively engage people about their places. Vickery, instead, has a focus on working with the changing urban landscape of the borough, in terms of working with developers, that trigger cultural obligations through the planning process. Moreover, she aims at shaping the cultural offer for, and with communities of the borough and at making space for culture within places and communities: partnerships are key to achieve these goals. She says: «I'm really interested in artistic practice, and the possibilities of that through partnerships in terms of how that comes forward. And that's through the quiet work of policy development, and how artists can become involved at a granular level in that, and what we can learn from that […] I'm also very interested in how that comes forward in terms of co-design and collaboration with communities»[186].
They both highlight how this collaborative way of working is uncommon in local authorities, whose departments are usually quite hierarchical and siloed. For this reason, they do not have a formal structure to support their projects: they do not have funding specifically reserved for their joint creative projects and need either to fit them into other existing programs, or to apply for grants. Crannis explains:

[185] Interview with Anna Vickery and Grace Crannis, 27/05/2025.
[186] *Ibidem*.

> From my point of view, I've structurally tried to fit these types of projects into wider programs. So, for example, if we are doing a project about a certain town centre in the borough, there is usually a community engagement budget attached to that. Where possible, I allocate some of that budget for an artist commission or for some sort of partnership working […] Previously, the way I've been able to make these projects happen is through grant funding. We applied and were successful four times for a central government grant that was about improving digital participation and technology for urban planning. Despite the official deadlines passing, but the budget was held for me to use, which enabled these projects […] But funding is definitely a challenge, because even if some of these projects are very important and impactful, they can be seen as a 'nice to have'. They're not necessarily essential ways of working. It takes time for us to build up the case that this is important work and that we should be doing this[187].

Vickery adds that the collaboration:

> came out of a non statutory, non essential way of working, but it came out of an intention, an interest and our backgrounds, I would say. I think it's something to do with understanding and making space for the role of culture within places and communities, and how that integrates into planning, specifically within urban space. I feel like our work is often championing and making the case for that. For much of my career I have worked within organizations where the primary remit is not arts-focused[188].

As sources of inspiration, they name the Artist Placement Group, founded by Barbara Steveni with her husband John Latham in 1966, with the aim of placing artists in government, commercial and industrial organisations. Artists were seen as underused human resources, who would bring completely alternative ways of seeing and thinking to bear on the organisations they were placed in. In fact, according to APG, artists could have a positive effect through both their inherent creativity and their relative ignorance of corporate conventions (Eleey 2007). Another inspirational figure was that of Mierle Laderman Ukeles and her *Touch Sanitation* project (1979-1980), where she worked within New York's Department of Sanitation as an artist in residence. The last example cited by Vickery is that of *MANIFEST*, an initiative aimed at bringing outstanding UK-based artists into policy processes, launched by Policy Lab in 2023. The Lab was established in 2014 as part of the Civil Service Reform plan to make policy making more open through design, innovation and people-centred approaches. Policy professionals involved in the project not only appreciated

[187] *Ibidem*.
[188] *Ibidem*.

the outcomes but were also able to link them to specific needs and problems they encounter in their work. In particular, they noticed how artists contributed towards innovation in policy development, drew attention to aspects of policymaking that might otherwise go unnoticed, brought out human elements in the policy system, made space for and prompted reflection in policymaking, fostered greater engagement in policy issues by representing them visually and materially, and produced effects on wellbeing for policy professionals and stakeholders (Policy Lab Official Website).

The framework for Vickery and Crannis's collaborative projects lies in Wandsworth's Arts & Culture Strategy 2021-2031, which holds among its strategic goals that of Placeshaping, flanking economic growth, supporting communities and partnerships, learning and education, health and wellbeing, access for all, and dealing with the climate emergency and sustainability issues. The strategy claims: «We plan to use our cultural assets and programmes as the building blocks of place-shaping, and as key elements within new developments and regeneration. We look to work with partners to ensure a strong and thriving arts and cultural offer that benefits not only individuals, but also families and wider communities, as well as contributing to the vitality of the Borough's neighbourhoods and town centres» (London Borough of Wandsworth 2021: 3). With regard to the placeshaping goal, it adds: «Ensure arts and culture is integrally linked to the development of different parts of the Borough, supporting the Area Strategies set out in the Local Plan, and contributing to the improvement of the Borough's neighbourhoods, high streets, and regeneration areas by ensuring that art and culture are accessible to all, grow with the ambition of the borough and reflect the needs and opportunities of the residents and supporting creative clusters» (London Borough of Wandsworth 2021: 13). Among the objectives of the placeshaping goal are ensuring that culture and community are at the heart of the Council's regeneration schemes, and encouraging high quality meaningful public art to improve the public realm. The strategy then highlights the will to collaborate with planners and developers: through working with planning officers and developers at the pre-application stage, the Arts Service will ensure that developers' individual S106 cultural contributions are allocated to maximise the positive impact on the Borough. The Service will work with cultural and community organisations and link them up to developers, thus enabling Cultural Action Plans to be produced, or investing funding in new cultural infrastructure (London Borough of Wandsworth 2021). These goals have been translated into an Arts and Culture Action plan with SMART objectives to measure how this vision translates into action on the ground: for all the objectives see Fig. 122 (London Borough of Wandsworth 2022a).

Alongside the new Arts and Culture Strategy, the Council developed the Local Plan 2023-2028 for the Borough, which emphasizes a place-based approach, with detailed area strategies tailored to the Borough's key areas for regeneration and development. The plan recognized the vital role played by arts and culture as part of the place-shaping strategy, ensuring places support living, working, supplying, caring, learning and enjoying. The plan follows three core principles: People First, Placemaking and Inclusive Growth. When describing its objectives, the plan highlights the importance of building well-designed, attractive and distinctive neighbourhoods, connected by parks, commons, and open spaces: «Wandsworth will be the best place to live in inner London as a result of the enhanced quality of the built environment, which puts the health and well-being of local residents at its heart. Our public spaces, such as those within the Wandle Valley and Thames riverside environments, will be of a high quality, making them well-designed, enjoyable and safe places which people want to visit and stay» (London Borough of Wandsworth 2023a: 21). According to the plan, it is crucial to put placemaking at the heart of its activities, «by developing Area Strategies that build on each community's unique heritage, contribute to the development of local community identity, create and sustain distinctive places that reflect and support the expectations and aspirations of residents in terms of access to homes, jobs, facilities, culture, active travel and good design» (London Borough of Wandsworth 2023a: 23). The placemaking principle deals with traffic and public transport, open space, built identity, and design and built form: in particular, in line with the placeshaping objectives of the Arts & Culture Strategy, the Local Plan promotes identity in the townscape and values heritage, and ensures good and lasting urban design and architectural practice to create beautiful places and a coherent built form. In section 16 (*Providing for Wandsworth's People*), the plan makes direct reference to the Arts & Culture Strategy, claiming that «integrating art in the public realm within development opportunities contributes to the creation of unique, high-quality environments which people want to be in, as well as supporting crime reduction and community cohesion objectives» (London Borough of Wandsworth 2023a: 344). Public art, in its many forms, can help to create a sense of place, enhance civic pride, promote safety, animate public space, add value and enhance the visual quality of an area. It can also help in the process of regeneration, fostering social inclusion and community involvement while contributing to the borough's streetscape (London Borough of Wandsworth 2023a).

Vickery and Crannis, nonetheless, describe how the terms placemaking and placeshaping, even though widely used in the councils' policies and strategies, can be interpreted very differently. Crannis says:

> There is an interesting point around placeshaping, or placemaking. We talk about that a lot within the council, but I don't think everyone is fully clear on what it means and what our individual and collective role is within that […] I think it can be an everything-term. Sometimes, actions that fall under that description do make planning processes more inclusive and can do positive things for communities. And sometimes they can be extremely detrimental to communities […] I think there's also a trend in councils to use that word to cover a lot of things, I've even heard things like collecting the bins described as place shaping[189].

Collaborative working can help build shared meanings: Vickery, for example, outlines her understanding of placemaking and placeshaping and underlines the importance of communication between different teams:

> I feel like placemaking is the bricks and mortar kind of activity, the designing of public space and placeshaping has community context, heritage and identity at its heart. I think it's also about care. Obviously, my interpretation of that may not be the same as other colleagues'. So I think it's about clarity of terminology. It is about shared understanding and intent, and as important as the work and the projects that we do, is the way that we talk about them and how we understand this in the wider context[190].

Communication is thus one of the biggest challenges for Vickery and Crannis's projects. With this background, Crannis and Vickery initiated their collaborative projects between the different teams. The collaboration started naturally, as the two officers shared interests and were working under the same directorate and building, as Vickery explains:

> Planning and the Arts service now sit together under the Place Directorate, and there is a move within council led projects to look at place through the lens of community, and arts and culture play a role within that. There are a lot of conversations at the moment around that and around what the benefits of this can be. So I feel like it's becoming more embedded. I still think there's need for clarity in these things, because different services in larger organisations have different remits to deliver different priorities. But I think it's getting to a shared understanding about what people are doing and what good practice looks like within that[191].

[189] *Ibidem*.
[190] *Ibidem*.
[191] *Ibidem*.

Vickery was already used to dealing with planners during her projects, especially when working on planning applications that triggered cultural obligations to be included within S106, and when reviewing how culture is reflected in the Local Plan. Crannis, instead, had a personal interest in collaborating with the Arts team, and had previously done it within Richmond's borough. Crannis mentions two sets of projects in particular: two artistic projects, *Sounds of the borough* by Publica and *The Deconstructed Disco* by Hanna Benihoud Studio (2022), which influenced the writing of the council's *Night Time, Our Time Strategy* (2023), and *Darkness in Urban Spaces* by Kim Coleman and Harun Morrison (2023-2024).

As the Greater London Authority (GLA) had recommended all boroughs produce visions for their night times, Wandsworth's council collected data for two years on how their town centres and high streets were performing at night. In 2022, the council held a *Night Time, Our Time* consultation to hear residents' views on the night time. Then, between the end of 2022 and beginning of 2023, they held a follow-up consultation where they asked residents to provide comments on specific places on an Ideas Map, to show where and what type of improvements or interventions were needed. In May 2022, Wandsworth Council's Economic Development and Planning Policy teams published an artist brief calling for public realm projects to make up part of a range of new and innovative consultation methods used by the Council in the consultation process. The objective was to reach wider audiences and present the strategy in an accessible and visually clear format, going beyond traditional consultation methods, to allow for meaningful feedback that would inform the final version of the strategy (London Borough of Wandsworth 2022b). The engagement program included two artistic projects: *Sounds of the Borough* was a collection of stories and sounds told and captured by local residents. Ten participants from across Wandsworth took part in a workshop series and created audio recordings during their daily lives. The collection captured the diversity of experiences, providing a window into the shared needs and realities of residents at night. *The Deconstructed Disco* (Fig. 123) was a public realm installation inspired by workshops with young people at local youth clubs, who also helped with the build. It took the shape of disco shards, each associated with a different emotion and playing different music. The finished product was installed by Falcon Road underpass in Clapham Junction for five days in October 2022, to coincide with daylight saving time and the school holiday. Evening events also took place across the borough in Roehampton, Wandsworth Town, Tooting, and Battersea. Both artists worked with local people to better understand local experiences in Wandsworth at night, generating insights, personal stories and data that the council collected and used to produce the *Night Time Strategy* (London Borough of

Wandswoth Official Website). The strategy sought to create a more balanced night-time, providing services that appealed to a diverse range of users, whilst respecting the need for peace at night in residential areas. It followed four principles: 1) Voice: listening to those who participate in or are affected by the night time environment is key, so that their voices are heard and reflected in the strategy; 2) Collaboration: working better across agencies, organisations and communities is crucial to create a better night time experience for all; 3) Knowledge: it's important to provide guidance, training and information that informs a better understanding of the night time economy and safety; 4) Investment: specific interventions are needed to create positive impacts in particular locations or piloting new ideas (London Borough of Wandsworth 2023b). According to Crannis, it was Benihoud's project to have a greater impact, with around 625-680 people engaging with the artwork and a total of 98 unique comments and long form responses collected from participants, covering topics from night time safety, ideas for improving their local area, comments on the artwork itself and place-based comments about night time experiences (London Borough of Wandsworth 2022c). The final report about the project states that it influenced the strategy firstly because the comments helped shape the area-based insights for each area of the borough, particularly Clapham Junction. Secondly, the public realm ideas that were collected over the period were added to the strategy for development in the future. Lastly, the project grew the reach and mailing list and improved the reach of the project to allow more people to comment on the draft document (London Borough of Wandsworth 2022c). The report states that «having a physical presence on site for several days was beneficial – being there for that long meant people came back with friends and family and the artwork opened up many in-depth conversations about placemaking and planning. We received a lot of good quality insights into peoples' night time experiences. In general, most people we spoke to really enjoyed the artwork and were happy there was something creative happening in their area» (London Borough of Wandsworth 2022c: 4).

Darkness in Urban Spaces was an artist-led research project that explored human relationships and more-than-human relationships with darkness, commissioned with the aim of giving policy makers new insights. The project investigated the ambivalent theme of night lighting: if, on the one hand artificial lighting can disturb protected species like bats and others and should be avoided if unnecessary, on the other hand darkness can compromise people's ability to use, enjoy and feel safe in parks and green spaces at night. The artists held monthly walking workshops in Ham over a year, with community members, council staff and local area experts, using lens-based and cameraless photography as tools to explore darkness and light. Ecologist Connor Butler supported the artists by helping to map dark

spots and corridors that non-human life prefers and which animals use the site at different points of the day. At the end of the project, the artists produced the following list of recommendations to be employed by policy makers:

- Central government, local councils, and planners should recognise and respect the value of human and non-human access to darkness and incorporate this into their decision-making processes
- Darkness should not only be understood as a social negative or generator of conditions for fear, but also as a vital part of urban life and a site of pleasure and community
- Safety in public spaces shouldn't only be predicated on the illuminated/bright city, but also consider broader social factors
- It should be recognised that both humans and non-humans need darkness for health
- Lighting is one consideration among many for wheelchair users and those pushing prams or trolleys. Quality and evenness of surfaces and paths equally factor
- There are environmental and financial advantages to using less artificial lighting at night
- Achieving darker urban space can be welcomed by some communities and is technically simple to address compared to other major environmental problems. (Coleman, Morrison 2024: 26-27)

Crannis describes the process of producing the project, of which she was the commissioner and project manager:

> The first step was an open call that was run collaboratively by me in the planning team with colleagues in the Richmond Arts Service. They had reached out to many council teams asking for colleagues collaborate with. I put in an expression of interest, and we came up with ideas and research questions linked to policy areas that are complex or contentious or would be quite interesting to explore through artistic practice. We wrote the brief and had to agree how to loosely define the outcomes but keep it open and how much funding each team would contribute. […] Then we put out an expression of interest and got a massive response. We interviewed the shortlist and appointed Kim [Coleman] and Harun [Morrison]. That original commission ran for slightly over a year. I extended it to run two more workshops to share the project with council colleagues […] From those workshops, we came up with a list of 10 recommendations, which could be adopted by different teams to actually implement and

change council processes, or write new policy, or whatever is needed to reflect the artist's outcomes[192].

In March 2025, council officers from many different departments attended two-part follow-on workshop with the artists, during which they produced ten ideas for the darkness:

1. Policy: hold a Citizen's Assembly for darkness – how do we approach lighting, biodiversity and night time safety in the borough, particularly for planning issues? What is the Council's role and how should we process complaints and make decisions?
2. Policy: new guidance to strengthen our lighting guidance – through a lighting strategy, floodlighting SPD or approach to creative lighting for placemaking
3. Policy: embed walking into decision making – more meetings outside in the places we are writing policy for, mandatory site visits
4. Education: 'close your curtains' awareness campaign to make people aware of the positive impacts of this simple change in behaviour
5. Policy: appoint a darkness and biodiversity champion in the Council
6. Placemaking: bring ideas about darkness into town centres in the form of artwork and cultural initiatives to create interest and awareness
7. Wayfinding: could we do this with light and give people the option to take a demarcated 'dark' or 'light' route?
8. Project: annual strategic switch-off for Earth Day (22 April), with a hyper local focus to explore the impacts
9. Project: a night time film project to show what life is like in the dark and the impact of artificial light to be communicated to residents
10. Training: give officers and the community a greater understanding of the needs of species – starting with animal needs first. (London Borough of Richmond 2025: 1-2)

The results haven't informed a specific policy yet, but Crannis and her team are working on that: «I want to push it now because we've identified these opportunities. The next step is what we do about it, for example whether we need a new floodlighting policy, whether we need to train council staff on biodiversity in nature and the needs of animals, whether we need to do a campaign to ask people to shut their curtains to limit the spread of light. The complexity is many people are responsible for these things and they are ready to be enacted, if someone can pick them up»[193].

[192] *Ibidem*.
[193] *Ibidem*.

The project Vickery and Crannis are currently collaborating on is *Art and Urban Regeneration: live exchange as a method for policy development*, an impact fellowship led by artist Jaspar Joseph-Lester. The project takes up the question of art's role in prefiguring the city to propose new approaches to art and expanded roles for artists within areas undergoing urban regeneration. Joseph-Lester is working closely with Wandsworth Council and initially aimed at producing a photo essay that - through documenting and reflecting on the group walks and workshops – would make recommendations for developments in policy. The fellowship also functions as an example of how artists can be deployed at the earliest possible stage of urban development for the benefit of urban stakeholders (community and residents' groups, cultural institutions, art commissioning groups, policy makers, urban planners, students and researchers, artists). Before starting the fellowship, Joseph-Lester had been working with Vickery and Alex Rinsler (Wandsworth Arts Service and Nine Elms Arts & Culture Team) on the new Sites and Situations MFA. The project included group walks around Nine Elms led by representatives from the Council, local activists, and artists. The walks focused on the regeneration of the area and the role of art in city design to consider potential for interventions by groups of artists along the Thames walk. The project led to group projects for the area. The Fellowship gave the artist the opportunity to extend the collaboration with Wandsworth council to the planning services (Crannis) to establish a broader perspective around the project aims and to focus on cultural policy in relation to regeneration and placemaking. The project's objectives are to develop new models for the embeddedness of art and artists in processes of urban regeneration and city making, to develop strategies for policy development around placemaking, regeneration and new urban futures through live exchange (group walking and workshops) and collaboration with Wandsworth Council, and to provide insights into the role that art can play in re-invigorating urban change in cities undergoing regeneration. The project is divided into three stages: the first employs group walking as a method for knowledge exchange and critical reflection. «For Joseph-Lester, group walks are both method and metaphor: by traversing regeneration sites, planners, council officers, curators, artists, designers and local residents explore lived experience, and in doing so, inform planning with narratives of memory, culture, and identity» (Joseph-Lester 2025: n.p.). Walking is therefore deployed as a catalyst for empathetic models of city making and cultural intervention. The artist organizes walks around sites in Wandsworth undergoing regeneration (such as Clapham Junction and Lombard Rd), in collaboration with representatives from the council, enabling the working group to test and develop methods and ultimately construct a mechanism for live exchange. The following walks are developed through workshops to include local organisations,

community groups, educators and cultural institutions to reflect a broad and diverse range of urban stakeholders. In total, four commissioned walks with experts from other fields, four walks with planners, art commissioners and place makers from Wandsworth Council, four walks with residents from Winstanley Estate, and one walk with a youth group from Providence House were organized. Joseph-Lester explains that:

> The "Group Walks" in Wandsworth began with a simple act – walking together – and quickly revealed itself as a method for collective noticing. Across estates, riverside paths, rail bridges and underpasses, participants read the city through movement, slowing down enough to register textures, thresholds and the quiet rules that shape daily life. "You'd imagine that the only way to deal with it would be to separate the cars and pedestrians." "this is a big area of focus at the moment because they've got different owners." These remarks capture the core terrain of the walks: the uneasy interface of infrastructure, ownership and experience. The borough's most ordinary routes – the cut-through beneath the tracks, the pavement that narrows at a junction – became the places where policy meets perception […] Walking, then, functioned as both inquiry and invitation. It enabled a multi-voiced reading of place – where a station concourse felt expansive from above but airless below; where a freshly painted tunnel looked better, yet still emptied out after dusk; where a path 'open to all' nonetheless made some feel watched. The act of moving and pausing together produced an inventory of lived details that formal documents often miss. Crucially, the walks foregrounded people – children, carers, elders, cyclists, bus users – and how art and design imagines (or omits) them. Comments about sound and silence, light and shade, benches and thresholds, built a picture of how 'publicness' is felt. (Joseph-Lester 2025: n.p.)

From the walks, a set of consistent proposals emerged to be taken forward by the Wandsworth Council: 1) Design for adaptability, not just aesthetics. Spaces that host many uses across time foster resilience; 2) Support informality. Not all value can be planned. Make room for spontaneity, improvisation, and community-defined uses; 3) Prioritise repair as much as innovation; 4) Involve communities early, often, and continuously. People must see themselves not only as users, but as co-authors of place. According to Joseph-Lester, walking together, paying attention together, builds not only data, but also relationships, which are the foundation of any meaningful placemaking process (Joseph-Lester 2025).

The second stage consists in two workshops, the first aimed at reflecting on group walks and recommending participants form local organisations, community groups, educators, cultural institutions, artists, and cultural practices for the next stage of the project, while the second including participants identified through the first workshop. In particular, the two workshops

held at Wandsworth Town Hall (28th May 2025) and The Royal College of Art (8th June 2025) explored the practice of developing open and flexible briefs in the commissioning of public art, architecture, and community projects. A set of key recommendations emerged from the workshop:

> 1) Develop a shared library of briefs and case studies across councils and organisations, reducing duplication and raising standards;
> 2) Formalise training and peer exchange for officers, ensuring that commissioning is recognised as a skilled practice requiring support;
> 3) Embed process in policy, making site visits, group walks, research phases, and community dialogue a requirement rather than optional;
> 4) Balance short-term visibility with long-term impact, valuing both quick interventions and slow research;
> 5) Ensure fairness and equity, paying artists properly and making opportunities accessible across experience levels;
> 6) Plan for documentation and legacy, creating an archive of learning that outlasts individual projects or political cycles. (Joseph-Lester 2025: n.p.)

Joseph-Lester pinpoints that the group noted that the recommendations are mostly about shifting priorities: valuing process, context, and learning as much as output. The workshop ended with a reflection on the ethos of openness, a pre-condition for setting a framework within which unexpected things can happen. Openness means trusting artists and communities to bring insight, while providing the scaffolding of clarity and support. Tthe workshop's legacy was seen not only in the recommendations derived from it, but also in the relationships formed among participants. Commissioners, artists, and academics left with a stronger sense of shared purpose and mutual support. By continuing to meet, exchange, and refine practice, they can ensure that brief writing becomes a live, evolving craft rather than a bureaucratic chore (Joseph-Lester 2025).

The third stage had the objective to develop a photo-essay that documents and critically reflects on documentation from the project. The aim of such publication was to create a toolkit for good practice to develop strategies for the development of cultural policy leading to better urban futures (Joseph-Lester 2024).

Some of the project's outcomes were displayed in June 2025 on occasion of the London Festival of Architecture: the first result came in the shape of *Sound Pavilion*, a composition developed for the area around Clapham Junction in collaboration with local youth clubs, schools and participants (Fig. 124). Through a QR code available on a plaque located in the

site, visitors were able to experience a layering of soundscapes created using the rhythm of passing trains as a baseline for songs and lyrical responses to the area. The work addressed ideas around what it means to belong and how this can be communicated through sound and space (London Festival of Architecture Official Website). The second outcome was the *Mapping Winstanley* exhibition (Fig. 125): Joseph- Lester, together with Siyu Chen and Mengshuo Wu, produced five creative maps, developed from a series of walks with participants that have worked and lived on the estate and include different periods and experiences that cover the full lifetime of The Winstanley Estate. Each map was designed around the experiences and insights of different individuals to become a personal portrait (London Festival of Architecture Official Website). Talking about the project, Vickery says:

> I think it will be really interesting to see how this works, because we've not done that before in terms of bringing somebody into the council to work alongside two different teams and understand from different perspectives the idea of placeshaping… If you work in the sector and you work in local government, eventually, you understand how it all works. You can see how the planning works, how arts and culture might fit within that. Often as an artist, your intersection with that is by responding to a brief to provide something at some stage, whether that's a temporary piece or whether that's a piece of public art. With this approach, there's not so much a determined outcome. It's a methodology of working, with some recommendations and learnings coming from that, through a socially engaged practice. That's really interesting in terms of being able to be open enough to not have a predetermined outcome. For this kind of way of working, having conversations with other officesr and other services is an outcome in itself. It's quite difficult to get your head around if you're used to commissioning in a certain way, with certain set steps for a certain outcome, which is often an object or temporary project. So what's exciting for me is it's a slightly different way of working[194].

Besides the two artworks, the outcomes of the project have included the publication of *Spaces of Knowledge: Art, Urban Walking, and Empathetic Exchange*, a collection of essays by leading researchers, artists, designers, academics, urban planners, curators, architects and policymakers responding to questions about the role of urban walking as method, as theory, and as practice in the frame of social change, policy development and civic cognition. The group connected during a two-day symposium that took place at the Royal College of Art and at the York Library Gardens featuring talks and panel discussions, art performances, group walks and a book launch (Joseph-Lester 2025). In their reflections on urban walking,

[194] *Ibidem*.

the presenters and participants considered four key areas: 1. Walking as Method. What is the meaning and significance of 'walking', through human-made urban spaces, as a mode of enquiry and a means for the pursuit of knowledge? 2. Walking and Policy Development. What is or can be the role of walking in the development guidelines and policies, templates for civic practice? 3. Walking and Social Justice. What are the implications of such walking, in terms of ethic, living together, and living justly? 4. Walking and Art Practice. What is the relation between walking and Art and how does this relation inform our understanding of shared public space? (Joseph-Lester 2025) Joseph-Lester's chapter will examine urban walking as a catalyst for developing innovative models of artistic engagement in urban regeneration and city-making.

Another publication resulting from the project is *Open Brief Writing for Art in Public Space: Principles and Practice*. This text brings together the workshops held at Wandsworth Town Hall and The Royal College of Art, taking as their starting point the recognition that conventional briefs often over-determine outcomes, closing down the possibilities for creativity and collaboration. The workshop participants – Kate Batchelor, Larry Botchway, Nancy Collinge, Grace Crannis, Jaspar Joseph-Lester, Jade Morgan and Anna Vickery – discussed how briefs might instead be framed as tools for research, engagement, and adaptive practice. Lastly, the project has had policy impacts, as the recommendations set out in this publication, are already being used by officers to support open brief writing in other projects and adopted by the Council in a new policy document, the *Cultural Commissioning Guidance for Wandsworth Town*.

In terms of skills and methods, Crannis highlights the importance of advocating for projects and being persistent: «Aa lot of the work is pushing internally, advocating for it, being a champion. You need to have a lot of hard conversations to make sure things get approval and sign off. The key is just persistence, to be honest. You have to keep pushing that a) this should happen and b) people should listen because it's important»[195]. Moreover, she underlines how being open, clear and flexible is necessary, especially when writing briefs for projects. Lastly, she claims the significance of embedding results. Vickery additionally, claims the importance of facilitating exchange and identifying opportunities:

> You're a kind of conductor, through which people can get information. What you need to do is to be really clear about facilitating discussion, sharing your knowledge […] When you're introducing an artist, you have to decide on an area where they might want to be working […]

[195] *Ibidem*.

> because, obviously, there is only a certain amount of time. It's a very big borough, so it would make sense in terms of where other developments are happening, where artists might be best to work with communities. And then, you have to be able to signpost the artist confidently to colleagues, often it's about the language used. We all work within our own set of understood terminologies. If I'm speaking to somebody internally, I'm really aware that something written in a paper for an artistic research piece may be difficult to get purchase on if you're not from that discipline. How do you talk about somebody's practice and introduce it to a colleague, so that you can make space for that conversation to happen? […] It's about making space for exchange and about identifying how you could do that within an organization, which has to work in a way that is siloed because teams have very specific areas of responsibility, some are statutory and some are not.. I think it's about finding space within that as to who's doing what and how you enable conversations to happen, and how communities are involved in such conversations[196].

Lastly, she underlines that understanding and respecting how other people in organizations work is key, explaining how she approached this in the case of Joseph-Lester's project:

> There's best practice around ways of working that I would adopt, which is about communication and respecting other people, other colleagues, deadlines and pressures. It's about understanding that they will have their own set of concerns. This, for them, is an extra thing to do […] We are trying to make the case for that whilst understanding this is not always going get taken up as an opportunity by somebody else. There are very particular processes, all organizations have them, so we help the artist understand, identify, and be a part of those. Jaspar did a corporate induction course, which is what all staff have to do when we come to work here, it is about understanding how the organization works and what are the expectations are of working within that. It's really multilayered. I then worked in partnership with Grace, setting out how we will both host the residency, how much of our time we can give and a shared set of parameters. So we have bi-weekly meetings together with Jaspar to discuss and talk about how it's going and updates, he can put any requests in, we can then respond to that, and signpost appropriately, and then other things develop out of this proecess[197].

5.3 Sweden

For public art policies and funding systems in Sweden, see chapter 4.1.

[196] *Ibidem*.
[197] *Ibidem*.

5.3.1 OPI Lab (Jonas Dahlberg), Stockholm

OPI (Of Public Interest) «is a practice-based research environment dedicated to a collaborative experimentation across art, architecture, and beyond», founded in 2021 by Jonas Dahlberg in Gröndal, Stockholm, in order to explore ways to engage with public spaces and our living environment (OPI's Official Website). The laboratory is a place for developing new methodologies and languages that enable work in complex and polarized urban environments. Some of the questions the lab revolves around are: what if we created the conditions to work with similar time spans, schedules, scales and budgets as urban planners and developers do? What kind of questions do we ask? What kind of questions do we answer? What kind of alternative imaginaries are we creating and how are they shaped (Dahlberg 2024)?

Dahlberg, artist and professor of Public Art at the Royal Institute of Art, was initially asked by the university to build up a Public Art course, which was developed as a postgraduate lab welcoming sixteen professional practitioners (artists, curators, architects, and more) each year. The program, dedicated to collaborative experimentation across art, architecture, and beyond, consists in ten week-long gatherings across ten months to be held in Gröndal, an old industrial area of Stockholm which is currently undergoing significant development. The gatherings «are structured around a program of practice-based research, lectures, seminars, workshops, conversations, and critiques – a format designed to stimulate knowledge exchange through learning and unlearning in a peer-to-peer setting» (OPI's Official Website). Since 2025, OPI Lab has become also a research environment for other researchers, such as PhD fellow Runo Lagomarsino, who is taking the neighborhood as his case study and laboratory, «where full-scale (1:1) experiments in collaboration can be carried out together with the neighborhood, existing networks, and new contacts established through the industry partners connected to the project» (OPI's Official Website). Dahlberg decided from the beginning that the course needed to get out of the Royal Institute of Art's premises and settle in a location which could represent both a case study and an opportunity for the students to interact directly with the public realm. He chose Gröndal both because he knew the area well as he used to live there, and because of the neighborhood's development situation. Furthermore, he decided to settle in a specific area instead of visiting a different area every year with his students in order to align with urban development's timing, which operates through years or sometimes even decades. Dahlberg's objective was to build a new research environment:

> That has been my goal from the beginning, to build up an environment where we can work in public space in the same way as we work in a studio, which means that we are in a space surrounded by public space, working with that space as a case study, and we are going out and using it, initiating ideas as artists are normally doing in the studio. When an artist goes into the studio, they sit there and they start to do things which no one have asked them for most of the times. They don't know if anyone is interested in what they're doing, and they don't know if it's going to be financially viable. And then they hope that it will. What we try to do is to use public space in the same way. So instead of sketching inside our studio, we are sketching outside. We are sketching in public. We are a group of artists, landscape architects, city planners, we have a choreographer in this year, curators... we have a wide group of people in there. As you're sketching in public, people start to also see us and our professions, our languages, and we do it in our language […] We are doing it in our artistic language, and we try to talk through our own languages. We prototype. So they slowly get used to us… What we do becomes part of their environment in that neighborhood […] We're opening up for artistic languages, and these professions. Of course, among the people who live in a neighborhood like this, there are also city planners and municipality workers. It's also the people in power that are passing by. So them too are slowly, slowly, noticing it, even if what we do will not be necessarily important for a planning process or art in public space […] But on the long term, it will change how people perceive us, it will give our voice and our bodies importance […] Otherwise, they wouldn't even know how to map us, how to bring us into the process of thinking around what the city plan is. This is interesting in itself […] The goal for me is that they, in the long run, should see that our voices, our thinking, should have a place around the table[198].

Dahlberg highlighted the importance of the storefront space hosting the project and shaping it at the same time:

> Since I moved in the storefront space, I've constantly made new additions, alternations and constellations of the space, changing how it is experienced from both the outside and inside. I've come to realize that the space needs to be in constant motion and change. It needs to be unfinished, to not be able to be defined entirely. OPI exists as an ongoing provisional in between state that follows changes and support what enters and transpires in the space and its surroundings. It uses architecture as a dialog tool, or as a camouflage. Sometimes the space is made to feel open, and look and function as a bar or cafè or some other semi-public identity, and at other times it takes on a completely different form, more conductive for concentration or rigorous exchange and production. (Dahlberg 2024)

[198] Interview with Jonas Dahlberg, 23/05/2025.

He describes the activity and impact of the lab on the neighborhood in these terms:

> We are all over the place now. We have two groups that are working together with the municipality […] We have course participants that are talking with [the developer] Skanska. We have others that are looking into the detailed plan. Last year, we had people that won the critique prize in architecture because they made a citizen proposal for the new area […] And with Runo, we are sitting at the table with the city and with the developers […] So I hope that we will be part of creating a little change. Not that we will change the old city plan, but that we will be able to negotiate something at least[199].

One of the most peculiar characteristics of OPI is that it's a hybrid entity, holding together three different parts: in fact, besides the lab, there are also a studio and a public space. The studio «OPI X develops projects in collaboration with colleagues, organizations, communities, and cities – creating alternative futures and counterspaces that can act as spatial double agents» (OPI's Official Website). Dahlberg explains that:

> The studio works as an incubator. So this means that we bridge kind of experimental and difficult methodologies, that we are using in the course, in the studio part. By bridging, we can help people pull out projects and either we help guide them to other people, or we bring them into collaborative projects where there's a flat hierarchy […] We can be a support structure for others[200].

Dahlberg this service can be very helpful for those who are willing to apply for projects in public space and need help in preparing their CV, or need someone more experienced to flank them. One of the latest projects developed by the studio is *Between Walls,* the artistic strategy for Bodø municipality, Norway, signed by Dahlberg and architect Johanna Fager. The proposal consists of creating one (or more) structures on vacant lots between buildings, where local people can meet to discuss changes in the city and neighborhood, so that artistic action becomes the basis for planning the city's future (Fig. 126). The proposal is based, on the one hand, on the need for a space for citizens to discuss issues related to the city and planning and, on the other, on the fact that empty spaces within the urban fabric are capable of sparking debate (Of Public Interest Studio 2025). Dahlberg claims this is an opportunity to challenge value systems in urban planning:

[199] *Ibidem*.
[200] *Ibidem*.

> It's about the way you value things, about the set of values that the city or people that are involved with planning are taking into consideration. They have a value system, which we might think differently from those in power: we might question the value system they are basing their decisions on, basically. It's not to be naive and utopian […] I'm interested in what can be done, what can be negotiated in[201].

The public part regards organizing public events to share, test, and discuss what OPI does and inviting others to present things of public interest during a series of open door sessions. Furthermore, OPI sets up a festival. Dahlberg explains that these activities are not financed by the Royal Institute of Art, a situation which turned out to be positive as it allowed for a greater freedom. According to Dahlberg, all of these three parts are needed for the structure to work properly. This structure has unfortunately caused some problems in terms of financing the organization, as Dahlberg encountered many difficulties when applying for funding to flank the university's one. For this reason, Dahlberg has been investing his own money in the project for many years, and is currently trying to develop fundrainsing strategies.

Dahlberg started his education as an architect, but then he switched to art before graduating, and became an acknowledged video artist. Nonetheless, after fifteen years, he started to feel an urge for change, and in particular was interested to work with architecture and public space. He was invited to design the setting for an opera at the Grand Theater in Geneva, where he worked with traditional old school methods for scenography, such as lighting and costumes. This added the scale component to Dahlberg's work, and allowed him to apply for the architecture open call for the national memorials to honor the victims of the terror attack in Oslo and Utøya on 22nd July 2011. Dahlberg won the competition, but the project was later cancelled by the government due to local residents' protests. The memorials' commission made it clear for Dahlberg that he wanted to work on something new and different, based on initiating projects with no commission and on working on complex ideas. Thanks to these experiences, Dahlberg matured many competences that he brought in OPI's project:

> The most important thing, which I brought with me, that I teach and talk with the participants in OPI, is the idea of my body versus other bodies. I brought in what it means to move through and how to be able to change positions. I brought in the belief that there's no objective mapping

[201] *Ibidem*.

> […] of a space. I believe that all mappings are subjective. If you do a subjective mapping, in the end, you will end up with being extremely objective in a certain way, by understanding your body in relation to other bodies, your experience in relation to other experiences[202].

This allows to test the real potential of art in public space: according to Dahlberg, the power of art lies in the public not knowing yet it is art, thus getting curious and stopping by. The key of his method is to get to know the context and people's necessities:

> To really work with art production in public space, you need to handle difficulties. You need to start to look at what is going on in the space as your palette: all these complexities are your colors on the palette that you work with. It's the people: it takes two seconds for them to walk by, and they are tired. It's the noise. It's the maintenance. It's the finance. It's to work in a way to understand what I can do if I want to say something which is slower than their tempo. I know their tempo. I know they are not there to listen to me. So, how can I slow them down? I need to work with them and catch their attention. This is something which is very rarely used in art: architects are not doing that either. It's working with sequences. It's working with tempos. It's working with a non-objective way of thinking. For me, one part comes from architecture. One part of it comes from cinema, regarding movement sequences, and one part of it comes from my own knowledge of my inner world: my fear, my sadness, my melancholy, my anxieties[203].

Dahlberg explains working with tempos through the example of his video installations:

> As a video installation artist, I worked with really slow films that were very silent. [When you exhibit] you have a room, and then you have a curtain in front of it to make the room dark. This means that when people open the curtain, the light comes into the space and the space becomes too bright, so you can't see the film. So you walk in, and then you close the curtain. And then you see something really slow, and your eyes haven't adjusted to the darkness because it's too dark. You can't see anything. You don't see if there are any people there. And then you leave because you have fortyfive other works to see. And this is too slow, so you go to the next one. You need to start to work with the audience and with that situation, which means that if I want them to go into the space and see, I need to create an entrance zone. The entrance zone will take them from a tempo of a group exhibition to walk into a slow film. And it needs to adjust from the bright to the dark. So it needs to create the fade in tempo and in light […] What I did then was to flip the screen. I created a wall and I took away the curtain.

[202] *Ibidem*.
[203] *Ibidem*.

> So the wall is flipped backside, and the film is on the other side. It's a big empty space in the beginning, which you see, which is semi dark. So you can walk slowly into the space. I put a carpet in, so I started to create a silent space. The body starts to disappear a little bit. People need to invest time because they don't know what they're going to see. So they walk into the space, which is an empty silent space, which is basically what my films are. So without knowing it, they're going into my tempo and my film in the space, and then they turn around, and they can see the film. Then, they have already spent maybe twenty seconds in this decision-making, and normally they will stay another one minute because of the investment of walking in there. They lean against the wall. They can see the people who come. They are in control of the space, not like before, when people were coming in and bumping into them from the back […] I'm reading the situation and working with that. And the same thing you need to do in public space[204].

