

CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES

english

El Cubo Verde *network*

CULTURARIOS HUMUS OF CULTURAL INITIATIVES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

● MAP
GEOLOCALIZATION ●

● RECIPES
PROJECTS DATABASE ●

● DIFFUSE NETWORK
COLLABORATIVE FILM ●

CULTURARIOS

HUMUS DE INICIATIVAS CULTURALES EN EL CAMPO

A project of El Cubo Verde network. (www.elcuboverde.org)

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EL CUBO VERDE
RED DE
ESPACIOS DE ARTE
EN EL CAMPO

Carasso
Daniel & Nina

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CULTURARIOS Humus of Cultural Initiatives in the Countryside

CULTURARIOS

Humus of Cultural Initiatives
in the Countryside.
El Cubo Verde network



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A western look at rural people
and cultural mediation.

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Foreword

Those who believe that Art is only the fruit of the emergence and development of cultures linked to the urban, will no doubt be grateful to feel introduced and accompanied before reading the eight texts that make up this publication. Those who, however, begin reading these texts aware of the cultural diversity that exists in rural areas and of the wide range of citizen participation projects and spaces for artistic creation scattered throughout the counties of our country, will be pleased as well, perhaps even more so.

Either way, both types of readers will be interested to know that this volume, *Cultural Geographies* (Geografías Culturales), is part of a project called *Culturarios, Humus of Cultural Initiatives in the Countryside*, (Culturarios. Humus de iniciativas culturales en el campo) the first formal project to emerge from the informal platform *The Green Cube* (El Cubo Verde), the network of art spaces in the countryside, thanks to the support of the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation.

This network is the evolution of a proposal that Coco Moya and Lola Mansilla, as students of the Master's degree in Art and Research at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), devised in 2015 as a form of self-learning and support or platform for a community interested in art spaces and projects in the countryside. Needless to say, since then, this community has done nothing but to grow. *Culturarios* is, therefore, a reflection of this growth. A project initially designed by the artist Coco Moya, one of the mothers of the network, in conjunction with some of those people who feel part of the community of El Cubo Verde: the historian and artist Virginia López of the space PACA_Proyectos Artísticos Casa Antonino, main architect of this edition; the forestry engineer and filmmaker David G. Ferreiro of Imago Bubo-Rural Colectivo; the photographer, filmmaker and artist Hadriana Casla; and the artist and researcher Alejandro Piccione.

What has come into your hands is only one of the two pillars of a wonderful project that has sought to collect and compile the greatest number of feelings and cultural identities that harbour the projects embedded in the different rural regions of our state territory. The other, of a more intimate nature if possible, is a collaborative documentary led by Hadriana Casla called *Diffuse Network* (Red Difusa), in which most of the projects investigated in *Geografías Culturales* participate.

The texts that you will find below are the result of a laborious field research, designed to analyse the situation of cultural mediation in rural areas, to present a wide range of spaces and initiatives (what do they do, but above all where do they do it from). It recounts achievements, failures, uncertainties, methodologies and forms of management, desires, contexts, imaginaries and intuitions of how they could do it better. Paths traced and possible escapes. All from the micro but with broad horizons. This publication is an encounter in the middle of the road. It is also a "climb up the tree", like Uncle Teo in *Amarcord*, although not asking for *Voglio una donna!* but shaking the branches from the peripheries or the corners of the world, because we believe that this publication can be one more piece to add to our toolbox, a testimonial work that, among other things, *the city and the urban are no longer the only places where the most relevant artistic manifestations take place.* (Lorena Lozano, *Culturarios* 2021).

In order to cover the vast territory of more than half a million square kilometres that make up our territory, and despite the fact that the restrictions imposed by the COVID19 health crisis made it impossible to travel for a large part of 2020, we chose to set up a team of researchers and field researchers in charge of eight different geographical areas. This decision, which answers to both a strategic and logistical need, led us to divide the country in an unusual way, in which provinces of some autonomous communities are mixed with others, giving rise to an interesting comparison between cultures and different ways of doing things from their administrations, and at the same time creating common territories, because, as María Montesino says, *the map is not the territory.*

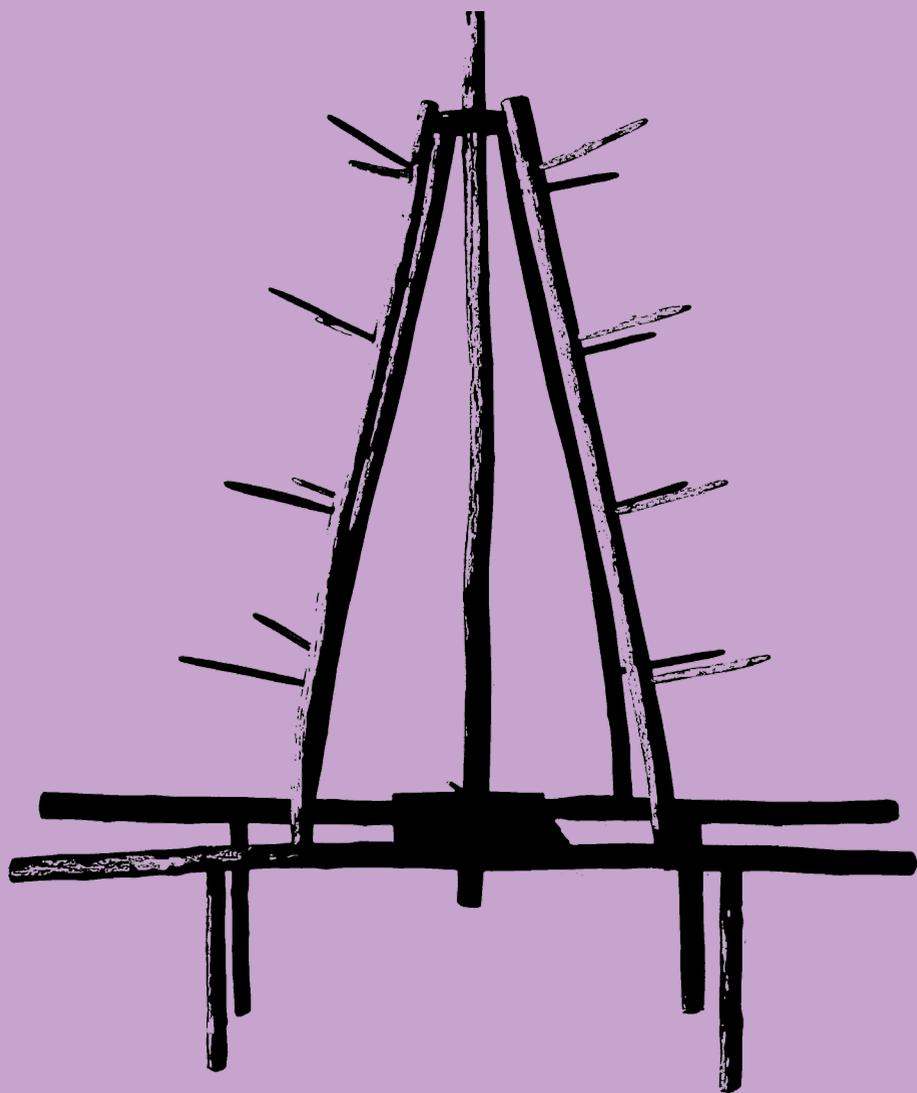
Once again drawing on the community in which we live together, called *El Cubo Verde*, we have assembled this team of 8 researchers. Each one of them, in addition to heading their own research project and being sensitive to the processes of artistic creation, is strongly linked to the assigned territory, forming a committed team with a diversity of perspectives and ways of approaching their own reality.

Irene Sanfiel and Fidel Darias of Madre Monte took charge of the North African Area; Lorena Lozano of Econodos of the North Western Area; María Montesino of La Ortiga Colectiva of the Northern Area; Lucía Camón of Pueblos en Arte of the North Eastern Area; the members of the Campo Adentro project covered the Mediterranean Area, while Pol Parrhesia and Jorge Gallardo of Bee Time took a road trip in the Southern Area; Sabah Waïd of Underground Archaeology took care of the Western Area, and finally, of the Central Area, Alejandro Piccione.

The purpose of words
is to convey ideas.
When the ideas have been understood
words are forgotten.
where can i find a person
that forgot the words?
She is the one I would like to talk to.

[editor's note,
quote from Chuang-Tzu substituting *man* for *person*.

WESTERN AREA



western area

Ávila

Salamanca

Cáceres

Badajoz

WESTERN AREA



A western look at rural people
and cultural mediation.

Sabah Walid

This text was born as a collaborative research process, but also as a well placed, personal one. It gathers different views and ways of inhabiting and exposing our bodies; how we affect and are affected by our territories; and how we mediate with what surrounds us to seek a solution or make visible the difficulties or benefits with our communities, putting our lives at the centre. It is a current in which we let ourselves be carried away, a personal journey in which the different perspectives that form part of this reflection are joined to personal experiences.

This virtual journey has allowed us to travel the countryside from the specific to the different, from the personal to the collective, but from the perspective of the people who travel through it and relate to it. Our journey has also allowed us to see environments far removed from idealised images, but immersed in the logic imposed by a production system that does not adapt to the times, spaces and people who live and want to live in our villages. People and communities that work around the idea of establishing strategies of placed culture from committed and interested practices.

This research includes the participation in interview format of several collectives and artists (Microresidencias Artísticas-Sambrona and LaFábrica detodalavida, from Badajoz; Imago Bubo-Rural Colectivo, La Colectiva Errantes and UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio & Gente, from

Cáceres; MolinoLab from Salamanca, Terra Levis/MASAV, Carlos Martín Sañudo and Cerro Gallinero, from Ávila), people from rural communities (Teresa de Blas, Ávila), and representatives of the administration linked to culture (Secretary of Culture of the Regional Government of Extremadura, Socio-cultural Officer of Sancti-Spíritus Town Hall, Salamanca). I would like to thank everyone who has agreed to talk to us, contributing with their views and knowledge and facilitating the research work, always with the aim of looking for alternatives and opening up spaces for communication to improve the lives of the people living in rural areas.

Looking at the territories, placing practices in their context

Looking at the territories and the elements that define them, from the perspective of the people who inhabit them, was the first step when embarking on this journey. The spaces that we have drawn in this research process, what we call the Western Area (Ávila, Salamanca, Cáceres and Badajoz), wanted to understand these contexts as spaces that, despite their particularities, had similar characteristics: landscape, communications, economic strategies, ways of relating to and between com-

munities, among others. To this we must add the agents that have participated in this research: communities located in boundary spaces, which include collectives that we could define as intramural, that locate their practices in specific spaces and whose objectives are set in relation to their territory; projects that have opened their borders, permeating their ways of doing things to contexts that are more or less close, but within the framework of a specific administrative reality; and collectives that are located in no-man's land, which, although developing in a rural environment, practice rurality as a concept and not as a context. These proposed categories are constantly breaking down. The projects adapt to the different difficulties and opportunities they encounter along the way, but these divisions - which, as I have already said, respond to generalities - are evident in the ways of understanding their practices and demand the use of methodologies which, although similar, have their own singularities. I am referring to issues such as the importance of situating oneself in the territories from positions that advocate the intrinsic need to inhabit the territory in which the projects are developed, or the importance of positioning from strategies that seek to generate spaces for reflection and disturbance that are maintained by the communities themselves, without needing to be part of the life of the people, with the exception of specific moments.

A first approach to these territories led us to try to understand what we call "rural", and to do so, we discussed the definition based on the rural/urban dichotomy. A traditional and directed view that presented a meaning based on confrontation. Thus, the rural was defined from the characteristics that make up urban environments and vice versa. Our conversations showed that this way of understanding rural contexts was based on terms of interdependence - rural/urban - but that they were drawn in the imaginary as a relationship of dependence, a relationship in which it seemed that the rural was always subordinated to the demands of the urban, as a food pantry, a catchment area for resources and spaces for rest and relaxation. In the words of the Terra Levis/MASAV collective "... the Spanish countryside, from our point of view, has until recently been much vilified. The rural, the peasant, the redneck, was seen with disdain from the city itself". We are starting to overcome this way of understanding the rural, and although rural people have their own characteristics, this duality is not raised by the people who live, work and live in rural localities. The truth is that it is not a vision that has been completely superceded. The

discourses in which cities are shown as spaces of the future in which to prosper are still valid, especially for young people, who continue moving to the cities in search of other ways of life. For example, more than 50% of young people in municipalities such as Los Santos de Maimona (Badajoz), where the LaFábrika detodalavida (LFDTV) collective is located, have emigrated.

We also have the **idealised rural world** that displays the countryside and villages as places of experiencing nature, where life is simpler, where people work less, eat and breathe better. This magical rural world is another element to get over, a process of demystification must take place that presents rural environments with their advantages and disadvantages, but above all, that presents them as "places of opportunity, and also as political places, spaces crossed with conflicts in which inactive realities open up" (Micro-residencias-Sambrona). These imaginaries accentuate colonial practices that situate our rural areas as spaces framed in secondary activities, which complement our real lives, which take place in urban areas, and provide for a territorial strategy based solely on understanding rural environments as fallow areas of well-being but not of real life, not incorporating the people who live in our villages in the narratives, in other words "...we must make visible what is often invisible" (Micro-residencias-Sambrona). Therefore, we increasingly see our villages abandoned in winter but rising from the ashes during the summer, multiplying a population that is offered activities mainly related to leisure.

We find ourselves with very unsustainable **territories** that divide their sustainability between agricultural production (often thanks to grants from European funds) and conservationism linked to tourist production, systems in constant friction, where the lack of dialogue to create land stewardship strategies shows how political decisions are unaware of the real effects on rural populations. This can be seen in the very strategy of maintaining the population in rural areas, but also in the relationship between the conservation of territories and their exploitation, between nature and ways of life. For rural communities, and from the point of view of Teresa de Blas (community agent in Solana de Rioalmar, Ávila), "the rural is defined by its relationship with its location in natural spaces, which gives villages a great sense of collectivity, and organises their populations around their resources". This is an area with a low level of industrialisation (with the exception of agricultural

These imaginaries accentuate colonial practices that situate our rural areas as spaces framed in secondary activities, which complement our real lives, which take place in urban areas,

and livestock cooperatives), in addition to the new commitment to open-cast mining and renewables, but regardless of whether this strategy is sustainable in relation to landscapes, what does seem to be clear is that “it does not fix the population and does not promote a sense of belonging to the territory”. And, in addition, the problems of the lack of adequate and safe communication infrastructures, and the lack of public services, especially health and education, elements closely related to investments based on the number of inhabitants, causing the processes of depopulation to be perpetuated. However, “this lack of large infrastructures, added to the almost non-existent voracious urban planning, has allowed the conservation of a cultural landscape that is in danger” (Terra Levis/MASAV), mainly due to depopulation, and consequently, “we must look for ways for the ageing populations living in our villages to have all the public resources so as not to continue to create a second-class citizenship” (La Colectiva Errante). As David Prieto tells us, the countryside is not a wasteland but is full of opportunities (PRIETO, 2020: 270).

The territories covering the Western Area also have another characteristic, the existence of intermediate cities, or rural cities, which are centers from which interdependent relationships are established with the rest of the regional or provincial populations. This characteristic can be observed, for example, in cities such as Plasencia (Cáceres, 39,860 inhabitants, INE 2020) or Ciudad Rodrigo (Salamanca, 12,860 inhabitants, INE 2020), which are configured as cities closely linked to the agricultural economy, and therefore to the rural economic structure of which they are part, and where interdependence is structured, in these small cities, in the fact of being “centres where public buildings and commercial areas are located” (La Colectiva Errante). But these areas do not escape the aforementioned problem of rural environments, depopulation. Plasencia has lost 1,587 inhabitants in recent years (41,447 inhabitants in 2010. INE, 2010) and Ciudad Rodrigo 1,516 inhabitants (13,777 inhabitants in 2010. INE, 2010).

Returning to **migration** processes, especially those linked to young people seeking new possibilities, which they do not seem to find in the villages, this is not equally evident in all territories. Provinces such as Ávila and Salamanca, with very sparsely populated rural populations and a smaller dispersion of their centers, show more evidence of this situation, compared to Cáceres and

Badajoz, with an important youth migration problem but perhaps not so visible, from an outsider’s point of view, due to their more dispersed layout, but with a greater concentration of population.

One of the practices that have been implemented in recent years, and which we have discussed in our conversations with different groups, is to encourage the return of emigrants. With this purpose, on 22 March 2019, the Council of Ministers approved the plan “A country to return to”, with a budget of 24 million euros to be distributed between 2019 and 2020, promoted as a strategy to facilitate the return of Spanish talent. This strategy highlights the difficulties of returning from other countries, but especially to rural areas, which do not have their own guidelines. The reality is that these returnees cannot find alternative employment, nor the necessary resources to bring their own projects.

The processes of going back from the city to the countryside are not new. Many young people have chosen to return to their villages in order to participate in rural life and the rural economy. However, it is only now that the difficulties as-

Many young people have chosen to return to their villages in order to participate in rural life and the rural economy. However, it is only now that the difficulties associated with these movements are becoming more evident.

sociated with these movements are becoming more evident. The recession that began in 2008, in many cases not yet overcome, and accentuated by the current pandemic, has meant that returning to the villages is now seen as a necessity given the impossibility of making a living in the cities. This situation has led to a clear demand “... either

a great effort is made to renew public policies or we are heading for failure once again” (LFDTV). But, in addition, from the point of view of the residents (Teresa de Blas), “these returnees are faced with various obstacles, lack of housing, lack of or poor internet connections, or lack of work, issues to overcome if we want the return of the young population, as otherwise living in the villages is a commitment to wellbeing”.

In recent years there has been an increase in public awareness of the need to recover knowledge and traditions. There are more and more initiatives related to these recovery processes, such as those taking place in Los Santos de Maimona (Badajoz), with the recovery of wasteland (LFDTV). In addition to this, there is an increase in ecological projects, vegetable gardens, cheese and bakery factories, extensive livestock farming, handicrafts (Cerro Gallinero, Terra Levis-MASAV), revitalisation of historic centres (Microresidencias-Sambrona), repositories of traditional practices, recovery of heritage spaces (Terra Levis/MASAV, UNDER-



GROUND Arqueología Patrimonio & Gente)... But these are not established processes, as in many cases suffer from a lack of continuity for various reasons. There is no clear commitment to young people who want to undertake this type of initiatives (LFDTV, Cerro Gallinero), and also exists “the need to rely on cultural mediation as a strategy for transformation, to introduce expanded education models that incorporate the need to recover local traditional practices” (La Colectiva Errante). The importance of the recovery of traditional practices is nowadays in the spotlight as a strategy for the conservation of natural spaces, healthy eating, the fight against climate change, the balance in people’s lives, in short, the search for more sustainable ways of life. As the Terra Levis-MASAV collective points out “... a large part of the conservation of landscapes, as we have them today, is due to our extensive livestock farmers”. But from these collaborative reflections, there is a commitment to open up spaces for dialogue and research to work on the future of the territories, of traditional trades and jobs. The interweaving of traditional and contemporary practices will allow traditions to adapt to the new needs that advocate fleeing romantic stereotypes, improving the living conditions of our rural people and putting an end to greenwashing practices” (Carlos Martín Sañudo).

As far as cultural practices are concerned, our conversations again incorporated the rural/urban dichotomy we have discussed. The inclusion of mediation, participatory practices and collaborative models in cultural and artistic processes has been mainly dealt with and studied in and from cities. This has led to the idea, not always accurate, that these processes were linked to urban environments, so that in order to improve village life there was a need to incorporate them into rural cultural life.

For most of the interviewed collectives, it is not so much a question of transferring urban practices to the villages, but of adapting methodologies to these contexts, “... one must know how to listen to the territory” (La Colectiva Errante), from decolonial strategies that make rural, marginalised and subaltern knowledge visible, as strategies of resistance and propositional construction. “Art and culture are seen as tools that allow us to create spaces for social dialogue to incorporate local realities” (Imago Bubo-Rural Colectivo). In our villages, culture is the core of the network that sustains daily exchanges. Thus,

→ *Dehesa, memory and migration spaces.*
Imago Bubo

(...) For most of the interviewed collectives, it is not so much a question of transferring urban practices to the villages from decolonial strategies that make rural, marginalised and subaltern knowledge visible as strategies of resistance and propositional construction.

culture and heritage, understood as common goods under construction, as preserved knowledge, are the centre of the ball of yarn from which to weave, create and experiment with new ways of doing, in which performative art, like knitting needles, needs to be incorporated into the rural, complement the spaces to make them more alive and share their conflicts and frictions. However, “the rural can become the stage on which to develop urban cultural mediation practices, which in addition to not counting on local populations, have in many cases failed to achieve their objectives (LFDTV).

With regard to the **communities**, we dedicated part of the interviews to talking about demand and cultural programming, and how it affects our practices. We could summarise that cultural collectives understand that demand is mediated by the programmes themselves, which are financed or supported by the administrations responsible for culture. Therefore, the fact that there is no explicit demand from rural populations and local administrations

for certain productions does not mean that these populations are closed to this type of intervention; on the contrary, “they are communities open to learning” (MolinoLab). As we are told by the Microresidencias project “... cultural programming has to allow all diversities to move through the spaces”. Incorporating new themes in cultural programming helps mediation

to become part of both the collectives that are working in the territories and the populations that live in the villages. The demands are not exclusively adapted to community interests. “The work of the different collectives, especially those that implement long-term projects, shows an increase in participation in programmed activities and an increase in confidence on the part of the communities in relation to the projects they develop and the decentralisation of cultural practices” (Terra Levis/MASAV). In this sense, what we have called “returns” to the communities comes into play, whose main mission would be to put people at the centre (UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente), to promote processes of recognition and a sense of belonging, giving importance to small stories (Imago Bubo-Rural Colectivo, Carlos Martín Sañudo), for using public and community reference spaces and incorporating their cultural activities (MolinoLab), for fostering citizen leadership and empowering youth to achieve community self-management (Carlos Martín Sañudo) and for creating strategies for citizen science, for crea-



Pasacalles_ final show, Micro-Residencias Artísticas.
Asociación Cultural y Juvenil Sambrona. 2018

ting collective knowledge banks, in which academic and community narratives are included (UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente). When we do community projects, if you feel part of that community, your voice is also part of it, as one more, so your initiatives have a place as long as the rest of the community wants to participate in it. It's not about landing in the territories, but about being part of them, that's why "... just because a project doesn't work doesn't mean that nothing will ever happen" (Imago Bubo-Rural Collective)

Cultural programming in the western countryside, managed by local and supra-local administrations, play a basic role. Projects such as "Circuitos Escénicos" in Castilla y León (Sancti-Spíritus), or "RencontrArte" in Extremadura, make it possible to programme different cultural activities and adapt them to local infrastructures. This programming preferably covers what we have called leisure or event culture, "one-off strategies that do not guarantee the right to exercise culture" (Microresidencias-Sambrona). For this reason, collaborative models between associations and administrations (for example, MolinoLab + Sancti-Spíritus City Council) make it possible to create complementary programmes, although these strategies are generally born from the groups themselves, while

To love a village is to programme culture in winter.

the administrations act only as recipients of proposals, which they may or may not support. But this symbiosis is sometimes complicated. Villages receive cultural packages that are decided from outside, and therefore from practices that are far removed from mediation. We must not forget that these activities are financed with public funds, so the need to start involving citizens in decision-making becomes evident, "...to look at the cultural rights of people who live far from the centers where things happen" (La Colectiva Errante). Both from local administrations (Sancti-Spíritus) and from the rural population (Teresa de Blas), the existence of an extensive cultural programme is transmitted, and in recent years has been able to adapt better to the times of the communities. However, although the health crisis has had a major impact, and has led to a decrease in the programming of cultural activities, "there has also been a decrease in supply that has been evident since the mid-1990s" (Teresa de Blas). Nonetheless, supply and demand do not always match and as Teresa tells us "...when they offer you something and you are not convinced you don't go, but if you are convinced you at least try it", so the incorporation of activities outside the traditional circuits will form part of the citizens' demands if they know how to convince and involve the communities.

Another problem associated with cultural programming is the **seasonality** of activities in the summer months, that “rural revival” we have already mentioned. This seasonality tries to adapt to the rhythms of small population centres, making projects coincide with the increase in population in the festive months as a way of participating in the cultural weeks. It proposes, mainly from public funding lines, periods with abundant cultural programming. But this way of programming does not show a picture of the reality of the villages, which are condemned to periods of wasteland in which nothing happens. Thus, many of the people who have participated in this research have put on the table the need to change this type of practice, as Imago Bubo reminds us, taking the words of Lucía Camón, “...to love a village is to programme culture in winter” (presentation of the book “Thinking and doing in the rural environment”). The administration is aware of the need for change in its policies and funding formulas. In Extremadura, for example, “the strategy of calls for cultural projects has changed in recent years, going from encouraging support for large projects to including a line of funding for associations, with more contextual projects, to give a voice to citizens from the associative fabric” (Secretary of Culture of the Regional Government of Extremadura). But the collectives have not felt that they have been involved in these changes, whose solutions do not respond to their specific demands. In this sense, the fact that public administrations have participated in this research has clarified key points of our demands (long-term support, opening of spaces for dialogue, institutional support beyond the purely economic,...). From the cultural mediation sector and the public administration, in this case in Extremadura, the need to open up spaces for dialogue is raised, but it is made clear that in order to facilitate participation in the construction of changes in public policies it is necessary, or at least advisable, to create an intermediary in the form of a cultural mediation association that allows this type of working group to be established.

Relations between **administrations**, collectives and artists in our rural environments can be divided into three large groups, which do not only respond to the delimitations of their competences, but also to the type of relationship established with them: supra-local administrations, whether provincial or regional; intermediate administrations, such as local action groups or associations of municipalities; and local administrations. This research has allowed us to generalise that the systems of relations with local councils are more frequent and effective. These relationships are not based on monetary support but rather on sharing spaces and resources, taking part in

citizen participation processes and being open to non-regulatory activities (Imago Bubo-Rural Collective, UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente). On the other hand, we see that intermediate administrations, and especially regional administrations, have much weaker relations with collectives working in artistic and cultural mediation processes. This is manifested in bets on macro projects, showing a certain lack of interest in local practices, “... they forget how easy it would be to carry out dialogue projects with the agents of the territory” (Imago Bubo-Rural Collective).

Another transversal theme in our discussions was the sustainability of cultural practices, of mediation and of the people who work in these areas. How the current formulas, based on models that promote precariousness, lead not only to the demotivation of the mediating agents, but also of the communities themselves, whose expectations in many cases are not met. This is a “perverse model that needs to open up spaces for dialogue in order to fight for the right to be able to develop a true cultural democracy” (UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente).

The **sustainability** of these projects is organised in three ways: public subsidies, self-management, or through mixed formulas. In the first case, the dependence on competitive public subsidies (a somewhat unequal offer between Extremadura, with more subsidy lines, and Castilla y León), linked to non-profit legal forms, mainly aimed at the associative fabric, pose several problems: “lack of financial allocations for project managers” (La Colectiva Errante), “seasonality of budget allocations, and difficulty for many groups to access programmes because they do not have financial resources or because the objectives are not adapted to their projects” (Microresidencias-Sambrona). In the case of self-managed projects, they face other problems such as the need for their own work space in which to develop their activities, which is why this type of project always relies on this resource (Cerro Gallinero, Molinolab). The third model, public subsidies and self-managed projects, is perhaps the most frequent, and balances its sustainability by seeking funding solutions adapted to the different projects. However, this model is not applied exclusively in the search for funding; in general, the collectives that adopt this system also seek to generate spaces in which to work with institutions, the business fabric (Cerro Gallinero, Terra Levis/MASV) and academia. It is therefore a matter of generating multi-agent networks, and as the Sancti-Spiritus Town Council tells us, “...in the end, we all add up to more”.

From the rural and the everyday. Cultural mediation as a process and the return of care.

This walk through the countryside as a context has not been aseptic. It has involved putting our bodies on the line, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and, therefore, it has shown that we cannot separate mediation from care. This is because rural environments are no strange to conflicts, to logics imposed from above, and to relationships and complicities that involve an act of reception, but also of friction.

Cultural mediation has the fundamental role of facilitating processes, generating complicities, “doing with” or “alongside”. As Fran Quiroga states, mediation is an unfinished process in continuous construction, open and flexible (QUIROGA, 2020:188-189). While it is true that establishing what cultural mediation is and how it is put into practice shows us a certain space of indefinición, or rather, a plurality of ways of understanding, it is also true that all these voices, which are based on positioned points of view, share many elements. Thus, we can say that cultural mediation is understood as a practice that forms part of all the processes that are activated by the collectives, in a transversal way or aimed at specific actions.

On one hand, there are projects that understand mediation as a strategy to solve conflicts and establish relations between all the agents that intervene in their territories (administrations, educational centres, associations, companies and the community in general); and there are other collectives that understand mediation as the relationship established between their projects and the citizens, “...the social part of an artistic project” (Cerro Gallinero). However, both positions agree that mediation fosters processes of expanded education and seeks strategies to break the processes that come from above. These ways of doing things generate frameworks of action that, from the supralocal administrations, show the difficulties of incorporating these processes within the institutional machinery itself. But on the other hand, “local administrations act directly with projects that promote the need to incorporate cultural mediation strategies” (Secretary of Culture of the Regional Government of Extremadura), and that vindicate

the role of the officers of the town councils as effective links between the administrations and the populations, “... it is that bridge between culture and the people and between the administration and the people” (Sancti-Spiritus Town Council).

This study cannot give a voice to all communities, but thanks to the participation of Teresa de Blas (Solana de Rioalmar) we can get a closer look at mediation from the point of view of people living in rural areas. Thus, mediation is the act that promotes culture, makes a cause visible and seeks a solution. But, its role takes time and dedication, and needs appropriate economic funds, “...obviously talking about the cultural issue, someone who is in between, who, for me, ..., coordinates, manages, moves, promotes, ..., call them mediator, call them guide, call them Agent of Rural Development, I think that is the management that a mediator should do, and promote culture”.

Mediation is the tool that connects the needs and desires of communities generated around shared interests. Mediation should make things happen, not by forcing processes that are not demanded, but by participating in the construction of new spaces that include voices, generally alien to rural contexts”

Rural areas are not univocal; they are made up of multiple realities where the people who are part of their communities play different roles and face conflicts in different ways, with their own hierarchies and ways of doing things. Mediation, in the words of María Montesino, is part of the processes of social construction (MONTESINO, 2020:84). And it is from this perspective that mediation is proposed as a “tool that connects territories with people, that re-signifies spaces, generates symbolic narratives” (Terra Levis/MASAV,), and “new narratives that make rural environments and ways of life visible” (La Colectiva Errante).

As we have said, mediation and care go hand in hand, but mediation without **participation** is an empty act. For this reason, our path has led us to address participation as the axis of cultural practices. To raise projects with the communities concerned, in their own contexts, is “to create a community of interest and active participation” (UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente).

“Exercising participation is also about listening, adapting to people’s own stories” (Carlos Martín Sañudo), situating them, valuing them, making them visible and sharing with them in order to build real and inclusive narratives. But we should not understand cultural mediation as an act that justifies discourses, that quantifies people, but rather that mediation will be given or not if it is necessary, and will be adapted to the needs of the



The magician's trick is to see through a drop of water (2021), Carlos de Gredos. Centro de Arte y Naturaleza Cerro Gallinero, Hoyocasero. 29.05.2021

communities, but also to the times, budgets, and expectations that are assumed when incorporating this role of mediators in front of the communities. In other words, mediation is a consequence of its necessity, it is not only the creation of spaces for relationships, it is a way of organising oneself, it includes different, consensual and multivocal systems of governance. Thus, culture as a common good is a right, and mediation is the tool that connects the needs and desires of communities generated around shared interests. But also “mediation should make things happen, not by forcing processes that are not demanded, but by participating in the construction of new spaces that include voices, generally alien to rural contexts” (UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente).

Mediation, specifically in our rural areas, is seen from two perspectives. On the one hand, as a practice that has been carried out in villages for centuries and that, although diluted in modernity, continues to be maintained and adapted. On the other hand, as an innovative instrument that seeks transformation by incorporating foreign practices.

It would be fair to unite these two perspectives, to get to know the way of doing things by the neighbours who live in our villages and to incorporate strategies that make the mediation processes more visible and useful. Activating mediation is, therefore, a transformative, pedagogical, feminist and decolonial act (FUNDACIÓN CARASSO Y PEDAGOGÍAS INVISIBLES, 2018:4).

Exploring this path, participating in this research, has in itself been an act of prototyping in which the **health crisis** caused by COVID-19 has provoked a situation of uncertainty to which we were not used to. It has been a process of constant adaptation, which has affected us as people and therefore has affected our practices. We have prototyped methodologies in a very short period of time, and this has meant that we have not been able to adapt to one of the realities of our rural areas, i.e. an ageing population, where the fear of the pandemic was tragically justified and to which we have not been able to give more appropriate responses. More intimate events have been held and new technologies have been incorporated,

mainly to relate to each other. In some cases “... we have gone from being spaces of relationships to spaces of productions” (LFDTV).

The pandemic has shown that these types of projects, which have their weight in the community, have not been as conditioned as other cultural projects that depend on the attendance of audiences, ticket sales, closure of venues, etc. The very philosophy of the projects, linked to the contexts, has allowed them to continue to develop in these times of pandemic. Some have been created during the pandemic (MolinoLab); others have reduced their public activity, but have opened up spaces for reflection and debate, not only about their practices but also about their management models (UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente, La Colectiva Errante, LFDTV, Microresidencias-Sambrona), and others have had more impact mainly because they have developed their activities in open-air spaces, becoming an alternative, and have succeeded in programming at times when the health situation was more favourable (Cerro Gallinero, Terra Levis/MASAV, Imago Bubo-Rural Colectivo).

Another element integrated in this conversational walk has been the reflection on the use of **new technologies**, especially in remote activities. The pandemic has made it evident that the balance between virtuality and presence has been broken. The introduction or acceleration of digitalisation in rural communities has faced problems of connectivity and the digital divide, but, perhaps less visibly but no less importantly, content has not been adapted to rural communities. This does not mean that a return to face-to-face practices as the only structures on which to build our projects has been agreed. Virtuality has arrived, in many of the collectives and in general in the administrations, to stay. It has made it possible to imagine new ways of doing things (Carlo Martín Sañudo), it has opened up projects to wider communities (Terra Levis/MASAV, MolinoLab), it has been seen as an opportunity (Microresidencias-Sambrona), but, “...the network must be a tool but not an end” (Terra Levis/MASAV, MolinoLab), and virtuality in many of our practices - based on affection, active listening, care for people and time - can produce a rupture with the communities with which we develop our projects, and a loss in the achievement of our objectives. Perhaps this rupture occurs because we have not had the time, because it may be necessary to shift to second gear in this reconversion to the

non-presential, but perhaps this is not the path we should take. To return to care-based practices is to put people at the centre, to make our practices visible, in our territories and beyond, and for this, face-to-face is the space that allows us to establish inclusive and co-created strategies. The fact that virtual environments allow us to be more connected does not have to mean strengthening community links.

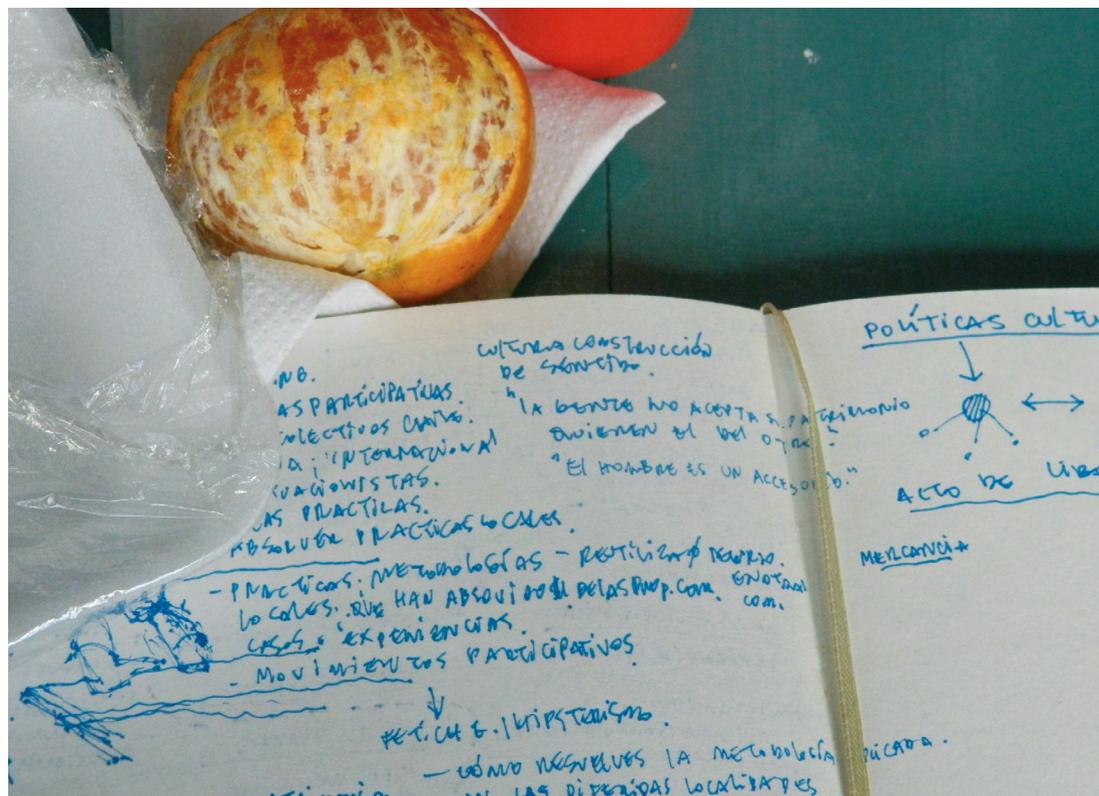
The yellow brick road.