Moreover, Dahlberg underlines the importance for him to work on methodologies and not to focus on a specific topic of his:

> My job here is to give voices to other people. The course aims to bring in a diverse group of people. I don't have an agenda myself regarding what they work with. I have a methodology, and that methodology contains their interest, be that decoloniality, be that feminism, be that whatever topic […] My interest in methods derives from the fact that I'm not so interested in being in a situation where we have one subject. Our society today is a one-subject society […] Students work with one subject, which means that they can go quite deep into that subject, of course. But they all think the same […] I'm more interested in creating the conditions for a public space where we don't think the same. I'm more interested in the arguments and in creating a safe space for not thinking the same. For instance, if I want to not just talk about what colonization has done, but I also want to propose ways of changing that, then you need to speak with the ones who think differently. I don't know another way of changing what people are thinking. If you build a context where you just show art on a certain topic in art spaces and in art context, everybody will agree with you. So then it will be a very empty gesture politically. It's just art […] No change. So, what I believe is that methodologies concern how to speak with difference. And this is what the method is about: it's about understanding your body in relation to other bodies. And the method is to create a new way of mapping and understanding a situation, any kind of context, in a way […] I'm there to not let students assume directly with their gut. I'm there to say: how about if we try to understand the others' (for example developers) motivations? What if we speak with one of the people there that are working on the project, and we try to understand their position, their decisions? Then, of

[204] *Ibidem*.

course, you run the risk of becoming instrumentalized. But we need to speak, and we need to find a way to negotiate something in that world, because otherwise we will be standing on the outside and looking at the world being built again and again and again by the same people. So we need to start to initiate. We need to start conversations, and we need to negotiate, and we need to compromise. And if we don't compromise, then we do bad blobs in public space. We need to find ways to make people listen and follow and come into a dialogue. And then we can push it further and further[205].

The main methodology developed by Dahlberg is called "the pinball script":

> It's a work methodology about how to develop projects situated in the complex context that is called public space. As in any pinball game, the ball needs to be set in motion to start the game. The ball represents your first initial curiosity or interest. In order to start developing a project, you need to put the ball in play directly, so that it starts responding to the very specific situation and locality that you are in. In this pinball script, the project development develops through continuously bumping between where, how, why, who and what. Like in pinball, the ball can be stuck bumping between two bumpers for a while before going to a new one. If a project or concept is developed too far before you set the ball in motion, it will most likely fail or not reach its potential, since the project will not be able to adapt and respond or adjust if the concept is too fixed. It's not a linear process: the ball doesn't know where it's heading. The logic [telling] on which bumper it bumps against could be described as following a critical reading logic, so the ball finds its way towards the bumper, that questions and contributes with energy, knowledge and information, needed for you to critically question, rethink and develop further. While the ball goes back and forth against the bumpers, slowly this process develops some kind of translation or sketches. (Dahlberg 2024)

A second phase consists in the communication of the results achieved during the pinballing, which is called "the distribution language layer":

> The distribution language can be seen as the artistic strategies and languages that make a project or concept work in a very specific context and locality. The distribution language is not seen through your eyes, it's about understanding the ones you address (viewer, audience, participant, listener, commissioner, reader, and so on), their time, state of mind, desires, interests, in that specific moment, in a very specific situation where your project is situated. It's about using that understanding in relation to your intention that develops a distribution language, through a subjective listening practice. (Dahlberg 2024)

[205] *Ibidem*.

He then adds:

> You can't just develop a project, and then think: now I will distribute this. That's a blob. You need to bring in the context around it as early as possible. Sometimes […] people think that it's just a proposal. And I ask: but for whom? […] Who will read it? What kind of text are you writing? […] You can't write a text without knowing whom you're speaking with. The readers are so different, that you need different voices. You need to know that the voice you're developing is for a specific public. It's not for everyone. The proposition can't just be for us in the group. It needs to reach someone else who needs to be defined. And if you start to define that, the other things come automatically. Suddenly, you need to change the language. Suddenly, the project changes a little bit because the proposition changed. And suddenly, you start to work with it in a real way instead of sitting in your room and writing a book that will be placed in a drawer […] It's both a development and assessment method. You can't divide these things […] As soon as you start to sharpen your voice because you understand which public you're speaking with, the text becomes better. If you think you're speaking with the general public, you normally speak with no one because the general public doesn't exist[206].

Dahlberg uses the case of the artistic strategy for Bodø to make an example:

> The municipality wanted a strategy document, which was also an artwork […] That meant that they needed visual help, so it would not be enough to give a paper about how you can work with artistic strategies in planning processes, because then it would end up in a bunch of other policy documents and disappear into the municipality […] So this means that they needed images and different kinds of visualizations […] They have created a typology block for the new city, so I took it and used it. I took away a part of a house and put that typology in the empty space […] Then you can have conversations in that empty space, with different kinds of interest groups that can imagine the future. We did some illustrations of this, because we needed to produce an image […] In that case, I knew I was speaking with politicians, city planners, even with the one that needs to give up a development space and sacrifice that for a public value of the future, which is a value that they might not even agree upon. That means that we needed to produce beautiful pictures that would make people not too afraid of this […] In this case, we didn't have so many parameters […] and we needed to speculate a little bit too much […] I need to speak with three different kinds of people, so I need to find an in-

[206] *Ibidem*.

> between language. The politicians and the citizens are very different. And then there are the developers […] They have very different value systems, drives, and aims with what they do[207].

Even though Jonas Dahlberg does not define himself as a curator, his activities at OPI can be seen as a very relevant example of CAUT in terms of transforming the urban context through artistic means. What is particularly important is Dahlberg's focus on consciously theorizing methodologies for working with these situations, mixing artistic practice and theoretical research.

5.3.2 Marabouparken/Baltic Art Center (Helena Selder), Sundbyberg/Visby

Helena Selder is a curator and artistic director of Baltic Art Center, an international production-based residency for contemporary art on the Swedish island of Gotland since 2016. Before, she was curator and artistic director of Marabouparken konsthall in Sundbyberg. These institutions are not specifically devoted to producing public art projects, but Selder curated two initiatives of this kind while employed there: *Marabouparken Lab* (2010-2016) and *Art in Urban Development Project Visborg* (2019-2021).

Selder has an Art History background, and started working in the art production field in the mid 1990s, when she volunteered at Färgfabriken, a post-industrial factory space in Southern Stockholm converted into a private art space. In that context, she started assisting artists doing their projects. Later on, she worked for a governmental agency called Swedish Travelling Exhibitions (*Riksutställningar*), assisting two curators in producing contemporary art exhibitions. After that, she decided to enroll in the Curating Contemporary Art MA at the Royal College of Art in London, where she cemented her curatorial practice by studying aesthetics and art theory. After her graduation, she moved back to Stockholm and contributed to start the new art space Marabouparken konsthall.

Marabouparken konsthall is an art center located in Sundbyberg, a Swedish town with 40,000 inhabitants, neighbor to Stockholm City. It used to be a production zone with factories, is one of the few towns in the densely populated Stockholm region that still has green and open areas that can be sold off for building development. The art center has its venue in Marabou Park, an award-winning park that was developed in the 1940s and 1950s as a visionary landscaped recreational facility for the employees of the Marabou chocolate factory. Selder, as the center's curator and later on artistic director, was actively engaged in

[207] *Ibidem*.

developing ways for the art institution to facilitate exchange between artists, local residents and stakeholders, in order to develop ideas and critical discussion on how to inhabit local public spaces and structures. In particular, in 2010 she started *Marabouparken Lab,* a residency that invited artists to contribute to long-term collaborations and research-based projects in local contexts. The lab focused on experimental projects, open-ended and explorative, in the borderland between art and education. The idea was to link artists, people, education and public space, to take advantage of creativity and experience from various sources in building a dialogue about how to shape the city (Marabouparken Official Website). The project started with the exhibition *Parkliv* (Parklife), installed from August to November 2010 in the center's venue. Participant artists included Dave Allen, Kerstin Bergendal, Martin Boyce, Nathan Coley, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Martin Karlsson, Matts Leiderstam, Margaret Morton, Paola Pivi, Ingo Vetter, Annette Weisser, Elisabeth Westerlund, Kohei Yoshiyuki, and Christine Ödlund. The exhibition aimed at reactivating Marabou Park in its role as both a private and public space (E-flux Announcements Website). After that, several projects were developed: *PARK LEK* by Kerstin Bergendal (2010-2014) (Fig. 127), *Manifesto* by Anna Witt (2012-2013), and *Participant Observers* by Henrik Andersson (2014-2015). Among them, *PARK LEK* was the most relevant, both in terms of duration (four years) and outcomes, becoming an internationally renowned case study. Sundbyberg is a clearly divided city, including both villas for wealthy people and social housing. During a national economic crisis in 2004, Sundbyberg's administration decided to accept a proposal from six large building companies offering a kind of down payment: they wished to secure an attractive site for development whenever the demand for new homes grew stronger again. Developers wanted to build on the green areas between two existing parts of Sundbyberg, densifying the areas of Hallonbergen and Ör (Bergendal 2015). The name of the project is a reference to small public institutions, placed in parks of new urban areas in Sweden since the 1930s. They consisted in a manned playground with a single, modest building and only one or two staff members. There, children could borrow different play items or join one of the activities. Thus, the *park lek* (park play) acted as a meeting point for residents. Bergendal came to Sundbyberg and acted like a *park lek* staff member, creating situations and giving residents tools to have a say in the redevelopment process, which risked exacerbating social segregation. Selder explains that she invited Bergendal because she was very good at organizing discussions and at urban landscapes. Bergendal describes her way of working this way: «The long term, but not permanent. A state of exception, but as a premise. Intervention … just by being there» (Bergendal 2015: 94). Bergendal confronted the problem of the hierarchical nature of municipal structures: «such

organisations normally tend to avoid unprogrammed dialogues, and in particular they avoid letting participants from different levels and capacities come into unprogrammed contact with decision makers», explains Bergendal (Bergendal, Phillips 2018: 37). The project critiques modernist planning and its methods, in particular public consultations where people are called to express themselves on decisions that have already been made: while modernist planning, focused on execution and design, doesn't admit conflicts and paradoxes, Bergendal's work is permeated with ambiguity and indeterminacy, and fosters the development of a new social imagination. By building a new «politics of audibility», she aims at countering the declamatory speech of planners, developers and politicians, and at allowing people who are not usually heard in planning processes to be listened (Holston 2018: 108). The result was the accumulation of different perspectives, creating complexity in contrast to planning methods aiming at streamline perspectives (Selder 2018). The project had two phases: during the first Bergendal initiated processes of mapping and conversation with formal and informal structures. Partners had to step out of their comfort zones and rhetorics. Activities included talks with civil servants and then a widened group; slow-paced walk-and-talk processes; visiting those whose knowledge of the areas had not been included in the proposed plan; films of local people commenting on the plan; workshops where also developers participated; presentation of solutions to politicians and civil servants; a large model which visualized a concluding strategic counter-proposal. During the second phase, supported by Public Art Agency Sweden, she built a parallel public consultation platform, in tension with the traditional civic hearing procedure. The *PARK LEK PARLIAMENT* elaborated more specific programs, with the collaboration of a municipal project office, which was placed inside the art project and was led by Åsa Steen from Sundbyberg Town, and two planners, Helena Dunberg and Lisa Brattström. A new local council consisting of all landowners of the involved areas, was inserted in between the project and the administration's commissioners. Six main principles were formulated and handed over to the municipal council of Sundbyberg, to be followed by the planning department: «utopian thinking as planning method; accumulation rather than streamlining of perspectives; the competence of life lived; address-whom am I speaking to?; conflicts are part of it and can be good; time.time.time.» (Selder 2018: 72). For each of these six focus areas, a work group was opened for the public, meeting at least four times a year. In 2016, two years after the end of the second phase, the municipal council of Sundbyberg approved a new plan for the reorganization of the area, implementing many of the proposals generated by *PARK LEK*, such as the expansion of the area addressed by the district plan and the inclusion of two main green areas crossing each other (the so-called Green Cross model), thus retaining the existing

green infrastructure and counteracting the segregation of the area (Wilson 2018). When talking about the outcomes of the project, Selder says: «The project created a public space in Hallonbergen where people were participating, where the locals would meet politicians and planners, so Kerstin would draw out people in discussions and force them together. I guess, that's how they also saw a lot of things, because they don't usually work interdisciplinary or over the departments, and she made them do that in a sense»[208]. Nonetheless, Selder explains the difficulties encountered in reaping the benefits of her work: « If, as an arts organisation, you're not part of the public planning structure it's hard to realise these kinds of artistic interventions. And if you manage to get in, you end up offering your own resources in terms of time, knowledge and network, but as an outsider to the public structure it's not easy to harvest the results»[209].

Years later, Selder became director of the Baltic Art Center in Visby, and was invited to curate the *Art in Urban Development Project Visborg* on behalf of Region Gotland and with support from Public Art Agency Sweden. The Baltic Art Center is a small nonprofit NGO, run as an association with its board. Selder is the artistic director, and she works together with Anna Norberg, the head of administration. The organization works as a project-based residency for international artists: Selder recounts that her projects start by searching for interesting projects:

> While I fundraise, I find projects that I think would be interesting to do on Gotland, both from the perspective of the artist and from a Gotlandic perspective, and also something that matches funding. So, I often work thematically in relationship to a couple of partners, that can be stakeholders on Gotland or international collaborations and networks. They can be networks funded by Nordic Baltic Funding, but they can also be Creative Europe's. And then we have partners on Gotland, like the Gotland Museum, or the Uppsala University Campus Gotland. So it's a sort of play in between what interests me as a curator, and topics that I find relevant for Gotland as a context and international artists. They are very often things having to do with sustainability and now more and more with the military mobilization on Gotland, which is a place that has huge historic collections. Moreover, there is a very big interest in heritage on Gotland. So I could say heritage, different kinds of sustainability issues and, recently, the mobilization of civil society through artistic processes, are the main themes[210].

[208] Interview with Helena Selder, 11/04/2025.
[209] *Ibidem*.
[210] *Ibidem*.

Oftentimes, during the artistic projects Selder and the artists need to engage with the civic society:

> Very often we are working with civil society because we are not the kind of residency where artists come and do their own thing in the studio. We don't have a studio - we have a small office, we have a guest apartment, we have a car, we have me and Anna and then we have whole island which they can engage with. It's again not working with public art as such with physical objects in public space. It's more about taking the art outside the studio or the art space[211].

Though, in the case of *Art in Urban Development*, it was very difficult to engage with future users both because of the corona pandemics and because the district was still to be built and thus there were no people living there. The only people using the area were the staff at Region Gotland, as their office was located there, and a school.

Besides taking art in public spaces, other objectives of Selder's work are to open new perspectives for people not working in the arts, to connect spaces through art, and to facilitate artists.

At the time Selder was hired at the Baltic Art Center, Region Gotland was planning a housing development and other activities in the former regimental area Visborg in southern Visby, as a consequence of the P18 regiment being disbanded in the early 2000s. The development plan for the Visborg area 2025 was decided in 2009. The Regional Board decided on a quality program for Visborg 2020, with the goal of creating a sustainable and attractive district with social, architectural and environmental qualities (Region Gotland Official Website). The purpose of the project was to develop working methods for including artistic perspectives in urban development projects and to find different perspectives in Visborg's development: artistic investigations in fact were seen as able to draw attention to values that had not been included in the planning process. The project was implemented as part of Public Art Agency Sweden's *Kunskapsnav offentlig konst* commission (Baltic Art Center Official Website). In dialogue with the Department of Culture and Leisure at Region Gotland, the urban planning office applied to the call for *Art in Urban Development* in spring 2018 and signed a cooperation agreement with Baltic Art Center and curator Helena Selder in the spring of 2019. The work aimed in its initial phase to include the development of design concepts as part of a quality program for the district, but also art events with the aim of examining the situation in Visborg during the course of the project (Selder 2020). The area's

[211] *Ibidem*.

natural values and sustainability goals have been important to define the art project's main themes: “links, paths and movement” (connected to sustainable mobility goals) and “meeting places and green urban spaces” (identity and social sustainability goals). Selder and a design group, made of staff members from the Region’s Technical Department and the City Architect, elaborated these in dialogue with the consultants Ahlqvist Almqvist Architects and URBIO Landscape Architects. After having outlined the main themes, Selder developed a project plan with a preliminary time schedule, action plan and budget. She also prepared a document for the artists, consisting of a description of the area and the project as a whole, extracts from the structural plan for Visborg with maps of the area and extracts from the document regarding sustainability goals for the new district. The project plan focused on artistic investigations based on the proposed themes and the exchange between the artists, the design group and its consultants. The art project functioned as an artistic preliminary study engaging planners, architects, landscape architects and others concerned planning professions, and invited artists in a joint discussion to contribute to a future quality program, identify long-term methods for including artistic perspectives in the planning process, but also point forward to concrete proposals for designs (Selder 2020). At first, the regional Visborg design group was interested to include in the brief also a question about how to connect this district to Visby itself, but in the end the idea was withdrawn in favor of enhancing Visborg’s specific character. The artistic work was divided into introduction phase, idea and research phase, project phase and documentation phase. In all phases, artists received a feedback on their ideas. The selected artists, Juri Markkula, Ingela Ihrman and Urbonas Studio, were firstly called for a site visit and met the design group: they had a walking tour of the area led by the design group's landscape architect, followed by a larger meeting in the town hall, where the artists were given a deeper background on the Visby city plan and the Visborg area by the city architect, and where the artists were given the opportunity to present themselves and their work to the entire design group. The site visit was followed by a research period during which the artists had the opportunity to reflect and follow up on their interests and plan a new visit to Visborg. On occasion of the new visits, meetings were booked with people and groups who were able to provide relevant knowledge and perspectives on the artists' work and their project proposals. After getting feedback, they started to implement their projects in different ways, each specific for the kind of proposal presented. Selder, thanks to her presence in the design group and regular contact with the city architect, was able to convey information and knowledge between the artists and the urban development project (Selder 2020).

Juri Markkula, in his work *ANNO MMXX* (Fig. 128), presented how the identity of the future district Visborg could be strengthened and developed in the planned city park Donners Hage. The artist used the cultural history of the site and the natural values of the regimental area's brick architecture, fences and local vegetation in designs marking the entrances and exits of the park. The idea behind the design concept was framing Donners Hage, both as a physical space and a place of memories: to do so he designed a brick portal (a reference to regimental architecture), a bronze casting of a traditional sheep fence, a copy of the lowest 90-100 cm of a giant alder trunk located in the park, and a portico made from PVC pipes covered with photographic image textures generated with 3D technology from the surroundings of Donners Hage (the camouflage recalling the military past of the site) (Baltic Art Center Official Website).

Ingela Ihrman, in her project *Marching on Visborg* (Fig. 129), worked on how both officials and citizens could be included in an artistic adaptation of the urban planning process. Ihrman's project was a meta artwork about planning itself and the people who plan, supposed to turn the spotlight back on to the people who were commissioning the artwork: showing the behind the scenes, Ihrman wanted to make planners aware of their own practice underlying the development. She proposed a model for artistic participation where the result was not a realized work, but a process within the framework of the project. The artist held conversations with the design group and stocked data, plans and thoughts. In parallel with this, she generated images, objects, sounds, text and movements that connected parts of the urban development project with history, human attitudes towards nature and specific plants and animals. She then carried out a performance at the Regional Town Hall in Visborg with Anna Haglund and Frida Peterson, who trained in specially designed costumes, blew notes into bottles and sang the specially composed choir song *Gotland's water and sewage* (Baltic Art Center Official Website). The performance was a reference to Gotland's scarce water sources: in Visborg's plan one of the goals was building a more sustainable water system, based on source-separated sewage (Region Gotland 2020). According to Selder, the characters ideated by Ihrman could have been used by the Region also as a way to communicate important values in this new residential area, such as the reuse of water.

Urbonas Studio's *The Swamp Observatory* (Fig. 84) looked at the planned stormwater ponds in northern Visborg with the belief that the wetland is a form of intelligence and a model for coexistence between life forms that humans can learn from. The ponds could work as a carbon sink, or for the collection and distribution of water, the filtration of pollutants, a habitat and refuge for plants and animals, and a destination for scientific and artistic research. Working with sixth-grade students from a local school, Urbonas developed an AR app to

integrate reality with future unknown materials and species (Baltic Art Center Official Website).

Region Gotland's City Architect Christian Hegardt explains that «the collaboration with the artists in the early stages of urban planning has been instructive for us urban planners. Involving the artistic competence early on has also made it easier to identify important values on the site. We believe that the artistic investigations, in one form or another, will further contribute to the realization of the city district, and it will be exciting to see if we can also apply a similar work model in future projects» (Baltic Art Center Official Website).

Unfortunately, the development project was stopped because of the corona pandemic and the design group was dismantled, and so the artistic projects couldn't have as much impact. Moreover, the pandemics forced Selder and the artists to develop the projects mostly online because of gathering restrictions. Selder highlights how, among the three, Ihrman's project was particularly penalized by the situation:

> The participatory component of the performative work, which was meant to engage people from the Planning Department, didn't happen. We couldn't. We did a performative test when there was a period when the pandemic was a bit low, in the actual administrative building. But the idea was really to make a performative work with the civil servant who was working from Region Gotland, particularly in the Technical Department, and that the design of this performance would capture and convey aspects of the planning process itself[212].

Ihrman's was also the artwork that was most detached from the idea that the design group had:

> I think also the steering group didn't really see much possibility to have a dialogue with anybody using the area like that. I mean, we did have it with the school and they were happy about that, but I think they were more interested in design perspectives to be honest. Anyway, I think they were happy about the pedagogical intervention that the Urbonas Studio did, because it was in relationship to the school […] Otherwise, they wanted design ideas, and the one I think they had an easiest time to take to heart was Juri Markkula's design and use of this existing formal elements in the area, like the architecture from the old military regiment that was the headquarters of the Region, or different aspects that he was using for the City Park. I think that the hardest time they had with was with Ingela Ihrman, because I don't think that the sort of meta-project she made was something that they really could understand or read, but

[212] *Ibidem*.

> there was a lot of humor there, which they liked. So I guess that was okay: I, for my part, wanted them to get very different perspectives and very different art practices[213].

Though, the preliminary studies made by these artists identified values and priorities that could be used as basis for future art plans of the area. In the final part of the project's report, Selder gives some suggestions, such as transforming the design group in an arts council with a strategic focus. The council's role could include developing an art plan and ensuring that future 1% funds from building investments are used in accordance with it. It could also monitor that decisions are made in time to appoint art boards for specific design assignments that arise during the process. Lastly, she says that it would be valuable if the design group had the opportunity to redistribute art funds between different construction and civil engineering projects based on the guidelines from an art plan (Selder 2020).

When talking about the methods she employed in her projects, Selder says that matching artists and sites and creating open-ended processes are the key:

> I think that is very much part of my own curatorial method: I can see if one artistic practice has a lot to offer in terms of perspective on a specific site or context. I have rarely worked with placing physical objects in public space. I work with adding a layer of knowledge to the context, even if it's knowledge in the shape of an artwork, in the shape of something abstract, but very often of an open-ended process, which opens up possibilities which other people find interesting and want to latch on to[214].

In the case of *PARK LEK*, for example:

> The artist had a method of reading the city and reading how the city was organized that interested the City Architect. For example, she was making a reading of how the public parks were placed in the city and who had access to them and who didn't, how they were designed and how they opened up to different districts in the municipality: a reading that the city architect needs to do, but may not have the aesthetic capacity to do […] In this case the architect was interested in these kind of perspectives and invited Kerstin Bergendal to be part of making a new green plan, which means looking at the whole municipality and seeing how green areas are used and how to work strategically with them to contribute to the city[215].

[213] *Ibidem*.
[214] *Ibidem*.
[215] *Ibidem*.

Another important method that Selder used was that of building the structure for the project to happen, divided into introduction phase, idea and research phase, project phase and documentation phase. She participated in all the design group meetings, reported artistic progress, and mediated between the artists and the other stakeholders in the group:

> [I had to do] a lot of mediating in the Visborg design group and in the actual meetings, because I was always with the artists when they were meeting planners or other competences. For example, Ingela wanted to meet the engineer who would be able to tell her about the underground water system […] The details around this quite technically advanced thing were something that you needed to do research on. In all of these meetings I would try to mediate, because they didn't understand what she wanted to know… so there is mediation on every level. The City Architect gave me a heads-up when he understood that somebody wasn't understanding why we were doing something, and he would then instruct me telling me that I needed to unpack why I was interested in something, and booking meetings about this. He would advise me on who to see. For example, they didn't understand why we needed to work with international artists, because it was expensive. And what for? We're an international residency, and thus I need to, and want to, work with international artists. The other reason is getting an outside perspective[216].

She adds that to mediate successfully, she needs to map blank spots of knowledge:

> You have to understand what other people don't understand, and it goes both ways. There are blanks of information and knowledge. It's just a matter of time until people understand, but you have to sort of map out where they have the blank spots. That's the mediation: trying to predict where people will not understand why artists have this interest or why they want to do a certain thing and also make artists understand why certain limits are there, or why the planners and the civil servants have to do certain things. The mediation skill is pretty important. And I've also heard that from artists that the fact that I was there made it easier for them to just be artists and not have to do that mediation themselves, because they have to focus on getting what they need to develop their idea. And I tried to sort of pave the way for them to get what they needed to make their idea happen, but also to engage other people in that process and feel enthusiasm for it and find it interesting[217].

Selder thus interwove different working processes and perspectives so that they could fit with one another. In her interaction with different competences, she integrated in her work

[216] *Ibidem*.
[217] *Ibidem*.

some of the other professionals' ideas, such as those of quality briefs, reflected in the choice of specific themes for the project and in paying attention to specific structures and qualities of the landscape. Lastly, Selder concludes claiming how crucial is for a curator to be convinced strongly about the power of art outside art spaces: «It's important also to have a very strong conviction that artists have a lot to contribute outside of the art space, the gallery or the studio […] I don't think it's a romantic idea that artists, if they're invited into this planning process, somehow come to represent human beings who are not planners and don't have a fixed position, but are users of this space that is being planned. So it's like they are in a way representing future inhabitants or users»[218].

5.4 Italy

In Italy, artistic interventions in public spaces have been mostly prompted by social policies or urban redevelopment programs, sometimes with little awareness on the part of administrations, which perceived art as a form of decoration of urban space imposed from above. In general, there have been few programmatic and systematic policies concerning art, with a tendency to look only at short-term effects and weak links with the territory, despite various attempts over the years to regulate the issue, for example through the so-called "2% law" (Law 717/1949, *Norme per l'arte negli edifici pubblici*) (Mazzucotelli Salice 2016). The law requires state administrations and other public entities commissioning new construction or reconstruction of public buildings to earmark a percentage of the total project expenditure – ranging from 0.5% to 2% – for the commission or acquisition of works of art to embellish the structure. The law has been implemented unevenly over time and has heated debates on its practical application because of a lack of clear, consistent implementing decrees and technical guidance, the exclusion key typologies of buildings such as schools and universities from the obligation, and the fact that commissions often resulted in formally anachronistic works, detached from the evolution of contemporary art, leading to a recognized "2% style" (Messina 2017).

It has often been the case that artistic interventions have been used as an easy shortcut to spectacularize and embellish urban projects: in this way, administrations could, on the one hand, gain public visibility by associating their image with that of artists and, on the other, increase the consensus and legitimacy of transformation interventions (Ponzini 2011). For a long time, there was also a lack of an integrated vision that would combine landscape

[218] *Ibidem*.

management policies with those of cultural heritage: the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, established in 1975, immediately delegated the protection of the territory to the regions. The lack of an integrated vision also led to a lack of coordination between the various regional authorities, which often resulted in conflicting policies (Pioselli 2007).

In the 1990s both the settlement process of migrants and the need to reclaim marginalized urban areas called for new social and spatial policies, which established a connection also with certain socially engaged art practices. In particular, third sector organizations, including also non-profit associations and museums, became the intermediary of creative processes aimed at building social cohesion: this is linked to a new urban planning trend, entailing the creation of complex projects and participatory local development actions (Meschini 2021). An example of this are the *Contratti di Quartiere*, urban redevelopment programs funded by the Regions and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transports, and introduced by Ministerial Decree 22/10/1997, aiming to integrate urban and social aspects. They dealt mostly with social housing neighborhoods, where they promoted experimental interventions in bio-architecture, urban ecology, and energy saving (Sclavi 2002). These programs marked the shift from a phase of urban expansion, to a phase of urban transformation, renewal and regeneration. The program was divided in two phases: the first in 1998, the second in 2002. Many of the projects activated through these programs used participatory methods, which were close to socially engaged art practices and paved the way for their increasing inclusion in urban transformation processes (Meschini 2021). Italian programs were flanked by European projects such as the *Urban* programs described in chapter 3.1: for example, Turin participated in the second cycle of the program (2000-2006), and the *Nuovi Committenti* art project in Mirafiori Nord was implemented as part of that.

In 2002 the Ministry of Culture introduced the *Piano per l'Arte Contemporanea* (PAC) (Law 29/2001), establishing an annual plan financing the acquisition, commissioning and promotion of contemporary art in Italian public collections. In 2017 the PAC was suspended, but it was reintroduced in 2020.

Another important project was introduced in 2014, namely the *Italian Capitals of Culture*: in line with the *European Cities of Culture* initiative, it aims to «support and promote the independent planning and implementation capabilities of Italian cities in the field of culture, so that the value of culture as a lever for social cohesion, integration, innovation, and individual and collective social and economic growth can be disseminated»[219] (Italian Capitals of Culture Official Website). Thanks to this initiative, Italian cities have been able

[219] Translation by the author.

to implement artistic projects in urban spaces, as was the case of the *Without Frontiers* festival described in chapter 2.2.

In 2014, the Ministry's General Directorate for Contemporary Art and Architecture was renamed as General Directorate for Contemporary Art, Architecture and Urban Suburbs, sanctioning the expansion of its expertise in contemporary art to include the regeneration of urban suburbs, which for the first time became the specific focus of action by the Ministry. The objectives set by the Directorate were to promote and support contemporary art and architecture by expanding its expertise to include the redevelopment of urban suburbs. Among the projects introduced by the new Directorate were the *Futuro Periferie. La cultura rigenera* (Future Suburbs. Culture Regenerates) congress (2017), the *Atlante delle periferie funzionali metropolitane* (Atlas of metropolitan functional suburbs) study (2017); an award for research on urban regeneration (2017), and the open calls *Creative Living Lab* (since 2018, renamed *Laboratorio di Creatività Contemporanea* in 2024), *Cineperiferie* (2018), and *Culturability* (promoted since 2013 by Unipolis Foundation, since 2017 in collaboration with the Directorate). All these open calls revolve around cultural projects promoting suburbs, regenerating derelict spaces and buildings, also through participatory methods (General Directorate for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Culture's Official Website).

In 2017 the Ministry also introduced the *Italian Council* project, which provides funding for the commissioning and acquisition of new artworks with related international promotion, for the international promotion of artists, curators, and critics, and for the development of Italian talents abroad (General Directorate for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Culture's Official Website).

Public funding is flanked by private patronage, such as that provided by banking foundations and those related to the *Art Bonus* system. Introduced in 2014, the *Art Bonus* provides a 65% tax credit for individuals and companies making liberal donations to support the maintenance, protection, and restoration of public cultural heritage, as well as to support public cultural institutions and performing arts organizations (The Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends Website).

5.4.1 Connecting Cultures (Anna Detheridge), Milan

Connecting Cultures, Foundation for the Arts and Interdisciplinary Research (F.A.I.R.), is an organization engaging with territorial regeneration, cultural planning, public and participatory art in marginal areas, working with local and diverse ethnic communities.

Founded as an association in 2001 by Anna Detheridge, professional cultural journalist and author, Connecting Cultures in recent years has also promoted an approach to sustainability through visual arts, fashion, and design. Detheridge has a background in linguistics and semiotics. In her work as a cultural journalist she became interested in the overlappings between contemporary art, architecture, design, photography, media studies, reading them as visual languages. In particular she found certain texts by Umberto Eco such as *The Absent Structure* (1968), inspirational in their analytical approach to visual culture.

In the early 2000s, she decided to leave full time journalism moving "from words to deeds". «It seemed to me that it was time to start looking at the world and reality with an inferential gaze, in the sense of giving importance not just to representing realities, but also to reconstructing meanings through curatorial practice and, above all, through the variety of art languages which came out of conceptual art»[220].

She explains: «In my opinion, especially in these times of conflict, our major emergency is the

transformation of our relationship and understanding of nature […], practice becomes essential, working in the field with people who have diverse disciplinary backgrounds, who are willing to learn from each other in the search for possible solutions, but also in the search of new narratives»[221].

For this reason, Connecting Cultures' first site was in an old farmstead in Parco Agricolo Sud, a marginal area of Milan, where she started leading her first exploratory projects in collaboration with local universities and artists. One of her leading ideas was to work on projects which regenerate places through changing perspectives rather than physical reconstruction.

Connecting Cultures' objectives are to raise awareness around sustainability issues, to promote sustainability at the local level through the arts, culture, and the enhancement of public spaces, to encourage local communities to develop active citizenship programs, and to spread ideas of empowerment and social and cultural inclusion through art and design. The foundation organizes workshops, exhibitions, publications, events, and training courses, involving both Italian and international artists, curators, researchers, and communities. Connecting Cultures promotes art as a tool for social, cultural, and environmental transformation, supports interdisciplinary research, and activates participatory processes involving artists, scholars, and local communities. The foundation aims at cultivating new shared imaginaries, which are helpful to read through the complexity of today's world. In

[220] Interview with Anna Detheridge, 13/05/2025. Translation by the author.
[221] *Ibidem*.

this context, taking care and curating are seen as practices of support and care addressed to people, nature and the environment: cultural activities and artistic interventions are process-oriented, taking the shape of dialogues, performances, installations, videos and educational activities (Connecting Cultures Official Website).

As for the foundation's organization, it consists in three staff members, including Anna Detheridge as artistic director, and two project managers. Plus, there is a young curator doing her apprenticeship.

One of the first activities of Connecting Cultures was the organization of the exhibition *Arte pubblica in Italia. Lo spazio delle relazioni* (Public Art in Italy. The space of relationships) at Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto (Biella), from June 6th to November 9th 2003. The exhibition was an initial survey of artistic practices outside gallery spaces, prioritizing the social sphere and choosing dialogue and collaboration as their working methods. In these practices, the artist is invited to work with institutions and communities often alongside other professional figures (artists, town planners, geographers sociologists etc) to address the demands of an increasingly complex society, moving beyond the merely decorative or monumental conception of art. The research concerns issues such as intercultural society, public space, and relations between different areas of society, proposing possible synergies between administrations, urban planners, artists, media, citizens, and cultural institutions in contexts of urban regeneration, territorial development, and social transformation.

The exhibition *Arte Pubblica in Italia* brought together twelve groups and individual artists, architects, and curators: Artway of Thinking, Massimo Bartolini, Emilio Fantin, Fondazione Pistoletto, Alberto Garutti, Gruppo A12, Multiplicity, Cesare Pietroiusti, Stalker, Luca Vitone, Xing, and Progetto Zingonia (Connecting Cultures Official Website).

After this initial mapping, Connecting Cultures led several artistic projects in urban spaces, some of which are particularly interesting. Among them are, for example, *Imagining Parco Sud* (2007-2009), a photographic and urbanistic investigation of the area where Connecting Culture's venue was located, and *Milano e Oltre* (2010-2013), which established creative hubs for young artists, designers and other creative professionals in four of Milan's suburbs (Barona, Bovisa, Bicocca and Quarto Oggiaro). In this chapter, *Progetto Valdarno* (2005-2006), and *Il segno della memoria* (2009-2013) projects will be described as examples.

Progetto Valdarno was produced in collaboration with the Region of Tuscany, the Province of Arezzo, and the Municipality of Montevarchi, with the cooperation of the Artway of Thinking collective. The project was born from a request of the Tuscan Region to create a new identity for a building complex La Ginestra (Montevarchi), which included a former factory, a convent built in the XVI century and other constructions. They had no function at

the time, and were owned by the municipality: the aim was to regenerate the complex and promote the values of a territory which was mainly constituted by largely abandoned and unproductive countryside, with an uncertain future. (Connecting Cultures 2021). The project lasted 18 months and was commissioned to Connecting Cultures by Tuscany's Contemporary Art Network - TraArt, the Province of Arezzo and the Municipality of Montevarchi. The project consisted of a series of activities spread across 2005 and 2006, with the aim of activating participatory cultural processes and enhancing the creative energies of the area. The project's prerequisites were: 1) the project's implementation had to be based on constructive dialogue with all key stakeholders to develop a long-term development plan; 2) the institution had to develop and contribute to a process of unifying territorial policies regarding urban planning, the environment, culture, the economy, education, and youth policies; 3) the project had to be developed in synergy with other institutions in the area aimed at protecting and enhancing the environment, cultural heritage, and the museum system (Connecting Cultures 2006).

The project was important to establish Connecting Cultures' working method, which Detheridge calls the three Rs method: exploration (*ricognizione* in Italian), relationship (*relazione*), and restitution (*restituzione*). As Detheridge describes:

> [It is] a way of working that starts quite simply going out into the field without knowing what you will find: looking and listening, noting certain hidden presences. You observe, you try to understand, you try to make sense of things in three stages: exploration, making relations and restitution. As for the relationship, you relate to those who are in that area, noting places of energy that bring people together […] people of all kinds and of course all the stakeholders involved […] Then, at the end of the process you elaborate forms of restitution, possible solutions. So the 3 Rs are ways of operating in a general sense to explore where you are, how to relate to others, and then understand what you can imagine giving back.[222]

Though, Detheridge highlights how restitution is often not a material intervention, but a recommendation, because of a lack of funding, even though this is not the case of *Progetto Valdarno*. In more recent years, funding for such projects – in the form of (mostly public) grants non-profit associations such as Connecting Cultures apply for – has been drastically reduced: for this reason, Connecting Cultures has been increasingly focusing on educational and relational projects rather than on physical regeneration ones.

[222] *Ibidem*.

The project began in January 2005 with Cantieri La Ginestra, a series of workshops and surveys of the area: it was an exploratory phase lasting 60 days, dedicated to observing and mapping local resources (Connecting Cultures Official Website). The survey, operated by Artway of Thinking, was based on a holistic and interdisciplinary approach: alongside the collection of scientific data, the project focused on storytelling and self-narration, in order to capture elusive aspects of the territory which could not be detected through urban and sociological analyses. For this reason, several interviews with local stakeholders were conducted to understand which were the capabilities of the area, thus outlining an economic fabric made up of small enterprises (mainly fashion and manufacturing-related), which were having tough times because of globalisation (Connecting Cultures 2006). Besides the analysis of expectations related to the potential of the space, two more analyses were conducted: a desk analysis of the most recent European cultural realities concerning contemporary art, and an analysis of the disciplinary and thematic areas capable of stimulating the territory through planning of specific events. For example, the surveys showed that approximately 80% of respondents who consumed few cultural products did so because of the lack of suitable facilities in the area, of the offer's low quality, of a lack of information, and because the offer did not match their personal interests.

Thanks to these data, it was understood that a new type of cultural offer was needed, including learning and experimentation workshops, interacting with the population in a multimedial way, and temporary exhibitions. The artists worked from la Ginestra premises during the survey phase, providing informal training for local participants that would combine the skills available in the area, ranging from art to design to craftmanship, economics, and gastronomy, fostering innovation through interdisciplinary training and networking with other local economic entities, such as the Slow Food presidium in Arezzo and local farms. The final proposal for the building complex's regeneration was firstly to create an incubator for cultural growth and informal education, through workshops and residencies, especially for young people, and secondly to offer services for more dynamic local enterprises by promoting creative clusters. These ideas were elaborated also during the workshop *Nuove GenerAzioni* led by Artway of Thinking, where young professionals worked together for 20 days to create a new identity for the building complex: the chosen destination was inspired by growth and development opportunities and by an idea of harmony with the past history of the place. Such proposals were presented in the final report and feasibility plan for Cantieri la Ginestra, submitted to the Region of Tuscany in 2006 (Connecting Cultures 2006). Besides the workshop, a series of seminars and walks entitled *Dall'archeologia industriale alla città diffusa* (From industrial archaeology to sprawl town)

was organized in order to explore Valdarno's history. Moreover, a photography workshop called Valdarno on the Road was led in partnership with the University of Newport (Wales) and the Marangoni Foundation (Florence), during which 28 artists conducted a photographic survey to create a new image for the Valdarno Valley. Lastly, an Electronic Arts and Music Festival (*Pandemic*) was organized, consisting of three days dedicated to the interaction between digital culture and electronic music, with performances, concerts, and artistic projects. All these activities were part of an initial grounding phase, during which the institution had to establish its reputation and create a cultural trademark recognized and appreciated at both a local and national level. In harmony with the cultural development of Cantieri La Ginestra, the building complex was regenerated according to a project designed by architect Massimo Cutini, thus transforming it into a place of production, hospitality, postgraduate education, informal learning, a technological hub, and a residency for university students, artists, and other guests, a place able to increase stakeholders' both social and cultural capital. These activities were part of the project's second phase, that is the creation of a cultural incubator offering services with high added value, stimulating entrepreneurial activities in the territory and consolidating itself as a cultural pole of regional and national importance. The idea of *cantiere* (Italian word for construction site) was chosen as it recalls the concept of a place suitable to developing projects and research, investigating the complexity, the contaminations, and the networks of the territory. The project is a good example of narrative practices, aiming not at transforming space in a decorative and aesthetical way, but by writing a new script for its future (Connecting Cultures 2021).