The yellow brick road is the space where a scarecrow, a lion, a tin man and a little girl travel a story that takes them from Oz to the Emerald City. A path, which in our case will take us from our imaginations to our realities, full of conflicts and adversities, but also of generosity and companionship and, why not, it will activate our imagination to recreate our futures and our desires. In other words, and leaving magic aside, we wanted to find out how the ideologies of the collectives have evolved and what their expectations for the future are.

Virtuality in many of our practices - based on affection, care for people and time - can produce a rupture with the communities with which we develop our projects (...)
face-to-face is the space that allows us to establish inclusive and co-created strategies.

By talking about how we started our projects and how they have adapted over time and the accumulation of experiences, we have seen that there are several circumstances. There are collectives (UN-

DERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio y Gente), and artists (Carlos Martín Sañudo) who have travelled a path based on practice, on doing, on learning. This path is in the process of transformation, as in recent years they have introduced spaces for reflection, both collective and individual, in which to rethink their practices and establish times in which to include personal care and reencounter contexts. For other collectives (Imago Bubo, Terra Levis/MASAV, La Colectiva Errante, Microresidencias-Sambrona), this path has taken them to unimagined places. In some cases because they were born from individual projects and have become community projects, and in others because they have expanded their networks or their territories. There are also projects and collectives that were born around a space in which to create and share (MolinoLab, Cerro Gallinero and LFDTV), whose ideologies show the need for such spaces to exist in rural environments, either because of a connection with nature, or because of a connection with the people who inhabit these landscapes.



Centrifugation, concepts and ideas.
Benito Juárez, Argentina.
UNDERGROUND
Arqueología Patrimonio & Gente

After understanding how those steps were, and practicing our imagination, we placed ourselves in an ideal future, which would meet our current expectations and place us and our projects in 10 years' time. Thus, we imagined ourselves developing broad projects, involving more people, opening up new avenues of collaboration and sustaining the community and ourselves. We saw ourselves as strong organisations capable not only of sustaining projects, but also of sustaining collective lives and dreams. We envisioned a network of care that, through militancy, is capable of channelling conflicts and sustaining us emotionally. Our contexts will have better infrastructures to make the countryside wide with gaps that allow empathy and where we can establish common places. We will see girls and boys running through our streets again, and houses will be full of life. We imagine our rural areas as spaces of resistance, opportunity and encounter.

Conclusions from the kitchens of the West

Considering this research as a journey has allowed us to travel through the different territories and to meet the people who live there, and all journeys, as those of us who work in cultural mediation know, must end with a good wrap up party accompanied by food and conversation. For this reason, we wanted to take on this recipe book of agents to try to come to some conclusions that close this research process, which, although unfinished, has allowed us to understand many of the realities that concern us.

From the 1930s onwards, with state developmentalism and the construction of infrastructures mainly linked to agriculture (reservoirs, canals, colonisation villages, etc.), many villages were abandoned. People were forced to emigrate to the cities or to other "newly built" rural areas. This also meant the abandonment of their dead,

their ways of life, their traditions. These processes, linked to post-industrial production systems, have continued to be repeated up to the present day, breaking down ways of living and producing. And to this must be added the lack of long-term commitments in these territories, and the need to commit to a decentralised economy that puts an end to the abandonment of the villages. European policies have been committed to our rural areas as priority areas but, after many years of investment, we are not able to see the fruits of progress. In our studied territories, the AROPE rate, which is the European indicator that measures the risk of poverty, severe material deprivation and low employment intensity, and compares it with the economic capacity of households to cope with unforeseen events, indicates that 37.7% of the population living in Extremadura is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and 16.7% of the population of Castilla y León is also at risk of poverty or social exclusion. We are food-producing areas, with a great cultural heritage, and a great investment in tourism, but where has all this European investment had an impact?

Rural areas are spaces with similar but also diverse characteristics, in which contexts are important. They also face conflicts in different ways, although they share many of them. One of the problems they share is the invisibility and marginalisation of their practices, which they try to solve not through dependence but by seeking complementarity, relying on their potential rather than their limitations. They are spaces where community work and self-management are still rooted in the logic of reciprocity. They are places of resistance that fight against the disintegration of the common goods caused by monetisation processes (QUIROGA, 2013:163) and break away from fossilised cultural practices (ARIÑO, 2012:20).

Culture in rural areas cannot be understood solely in terms of the economic practices of production, leisure and specific events, as they are part of a relational management system of their own, in which the territories are shaped as the fabrics that wrap up these practices. It is in this context that the figure of the cultural mediator establishes links in the contact zones of collective processes, facilitates contextual methodologies and introduces care in their community practices (KLETT, MEDIERO and TUDURI, 2013:80-81). This accompaniment must respect community times and spaces, moving between mediation and participation, being part of the communities, so that institutio-

nalisation practices do not occur (WALID and PULIDO, 2018:54).

What kind of relationships are established between the collectives and artists that you incorporate in your ways of mediation? It seems that in general terms there are open channels and possibilities for collaboration, but it also seems to be true that there is a general demand to increase (and in some cases create) these spaces for dialogue, which not only allow access to public funds, but also make visible and recognise collective practices and the need to incorporate cultural and artistic mediation in their programmes. But this is not a problem that comes exclusively from the hand of the administrations, mainly the supra-local ones, but rather it is a shared problem. The collectives must start to understand

Rural areas are spaces where community work and self-management are still rooted in the logic of reciprocity. They are places of resistance that fight against the disintegration of the common goods caused by monetisation processes (QUIROGA, 2013:163) and break away from fossilised cultural practices (ARIÑO, 2012:20).

the administrations' times, know the legislation that supports us, and come together to create valid speakers. And the administrations must request that these spaces for dialogue take place and create instruments that facilitate and support on-site projects, located in our rural environments. This problem is going to be accentuated at this time we are experiencing a "revolution towards the rural", with people who want to live in the villages, fleeing from the cities, who are looking for more sustainable ways of life, but with a rural

area with structural problems that does not adapt to this demand; and with a forecast of large investments, framed in the strategies of sustainability and circular economy; and all of this without taking into account the agents and the people who live in the rural areas.

For this reason, and as a starting point, we are committed to growing from the small and creating slowly, so that the ingredients of this recipe do not go unnoticed and we can savour them in that imagined, but also expected, future.

“... I advocate growing from the small and at a certain point knowing how sustainable your pot is and how much root fits in there, in the end if you have trees with very few roots and very high branches it will happen to you what happens in Madrid, all the trees in Lavapiés die.”
(Carlos Martín Sañudo).



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RECIPES



Aperos inútiles, [Useless farming tools] Virginia López, 2019.
Poetic grafts for a sentimental agriculture.

Imago Bubo. Rural Colectivo

Plasencia, Cáceres. [Extremadura]
David G. Ferreira, Eva G. Herrero, Amparo M. Díaz.
info@imagobubo.org
<https://imagobubo.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2016.

INGREDIENTS: A collective of artists and cultural managers from the North of Extremadura. Created to work, document and (re)write their environment with the aim of maintaining traditions and popular knowledge, and recovering rural and cultural heritage, from the incorporation of new artistic practices, linked to documentary film, photography, artistic training, education in popular culture and cultural management.

UTENSILS: A nomadic collective, travelling around Extremadura building processes to defend the rural environment and popular knowledge, focusing on their character as natural and relational spaces. Its practices are based on active listening and observation in order to build on-site projects that generate processes to safeguard and make visible the knowledge that is in danger of falling into oblivion. Thus, through dialogue, collaboration and collective work, they create a space for learning through artistic and cultural practice.

DINERS: Neighbours, artists, researchers and educators.



La Colectiva Errante /E-Colectiva)

Plasencia, Cáceres [Extremadura]
Iván Hernández Montero, Amparo Moroño Díaz and David G. Ferreira.
info@lacolectivaerrante.org
<http://lacolectivaerrante.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2013.

INGREDIENTS: Collective of people linked to the social, cultural and educational spheres developing forms of cultural and educational work within the framework of collaborative creative practices.

UTENSILS: *La Colectiva Errante's* toolbox is full of commitment to the land of Extremadura and to the knowledge and know-how that build the cultures of this territory. They are also driven by the desire to work hand in hand with the people who live in rural areas and those places far from the large cultural centres. The spaces of thought from which they construct their lines of work come from the field of cultural studies, collective pedagogies, critical museology and collaborative artistic practices. From these places they construct ways of being, ways of critical cultural production in the places they inhabit, using dialogue and collective action as fundamental methodological tools.

DINERS: Neighbours, artists, researchers, mediators and educators.

Lafábrica detodalavida (LFDTV)

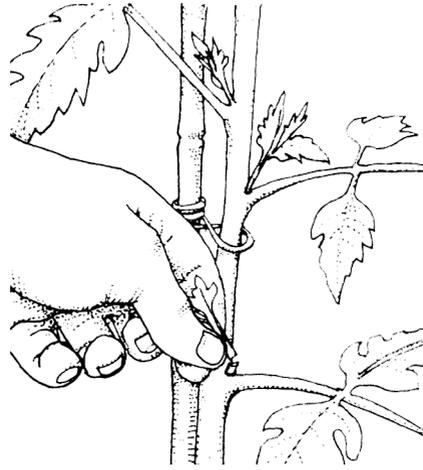
Los Santos de Maimona, Badajoz [Extremadura]
Collective in constant movement.
info@lfdtv.org
<http://lafabrikadetodalavida.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2010

INGREDIENTS: An association from Extremadura that has converted a disused space into a factory for the social management of the territory and leisure and culture in rural areas through rehabilitation using a self-build methodology. It is an effective example of the recovery of spaces for culture in rural areas, housed in two warehouses of an old cement factory located in Los Santos de Maimona, Badajoz.

UTENSILS: Lafábrica detodalavida is defined as a Factory for the Social Management of the territory and Leisure Culture in rural areas. A multipurpose and heterogeneous space with a different capacity to respond to not met social demands. A leisure-cultural, formative and productive environment set up from self-management, with the approval of the local administration, which loaned that part of the industrial complex, of which it is the owner.

DINERS: Artists, mediators, community.



Microresidencias Artísticas (asociación Sambrona)

Alburquerque, Badajoz [Extremadura]
Young people linked to the culture of Alburquerque.
asociacionsambrona@gmail.com
<https://microresidenciasartisticas.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2016.

INGREDIENTS: The Asociación Cultural y Juvenil Sambrona was born in 2010 and is made up of a group of young people linked to culture in Alburquerque. The initial seed was the Theatre School of the company Alsurroeste teatro and the City Council of Alburquerque. Sambrona is an independent association, whose main objective is to bring young people closer to contemporary culture from an active and creative attitude. Since 2010 it has worked on different drama projects such as Ámense. A dance and theatre proposal together with the poetry of Ada Salas and the music of Pedro Piquero. In 2016 they created Micro-Residencias Artísticas, a space for the specialisation and professionalisation of young artists from Extremadura and also for the exchange of experiences and transfer with the local community of Alburquerque, Badajoz.

UTENSILS: *Micro-Residencias Artísticas* justifies its development during these years based on two essential principles: the activation of our rural world and the respect/tolerance of the diversity of our communities, as a formula to counteract the negative effects of globalisation processes. It is a possibility of activation, coexistence and development between the young participants and the community during 20 days of residence, betting on mutual transfer of values and skills that encourage criticism based on tolerance and respect. The aim of their research is: space and the corporeal through contemporary artistic practices.

DINERS: Community, artists, mediators.

UNDERGROUND Arqueología Patrimonio & Gente

Mérida [Extremadura]
Juanjo Pulido and Sabah Walid.
info@underground-arqueologia.com
<https://www.underground-arqueologia.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2009.

INGREDIENTS: UNDERGROUND is an itinerant and open office of community management of cultural heritage born in 2009. As an itinerant and permeable collective permeable collective, one of its strategies is based on collaboration in community projects that cover common goods from different perspectives and with a clear rural vocation. Its projects are currently expanding throughout Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula.

UTENSILS: Since then, it has been working on models of expanded heritage, generating collaborative strategies to facilitate spaces for the creation of new heritage narratives.

DINERS: Community, heritage, researchers, mediators and educators.

Terra Levis-MASAV

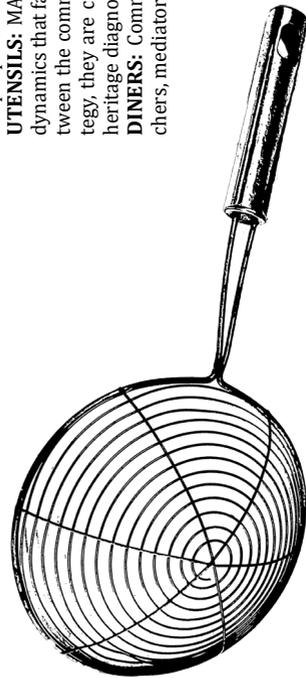
Museo Abierto de las Sierras de Ávila y el Valle Amblés_San Juan del Olmo, Ávila [Castilla y León].
Juan Pablo López and Luis Carlos López (coordinators) + members of the Asociación Abulaga.
terralevisarqueologia@gmail.com
<https://masavterralevis.org>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: "Terra Levis" is the research area of the MASAV - Museo Abierto de las Sierras de Ávila y el Valle Amblés. It is a community archaeology and emotional archaeology project, developed by the Asociación Abulaga, whose main objective is the survival of the rural environment. To achieve this, they count on the communities that have built their cultural landscape, that live or used to live in it, that feel it and are motivated by it..., that become active participants in the elaboration of the project itself and the generation of new narratives. The starting point is the Sierra of Ávila, a unique cultural landscape, in quiet transformation for more than 4000 years. Urban speculation, large infrastructures or the high population densities that have affected other areas of Western Europe have had little impact on this territory. We are faced with a fossilised landscape full of scars. These scars are the archaeological sites that dot the sierra and allow us to reconstruct the history and vicissitudes of the people who lived and live in these territories. They are research into the past that looks to the future. A future that is in the landscape, in the stones and above all in the people who live in the villages.

UTENSILS: MASAV is implementing different processes and dynamics that facilitate the generation of an open dialogue between the community and cultural heritage. Within this strategy, they are co-producing different collaborative actions of heritage diagnosis through mediation, research and art.

DINERS: Community, landscapes, heritages, artists, researchers, mediators and educators.



Carlos Martín Sañudo

Ávila [Castilla y León]
Carlos Martín Sañudo.
cmartinsanudo@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: Carlos has a degree in Higher Studies in Dramatic Art from ESADCyL and a Diploma in Tourism Studies specialising in Heritage Management from USAL. He has performed theatre and opera premieres in different national centres of creation, and carries out projects to enhance the value of archaeological and heritage sites through the performing arts. He participates as a cultural mediator in social projects with art as a transversal vector. He participates in the Terra Lewis/MASAV project in the coordination of artistic activities such as the *Oikonomos Festival: Landscape and Living Arts*. He enjoys the fusion between folklore and electronica, tradition and avant-garde, or performing DJ sessions with Cumbia as the protagonist.

UTENSILS: It incorporates different artistic disciplines into social processes to analyse and diagnose different territorial problems [depopulation, for example]; It also creates community artistic pieces approached from live arts and performative actions with strategies that have an impact on the cultural ecosystem and the social context; the creation of a space of transit between cultural heritage, the territory, its memories, community networks and the institutional cultural model, allows for the generation new ways of inhabiting and co-governing friendly spaces that critically question the community with which we are working.

DINERS: Community, landscapes, heritage, artists.

Cerro Gallinero

Hoyocasero, Ávila [Castilla y León]
Carlos de Gredos.
info.cerrogallinero@gmail.com
<https://cerrogallinero.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2008.

INGREDIENTS: *Cerro Gallinero* is an art and nature centre where a new relationship between man and landscape is proposed.

UTENSILS: In *Cerro Gallinero*, works are developed where the artist must investigate and work for this territory and its context, turning them into a privileged spectator; discoverer of elements and sensations that, very often, would go unnoticed by the inhabitants of the place if these works did not exist. The aim is to enhance the value of this area of inestimable landscape legacy, full of possibilities for different artists to capture the imprint it leaves on them.

DINERS: Artists, citizenship, landscape.

Molino LAB

Sancti-Spiritus, Salamanca [Castilla y León]
Fernando Fernández, Salomé Méndez, Guillermo Casas, Eva GM, Mr Jabali, María Ángeles, Lucía Trentini, Lucía Sombrias, Lewis, Abstráctika, Jara Blanco.
info@molinolab.org
<https://molinolab.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2020.

INGREDIENTS: *Molino Lab* is a rural experimentation space focused on self-sufficiency in food, art, culture, energy, technology, education and leisure. They develop projects in a collaborative way, with the aim of improving both their lives and their surroundings. Projects: Related to self-sufficiency, organic agriculture, bio-construction, energy technology, art, leisure, fight against deforestation, etc. They also host all kinds of events, from music jam sessions, videomapping projections, open-air summer cinema, etc. They organise workshops on a multitude of topics. Their aim is to record each project and activity in order to publish, in a free way, a series of knowledge, resources and methodologies so that everyone can start their path to self-sufficiency.

UTENSILS: Hands-on and collaborative learning. Observing, investigating and testing, failing, learning from their mistakes, reflecting and trying again. Using permaculture and hacker ethics applied to all areas of human life as working methodologies. They are organised into laboratories or work areas to develop projects and activities on themes as diverse as organic agriculture, art, self-building, technology, leisure and energy.