Il segno della memoria (Fig. 130), instead, was a project designed in the occasion of the regeneration of Imola's central square, Piazza Matteotti. Curated by Anna Detheridge and created by the Studio Azzurro collective, the project radically transformed the concept of a monument, moving from rhetorical celebration to a shared narrative. The project arose from the need to redevelop Piazza Matteotti, which had been paralyzed for years by bureaucratic and political deadlocks regarding the removal of an old fascist-era war memorial. Only in 2008 an agreement was made between the Municipality and the Ministry, allowing for a constructive collaboration to relocate the old artifact and envision a new contemporary work (Di Francesco, Ragozzino 2022). The new project was commissioned in 2009 by the Municipality of Imola 's Department of Culture and Civic Museums, the Superintendency for Architectural Heritage and the Regional Directorate for Cultural and Landscape Heritage of Emilia-Romagna, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities - Directorate-General for Landscape, Fine Arts, Architecture, and Contemporary Art. It was realized thanks to the support of the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Imola. An inter-institutional

commission established that the new work should be immaterial to respect the Renaissance spatiality of the newly restored square without physically imposing upon it: it was not meant to be another monument, but an intangible artistic intervention, capable of conveying a strong symbolic value of memory and peace. Detheridge explained that when she was asked to curate the project, the situation was still very hostile: «Faced with the accurate narration of these facts, the motivation for my curatorship seemed to me to be, first and foremost, a first aid intervention to resolve an unsustainable political situation and, only secondarily, a request of a contemporary public work to embellish the square. After many meetings, it was decided to inaugurate a process that would involve as many citizens as possible»[223] (Detheridge 2022: 75-76). In October 2010, during the *ad'a.piazza* festival, a questionnaire was distributed to citizens to gather ideas and expectations for the square, highlighting a desire for a place of social interaction rather than just a monumental space. The need to strengthen citizens' connection with the newly redeveloped square and to involve local communities in a project they could feel was their own led to the creation of a public competition, in which the people of Imola had the opportunity to participate in the selection process for the final work to be created in the square. To this end, five internationally renowned artists were invited to come up with artistic projects in harmony with the existing 15th-century context: Alfredo Jaar, Studio Azzurro, Grazia Toderi, Luca Vitone, and Krzysztof Wodiczko (Riva 2022). Their proposals were displayed in the exhibition *Concorso Piazza. Lo spazio sotto il cielo* in 2011 at the San Domenico Museum. Following a technical jury evaluation, the final decision rested with the citizens of Imola, who chose Studio Azzurro's project over Wodiczko's through a popular vote. In order to overcome the deep mistrust towards the operation, promoted and managed by administrations, it was strategic for Studio Azzurro to hold a series of meetings with representatives of committees supporting the old monument, with the aim of gathering their requests, sharing all stages of the project, and involving them directly in the process of raising awareness among residents. Thus, with the support of associations and through communication and collective activities, as well as a workshop with schools, a virtuous circle of revitalization of the memory of the Great War was launched together with the Civic Museums Department, leading to a series of spontaneous actions to share memories and make family archives available (Ligi, Studio Azzurro 2022). Citizens were invited to donate photos, letters, and postcards from the Great War preserved in family archives. The work, inaugurated on 3rd November 2013, consisted of a strip of light projected onto the pavement that displayed the individual memories of the

[223] Translation by the author.

more than 500 fallen soldiers from Imola, thus turning private documents into collective heritage. The work is considered by art historian Francesca Gallo as an example of a «post-modern commemorative posture» that rejects vertical monumentality in favor of horizontality and a critical dialogue with public space (Gallo 2022: 94).

Detheridge explains that she sees her role as a curator as a mediation role between different cultures contaminating each other, especially in projects working within multicultural neighborhoods. Moreover, she acted as a mediator with stakeholders, administrations, and planners. Many times, she collaborated with social partners, such as social workers: this relationship has not always been an easy one because inevitably different perspectives emerge on the meaning of cultural participation in disadvantaged situations. In fact, while many social workers aimed at creating a comfort zone for stabilizing people, for Detheridge cultural inclusion projects are growth and development opportunities. On the other hand, Detheridge found the indifference of public administrations towards common goals an added problem: «We rarely found genuine openness and participation»[224], she says.

When asked about the skills a curator working with art in public space should have, she answers that, in first place, it is important to have a genuine interest in other cultures especially when working with immigrants in participatory projects, secondly to be open to "the poetry of existence". Thirdly, when working with artists in participatory projects it is crucial to respect the desires and aspirations of the people you are working with: in particular, when working with refugees the curator should never push people to talk about personal issues. Lastly, it is necessary for a curator to have professional project management skills (for instance, applying for funding, or dealing with bureaucratic paperwork), as she claims: «Often this kind of work does not give you visibility, is time consuming and not very well paid»[225].

Detheridge goes on by saying that curatorial work in public spaces needs to be acknowledged as a profession because it «prevents disasters – even though it also risks disasters – because encounters with the public context are unpredictable»[226]. It can be important in many projects to build a framework of institutional partnerships which will allow the artist to work in a more structured and less hazardous way. She concludes that curating art in the public sphere requires curatorial skills which are quite different from those required for curating museum collections. Cultural project management and the curation of art projects in the

[224] Interview Detheridge.
[225] *Ibidem*.
[226] *Ibidem*.

public sphere today require specific pragmatic education courses for artists and curators of the future.

5.4.2 Lungomare (Daniele Lupo), Bolzano

Lungomare was a cultural association founded in Bolzano in 2003 by Patrizia Bertolini, Angelika Burtscher, Manuela Demattio, Roberto Gigliotti, Paulpeter Hofer, Brita Köhler, Daniele Lupo, and Josef Rainer. Angelika Burtscher and Daniele Lupo were joint artistic directors of the association until 2014, while from 2014 to 2020 they co-curated Lungomare together with Lisa Mazza and Roberto Gigliotti. In 2021, Lungomare was turned into a cooperative by Angelika Burtscher, Frida Carazzato, Daniele Lupo, Eva Mair, and Georg Zeller, in order to interweave Lupo Burtscher studio's design practice more closely with curatorial practice of the former association. Lungomare works on exhibition and publishing projects, as well as communication, awarenessraising campaigns and site-specific artistic productions. It is a platform for cultural production and design that curates and produces at the intersection between the public, virtual, printed, urban and exhibition space. «It activates long-term processes which start mainly from a specific geographic and social context, situating it within a larger narrative. Lungomare strives to question alternative forms of artistic, cultural, and activist practices, addressing socio-political issues through a hands-on approach» (Burtscher, Lupo 2023: 305). Curator and director Daniele Lupo explains in an interview the importance of working with situated creative practices:

> Lungomare engages with practices that are situated, and that therefore relate to a context in a very effective and not just formal way. Most of our projects therefore emerge from needs identified within a specific locality. From there we try to understand how these needs can be addressed, including through artistic and design-oriented forms of planning […] We invite artists to engage with a territory and then work in dialogue with it. While these issues are addressed within a specific place – such as South Tyrol or Bolzano – they are not limited to that context. Instead, they become valuable tools for interpreting and engaging with other, very different environments [227].

Lungomare's work and research focuses largely on how social and cultural projects impact the public sphere and shape our coexistence, following a transdisciplinary approach. Work processes are characterized by dialogue with theorists, artists, and experts from different

[227] Interview with Daniele Lupo, 19/05/2025. Translation by the author.

fields, in order to explore new perspectives and collectively negotiate the designed spaces (Lungomare Official Website). Among the key interests of Lungomare are: the activation of a context, and the multi-layered reading of it; the public space as an anchor point and the potential for a common space to become a place of negotiation; sharing knowledge, and the multi-voice transdisciplinary development of content; the question of belonging and the reflection on what borders, border crossings, origins, identities, and practices of radical hospitality mean (Burtscher, Lupo 2023: 20).

Over the years, Lungomare developed several projects interweaving art and planning of public spaces, such as *Osservatorio urbano* (2005), curated by Manuela Demattio, Roberto Gigliotti, and Carlotta Polo, a long-term laboratory that initiated projects in the urban space of Bolzano and other cities and regions. The lab switched the common conception of the city's inhabitants as passive recipients of decisions arising from urban planning to players actively involved in creating the city's form and its social fabric, thus consciously distancing itself from conventional practices and methods of urban planning and experimenting with a different approach. It produced inexact instruments, leaving room for emotions and the unpredictable, and seeking to share a perspective with the city's inhabitants (Burtscher, Gigliotti 2015). *Osservatorio Urbano* was a reading and archiving tool gathering information, experiences and observations of the city in the form of texts, personal images and on-site artistic visits. The materials were represented by a map containing precise and personal contributions from those participating in the project, the so-called urban explorers. The map was the basis for all of the actions organized by *Osservatorio Urbano* (Lungomare Official Website). Another example was the *Sette per Sette* project (2010): during the exhibition *Legal Disagreements* at Villa Romana in Florence, Lungomare showed the video *One seat at a time*. The exhibition explored the coexistence between the touristic use of cities and the everyday life of inhabitants, questions of public order and the control of a city. The video was a role-playing game that brought seven people together around a table for lively discussion. Each participant took on a given role: the mayor, a resident, a local merchant, a tourist, a foreigner, and a street performer. After a few minutes of discussion, the participants swapped roles and the discussion began again. According to Burtscher and Gigliotti:

> Incorporating a "different" perspective into planning enables unexpected solutions and approaches and opens up new and sustainable processes. We do not want to view planning as a linear, problem-solving process, but rather — in keeping up with the complexity of contemporary society and cities — as a practice that, in interaction with other disciplines and

> instruments, responds individually to a given situation. A practice of listening is actively developed in the process. The experimental, the unpredictable, and the choral reading of the city thus become an important part of our work. Such an approach demands a conscious attitude, both on the part of "conventional" planners and on the part of what we call urban practitioners[228]. (Burtscher, Gigliotti 2015: 202)

A more recent project is *Co-Carts − Vehicles for the Community* (2020), where the artists collective orizzontale focused on public spaces during the Covid19 pandemic, exploring and reinhabiting them. Their idea was to design tools for collective action to revitalize public spaces: orizzontale created pop-up vehicles which could «be borrowed by all city inhabitants to weave new connections between spaces and people, to foster experimentation and to create new images into the city's public space» (Lungomare Official Website). Their shape and function had the potential to change urban space: for example, they included a built-in megaphone that could amplify voices or a table where exhibitions and actions could take place.

One of the latest and most relevant projects by Lungomare is *FLUX – River interventions and explorations* (2022-ongoing), curated by Angelika Burtscher and Daniele Lupo. The project explores the riverscapes of Bolzano, around Talvera, Isarco and Adige rivers, in collaboration with artists, architects, researchers, and residents. It focuses on the undiscovered potential of the riverscapes through a cross-disciplinary and participatory approach, including a public programme of workshops, conversations, walks, performances, and temporary interventions along the urban river-space. Lungomare initiates public debates and interventions in urban space, between interest groups, activities, spaces, users, and institutional planning, to stimulate collective reflection and visions. The objective is to change the perception of the river landscape in Bolzano, revealing its potential and developing a variety of visions for its use. This exploration process aims to catalyse diverse needs and ideas that will then be translated into temporary interventions, in order to create new access points and communal spaces along the rivers. *FLUX* is developed through three formats: the exhibition series *FLUX – FRAGMENTS*, the two-part publication *FLUX-Zine*, and *FLUX – INTERVENTIONS*. While, in the exhibition series artists and architects observe and reflect on the public spaces around Bozen's rivers, *FLUX-Zine* provides an overview of past and upcoming *FLUX* projects and serves as a platform for artistic and poetic contributions. Within *FLUX – INTERVENTIONS*, public spaces around the river are made accessible to everyone in the city. Through workshops, performances, exhibitions and

[228] Translation by the author.

festivals, otherwise unnoticed or disregarded river banks become places for reflection, exchange and learning (Lungomare Official Website). Artistic interventions include Gaia Giani and Margareth Kammerer's *Die Wald Liste*, Antonio Rovaldi's *Torno indietro un attimo*, Futurefarmers' *Un Meandro: (Com)posizioni con il fiume*, Herwig Turk's *Spazio per i fiumi*, Sööt/Zeyringer's *Semiotica della riva del fiume* performance, and Johanna Dehio, Johanna Padge and Mascha Fehse's *Fiumicina*. Particularly interesting is the example of *Fiumicina,* which started in 2022 with the setting up of a temporary kitchen built together with residents and various experts along the banks of the Isarco river. The kitchen was open for three days and offered themed workshops dealing with improvisation and construction, spontaneous herbs along the riverside, and experimental solar cooking and baking. In addition to being a place for food preparation, the kitchen was a meeting place, and cooking became an opportunity for exchange. It invited to explore the urban natural space and discuss the potential, needs, and common desires for a new public space on the riverbank (Lungomare Official Website).

During an interview, Lupo explains how Lungomare is structured: besides him and Angelika Burtscher, the team consists of three other people working on design projects, and two on cultural production, with different kinds of contracts. Lupo says that they are trying to always keep open dialog in the team in order to make the organization as horizontal as possible. Moreover, he underlines how turning the association into a cooperative is a strategy to overcome the cultural world's financial precariousness. Having a more defined structure also allowed Lungomare to access local and national funding, such as the Ministry's, the Province's, the Region's, the Municipality's, and private foundations'. Furthermore, Lungomare is participating in European projects such as Horizon and Creative Europe, which are helping in a situation of uncertainty regarding local funding: an incentive to apply was given by the fact that Lungomare noticed how Europe is increasingly interested in research and cultural projects whose outcomes are not just theoretical, but situated in real life.

Lupo then describes the way Lungomare's projects are produced:

> In general, our projects arise from an interest in, or perception of, issues that we feel as urgent. For instance, we addressed the topic of migration when the nearby border became particularly complex and difficult to manage. We focused on public space after the pandemic, as it was necessary to reestablish a contact with it and reclaim spaces that had been largely denied during that period. More recently we have been working on the theme of rivers. Following the pandemic, our attention turned to processes of regeneration, including the renewal of public

> spaces and the river areas in Bolzano. We considered it was relevant to establish a new dialogue between citizens, the city, and the river areas, which function as significant oases that are part of the urban fabric of the city […] These themes somehow arise from a sense of urgency. The initial impulse therefore derives from our perception of the place in which we operate. From this starting point, concepts are developed, and partnerships are sought in order to build the necessary expertise to address and to tackle these issues. Such collaborations may involve research institutes, other experts, researchers, academies, and universities. There is a phase of academic research and in-depth study... We try to draw on academic research, collecting information, and invite experts to engage in discussion with us. It is also a localized form of research, aiming to activate an awareness of citizens' needs. Then we identify artists, designers, and architects who may offer meaningful perspectives on these questions. The final stage is the production phase[229].

Lupo then introduces some of the methodologies used when curating projects at Lungomare: the first one consists in creating so-called relational tools, used to start dialogue with citizens and other local players. The method, learnt from the experience of Lungomare with the artistic collective Futurefarmers, involves «creating a tool or object that somehow attracts attention precisely because it is unfinished. The process then continues by working on this object together with the community of interest that emerged in the public space. This initial engagement subsequently develops into a larger project. This is a methodology that we have used very often, without initially knowing it, which helps greatly in identifying interest groups for projects»[230]. *Fiumicina* is a good example of this methodology:

> The artists aimed to activate the river space through conviviality. Initally we wanted to bake bread by the river, but it was a very hot summer and it was forbidden lighting fires. This constraint led us to explore solar cooking. The designed object became an attraction. It functions as a sculpture that operates effectively well when the sun is shining: it is a fully-fledged kitchen, even for baking bread and preaparing coffee. It can also be used for grilling, and other forms of cooking. At the same time, it has a tall, highly visible shape and attracts people who are interested in solar energy and solar cooking. It also attracts people who are interested in public spaces and are drawn to this unusual shape[231].

Also *Co-Carts* is based on the same logic. Relational tools are closely connected to the idea of co-design, which constitutes the foundation of each project according to Lupo: it opens

[229] *Ibidem*.
[230] *Ibidem*.
[231] *Ibidem*.

the artistic design process to people who will use the spaces, and builds a relational network with people and research institutes. At the center of these networking processes is always dialogue with different kinds of interlocutors. In the case of *FLUX,* for example, Lungomare set up discussion groups involving civil protection mountain basins and various municipal offices, in an attempt to create platforms providing citizens with access to the river:

> After several meetings – at least five – we succeeded. The parties involved had never met before; however, the process led to the creation of an access point to the river, which is now permanent. This represents a significant result considering that this is the first time that the municipal administration, together with the Mountain Basins Authority, has granted public access to the river. This initiative subsequently led to the establishment of a working group that includes our organisation. The group is now engaged in the broader redesign of the river area of Bolzano[232].

Lupo highlights how in this case the artistic project was capable of positively impacting the planning of the riverside area:

> Since we began working on the theme of rivers […] rivers have been experienced much more intensively. Our initiatives have contributed to the process of reclaiming riverbanks as places of regeneration and encounter. There has been a renewed civic awareness to these entities crossing the city. The most immediate way to assess the impact is through the platforms mentioned earlier, as they are visible and are extensively used[233].

Lupo claims as cultural production raises awareness among citizens on topics related to their local area, and can be the spark to take action. In the case of *FLUX,* the zines are an important tool to raise awareness about the complexity of the place:

> We are aware that, in addition to creating a master plan, we need to work on information and therefore make citizens aware of what the river is, how it functions, the risks it entails, how it is managed, who is responsible for it. It also requires recognizing the different groups that inhabit and use these spaces: fishermen, kayakers, people who cook along the riverbanks, as well as those who sleep there because they have no other place to go. In short, the river as a public space operates on multiple levels. For this reason, communicating and narrating these

[232] *Ibidem*.
[233] *Ibidem*.

different dimensions is essential for raising awareness about rivers and their role within the city[234].

Lupo, coming from a design background, admits that his very peculiar approach to curating is rooted in his hybrid nature, especially when it comes to the importance of communication and of aesthetic choices: for this reason, he defines his transdisciplinary way of curating as "dirty", as he needs to get his hands dirty by dealing first-hand with spaces and situations[235].

5.5 The Netherlands

The public art policy and funding system in the Netherlands have undergone a profound transformation, moving from a post-war model rooted in social welfare for artists to a contemporary framework emphasizing cultural entrepreneurship and decentralization. This evolution reflects shifting political ideologies and economic realities within the Dutch cultural sector.

Dutch public art policy has two foundational pillars, both established after World War II: the social support mechanism for artists and the integration of art into the built environment. The most significant early policy was the *Beeldende Kunstenaars Regeling* (BKR), or Measure for Visual Artists, implemented from 1949 to 1987. The BKR was essentially a social welfare program that provided participating visual artists with a secure, though modest, income. In return for this state income, artists were required to deliver works of art to the government. The BKR was phased out in the 1980s under liberal-conservative administrations who viewed the measure as financially unsustainable and inconsistent with neoliberal principles. Its termination marked a decisive shift from social support to an art policy where quality and market competitiveness became the decisive criteria for public funding (Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlads Official Website). Flanking this measure, there is a percentage scheme for visual arts (*Percentageregeling voor beeldende kunst*) in or near government buildings that are newly constructed, renovated or purchased by the Central Government Real Estate Agency, which is a division within the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations. The scheme, initiated in 1951 by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, is applied if the total construction costs of a building exceed 1 million euros. Between 1 and 7 million euros, the budget for art is 2% of the total building costs;

[234] *Ibidem*.
[235] *Ibidem*.

between 7 and 10 million euros, the budget for art is 1% of the total building costs plus 70 000 euros; and when the costs exceed 10 million euros, the budget for art is 0.5% of the total building costs plus 120 000 euros (The Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends Website).

Another important source is the Mondriaan Fund, a national cultural fund supporting visual arts and cultural heritage. It operates as a body of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. It provides financial support in areas where a profitable market does not exist (yet). Its grants are aimed at encouraging cooperation between organisations, artists, mediators, clients and/or other private or public parties. The Fund organises development programmes for promotion and innovation in the visual arts, such as the Prix de Rome and a private-arts-buyers scheme (*KunstKoop*) (The Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends Website). However, according to the decentralization principle, it is municipalities and provinces to play the leading financial and policy role, contributing 71% of the public cultural funding for culture. Municipalities use funding from the national Municipalities Fund (*Gemeentefonds*) to finance local cultural amenities, including public art. Dutch cultural policy has a cyclic nature: every four years, policies, funding procedures, and recipients are determined in a cultural policy plan (*cultuurnota*). Organizations and makers active in the municipality will then apply for funding, which a limited number of organizations will receive (Loots, Piecyk, Wijngaarden 2024). Moreover, major cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam often have dedicated municipal art funds or programs that commission site-specific works, often exceeding the scope of the older national percentage scheme and focusing on urban regeneration, place-making, and critical dialogue.

Besides public funding, the sector is increasingly embracing cultural entrepreneurship, following a period of significant government budget cuts (around €632 million from 2013 to 2016). This shift compels artists to seek diversified funding, including private sponsorship and crowdfunding. Examples are endowment funds are the Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds, VSBfonds, and the Elise Mathilde fonds, which contribute not only to flagship projects but also to pay stipends to emerging and renowned artists (Loots, Piecyk, Wijngaarden 2024).

5.5.1 Stroom Den Haag (Vincent de Boer), The Hague

Stroom Den Haag is an expertise center for art, society, and the public domain located in The Hague and open since 1990. It believes in the indispensable role of artists in creating a livable city and a resilient society, and strives to connect art, artists, and the city through its activities (Stroom Den Haag Official Website), which can be divided in three main areas:

placemaking, innovating & stimulating, and connecting with society. The activities are aligned with The Hague's municipal policy, as formulated in the Cultural Vision 2033 *De kunst van betekenis* (The art of meaning): it aims at bridging differences in a city representing both a stage for international and royal representation, and one of the most segregated areas in the Netherlands. The overall goal is to increase accessibility, provide space for the great diversity of nationalities and cultures, and continue investing in a livable and attractive city. Stroom contributes to translate these goals into action (Stroom Den Haag 2024). As for the placemaking area, interventions are based «on stimulating artistic development, facilitating the creative process, and creating a 'social pedestal' for art in the city and society in collaboration with partners and the public» (Stroom Den Haag 2024: 6). The policy plan then states: «We create space and facilitate a context-oriented artistic practice. These practices are often site-specific, socially engaged, research-driven, co-created, and encompass various working and expressive forms, especially in public spaces. Each project is unique and requires a tailored approach to achieve a meaningful artwork» (Stroom Den Haag 2024: 6). Stroom's expertise constitutes «a toolbox offering a mix of physical and business conditions (space, financial resources, organization, etc.), facilitating a socio-cultural context (through connection, relationship building, creating involvement, research), and making projects visible or public» (Stroom Den Haag 2024: 6). As for the innovating & stimulating area, Stroom does thematic research, providing context for facilitating new projects, and offering a significant impulse for artistic practice. In fact, it creates space for experimentation and the development of new work. The thematic program includes temporary residencies and collaborations with local and (inter)national partners such as art academies, artists, and research institutions, but also an online database providing visibility to local artists and representing a crucial tool for research by intermediaries, curators, and commissioners. Lastly, it encompasses talent development programs such as *Invest Week*, the *Stroom Young Talent Award* in collaboration with Royal Academy, and the *Ouborg Award*, the city's visual arts award for established talent. Stroom provides financial support to artists and artistic initiatives. As for the connecting with society area, Stroom provides depth and context for projects and utilizes various formats such as presentations, artist talks, guided tours, studio visits, lectures, information sessions, seminars, and educational programs. Moreover, it integrates expertise development and research to support its policy, including knowledge sharing, Stroom relates to the city and reflects substantively on society, trying to reach a diverse range of audience groups. It regularly collaborates with third parties and provides space for thematic program lines such as *See You in The Hague*,

focusing on art that reflects on war and justice, and the *Positions* program, as a platform for The Hague artists (Stroom Den Haag 2024).

Stroom operates in all neighborhoods of The Hague, having a direct impact on residents (e.g. sculpture routes, public art, school art projects, knowledge sharing, livability), city development (studio policies, artist initiatives, cross-pollination of various disciplines and urban themes), field development (financial support, organizational support, networking, awards, scholarships), and the artists' practice itself (content development, professional career development, financial support, studio mediation, commissions, talent development, meetings, advisory services, knowledge sharing, networking, visibility) (Stroom Den Haag 2024). Besides creating its own programs and helping artists, Stroom holds an initiating and advisory role on communicating, commissioning, maintenance, management and programming of visual art in outdoor spaces, which pertains sideways to urban development: due to housing policies, housing shortages, and high property and land prices, there is increasingly less space for artistic hubs, which are being pushed to the periphery or even out of cities. Stroom is in dialogue with the municipality, real estate, and urban development, as well as other partners, to strengthen art and artists throughout the city and enhance their connections (Stroom Den Haag 2024). Stroom actively mediates and supervises the commissioning of art in outdoor spaces for large-scale urban development projects and infrastructural projects: some examples are the development of the VINEX locations Wateringse Veld, Leidschenveen-Ypenburg and the Rotterdamsebaan (Stroom Den Haag Official Website).

The center was initiated by the municipality to support the local contemporary visual art scene and artists, but at the same time acts independently of political and administrative influences, having its own board and advisors, and provides support and connection at all levels of artistic practice within the city. It is a translocal network organization and system institution, partly funded by a municipal budget subsidy, guaranteed for the minimum period of the Arts Plan 2025-2028 (Stroom Den Haag 2024). Moreover, Stroom is developing a plan for a financial mix, focusing on fundraising, sponsorship, sales, percentage schemes, commission work, co-creation, collaborations, and other forms of partnerships. Its key organizational values are integrity, safety, and good governance. Its job structure is led by a two-headed executive board, balancing content and organization to strengthen each other in policy formation and the organization of Stroom (Stroom Den Haag 2024).

Stroom's Advisor Art in Public Space Vincent De Boer, has a background as an artist and previously worked as a curator at SKOR, the Dutch Foundation for Art and Public Domain, which closed in 2013 due to governmental budget cuts. Besides De Boer, who is permanently

employed at Stroom, other (freelance) curators and advisors work for the art center. Moreover, long-term and more extensive commissions sometimes have their own curators; for instance, in the case of the Rotterdamsebaan commission, it was Wineke van Muiswinkel, for *Art at Schools* projects it is Leon Perlot, and the curator of the *Sculpture Gallery* is André Kruysen.

In 2021 Stroom, in co-creation with the municipality of The Hague, launched the website bkdh.nl (Outdoor Art The Hague), listing the more than 700 art works in the public domain. The website strives to increase the visibility, knowledge and accessibility of the city's outdoor art collection. It offers new possibilities to activate, share and communicate about public art in The Hague with a vast and wide audience.

One of the key projects of Stroom in the past 35 years is undoubtedly the *Sculpture Gallery*, a permanent collection started in 1990 by Peter Struycken and located in the city center at the intersection of Grote Marktstraat and Spui. It displays 48 sculptures – of which 40 in the city center and 8 in an Open Depot at the Zuiderpark – and almost every year new ones are commissioned. Also noteworthy is the *Art at Schools* program, part of The Hague's 'percent for art program' since 1993, one of the few in the Netherlands: over the past thirty years, Stroom has completed more than a hundred art assignments at schools throughout The Hague. According to the program, when renovating existing schools or building new ones, 0.64% of the budget is used for an art assignment. Then, there are the advisory services we've already mentioned. Lastly, there is the production of permanent and temporary land art works, such as *Celestial Vault (Hemels Gewelf)* by James Turrell in the dunes of Kijkduin and *Park in the Water* by Studio Acconci in Laakhaven/Holland Spoor (Stroom Den Haag Official Website).

While the *Sculpture Gallery* is an example of a unique collection of public art in the city centre, some of the artworks born within Stroom's land art or advisory projects are also quite innovative and interesting in terms of their interaction with urban planning. An early example is *301 Steps (daylight/tungsten)* by Jan van Grunsven & Arno van der Mark (1998) in The Hague (Fig. 133). The artists developed their design plans in collaboration with the municipal Urban Development department and created an artwork which is so well integrated in the urban environment that it is hardly noticeable: the art has become the public space itself. Van Grunsven and Van der Mark noticed that the Schenkstrook area, stretching from the city center through office buildings to the green urban fringe, had distinct atmospheres. They wanted to enhance these atmospheres in their redesign: they chose the central section, between Prinses Beatrixlaan and Wilhelmina van Pruisenweg, and redesigned it using the elements available for road and park construction. The stretch of road

(241 meters or 301 steps) they selected is characterized by a slight elevation change and blue street lighting at night (Daylight/Tungsten), substituting the ordinary one. The pavement tiles have been abruptly replaced by stelcom plates and the posts separating the carriageway from the cycle path have been replaced by an elegant iron railing. The riverbank area was widened to create a green strip twice as large, while the single-lane road, alongside a bike and pedestrian area, was consolidated into an asphalt surface. After 301 steps, the materials turn back to normality: the footpath, lane and cycle path remain the same, but the experience of the urban space is totally different (Stroom Den Haag Official Website). The 1990s were a period of great experimentality, and the urban planning department was interested in artistic interventions to be integrated in urban design. When *301 Steps (daylight/tungsten)* was realized, it was a really new way of commissioning art. However, as this area is in transition the artwork is under scrutiny as well.

Another example from the 1990s is *Park in the Water* by Vito Acconci & Studio (1997) (Fig. 134). Initially, Acconci developed a mega plan for the area around Laakhaven/Hollands Spoor, for which he had already made a model that was shown at his exhibition of *Models for Public Art* in 1993 in The Hague. The original model showed a fragmented and unstable environment in which water and land were competing with each other. It was based on ideas about polders and the Laakhaven's connection with the sea (Outdoor Art The Hague Website). Hans van Beek, the architect responsible for the development of the area, was so impressed when he saw the plan that he asked Acconci to reduce the scale of the project and offered him the assistance of his own architectural office, Atelier PRO. Acconci designed a section of the city park, where a piece of land in the shape of a quarter of a circle with a radius of about 40 meters has slid out, tilted off the land and floated away, together with its trees, street lamps and ground cover. The existing geometric pattern of planting has been disrupted: trees in planters filled with soil and lampposts have fallen into the water, leaving their negative forms on the quay that can be used as seating (Stroom Den Haag Official Website).

A more recent project is *Edible Park* by British artist Nils Norman (2010-2011), part of the multi-year program *Foodprint,* that focused on the relationship between food and the city. It consisted of two gardens, a sustainable pavilion, and a series of activities such as workshops, presentations and picnics: Norman’s aim was to practically test what an ecological design method like permaculture could mean for a city like The Hague. The gardens were located in the Escamp district of The Hague, specifically in Zuiderpark and on the grounds of the Amateur Gardeners’ Association Nut en Genoegen. Both locations were designed as information points for permaculture and sustainability, thus holding a public function. The

clay and straw pavilion, designed by architect Michel Post from ORIO architects under the direction of Nils Norman, was used for storage of garden materials, as a shelter for volunteers maintaining the garden, as a reception area for school classes and groups, and as an information point for interested visitors. Besides it, the project also entailed transforming a previously unused piece of land into a public garden, where a pond and butterfly garden were created. As part of the project, a permaculture garden was also developed, with a central meeting place in the form of a picnic table (Stroom Den Haag Official Website).

One of the most recent and relevant projects by Stroom is *Be longing* by Michael Rakowitz (2024), in Molenvlietpark, Leidschenveen-Ypenburg, The Hague (Fig. 135). Since 2018, Stroom has been guiding this major art commission on the themes of archaeology and migration flows, commissioned by the municipality of The Hague, along the Rotterdamsebaan – a new road between Binckhorst and the Ypenburg junction. A percentage of the budget for the infrastructural works was devoted to art: this made the project possible. As a permanent partner of the municipality for public art, Stroom supervised the selection process, the artist, and the artistic development of *Be longing* through to its unveiling. The commission deals with the area of Molenvlietpark, where an archaeological site has been found during the excavation works for the new Victory Boogie Woogie tunnel. De Boer says:

> This tunnel was built by a private company that was open to art […] It was important to convince them that this important construction project formed a huge opportunity to create a really unique artwork[236].

De Boer explains that, after receiving the commission, there was a research period where students from the art academy in The Hague were doing an artistic research in the area of Leidschenveen-Ypenburg, involving the people who were living there. The result was a publication *Six degrees of separation*, and two students registered the whole process from start to unveiling on film. An advisory board gathered over a longer period of time to formulate the specifics of the commission and its reference to the archaeological site and research. Then they made a longlist of artists and finally shortlisted three internationally renowned artists in 2021. The artists explored the area, visited the Victory Boogie Woogie tunnel under construction, the municipal's archeology department, various multi-ethnic neighborhoods, and discussed topics like migration and diaspora with organizations such as

[236] Interview with Vincent De Boer, 21/03/2025.

the Indisch Herinneringscentrum. The selection committee presented the proposals of the artists in early March 2022 from which Michael Rakowitz's proposal *Be longing* was chosen that year. Meanwhile, in the midst of the covid pandemic the Rotterdamsebaan itself was officially opened in February 2021. Rakowitz spoke with many people from migrant communities during his visits to the city and established a partnership with the *Participatie Keuken* (Participation Kitchen), that builds on the idea that every person wants to feel seen, heard, and valued. Sharing meals and stories is seen as a way to collectively work toward a livable society. The English title *Be longing* refers to both feeling at home somewhere and to homesickness (for the old place) and the desire for a new home. Rakowitz sees a parallel between the archaeological layers of The Hague's soil and the social layers of the city's population, as household objects are brought by migrants from their home countries to feel at home in their new surroundings, but can also be found in Molenvlietpark's archaeological site. In collaboration with *Participatie Keuken*, Stroom organizes communal dinners and gatherings where issues affecting different migrant communities in The Hague are discussed through the objects brought by the participants and meals prepared together. The artist invites residents to donate crockery brought from their country of origin, to serve as tangible foundations for all the stories (Stroom Den Haag Official Website). As a final restitution of this process, Rakowitz created seven objects referring to archaeological finds in and around the Molenvlietpark and composed of the shards of the contributed ceramics (Outdoor Art The Hague Website).

Talking about curators' and project leaders' role, De Boer clarifies that:

> Our role is to guide, intermediate, push and pull with all connected parties during the whole selection and production process. To think about the role of the advisory committee, to keep track of the planning, the content, to guarantee during the whole process the artistic value of the work. I think the curator or the project coordinator is putting all those things together[237].

According to De Boer, curators aim to root the artworks in their urban and social contexts: « It's very important that artistic ideas land in fertile and common grounds. And that's the social fabric adopting the work, this is something crucial that needs to be understood by all parties from the beginning. The work needs to be embraced by the community and cared for afterwards»[238].Besides, «curators help to communicate and clarify the selection process, , so that it's clear to the people who live in the city or in the neighborhood […] If you understand,

[237] *Ibidem*.
[238] *Ibidem*.

if you're a bit more aware of the process, of how that artwork came into your area or to your city, then the expectation, the curiosity and the appreciation for art in public space grows considerably»[239]. Curators often form an important counterbalance to the logics of city marketing or development.
De Boer lists some of the skills that are useful for curators to work with art in public spaces:

> I was trained as a sculptor and I understand what's happening in the art field. I think openness is important, and to be able to raise the level of artistic research or to find new answers, for it's about exploring new areas, but also to care for the old […]It's important to re-contextualize artworks from the past, […] to keep the conversation alive […] about in what kind of society we live in[240].

De Boer talks about the heavy responsibility held by Stroom in terms of preserving and handing down knowledge regarding public art in the Netherlands, especially after the closing of SKOR:

> There was so much knowledge and experience with different kinds of art projects in the Netherlands, and a lot of it has been vaporized. It's really sad. We are one of the few existing institutions for having this position related to art and public space in the Netherlands. We feel the responsibility to build on to this network and to take a national position, being able to build on this knowledge and continue it. We have an extensive archive and library, but also the contacts with colleagues and other institutions[241].

The situation is still risky, as budget cuts are increasing and regulations about public art funding are changing. De Boer explains that to get funding:

> In the current situation the arts often have to legitimize their existence, and we are in constant contact and negotiation with the municipality about this. Projects of art in public space are over a longer period of time, and often touch political questions[242].

Besides passing on knowledge about work processes for public art both nationally and internationally, Stroom tries to facilitate artists: for example, they introduced a flat fee for artistic proposals, so that artists don't have to do the budget planning.

[239] *Ibidem*.
[240] *Ibidem*.
[241] *Ibidem*.
[242] *Ibidem*.

Some methods used include involving different kinds of expertise (not only about artistic materials and production, but also social issues):

> We use the term "social pedestal" to refer to the social cohesion between the people involved in the project, to initiate, realize and maintain the artwork. The infrastructure of the community, of the people involved, and the clear expectations and questions on which the project is based are very important aspects. It's not new, but it asks for more attention now than 10 or 20 years ago[243].

This is linked to another important aspect: that of pushing commissioners to explore wider.

> Oftentimes the question starts with: we want an artwork. How much will it cost and when will it be ready? Then you have to rewind the tape and to say: okay, but what is the question? Who is involved? What is your expectation? What's the surrounding? The general public would like to have some clear answers to questions such as the kind of art (abstract, multimedia, etc.). But I think that before that, you have to explore further. Of course, it takes a bit more time. However, in return you end up with something much more complex but also more fitting with the context you are working with[244].

And with real estate prices going up another crucial factor nowadays is to find the right partner in order to keep space for art in urban development: De Boer describes it as a very «delicate balance»[245], which needs to take into consideration the differences between the meta-level of urban planning and politics, and bottom-up entities dealing with the physicality of objects and experiences. A good methodology to solve complex situations was found in the case of *Park in the Water*. The artwork of artist Vito Acconci is located in the same Central Innovation District as *301 Steps,* an area currently undergoing huge transformations from a planning perspective. The municipality was afraid of conflicts with the artist, especially in the case of an international and famous artist such as Vito Acconci. De Boer recounts: «For five years, I had meetings with the municipality about the concept of the artwork and what can be changed and what not. I kept seeing designs where they totally misunderstood what the artwork entailed to, they wanted to build new islands around it or make bicycle lanes or benches, and somehow that would ruin the quality of the work»[246]. To solve this problem, De Boer adopted the emotional networking technique: a session was

[243] *Ibidem*.
[244] *Ibidem*.
[245] *Ibidem*.
[246] *Ibidem*.

organized, bringing together fifteen participants, including an ecologist, an employee of The Hague housing cooperative, an urban planner, a staff member of the University of Applied Sciences, local artists, and employees from the municipalities of The Hague and Flevoland. The session was facilitated by Marit van Dijk of the Heritage Lab at the Reinwardt Academy, part of the Amsterdam School of the Arts. The technique is used to map emotions related to a shared theme, which can be expressed along two axes: from weak to strong, and from pleasant to unpleasant. At the beginning, each participant expresses their position on the artwork by marking their position on a graphic diagram. After that, the participants share their experiences or knowledge on the subject and explain why they feel that way in several rounds of discussion. They can then choose whether to change their position on the diagram (Figg. 136-137). The group then goes to the site of the work and visits it in person, describing what they notice and what thoughts the work evokes. In the case of *Park in the Water*, while the initial discussion had been mostly positive, the visit also brought out problematic aspects, such as its inaccessibility, poor maintenance, lack of greenery, and lack of seating areas. At the end of the process, participants reported that the method allowed them to express complex emotions and thoughts, to become more aware of their role and of the presence of conflicting opinions (van den Dool 2024). De Boer was enthusiastic about the results:

> A couple of weeks later, I saw the new urban planning concepts. And at the time, I thought: wow. They finally grasped the essence of this work. It's not about controlling the process, but rather about creating a safe and open space where lots of things can be addressed without fear of repercussions. I am totally excited to use this method in the future and with other projects[247].