DINERS: Artists, collectives, community, volunteers



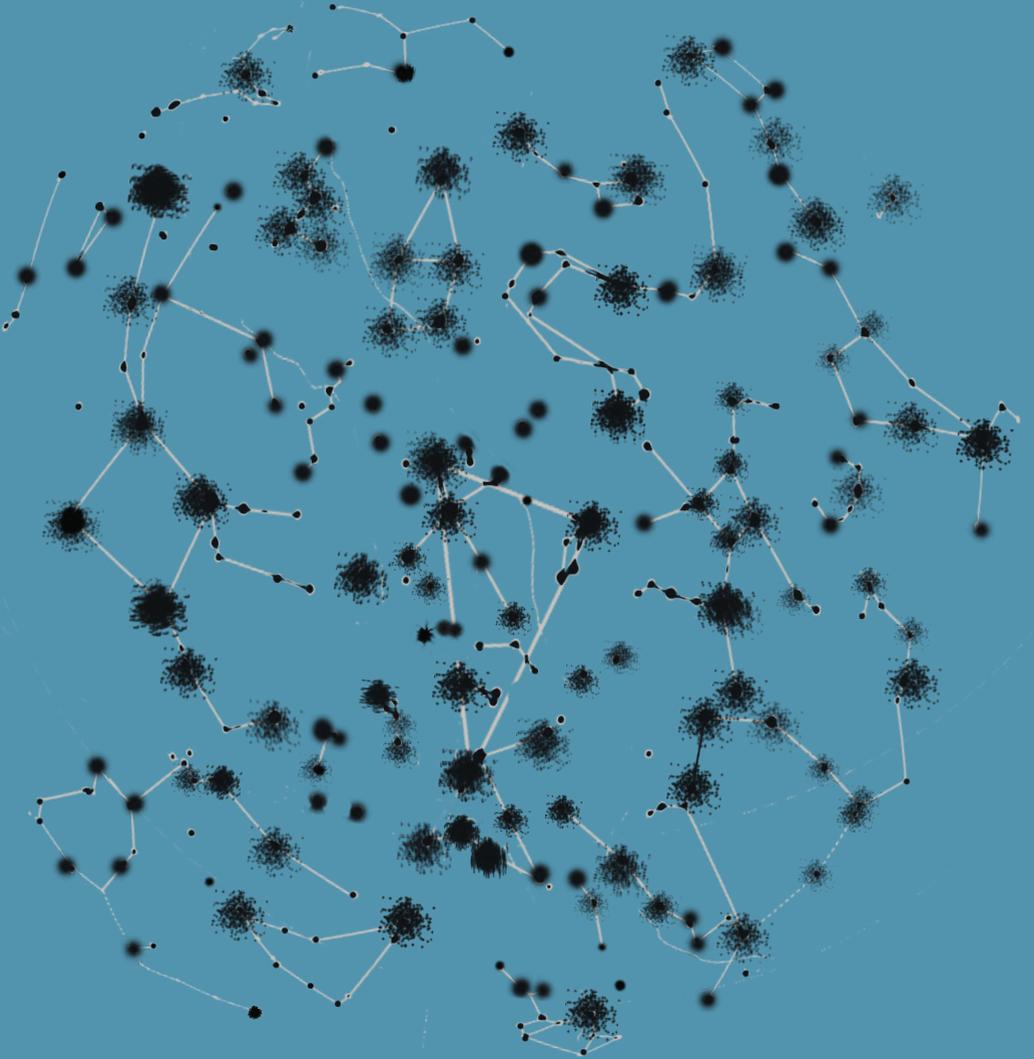
Healing the Wounds, (2017) by John K. Grande
placed without human intervention in the center of *The Labyrinth*
of Mogor-Hoyocasero (2012) by Helena Aikin.
Centro de Arte y Naturaleza Cerro Gallinero, Hoyocasero.
24.04.2021.

Sabah Walid

Co-responsible for the collective **UNDERGROUND Archeology, Heritage & People**, an itinerant and open office for community management of cultural heritage. It works around expanded heritage models, generating collaboration strategies to facilitate spaces for the creation of new heritage stories. As an itinerant and permeable collective, one of its strategies is based on collaboration in community projects that encompass common goods from different perspectives and with a rural vocation.

<https://www.underground-arqueologia.com/>

NORTH AREA



north area

Cantabria

Euskadi

La Rioja

Burgos

Palencia

NORTH AREA



Notebook of an unfinished journey:
artistic constellations from the rural.

María Montesino

"It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what concepts we think to think other concepts with".

Donna Haraway

Preliminary notes

January 2021

I have been invited to participate as a researcher in Cultural Geographies, part of the Culturarios project promoted by El Cubo Verde network. After reading the guidelines sent by the coordinators, for the first time, I sit down to think about how I want to approach the work. On this occasion, the research required interviews and producing a final article. I found the project very interesting both for its approach and for the idea of being able to share experiences and reflections with other researchers. I like collective proposals, which connect with cultural projects in other territories and put us in contact with other people and collectives.

In the last few days I have accumulated a lot of tiredness, as several projects have overlapped, with commitments that are resurfacing after the hardest months of the pandemic last year. In addition, as of September 2020, I will once again be a doctoral candidate at the University of the Basque Country and this means more time for reading and for activities.

I am the researcher responsible for the Northern Area, comprising Cantabria, Euskadi, La Rioja, Burgos and Palencia.

Before starting the fieldwork, I would like to plan this trip as back and forth: going into one community and doing all the interviews, then into another and so on. I have planned this journey without taking into account the geographical location as a priority, but rather the interlocutors, starting first to interview the cultural projects and spaces (wherever they are) and then the cultural institutions (as dates become available).

Although this journey will take place from home, I find describing the environments of cultural projects very interesting. Landscapes excite me, I think they provide a lot of information for a socio-anthropological analysis of what we want to study. I always remember when I was a child going out with my father (an anthropologist and editor) on his fieldwork in the villages, especially when he would tell me to listen very carefully to the their way of narrating stories, with all kinds of details and always a reference to the landscape, to the environment. Descriptions that referred to a very specific place, detailed to the millimetre, with its toponymy, references to the climate, to the specific time of year, allusions to the trees, plants and animals, to the festivals that took place there, to the memory and biography of the protagonists. How many things you can learn just by listening to someone talking about the landscape around you!

Along the way, various landscapes will be narrated to me and I will take notes in my field notebook so that I can describe the surroundings that I would have discovered and enjoyed in person if I had actually had the opportunity to travel there. What will be shown here in relation to the landscape is the result of the description through the eyes of the people interviewed, a kind of exercise of seeing through the eyes of another person. I imagine this journey as a sort of swarm where we will be sharing times, spaces and themes in a discontinuous coming and going, which particularly seduces me. Virtuality also allows me to play with this and to be able to reconcile my family life with work.

I am aware that I have several open fronts and that this

will probably lead me to have to come and go from the research and combine it with other commitments. To begin with, I propose a simple roadmap:

Phase 1) Interviews with artistic and cultural projects and spaces in rural areas.

Phase 2) Interviews with officers from cultural institutions.

Phase 3) Analysis. Theoretical contextualisation.

Phase 4) Drafting of conclusions, answers to the initial questions and objectives of the research.

I start scheduling the interviews, designing a simple excel file to be able to compile the basic information in a single document. I write a generic email template where I explain who I am, the research I am involved with, the areas I am responsible for and the coordinating group. I try to summarise the objectives of the research. After this initial contact, I get in touch directly by telephone to explain the project in more detail and what the interview will consist of.

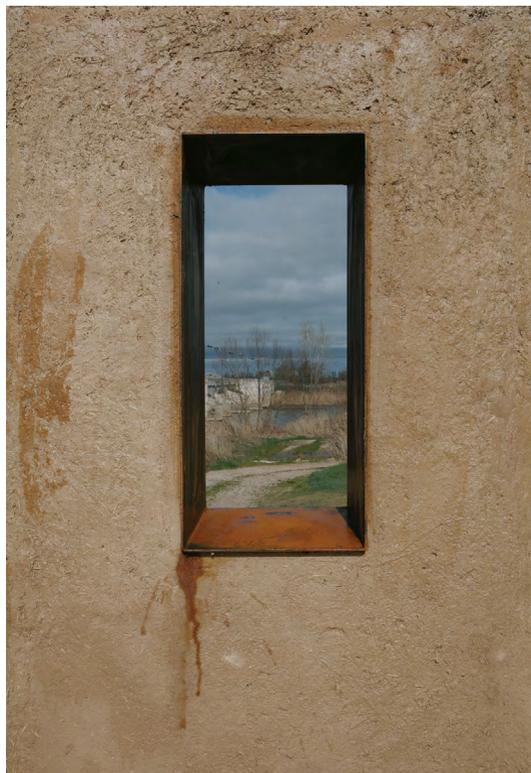
This preliminary part of the research, related to scheduling, is relatively simple but could get complicated at this stage, even more so when interviewing online. There can be many reasons, perhaps there is too much teleworking and not enough quality time for the interview, there is digital fatigue, or perhaps people do not feel comfortable in online meetings, even though we have had to get used to them. I firm up the dates and create links for the first meetings. I feel calmer when I see that I am completing the interview appointments and I see that I will be able to start the fieldwork, virtual in this case, although equally important.

My article is structured in two parts: a travel diary in which I describe the interviews with the spaces and provide information, turning it already into an introduction to the issues and the context; and a series of reflections that will be grouped around the points of interest of the research: ruralities, culture and mediation.

Culture and ruralities

We must take into account the different contexts that ruralities are currently experiencing and that place us before diverse rural environments: “the contemporary rural environment is a changing and complex space. The reality associated with the classic imaginary of the rural (a closed and static territory, linked almost exclusively to agricultural and livestock production) has almost completely broken down. (...) Determined mainly by two parallel processes, de-agrarianisation and depopulation, the rural environment forms a complex social reality” (Prieto, 2020: 270).

In recent times, we speak of new ruralities to refer to imaginaries that link the urban and the rural, creating synergies and back and forth narratives,



Obra de Miguel Martínez Delso en “Tierra, agua, fuego”. Nexo990, 2020.

interconnecting scenarios, actors and ecosystems. The inhabitants of the rural environment (diverse, heterogeneous, plural) have been changing over the years, today there is a much more heterogeneous population that poses new demands and challenges, one of them, the cultural issue associated with identity and the creation of communities; it would now be a matter of “addressing a series of reconstructive tasks of culture (...) betting, without demur, for the defence of unpredictable rhizomatic identities, based on the acceptance of an open multiculturalism” (Montesino, 2011: 9).

Thinking about what the new ruralities are and how narratives are constructed around them can help us to reflect on what imaginaries are being created around them, in addition to being able to encompass the new theoretical and analytical trends on ruralities, their strengths and specific problems.

We find ourselves in a rural environment that is undergoing depopulation and disappearance of

It is urgent to think about the contexts of rurality beyond limits and borders, in a transversal, transdisciplinary, non-dichotomous way, without separating culture from ecology, art or feminism.

rural nucleus on the one hand, and touristification on the other, where agrarian activity is residual. Rural inhabitants are increasingly demanding access to services that can cover their current needs (employment, health, mobility, cultural, digital requirements, etc.).

There is a growing awareness of processes affecting rural areas such as the degradation of ecosystems, depopulation, job insecurity, loss of services (clinics, schools, hospitals, transport, commerce, etc.). The pandemic and confinement contributed to generate many of these debates on the rural environment by placing the focus on villages as spaces to “escape” from the big (or small) cities. In my opinion, far from being a return to the countryside in the medium to long term, they are part of the same back-and-forth dynamic associated (for the most part) with working time versus leisure time. Many of these itineraries reduce the rural to a container for leisure and tourism (ecosystem, people, animals, heritage...) where the rural and its imaginaries are consumed like any other product. It is urgent to analyse what models of rural development are being promoted by the institutions in order to be able to propose policies that take into account a critical perspective of political ecology as: “a transdisciplinary field from which to think about the production of nature or, better said, the way in which nature is inhabited (...). The idea of habitability is based on the profound intertwining between the inhabitant and the habitat, a being that incorporates (in the literal sense of making body) ways of doing and thinking (network of habits)...”. (Mendiola, 2012 : 250). Taking into account, therefore, the very idea of habitability, the ways in which we inhabit a space and how we relate culturally to others.

Amador Fernández-Savater’s reflections on the paradigm of inhabiting are interesting, where he refers to seeking another sensibility, another gaze and ways of doing based on perceiving the world, detecting and coming into contact with the already existing points of power, favouring and accompanying the different points of power (Fernández-Savater, 2020: 212). Perhaps the key lies in attending to what is present, what we already have here, so as not to lose touch with what is happening by trying to seek models of perfection that are unlikely to be applicable to the different realities we encounter.

Furthermore, we are facing an eco-social crisis, the loss of population in rural environments, the negative effects of intensive food production and its global consequences on our health. What can we do to respond to these questions? How are we approaching these problems? Can the rural environment be a space of multiple possibilities

for change towards models of coexistence that are more integrated with ecosystems? Can rural ways of doing things and rural knowledge help us resolve some of these scenarios?

Culture, understood in its broadest sense (as a social link, practice, dialogue of knowledge, heritage, as a tool for improving people’s lives) can be one of the ways to question many of the unsustainable models that continue to be taken as a reference. Now when we are facing an unprecedented climate crisis, the loss of population in our villages and the negative effects of a health crisis: what strategies can we design from the cultural sector to face these problems and seek solutions in the medium and long term?

It is urgent to think about the contexts of rurality beyond limits and borders, in a transversal, transdisciplinary, non-dichotomous way, without separating culture from ecology, art or feminism. To interpret and understand these concepts (with their imaginaries and practices) as part of the fabric that is generating the humus to cultivate community, emancipated and participatory cultural projects.

Constellation of cultural spaces and projects:

This seems like a strange journey, without leaving home, having become used to doing so many things through the computer screen in the social context of a pandemic. I have had the opportunity to meet and talk to people whose lives are related to culture and ruralities, more specifically to the arts and rural environments. I would like to share here the travelogue where I have been writing down impressions about each of the projects I have had the pleasure of encountering, the people who have explained to me what they do, how they do it and why they do it, the landscapes they inhabit and the imaginaries that surround their lives and their work.

My trip had predefined specific destinations located in Cantabria, Euskadi, La Rioja, Palencia and Burgos. Below are the records in the notebook that has accompanied me from the beginning of the research, which has also become kind of a diary, with no other intention than to share my impressions throughout the research process. It is a diary in which I have tried to incorporate all kinds of notes and reflections, probably having something of an ethnographic exercise. It is surely the fruit of the present moment I am living right now, where my own participation in very diverse proces-

ses means that all this is reflected in the rucksack with which I am undertaking this itinerary. I do not intend to do more than to land ideas that have arrived to me as the journey has progressed. I am very aware that people are not objective but conditioned by our knowledge and experiences, and in this sense, I feel that I am here participating in a positioned mediation: “culture problematises, questions and speaks of contemporary discomforts, and mediation must not be a neutral agent, without positioning (...) All the people who participate in collective processes of creation incorporate diverse worldviews, ways of being or political strategies” (Quiroga, 2020: 190).

9 February 2021

Ur Mara Museum

Alkiza, Gipuzkoa.

This first interview is fundamental to me because it will give me an approximate idea of how long others will take. I review the battery of questions and group them by topic. I prepare a notebook and pen because, although I will record the meeting, I have a habit of taking notes and making small word schemes while I listen.

I start the interviews with the people in charge of the projects and spaces, and in this first one I learn about the history of the sculptor Koldobika Jauregi and the artist Elena Cajaraville and their Ur Mara Museoa, the workshops, meetings and proposals they carry out. Ur Mara is an author's museum that not only houses the work of the sculptor Koldobika Jauregi, but has developed as an extension of his main concerns: ecology, ethnography, nature, philosophy and poetry. They have created a platform for education, knowledge and dialogue that favours experimentation and freedom in the rural environment.

Ur Mara is a sounding board for the diversity of artistic languages and their different processes. The main rooms of the Ur Mara Museoa are indigenous forests: among beech, oak, ash, chestnut and birch trees we find sculptures and installations, a natural auditorium and also ethnographic traces such as an old lime kiln located next to the small limestone quarry. The environment is very important here, the forest itself, because it houses the museum and its sculptures.

Ur Mara Museoa is made up of 17 hectares of forest, the surrounding landscape is mountainous, with no plains, which makes agriculture complicated: almost all of it is forest. The industrial pressure (perhaps more noticeable for its proximity to San Sebastian), makes the factories and industrial estates visible. The population is mainly working class with few livestock farmers and few “mixed

workers” who combine factory work with livestock farming. Most of the livestock farms are intensive, where animals and land are exploited to the maximum, generating slurry that pollutes the soil and the ozone layer.

Ur Mara is also a cultural association that manages the museum. An art museum designed in parallel to nature, with a fairly self-managed sustainability; the good thing about small teams is that they have more capacity to adapt to changes: “we don't have expenses and that's enough”.

Elena explains that: “Ur Mara is a mirror of our work and our way of understanding life”, to which Koldobika adds: “Our lives are dedicated to art, which is a field of knowledge (...) a field of transmission of information and knowledge”.

In the past, they used to carry out live ethnography projects: through a specific project, collecting vocabulary, tools, artefacts, etc., they managed to get these objects to be put to good use. The neighbours gave objects for specific exhibitions and then they were returned to their owners; it was a way of creating a museum and exhibitions in a village that has no space for them. They have always had a good relationship with the municipal institutions that have collaborated in particular projects, as well as with the residents and people who go to concerts and exhibitions in the village. The subject of tourism comes up throughout the conversation: “the villagers are disappearing... a part of what is tradition, rural... we are very close to strong tourism and that is brutal”.

The usual inhabitants tend to work in the factories and it is normally those who come from the city who have other interests and training. The latter in relation to the local environment is something that worries them: “we are in the Natura 2000 network and people turn their backs on the forest, their heads are still in the factory”, which is why in their workshops they try to be active with the children from participating schools. Transmitting values such as environmentalism and sustainability is a medium and long-term task, but one that will have a greater impact over time. For Koldobika and Elena it is important to show other things as well.

The imagery of this project has to do with a way of treating nature and space (not as a designed garden but as an element integrated into the environment), with references in independent and private projects in Germany and France. From the César Manrique Foundation they incorporated the idea of independence to be free, to be able to decide what to do and how, without being conditioned by trends. Art is the vehicle that drives Ur Mara Museoa. And they do it in a sustainable

way, adapted to the environment, with animals that maintain the natural spaces of the 17 hectares of forest, donkeys that, in addition to maintaining the pastures in their measure, fertilise the land by grazing.