De Boer lastly adds how crucial the curator's ability is to deal with unusual situations, which requires flexibility and adaptability.

[247] *Ibidem*.

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH OUTCOMES

6.1 The curator's role in urban planning processes: functions, skills and models[248]

Since curatorial practices have expanded towards planning and have developed in all the different ways presented in chapter 3.2, they have taken on many new functions differentiating them from traditional museum curating. In particular, the author noticed an affinity between these functions, and the four qualities that Leonie Sandercock identified as important for the new planning of the 21st century: being political, audacious, creative, and therapeutic (Sandercock 2004).

As for the political quality, according to literature, curatorial practice detaches itself from a neutral and technical attitude, which is typical of many planning practices, and tries to foster critical reflection on urban issues (Rendell 2006; White 2023): in this way, it is able to address complex situations without trivializing them, and to solve wicked problems (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018; Zawieja, Segerlund 2017). Taking position, moreover, allows to organize spaces in a more aware way (Magnusson 2016), to encourage socially committed planning processes (Tuukkanen 2020; Staunton 2022; Holub 2023), and to dream about and produce alternative scenarios – or counternarratives – to hegemonic neoliberal urban development (Mouffe 2013; Krasny 2015; Doherty 2017; Marchart 2019; Petersen, Nielsen 2021; Unger, Färber, Blumenstein 2021; Schnell 2022; Kathke, Tomann, Uhlig 2022; Aksu, Karjevsky 2023).

As for audacity, according to literature, curatorial practice has been seen as a method for deconstructing urban planning's rigidity, in order to bridge the gap between urban development's needs and conventional planning tools' inadequacy, providing alternatives and causing fruitful interferences in planning processes (Schalk 2007; Holub 2015): in fact, curating is able to detach itself from the rigid parameters of planning, allowing processes of unlearning and re-learning, dissolving predefined schemes and procedures, and opening space for unexpected results (Schalk 2007, 2023; Petrescu 2007; Holub 2015; Kortbek 2019; Unger, Färber, Blumenstein 2021; Lazarova 2023; White 2023). Curating is able to make a breathing space within the limitations of construction (Kaijima, Kuroda, Tsukamoto 2006),

[248] This chapter contains an adaptation of the following papers: Ruzzier I. (2025), "Urban curating: building new images of the city through narrative practices", in Dorato E. (ed.), *Oltre lo sguardo/ Beyond the gaze. La città immaginata/The imagined city*, vol. 5, Torino, AISU international, pp. 652-661; Ruzzier I., "Il curatore-mediatore: l'importanza delle capacità comunicative e relazionali nella curatela dell'arte negli spazi pubblici", *Zona Critica* (forthcoming publication).

allowing looseness (Franck, Stevens 2007), listening and exploration (Wiberg 2020): it is a form of unplanning in the sense that it challenges planning to develop new open-ended and flexible methods (Krasny 2008, 2014; Holub 2015; Sendra, Sennett 2022). For example, it can do that by shifting planners' attention from objects to urban processes and systems (Helsel 2009), shifting mindsets of policy makers and developers (Helsel 2009), mapping problems and issues from a different perspective (Warsza 2018), and gathering urban knowledge that would otherwise be unheard or overlooked (Schalk 2007).

As for the creative quality, scholars claim that curatorial practices are as a meaning-making strategy for individuals to find orientation in the surplus of narratives and knowledge that characterize cities (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018; Kathke, Tomann, Uhlig 2022). By revealing unexpected aspects of cities, building new imaginaries (Chaplin, Stara 2009; Gabrielsson 2009; Schnell 2022) and activating spatial potentials (Lavrinec 2011; Warsza 2018; Lazarova 2023), they produce cultural, social and economic value (Trentin, Rosellini, Djalali 2020; Belfiore 2020; Adler 2021). This is typical of placemaking and place-branding processes (Fleming 2007; Chaplin, Stara 2009; Macdonald 2009; Markusen, Gadwa 2010; Warsza 2018).

Lastly, there is the therapeutic quality, which Sandercock considers mostly in the sense of being able to mediate, negotiate, resolve conflicts: curatorial practices, according to literature, have a great connective potential, linking people, things, stories, opportunities, but also aesthetics, economy, culture, sociality and politics (Petrescu 2005; Schalk 2007; Krasny 2015; Zawieja, Segerlund 2017; Warsza 2018; Lazarova 2023). This is directly connected to the core of curating, which Ute Meta Bauer has defined as an art of «tracing connections» (Meta Bauer 2019): very interestingly, Elena Granata calls this ability «connective intelligence» (Granata 2021), a form of intelligence which is subtle and transformative, avoiding specializations and rigid competences. Connective intelligence is «able to build relationships between different things, indeed it is always able to transfer what it had learned in one field of knowledge to another one»[249] (Granata 2021: 9). This is exactly thekind of intelligence curators need, and it is also what differentiates them from planners (and what planners could learn from). Curating is therapeutic not only because it's connective, but also because it is caring: curators take care of relational and affective material, of the city's physical and affective consistency (Petrescu 2005; Schalk, Sustersic, Sandin 2018; Trentin, Rosellini, Djalali 2020; Schalk 2023; Krasny 2023), by fostering a sense of belonging and unity (Holub 2015; Courage 2017; Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018), addressing

[249] Translation by the author.

social injustices (Krasny 2015), promoting durational interventions over short-term initiatives (O'Neill, Doherty 2011; Holub 2015; Warsza 2018; Nehl 2018), enabling others to express themselves (Helsel 2009; Zawieja, Segerlund 2017; Lopez Pineiro 2018), facilitating, legitimizing, anchoring and making more visible artistic expression out of art contexts (Erić, Vuković 2004; Doherty 2007; Wong 2011; Jacob 2014; Lacy, Thompson 2017; Zawieja, Segerlund 2017; Carpenter, Horvath 2022; Ophrat 2023), and fostering social participation (Doherty 2007; Wong 2020).

These qualities have been found in the case studies, as can be seen from the summary table. The political quality can be found as critical reading and interpretation of contexts (Baeza, Zawieja, Bernhardt, Karjevsky), taking position (Hagdahl), spreading art as a democratic right (Hagdahl), acting with responsibility (Malm), creating counterimages to hegemonic narratives (Blumenstein), challenging value systems in urban planning (Dahlberg), modeling possible worlds (Doherty), questioning situations through art (Doherty, Miller), preserving public accessibility (Karjevsky), and raising awareness among citizens (Lupo).

The audacious quality can be found in pushing the limits of art in public space (Hagdahl, Malm, Dahlberg, Doherty, Pinsky), opening the field to more artists (Malm), making space for art in urban development policies and programs (Malm, Mossum, Bernhardt, Vickery, Dahlberg, De Boer), working on big scales (Malm), being open to different perspectives (Mossum, Bernhardt, Blumenstein, Dahlberg, De Boer, Detheridge, Karjevsky), embracing complexity (Mossum, Blumenstein), working against the mainstream (Mossum, De Boer), strengthening site-specificity (Zawieja, Lupo, Miller), embedding artists in local authorities (Vickery), prototyping (Dahlberg, Karjevsky), working with the unusual (De Boer), holding contradictions (Karjevsky), hacking traditional planning processes (Karjevsky), hybridizing art and design practices (Lupo), and working with open-ended processes (Selder).

The creative quality can be found in knowledge building about art in public spaces (Malm, Mossum, Blumenstein), making high quality projects (Malm, Zawieja, Pinsky), creating narratives connecting artworks, places and people (Malm, Mossum, Muka, Zawieja, Bernhardt, Doherty, Karjevsky, Miller, Selder), extracting artistic potential (Blumenstein), creating structures for culture (Blumenstein, Dahlberg, Selder), making the neighborhood livelier and more attractive (Blumenstein), stimulating imagination (Blumenstein), shaping cultural offer for a place (Vickery, De Boer), turning perspectives on places (Detheridge, Pinsky), meaning-making (Karjevsky), and redesigning public spaces (Karjevsky).

CURATOR	INSTITUTION/ PROJECT	STRUCTURE	FUNDING	BACKGROUND	SKILLS (WHAT)	METHODS (HOW)	OBJECTIVES (WHY)
Alba Baeza	Public Art Agency Sweden	State agency	Public (State funding)	Film and contemporary audiovisual studies Curating contemporary art	Project management Creative and critical reading Mediation/Connect Pedagogy	Team-work (triangular structure) Responsive methodology Work site-specifically	Facilitate artists Build trust with institutions Share knowledge/do pedagogy about art in public spaces
Peter Hagdahl				Artist	Taking positions (opinions) Mediation Negotiation Adaptability	Strategic role of employees Temporary projects/New formats Adapt to different situations Challenge artists and push limits Team-work	Experiment with art in public space Do pedagogy about art in public spaces Spread art (democratic right) Guarding/Raising artistic perspectives in urban development Help smaller municipalities build art projects Work with civil society and build trust Facilitate artists

							Empower local organizations
Magdalena Malm				Cultural studies, ethical science, and literature Curating contemporary art	Social skills Adaptability to context Humbleness Listening Responsibility	Integrate new formats/temporary projects Change processes for permanent art Art as core Full time curators Curatorial teams Transparency with the institution Foster collaboration Internal production and competence	Knowledge building within the institution to work with art in public space Get higher quality projects Challenge ideas of public art and influence the field Opening to more artists Include art in designed living environments Facilitate artists Create compositions of artworks Work on big scales
Lotta Mossum				Artist	Intuitiveness Embrace complexity Translation Openness to different perspectives Create common threads/connectedness	Art as core Strategic dialogue with property owners Full time and long-term curators with different specializations Art Unit	Collect experience Create clear methodologies Integrate and create space for art in urban planning Work against the mainstream

					Adaptability to context Listening Be co-creative Social skills	Open calls Collaborative processes	
Edi Muka				Artist	Mediation Connectedness Do research Production of art Dialogue Curate relationships	Temporary projects Merge working methods Open up collaborations Hybrid formats	Facilitate artists Anchor projects in their contexts Promote other local institutions Develop new working methods Share knowledge
Joanna Zawieja				Architect	Social skills (establish relationships) Transparency Critical interpretation Mediation City planning skills Listening Humbleness Stubborness	Role of city development curator Co-participatory projects Start from the site and context (be present) Step-by-step methodology Work with local project groups	Spread knowledge Ensure quality of art projects Do pedagogy Strenghten site-specificity

					Management (find site, money, people)	Process-based approach Write agreements Investigatory process Build narratives Change commissioning order	
Laura Bernhardt	CURRENT Festival	Festival for art in urban space (project)	Public (City of Stuttgart) Sponsors Foundations	Product Design Visual Arts Interrelated Media	Understanding the space Knowing the city well Building relationships Knowing the art context Practical and technical art production	Symposiums Cooperate with other institutions Philosophical approach Working with local artists, but also bringing in external perspectives Connect artists and other institutions Building narratives Internal assessment Magazine	Finding new forms of funding Making space for artists in public space Create spaces for collaborations and new ways of working Providing new (caring) perspectives on urban planning
Ellen Blumenstein	Imagine the City	Non-profit association	Public (HafenCity Hamburg GmbH)	Literature Musicology	Open-mindedness towards other fields	Mediating between interests Keep high complexity	Make the neighborhood livelier Creating a pool of knowledge

			Private sponsorships Grants (art funds)		Understanding the needs of different stakeholders Understand artistic practices Extract artistic potential Networking	Research on the context Address the subconscious and narratives of the city Create rather than critique (counterimages) Cultural planning/creating structures	Stimulate imagination about the neighborhood Open new perspectives/change narratives Attract media and public interest in the neighborhood Strengthening the neighborhood's position as a cultural destination
Grace Crannis	London Borough of Richmond and Wandsworth	Local authority's offices: planning policy team + arts & culture service	Public (not specific, but pertaining to other borough's projects) Grants	Architecture and Design	Brief writing Push and advocate for projects	Be open, clear and flexible Persistence Embed results	Creatively engage people about their places
Anna Vickery				Fine Arts Curating Contemporary Art	Policy development Facilitating exchange Identifying opportunities Understanding how organizations work	Co-design with communities Partnerships Be open and clear Embed artists in local authorities Translate between different languages	Working with developers who trigger cultural obligations Shape cultural offer for the community of the borough Make space for culture within places and communities
Jonas Dahlberg	OPI Lab	University course	University funds	Architecture	Subjective mapping	Not being fully a university institution	Test the limits of public space

		Design studio Public space	Dahlberg's private money Fundraising	Artist (video) Scenography	Know the context Work with sequences and tempos Negotiate	Three-parts structure Work in contact with people Have a studio in public space Not focus on a single subject Pinball script Prototyping	Challenge value systems in urban planning Incubator of new methodologies Keep freedom for practices Help artists Make space for artistic professions in society Create conditions for diversity in public space
Vincent De Boer	Stroom Den Haag	Art center	Public (municipality) Sponsorships Sales Commission work Other partnerships	Artist	Create safe and open atmosphere Work with the unusual Project management Keep all aspects of the project together Communicate Understand (social) context Think beyond the market frames	Mixing different expertises (especially social) Explore wider Find the right partner Link different levels Emotional networking Make clear the value of art	Advisory role about art in public space with the municipality Give artists spaces to work in Commission art in the city Facilitate artists Keep space for art in urban development Make space for substantial art/raise the level of artistic research

					Openness Knowledge about art making		Root artworks in their contexts Care for old art
Anna Detheridge	Connecting Cultures	Foundation	Grants (Cariplo)	Linguistics Semiotics	Interest in geopolitics Curiosity for different cultures Look for the poetry of existence Respect for people and art Project management	The 3 Rs: Exploration, Relationship, Restitution Workshops/education Mapping Participatory projects	Change visions on places Connection and contamination between cultures Facilitate complex artistic projects Manage the relationship between art and public space
Claire Doherty	Situations	University program (2002-2011) Limited company (2011-2017)	University Awards from foundations (Paul Hamlyn, Cultural Olympiad) Public (Arts Council) External project funding (e.g. by urban developer companies)	Art History Curating contemporary art	Connective skill (artists and places) Respect for artistic practices Care for audiences Production Letting go of your ego Community engagement Storytelling	Narrative approach Understand others' priorities Use accessible language Negotiating new ideas of public art New rules of public art Cumulative processes	Commissioning artworks out of gallery spaces Commission artworks that are in a state of becoming Building a sense of place Shake up and question situations through art

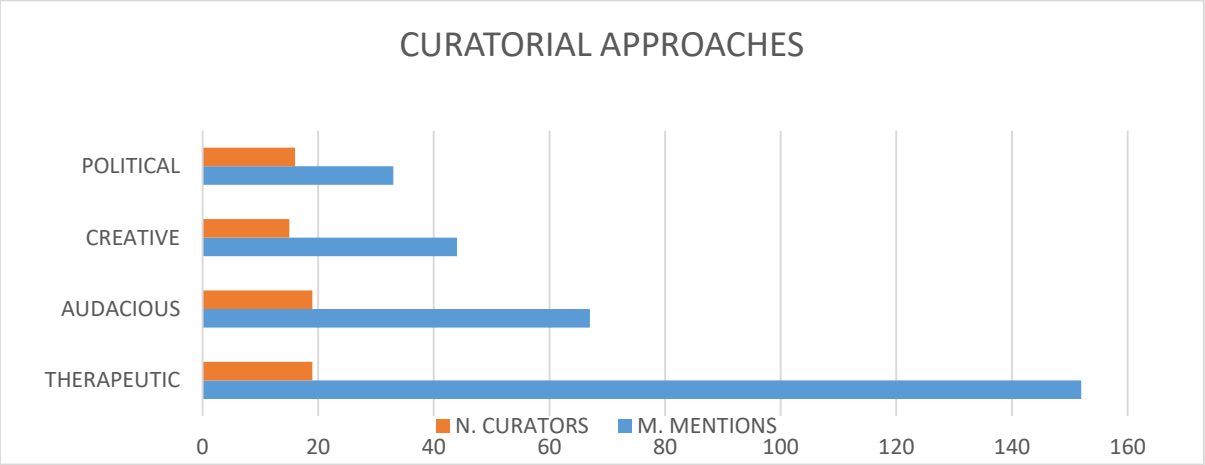
						Creative illusion/modeling possible worlds Partnerships with local organizations	
Gilly Karjevsky	Floating University Berlin	Non-profit organization/ Association	Public Sponsors	Literature Film studies Sociology of the Arts Creative practice for narrative environments (design)	Management and production Storytelling Openness to and negotiating with different perspectives Critical thinking Educational skills Social skills Self-awareness Selling Holding contradictions	Building narratives Collaboration and cooperation Listening Making compromises Being resolute, set and communicate clear intentions Non-binary thought Work on site Do research and share knowledge Prototyping Connect top-down and bottom-up initiatives Educational initiatives Critical complicity	Ensure safety Allow for collective participation Meaning-making Redesign public spaces Address productive tensions in urban spaces and show their transformative potential Facilitate artists/designers Hack traditional planning processes Building partnerships Addressing sustainability/ecological issues Preserving public accessibility to site (gatekeeping)
	72HUA Festival	Tactical Urbanism Festival (project)	Public Roskilde Festival				

Daniele Lupo	Lungomare	Cooperative (cultural production + design studio)	Public funds (Culture Ministry, Region, Municipality, etc.) Private funds (foundations) European funds (Horizon, Creative Europe)	Design Art	Networking Communicative skills Create dialogue	Relational tools Co-design Printed zines/Publications Exhibitions Dialogue platforms Hybridize art and design practices	Work with situated creative practices Respond to local urgencies Raise awareness among citizens Enhance the social dimension of public spaces
Kristina Miller	ZK/U	Independent art residency and project space	Public (*Basisförderung)* Fundraising	Fine Arts Sociology Spatial strategies	Flexibility Designing exhibition spaces Mediation with other institutions Engaging the neighborhood	Working long-term, site-specific, and process-related Building narratives Working with formats Working intuitively	Linking fine arts with social and political debates
Michael Pinsky	Relay	Art program (project)	Private (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership) Eurostar	Fine Arts	Networking Project management and production Taking care of all the aspects Sense of how public space works Love for public space	Matchmaking between artists and sites Work with temporary art Preserve and pass on curatorial knowledge Work on site	Help artists make seminal artworks in public space Create high-quality public spaces Change the perception of the neighborhood Push limits of art in public space

Helena Selder	Art in Urban Development (Baltic Art Center)	Projects	Public grant (Public Art Agency Sweden)	Art History Curating Contemporary Art	Mediation between different skills Map blank spots in knowledge Strong conviction about the power of art	Work with open-ended processes Structure the work Quality briefs	Work with art out of art spaces Open new perspective for people not working in the arts Connect spaces through art Facilitate artists
	PARK LEK (Marabouparken)		Municipality (Sundbyberg) Public grant (Public Art Agency Sweden)				

Table 3. Case studies' summarizing table.

The therapeutic quality can be found as facilitating artists and complex projects (Baeza, Hagdahl, Malm, Muka, Bernhardt, Dahlberg, De Boer, Detheridge, Karjevsky, Pinsky, Selder), building trust with institutions (Baeza, Bernhardt), sharing knowledge and doing pedagogy about art in public spaces (Baeza, Hagdahl, Muka, Zawieja, Karjevsky, Pinsky), mediating and negotiating (Baeza, Hagdahl, Zawieja, Blumenstein, Vickery, Dahlberg, De Boer, Doherty, Karjevsky, Lupo, Miller, Selder), guarding artistic perspectives in urban development (Hagdahl, Dahlberg), empowering and helping smaller organizations in building art projects (Hagdahl, Muka), building trust with the civil society (Hagdahl), working with collaborative and participatory processes (Mossum, Muka, Zawieja, Vickery, Detheridge, Karjevsky, Lupo), curating relationships (Muka, Zawieja, Bernhardt, Blumenstein, De Boer, Karjevsky, Lupo, Pinsky), listening and understanding others' needs (Malm, Mossum, Zawieja, Blumenstein, Vickery, Dahlberg, De Boer, Doherty, Karjevsky, Lupo), engaging people about their places (Crannis, Doherty, Miller), creating a safe and open atmosphere (De Boer), keeping all the aspects of the project together (De Boer, Pinsky), connecting different cultures (Detheridge), connecting artists and places (Doherty, Pinsky), caring for audiences (Doherty), building a sense of place (Doherty), addressing productive tensions in urban spaces (Karjevsky), and opening new perspectives for people not working the the Arts (Selder).



Graph 1. Approaches to curating art in/for/as urban transformation.

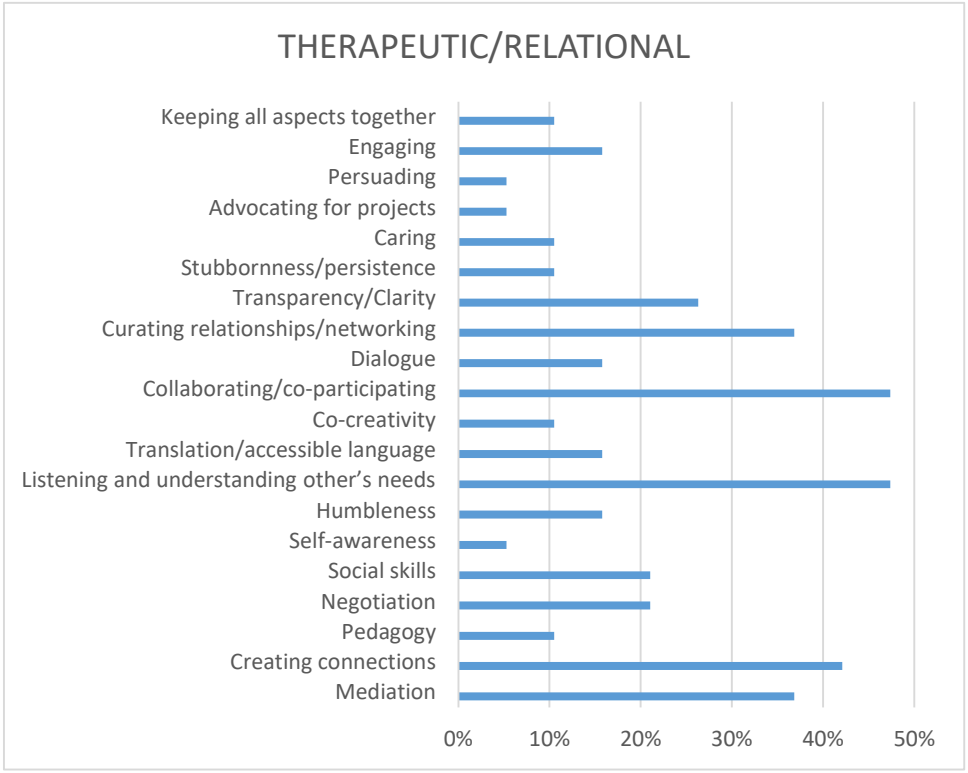
This analysis shows that the most common approach is the therapeutic (or relational) one, with 19 curators referring to it, and 152 mentions in total. The most common objectives within this approach were those of mediating and negotiating (12 curators), of facilitating artists (11 curators), and of listening to and urderstanding others' needs (10 curators). The most involved curators are Karjevsky (15 mentions), Doherty (14 mentions), and Zawieja

(13 mentions). Within this model, it is extremely important to hold mediation, negotiation, and social skills, which have been suggested by several scholars on a theoretical level. According to scholars, there are three different types of mediation in curating: the first deals with translating and conveying to the public both their own vision and that of the artist, the second with extracting value, and the third with connecting the various participants, such as commissioners, planners, artists, and users of the spaces, and facilitating their interactions. The therapeutic/relational model takes the third mediation type as its core. As for this type of mediation, it is commented on by Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen, in their essay about curators as middlemen dealing with conflict management (Andreasen, Bang Larsen 2007). In this second kind of mediation – particularly relevant for curating out of art spaces – relational skills are particularly important: whereas the art context featured the curator, the artist/work, and the audience, in public space – which is inherently negotiable (Bianchetti 2011) – the situation becomes much more crowded, with figures such as commissioners, land owners, architects/planners, and space users. The curator needs to act as a translator between stakeholders, participants, and artists: the success of the project may be determined by the curator's ability to find a common language to develop and promote the work while maintaining its artistic integrity (Doherty 2017). Nicole Foster talks about the method of cultural and creative ecologies as a way to solve the translation issue between cultural actors and planners, countering trends that instrumentalise arts and culture for economic growth: in her study it is researchers to take on this mediation role, but curators could do it as well (Foster 2022). This translation role is highlighted also by Natalia Bobadilla who identifies urban entrepreneurs as mediators who align the diverse interests of public authorities, artists, and local residents (Bobadilla, Goransson, Pichault 2018). Moreover, the curator needs to establish non-hierarchical dialogues between people with conflicting interests, and use conflict as a productive force (Holub 2015). Sheleff suggests that the importance of these practices has often been underestimated, partly because of their association with women's care work: while «the male curator is perceived as having authority and agency, [...] the woman curator is considered mediator to the genius of artists» (Sheleff 2024: 37), as shown by the cases of Harald Szeemann's curatorship at Documenta 5 and Carolyn Christov Bakargiev's at dOCUMENTA (13). All these characteristics resemble the ones described by Sandercock for new planners of the 21st century: being able to engage in dialogue, to negotiate, to tell stories, to listen, and to interpret body language (Sandercock 2004). This rise in the importance of relational skills has been seen through examples such as that of mediators in the Nouveaux Commanditaires/New Patrons protocol (see chapter 3.2), and of Manifesta biennial's Creative Mediators (see chapter 5).

The relational aspect was the only one to emerge from all the interviews: for curators at Public Art Agency Sweden, these skills have proved essential not only in projects involving the construction of new public spaces, where mediation and negotiation mainly take place with the commissioner and owner of the space through the formation of a consultation group, but also and above all in processes that directly involve civil society, as in the case of the *Konst Händer* project, where the artistic projects were developed in collaboration with project groups composed of members of civil society. Anna Detheridge explains the importance of knowing how to interact respectfully with other cultures and sensibilities, and illustrates the three Rs methodology used in her projects: regeneration, relationship (with local actors), and restitution. Anna Vickery and Grace Crannis highlight the importance of perseverance and knowing how to convince others of your ideas, being clear, facilitating discussion and the exchange of knowledge, and translating different languages. Claire Doherty clarifies how essential it is to know how to connect artists to places, respect artistic practices, take care of the needs of the public, put aside one's ego, understand the needs of other actors involved, use accessible language, establish partnerships with local organizations, and negotiate new ideas for art in public spaces. Ellen Blumenstein talks about how curators need to put themselves in the shoes of the various actors involved in the process, understanding the needs of the public, users of the spaces, and building contractors, while at the same time striving to maintain a high level of complexity. Gilly Karjevsky explains how important it is to be open to different perspectives, negotiate, embrace contradictions, persuade, listen, compromise, be resolute, and communicate one's intentions clearly. She recounts how, during 72HUA in Lobeda, a working group was created that brought together representatives from various city institutions, and how this joint effort yielded fruitful results. Helena Selder talks about how she mediates between different areas of knowledge and facilitates artistic action in her practice. Kristina Miller discusses mediation work with other institutions and community engagement in the neighborhood where ZK/U is based, through the use of narratives and formats. Laura Bernhardt talks about cooperation with other local institutions to anchor projects in the area, so as to keep the festival alive even during periods of closure. Michael Pinsky explains how important it was to have a good relationship with the construction companies working in King's Cross when the *RELAY* project was launched, and how the curator acts as a matchmaker between artists and the site. Daniele Lupo talks about his work of collectively negotiating spaces by using relational tools and discussion panels. The method proposed is particularly useful in contexts where it is difficult to involve other actors in dialogue: relational tools act as attractors that generate curiosity, which can lead to broader debate. Jonas Dahlberg emphasizes the crucial

importance of working on site, with people, and talks about the importance of communicating results through the distribution language layer. Dahlberg's pinball script/distribution language is, on the one hand, an effective research tool for developing projects that respond to the specificities of the context and, on the other, helps to understand how to successfully target project proposals to the various stakeholders. Vincent De Boer describes how important it is in projects to communicate, be open, understand social contexts, and find the right partners, and presents the emotional network technique, that can be usefully employed to resolve deadlock situations in complex projects by creating a safe and open environment for discussion, reminiscent of the «cool forums» described by scholar Jonathan Metzger (Metzger 2011).

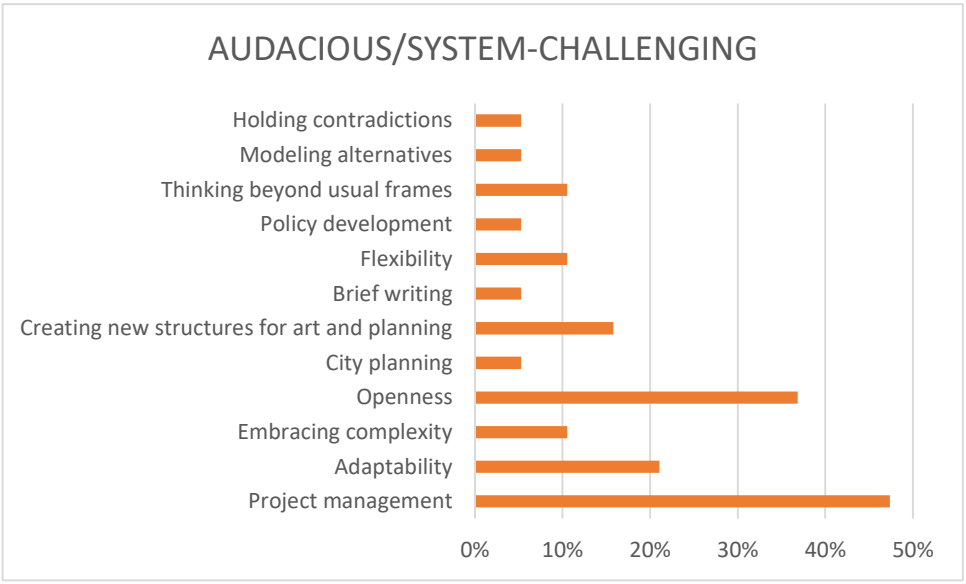
In the interviews (graph X), the most common skills related to this approach were creating connections (42% of respondents), listening and understanding other's needs (47%), collaborating and/or co-participating (47%), curating relationships/networking (37%), and mediating (37%). Other skills that emerged are pedagogical skills, negotiation, self-awareness, humbleness, translating/using accessible language, co-creativity, dialogical skills, transparency/clarity, stubbornness/persistence, caring, advocating for projects, persuading, engaging people, and keeping all aspects of the project together.



Graph. 2. Percentage of curators mentioning therapeutic/relational concepts.

The second most common approach after the therapeutic/relational is the audacious (or system-challenging) one, with 19 curators referring to it, and 67 mentions in total. The most common objectives within this approach were those of making space for art in urban development contexts (6 curators), of being open to different perspectives (7 curators), and of pushing the limits of art in public spaces (5 curators). The most involved curators are Karjevsky (7 mentions), De Boer (7 mentions), and Mossum (8 mentions).

This approach is characterized by the creation of innovative structures and procedures to generate alternative planning processes through the use of artistic means: it is based on the exploration of new methods, on the openness to diverse disciplines and expertises, on the idea of unlearning and relearning. This quality can be found in Public Art Agency's Sweden objective of pushing the limits of art in public spaces and urban development processes, in Crannis and Vickery's idea to influence planning policies through art projects and of embedding artists in local authorities, in Dahlberg's wish for challenging value systems in planning and allowing artists to sit at the decision-making table, in Karjevsky's idea of hacking traditional planning processes through alternative procedures, and in Lupo's working method hybridizing art and design.



Graph. 3. Percentage of curators mentioning audacious/system-challenging concepts.

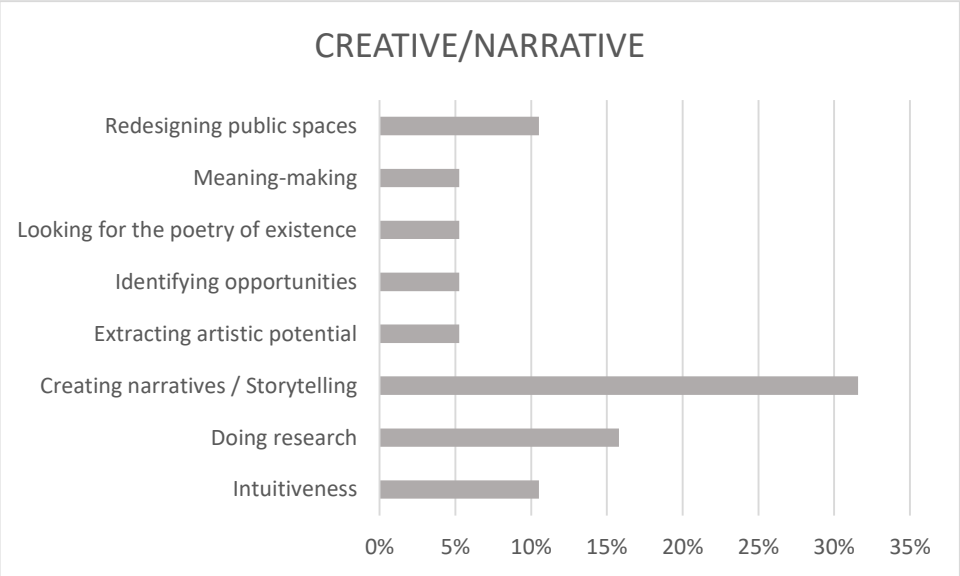
The most common skills in this approach are being able to manage and produce projects (47% of respondents), being open to different perspectives (37% of respondents), and of adapting to different contexts (21% of respondents). Other relevant skills that emerged are embracing complexity, city planning, creating new structures for art and planning, brief

writing, flexibility, policy development, thinking beyond usual frames, modeling alternatives, and holding contradictions.

The third most common approach the creative (or narrative) approach, with 15 curators referring to it, and 44 mentions in total. The most common objectives are creating narratives connecting artworks, places and people (9 curators), building knowledge about art in public places (3 curators), making high quality projects (3 curators), and creating structures for culture (3 curators). The most involved curators are Blumenstein (9 mentions) and Karjevsky (6 mentions).

This approach is centered around the model of mediation as value extraction, described by Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen: according to them, the curator legitimizes the value of artistic products that he considers suitable for entering the art world (Andreasen, Bang Larsen 2007). However, in this approach the curator does not only extract value from artworks, but also from places. Within this approach, curating, by selecting and aesthetically arranging content, is considered a tool of historical meaning-making and as a strategy for individuals to find orientation in the surplus of narratives and knowledge about the past characterizing late modern societies (Kathke, Tomann, Uhlig 2022). The approach is tightly linked to the idea of urban imaginaries, which had been introduced by theorists such as Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, but firstly explicitly theorized by urban planner Kevin Lynch in his well-known *The Image of the City* (Lynch 1960), where he brought in the concept of «imageability» as a principle to organize the everyday chaos of urban experience. Urban imaginaries were later revisited by Michel De Certeau, who shed the light on the importance of inhabitants' everyday actions to build images of the city (De Certeau 2010), while Henri Lefebvre contributed outlining urban imaginaries as instruments of power in his *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991). Lastly, in *Postmetropolis* (2000), Edward Soja described urban imaginaries as «the mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretative grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live» (Soja 2000: 324). Urban imaginaries can prove extremely powerful, as their outcomes can influence real futures, helping scrutinize the status quo and creating pathways towards a different world, as scholar Philipp W.A. Schnell explains, saying that their transformative potential lies in «their capacity to consistently and repeatedly overcome traditional capitalist-functionalist paradigmata, and constitute a persistent force for analyzing, (re-)contextualizing, and actualizing inherent potentials of urban spaces with the aim of creating new experiences, connections, social relations or experiments for the ongoing project of socio-spatial transformation that is urbanization» (Schnell 2022: 13). Lukas Staudinger and Christian Haid claim that telling

stories is always a political activity, in terms of whose stories should be told, and how the narratives of those otherwise unheard get heard and find resonance (Staudinger, Haid 2022). Leonie Sanderock talks about the undervalued but fundamental power of storytelling in planning practices: she explores how narratives function as essential tools for professional performance, serving as catalysts for social change, foundations for collective identity, and persuasive frameworks for policy development. She suggests that storytelling can help planners move beyond dry, technical data in order to engage more effectively with the diverse histories and emotional realities of multicultural communities (Sandercock 2003).



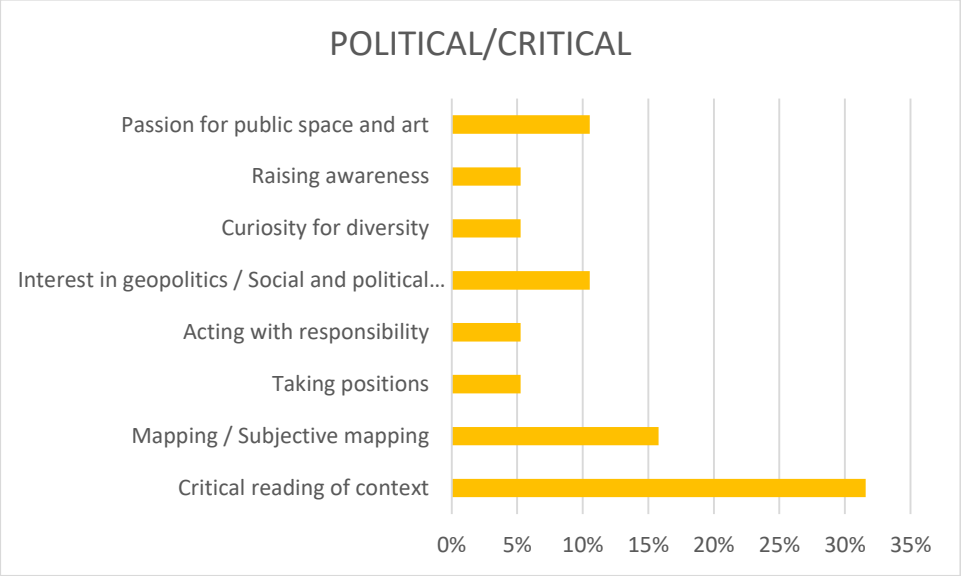
Graph. 4. Percentage of curators mentioning creative/narrative concepts.

This approach can be seen in Magdalena Malm's idea of curating as an artistic profession that connects ideas, people, and places, creating compositions, in Karjevsky's idea of meaning-making, and in Detheridge, Pinsky and Blumenstein's idea of turning perspectives on places, making them more attractive and lively.

The most common skills in this approach are creating narratives/storytelling (32% of respondents), doing research (16% of respondents), and intuitiveness (11% of respondents). Other skills that emerged are extracting artistic potential, identifying opportunities, looking for the poetry of existence, meaning-making and redesigning public spaces.

The least common approach is the political (or critical) one, referring to 16 curators, with 33 mentions in total. The most common objectives are critically interpreting contexts (4 curators), and questioning situations through art (2 curators). The most involved curators are Detheridge (3 mentions), Dahlberg (3 mentions), Hagdahl (3 mentions), and Karjevsky (4 mentions).