Covid has stopped the usual rhythm of the projects, since they try to create a community when they do an activity, getting together for a meal afterwards, where a lot of communication and bonding takes place. They still don't know what is going to happen this year. At the beginning of the year there were a lot of problems with the protocols due to the closure of municipalities, it was strange not to be able to attend to people who lived a few kilometres away from Alkiza. However, they have always been a good option within the current panorama, being in the open air and able to attend to few people, and as Koldobika and Elena's criteria is not reduced to economic benefit. Their capacity for resistance has been greater with fewer people in the hard core, they have not sought immediacy, they can adapt to other rhythms, flexibility, new decisions, look for other options, take into account the times. The resilience of the small, which can be very big and universal in other aspects. "The project was born out of a crisis and we are in another crisis (...) as we are few there is no problem, we are sustainable because we are few. Our strength is to have open-air, guided tours, workshops, etc. But we are let down by the more human part, the food, the musicians... now it's colder".

10 February 2021

Azala

Lasierra, Araba.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Idoia Zabaleta from the creation space Azala and talking to her about many issues related to the processes that go through creation, collaborative networks and cultural projects in rural areas. Her proposals Borradores de Futuro, Micorrizas or the Residencias (creation, writing...) make this space a cultural project with different aspects. She tells me that after "14 years of Azala, now I am beginning to understand what it is with the perspective of time". The importance of perspective.

Azala is a creative space combining a cultural project with the possibility of accommodation and work spaces. Azala is in Lasierra, a small village in Álava with 12 inhabitants who, among other things, form an Energy Community. It is a land

of wheat and pinto beans, as well as potatoes and beetroot. Azala is a space for artistic practice and cultural creation, as well as for group stays that require time and a place to work in contact with nature. It is important for the project to seek spaces of calm as opposed to the spaces of anxiety that are so often created around culture.

The integration of the project in the village may have to do with the own integration of its inhabitants. In Lasierra, the role of mayor rotates every four years between each family, which I imagine forces them, in a certain way, to assume functions and relationships that would not otherwise be possible. In any case, in the small villages it is still true that although they have been living there for many years they are still outsiders... and probably will continue to be so. This does not prevent a respectful coexistence where several activities and processes overlap, while some neighbours are sowing, for example, others are preparing cultural activities related to the solstice. Wouldn't that be a clear example of where the new (and old) ruralities are moving?

It is important for the project to seek spaces of calm as opposed to the spaces of anxiety that are so often created around culture.

When Azala was born in 2008, it was a centre for creation that was very well connected to the rest of

the Basque Country (within the cultural context of art), very much connected to large and small institutions. The first years were of international work, also with Bilbao and San Sebastián, but it has been more complicated for them to situate themselves within the territory (Álava), as they have always appealed more to the international than to the local community.

The pandemic affected specially the part of the project related to tourism, but not as much as in other places, given that people could still stay in the huts. They have also continued to do activities because the space allows them to do "rescue" residences, taking in people who wanted to leave the city. Projects such as *Drafts for the Future* (Borradores del Futuro), being online, have been able to continue, in fact, they have published three fables recently. We talked about this new (or old) fashion for certain types of language, now there is talk of social innovation, sustainability, words like eco-social are beginning to resonate. In the context of subsidies, everything is very much dictated from Europe and translates into a further perversion of language, where more attention is paid to form than to substance. It is as if words are emptied of their meaning and everything is a kind of fashion at the service of the system that says what has to be done and when. Sort of anything goes. Language can also be a tool to activate many projects, depending on how things are approached.

We ended up talking about how one of the issues related to rurality, to living in the countryside, is perhaps the awareness of cycles and temporality. There is a kind of poetic dimension that life in the countryside can give you, especially with work related to agriculture. A physicality that sometimes arises from physical effort, from time, from work done with the hands. Idoia's story is full of metaphors related to the symbiotic connections that occur in what we call nature, she talks to me about mycorrhizae, mycelia, plant physiology, surface, subsoil, network.

I am enthusiastic about the translation of Azala, which means "skin" in Basque, "a permeable membrane that allows the organism to maintain its structures intact while communicating with the environment". Azala also means "surface" in Basque, "that which refers to the extension of a territory." What a good time to reflect on bodies and surfaces.

11 February 2021

El Hacedor

La Aldea del Portillo de Busto, Burgos.

Today, I interviewed Dorien Jongsma from the collective workshop and cultural centre "The Maker", "El Hacedor", in La Aldea del Portillo de Busto, the headquarters of Images and Words, Imágenes y Palabras, an association founded in 1999, with the main objective of diversifying cultural life in rural areas, to organise a continuous activity related to arts and culture, in villages in the region and in cities in the province of Burgos.

El Hacedor is the basis of creation, a starting point and a meeting place. In addition to extensive workshops for artistic production, there is an art gallery, a small library and a house. In the workshops, artists from different backgrounds produce works and exchange experiences. The gallery is an open place for exhibitions of any artistic discipline and for film presentations, theatre plays, poetry recitals, music concerts, dance, talks, book presentations and any other activity that fits in with the objectives of Imágenes y Palabras.

El Hacedor is possible thanks to the energy and dedication of a group of volunteers (many foreigners) and informal networks of collaborators; the question is: who wants to get involved in the project? And from there, activities start to emerge. El Hacedor has an annex house with 10 places to stay, as well as vegetable gardens and animals (donkeys, dogs and cats).

Looking around, El Hacedor is in a mountainous area, not in high mountains but reminiscent of a series of dunes that extend, a very different landscape to the one on the other side of the Portillo

pass. This is a landscape formed by the rivers, it is a natural park that located in a transition zone between the humid Basque and dry Castilian areas. It forms part of the Cantabrian mountain range, like a corridor that serves as a link with the Pyrenees. Here you can breathe in the diversity of the landscape and the biodiversity of animals, flowers, colours and trees. It is an open space, despite the mountains, and the winters are cold with frost and snow.

Many of the proposals of El Hacedor have to do with sustainable practices with the environment, integrating traditional ways of doing with contemporary artistic proposals, all from collective action proposals. Proposals that connect schools, surrounding villages, projects with a direct link to ecology, territory, vertical gardens, living forests... "nothing we do here would be reproduced in the same way in another context".

Talking to Dorien about networking, she tells me: "contacts are absolutely essential and knowing that there are people fighting in other places also gives you... you know... I'm not the only one (...) I would like... I dream of a collaboration of content, of action (...) I would like to have tangible collaborations... that kind of collaboration... it makes you alive and to feel within a network".

We also discuss the image of the projects on the internet, on websites, blogs and social networks and the importance of being able to have face-to-face contact, in her own words: "to get to know the real projects, because there are projects that you see on the web that are super advanced (...) and you get to the space and say where is it? that falsehood is impossible with real direct contact".

We talked about the pandemic and how it has affected the project and herself. Last summer it became very difficult because there were no volunteers, no projects, she really missed the tangible collaborations. For Dorien: "the quality of the encounters is as high or higher in these places than in any fleeting place in the city, I think that's what makes it worth it, the contact with people, not just talking to them, which they are also coming to do (...) that working together...and doing...it's not the same sitting around a table and having a nice conversation with good wine and good food and all that. ... by doing something together, working with the same objective and then sitting at that table, sharing the same wine and the same food, the conversation is going to be very different... and that complicity that is generated with the people here... is very difficult to achieve in other places".

"It takes effort, energy, dedication and a lot of activity for people to take you into account". We talk about the energy that moves a self-managed cultural project and the idea of inhabiting, where culture is not understood as industry or management, but as a way of being in the world.

12 February 2021

Camprovinarte

Camprovín, La Rioja.

I interviewed Lara Montoya, coordinator of the Festival Camprovinarte, a municipal project related to other cultural proposals that seek to halt rural depopulation in this area of La Rioja. Once a year, Camprovín hosts artists who carry out permanent mural interventions and live with the 170 inhabitants of this village.

They have a local radio station, "Radio Abubilla", to talk about the villages, culture and art. They organise artistic routes through the territory, have a coworking space and hope to open the doors of an Ecomuseum this spring. I was very struck by the fact that in Camprovín there is still a rural school where 5 children go every day and a municipal housing to welcome new inhabitants. It is a great idea for the town councils to have this type of housing for people who want to live in the villages.

The project began as a tourism promotion project, but it gradually moved towards development, cultural management, depopulation and entrepreneurship. It is an artistic project, an exhibition, a festival with artistic interventions in the public space, mostly murals, but also sculptures. There are permanent works that attract visitors. Lara would like: "to change the image of the village without transgressing it too much, we don't want it to become a multicoloured village".

The challenges brought about by depopulation come up throughout the conversation, and the measures focused in that sense: "There are other types of projects framed in a bigger idea, which is to fight against depopulation, something really worrying in the village... the school has been on the verge of closing on many occasions, there were hardly any young people and this is something that is changing in a certain way thanks to the visibility that Camprovinarte gives; we also do routes with art (...) we have a coworking (...) which is associated with a municipal housing where several people are coming for 6 months to try if they want to come and live in Camprovín".

I love the idea of Radio Abubilla: "another of the projects is a rural municipal radio station, which is part of this global idea of changing the perception that has been imposed on the rural environment of "rednecks" (...) of communicating a more positive idea without stopping talking about the problems we have".

The participation of the neighbours is fundamental: "there are volunteers (...) other years we did a market of local products (...) there is wine, oil... and people sold their products and other projects

more related to art and design... Every year we have done workshops (...) other artists do look for that mediation or wait to come here to find out what they want to paint". We talked about artists who enjoy mediation from the beginning of the intervention process, getting to know the area, neighbourhood, customs. We raise the need for people to be able to participate more in these processes, for them not to be a passive part: "it's something I've been thinking about a lot, in the next editions I'd like there to be more citizen participation, I think it's something that's necessary". The landscape is that of the Najerilla river valley, if you look back you see the mountains (with holm oaks, oaks, beeches and some pines) and then there is the sierra. A landscape where the mountains are integrated with vineyards in the higher parts and cereals in the valleys. There is no local livestock farming, the pastures are used by farmers from other villages who bring cows, although they are rarely seen. There used to be goats and pigs: "There is a sausage factory, but there are no more pigs". There is also waste land of former pasture that is no longer being used.

In Camprovinarte they value that the theme be related to the respect for the environment, gender equality or km 0 products. For example, at the market on the day of the festival they try to promote local products, go on walks to learn about the local heritage, and they are even creating an eco-museum to introduce ethnographic aspects and digitalise them, to learn about the local heritage (the chapel, wash house, vineyard guard, collective memory).

The big change within the process of the project itself was to move from the perspective of attracting tourism to understanding depopulation: "at the beginning it was more related to tourism and now the idea is to fight against depopulation and for Camprovinarte to be related to the rest of the projects. And to have more citizen participation and local products".

The pandemic has affected them above all because of the sociability and social relations that derive from the activities, the artists who stay in neighbours' houses, the meals, the days of shared work. For Lara, the future of Camprovinarte is to open up, without losing the measure that preserves the essence of the event: "I think that citizen participation has to be more present and local artists (...) to move away from the idea of the mural (...) open up the disciplines more, incorporate others, music... I'm a little afraid that this will become something big that escapes the scale of Camprovinarte and loses its essence (...) for me the spontaneity that is created during the event has been fundamental". We finished the conversation with some questions

about the works of art themselves, the acceptance of the works by the villagers and the pride of seeing activities taking place and people coming from outside.

16 February 2021

Nexo 990

Monzón de Campos, Palencia.

I interviewed Javier Ayarza (member of the collective Néxodos) to talk about Nexo990, a space for contemporary creation in Monzón de Campos (Palencia) managed by the collective Néxodos in collaboration with the City Council. Néxodos was born in 2017 as a contemporary creation collective focussed on the development of projects linked to peripheral territories, the enhancement of alternative spaces and the promotion of new formats for citizen participation. At the beginning of the conversation Javier makes it clear to me that, being a collective with different lines of action and from different parts of Spain, it is strange for him to have to define it individually. "A collective allows you to talk in a more intimate way, above all we are friends, it is very enriching to be able to have this union with other people from other communities, people from outside with whom you connect better to talk about culture, art, politics... always focused on a collective project".

Nexo990 has an exhibition space with proposals throughout the year, escaping from the format of the event and the festival. Nexo 990 is emerging little by little from the collective work of the group of people who make up Néxodos, Javier tells me: "working collectively is a way of developing projects that have a social character, that can raise emancipatory aspects within a context that lives with its back to contemporary culture, being aware that art is a gentrification because it is developed from the cities". The debate on art as a gentrifying element in towns is very interesting, to what extent do they need it? What questions should be posed from the point of view of cultural mediation in this sense?

We are talking about the local environment, about a population that tolerates the project but has a traditional mentality and their imaginaries don't fit in with this type of proposal. He also explains to me that most of the local people who attend are women, this is a dynamic that is repeated, the greatest participation in cultural activities in the villages is undoubtedly female. Nexo 990 is not understood as a local project, it would not make sense because of the dispersed population of this

area: "we consider the project more in a territorial scope (...) we do not conceive it as a project for Monzón de Campos, but for the territory". The idea of territory is very relevant, of not focusing exclusively on a village: "it would not make sense to make a project to develop projects for 100 people", that is why Nexo 990 is committed to being a regional, not only local, pole of attraction.

We talked about the rural environment becoming a kind of container where everything fits, without a critical sense of culture, which is helping many people to take advantage of this trend and see it as a business opportunity exclusively (even more so now with European grants). We discussed how tourism-oriented projects have an expiry date and that the commitment of the individual to the territory is a political question. From there, projects are planned, what and how they are going to do it, above all to resist certain logic, that the projects survive despite others that are created to channel funds and distribute aid.

The landscape of this territory is a Castilian cereal-growing plain, where the forest has disappeared, there are hardly any trees, except riverside trees in the Canal de Castilla (in the Carrión) and poplar groves. Farms used to be small, but now, with the

retirement of farmers, land ownership is accumulating in the hands of a few owners, with unsustainable production models.

We ended the conversation talking about the pandemic, the cancellation of projects, of workshops, especially the guided visits with children from the local school and the summer workshops; part of explaining and to have direct contact with the people; many families come to this type of events and it is through the children themselves that they become interested in the activities. There is also a lack of meetings, sociability, being together as a collective: "as there are several people in different communities, it has been very difficult because they haven't seen each other in person".

Javier emphasises that all Nexo 990 projects are very well thought out, they have an ideology and a way of working that is not based on filling in the programme, but that there are pedagogical, didactic, educational criteria and commitment, workshops, visits, etc. Very interesting activities for people outside the territory, but which are sometimes less understood in the village itself, as they don't see it as a necessity, they don't demand it. I identify with many of the aspects that Javier mentions and that have happened to me working in rural

working collectively is a way of developing projects that have a social character, that can raise emancipatory aspects within a context that lives with its back to contemporary culture.

environments, which is why I believe that the importance of cultural mediation lies in articulating these tensions and in being able to contribute to the dynamics of estrangement that allow the inhabitants of a territory to question their own cultural practices.

17 February 2021

Mutur Beltz

Karrantza, Bizkaia.

Today I had the pleasure of interviewing Laurita and Joseba from Mutur Beltz, an agro-ecological, artistic and cultural association to promote the Carranza sheep, a breed in danger of extinction, in the same way as the shepherd's trade itself. This local initiative in the Carranza Valley in Vizcaya tries to respond to the loss of this knowledge through agroecology, artistic practice and design. Carranza is the most westerly village in Bizkaia, bordering Burgos and Cantabria, within the Basque Country; it is more similar to Cantabria in terms of landscape, with slopes and low mountainous areas, a lot of arable land that can be worked well within the industrial world. At the beginning of the 1990s, intensive dairy cattle production was strongly encouraged, with the frequent transition from old farmhouses to livestock sheds. Sheep then took a secondary role, although some families kept their sheep in extensive farming (with all the benefits it has for the soil and ecosystems). There are no longer shepherds who live off sheep, says Joseba, "what they live off is intensive dairy farming with foreign breeds that do not adapt to the local climate and are stabled". The communal management of their forests is 65%, very intensified with cattle and horses; there are no longer any sheep in the mountains. With this intensive capitalist market model, part of the ecosystem, of the biodiversity and of the social and cultural reality surrounding the world of sheep has been lost. With the disappearance of sheep, biodiversity, animals and the ecosystem services they generate in a territory also disappear.

Mutur Beltz is their life project, coming to live in the countryside, where they have combined their two passions: shepherding and art. To better explain what they do, they use the comparison with the body of a sheep, where the head represents the sovereignty to create and participate and the 4 legs represent the production of milk, meat, wool and culture.

Laurita and Joseba help to continue weaving wool and also collaborative networks with other inhabitants of the territory. Both understand this project as a way of being in the world, where culture has many legs that cross local contexts and practices.

They organise the *Buen Vivir artistic residencies*, publish a publication that compiles their activity and practice cultural mediation from a vision that is worth understanding.

Residencia artística del Buen Vivir: the artists come to Carranza to live with them, generating work and contributing with their trajectory. Many synergies and relationships are created between artists and shepherds that are maintained over time, "it is a way of naturalising the two worlds, it strengthens the rural world and the rural reality and for that we need an understanding with the city, the economy, everything". Mutur Beltz is a dialogue between the countryside and the city, a powerful commitment to culture integrated in the territory, a place to recover ways of doing things that contribute to recovering part of the memory of its people.

The impact on the local environment is sometimes bittersweet, although in general it is very enriching. They highlight the beauty of collective work and mutual help, of the *auzolan*, that collective work that is done in all the houses, for example, with the shearing and selection of the wool, followed by sharing a meal among all the participants. "All these experiences and this way of doing (...) that two young people come to form part of their lives, of rural life, of life in the village and telling them and praising them, that what they do is good". We touched on issues related to the representation of their stories and ways of life in city art centres, how shepherds and neighbours are moved to recognise themselves in such spaces where, moreover, they are the protagonists. These tensions between the traditional and the innovative are really interesting when it comes to having a different perspective on cultural and artistic practices in rural areas.

With regard to livestock farming, they believe in a mixed and diversified future because "there is no other way out than mixed", if livestock farming is not sustainable, the economy has to diversify.