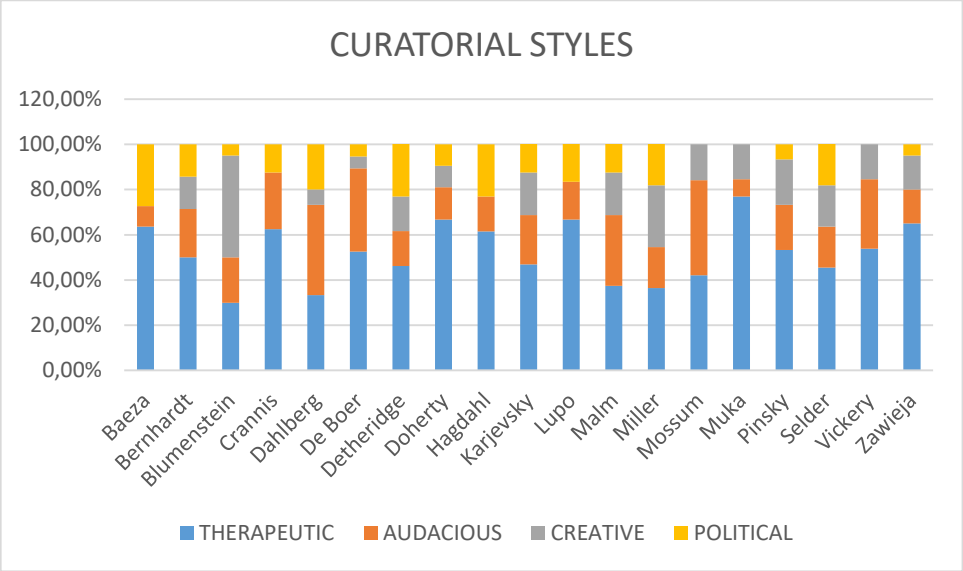
This approach refers to the interpretative model of mediation, which directly descends from from the birth of conceptualism in the 1960s: as art became less accessible to the public, it gave rise to the need for an intermediary figure who could reveal its meanings and enhance its value. The work of art became a «sick» creature in need of external help to make itself visible to the public, and curating was the process that could cure «the image's powerlessness, its incapacity to present itself» (Groys 2008: 45). From this perspective, curatorial mediation is never neutral: for this reason, authors such as Stephan Kampelmann criticize the use of the term "mediator" in reference to the curator, as it would refer to a neutrality that is not characteristic of this figure (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018). Boris Buden suggests instead a parallel between the figure of the curator and that of the translator, in that both, in addition to creating a bridge between different cultures, act as filters for the material they deal with (Buden 2012). Mayaan Sheleff, on the other hand, uses the expression «echoing with a difference» to mean that the knowledge conveyed by the curator is a reflection modified by his or her interpretation (Sheleff 2024). Curatorial interpretations and «ex/positions» (Marchart 2019) do not limit themselves to comment on existing social realities, but are able to invent and search new imaginaries and potentials to be translated into urban environments (Schnell 2022). This approach refers to what Elke Krasny defines as «curating as feminist organizing»: curating is not merely an aesthetic endeavor but a transformative labor that challenges systemic injustices through political and material organizing (Krasny, Perry 2023). This interpretative critical approach can be traced back to Rendell's concept of critical spatial practice, and that of critical curating, a reflexive practice that prioritizes social and political engagement (Fraser, Ming Wai Jim 2018).



Graph. 5. Percentage of curators mentioning political/critical concepts.

This approach can be seen in Blumenstein's idea of creating counterimages to hegemonic narratives in the case of HafenCity, in Doherty's will to model possible worlds through creative illusions, and in Lupo's idea of using art as a means of raising awareness among citizens about important social issues.

The most common skills in this approach are critical reading/interpretation (32% of respondents), mapping (16%), and an interest in social and political debates (11%). Other skills that emerged are taking positions, acting with responsibility, curiosity for diversity, and a passion for public space and public art.



Graph. 6. Curatorial styles identified according to the recurrence of concepts related to different approaches in interviews.

It is important to clarify that these approaches are not rigid and that they do not represent an either/or choice: the author has decided to outline them in order to be able to better analyze the case studies and the methodologies curators adopt, but in everyday curatorial practice they are flexible and oftentimes overlapping with each other. For example, the creative/narration model can overlap with the therapeutic/relational, whereas the narration for the urban space is not generated individually by the curator, but co-produced with the civil society. The audacious/system-challenging approach can intersect with the therapeutic/relational whereas the new challgenging structure is produced in dialogue with other professional fields or subjects, or with the creative/narrative, whereas narratives and meaning-making are used as means to introduce change in traditional planning procedures. The political/critical model overlaps with the audacious/system-challenging one in cases where giving a critical interpretation and taking a political position means challenging

traditional urban planning systems and neoliberal development objectives. The creative/narrative approach overlaps with the political/critical one, whereas building a new imaginary about urban spaces can produce a transformation of the hegemonic order into an alternative reality, and so on.

The choice to diversify different approaches was meant at understanding what are the most meaningful values and skills for each curator, and in what proportion, in order to compare different practices and curatorial styles. The results can be observed in the graph above (Graph. 6), showing how the approach of every analyzed curator is composed.

6.2 Comparing curatorial methodologies and organizational structures

Each curator presented their methods and organization in the case studies.

Curators at Public Art Agency Sweden presented how the institution was transformed by putting art at its center: to do that, it was crucial to reshape the role of project managers into that of curators, in an attempt to confer new and increased value to highly-specialized professional skills. Moreover, the Agency hired a team of full-time curators with artistic competences and different specializations: this allowed a process of learning and building competence to work with art in public spaces inside the institution, made it easier to relate to and engage stakeholders, and allowed employed curators to do strategic work, which would have been impossible for external curators. Important was also the creation of an Art Unit, where internal discussion and collaboration were fostered, and the creation of curatorial teams (instead of individual curators) to lead projects. Crucial was also the introduction of new project formats – in particular temporary projects and urban development projects – together with changing the workflow for permanent projects in order to produce higher-quality artworks. The introduction of temporary projects fostered experimental approaches and asked curators to reverse their usual way of working. Lastly, important methods were to be present on site and to work in a responsive way, through a step-by-step methodology, which allowed for more flexibility in setting goals and visions, so that the limits of what is possible were not set too firmly and too early, keeping open questions about art's format, theme, site and future management, and being able to constantly re-adjust the project's direction.

Ellen Blumenstein highlighted the importance of creating long-term structures to anchor culture in HafenCity, for example on an administrative and funding perspective: she argued that more structural stability would have given her the opportunity to develop more long-term relationships with local people. Moreover, she claimed the need to distance herself from

concrete situations and reflect them back into the public discourse by finding images or narratives and focusing on aspects of reality for which there is no room in everyday life. She focused on addressing the subconscious of the city and the narratives of the city, through an approach which creates alternatives rather than just criticizes the existing situation. Lastly, she argued for the integration of all the knowledge she gathered leading Imagine the City into the developers' Cultural Development Plan, dividing the working process in three phases and several working packages, and describing the organizational structure of the initiative, featuring a culture team holding both project management and curatorial expertise. Kristina Miller argued for the importance of flexibility in the organization's structure, and explained the role of both formats (Openhaus, Gütermarkt, and Food And Footage) and narratives (*Planetary Agencies, Augmented Aesthetics, Commons Cosmodrome,* and *Relational Urbanism*) both to structure and organize curatorial work, and to link people, institutions and projects.

Laura Berhardt explained how she used the festival as a format to make space for art in a large urban development project such as *Stuttgart21*, by using different media: the festival was not only revolving around installations and artistic actions, but also symposiums and the publishing of a magazine.

Also Gilly Karjevsky pointed out the importance of the festival format, seen as a planning, research and communication tool, useful to prototype and test change in public space through quick and unexpensive interventions, thus shifting mindsets and hacking traditional planning systems. She moreover added how for her it was important to work through a non-binary approach.

Claire Doherty recounted how she worked with durational, cumulative projects, where the open-endedness of the process was employed as a means for resisting the instrumentalisation of art. Moreover, she established a set of rules for commissioning public art projects, and oftentimes prepared art strategies for developers and municipalities who wanted to integrate art in urban development and regeneration. This allowed her to be present in the process from its early stages, and to pave the way for curatorial and artistic work to come. Lastly, she used the method of creative illusion, to produce alternative realities through narratives and art.

Michael Pinsky for *RELAY* set a methodology that was based on four pillars: embeddedness of the curatorial team into the development company; transparency in communication and presence on-site; passing on knowledge; and creating an art program corresponding to the building work's phases. Moreover, he chose to work with temporary projects in order to be able to explore wider possibilities.

Grace Crannis and Anna Vickery's method revolves around establishing collaborations between different departments – Arts and Planning – at London boroughs of Wandsworth and Richmond. They take art as a source of inspiration to change the council's policies and processes, for example in terms of commissioning public art or of the use of public spaces at night. To do so, they embedded some art projects into other fields, such as planning or engagement, and promoted embedding artists in the public administration, as in the case of Jaspar Joseph-Lester.

Jonas Dahlberg worked by creating an innovative structure – partly a university course, partly a studio practice, and parly a public space – allowing him and his students to work on site, in contact with people of Gröndal neighborhood in Stockholm. This allows to make artistic competence visible in that urban area, with the aim of becoming able to influence decision-making and sitting at the table with public officers, planners, and other stakeholders. He presented as his methods also the idea of subjective mapping of the context, together with his elaboration of the pinball script and distribution language layer methods, meant to build solid projects and communicate them efficaciously.

Helena Selder argued for long-term, open-ended, explorative projects, such as in the case of *PARK LEK*. She sees art as the opportunity to prepare a preliminary study engaging planners, architects, landscape architects and others concerned planning professions. In this way, artists are invited in a joint discussion to contribute to a future quality program, identify long-term methods for including artistic perspectives in the planning process, but also point forward to concrete proposals for designs.

Anna Detheridge described her three-phases methodology, made up of an initial exploration or mapping, of establishing relationships with the territory, and of finally restituting the results of the process.

Daniele Lupo described his hybrid curatorial practice, mixing visual art and design, through the production of artistic interventions, exhibitions, and zines. He put at the center the idea of co-design in relation to situated practices, and turned the spotlight on the use of relational tools as a way engage citizens and other local players in dialogical exchange.

Lastly, Vincent De Boer explained the importance of mixing different expertises, such as the artistic and the social, in order to produce artistic works that are aligned with the context they become part of. Lastly, he introduces the technique of emotional networking, which is meant at resolving deadlock situations in complex projects by creating a safe and open environment for discussion.

Some common threads emerge from this description: the first is the necessity to establish innovative and specific structures for producing art in urban planning contexts (Public Art

Agency Sweden, Blumenstein, Dahlberg). The second is the usefulness of temporary formats such as festivals and short-term projects to explore and test new (and more radical) solutions (Public Art Agency Sweden, Bernhardt, Karjevsky, Pinsky). Then there is the necessity to be present on site and work in a responsive way (Public Art Agency Sweden, Pinsky, Dahlberg, Detheridge, Lupo). It is also key to mix different expertises to work in an interdisciplinary manner (Public Art Agency Sweden, Karjevsky, Pinsky, Crannis, Vickery, Dahlberg, Selder, Lupo, De Boer). It is moreover crucial to build knowledge inside the project or institution and be able to preserve it and pass it on (Public Art Agency Sweden, Blumenstein, Doherty, Pinsky, Selder). It is important to embed results in term of change on the long-term, for example by modifying planning policy and working processes (Public Art Agency Sweden, Blumenstein, Karjevsky, Doherty, Crannis, Vickery, Dahlberg, Selder, Lupo). There is also the need to engage people in participatory co-design processes (Public Art Agency Sweden, Doherty, Crannis, Detheridge, Lupo). It is equally crucial to conduct mappings of the context before working on it (Public Art Agency Sweden, Karjevsky, Crannis, Vickery, Dahlberg, Selder, Detheridge, Lupo). Some curators suggest that it can be strategic to embed themselves into development companies and municipalities and/or work jointly with them (Public Art Agency Sweden, Blumenstein, Doherty, Pinsky, Crannis, Vickery, Selder, De Boer). Lastly, it is common to use narratives to structure curatorial work and promote urban change (Blumenstein, Miller, Bernhadt, Karjevsky, Doherty, Selder). To sum up, curatorial methods analyzed express how this practice is inherently relational, hybrid, adaptive, exploratory, transformative, and strategic: all characteristics that can be very useful to innovate planning practices.

As for the organizational structures, the research analyzed several different typologies, both public and private: from the State agency represented by Public Art Agency Sweden to the local administration represented by the London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth; from independent art centers, project spaces and artistic residencies (Stroom Den Haag, ZK/U, Baltic Art Center, Marabouparken konsthall) to art festivals and programs (CURRENT Festival, 72HUA Festival, RELAY); from non-profit associations and foundations (Imagine the City, Connecting Cultures, Floating ~~University~~), to cooperatives (Lungomare, which was a non-profit association before 2021), limited companies (Situations, which was a university program before 2012), and hybrid structures (OPI, which is a university course, studio, and public space). The teams are usually small-sized, up to ten people, and they can either expand or shrink according to the ongoing projects. For example, Situations normally had about eight-nine employees, but during intensive-work periods the number went up to thirty. The type of funding is largely public, either through dedicated

public budgets (on a State, region, or municipality level) or grants and awards. Other common sources are sponsorships and private funding (for example, by urban development companies and foundations). In some cases, other sources can be university and research funds (for example, Horizon), sales, and crowdfunding.

All of these models have their pros and cons: a first distinction needs to be made between temporary and durational structures. If on the one hand temporary formats can be a good way to test and prototype new solutions (for example in *72HUA*), in other cases they appear to be the only possible choice in absence of other options (as for example in the case of *CURRENT*). In the second case, this temporary format fosters a form of employment that is precarious, an engagement that is discontinuous both on the side of the curators and of the public, and results that hardly last over time and can be mantained. Thus, this kind of projects can be interesting if thought of as in the first option (where the festival takes advantage of its own temporaneity to do something that would not be possible for a stable organization), while can be problematic in the second case: the risk here is also that, when a project ends, knowledge gets lost and the results of it are not taken forward (as for example in the case of *RELAY*). The way out could be to abandon the logic of projectism in order to establish a more durational working structure: this happened in the case of *Without Frontiers*, illustrated in chapter 2, which started as a festival but then became a durational situated project, but also Ellen Blumenstein has suggested something similar in her proposal for HCH's cultural development plan.

A second distinction needs to be made regarding funding sources: both public agencies and administrations (such as Public Art Agency Sweden), and organizations relying on private funding (such as *RELAY*) have more stability and better funding than independent art centers and non-profit associations; on the other hand, they more easily risk to be accused of being instrumentalized to express certain political ideas (see for example the case of *Konst Händer*) or to promote processes of gentrification and commodification of public space (see for example the case of *RELAY* and of *Imagine the City*). Independent centers and non-profit association have more freedom of action when it comes to the contents of their projects, but at the same time they suffer from a lack of financial resources, which risks to minimize their impact in urban development processes: there are few staff members, some of which are oftentimes unpaid interns or volunteers; it is difficult to keep continuity and preserve knowledge; it is hard to be heard and listened to with no institutional support providing credibility in planning processes. From this perspective, the author thinks that the model represented by Lungomare is particularly interesting and efficient, as it is able to keep on the one hand the decisional autonomy which is typical of non-profit associations and

independent art centers, and on the other hand the financial stability given by not having to depend entirely on external funding. Moreover, this kind of model fosters multidisciplinary competences, which are necessary to lead both the cultural production and the secondary activity (for example, exhibition design and design for visual communication, in the case of Lungomare). In general, hybrid organizational structures could represent an interesting way of innovating the sector, providing both independence and financial stability.

6.3 Ethics and impacts: risks and opportunities of curating art in/for/as urban transformations, and a framework to classify impacts

Curating in/for/as urban transformation entails a series of risks and opportunities, which have been widely analyzed in literature. Most of these risks are the same of art in/for/as urban transformation, which have been illustrated in chapter 3.1, since curating builds on those artistic practices, but adding some specificities (see Zukin 1982; Deutsche 1996; Miles 1997; Cameron, Coaffee 2005; Sacco 2011; Rosler 2011; Emmelheinz 2013; Sachs Olsen 2017; Wainwright 2017; Pritchard 2020; Vilenica 2021; Gould 2022; Seldin 2025). The most common critique is that curatorial narratives can turn into rhetorics coopted by neoliberal development, fostering gentrification, social displacement and depoliticization, through value extraction, artwashing and maquillage operations. Indeed, philosopher Byung-Chul Han argues that capitalist narratives sell stories that are then transformed into commodities, and that the practice of storytelling transforms stories into consumer goods (Han 2024): this explains the reason why culture-led urban regeneration models have been copy-pasted in so many different cities around the world, producing formal omologation (Farinella 2024). If, on the one hand, curatorial narratives can foster a sense of belonging for local communities and contribute to placemaking, helping people to orient themselves and to make sense of the over-abundance of information and stimuli composing our urban culture (Chaplin, Stara 2009), revealing unexpected aspects of cities (Chaplin, Stara 2009), or even real «paratopias», places beyond what is visible (Pala 2020), on the other hand, placemaking can easily turn into place-marketing, if not carried out carefully, and a strive towards meaning-making can fall into city branding/packaging (Chaplin, Stara 2009). Thus, the image of the city risks becoming a banal commercial postcard (Hospers 2010). Olga Fernández describes curators as figures aligned with post-fordist economic systems, where the production of immaterial knowledge has become central, reflecting this system also from a working mode perspective (flexibility; lifelong learning; subjective collaboration; heterodox application of existing rules in an exceptional situation). In this sense, according to Fernández, in order to

avoid pitfalls and cooption, they should practice critique upon themselves as a new kind of institution (Fernández 2011). This thinking is recalled also by Dorothee Richter, who views the curator as a paradigmatic signifier and performance of neoliberal and post-Fordist working conditions. While she describes the position of curating as «Janus-faced» — oscillating between a dissident attitude and involvement in new forms of governmentality — she identifies the curator as a figure who structures and produces power relations within accelerated capitalism. In this framework, curating is seen as a «willing helper» in installing ideological superstructures that exploit knowledge and commercialize aliveness in the service industry. Though, she later adds that curating could also take on an opposite role, countering neoliberal tendencies through feminist and communal perspectives (Richter 2023). Catharina Thörn and Karin Swahn talk about territorial curation as the way through which public and private entities collaborate to trigger gentrification in historically marginalized areas, bridging the reputational gap between a district's stigmatized present and its profitable future through a strategic selection of historical narratives and the imposition of specific aesthetic norms (Thörn, Swahn 2025). Janna Graham, in criticizing how the contemporary art world facilitates urban dispossession by acting as a diplomatic mask for the violent realities of gentrification, illustrates the role of curatorial narratives in the process: according to her, they build manifest destiny stories and creative visioning exercises, which effectively vanish the voices of existing communities, rebranding forced removal as mere urban improvement. For this reason, she urges curators to abandon the myth of the neutral observer and instead take sides in solidarity with grassroots anti-displacement struggles (Graham 2017). Malcolm Miles talks about the rhetorics of culture-led urban development, in particular contrasting the lynchian idea of legibility with that of giving an interpretation from above (or what he refers to as the hegemony of top-down strategies) in projects which maily deal with visual aspects of the city, and which focus on lefebvrian conceptual spaces rather than on lived spaces. According to Miles, such rhetoric of legibility establishes a hierarchy that favors professional designers, planners, architects and (we would add) curators over the people who actually inhabit the city. He suggests, instead, to create co-productive processes where the lived expertise of inhabitants is acknowledged, and claims the need for voices of dissent which interrupt the gloss of urban development (Miles 2005). Claire Louise Staunton explains how curators need to face the depoliticization of urban contexts operated by creative placemaking practices which uncritically assume culture as a way to make better people and places: they can either choose to be coopted, or adopt a post-political attitude and counter hegemonic order (Staunton 2022). This process of depoliticization is illustrated also by Lucia Tozzi in her description of Milan and its rhetorics

of urban regeneration: in order to make the city marketable – a «win-win city» as she calls it – the oppositional logic (related to political positioning) is abandoned, in a way that the city can be both a capital of luxury and an inclusive city, a city that loves street art and décor, a city promoting the continuous construction of skyscrapers, and reforesting, and so on: in this context, it is no longer possible to take any position, and every alternative becomes equally marketable (Tozzi 2023).

This problem was particularly evident in some of the case studies, such as Michael Pinsky's project in King's Cross: in that case, dealing with the regeneration of a privately owned public space (POPS), the marketing objectives of the development company were so blatant and intrusive that led the curator to withdraw the project after his second assignment (see Naldi 2021). Also Ellen Blumenstein was criticized for favoring a privileged district in the case of her work in HafenCity. Another example is Claire Doherty's work in Bjørvika, where the curatorial project and artworks have contributed to one of the most famous examples of new-build gentrification, where a totally new, high-cost, and high-status neighborhood was built, creating a stark contrast with nearby, more working-class areas (Andersen 2021). The problem is particularly visible in projects that are commissioned by developers, and even more if the company is private.

Other critiques that can be moved towards curatorial practices in urban spaces are that some curators act as if they were in a museum, treating the urban space as an "open-air gallery", and imposing individual ideas in spaces that are public. This is partially linked to the critique of Miwon Kwon, related to curatorial anticipation: according to her, the curator with his or her ideas and preferences delimits not only the possible community partners for an artist but also the type of project that might be developed between them (Kwon 2002). In this way, the curator does not allow other subjects in the process to fully express themselves, orchestrating their relationships and artistic outcomes to address his or her own purpose. From this perspective, the curator is portrayed as that vampiric, self-centered and author-like that was born with Szeemann in the 1960s, as was explained in chapter 3.2.

Especially during the author's internship experience at *Without Frontiers*, hearing terms such as "open-air museum" was very common. The chief curator, Simona Gavioli, during a lecture about *Curating and Managing Events*, held at the Advanced Training Course on Urban Art LUNETTA. Anno ZERO in October 2020, argued that she did not agree with the use of the term "urban curator", because the profession of a curator working in public space coincided with that of a traditional curator (Gavioli 2020). Nonetheless, it must be said that even her work evolved over time and since 2020 her project developed in new ways that do not have so much in common with curating gallery exhibitions any more (just think of the

Lunetta Cultural Camp initiative). Anyway, what has been found in the analysis of the case studies is that the curators interviewed see curating in urban spaces as a specific profession with its own skills and methods differing from traditional art curating. Of course this is more evident in curators coming from other-than-art-curating backgrounds (Zawieja, Crannis, Detheridge, Karjevsky, Dahlberg), while curators who have an art curating background keep themselves closer to production procedures typical of art institutions (Baeza, Hagdahl, Malm, Mossum, Muka, Bernhardt, Blumenstein, Vickery, De Boer, Doherty, Lupo, Miller, Pinsky, Selder). The risk of curatorial anticipation and, in general, of imposing one's own vision upon the urban space is higher in curators who give more importance to creative (or authorial) aspects (for example, in the case of Blumenstein, Bernhardt, Malm or Doherty): though, it needs to be clarified that in all the case studies analysed the main component of all curatorial styles was the relational one. In this sense, all curators gave more importance to listening to others, understanding contexts, and enabling others to express themselves than to authoring their own creative work. This is a very clear difference existing between the traditional curator's and the curator in urban contexts' role: in this sense, curating in public space is closer to a public service or social work than to a meta-artistic profession à la Szeemann, though it still keeps a creative component.

Lastly, a problem lies in the duration and impact of curatorial practices: oftentimes, curators work short-term, organizing projects. If this can work well in art spaces such as galleries and museums, urban space requires much longer periods of time and stable presence and work in order show impacts. Ståle Holgersen, for example, criticizes the working logic of projectism, consisting in temporary assignments leading to possibly measurable results, coming one after another. Holgersen outlines the difference between policies and projects, explaining that the first ones assign resources in a strategic way and for a long period of time to guarantee continuity, while the second ones are more similar to short-term tactics which can be easily withdrawn (Holgersen 2019). Pascal Gielen explains that project-oriented thinking is a product of the neoliberal network economy, where relationships are established only for the short time necessary to obtain a certain goal: «in a network society solidarity is only temporarily functional, specifically for the duration of a project. In other words, in the network economy, even this value is understood in goal-driven terms. It applies only as long as it remains beneficial to, and thus fits the trajectory of, the enterprising individual» (Gielen 2010: 17). Gielen analyzes projects as a result-oriented working model that increases productivity, but at the same time fosters labor exploitation. Against the flexibility of projects, Gielen proposes the idea of inflexibility, thus interrupting the rush of project work and extending the duration of projects, and argues for curating with love as a form of

inflexibility that rejects functional rationalization, calculation and project-orientation in favor of lifelong investments and commitment (Gielen 2010). Mary Jane Jacob, quoting artist Morten Goll, instead talks about how projectism is problematic in terms of loosing knowledge and of artists and curators leaving before any problem can emerge:

> You accumulate experience from each project, but when you move to a new project, there's a loss of part of the knowledge that you experienced and learned. And all of the people who were on the road with you are left without resources, because you took them. Yet the most important resource is knowledge, the experience. If you do a three-month project in a community, you have the honeymoon and things are really amazing: "Wow, this is possible!" Then you pull out before the problems come. Problems arise when daily life occurs and you realize maybe it's not so easy to have this kind of democracy. (Jacob 2018: 112-113).

This idea could take forward Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty's idea of durational art projects (O'Neill, Doherty 2011) to something more radical: durational structures rather than projects.

This problem characterizes some of the case studies, as was already mentioned in chapter 6.2: among them, are Ellen Blumenstein's *Imagine the City*, Laura Bernhardt's *CURRENT* Festival, Gilly Karjevsky's *72HUA*, and Michael Pinsky's *RELAY*. It needs to be said that also other curators in the case studies work through projects – think for example of Public Art Agency Sweden's *Konst Händer*, of Helena Selder's *Marabouparken Lab*, of Anna Detheridge's *Progetto Valdarno*, or of Daniele Lupo's *FLUX* – even though their organizational structure is not a project per se. The difference lies in the fact that organizations such as the Public Art Agency, Marabouparken konsthall, Connecting Cultures, and Lungomare can more easily preserve curatorial and territorial knowledge, and, in some cases, move from short-term projects to cumulative durational processes thanks to their higher stability. As was said in chapter 6.2, the temporary project structure is not inherently negative, but it becomes such when it is the only possible option in absence of less precarious alternatives and its temporaneity is not a strategic characteristic of it, but rather a limit. In this sense, it is interesting how some curators have sought ways to establish more stable organizational structures, as was done by Ellen Blumenstein through her proposal for HCH's cultural development plan, by Claire Doherty transforming Situations in a limited company, by Malm with the creation of a team of full-time curators, and by Lupo transforming Lungomare in a cooperative. It is not only the financial stability, but also the stable presence on the territory to make a difference in the possibility to produce long-term

transformation rather than short-term projects: from this perspective, the work of ZK/U in Berlin Moabit, of Floating ~~University~~ in Berlin Tempelhof, of OPI in Gröndal (Stockholm), of Marabouparken konsthall in Sundbyberg, of Connecting Cultures in Milan's Parco Agricolo Nord, of Lungomare in Bolzano, and of Stroom in The Hague, is particularly relevant.

In order to cope with these three problems, some key solutions have been identified, which can help curators avoid pitfalls. Regarding the first problem, it would be important to shift from uncritical, depoliticized and therapeutic approaches to critical, post-political and caring practices. Scholars argue for abandoning pseudo-neutral positions and developing a critical awareness of the political and social context where curators intervene: if it is true that during the rise of independent curators, they became agents of neutralization and compromise between the art system and contemporary art's demands (Žerovc 2003), their role has changed greatly with their entrance in public space. Here, they need to take position and develop self-awareness (Marchart 2019) in order to solve problems in conflictual contexts (Kampelmann, Kaethler, Vickery Hill 2018), avoid cooption and shift from market curating to social curating (Stefan, Gheorghe 2013), facilitate dissensus (Staunton 2022), promote and anchor activism (Ophrat 2023; Holub 2023), counter neo-liberal narratives (Richter 2023), and strategically infiltrate, mimick and subvert dominant power structures (Stratigakos 2017; Mouffe 2013). Besides this, they should limit themselves to comment on the *status quo* («paranarratives») (Belloni 2020), but also produce alternatives to the power's mainstream one («counternarratives») (Kathke, Tomann, Uhlig 2022). Though scholars suggest, especially those from a feminist background, that this positioning does not need to be aggressive and loud (like neoliberal marketing, described by La Cecla 2015), but can be quiet (Holub 2023) and careful (Krasny, Perry 2023; Karjevsky 2024; Richter 2023). Here comes another turn in understanding planning (and curating): urban planning was born as a science in the 19th century taking as its foundations a hygienic metaphor (the city as a sick organism) and "health" assumptions (studying therapies to cure it). French historian Pierre Lavedan explicitly refers to urban planning as therapy to cure a sick city, whose sickness was due to industrialization (Farinella 2024). Linked to the idea of health was that of *embellissement*: a city that was healthy was also beautiful and orderly, thus curing a sick city also meant to embellish it, from a planner's perspective (Farinella 2024). This kind of therapeutic outdated logic is what has produced so many add-on aesthetic interventions in cities, of the kind which have been described as art-in-urban-transformation. What if this logic changed? And what if it changed thanks to curating? Curating, besides its latin ethimology, does not mean so much curing than taking care of: an idea that is way less

technical, sterile, and hierarchical. Taking care can be a much more collaborative, personal, and horizontal practice. Iliana Forianaki argues for the need for a «bureau of care that carefully considers care as a collective and structural practice not only for others but *with* others» (Forianaki 2020). Vivian Rehberg suggests that the idea of care can be used to overcome the conception of curating as a neoliberal extractivist practice: «Curating adds the symbolic value of caring, of carefulness» (Rus Bojan *et al.* 2010) according to Rehberg, meaning that it is an activity that can produce value per se, and not only extract it from places and artworks.

As for the second problem – that of curatorial anticipation and of curating-as-authoring – some useful suggestions for curators could be to try to decentralize themselves and to hold space for other people to speak (McDaniel 2021; Helsel 2009), thus opening themselves to and negotiating with a plurality of voices and narratives, neither being totally neutral nor forcefully imposing their own interpretation (Sachs Olsen 2018; Vianello, Bartolomei 2020; Kampelmann, Kathler, Vickery Hill 2018). In that, they should be as open-minded as possible, making space for uncertainty and open-ended processes (Holub 2015; Wall 2023; Sendra, Sennett 2022). Then, they should try to reaffirm relationality over domination and exploitation, looking for forms of conversation and organization based on trust and friendship, in contrast to neoliberal logics of controlling and ordering spaces and resources (Fehse, Soldavini 2023). Moreover, they should seek to foster social engagement instead of passive consumption (Doherty 2017), collaborative, participatory and dialogical curatorial practices (O'Neill 2010; Krasny 2020; White 2023; Sheleff 2024), thus subverting the current trend towards aesthetically empowered but socially weakened public spaces (Bianchetti 2011).

As for the last problem – that of projectism – it should be important for curators to create structures allowing them to focus on durational practices (O'Neill, Doherty 2011), as curating in public space is a relational practice, and good relationships need time more than spectacle: Luigi Coppola talks about the importance of making space for the «poetry of duration» (Coppola 2022: 56), and invites institutions to ensure adequate time for complex and unpredictable relationship processes, rather than focusing on organizing events, communicating their immediate results, and demonstrating the figures related to engagement and participation. These behaviors, in fact, often clash with processes that require duration, acceptance of failure, repetition, listening, and complexity (Coppola 2022).

The analysis of risks has allowed to identify risky attitudes and possible solutions, outlining some antinomies: uncritical/critical, depoliticized/post-political, therapeutic/caring, individualistic/dialogical, rigid/open-ended, short-term/durational approaches. Such

antinomies can be merged with the curating art in/for/as urban transformation to understand how curatorial practices can be evaluated.

Criteria	**Imagine the City**	**Progetto Valdarno**	**PARK LEK**
Top-down	✓	✓	
Bottom-up			✓
Hegemonic narrative	✓	✓	
Counternarrative			✓
Public	✓	✓	
Private			✓
Short-term		✓	
Durational	✓		✓
Early involvement		✓	✓
Late involvement	✓		
Individualistic	✓		
Dialogical		✓	✓
Transformative		✓	✓
Non transformative	✓		
Category	Art-in-urban-transformation	Art-for-urban-transformation	Art-as-urban transformation

Table 4. Examples of case studies' evaluation.

From the three examples in the table, one for each category, how relevant is the type of commission (top-down or bottom-up, public or private): when projects are commissioned bottom-up, usually the curator and artists have a critical position towards hegemonic narrative (see for example *PARK LEK*, *Haus der Statistik*, and Floating ~~University~~), while in cases of top-down commissions curator can have a critical and politicized position, though building counternarratives is much more complex and becomes a very subtle work of wit and diplomacy (see for example the case of *Konst Händer*). Whenever coming to an agreement is not possible, the result can be the withdrawal of the project (see for example

the second assignment in King's Cross): in cases where the commissioner is private and has specific market objectives, this contrast can become particularly evident.

Another important criterium is the early or late involvement of curators and artists in the planning process and how much action freedom is allowed to them: an early involvement and more freedom can produce deep transformative effects, while late involvement and less freedom produce less significant results in terms of transforming deeply the urban space. For example, in the case of Imagine the city, Blumenstein was involved by HafenCity's development company seventeen years after the approval of the masterplan, and was asked to work separately from the company thus making more structural interventions particularly difficult to achieve. On the contrary, Michael Pinsky in *RELAY*, Helena Selder in *Art in Urban Development Visborg* and curators at Public Art Agency Sweden (see for example *bLINK*) closely worked with developers since early stages. An important difference is then made by the duration (short-term or long-term) of the project, as long-term projects have more time to root themselves and work transformatively: though, even if this a key prerequisite, it is not sufficient for a project to be inherently transformational, as it needs to be supported by other factors mentioned above.

Then it is important to understand if the curation was rather individualistic and rigid, than dialogical and open-ended: most of the projects analyzed had a relational, collaborative or participatory component, though in some cases individual curatorial visions gained more weight than in others.

Lastly, there is the need to look at the impacts of projects: in this case, since a deep impact assessment was not possible within the scope of this research (but would be interesting to conduct in the future), curators were asked for a self-evaluation and to provide examples of outcomes achieved, especially in a long-term perspective. For example, Blumenstein, Bernhardt, and Selder (in the case of *Art in Urban Development Visborg*) admitted that they were not able to impact deeply the urban development process they were working within. Both Blumenstein, Selder, Pinsky and Karjevsky pushed for establishing a team preserving curatorial expertise: though this has not materialized in the case of Visborg, King's Cross and Lobeda, while in Hamburg HCH is considering the proposal. Other curators, instead, outlined how their interventions effectively contributed to transform urban spaces and dynamics: this is for example the case of *Haus der Statistik* and of Floating ~~University~~ in Berlin, of *PARK LEK* in Sundbyberg, of *Progetto Valdarno* in Montevarchi, and of *FLUX* in Bolzano. In other cases, the impact lies not so much in directly transforming spaces, but in changing planning processes, such as in the case of Anna Vickery and Grace Crannis's projects in London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth, of Dahlberg's OPI, of Public

Art Agency Sweden's work to include art in *Gestaltad livsmiljö* policy, and of Blumenstein's proposal for HCH's cultural development plan.
This framework can allow policy-makers and commissioners to understand how to structure their briefs for curators, what requests they can make, what conditions to establish, and what to expect in terms of outcomes according to both the commission's and curators' features.

6.4 A new urban profession?

Earlier in this chapter, it has been pinpointed how that of the curator in urban transformations is a different professional role from that of the museum or gallery curator, needing specific knowledge, skills, and methods, and having different functions and objectives. But does this mean that this figure needs to be professionalized?
Daniel and Richard Susskind explain that the reason of the existence of professions is to solve the problem of «limited understading» of human beings: «most people, acting alone, are unable to resolve all the important challenges that they might face in life. And so they turn to professionals because they have the *practical expertise* — our term for their knowledge, wisdom, experience, skills, and know-how — that is required to solve these important challenges» (Susskind, Susskind 2018: 126). Janet Newman and John Clarke add a political component to the definition of expertise: for them, it is not a distinct or coherent set of free-floating knowledges, capacities, and skills, but a «condensate in which particular formations of knowledge and power are configured» (Newman, Clarke 2018: 40). Thus, the construction of an expert authority is not neutral, but a political act. Moreover, they add that – because expertise is contingent and socially constructed – it is characterized by instability: it moves between moments of stabilization, where it is the dominant mode of knowing, and moments of contestation where it is vulnerable to challenge. Thus, it is not an asset to be taken for granted but must be continually gained, claimed, and maintained (Newman, Clarke 2018). The author of this thesis believes that establishing curating art in urban transformations as a profession would be a key symbolical and political gesture, giving this role more agency and opportunities to be heard and taken seriously in consideration as an expertise in the urban planning field. Some urban practitioners and curators, such as Kristina Lazarova (Lazarova 2023) or Beatrice von Bismarck (Rus Bojan *et al.* 2010), have argued for keeping blurry definitions in order to allow for more explorative actions and keep the field open to innovations. Also Nato Thompson talks about the flexibility and blurriness of curatorial practices, with particular reference to artistic actions, claiming that categorization could bring with itself a loss of complexity (Rus Bojan *et al.* 2010). Raimundas Malašauskas,

instead, is afraid that curatorial work, if made visible and transparent, would run the risk of being codified and over-identified (Malašauskas 2010). Though, deprofessionalization of curatorial practices can be associated with more precarious conditions (self-precarization) and higher risks of exploitation (Ferreri, Dawson 2017). Though, establishing a profession would not necessarily mean to fossilize these practices and make them more conservative: as Camilla Guadalupi affirms, «the professionalization process is not undermining the political potential of the practices, but rather it could be framed as a political strategy of empowerment» (Guadalupi 2018: 48). Guadalupi, in her paper, specifically refers to tactical urbanism designers, though a clear parallel can be traced between them and curators working in urban transformations: in both cases, their work is characterized by a lack of standardized outputs, a relational conception of space, and a deliberate downsizing of the designer's (or authorial) role in favor of user experience and agency. Guadalupi calls these figures «professionals of the unplanned», in order to outline on the one hand an intentional professionalization project driven by values and ideology, on the other hand their distinctive use of improvisation, flexibility, and open-ended processes that avoid predictable outcomes (Guadalupi 2019). Rob Roggema and Robert Chamski introduce the figure of the «specialist generalist», who – rather than focusing on a single, narrow discipline – places his expertise within a broader context, bridging the gaps between different fields, scales, and social interests: specialist generalists are visionary, yet pragmatic; they are able to think in a multi-dimensional way (connecting long-term goals with short-term actions and large-scale regional visions with small-scale local needs); they have knowledge in different fields; and besides technical skills, they use creativity, intuition, and imagination to formulate convincing responses to urban challenges. This role is particularly needed in a period where traditional, siloed approaches to urban planning and design are no longer sufficient to address the accelerated development of contemporary cities (Roggema, Chamski 2022).

Professionalization could answer to several of the problems faced by curators today, such as the lack of stability and continuity of curatorial projects (Vivant, Arab, Özdirlik 2017; Warsza 2018; in the case studies: Malm and other curators at Public Art Agency Sweden, Blumenstein, Bernhardt, Doherty, Pinsky, Detheridge) which mines their opportunities to work on a long-term sperspective and their impacts, the entrusting of art projects to people lacking specific knowledge about commissioning and curating art in public spaces, leading to low quality, conservative and often copy-paste results (Bruzzese 2022; Willis 2008; in the case studies: Detheridge), the rigidity of art commissioning procedures and expected outcomes (in the case studies: curators at Public Art Agency Sweden, Doherty, Pinsky, Crannis and Vickery, Selder, De Boer), the scarce legitimization of these practices which

leads curators to struggle to find funding, relate with institutions, be listened to and credited for their work (Aksu, Karjevsky 2023; in the case studies: Bernhardt, Blumenstein, Dahlberg, Selder), and the frequent loss of knowledge cumulated during projects (Zawieja, Segerlund 2017; in the case studies: Malm and curators at Public Art Agency Sweden; Blumenstein, Detheridge, De Boer, Pinsky).