We talked about the challenges and how they see their work in the future, they believe that the power lies in the local, taking the perspective of the rural space that, although difficult and complex on many occasions, has a firm commitment to the way of life and the project. In their own words: "Our proposal and our way of seeing reality is always long term, we are positive, we have to keep working, we need more people around us to make us happier and to feel better. Dignify the work we do, we know that it is possible to live off local wool". We talked about Jaime Izquierdo, the *agropolitan city* and the loss of the village, a problem when it comes to implementing anti-capitalist economies and empowering people.



1. Ur Mara Museoa.
2. Azala. *Topaleku Fem*, 2020. Photo Jorge Ferreira.
3. Enverarte 2017, intervention of Virginia López (det.), rock winepress *Los Hundidos*.
4. Camprovinarte.
5. Mutur Beltz.
6. El Hacedor.
7. La Ortiga Colectiva. *Poetics of rural living* Workshop.

On how the pandemic has affected them and what changes they have perceived, we talk about neighbourhoods and promenading. They tell me how people started to walk around the neighbourhood instead of going by car, life was coming back, people were greeting each other again, stopping to talk in a dispersed habitat, where each neighbourhood is a village. The walks connected the hamlets in a different way.

Mutur Beltz has a way of producing local fabric (wool and social), they try to make local, sustainable production, with a smaller carbon footprint, which is very difficult with the type of wool they work with. This project has all the ingredients to think from a perspective of new ruralities, where we can integrate the recovery of peasant knowledge and transversal thinking, a hybrid view and rhizomatic actions. I underline Joseba's expression: "while I talk, I think of myself".

18 February 2021

Arte contra el olvido

Boadilla de Rioseco, Palencia.

A few weeks ago I was able to interview Javier Melero from "Arte contra el Olvido" (*Art against Oblivion*), a project in Boadilla de Rioseco (Palencia) where the brothers Javier and Juan Carlos Melero promoted this project that has turned the streets of the village into an open-air gallery. They started the project ten years ago for the love of art, for the memory of their mother who used to take them to the village when they were little and also for the memory that is being lost in the villages.

There are hardly any inhabitants left in Boadilla, but "Arte contra el Olvido" is also a project against depopulation, which can attract visitors to the village and to the territory. To draw attention through this open-air art gallery, where rain and sun affect the works, where art is also a space of mediation between the urban and the rural.

The streets of the village have works by artists from all over the world and, as they themselves say: "We could have gone around the world, but we preferred the world to come around here".

The project is self-managed by the Melero brothers who, although living outside the village, have a very deep involvement with the territory. They count on the participation of the villagers when installing the works, Javier explains that for the neighbours "when they see someone who has stopped to take a photo (of a work), it is a spectacle that there was not before Art Against Oblivion, seeing people in the street, (...) nowadays with the

problem of the pandemic it is an interaction from inside the house because people do not go out like before, there is less communication between neighbour and visitor, before they went out and talked, there was greater communication".

The pandemic affected them quite a lot because they used to go 6 or 7 times a year and they have not been able to travel as much, it has slowed down the rhythm of the installation of the works. We commented that after the confinement, a narrative has been generated about the rural environment as if it were a desirable place to live or work and that in the future the villages will be valued more as spaces for health.

Javier imagines the future of this "humble project" full of connections, where they have gone much further than they had originally set out to do. It's a project that doesn't have a specific objective, there are people who come because they like art, others come to walk, it's a heterogeneous public, a work aimed at all audiences. There are people who find the project on the net and from there they want to come and get to know it.

Although they now have less financial capacity than at the beginning of the project, they have not ceased their work. For more than 30 years they have been stirring up culture in Boadilla, because they knew that the landscape they were representing and inhabiting at that time would disappear, as they have been able to see over the years.

The population of Boadilla barely exceeds one hundred inhabitants, but there are actually fewer living there. The landscape of Tierra de Campos has very few trees and clear horizons. However, nothing monotonous, with green springs and summers coloured golden by the wheat. In every season, the countryside is dressed in different colours. The traditional houses were made of adobe, straw and mud with little wood.

The interaction between the villagers and "Arte contra el Olvido" is based on participation in the more practical tasks, they collaborate by hanging works or providing tools. They also give up walls and surfaces on their properties so that the works can be exhibited. We are talking about networking, they have twinned with other towns through a work, which they give to each town for exhibition. They also organise a prize with other collectives, in order to have contact with people from outside the village. We reflected on the interactions through the computer screen and the importance of showing the project to more people than just the villagers, to show it outside, to make it visible on

We could have gone around the world, but we preferred the world to come around here.

the map, to connect with the universal. “We are loose verses” Javier tells me, who concludes by saying “we wanted to rescue ourselves from oblivion”. And they have done so thanks to the works of art that are consumed by rain, sun and air. Just as depopulation is diminishing the life of small villages.

19 February 2021

Enverarte

Ábalos, La Rioja

I had the pleasure of interviewing Maite Centol, promoter and coordinator of the Enverarte project in Ábalos (La Rioja). This annual proposal of artistic interventions in the public space is contextualised within the Open Doors Day, a participatory event organised by the Women’s Association of Ábalos in direct collaboration with some of the town’s wineries. Enverarte refers to the process that grapes undergo before the harvest, when they change colour during their ripening. There is a direct relationship with the space, in dialogue with the inhabitants and the territory in their proposals. A project whose imagery is built from the defence of public, relational art, where artists are active agents with the capacity to generate events from a non-elitist vision of art: “Working with the context, in this case, the cultures of wine, there is a relationship of equals between the winemaker (for example) and the artist through their processes of production and creation”.

We talked about “veraison”, one of the stages of grape ripening during the process prior to the harvest, and we compared it with the processes that artists themselves go through when they arrive at a place to carry out an artistic intervention or mediation. We discussed the different conceptions of art, of what art is, not so much defined as urban or rural, but as an idea that is created through the cultural imaginaries of each person. It is interesting to listen to Maite’s reflections on the idea of beauty, or rather, of art as something associated exclusively with beauty, where the inhabitants are inclined to accept more what is beautiful to their eyes. These are interesting questions, those of putting popular art on stage and their views on manual work, effort, detail.

Enverarte facilitates dialogue with the people, with the inhabitants, sometimes working in spaces provided by neighbours, where local wineries also collaborate (the importance of the social environ-

ment participating and feeling involved). Exists an active listening, paying attention to what interests the inhabitants of the territory, in order to be able to integrate relevant themes or issues with the environment.

The landscape of this village appears like a tongue that goes down a mountainous area towards Ábalos, which is a medieval village. Ábalos speaks of water, of “a place of water”, where two rivers flowing down to the Ebro meet. It used to be a landscape of cereal and pine trees, but now there are only vineyards and very little cereal, even so, it is not a monotonous landscape at all. The north wind is fundamental because it generates the right cold conditions in the territory so that the grapes can grow properly.

The pandemic has affected the project through mobility, through its impact on the local population. One of the proposals is to move away from the format of the event and to be able to organise a more extensive cycle. Maite imagines the future of the project expanded towards the common wealth, an idea of a territory more connected with other towns, where the idea of heritage and landscape can be worked on. The importance of the idea of constellation, going beyond the borders, as one of the fundamental keys to weaving networks and working with transversal perspectives.

Enverarte draws on the imaginaries of public art, relational art and the art of generating events. Maite mentions: “I am in favour of developing dynamics against elitist art... very interested in searching for new audiences and new spaces, the artist must be an active agent within the art world and within this activism I believe that reclaiming public spaces for contemporary art is very important”.

This conversation brings to mind exciting questions about how many debates could be generated about art and the symbolic spaces of power, from the type of museum to its location or the works that are exhibited, as well as about certain cultures of distinction that contribute to reproducing certain structures and practices of power. I think it is very important that continue to be projects like Enverarte, firmly committed to a decentralised culture, where places matter and people can relate to art in other, more horizontal and participative ways.

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25 February 2021

Rural University of Cerrato Tabanera del Cerrato, Palencia.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Héctor Castillejo from the Rural University of Cerrato in Tabanera de Cerrato. This University is one of the 9 Paulo Freire Universities and, as they themselves point out on their website, this project was born to: "Accompany those who want to make the transition from the city to the countryside. To recognise and value nature, the landscape and the wisdom of the culture of the rural people. To keep our villages alive. To transform society through art and education. To contribute to the social change that is emerging from political ecology and feminism". They develop workshops and training related to farmers knowledge, agroecology, as well as meetings, all as a way of being in the world, from a critical consciousness and a sovereignty of time and joy. What better way to practice what we call cultural mediation, than to inhabit it?

The project serves as a bridge for people who want to live in the village and to dynamise the territory through culture and art. The collective is made up of 15 people who have come to live in the village in the last 7 years, increasing the population of Tabanera in winter from 35 to 60 inhabitants. The activities are proposed collectively, there is quite an instinctive process behind them, each person can join a specific project or not, which allows the energy of the collective to be coherent with that of each of its members.

The relationship with the local social environment is good, although there are always people who don't like new things. Participation is irregular because they organise many activities for audiences from outside, to ensure that there is a flow of people and proposals. It is a combination of both (proposals and audiences), where the participation of women is much higher within the local population. On the question of audiences, they normally take advantage of internal demands (of the people who have come to live in the village) to offer them training and leisure. They also try to meet the needs that arise.

The identity of the landscape here is that of the moorland dedicated to the monoculture of cereal, with pastures of oak and holm oak, although less frequent. This monoculture landscape has a dry and cold climate with significant frosts in winter. The villages that are interspersed in the valleys are small, with 50 to 100 inhabitants.

Before the pandemic, they had taken a break and just when they were about to return to their activities, the pandemic arrived and stopped everything. They have done internal activities, but nothing outside. They are not planning online activities because it is a collective motivated by real encounters, they are not interested in a digital transition, which would be moving away from their fundamental purpose. The imaginary of the project has not changed particularly, its members come from cultural activism, assembly, libertarianism, with references in their own experience that is closely related to assemblies in squatting and Zapatista movements. The poetics are close, although they see the need to revise the way they work. They work in a network to share knowledge and accompany people and processes, with some more specific collaborations with other collectives or projects.

Inote this reflection by Héctor on the sovereignty of joy, which particularly appeals to me: "The sovereignty of joy, in the sense of self-management and non-dependence, in the field of culture and art... which is the world of culture and leisure (...)

we have come to the conclusion that it is a very important part of repopulation and (...) we believe that the success of so many people coming to live here has to do with that (...) one of the main fears, apart from work (...) what is most frightening is leisure (...) it seems a minor detail but it is

very important (...) not being alone, meeting each other, having a network (...) a community".

We reflect on the differences between culture as an industry, as a consumer good, and self-managed culture that does not have to go through the administration and institutions, but can be generated by people and communities. Making roads and having a good internet connection is important, but sociability and participatory communities can also be an important attraction when it comes to fixing the population in the medium and long term. Culture can be the vehicle, the gear, the glue, the friction that favours this possibility.

4 March 2021

Nacho Zubelzu Nestares, Cantabria

I have known Nacho Zubelzu for a long time, a self-taught artist whose work is closely related to nature or, at least, to the idea we have of it. His creations range from pen drawings to interventions in spaces and performance. The part of his work that most interests me here is related to

What better way to practice what we call cultural mediation, than to inhabit it?

transhumance, shepherds and farmers from different countries.

Nacho Zubelzu's life is shaped by his passion for art and nature, which stems from his fascination with the environment of the Campoo Valley in Cantabria. He draws on his own experiences in the mountains of Campoo to internalise the beauty of the natural elements and capture them plastically in paintings, photographs, sculptures, large-scale installations, performances and small illustrations. The artist has never drawn a dividing line between painting and sculpture, and uses them in a complementary way, with repetition and variation generated by sequences in which an analysis of ideas, sensations and feelings is addressed.

As can be seen on his website "In recent years his travels to African countries (Kenya and Gambia) and Asian countries (China and Mongolia), or to places of overwhelming nature, such as the Atacama Desert in Chile or the Andes, have inspired his most recent work, in which he captures the profile and the trace, the essence of nature and of human beings. With his painting, he takes each character on a nomadic journey to this other, much desired world. And with his golden strokes in abandoned areas, which he calls "orograms", he heals the fractures of what has been forgotten, of what the passage of time has deteriorated, giving back to the object or environment that lost dignity. Another source of inspiration is the transhumance that he carries out twice a year with nomadic shepherds from Extremadura and Andalusia, driving sheep and cows along the Spanish cattle trails in search of the two springs".

I found it interesting to talk to an artist who, from the rural, connects with other ruralities in various parts of the world. The individual vision in relation to the collective reminds us that any creation, reflection, project or initiative (even if it is collective) always passes through the singularities of those who participate and contribute. Artistic creation is also an individual process in relation to others. There are elements in Zubelzu's work that are always there, animals, landscapes and farmers, all of them protagonists of the story. Nacho's landscape is that of the high mountains of the Campoo valley, in the south of Cantabria, with cold, white winters and hot summers. Natural spaces that, in very few kilometres, meet the sea, providing a biodiversity that is captured in his works and that invites us to observe this environment of wild fauna and forests.

Nacho and I reflect on last year, on the pandemic, on how it seems that from the village you live differently than in the cities, here we have more

space, more air, we are closer to the forest and the mountains. We talk about his travels, about how his first experiences with the transhumant shepherds, sleeping under the stars and walking all day long with the herds, marked him. I listen to his reflections on the journeys he has made and how he has lived with shepherds and farmers from other countries. We talk about the importance of the field notebook, where you can write down and draw with whatever you have at hand, like the drawings he makes with coffee, where you can make out goats, cows or African dancers in the spots on the paper. This brief conversation with Nacho has given me the opportunity to include in this travel diary the artist in the first person and his relationship with the countryside in movement through travel and transhumance.

7 March 2021

La Ortiga Colectiva Fresno del Río, Cantabria

The day before International Women's Day, I interview Toñi de la Iglesia from La Ortiga Colectiva. Toñi is currently the president of the Cultural Association La Ortiga, a non-profit cultural association born in Santander in 1999 that carries out its activities mainly in Cantabria. Part of this activity (perhaps the most visible outside Cantabria) is the publication of the art, literature and thought magazine La Ortiga, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. They also organise itinerant workshops on anthropology, experimental arts and agroecology, cultural meetings, exhibitions and walks. Their contexts for reflection and enjoyment are rurality, anthropology, agroecology, the arts, thought, poetry and literature. The basis of their project is to contribute to the generation of collaborative cultural networks from a critical point of view.

They organise their proposals through what they call imaginaries (ecology, arts, feminisms, literature, food, thought), i.e. areas of interest from which to propose activities and working groups for each of them. All the members of the collective can participate in several imaginaries at the same time and the pace of the projects is adapted to the needs or interests that arise during the process.

La Ortiga has had a rural base since 2005 in a small village in the Campoo valley, in the high mountains of southern Cantabria. The landscape here is that of a valley surrounded by mountains, with a dry and cold climate, warm summers and harsh winters where there is no lack of snow and frost. The Campurrians often say "the wolf never ate the winter". This small town in Campurria, which has

less than 200 inhabitants, is their headquarter.

Between 2005 and 2015 they created a gastronomic-cultural space "La Casa de Fresno" where, in addition to enjoying dishes made with market and seasonal products, you could enjoy other types of cultural activities such as the "encuentros a mantel puesto" and after-dinner conversations with writers, artists and poets. La Casa de Fresno has published 4 collections of magazines and other books related to gastronomy and culture.

La Ortiga has always understood food and its processes as part of the cultural production, crossed by social, economic and political issues. Working from this integrative and transdisciplinary perspective, where people's ways of doing and experiences are above and beyond their studies, origin, age or background, has been one of the principles of this project.

The collective has institutional support for certain projects, although most of its activity is self-managed. The pandemic has not particularly affected them because, being a small collective in its "hard" core, they have been able to cope and adapt to the changes. No member of the collective makes a living from culture, which has also allowed them to be able to stop. The importance of rhythms and coherence in the time required for personal involvement in a project is taken into account so as not to overwhelm or become unsustainable. There is no imperative need to produce or to adapt to calls for proposals that will guide or condition the projects. At La Ortiga, proposals are put forward and then carried out little by little with the resources available.

Toñi talks about the need to facilitate spaces and times for older rural women, beyond municipal or local activities. To offer critical cultural proposals, with an emancipatory vision of culture, where there is no age limit or prejudice when it comes to carrying out certain activities. Why is there so much paternalism and infantilisation in municipal proposals aimed at older people? This is a recurring theme, we know that older women in the villages are the ones who participate most in any type of cultural proposal, why not offer different activities, which can also introduce dynamics of estrangement? Or why not work hand in hand with them to make their forms of knowledge visible, so much knowledge about ways of growing crops, cooking food, songs, or listen to their experiences of the prevailing sexism in most rural communities?

We were also able to exchange opinions on these and other critical reflections on ecology and

territory, the use of communal goods and spaces (and bad practices). I will keep the idea that it is necessary to review the spaces of communal management (councils and neighbourhood councils), all the entities that manage them and the people involved. A review that should start from the bottom up, as an exercise in transparency with citizens and about what is common, that which affects us all.

Perspectives from the institutions: sustaining, making visible, accompanying.

I have had the opportunity to interview several officers from cultural institutions in the communities in the area and I think it is interesting to summarise some of the conclusions I have drawn during the discussions. First, I will detail the questions they were asked in order to have a frame of reference:

- 1)What mechanisms are available from the administration for the promotion of artistic and cultural projects in rural areas? (programmes, grants...)
- 2)Are strategies being implemented to protect these projects in the face of the measures associated with the current health crisis?
- 3)Do you know of cultural spaces and/or projects in rural areas in your territory? Could you name some?
- 4)In what way could relations between administrations and cultural spaces be strengthened?
- 5)In your opinion, do you think that the rural environment is a future scenario for cultural projects? in what sense?

Most officers who took part in the interviews detailed the lines and programmes of aid available to the institution to which they belong. Practically all of them have a vision that is quite connected to the environment in which they work, although this does not always mean that the aid reaches the projects that need it most. Although not all, many administrations have programmes and lines of action that are implemented in rural areas with greater or lesser success. One of the officers replied when asked about the mechanisms available to the administration to promote cultural projects in rural areas:

"Most of the actions to support cultural action are developed through agreements or public calls for grants. Every two years we call for subsidies for the conservation and restoration of churches in all

Why is there so much paternalism and infantilisation in municipal proposals aimed at older people?

localities. There is no village that does not have a church or chapel. Apart from its architectural value, this is an important cultural heritage, in most cases a sign of identity of the locality. We are also developing a line of subsidies for archaeological excavations or the enhancement of archaeological sites and for studies in this field. These are two examples of intervention in the conservation of our material heritage. But we also make specific calls for subsidies to finance cultural programmes developed by cultural associations in the province and municipalities. In this sense, we encourage the direct protagonism of the agents who are closest to the reality of our towns. We help all municipalities to programme artistic activities, theatre, music, dance, etc., through a line of direct subsidies. In this way we encourage cultural life in our rural areas and indirectly help the entire artistic network in the province, both amateur and professional companies”.

As can be seen, there are references to material heritage, to aid for municipalities and to the idea of promoting the work of cultural agents who work directly in the villages. I believe that the institutions could facilitate actions to land on the ground and shed light (information, data, research...), since on many occasions, as Lucas Fernández explains: “it is very common for those of us who live in rural areas to think that we know our village like the back of our hand, but in this case it is highly advisable to put certain distance and use the numbers. (...) Without a real study, it will not be possible to know what the strengths and weaknesses are, what material and human resources are really available or how many people the project is aimed at and, most importantly, it will not be possible to adapt the initial idea to the local reality in which it is based” (Fernández, 2020: 72).

If we think about the relationship between projects and institutions, we have all kinds of answers. The truth is that it is common for institutions to name more “official” or more visible projects (perhaps because they have been in existence longer or because they are proposed by the administration), most of which are subsidised by public bodies, and that those of a more independent nature are “less perceptible” to their gaze. I don’t have enough information to draw conclusions in this respect, but I think it’s due to a mixture, on the one hand, of making visible the larger projects or those that they believe can generate more attraction, as opposed to this desire to “discover”, make visible or investigate other types of spaces and proposals, which implies a greater effort and dedication. However, there are officers whose job is precisely that, to find out what there is in the territory and

try to weave networks from there, incorporating these proposals into the cartographies drawn up by the institutions.

I find it interesting to highlight the response of one of the officers when asked about ways of strengthening relations between cultural spaces and institutions, above all in relation to policies aimed at creating cultural infrastructures that are later found to be empty of content:

“I think it would be interesting to set up a network of cultural spaces in our province, to exchange experiences, share resources and jointly publicise the cultural activities that are carried out. It would be a way to take advantage of synergies between all of us and improve the visibility and economic viability of these spaces. Public administrations should be involved in the financing and technical support for the management of these spaces, but the intervention of private agents, through sponsorship or patronage, is also very necessary. The best approach is to propose strategies to achieve the self-financing and viability of these projects. This objective, although difficult and sometimes impossible, must nevertheless always be present from the outset in any cultural project that is proposed. In the past, many cultural infrastructures have been built without thinking about their maintenance and sustainability in the medium and long term”.

Another officer summarises the importance given by the administration to the digital connection within rural policies when it comes to improving relations with cultural projects: “Through cultural agents and telematic means that enable communication and coordination of cultural services and programmes, avoiding overlapping of cultural programmes.”

In my opinion, some key aspects to be able to connect rural cultural agents and the administration could be based on:

- **Decentralising culture** by supporting rural cultural spaces, projects and agents.
- **Fostering open administrations** where officers are at the service of citizens, accompanying and guiding the development of projects in order to consolidate them and give them autonomy in the medium and long term.
- **Creating citizen participation policies** where spaces for decision-making in the cultural sphere are facilitated.
- **Encouraging the development of a critical vision** of culture, not exclusively economic, but holistic: social, ecological, political.
- **Inventing new narratives** about ruralities that

escape from professional or “cultural sector” narratives as the only tool for culture.

- **Promoting active listening** and fieldwork in order not to lose touch with what is happening and thus taking into account the more informal or smaller, but no less important, projects.
- **Socialising heritage** and creating heritage communities, where culture is a common bond.
- **Encouraging good practices**, away from clientelistic networks and caciquism.

Although there will always be debates about the freedom of self-management and the security of financial support, I believe it is urgent to facilitate medium- and long-term ways and processes to connect projects and institutions and weave alliances that can address many of the current problems in our villages. Culture is a means to achieve this, whether it is to stop depopulation, to have an ecological perspective of the place we live in and the activities we carry out, or to gain enough momentum to invent new resources, languages and ways of being in the world.

In order to think about culture in rural areas, we also have to think about culture in cities, to create communicating vessels, networks and spaces for exchange.

Finally, one of the interviewees from one of the projects tells us in her own words: “What is it that really moves me to keep fighting here? (...) What moves me the most and fills me the most is the contact with the people who come here to live, to do something and to live together. Not the tourist who comes to see the landscape and gets upset if it rains (...) I have never thought that tourism is a way out for everyone as we have been led to believe throughout Spain”. It is necessary to take this debate to the institutional level in order to question the narratives about tourism (and touristification), to **find solutions that are not only based on feeding these narratives about cultural tourism as the only way out in the face of the challenges posed by culture. In order to think about culture in rural areas, we also have to think about culture in cities, to create communicating vessels, networks and spaces for exchange.**

Mediation: between, in, with, from, for...

Mediation is fundamental when it comes to connecting spaces, projects, people and collectives, and also if we want institutions to understand the demands of cultural projects. From my point of view, mediation implies straddling many worlds in order to be able to accompany and facilitate diverse dynamics at all times. Mediation is sharing,

connecting, weaving, but it is also conflict, doubts, not knowing. “Mediation is an act of hospitality, a place from which to welcome and produce methodologies that help to generate comfortable, friendly, pleasant spaces (...). Here lies one of the risks, it is not a matter of proposing a mediation that tames through this desire for inclusion. Acting only on the basis of consensus generates a docile culture, which does not end up saying anything; on the contrary, it is necessary to act on the basis of that culture of the multitudes, in which different singularities participate (...)” (Quiroga, 2020: 188).

What is important, then, is the work of mediation, the devices that structure the connection, in the middle, where it is assumed that nothing happens is where all possibilities are found, in the hybridisation, in the place between two borders: “the local transited space opens up to a mesh of spaces and places its contingent and emergent difference in the way in which the relationship with other spaces is established. (...) the relationship, the flow, the connection, but also the border, the limit”. (Mendiola, 2012: 254).

One of the relevant aspects of mediation is its accompaniment during the processes (between, in, with, with, from, for) that spaces and projects carry out. There is always a relationship with the environment and its inhabitants, as well as the responsibility to explain what is going to be proposed. “When contemporary art calls for attention to be paid to the process, and not only to the result, it is for this reason. **The process gives greater legitimacy to the results, how it opens up decision-making or how it presents the exercise of devolution to the community to debate. Art is a place for experimentation and for the exploration of devices with which to widen the possibility of listening.** Mediation in the process is key, hence the importance of providing it with financial resources and giving it the time it requires”¹.

The art sociologist Janet Wolff argues in her book *The Social Production of Art* that it is a mistake to consider artistic practice as something totally different from any other human activity and that, to a certain extent, all the arts are collective (although there are differences between art forms) because they involve levels of cooperation and social mediation between conception and reception (Wolff, 1998: 15-16). I find this proposal interesting as a

starting point within the context of artistic mediation, to highlight the importance of collective processes that connect artists and inhabitants of a territory. Also to break with the idea of art as an element of distinction and power and of the artist as a special or distinguished person.

Rural citizen laboratories:

In this sense, in order to involve the inhabitants of a territory in cultural and creative processes, it is important to make the exercise of combining, on the one hand, a contact with what is happening and the material conditions of life themselves and, on the other hand, inventing possible imaginaries for what we call new ruralities, which can help us to reflect on some of the issues that affect rural inhabitants.

Culture, understood in its broadest sense (as a social link, practice, dialogue of knowledge, heritage, as a tool for improving people's lives) is the way to weave networks of mutual support among rural inhabitants and to respond to many of their needs and the structural problems they suffer.

A good way to do this is through **participatory processes** that culture can promote thanks to the methodologies of rural citizen laboratories. It is very interesting to see the type of spaces where all kinds of cultural agents can converge, in this sense, in the mapping of agents carried out by David Prieto as a multilevel system (Prieto, 2020: 294), where the diversity of cultural agents participating in projects in rural areas is represented. On the other hand, the notions of sustainable rural



LA ORTIGA COLECTIVA.
Rural Experimenta II, 2020.

development from an integral perspective are also interesting: "Sustainable development implies the capacity to integrate different logics: those linked to the territory (ecosystems), to local communities and to economic processes. Culture brings precisely this transversal capacity for integration: it crosses, weaves, pollinates, unites, dynamises, feeds back..."².

Why not highlight the importance of culture and cultural heritage as a link? Could it help to facilitate mediation in rural areas? This vision of heritage as a link has been reflected in different international texts, mainly since the 2005 *Faro Convention*³, where the emphasis was placed on the so-called heritage communities and the potential of heritage to generate identity links with people. This "European" vision of heritage emphasises the multidimensionality of all assets, to the extent that it explains that "heritage has multiple dimensions: cultural, physical, digital, environmental, human and social"⁴.

From this community approach, heritage makes sense to the extent that different communities symbolically appropriate it and are active in its conservation, management and enjoyment. In this way, it is the closest heritage with which the most powerful links can be established, and on which direct and sustainable action can be taken.

Heritage would then be the set of common, tangible, intangible and relational assets that form part, not only of our past, but that build our daily lives, involve us as people and as a community, and therefore we should have more ways of making visible how we participate in it or from it.

1 The complete article can be consulted here: "Cómo legitimizar el proceso de participación creativa" <<https://concomitentes.org/diario/legitimizar-proceso-de-creacion-participativa/concom:legado-cuidado>>

2 Conclusions I Foro Cultura y Ruralidades del Ministerio de Cultura in <<https://culturayciudadania.culturaydeporte.gob.es/dam/jcr:ca30ac69-734a-47e5-b867-b07c7c9a343c/Conclusiones%20I%20Foro.pdf>>

3 European Council. (2005). Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. 27 October 2005.

4 Available at <https://es.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/iucd_manual_metodologico_1.pdf>

5 Available at <<https://reds-sdsn.es/publicacion-hacia-una-cultura-sostenible-guia-practica-para-integrar-la-agenda-2030-en-el-sector-cultural>>

Post-pandemic scenarios:

Many cultural practices and scenarios are currently being (re)thought from a perspective that takes into account the social, economic and health effects of the pandemic. To summarise some of the common consequences of the pandemic on the projects, we could talk about a greater dispersion of the people involved in the projects, from the need to reinvent and readapt their work activity to the economic bumps, the time dedicated to care, as well as moments of personal and group reflection. The pandemic has created very different scenarios in cultural projects, but there are many similar consequences. Small collectives (many of them, moreover, from the world of self-management) resist better because the basis of their project is not entrepreneurial, that is to say, the fundamental part of their existence is not based on the economic, but on a network (participated by more or less people) of community resilience that is always present. Here are some shared reflections on post-pandemic scenarios:

Reflect on community resilience: on the importance of the local associative fabric, of **km 0 culture**, (understood not from a localist perspective, but from the strengthening of local cultural spaces and agents). **Seek alliances** with other projects that are working along common lines. Sometimes simply living together with people who have a way of being in the world with which we connect.

Networks of mutual support/cultural cooperativism: networks that I recognise in everything related to food production processes and that I have always missed in certain cultural environments. Working to promote cultural cooperativism from a cultural and social point of view, but also from an economic and budgetary point of view, would allow for **better working conditions**.

Contribute to generating spaces and times to enliven the rural environment through culture, to think together (reading groups, meetings, research, conversations, walks...) **to think about uncertainty in a collective way**. Culture does not only come from the so-called cultural industry, there are other organisations that are working for culture and deserve to be heard and recognised as main actors in the cultural sphere.

In rural areas, it is time to work in municipal contexts, **to relocate culture**, to develop a global perspective and to manage the spaces and common goods that are so important to preserve access to culture and to enjoy culture as a right.

I think that these reflections could be summarised in **the importance of inhabiting**, understood in a social, cultural, ecological and political sense. **To become aware that the map is not the territory, that it is necessary to think from the concrete, integrating the diversity of contexts and from there to see what possibilities we have to weave networks of community culture. Facilitate models of co-governance that are the ferment for continuing sowing critical cultures. The rural environment is a possible scenario for thinking about imaginaries of a sustainable future, but not without citizen participation in politics, understood in the sense of people's involvement in the processes of everyday life that affect them and over which they should be able to decide. There is no sense in a gentrifying future where speculation on territories turns into a landscape emptied of life.**

Some reflections on methodology and how we measure things

The methodology used in this research is qualitative, based on a series of techniques detailed below:

- Examination of secondary sources on cultural projects and spaces in rural areas in order to map existing ones.
- Online consultation and ethnographic analysis of websites, blogs, social networks, media news about the spaces and projects to be studied.
- Online interviews with the people responsible for the spaces and projects to be studied and the officers of the selected cultural institutions.
- Final online meeting in the form of a discussion group between representatives of the spaces and technicians from cultural institutions.

Quantitative and qualitative

From my point of view, it is interesting to bear in mind that cultural projects carried out in rural areas must be conceived as medium and long-term proposals, i.e. strategies conceived and designed

to be able to work in depth with the communities for a period of time that allows the projects to coexist, to establish processes, to favour the continuity of the proposals and to weave networks of collaboration.

For this reason, a purely quantitative vision is not the most appropriate in areas where we work with small populations and where depopulation is a prevailing reality. Culture is not a product whose exchange value is only economic, but rather culture is the means, the link, the power to generate networks and relationships between people and groups that favour many other processes related to the well-being of the inhabitants of a territory.

Quantitative information can provide us with a lot of information on demographic characteristics, for example, but it cannot (should not) be used to continuously analyse the success of a proposal by measuring the audience. Any of these figures, without putting them in context, would lead us to simple conclusions that tend to turn complex problems into a race to have the highest number of audiences, impacts or participants.

For all of the above reasons, I prefer to work on **qualitative values** that allow us to go deeper into the quality of the initiatives, their ethics with the inhabitants of their territories and the appropriate accompaniment during the activities, workshops and interventions. It is true that both are complementary methodologies.

Which indicators to use?

Although it is not the purpose of this article to make an exhaustive study of the theme at hand, there are indicators that can help us to have an overall view and to be able to compare. The so-called "impact measurement" can be based on the *UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators Methodological Handbook*.

Economy-Quantitative: contribution to economic development.

Education-Qualitative: fostering schooling, multiculturalism and creativity.

Governance-Qualitative: participation, transparency and decision making.

Social Participation-Qualitative: assesses the level of trust, spirit of solidarity and cooperation.

Gender Equality-Qualitative: measures the degree to which gender equality is perceived as positive and is supported.

Communication (internet access)-Quantitative: assesses the degree to which the use of digital technologies is democratised.

Heritage - Quantitative: the degree to which each action is committed to protecting and promoting the sustainability of heritage.

Environment - Quantitative: measurement of the ecological footprint of each action.

It would also be interesting to be able to cross-reference these indicators with the *SDGs of the 2030 Agenda*.

What questions can we ask ourselves when thinking about the impact of a project on its environment?

As a preliminary question, we can raise some questions that, as a way of thinking about ideas, can help us to think about how we want to approach the interviews.

Cultural:

What cultural practices are proposed?

Is creativity and enjoyment promoted?

Is there a critical view of the environment?

Are traditional cultural practices combined with more innovative ones?

Social:

Is the social bond strengthened?

Are intergenerational relationships fostered?

Does it recover rural knowledge?

Are activities for adults and children combined?

Is a gender perspective incorporated in the proposals?

Ecological:

Awareness of the environment and its care.

Integration of biodiversity and natural resources in workshops and actions.

Economic:

Are all participants receiving a decent fee for their work?

Is there an approach of economic sustainability in the project?

Is the project self-managed or subsidised?

The battery of questions finally posed is based on those proposed by the research coordination team and those that I consider interesting to add to each specific case as the conversation progresses. I share them here to give you an idea of how the interviews were approached:

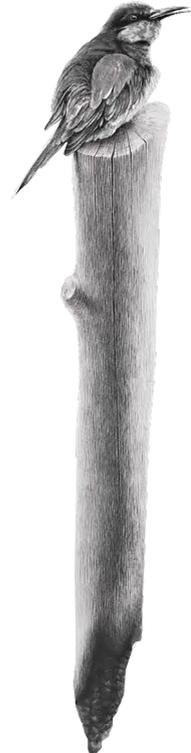
- 1) What is your management model and on what principles of sustainability is your project based?
- 2) What is your relationship with the local environment and what impact does your project have on it?
- 3) Can you summarise your subjective perception of the rural reality you live in?

- 4) What policies from the administration and public entities are carried out to sustain and support your project? How is your relationship with them?
- 5) Traditional sustainable practices of the territory and adaptation to the contemporary context and models of cultural development linked to livestock, agriculture, natural parks... What is their sustainability over time?
- 6) Landscape identity: What are the ecosystemic characteristics of the local geography?
- 7) In what ways is the mediation of your project affected by the health crisis, and what strategies are you adopting to carry out cultural programmes in the current uncertain context?
- 8) Do you network with other projects similar to yours? What role do you think networks of mutual support between cultural initiatives in rural areas play?
- 9) Do you think that the pandemic has brought the rural environment to the forefront when it comes to developing cultural and artistic projects?
- 10) What is the projection of your space/project in the medium-long term?
- 11) What personal, social, professional and other motivations have led you to build this project? What poetic visions, ideals or projects is your project based on?
- 12) What does the territory bring to the project? and to you?
- 13) What is the distance between the initial idea and the evolution of your project? What has influenced this "distance" (theory-praxis), if any?
- 14) Who are you addressing (public, audiences, participants) and how is the glocal articulated in your project?
- 15) What relations have been established with the cultural administrations of the territory and with the administrations of reference throughout the development and existence of the project?
- 16) How does the context influence the programming: made-to-measure productions, globalised conception or a mixture of both?
- 17) How many people are actively involved in the project?

Seeds fly

It is necessary to take some time to reflect on the questions that arise during research processes such as this one on cultural mediation in rural areas. Sharing case studies that can bring us closer to the real problems faced by cultural spaces and projects, and to the needs of the inhabitants of a territory, can help us to ask new questions from the perspective of culture. Research is a key element to connect our capacity for astonishment with the transmission of information and experiences, and if, in addition, it is done in collective studies, it can contribute to providing diverse views and perspectives, as scientific studies are often not transversal and it is very difficult for them to be permeable and transdisciplinary.