From this perspective, actions carried out in certain case studies are particularly relevant, in particular: Magdalena Malm's restructuring of Public Art Agency Sweden by employing a team of full-time curators (instead of external fixed-term project managers); Ellen Blumenstein's proposal to HCH to build an internal culture team featuring curatorial expertise; Gilly Karjevsky's and Anna Detheridge's pedagogical work, aimed at developing reflections on urban practices, and education opportunities for future practitioners; Claire Doherty's research work pushing for curators as key charismatic agents able to engage people and secure funding, and for the importance of durational projects; Grace Crannis and Anna Vickery's proposals to embed artistic practices in planning processes and local administrations; Jonas Dahlberg's creation of a research environment where practitioners can experiment new solutions; Helena Selder's proposal to establish an art council to administer art funding; Daniele Lupo's creation of dialogical platforms to discuss with local administrations and researchers on key themes; and Stroom's work to preserve curatorial and artistic expertise in The Netherlands.

The author would like to suggest the creation of an open-archive of curating art in/for/as urban transformations, available to access for not only curators wanting to document themselves on other practices and take them as inspirational sources, but also to policy-makers and commissioners, who could get a clearer idea about these practices and different approaches and curatorial styles. This could help them make more aware choices and integrate artistic and curatorial practices in planning processes with a clearer idea of what they are embarking on. Some archives of artistic practices are already available online – such as urbanmatters.org, the visible project's website, Public Art Online and IPA – though none of them specifically makes reference to curatorial practices. An idea could be that of implementing them by adding catalog records devoted to such practices. Another possibility would be that of creating a dedicated website, where different practices are recorded and their data can be compared not only qualitatively, but also quantitatively (see for example, the studies conducted by Baroncini, Daquino, Tomasi 2023), for example through visual representations. This archive should always stay open to the possibility of integrating new practices.

To conclude, the author would like to confirm the importance that the professionalization of curating art in/for/as urban transformations could have in terms of long-term impact of projects, of increasing projects' quality, originality and innovativeness, of better funding opportunities, of less precariousness, of professional acknowledgement, of easier relationships with institutions, and of increased knowledge preservation: these conditions would benefit both curators and commissioners. Through the analysis carried out, it has been understood that this professionalization would not entail losing openness and flexibility, becoming a narrow and siloed discipline, but rather pointing towards a different way of conceiving professions and professionals: according to this vision, expertise can be specialistic but also generalist, wide but also exploratory, deeply rooted but also open to the unplanned. This could be the new role of curators within urban transformation contexts, working for more sustainable and innovative planning processes.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has investigated the integration of curatorial methods into creative urban planning and development, framing these practices as essential for fostering innovation and social sustainability in contemporary European cities. In fact, several influential urban practitioners and scholars agree upon the fact that curatorial practices, even though they can't completely replace conventional urban planning tools, can encourage critical reflection, reveal cities' unexpected characteristics, reorganize the urban system in a flexible way, create sense of belonging and (un)planned interferences. Traditional urban planning has been frequently criticized for being rigid, technical, and rule-bound, often failing to address the social and qualitative complexities of the city. These conventional methods tend to focus on top-down master plans that define spaces from a position of centralized power, treating urban development as a linear problem-solving process that seeks to regulate space and eliminate uncertainty. Furthermore, planning institutions often operate in silos, where different departments — such as transport, housing, and culture — lack a common language or shared vision, leading to fragmented results. Curating addresses these problems through several transformative methods:

a) Challenging rigidity through unplanning: curatorial practice acts as an audacious interference in conventional planning by embracing the unplanned and the porous. Methods such as «unlearning» encourage planners to deviate from fixed procedures and become open to unexpected results, allowing for breathing space within the limitations of development processes.

b) Bridging silos with connective intelligence: the curator acts as a spider whose web connects disparate professional figures, translating between the rational efficiency of building processes and the sensitivity of artistic processes. This connective intelligence facilitates interdepartmental collaboration, such as the direct integration of artists into local authority planning policy teams to inform decision-making with fresh insights.

c) Replacing abstract plans with situated knowledge: while traditional planning often relies on abstract government texts or statistical data, curatorial work is deeply grounded in fieldwork and presence on-site. This ensures that urban development is informed by the competence of life lived — the stories, memories, and specific needs of a location that technical surveys might overlook.

d) Prototyping instead of master planning: curators often use festivals and temporary interventions as prototyping tools. Unlike traditional master plans, which devise a fixed and permanent mode of intervention, prototyping allows to test planning ideas on a small scale, with low costs, and see what really works in practice and what not, keeping flexibility, open-endedness, allowing the possibility to fail and try again, and rooting the practice in real-life situations.

The research identified several critical gaps in the existing literature and practice regarding Curating Art in/for/as Urban Transformations (CAUT):

a) Scarcity of contributions, fragmentation in the use of terminology and lack of systematization: academic contributions on the subject were found to be rare, at least those related to "urban curating". The terminology used to refer to these practices was very varied, including urban practice, critical spatial practice, creative placemaking, social practice placemaking, public art production, art project management, arts-based strategies, city curating, curating context, curating complexity, curating public space, and more. This made it extremely difficult to retrieve all relevant contributions related to this field. Moreover, literature was predominantly focused on single, isolated case studies. The existing information lacked a cohesive organization from both a historical and methodological perspective. Furthermore, the available literature was geographically concentrated, originating mainly from Northern European countries like Sweden, Germany, the UK, and Austria.

b) Accessibility and knowledge preservation: much of the relevant information exists in non-scientific journals and publications, which made it difficult and time-consuming to analyze through traditional academic methods. Standard scientific research methods, such as Systematic Literature Reviews (SLR), are difficult to apply to this field because sources are not standardized. They often lack common structural elements like abstracts or keywords, requiring manual analysis and classification that complicates the gathering of data. Furthermore, the absence of a common terminology made it difficult to review and compare existing publications. Additionally, knowledge about specific projects and practices frequently got lost because it was either never archived or stored in obsolete, inaccessible formats such as floppy disks, CD-ROMs, or crashed websites.

c) Terminological and language barriers: the concept of curating is often perceived as elusive or abstract by professionals outside the Arts, such as urban planners and policymakers. This language barrier leads to a failure to recognize the potential of curatorial methods in concrete development projects. Because of these misunderstandings, urban curators are not employed systematically and their work is often confused with project management or social work.

There is a lack of acknowledgement regarding curating as a professionally established cultural practice within the urban planning field.

The research presented in the thesis is centered around three sets of research questions and two primary objectives aimed at outlining the field of Curating Art in/for/as Urban Transformations (CAUT).

As for the research questions, the thesis investigated the following three areas of inquiry:

a) Impacts and ethics: this set of questions explores whether the curator is a necessary professional figure for urban projects and what their actual impacts are. It asks if curators can truly take care of and deeply transform the city rather than performing mere maquillage (decoration), and whether they have the right to impose an individual vision on public space versus the risk of losing their professional status to become social workers.

b) Methods and models: these questions focus on the role the curator must adopt (e.g., director, new urban planner, mediator, political activist) and whether different models exist for working in urban realms. Research here seeked to identify the specific skills and methodologies required for urban curating and how they differ from traditional museum practices.

c) Organizational structures: this inquiry examines the types of organizations curators work within, such as public agencies, non-profits, or private foundations. It also looks at the nature of commissions and funding, the required support teams, and how curators relate to other urban actors like policy makers, planners, and citizens.

The thesis established two main goals, to be pursued by answering the research questions:

a) Organizing the subject: the first objective has been to organize the field for the first time from both a historical and methodological perspective. This involved reconstructing the history of CAUT and analyzing curatorial approaches to preserve existing know-how. As part of this goal, the research proposed the creation of an open archive of CAUT practices to implement and safeguard these methodologies.

b) Integration and professionalization: the second objective has been to foster the integration of curatorial practices into inclusive, innovative, and sustainable urban planning processes as a structural, long-term element. By translating curatorial methods into a language accessible to stakeholders like urban planners and policy makers, the research aimed to establish urban curating as a professionally acknowledged form of cultural work.

The research presented in the thesis has been defined by specific typological, spatial, and temporal delimitations to manage the breadth of the subject of Curating Art in/for/as Urban Transformations (CAUT).

As for typological delimitations, the study selected practices where curators were outlined professional figures, although it allowed for flexibility in titles, including those who identify as artists, spatial practitioners, project managers, or art strategists. Furthermore, the research excluded secret or illegal groups and public art projects – like standalone sculptures or decorative murals – that focused solely on aesthetics or decoration. It gave particular attention to projects where art was integrated within planning processes or acted as a catalyst for change rather than being an ex-post addition to a finalized plan.

As for spatial and temporal delimitations, the research has been strictly limited to case studies based in Europe, and covered professional curatorial practices from the late 1990s to the present day.

The research was structured across six primary chapters to provide a comprehensive historical, theoretical, and practical analysis of Curating Art in/for/as Urban Transformations (CAUT).

The first chapter established the research foundation, outlining the research gap and three sets of questions regarding impacts and ethics, methods and models, and organizational structures. It outlined the thesis's objectives and methodology, and delimited the study to European practices since the late 1990s where curators act in synergy with planning processes rather than merely decorating space.

The second chapter detailed the author's foundational curatorial experiences: the *Visioni Veneziane* exhibition in Venice, which tested scattered display formats to engage residents with urban memory, and the *Without Frontiers* festival in Mantova, which demonstrated how curatorial narratives can drive long-term regeneration in social housing neighborhoods.

The third chapter constructed the theoretical framework: firstly, it made a review of artistic practices related to urban planning contexts from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day, tracing the evolution of public art from isolated "art-in-public-places" to socially engaged "art-in-the-public-interest". It presented artistic practices, exhibitions, and art and spatial theory, highlighting their development over the decades. It introduced an interpretative framework to distinguish such artistic practices in art in/for/as urban transformations. Secondly, the chapter illustrated the history of curating, paying particular attention to how it expanded into other fields such as urban planning, and presenting several pilot projects. Lastly, it outlined curatorial theory regarding curating art in/as/for urban transformations and proposed a framework to classify literature contributions.

The fourth chapter focused on the major case study, Public Art Agency Sweden (PAAS), detailing its shift from building-related decoration to a core artistic mission integrated into national policies like *Gestaltad livsmiljö* (Designed Living Environment). It presented its

main assignments, methods, and organizational structures, illustrating the key innovations it introduced in public art commissioning and curating.

The fifth chapter analyzed twelve minor case studies across Germany, the UK, Sweden, Italy, and the Netherlands, using semi-structured interviews to explore diverse organizational projects, models, and methods.

Finally, the sixth chapter summarized the case studies and connected main findings through a comparative analysis to answer the research questions.

As for the questions regarding curatorial methods and models, the research drew on Leonie Sandercock's qualities for urban planners of the 21st century and identified four key approaches for Curating Art in/for/as Urban Transformations: political, audacious, creative, and therapeutic. These approaches emerged from an analysis of the functions and skills mentioned by curators during the qualitative interviews, compared with data emerged from the literature review. The therapeutic/relational approach emerged as the most dominant, with curators acting as mediators, facilitators, and listeners who bridge the gap between planners, developers, and the public. Secondly, came the audacious/system-challenging approach, then the creative/narrative one, and lastly the political/critical one. The data was used not only to determine the most common approaches, but also the most widespread functions and skills for each and every approach. Lastly, the data was used to represent graphically the different curatorial styles of individual curators involved in the research.

As for methods, some common threads emerged from the analysis: the necessity to establish innovative and specific structures for producing art in urban planning contexts; the usefulness of temporary formats such as festivals and short-term projects to explore and test new (and more radical) solutions; the necessity to be present on site and work in a responsive way; mixing different expertises to work in an interdisciplinary manner; building knowledge inside the project or institution and be able to preserve it and pass it on; embedding results in term of change on the long-term, for example by modifying planning policy and working processes; the need to engage people in participatory co-design processes; conducting mappings of the context before working on it; embedding curators into development companies and municipalities and/or work jointly with them; using narratives to structure curatorial work and promote urban change. The curatorial methods analyzed expressed how this practice is inherently relational, hybrid, adaptive, exploratory, transformative, and strategic.

As for the questions on organizational structures, the research analyzed several different typologies, both public and private: from State agencies to local administrations; from independent art centers, project spaces and artistic residencies to art festivals and programs;

from non-profit associations and foundations, to cooperatives, limited companies, and hybrid structures. Research highlighted that teams are usually small-sized, and organizations largely rely on public funding (dedicated public budgets, grants and awards). Then, the chapter traced these structure's pros and cons, making a distinction between temporary and durational structures, and public and private funding. Lastly, the author suggests that a hybrid model such as that of Lungomare cooperative is a particularly interesting and efficient structure, keeping together decisional autonomy and higher financial stability.

As for the questions on ethics and impacts, the chapter carried out a risk analysis based on both literature and interviews, and tried to suggest possible solutions to counter threats. The risks outlined are: 1) that curatorial narratives can turn into rhetorics coopted by neoliberal development, fostering gentrification, social displacement and depoliticization, through value extraction, artwashing and maquillage operations – a problem that is particularly visible in projects that are commissioned by developers, and even more if the company is private; 2) that some curators act as if they were in a museum, treating the urban space as an "open-air gallery", and imposing individual ideas in spaces that are public; 3) that curators work short-term, organizing projects, thus having low impact on urban spaces.

To solve these problems, the chapter identified three sets of solutions: 1) shifting from uncritical, depoliticized and therapeutic approaches to critical, post-political and caring practices; 2) that curators decentralize themselves and hold space for other people to speak, thus opening themselves to and negotiating with a plurality of voices and narratives, neither being totally neutral nor forcefully imposing their own interpretation; 3) creating structures allowing curators to focus on durational practices.

After that, the chapter created a framework to classify CAUT practices and their impacts, taking into consideration the following criteria: type of commission (top-down or bottom-up, public or private); supporting the hegemonic narrative or building a counternarrative; being short-term or durational; entailing early or late collaboration between curators/artists and planners; individualistic or dialogical curatorial approaches; having significant transformative results or not. The framework distinguishes among curating in/for/as urban transformations, where: Curating-Art-in-urban-transformation represents a top-down approach where curators and artists are involved late in the process, often after planning decisions are finalized. The resulting art typically acts as a decorative add-on or maquillage to beautify a space rather than deeply transforming it; Curating-Art-for-urban-transformation is an approach where curators are integrated early in the planning process, and artistic perspectives contribute substantially to the transformation itself. These are often top-down commissions but characterized by genuine collaboration between curators, artists,

and planners; Curating-Art-as-urban-transformation is typically a bottom-up or grassroots model where the artistic initiative itself activates the urban change, sometimes challenging the ideas of official planners and developers.

This framework is meant to allow policy-makers and commissioners to understand how to structure their briefs for curators, what requests they can make, what conditions to establish, and what to expect in terms of outcomes according to both the commission's and curators' features.

The thesis concludes with a reflection on the professionalization of curators working in urban transformations contexts. Despite some risks linked to this possibility – such as that of losing complexity and making curatorial practices more conservative – professionalization undoubtedly entails a series of benefits, both for curators and commissioners: in fact, establishing curating art in/for/as urban transformations as a profession would be a key political strategy of empowerment, giving this role more agency and opportunities to be heard and taken in consideration as an expertise in the urban planning field. Professionalization could answer to several of the problems faced by curators today, such as the lack of stability and continuity of curatorial projects, which mines their opportunities to work on a long-term sperspective and their impacts; the entrusting of art projects to people lacking specific knowledge about commissioning and curating art in public spaces, leading to low quality, conservative and often copy-paste results; the rigidity of art commissioning procedures and expected outcomes; the scarce legitimization of these practices which leads curators to struggle to find funding, relate with institutions, be listened to and credited for their work; and the frequent loss of knowledge cumulated during projects. Professionalization of curating art in/for/as urban transformations could have crucial importance in terms of long-term impact of projects, of increasing projects' quality, originality and innovativeness, of better funding opportunities, of less precariousness, of professional acknowledgement, of easier relationships with institutions, and of increased knowledge preservation. This professionalization would not entail losing openness and flexibility, but rather pointing towards a different way of conceiving professionals as specialist generalists detaining an expertise that can be at the same time wide and exploratory, deeply rooted and open to the unplanned. In this way, curators could contribute to make urban transformation more inclusive, sustainable, and adaptive.

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FIGURES



Fig. 1. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition map. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan



Fig. 2. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in a shop window. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan



Fig. 3. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan



Fig. 4. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2017. Source: Silvia Degan



Fig. 5. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2023. Source: Irene Ruzzier



Fig. 6. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display in Venezia Santa Lucia's train station. 2023. Source: Irene Ruzzier



Fig. 7. *Visioni Veneziane's* Exhibition display at the Jewish Museum. 2017. Source: Luigi Ferrigno



Fig. 8. Fabio Petani, *Cadmium & nelumbo adans & pteridophyta*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2016. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 9. Etnik, *Inside out*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2016. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 10. Corn79, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2016. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 11. Made514, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2017. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 12. Made514, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2018. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 13. Peeta, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2018. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 14. Joys, *Tsunamy*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2018. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 15. Telmo Miel, *Untying the knots that limit you*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 16. Raul33, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 17. Mrfijodor, *Plastic Rain*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 18. Xena – Fátima de Juan, *Untitled*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2019. Source: Caravan SetUp.



Fig. 19. Andrea Casciu e Kiki Skipi, *Eikasia*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2020. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 20. Aris e Corn79, *Hybrid02*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2020. Source: Caravan SetUp.





Fig. 21. Howlers, *Alice in Borderland*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2020. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 22. Tellas, *Agorà*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2021. Source: Caravan SetUp.





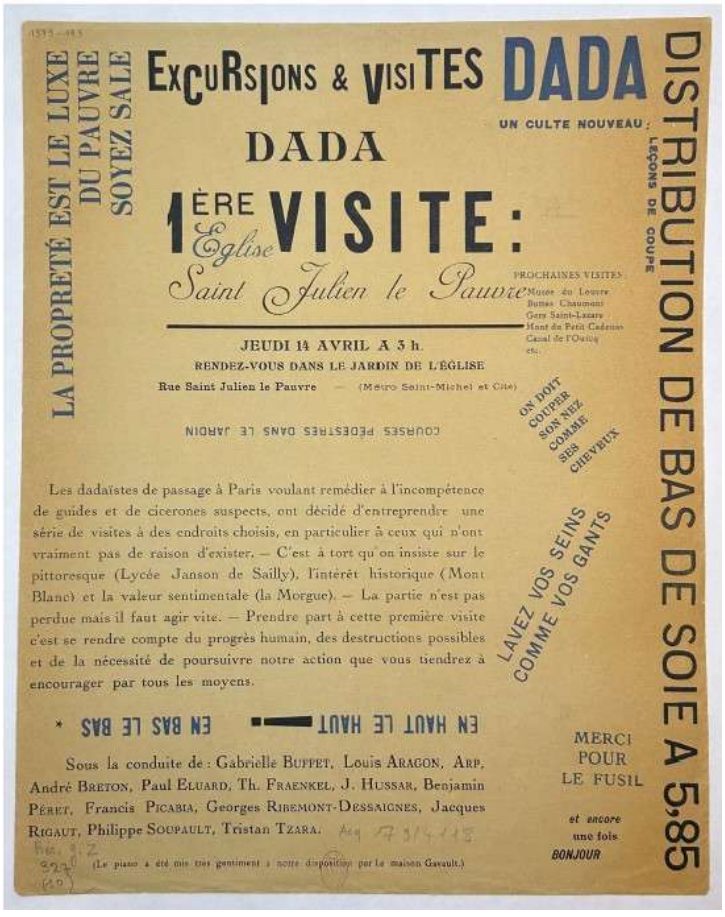
Fig. 23. Vesod, *Psiche*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2022. Source: Caravan SetUp.

Fig. 24. Order55, *Eliptic spectrums*, Lunetta (Mantova), 2024. Source: Caravan SetUp.





Fig. 25. *True story* project, Lunetta (Mantova), 2024. Source: Caravan SetUp.


EXCURSIONS & VISITES DADA

DADA

UN CULTE NOUVEAU

1ÈRE VISITE:

Église Saint Julien le Pauvre

PROCHAINES VISITES
Musée du Louvre
Buttes Chaumont
Gare Saint-Lazare
Mont de Petit Cadenas
Canal de l'Ourcq
etc.

JEUDI 14 AVRIL A 3 h.

RENDEZ-VOUS DANS LE JARDIN DE L'ÉGLISE

Rue Saint Julien le Pauvre — (Métro Saint-Michel et Cité)

COURSES PEDESTRES DANS LE JARDIN

ON DOIT COUPER SON NEZ COMME SES CHEVEUX

Les dadaïstes de passage à Paris voulant remédier à l'incompétence de guides et de cicerones suspects, ont décidé d'entreprendre une série de visites à des endroits choisis, en particulier à ceux qui n'ont vraiment pas de raison d'exister. — C'est à tort qu'on insiste sur le pittoresque (Lycée Janson de Sailly), l'intérêt historique (Mont Blanc) et la valeur sentimentale (la Morgue). — La partie n'est pas perdue mais il faut agir vite. — Prendre part à cette première visite c'est se rendre compte du progrès humain, des destructions possibles et de la nécessité de poursuivre notre action que vous tiendrez à encourager par tous les moyens.

LAVEZ VOS SEINS COMME VOS GANTS

EN HAUT LE BAS * EN BAS LE HAUT

Sous la conduite de : Gabrielle Buffet, Louis Aragon, Arp, André Breton, Paul Eluard, Th. Fraenkel, J. Hussar, Benjamin Péret, Francis Picabia, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Jacques Rigaut, Philippe Soupault, Tristan Tzara.

(Le piano a été mis très gentiment à notre disposition par la maison Gaveau.)

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Fig. 26. Flyer of the Dada excursion to Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre on 14th April 1921.

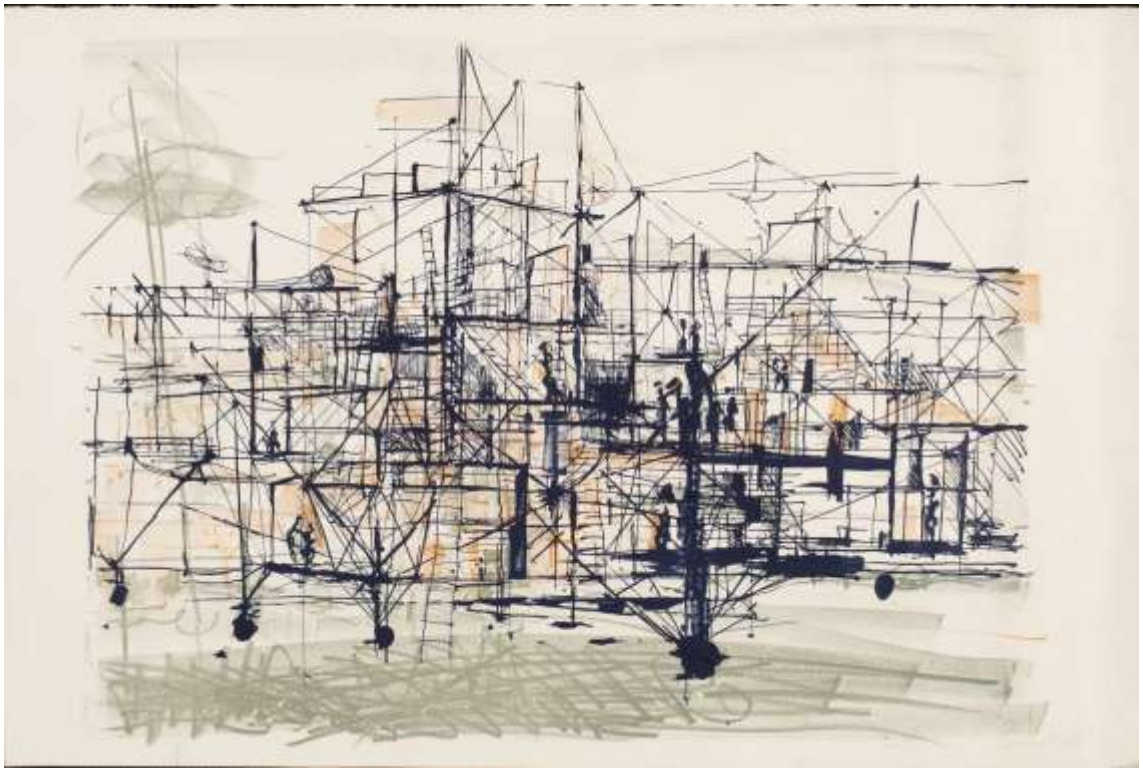


Fig. 27. Constant Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon*, 1961. Source: Het Nieuwe Instituut.



Fig. 28. Alexander Calder, *La Grande Vitesse*, Grand Rapids (Michigan), 1969.



Fig. 29. Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, New York, 1981.



Fig. 30. *Det växer i Skellefteå. Men hur?* exhibition map, 1972.



Fig. 31. Ugo La Pietra, a frame taken from *La riappropriazione della città*, 1977.

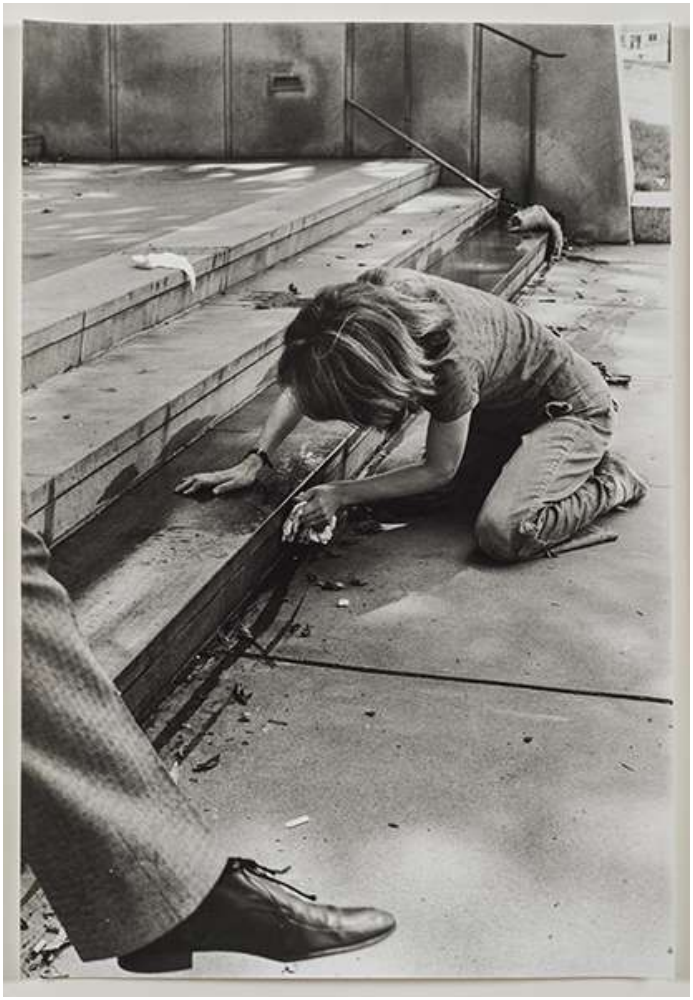


Fig. 32. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside*, 1973.



Fig. 33. Archizoom, *No-Stop City*, 1970-72.

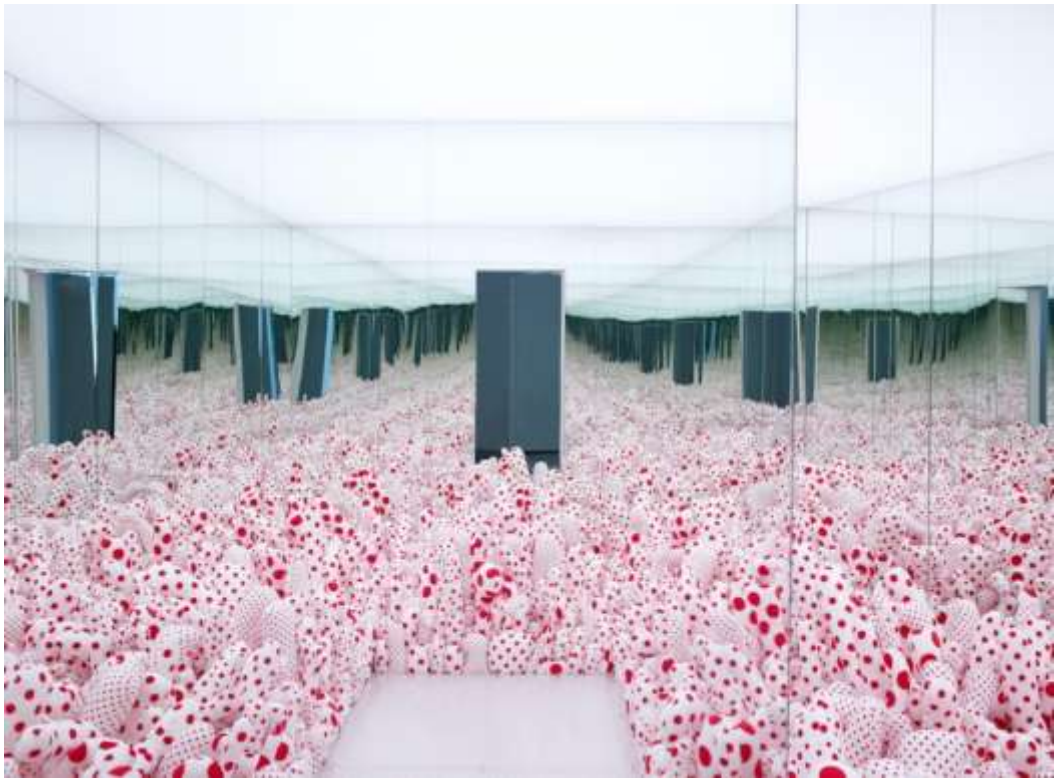


Fig. 34. Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Mirror Room,* 1965.



Fig. 35. Archigram, *Instant City,* 1968.



Fig. 36. Rick Lowe, *Project Row Houses*, Houston, 1993.



Fig. 37. Christoph Schäfer, Cathy Skene and other artists, *Park Fiction*, Hamburg, 1994.



Fig. 38. Christoph Schäfer, Cathy Skene and other artists, *Park Fiction*, Hamburg, 1994.



Fig. 39. Apolonija Šušteršič, *Hustadt Project – Community Pavilion*, Bochum, 2008.



Fig. 40. Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The Homeless Projection: A Proposal for the City of New York*, New York, 1986.

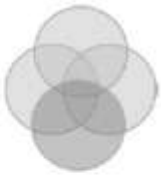
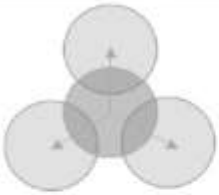
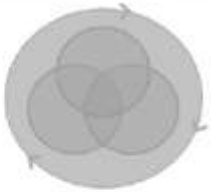
	First: Culture *in* Sustainability	Second: Culture *for* Sustainability	Third: Culture *As* Sustainability
			
Definition of culture	culture as a capital	culture as a way of life	culture as a semiosis
Culture and development	culture as an achievement in development	culture as a resource and condition for development	development as a cultural process
Value of culture	intrinsic	instrumental and intrinsic	embedded
Culture and society	complementing	affording	transforming
Culture and nature	human perspective on nature	interaction of culture andnature	nature constituent of culture
Policy sectors	cultural policies	all policies	new policies
Modes of Governance	hierarchical governance, 1st order	co-governance, 2nd order	self-governance, meta-governance
Research approach	mainly mono- and multidisciplinary	mainly multi- and interdisciplinary	mainly inter-and transdisciplinary

Fig. 41. Katriina Soini and Joost Dessein, *Conceptual Framework for Culture and Sustainability*. Source: Soini K., Dessein J. (2016), "Culture-Sustainability Relation: Towards a Conceptual Framework", *Sustainability*, no. 8.



Fig. 42. Colette Miller, *Angel Wings Project*, Los Angeles, 2016.

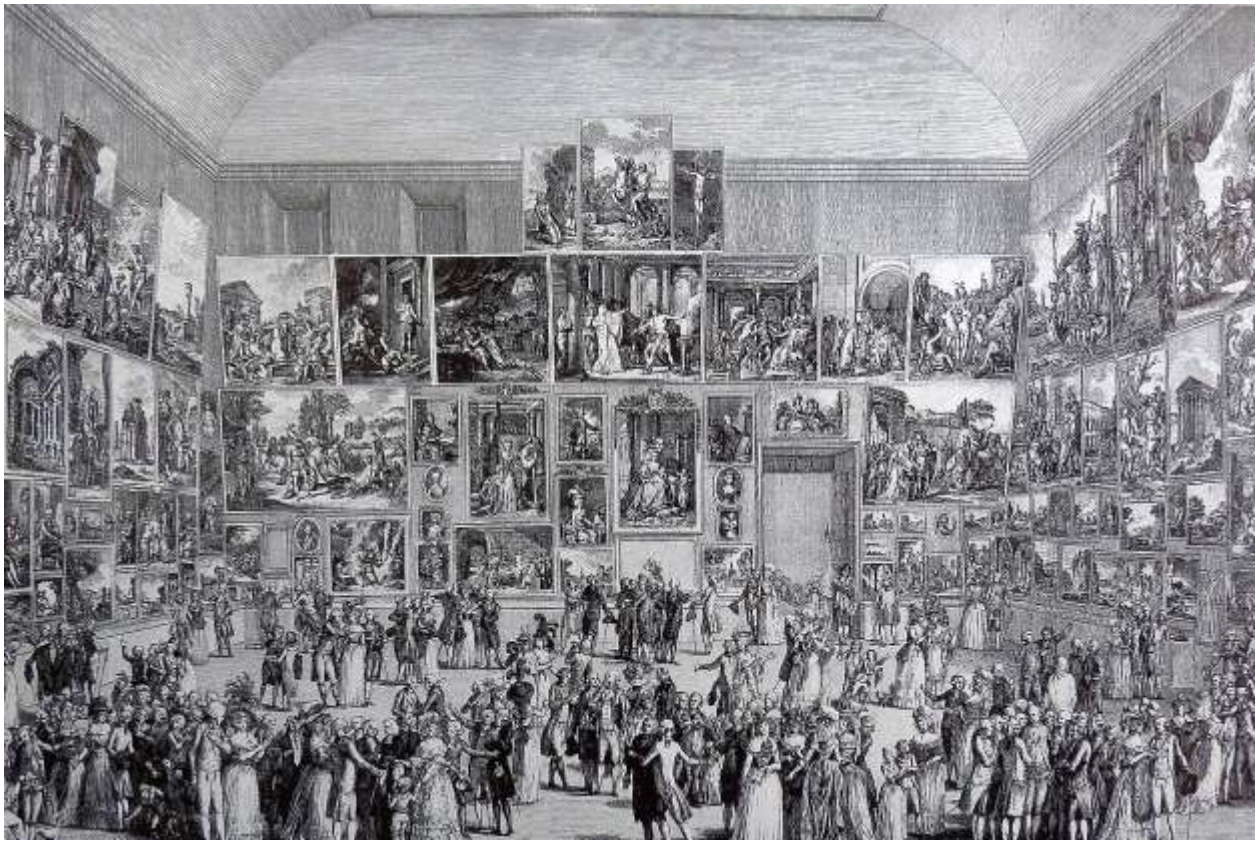


Fig. 43. Pietro Antonio Martini, *Exposition au Salon de 1787*, 1787.

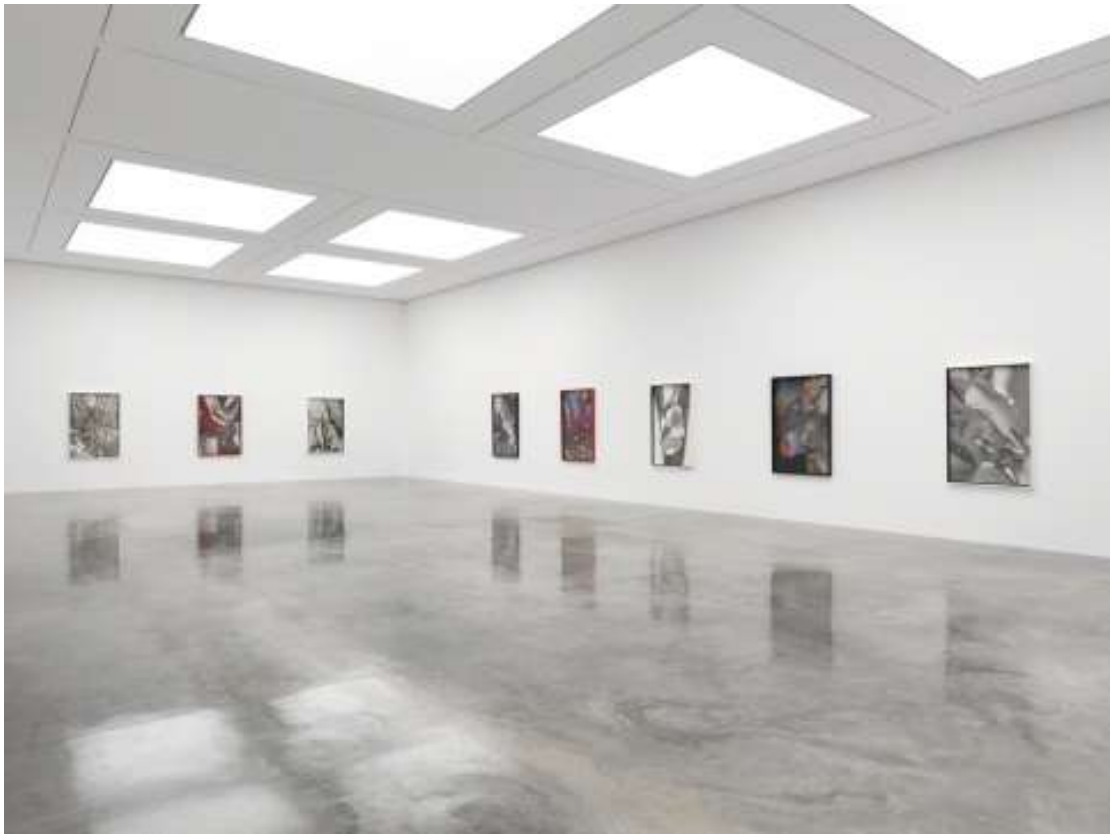


Fig. 44. An example of white cube display, White Cube Bermondsey gallery.



Fig. 45. Marcel Duchamp, *International Exposition of Surrealism,* Paris, 1938.

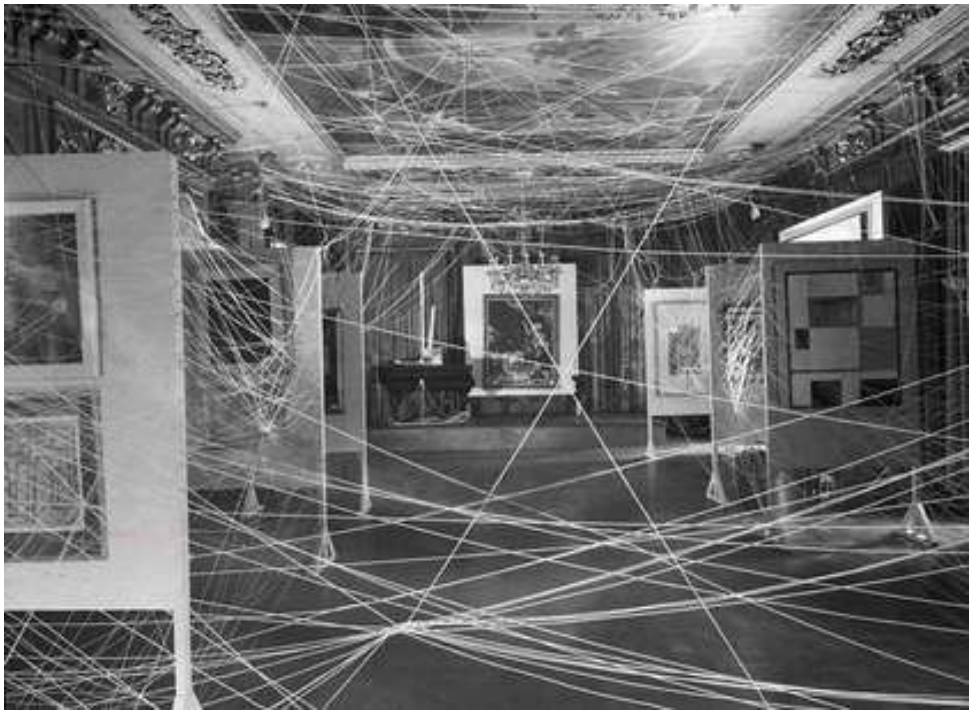


Fig. 46. Marcel Duchamp, *First Papers of Surrealism,* New York, 1942.



Fig. 47. Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing #289,* 1976.



Fig. 48. Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs,* 1965.



Fig. 49. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped Reichstag,* Berlin*,* 1971-1995.



Fig. 50. Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 0,* 1974.

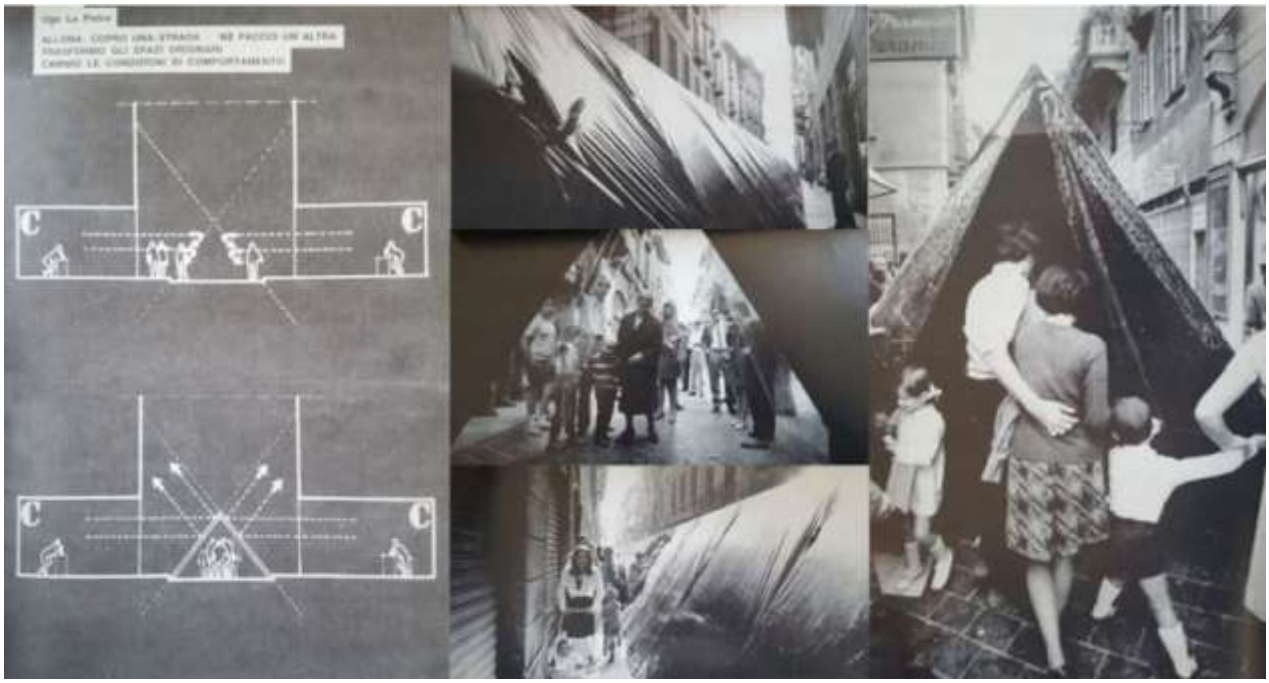


Fig. 51. Ugo La Pietra, *Allora: copro una strada ne faccio un'altra trasformo gli spazi originari cambio le condizioni di comportamento,* Como, 1969.



Fig. 52. Mirella Bentivoglio, *Struttura Simbolica (Ovo di Gubbio),* Gubbio, 1976.



Fig. 53. David Hammons, *House of the Future,* Charleston, 1991.

Fig. 54. Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, *Tele-vecindario,* Chicago, 1993.





Fig. 55. Haha, *Flood,* Chicago, 1993.



Fig. 56. Andreas Siekmann, *Square of Permanent Reorganization,* 1993. Two of 159 drawings illustrating the seven different scenarios the project proposed: *Winter Square* (left) addressing the needs of homeless people; *Teenage Square* (right) following the ideas of children interviewed in their classes at school.



Fig. 57. Le Corbusier, *Unité d'habitation,* Firminy, 1967.



Fig. 58. Shigeru Ban, *Paper Dome,* Utrecht, 2003.



Fig. 59. Lucy Orta, *Totipotent architecture,* Turin, 2003-2007.



Fig. 60. Claudia Losi, *Affacci – Aiuola Transatlantico,* Turin, 2008.



Fig. 61. Stecca degli Artigiani, Isola (Milan), before 2007.



Fig. 62. Bert Theis, *Untitled/Untilted,* Isola (Milan), 2001-2007.



Fig. 63. Isola Pepe Verde community park, Isola (Milan), since 2013.



Fig. 64. Jeanne van Heeswijk, *The Blue House,* IJburg (Amsterdam), 2005-2009.

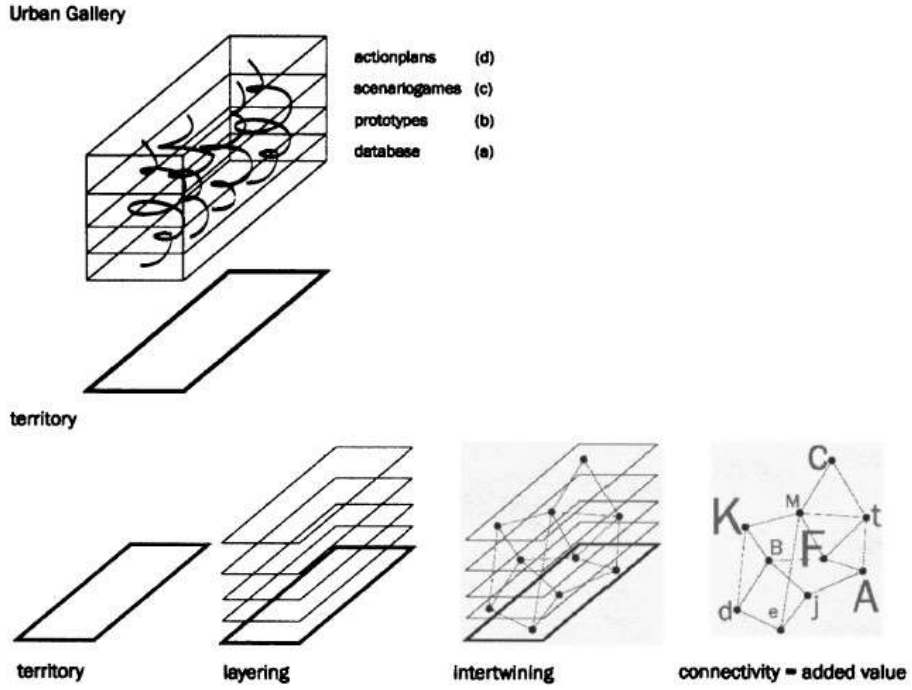


Fig. 65. Raoul Bunschoten, Urban gallery's functioning. Source: Bunschoten R. (2003), "Stirring Still: The City Soul and Its Metaspaces", *Perspecta*, no. 34, pp. 56-65.

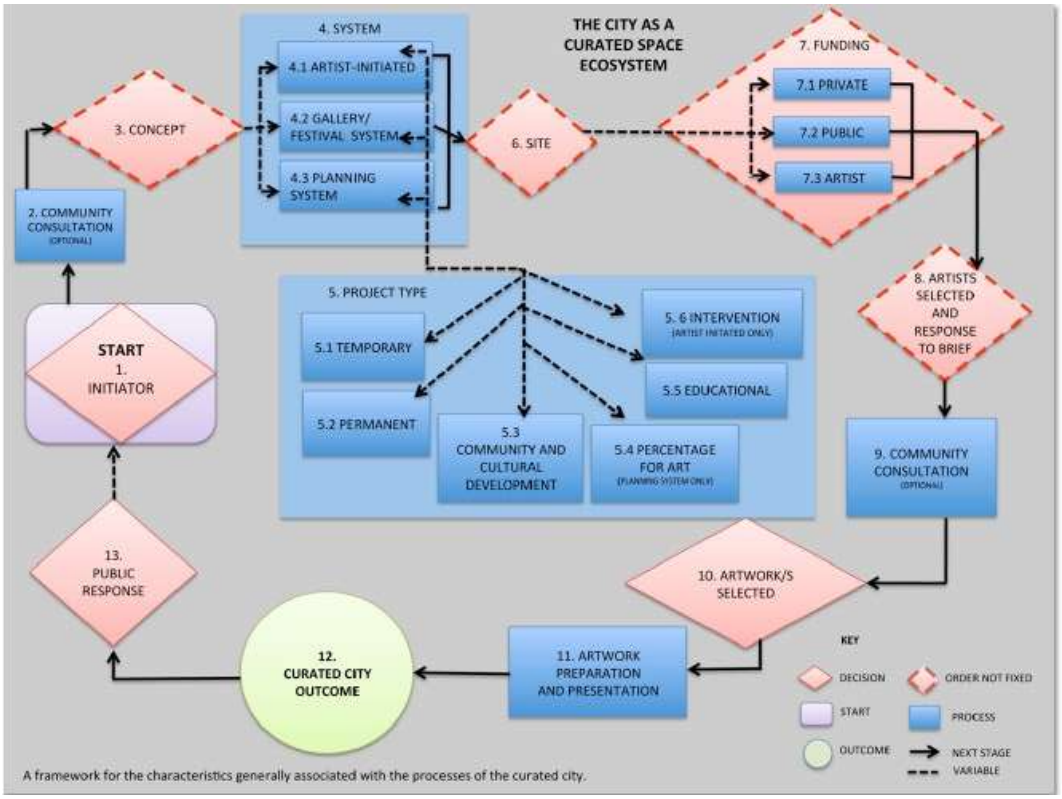


Fig. 66. Tammy Wong, The City as a Curated Space Ecosystem. Source: Wong T. (2011), *The City As A Curated Space. A study of the public urban visual arts in central Sydney and central Melbourne, Australia*, doctoral thesis, RMIT University.

Key actions of the model framework	
Action 1	**Assess the curated city** Assess the status of the curated city using the Curated City Assessment Schedule (refer to following pages) as a way of unearthing the genealogy of discourses in the curated city ecosystem. Decipher dominating discourses of the site under analysis and work out which elements encourage the strengthening of the activation of the ecosystem.
Action 2	**Define a role for the artist** Develop a defined role for the artist, to empower the artist as a contributor in the curated city. The artists will no longer be in a marginalised position if they are able to contribute. Promote artists who have skills valuable to the wider community. Agents of the ecosystem should encourage local artists to be involved in local urban public spaces.
Action 3	**Inform, educate and build capacity** Inform, educate and empower the community of the curated city in order to build capacity in local residents, businesses, artists and arts organisations.
Action 4	**Mobilize community partnerships and networks** Mobilize community partnerships in collaborations to identify and strengthen the curated city ecosystem, particularly between other key agents that can contribute to the curated city. Create opportunities and open channels for the curated city community to network, share ideas, experiences and progress
Action 5	**Policies, plans and programs** Develop policies, plans, programs and collections strategies to enable the curated city to support individual and community public art activity. Assess, update, develop and apply regulations protecting existing curated city activities.
Action 6	**Employ competent managers of the curated city** Ensure activators of the curated city employed are competent trained staff that understand the complexity of the curated city ecosystem and are able to work across the key agents.
Action 7	**Assess effectiveness** Assess effectiveness and accessibility of the curated city through feedback to the initiating agent from those involved in curated city programs.
Action 8	**Research new innovations** Research and apply new insights and innovative solutions in developing the curated city.

Fig. 67. Tammy Wong, Key Actions for the City as a Curated Space. Source: Wong T. (2011), *The City As A Curated Space. A study of the public urban visual arts in central Sydney and central Melbourne, Australia*, doctoral thesis, RMIT University.



Fig. 68. Tadashi Kawamata, *Favela Cafè*, Basel, 2013.



Fig. 69. RaumlaborBerlin, Sauna at Jubilee Park, Gothenburg, 2015.

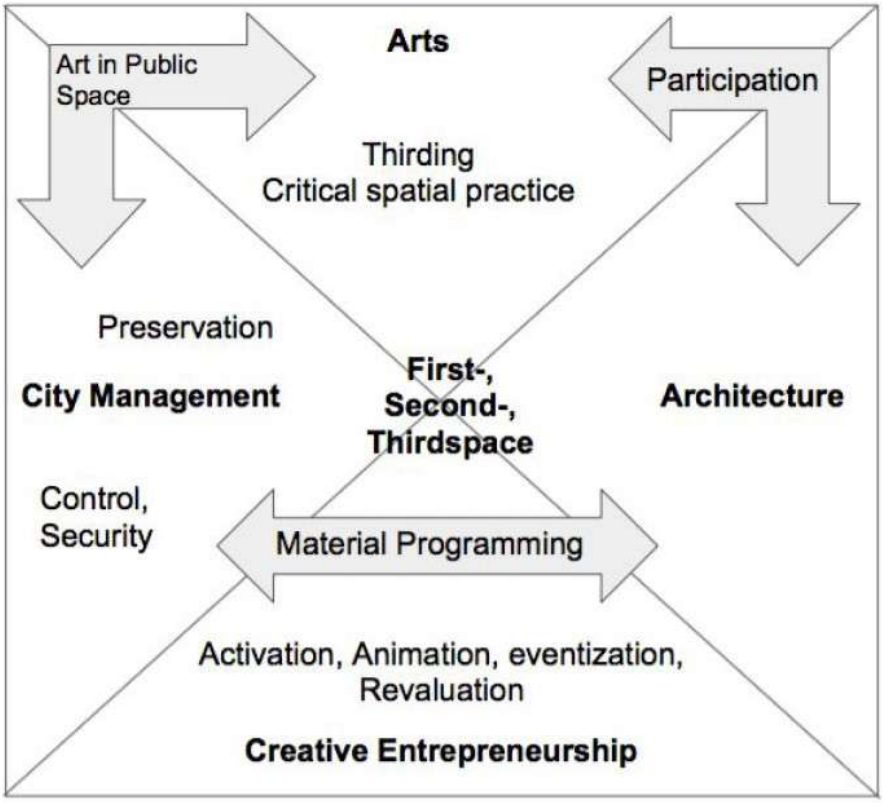


Fig. 70. Marthe Nehl, Tetrad of Urban Curating. Source: Nehl M. (2018), *Urban Curation. An explorative study on understandings, roles and functions of curating practices in urban contexts,* master thesis, Malmö University.



Fig. 71. *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing URBAN CURATING Now* (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023), seating scheme. Source: Irene Ruzzier.

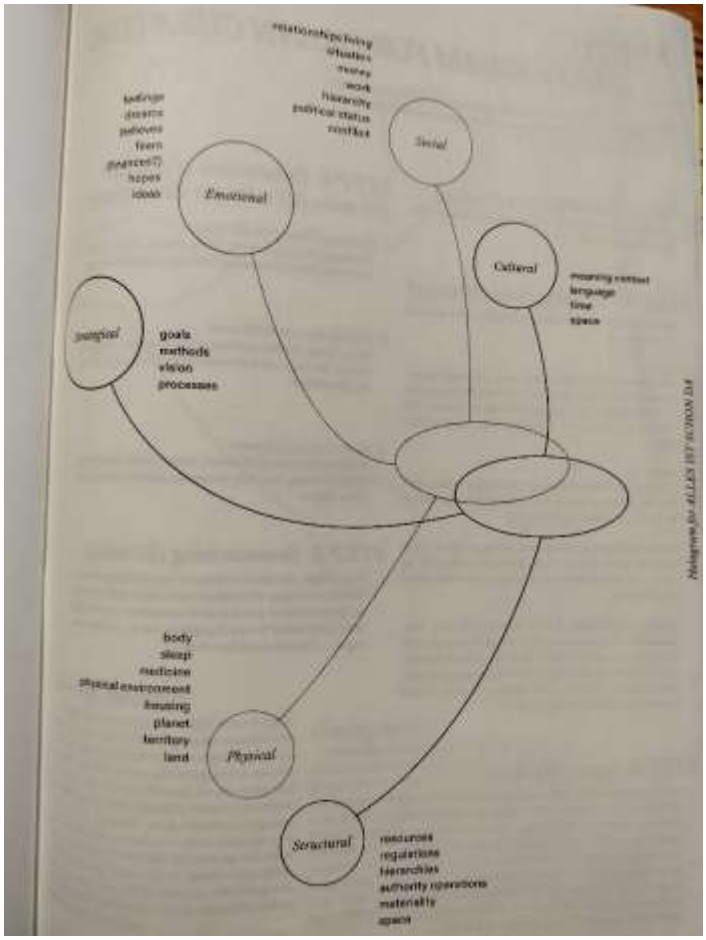


Fig. 72. *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing URBAN CURATING Now* (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023), scheme for hologram sessions. Source: Irene Ruzzier.

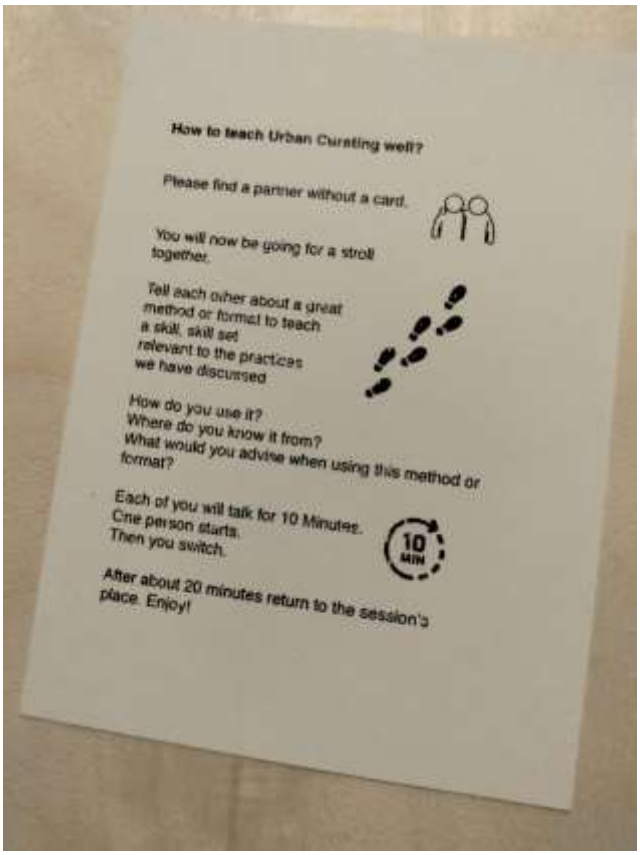


Fig. 73. *ALLES IST SCHON DA - Performing URBAN CURATING Now* (Hamburg, 9th-11th May 2023), workshop instructions. Source: Irene Ruzzier.



Fig. 74. Mats Theselius, Håkan Johnsson, *Trafikplats Mölndalsbro*, Mölndal, 1998-2003. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 75. Chandra Ahlsell, Anna Holmquist, *Vanstaskolan in Ösmo,* Nynäshamn, 2011-2013. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 76. Simon Starling, *H+, Loft Lift,* Helsingborg, 2011-2012. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 77. Maider López, *Moving Plants,* Hammarkullen (Göteborg), 2019. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 78. Nasim Aghili, Björn Karlsson, *Şaneşîn,* Hässelby (Stockholm), 2016-2018. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 79. Sandi Hilal, *Al Madafeh/The Living Room,* Prästholmen (Boden), 2016-2018. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 80. MYCKET, *Kepsen (The Cap),* Råslätt (Jönköping), 2020. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 81. Hanna Ljungh, *Curiosity Cabinets: Medicinareberget,* Gothenburg, 2020-2023. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 82. Map13 Barcelona, *Paviljong,* Hageby, 2020. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 83. Katharina Grosse, *bLINK*, Göteborg, 2025. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 84. Urbonas Studio, *The Swamp Observatory,* Visby, 2022. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 85. OOZE, Marjetica Potrč, *Future Island,* Stockholm, 2023. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

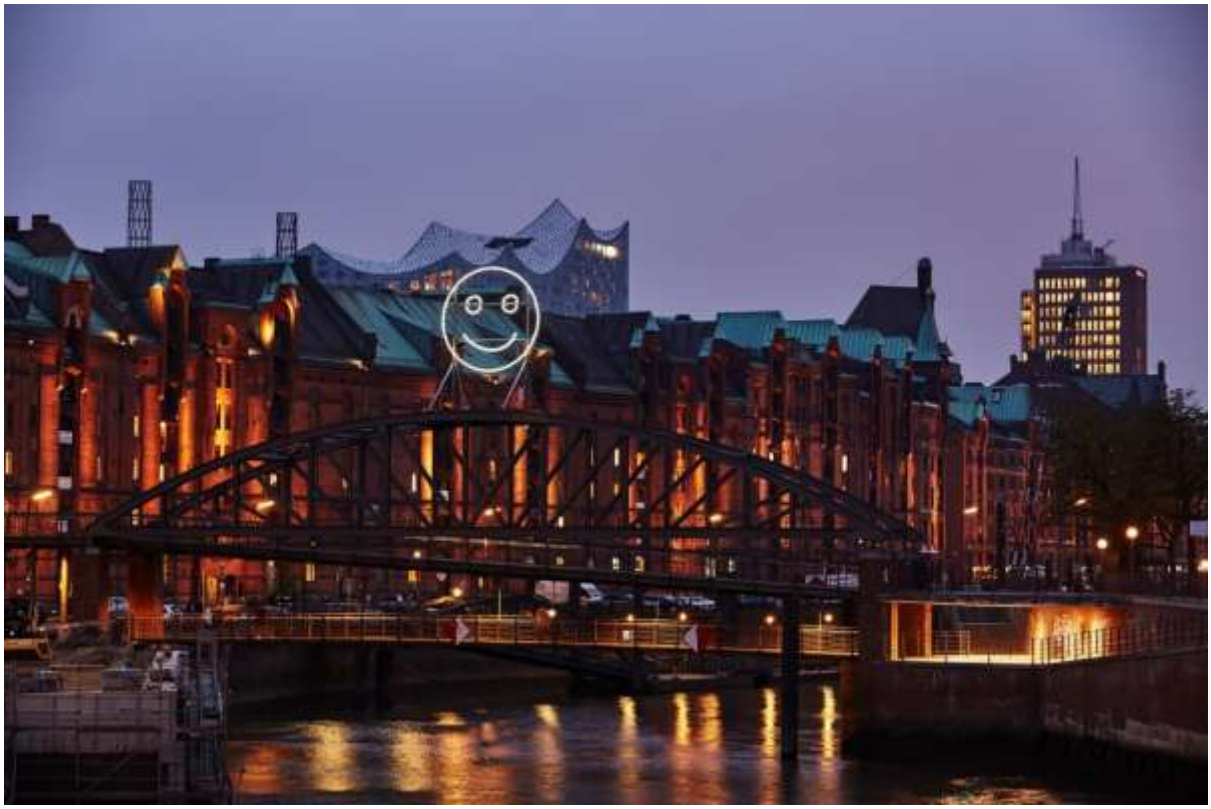


Fig. 86. Julius Von Bismarck, Benjamin Maus and Richard Wilhelmer, *Public Face,* Hamburg, 2018-2020. Source: Imagine The City.



Fig. 87. Terence Koh, *Bee Chapel,* Hamburg, 2019.

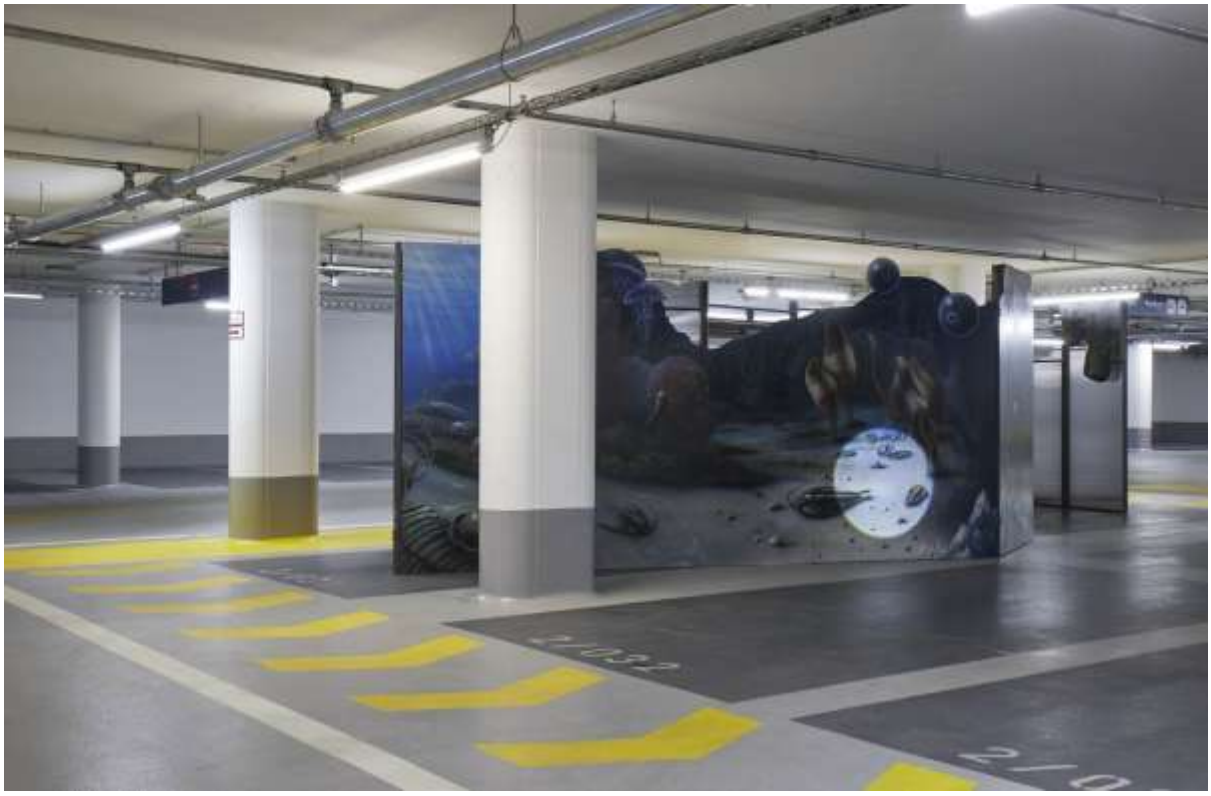


Fig. 88. Gerrit Frohne-Brinkmann, *Backdrop*, Hamburg, 2020-2021. Source: Imagine the City.



Fig. 89. Ellen Blumenstein, Requirements for cultural activities according to HCH's Cultural Development Plan. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

strategy	realization	Operation
→ Initiate a spatial cultural program → For this, a Develop a cross-functional strategy	→ As the client, stakeholders (authorities, culture, Hand recipients: identify, integrate → Bringing partners together	→ Renting out rooms (Structural funding)

This means the following for the employees in the Culture team:

Curation	Project management
→ Space program: Specify objectives depending on the area, short-, medium- and long-term perspective. → Inventory: Shared with GBK, ground floor uses, existing properties suitable spaces identify → Open space, new building: Together with GBK, identify suitable spaces for ground floor uses. → Identify suitable planning processes, find and/or involve creative professionals, and develop formats.	→ Revise decision-making criteria, administrative regulations, financing models, etc. (involve external expertise) → Identify competing uses, e.g., retail, services? → Developing usage and financing models with stakeholders

Fig. 90. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: creating spaces for culture. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

strategy	realization	Operation
→ Area-dependent Define key points → In parallel, identify needs	– ,'Matchmaking' or mediation between internal priorities and external needs	→ Structural (e.g., low rents, Oberhafen) and/or project funding

Here, the curatorial team and project management work together to translate the abstractly formulated goals into concrete partnerships. In personal discussions, they are primarily responsible for mediating between potentially diverging interests (see Oberhafen).

Curation	Project management
→ Interesting Identify institutions/interview partners → Start a dialogue → Develop concrete formats	→ Suitable spaces provide → Develop criteria for the procurement process

Fig. 91. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: supporting existing cultural spaces and initiatives. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

strategy	realization	Operation
→ First definition of "cultural use" (including creative industries) as Develop a basis for discussion regarding participation in the CEP process	→ Desired Defining cultural uses → Possibly interested User acquisition and implementation → users and Building owners network	→ If necessary, mediate between different interests

The division of labor within the team remains the same.

Curation	Project management
→ Strategically defined content translated into concrete formulations, discussions and Translate usage suggestions	→ Involve colleagues within the building (GBK, existing properties, ground floor uses). → Develop support instruments → Provide organizational support to users

Fig. 92. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: establishing cultural uses. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

strategy	realization	Operation
→ Setting priorities in each area → Develop a cultural program → Funding strategy for art in architecture, art in everyday life, functional art/design → Implementing projects → If necessary, securing funding.	→ Specific projects develop → Implementing projects → If necessary, securing funding.	→ Implementing projects → If necessary, securing funding.

The division of labor within the team remains the same.

Curation	Project management
→ Developing topics → writing concepts	→ Finding partners → Developing formats → Find financing if necessary. → Implementing projects

Fig. 93. Ellen Blumenstein, Fields of action: active participation in cultural projects. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument*, preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Specific tasks of project management (AP0)

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
→ Create a work structure → Internal voting processes (management board, general committee, interfaces with departments), semi-public processes (supervisory board, BKM+BSW) Establish a public advisory board, inform relevant external stakeholders in advance. → Create a project structure plan: name and assign tasks, structure the process → Determine total costs for the CEP process (internal/external) (Structural costs, implementation, report) → Templates for Prepare for Supervisory Board meeting	→ Stakeholder management → Complete the invitation/contact list, make official contact → Leading workshops (e.g., historical heritage, architectural culture, art in architecture/art commission, collaborations e.g., with the city curator, art commission, identifying suitable spaces (if necessary + creative society), integrate existing collaborations/dialogue processes → Evaluate participation responses → Structure and integrate the results of Phase 2, and discuss them with the CEO and advisory board. → Identify funding opportunities if necessary	→ Collection, Processing, Documentation of results → Various Discussion papers develop → Create final version

Fig. 94. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP0. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Specific tasks for internal/area-specific activity (AP1)

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
→ Define the potential for integration into HCH structures, identify or find stakeholders. → Stakeholder analysis, criteria for involving further stakeholders Institutions & actors develop → Selection of institutions & actors: → Determine costs in the departments involved → Present the implementation plan for KEP (Cost-Effective Parcel Service) to the supervisory board and obtain a mandate.	→ Involve all relevant stakeholders. → Upper Harbor process to be developed separately →Identify key topics, materials develop/compile → Internal workshop based on objectives (placemaking) →Innovation, Mediation/Communication → Historical/Cultural Heritage → One workshop per area on encounters / urban neighborhoods → Development of communities, places for specific groups → Occasionally, initial decisions are made based on the returns. → Preliminary decision regarding own commitment	→ Presentation, Create a text version, with departments fine-tune → Discussion in the advisory board, presentation of the managing director, Presentation in Supervisory Board

Fig. 95. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP1. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

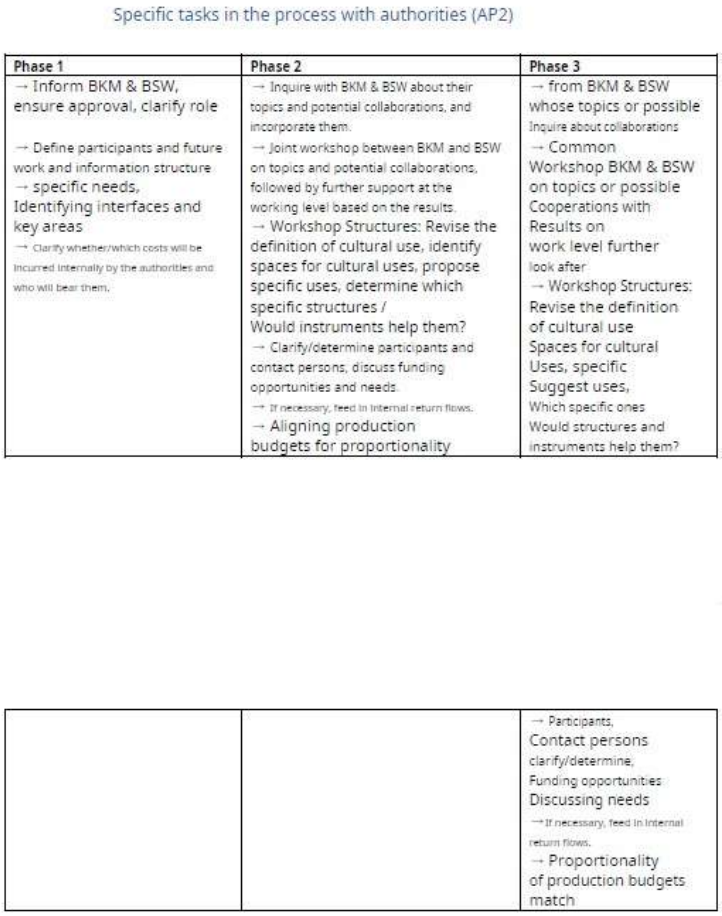


Fig. 96. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP2. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

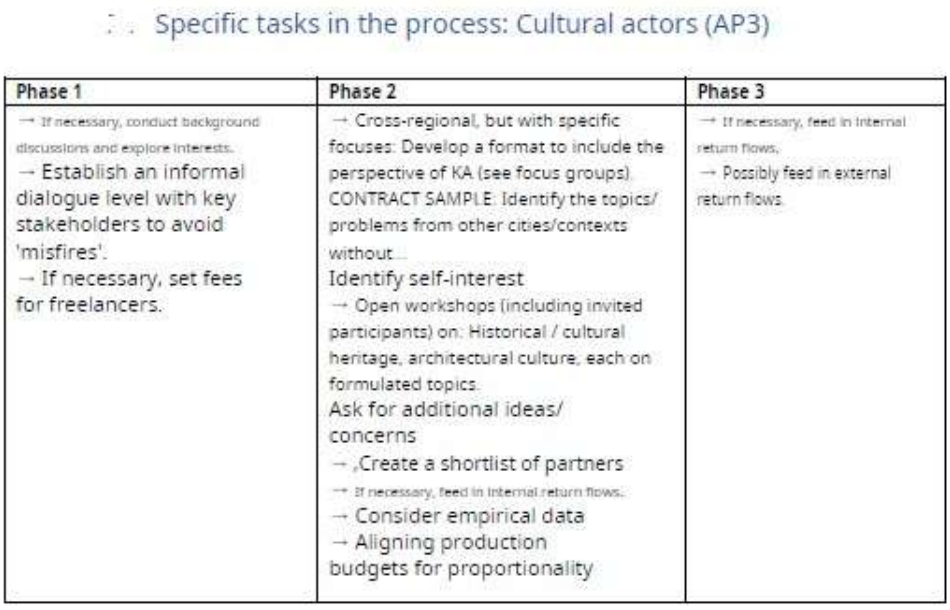


Fig. 97. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP3. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.

Specific tasks: Communication (AP4)

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
→ Rough plan Communication strategy → Define specific publics → Strategies for each type of information/integration develop → Determine the costs of the communication strategy	→ Announcement, public presentation of the CEP process → with communication measures → One workshop per area on encounters / urban neighborhoods → Development of communities, places for specific groups → Adjust communication accordingly	→ Editorial staff, graphic designer Processing → With communication measures to accompany → present publicly

Fig. 98. Ellen Blumenstein, Cultural Development Plan's Work Package AP4. Source: Blumenstein E. (2024), *Vorprojekt Kulturentwicklungsplan HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Schlussdokument,* preliminary project for the Cultural Development Plan, Imagine the City's private archive.



Fig. 99. GÜTERMARKT at ZK/U, Berlin. Source: ZK/U.



Fig. 100. *Haus der Statistik*, Berlin. Source: ZK/U.



Fig. 101. Alona Rodeh, *Nighcaps*, Stuttgart, 2021. Source: CURRENT.



Fig. 102. Sylvia Winkler and Stephan Köperl, *Glitch Klitsche,* Stuttgart, 2021. Source: CURRENT.



Fig. 103. SONDER, *URBAN COSMETICS - Strategies for Municipal Conflict Care,* Stuttgart, 2023.



Fig. 104. Bab(v)-El-Yam, *Space Invaders,* Bat Yam, 2010. Source: 72HUA.



Fig. 105. Amoniac, *Fire Island,* Terni, 2012. Source: 72 HUA.

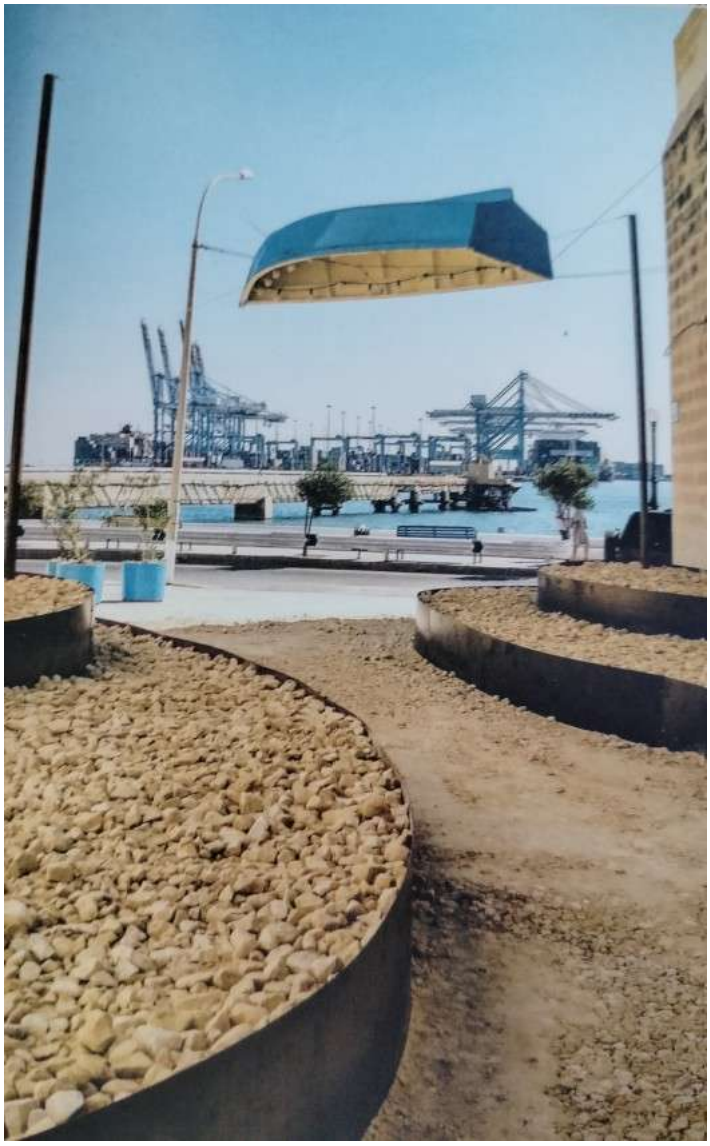


Fig. 106. Birżebbuġa, *How's the Water,* Birżebbuġa, 2017. Source: 72 HUA.



Fig. 107. RaumlaborBerlin, *Floating ~~University~~*, Berlin, 2018.

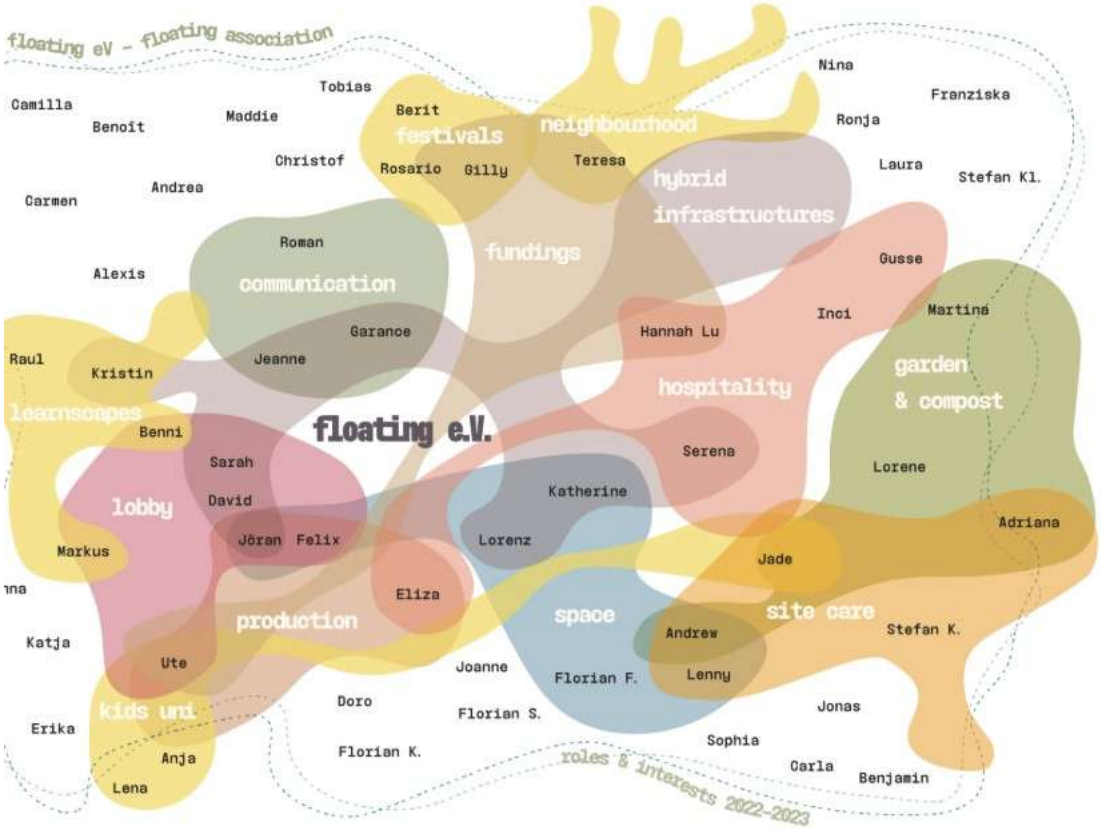


Fig. 108. Floating Association: roles and interests 2022-2023. Source: Floating ~~University~~.



Fig. 109. Ruth Claxton, *And My Eyes Danced,* Weston-Super-Mare, 2010. Source: Situations.



Fig. 110. Lara Favaretto, *Without earth under foot,* Weston-Super-Mare, 2010. Source: Situations.



Fig. 111. Futurefarmers, *Flatbread Society,* Oslo, 2013. Source: Situations.



Fig. 112. Futurefarmers, *Flatbread Society,* Oslo, 2013. Source: Situations.

Table 4.5 Placemaking, Heritage, Sustainability: Summary of Quantified Impacts

Delivery to date	Impact	Value	Impact Theme
• 10.5 ha public realm • 7 restored heritage buildings • 7.5m visitors (15/16) • 163 events (15/16)	Spend of visitors to King's Cross both for work and leisure / events...	Visitor spend supporting £480m GVA per annum identified under Impact Area 3	Economic
	Public willingness to pay for new open space and public realm...	£1.2m willingness to pay	Social

Fig. 113. Regeneris Consulting, Placemaking impacts in King's Cross. Source: Regeneris Consulting (2017), *The Economic and Social Story of King's Cross*, final report.

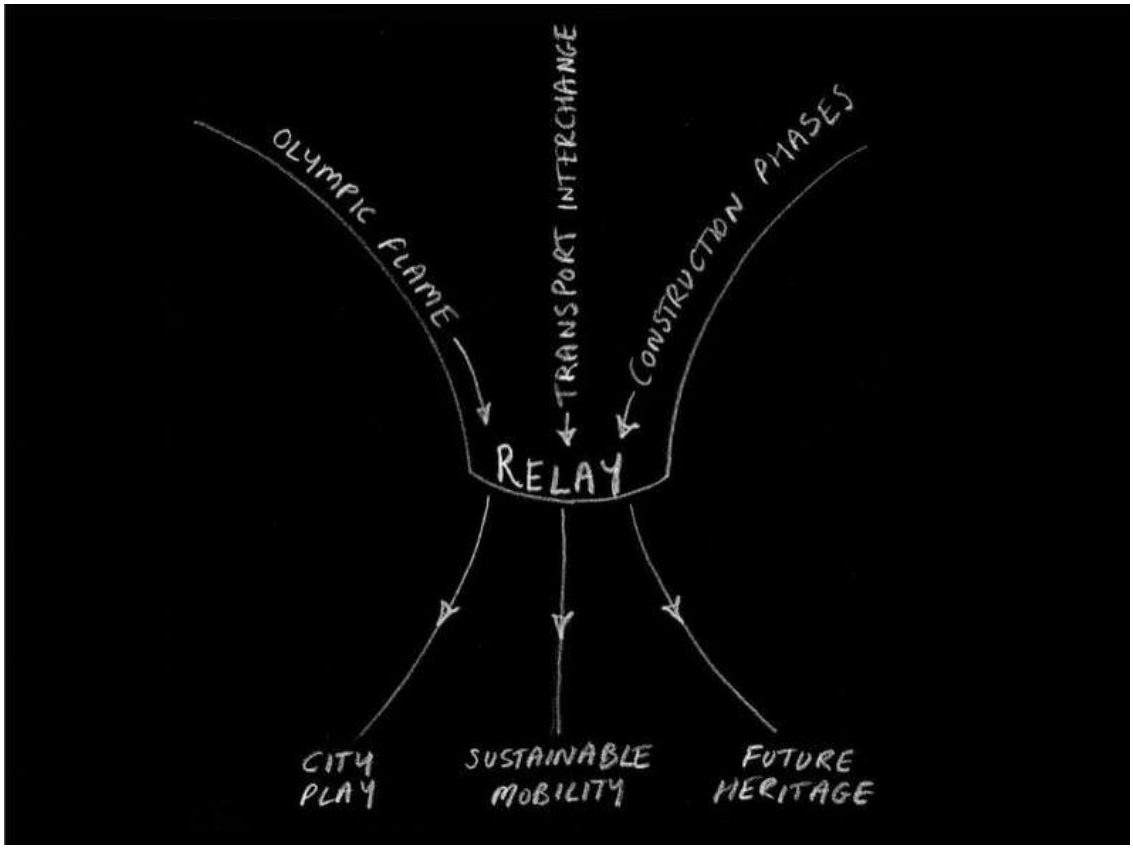


Fig. 114. Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix, RELAY scheme 1. Source: Delcroix S., Pfannes E. (2015), *Art, Place and Community,* talk part of *CAS Talks - Public Art Forum.*

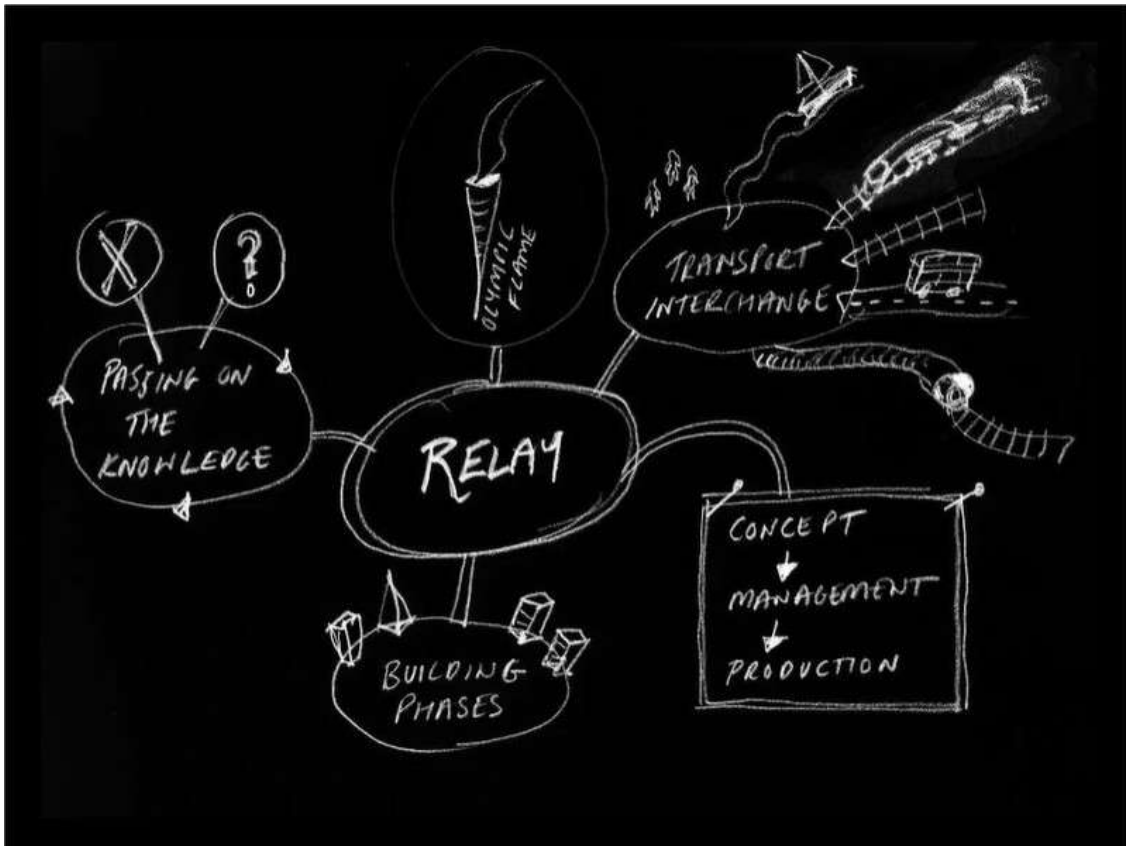


Fig. 115. Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix, RELAY scheme 2. Source: Delcroix S., Pfannes E. (2015), *Art, Place and Community,* talk part of *CAS Talks - Public Art Forum.*

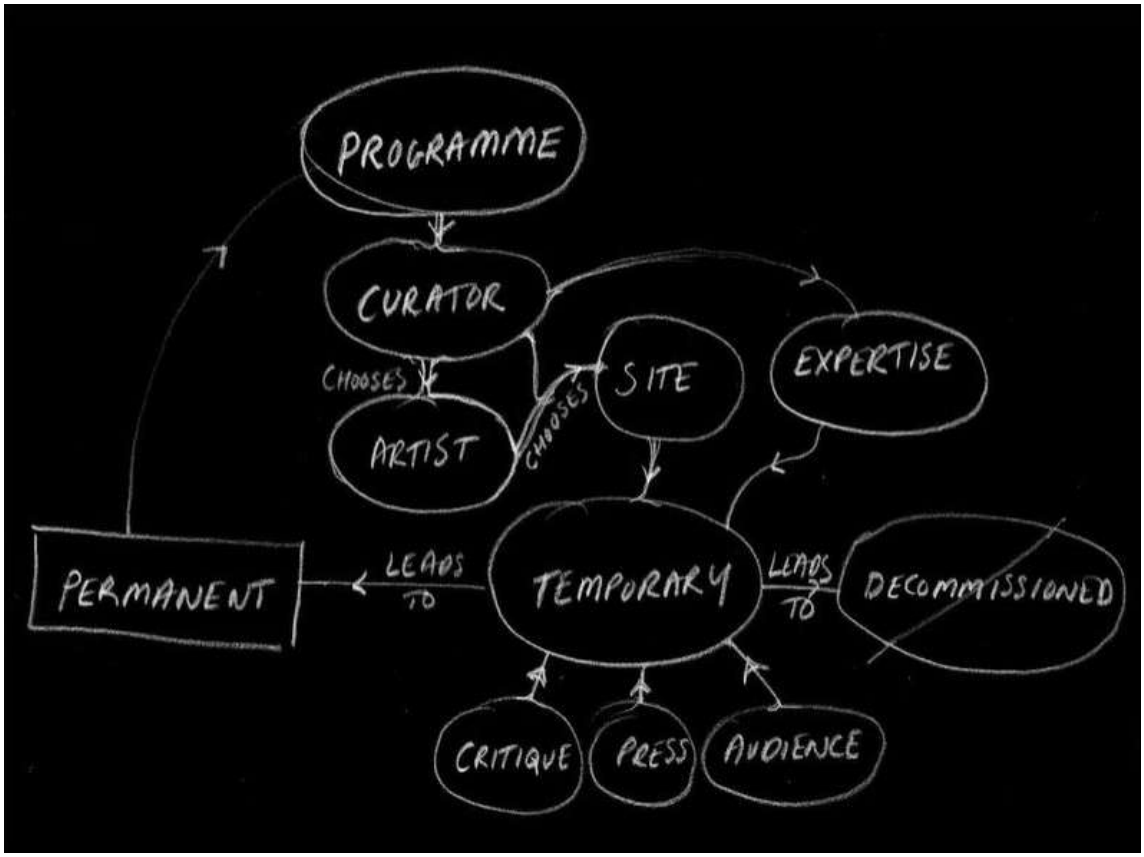


Fig. 116. Michael Pinsky and Stephanie Delcroix, RELAY scheme 3. Source: Delcroix S., Pfannes E. (2015), *Art, Place and Community,* talk part of *CAS Talks - Public Art Forum.*



Fig. 117. Jacques Rival, *Identified Flying Object,* London, 2011.



Fig. 118. Richard Wentworth, *Black Maria,* London, 2013.



Fig. 119. Felice Varini, *Across the Building,* London, 2013.



Fig. 120. OOZE, Marjetica Potrč, *Of Soil and Water,* London, 2015-2016.



Fig. 121. Roadsworth, *Natural Cycle,* London, 2022.

Goal - Place-shaping: Utilising inward investment to deliver sustainable, ambitious growth and regeneration, embedding culture to nurture our existing and new communities.

Key: actions in boxes highlighted in green are Council led, actions in boxes highlighted in blue are being developed in partnership between the council and organisations, actions in boxes highlighted in yellow are being developed by cultural and community organisations across the borough.

Objectives	Actions for year 2 (2022-23)	Actions for year 3 (2023-4)	Actions for year 4 (2024-5)	SMART Targets
Support the delivery of the area strategies as outlined in the emerging Local Plan. These areas are: • Nine Elms • Wandle Delta/ Wandsworth Town • Clapham Junction • Wandsworth Riverside • Putney • Balham • Tooting • Roehampton	Support planning policy with any refinement required of the Local Plan before its submission to the Secretary of State in Spring 2022. Complete the Impact Assessment of the Nine Elms Battersea Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2022 to understand the impact of the five years of cultural place-shaping in Nine Elms and feed into future strategic work within the borough. Recommendations from this report will feed into all 7 strategic goals of the Arts and Culture Strategy and the creation of Nine Elms new Culture Action Plan 2022-2027. Work with planning colleagues and developers as part of pre-app consultations to set a vision of the emerging cultural quarter in the Wandle Delta and Wandsworth Town.	Adoption of the new Local Plan. Continue implement learning and recommendations from the Impact Assessment of the Nine Elms Battersea Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2022, both in Nine Elms and other areas of regeneration. Continue to work with planning colleagues and developers as part of pre-app consultations to set a vision of the emerging cultural quarter in the Wandle Delta and Wandsworth Town. Work closely with planning policy to develop clear spatial frameworks to provide clarity for landowners and commercial investors and facilitate investment decisions that can support the Council's vision.	Continue implement learning and recommendations from the Impact Assessment of the Nine Elms Battersea Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2022, both in Nine Elms and other areas of regeneration. Continue to work with planning colleagues and developers as part of pre-app consultations to set a vision of the emerging cultural quarter in the Wandle Delta and Wandsworth Town. Work closely with planning policy to develop clear spatial frameworks to provide clarity for landowners and commercial investors and facilitate investment decisions that can support the Council's vision.	Year 2: • Input into final version following Winter 2021-2 consultation on the R19 draft • Complete the Impact Assessment of the Nine Elms Battersea Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2022. Implement recommendations of the report and decimate learnings Year 3: • Adoption of new Local Plan Spring/summer 2023 • Continue to role out recommendations from the Impact Assessment of the Nine Elms Battersea Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2022
Embed objectives from the Arts and Culture Strategy in future Section 106 (S106) agreements as part of new developments	Ongoing work with developers and planning officers on all schemes that trigger cultural obligations.	Ongoing work with developers and planning officers on all schemes that trigger cultural obligations.	Ongoing work with developers and planning officers on all schemes that trigger cultural obligations.	Years 2-4: • Work with the existing 50 plus developers either in pre-app or with granted planning permission who trigger S106 cultural obligations to negotiate commitments, support creation of cultural action plans and monitor their delivery. • Ensure all future S106 cultural obligation commitments align with new Arts and Culture Strategy
Continue to focus on growing the cultural infrastructure through Cultural Anchor Tenancies, who will support the delivery of other goals within this Arts and Culture Strategy	Work with developers on recruiting Cultural Anchor Tenants on spaces secured through S106s. Confirmed schemes that will require the recruitment of cultural anchor tenants over 2022-23 are: • Peabody for the BPS 4a scheme on Sleaford Street, Nine Elms • Vision Develop scheme on Yelverton Road, Lombard Road York Road Focal Point Area	Work with developers on recruiting Cultural Anchor Tenants on spaces secured through S106s. In Lombard Road: work with the new cultural anchor tenant in the on Yelverton Road building to enable them to open. Nine Elms: • Support R&F to deliver cultural anchor tenancies for One Thames City sites.	Nine Elms, support the opening of: • Sleaford Street Cultural Anchor Tenant • Creative workspace at Palmerstone Court Work with developers on recruiting Cultural Anchor Tenants on spaces secured through S106s. Continue to work with Cultural Anchor Tenants to support their work and	Year 2: • Matt's Gallery to open Spring 2022 • World Heart Beat to open Autumn 2022 • Chocolate Films to open Spring 2023 (TBC) • Monitor Cultural Anchor Tenants' SVAs to ensure they are delivering against the Arts and Culture Strategy • Recruit Cultural Anchor tenants for Peabody and Yelverton Road spaces Year 3:

	In Nine Elms: work with Theatre 503 to help them open in Winter 2022; work with Chocolate Films to help them open in Spring 2023. Continue to work with Cultural Anchor Tenants to support their work and programmes via advocacy, advice and brokering partnership work	• Support the creation of creative workspace at Palmerstone Court • Work with cultural anchor tenant for the Peabody for the BPS 4a scheme on Sleaford Street, Nine Elms Continue to work with Cultural Anchor Tenants to support their work and programmes via advocacy, advice and brokering partnership work	programmes via advocacy, advice and brokering partnership work	• Theatre 503 to open Spring 2023 (TBC) • Yelverton Road Cultural Anchor Tenant to open Autumn/Winter 2023 (TBC) • Support R&F to deliver cultural anchor tenancies for One Thames City sites. • Monitor Cultural Anchor Tenants' SVAs to ensure they are delivering against the Arts and Culture Strategy Year 4: • Sleaford Street Cultural Anchor Tenant to open (TBC) • Creative workspace at Palmerstone Court to open Summer 2024 (TBC) • Monitor Cultural Anchor Tenants' SVAs to ensure they are delivering against the Arts and Culture Strategy
Nurturing cultural infrastructure, especially organisations new to an area, with a focus on them flourishing both locally and playing an active role in the Borough's wider offer	Ongoing work with cultural organisations, supported through encouraging them to become members of the Wandsworth What Next? Chapter and the Creative Wandsworth (the Local Creative Education Partnership). Support Royal Academy of Dance as they relocate to their new building on York Road. Work with their senior management to ensure the delivery of their three-year community engagement strategy. Work to support cultural organisations via advocacy, advice and linking in with Wandsworth Art to promote their activities to local audiences. Encourage and support these venues to take part to WAF 2022.	Ongoing work with cultural organisations, supported through encouraging them to become members of the Wandsworth What Next? Chapter and the Creative Wandsworth (the Local Creative Education Partnership). Support Royal Academy of Dance and work with their senior management to ensure the delivery of their three-year community engagement strategy. Work to support cultural organisations via advocacy, advice and linking in with Wandsworth Art to promote their activities to local audiences. Encourage and support these venues to take part to WAF 2023.	Ongoing work with cultural organisations, supported through encouraging them to become members of the Wandsworth What Next? Chapter and the Creative Wandsworth (the Local Creative Education Partnership). Support Royal Academy of Dance and work with their senior management to ensure the delivery of their three-year community engagement strategy. Work to support cultural organisations via advocacy, advice and linking in with Wandsworth Art to promote their activities to local audiences. Encourage and support these venues to take part to WAF 2024.	Year 2: • Support and monitor Royal Academy of Dance in the opening of their new building and the delivery of their S106 community engagement strategy to ensure residents benefit from this new cultural infrastructure. • Develop and deliver at 2 annual engagement opportunities, through routes such as WAF and Creative Wandsworth for Wandsworth based cultural organisations. Year 3: • Develop and deliver at 2 annual engagement opportunities, through routes such as WAF and Creative Wandsworth for Wandsworth based cultural organisations. • Support and monitor Royal Academy of Dance in the delivery of their S106 community engagement strategy to ensure residents benefit from this new cultural infrastructure. Year 4: • Develop and deliver at 2 annual engagement opportunities, through routes such as WAF and Creative Wandsworth for Wandsworth based cultural organisations. • Support and monitor Royal Academy of Dance in the delivery of their S106 community engagement strategy to ensure residents benefit from this new cultural infrastructure.

Position certain parts of the Borough as creative quarters (and potentially as Creative Enterprise Zone destinations) providing affordable creative workspaces. (The emerging Local Plan identifies the following areas as potentials creative quarters: Nine Elms, Wandle Delta/ Wandsworth Town, Clapham Junction, Wandsworth Riverside, Putney, Balham, Tooting and Roehampton. As CEZs are specifically linked to securing spaces at peppercorn or highly subsidised rates, the initial focus over years 1 to 3 will be on Nine Elms, Wandle Delta/ Wandsworth Town and Wandsworth Riverside where there are a number of developer secured spaces coming forward.)	Apply for the Lombard Road/ York Road Focal Point Area to be part of the GLA's Creative Enterprise Zone accreditation scheme. Continue to develop the Battersea Design and Technology quarter as a creative quarter: • PRD consultants to complete consultation workshops and draft report on way forward • Council to recruit a 12 month post to take forward the three year delivery plan for the BDTQ funded from the Stride partnership. • Establish a governance and oversight mechanism • Start work on developing a Funding Strategy to consider the potential to bring in other external funds such as the UKSPF and the commissioning of a public realm and infrastructure studies(s). Support feasibility for developing a Food and Horticulture Quarter in Nine Elms, focussed on New Covent Garden Market and the surrounding developments Take a joined-up approach between Planning Policy, Planning, Economic Development, Arts and developers to start delivering on the Wandle Delta SPD to establish a Creative quarter, building on the various creative businesses already in the area.	Continue to develop the Battersea Design and Technology quarter as a creative quarter. Continue to develop the Lombard Road/ York Road Focal Point Area into a creative quarter, and to identify/sure places and funding for cultural and creative infrastructure. Continue to support feasibility for developing a Food and Horticulture Quarter in Nine Elms, focussed on New Covent Garden Market and the surrounding developments Continue to work with developers to deliver the Wandle Delta SPD to establish a Creative quarter, focusing on both securing long term Cultural Anchor tenants and meanwhile creative spaces.	Continue to develop the Battersea Design and Technology quarter as a creative quarter. Continue to develop the Lombard Road/ York Road Focal Point Area into a creative quarter, and to identify/sure places and funding for cultural and creative infrastructure. Continue to work with developers to deliver the Wandle Delta SPD to establish a Creative quarter, focusing on both securing long term Cultural Anchor tenants and meanwhile creative spaces.	Year 2: • Submit an Expression of Interest and, if successful, a Stage II application form to become a GLA's accredited Creative Enterprise Zone • Deliver programming streams around Nine Elms creative quarters • Work with LRWRPA creative organisations to ensure that local people benefit from employment and training opportunities. Link and align with the cultural implementation plan being developed on the Winstanley and York Road Estate. • Work with developers to secure spaces through S106 for cultural and creative anchor tenants in the Wandle Delta Year 3: • Deliver programming streams around Nine Elms creative quarters • Work with LRWRPA creative organisations to ensure that local people benefit from employment and training opportunities. Link and align with the cultural implementation plan being developed on the Winstanley and York Road Estate. • Work with developers to secure spaces through S106 for cultural and creative anchor tenants in the Wandle Delta Year 4: • Deliver programming streams around Nine Elms creative quarters • Work with LRWRPA creative organisations to ensure that local people benefit from employment and training opportunities. Link and align with the cultural implementation plan being developed on the Winstanley and York Road Estate. • Work with developers to secure spaces through S106 for cultural and creative anchor tenants in the Wandle Delta
Ensure that culture and community are at the heart of the Council's regeneration schemes.	Start to explore how integration of the work of the Nine Elm's culture team into the borough wide Arts and Culture Service will proceed in the coming few years. Work with partners and local stakeholders to deliver the Nine Elms Cultural Action Plan to enhance the sense of place and	Nine Elm's culture team and borough wide Arts and Culture Service start to integrate workstreams. Begin to access S106 secured funding for cultural activity on the Winstanley and York Road Estate. Work with the appropriate team charged with developing and	Council continue to integrate workstreams. Utilise S106 secured funding for cultural activity on the Winstanley and York Road Estate. Work with the appropriate team charged with developing and delivering the Cultural Implementation Plan to embed cultural and creative opportunities	Year 2: • Deliver at least two community focused events in Nine Elms • Deliver at least one community focused event in Winstanley and York Road Estate • Deliver at least two community focused event in the Alton Estate

	neighbourhood and establish a sustainable cultural ecosystem that fosters community cohesion and supports residents' aspirations for access to high-quality facilities, culture and design. Work with residents and local community and cultural organisations to ensure that the cultural strategy of the Winstanley estate dovetails with the cultural quarter developing in the Lombard Road/York Road Focal point and also benefits from existing cultural provision in Clapham Junction. Work with residents and local community groups to ensure that cultural infrastructure that meets the needs and aspirations of residents is embedded into the scheme in order to ensure that the full social and economic benefits of cultural regeneration are achieved. Work with the Regeneration team, residents and local community and cultural active groups/individuals on the Alton Estate in Roehampton to develop the cultural programmes that meet the needs and aspirations of residents.	delivering the Cultural Implementation Plan to embed cultural and creative opportunities throughout all aspects of the development to ensure that the full social and economic benefits of cultural regeneration are achieved. Work with the Regeneration team, residents and local community and cultural active groups/individuals on the Alton Estate in Roehampton to develop the cultural programmes that meet the needs and aspirations of residents.	throughout all aspects of the development to ensure that the full social and economic benefits of cultural regeneration are achieved. Work with the Regeneration team, residents and local community and cultural active groups/individuals on the Alton Estate in Roehampton to develop the cultural programmes that meet the needs and aspirations of residents.	Year 3: • Deliver at least two community focused events in Nine Elms • Deliver at least two community focused events in Winstanley and York Road Estate • Deliver at least two community focused events in the Alton Estate Year 4: • Deliver at least two community focused events in Nine Elms • Deliver at least two community focused events in Winstanley and York Road Estate • Deliver at least two community focused events in the Alton Estate
Enable and encourage high quality meaningful public art to improve the public realm.	Complete Arch 42 commission of the art installation in Nine Elms on the new access route to the Nine Elms tube station. Nine Elms team will work with TFL to develop a new art commission for the Nine Elms station (located in Lambeth). Community engagement will need to happen in due course. Working with Tideway on the various art installations being commissioned as part of the upgrade to London's sewers. Work on installing (a) temporary artwork(s) in Battersea Park while the Hepworth is on loan. Part of the GLA's commission for diversity in the public realm working group.	Produce an accompanying Artworks, Statues and Memorials guidance note to articulate the role public art plays in creating a sense of place, enhancing civic pride, animating public space, adding value and enhancing the visual quality of an area. Produce best practice documents or guidance for commissioning of artworks (both temporary and permanent) in the public realm. Nine Elms team will work with: • TFL to finalise the new art commission for the Nine Elms station (located in Lambeth) and develop a community engagement programme for both Lambeth and Wandsworth residents. • To develop the Palmerston Court scheme public art Working with Tideway on the various art installations being commissioned as part of the upgrade to London's sewers.	Work on completing Palmerston Court scheme public art Working with Tideway on the various art installations being commissioned as part of the upgrade to London's sewers Part of the GLA's commission for diversity in the public realm working group.	Year 2: • Complete Arch 42 installation • Commission new artwork for Nine Elms station • Work with Tideway regarding fabrication and installation of art installations • Install temporary artwork(s) in Battersea Park while the Hepworth is away • Attend GLA's commission for diversity in the public realm working group meetings Year 3: • Deliver new artwork for Nine Elms station • Draft Artworks, Statues and Memorials guidance note to accompany the new Local Plan • Work with Tideway regarding fabrication and installation of art installations • Attend GLA's commission for diversity in the public realm working group meetings.

		Part of the GLA's commission for diversity in the public realm working group.		Year 4: • Complete Palmerston Court scheme public art • Work with Tideway regarding fabrication and installation of art installations • Attend GLA's commission for diversity in the public realm working group meetings.

Fig. 122. London Borough of Wandsworth, Arts and Culture Action plan's SMART objectives. Source: London Borough of Wandsworth (2022a), *Arts & Culture Strategy 2021-2031. Delivery Action Plan for 2022-2025*.



Fig. 123. Hanna Benihoud Studio, *The Deconstructed Disco,* Wandsworth, 2022.



Fig. 124. Jaspar Joseph-Lester, *Sound Pavilion*, Wandsworth, 2025. Source: Jaspar Joseph-Lester.

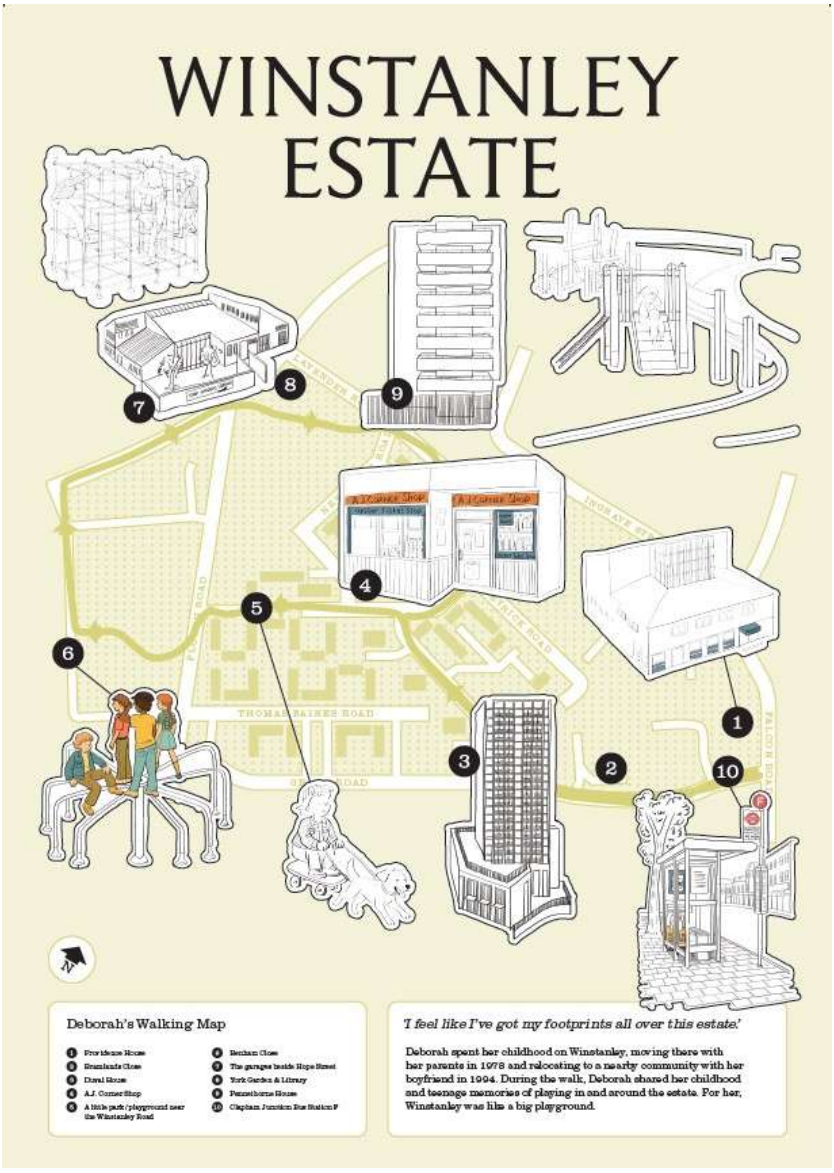


Fig. 125. Jaspar Joseph-Lester, Siyu Chen and Mengshuo Wu, one of the maps of the *Mapping Winstanley* exhibition, London, 2025. Source: Jaspar Joseph-Lester.



Fig. 126. Jonas Dahlberg and Johanna Fager, *Between Walls,* art strategy for Bodø municipality. Source: Jonas Dahlberg.



Fig. 127. Kerstin Bergendal, *PARK LEK,* Sundbyberg, 2010-2014. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.



Fig. 128. Juri Markkula, *ANNO MMXX,* Visborg, 2021. Source: Baltic Art Center.



Fig. 129. Ingela Ihrman, *Marching on Visborg,* Visborg, 2021. Source: Baltic Art Center.

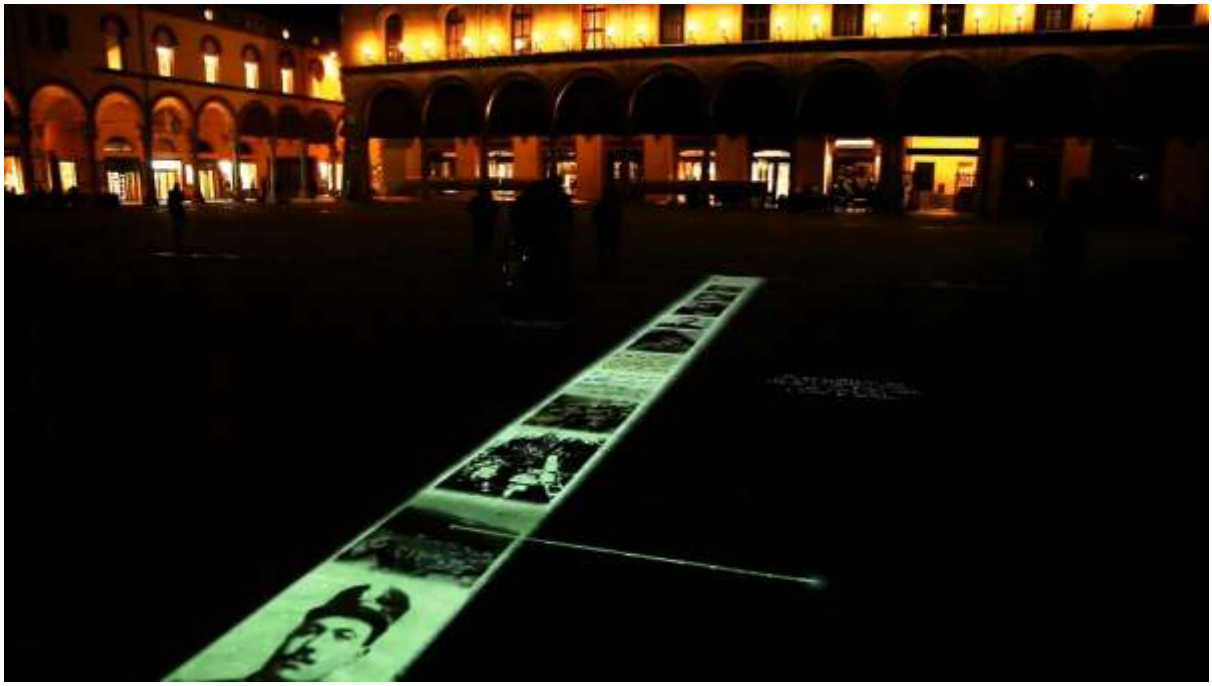


Fig. 130. Studio Azzurro, *Il segno della memoria,* Imola, 2013.



Fig. 131. orizzontale, *Co-Carts − Vehicles for the Community,* Bolzano, 2020. Source: Lungomare.



Fig. 132. Johanna Dehio, Johanna Padge and Mascha Fehse, *Fiumicina,* Bolzano, 2022. Source: Lungomare.



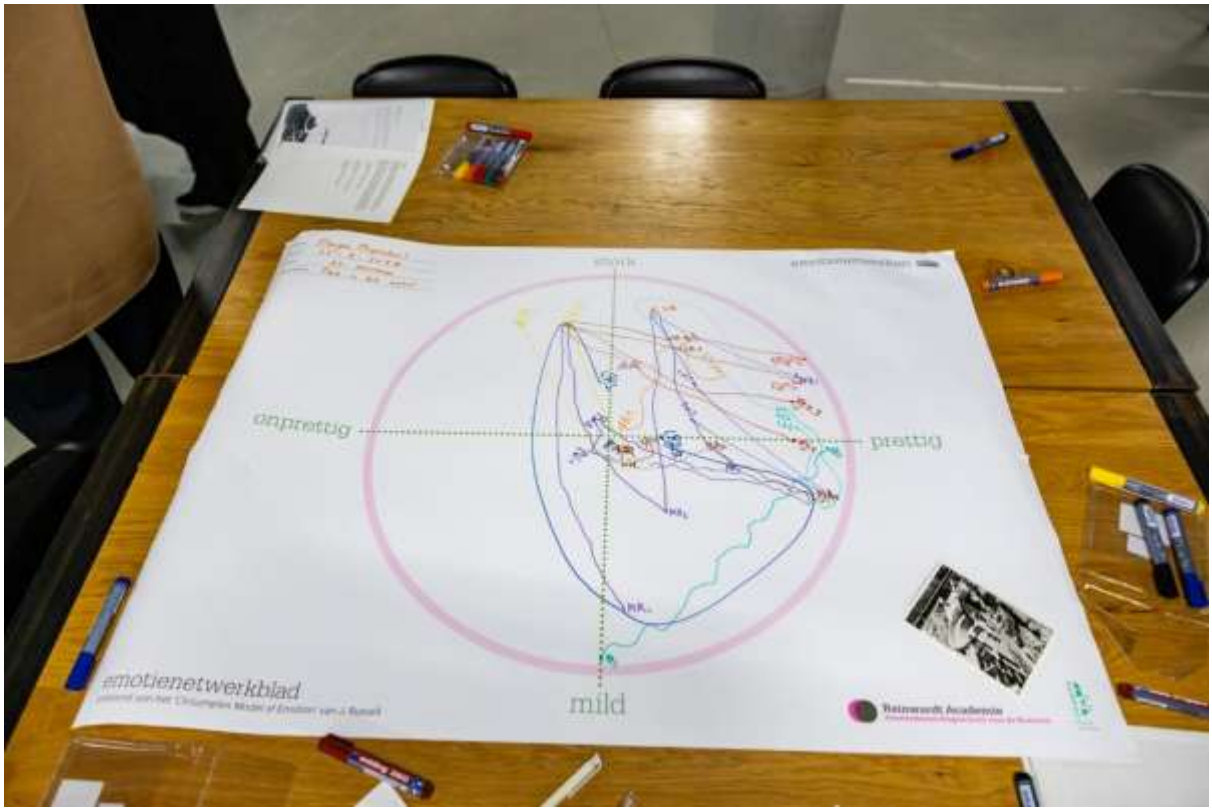
Fig. 133. Jan van Grunsven and Arno van der Mark, *301 Steps (daylight/tungsten)*, The Hague, 1998. Source: Stroom Den Haag.



Fig. 134. Vito Acconci & Studio, *Park in the Water,* The Hague*,* 1997. Source: Stroom Den Haag.



Fig. 135. Michael Rakowitz, *Be longing*, The Hague, 2024. Source: Stroom Den Haag.





Figg. 136-137. Emotional network session, The Hague, 2024. Source: Stroom Den Haag.