If I had to think of this research process as a simple piece in a larger puzzle, I would take up the idea of critical culture as a starting point, the imaginaries of the new ruralities as references for thinking about the trans, the hybrid spaces, this inhabiting of the border that I have referred to throughout the text. I would also ask myself many questions about citizen participation in cultural processes, especially those linked to heritage. There will always be more (and better) readings for this unfinished journey, other ideas, other practices, other memories, other critiques, other landscapes, other humus that encourage sowing. Fortunately, seeds fly.



Footnotes

These footnotes are a series of annotations that I recover here as loose ideas on which to invite reflection on concepts, actions and processes related to the research work developed and the issues that occupy it (ruralities, culture, territory, imaginaries). I have already described some of the ideas that can serve as a link between the frictions generated in the debate on the new ruralities, such as the idea of itinerancy/transhumance, glocal imaginaries, social innovation, trans thought, ecofeminism, the everyday or the arts as an element of estrangement and collective reflection. (Montesino, 2019: 6-8)

New technologies

Another prevailing discourse is that of internet access. Having a good connection to the net can be a means, a tool that facilitates certain types of work, that allows us to be more connected to other places or to be able to telework. I don't think it should be used as a one-size-fits-all solution, as if having fibre optic will solve all problems. "Smart" stories are here to stay: there is talk of smart rural territories, *smart villages*, where mobile applications are growing like cabbages, often focused exclusively on tourists who can consult routes, learn about local heritage or find out which is the best restaurant in the valley. Why not work with the local population on their own demands to put this technology at their service? Promoting technological sovereignty, reducing the intergenerational digital divide and reflecting on the myths that accompany wifi as a solution to all ills would not be a bad start. Perhaps a technology that is not emancipatory does not make much sense.

Translating

The importance of translating. That is, of expressing in a different way something that has already been explained, with other languages:

- Understanding communication not only as a function, but as enjoyment.
- Facilitating spaces and times for communication and sharing of knowledge and experiences.
- Thinking of actions that help us to provoke estrangement, reflection, creative processes.
- Extrapolating and sharing our experience with other territories and social actors.

Entrepreneurship

It is very common to see entrepreneurship spaces in rural areas in recent times (all kinds of workshops and start ups, coworking, courses...) and to hear talk of the entrepreneur as a kind of courageous person who forges himself in search of new opportunities. Why not analyse in depth the causes of the lack of employment in the villages and provide spaces to think about it (and about other possible economies) and look for medium and long term solutions?

Territories When talking about territories, it is interesting to think about what kind of territories we are talking about: do we mean physical, mental, symbolic territories?

- Who inhabits the territory? People, animals...
- What are the relationships between the different actors?
- What processes run through them? Cultural, identity, economic...
- And what narratives? New ruralities, depopulation, climate crisis, tradition, tourism, utopia?

Food

Rural Depopulation

Food and its processes have a lot to do with the rural environment as a container, space, imaginary and scenario of their demands and struggles. "Understanding cultures from an anthropological point of view, of the processes they go through, their relational, creative and innovative capacity, will probably help to move away from models based on an active-expert-academic-institutional subject that defines what is valid and what is not, to broaden the spaces of action towards apparently less cultural areas such as food or health, for example. Producing food is already a cultural fact". (Montesino, 2020: 92).



Sustainability

We know that capitalism is a movement that quickly swallows up criticism, now it is fashionable to "go green" and all related narratives (from advertising to culture). In recent times, it is very common to see how in many discourses all types of desires and illusions are projected onto what we call nature, but they tend to be stories that are empty of meaning, as if "the natural" could not be questioned. The problems of ecology (of inhabiting an ecosystem) should be dealt with from a political perspective, with all the complexity that this implies, taking into account a wide variety of sides and frictions. It is nothing new to discover low-intensity versions of green politics, the ecological transition or the green new deal. Nothing is really changing, only the narrative of big business, which now sees the rural environment as a territory to be explored in some cases (wind farms for example) and already explored and exploited in others, as is the case with landfills, macro-farms or the construction of industrial estates that are later not used.

It is curious to do the exercise of thinking, for example, about the different stages of production of a food (let us imagine meat) and the discourses that can be associated with each of them, since it is there, in the small print, in what is associated, in the debates it suggests or the imaginaries to which it alludes, where we can find many clues and keys to analyse a topic.

- Production: the importance of land, farms, communal land, pastures, mountains, forests, animals...).
- *Word map and narratives: ownership, identity, sustainability, pollution, wild/domestic, community, nature, extensive, intensive, ecological...

- Transformation: slaughterhouse, cutting plant or packaging plant. *Word map and narratives: animal welfare, ethics, zero waste, cutting down on middlemen, artisan, industrial...

- Distribution/marketing: refrigerated transport, end consumers, shops, consumer groups. *Food sovereignty, fair prices, km 0 trade, cooperativism...

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RECIPES



Camprovinarte

Camprovín, La Rioja.
<https://camprovin.com/>

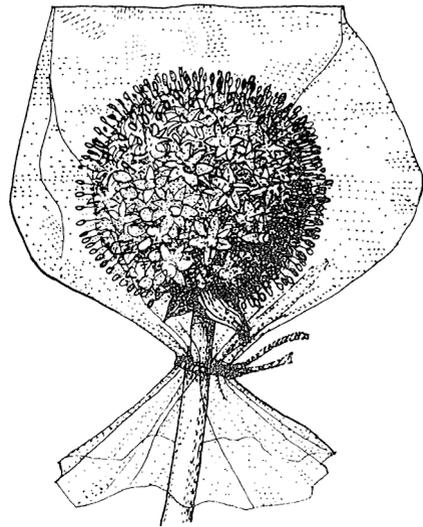
COOKING TIME: Since 2017

INGREDIENTS: Once a year, this art festival hosts artists who create permanent murals and live together with the inhabitants of this village of 170 inhabitants in La Rioja.

UTENSILS: The *Camprovinarte Festival* is a municipal project of the Camprovin Town Council, related to other cultural proposals that aim to stop rural depopulation in this area. They have a local radio station, "Radio Abubilla", to talk about the villages, culture and art. They organise artistic routes through the territory, have a coworking space and hope to open the doors of an Ecomuseum this spring.

The project has received sponsors and subsidies from the regional government in recent years.

DINERS: All types of audiences.



Ur Mara Museoa

Alkitza, Guipúzcoa
<https://www.urmara.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2008.

INGREDIENTS: Non-profit cultural association in charge of managing *Ur Mara Museoa* with the sculptor Koldobika Jauregi and the artist Elena Cajaravilla at the helm.

UTENSILS: *Ur Mara* is an author's museum that not only houses the work of sculptor Koldobika Jauregi, but has developed as an extension of his concerns: ecology, ethnography, nature, philosophy and poetry. Managed by the Ur Mara Cultural Association, they have created a platform for education, knowledge and dialogue that favours experimentation and freedom in the rural environment.

Ur Mara is a sounding board for the diversity of artistic languages and their different processes. The main rooms of the Ur Mara museum are an indigenous forest: among beech, oak, chestnut and birch trees there are sculptures and installations, a natural auditorium and also ethnographic traces such as an old lime kiln located next to the small limestone quarry. The activities are self-managed, although on occasions they may collaborate with other institutions.

DINERS: Depending on the project, there is a diversity of audiences in its activities (concerts, recitals, etc.), with specific workshops and school visits.

El Hacedor

La Aldea de Portillo, Burgos.
<https://imágenesypalabras.com/es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 1999

INGREDIENTS: The Collective Workshop and Cultural Centre "El Hacedor" in La Aldea del Portillo de Busto is the headquarters of *Imágenes y Palabras*, an association that was founded in 1999, whose main objective is to diversify cultural life in rural areas, to organise a continuous activity related to arts and culture, in villages of the region and in cities of the province of Burgos.

UTENSILS: In addition to extensive workshops for artistic production, there is an art gallery, a small library and a house where you can stay. In the workshops, artists from different backgrounds can produce works and exchange experiences. The gallery is an open place for exhibitions of any artistic discipline and for film presentations, theatre plays, poetry recitals, music concerts, dance, to give talks, to present books and any other activity that fits in with the objectives of *Imágenes y Palabras*. It is a self-managed project.

DINERS: All audiences, depending on the activities.

Azala

Lasierra, Álava.
<https://www.azala.eu/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2008.

INGREDIENTS: A creative space that combines its cultural project with accommodation and workshops for artists.

UTENSILS: This collective carries out cultural and artistic activities in rural areas. *Azala* is a space for artistic practice and cultural creation, as well as for group stays that require time and a place to work in contact with nature. Some of its proposals such as *Borradores de Futuro*, *Micorrizas* or the Residencials (creation, writing...) are part of the diversity of cultural activities that arise from *Azala*. This collective has the support of various local, regional, national or international institutions, depending on the project to be developed.

DINERS: All types of audiences, depending on the project (creative space or rural accommodation).

Nexo990

Monzón de Campos, Palencia.
<https://nexodos.art/espacio-n990/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: *Nexo990* is a space for contemporary creation managed by the *Néxodos* collective in collaboration with the City Council.

UTENSILS: *Nexo990* has an exhibition space with proposals throughout the year, escaping from the logic of the event and the festival. The proposals are designed by the contemporary creation collective *Néxodos*, which focuses on the development of projects linked to peripheral territories, the enhancement of alternative spaces and the promotion of new formats for citizen participation. Its proposals are oriented towards the regional sphere, not exclusively local. All the projects are well thought out, with a pedagogical approach and commitment. They organise themselves through an assembly to decide on the projects to be developed.

DINERS: All types of audiences, depending on the activity. They organise workshops and guided tours (also for schools in the area).

Nacho Zubelzu

Valle de Campoo. Cantabria.
<https://www.nachozubelzu.es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2000.

INGREDIENTS: Artist whose works and performances are closely linked to the connection between human and non-human animals, nature and the rural world.

UTENSILS: Nacho Zubelzu's life is shaped by his passion for art and nature, which stems from his fascination with the environment of the Campoo Valley in Cantabria, Spain. He draws on his own experiences in the mountains of Campoo to internalise the beauty of the natural elements and capture them plastically in paintings, photographs, sculptures, large-scale installations, performances and small illustrations. The artist has never drawn a dividing line between painting and sculpture, and uses them in a complementary way, with repetition and variation generated by sequences in which an analysis of ideas, sensations and feelings is addressed.

In recent years his travels to African countries (Kenya and Gambia) and Asian countries (China and Mongolia), or to places of overwhelming nature, such as the Atacama Desert in Chile or the Andes, have inspired his most recent work, in which he captures the profile and the trace, the essence of nature and of human beings.

DINERS: All kinds of audiences, from those who visit the exhibitions in the gallery to the inhabitants of the territory where he performs or produces some of his works.

Mutur Beltz

Karrantza, Bizkaia
<https://muturbeltz.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: Mutur Beltz is an agro-ecological, artistic and cultural association to promote the Carranzana sheep, a breed in danger of extinction, in the same way as the shepherd's trade itself.

UTENSILS: This local initiative from the Carranza Valley in Vizcaya tries to respond to the loss of farmers' knowledge through agroecology, artistic practice and design. They work on the production of milk, meat, wool and culture.

Laurita and Joseba help to continue weaving wool and also collaborative networks with other inhabitants of the territory. Both understand this project as a way of being in the world, where culture has many legs that cross local contexts and practices. They organise the Buen Vivir artistic residencies, produce a publication that compiles their activity and practice cultural mediation from an integral vision that links culture with heritage, landscape, people and animals. They incorporate gastronomy and sociability as living and cohesive cultural elements, accompanying the meetings with gastronomic days based on sheep, in which local shepherds and cooks are involved.

Mutur Beltz has the support of different provincial administrations in the field of culture.

DINERS: Diverse audiences, from people from the art world who come to the meetings to the inhabitants of the territory.

La Ortiga Colectiva

Fresno del Río, Cantabria
<https://laortigacolectiva.net/>

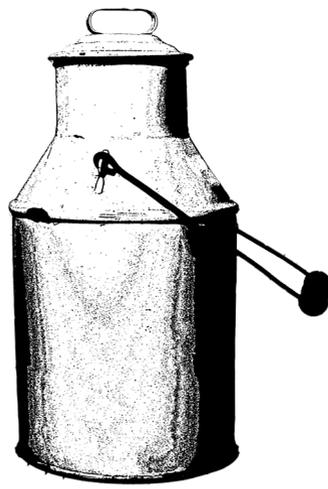
COOKING TIME: Since 1999.

INGREDIENTS: Cultural Association that defends citizen participation in cultural initiatives. The basis of its project is to contribute to the generation of collaborative cultural networks from a critical point of view.

UTENSILS: *La Ortiga Colectiva* focuses its activity on publishing the art, literature and thought magazine *La Ortiga* (which appeared in 1996), as well as organising citizen laboratories, meetings, itinerant workshops and training in the fields of social sciences, arts and agroecology. *La Ortiga* organises its proposals through what they call imaginaries (ecology, arts, feminism, literature, food, thought), i.e. areas of interest from which to propose activities and working groups for each of them. *La Ortiga* has had a rural base since 2005 in a small village in the Campoo valley, in the high mountains of southern Cantabria. Between 2005 and 2015 they had a gastronomic-cultural space "La Casa de Fresno" where, apart from being able to enjoy dishes made with market and seasonal products, 4 collections of magazines and some books related to gastronomy and culture were published.

The collective has institutional support for certain projects, although most of its activity is self-managed.

DINERS: All types of audiences.



Arte contra el olvido

Boadilla de Rioseco, Palencia.
<https://boadilladeriosecoarte.wordpress.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2011.

INGREDIENTS: *Arte contra el Olvido* is a project in Boadilla de Rioseco (Palencia) where the brothers Javier and Juan Carlos Melero have turned the streets of the village into an open-air art gallery.

UTENSILS: This project is closely linked to the memory that is being lost in the villages, it is also a project to combat depopulation, which can attract visitors to the territory. To draw attention through this open-air art gallery, where rain and sun affect the works, where art is also a space of mediation between the urban and the rural.

The project is self-managed by the Melero brothers who, although they live outside the village, have a deep involvement with the territory since their childhood. They organise a prize together with other collectives, in order to have contact with people from outside the village. They have twinned with other villages through a work of art, which they give to each village so that they can exhibit it.

DINERS: It is a heterogeneous public. There are people who like art and know about it, others come across the works directly, others on the internet and from there they want to come and see it.



Enverarte

Abalos, La Rioja.
<https://www.facebook.com/ENVERARTEAbalos/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: Yearly proposal of artistic interventions in the public space of Abalos, contextualised within an *Open Doors Day*.

UTENSILS: *Enverarte* is a participatory event coordinated by the artist Maite Centol and organised by the *Women's Association of Abalos* in direct collaboration with some of the town's wineries. This project seeks to link art, the processes surrounding wine production and intervention in public spaces. Its imagery is built on the defence of public, relational art, where artists are active agents with the capacity to generate events from a non-elitist vision of art.

Enverarte facilitates dialogue with the people, with the inhabitants, sometimes working in spaces provided by neighbours, where local wineries also collaborate, it is important that the environment participates and feels appealed to. There is an active listening that pays attention to what interests the inhabitants of the territory, in order to integrate relevant themes or issues with the environment.

DINERS: A heterogeneous public, with the participation of the inhabitants of the village and of people who come specifically to the open days from other parts of the territory.

Universidad Rural del Cerrato

Tabanera del Cerrato, Palencia.
<https://universidad-rural-paulofreiredelcerrato.wordpress.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2010.

INGREDIENTS: *The Rural University of Cerrato* is one of the nine *Paulo Freire Universities* to train and accompany people who want to return to the countryside and recover rural knowledge.

UTENSILS: The project aims to recognise and value nature, the landscape and the wisdom of the culture of the people of the countryside, to keep villages alive and transform society through art and education.

They develop workshops and training related to rural knowledge, agroecology, as well as meetings, all as a way of being in the world, from a critical conscience and a sovereignty of time and joy. The project serves as a bridge for people who want to go to live in the village and also to dynamise the territory through culture and art. The collective is made up of 15 people who have come to live in the village over the last 7 years. The activities are proposed collectively, and when proposing activities, they normally take advantage of the internal demands (of the people who have come to live in the village) in order to offer them training and leisure. They work in a network to share knowledge and accompany people and processes, with some more occasional collaborations with other groups or projects.

DINERS: Participation is irregular because they organise many activities for people from outside, seeking to ensure that there is a flow of people and proposals. Heterogeneous public, where the participation of women is much higher within the local population.

Maria Montesino

Degree in Sociology from the University of the Basque Country. Agroecological producer in cattle ranch *La Lejuca*. She is part of **La Ortiga Colectiva** where she edits the magazine of art, literature and thought. She has developed her activity in rural areas since 2005 through itinerant workshops, editions and meetings. Her cultural production focuses on agroecology, feminism and social anthropology. She is currently doing her doctoral thesis on new ruralities, culture and food sovereignty.

<https://laortigacolectiva.net/>



TXAPELMUXU, Mutur Beltz.

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NORTH-EASTERN AREA



north-eastern area

Huesca

Lleida

Navarra

Zaragoza

Soria

NORTH-EASTERN AREA



The majestic greenery of mountains and
in the moors, diamonds in the rough.

Lucía Camón

They have all gone
and no one has returned
to close the door.
This one, old and broken down,
beats against the wind
in the nights of astonishment
as if no one wanted to hear it,
as if all the wastelands of time
were enclosed here,
on these galleries of cracked houses.
And far away,
beyond the last holm oaks,
someone remembers the bed
where he was conceived with sadness.

José Antonio Labordeta

We are in a land of artists and a cradle of cultures, a land that once belonged to an empire where the sun never set: Aragon, Lleida, Navarre and Soria. Places where Muslims, Jews and Christians have lived side-by-side, places where culture has shone and is palpable in a spectacular heritage that reminds us of who we are.

When I arrive at the moors, an image of the most extreme ascetic in his barrel comes to mind. Don Quixote and Sancho also come to me, and all the freedom of someone who believes in the certainty of desolation and blackness.

Two worlds I visited: the green of the mountains and the yellow of the desert. The circumstances and politics are radically different. I wonder if one place can learn from the other, if the dryness of the fields can be watered with ideas, travels, open-mindedness... I imagine a comforting rain of confidence and care falling gently on unpopulated lands. And also a warm, dry air that reminds to the inhabitants enclosed between mountains of calmness and the horizon.

Methodology

One of the main aspects of the rural world lies precisely in the connection with the land. The landscape that surrounds each of the spaces determines its relationship with the world and the resources available to it. Therefore, based on the landscape and the idiosyncrasy of the territory under investigation, two levels have been established:

The mountains: Huesca, Lleida and Navarra.

The moors: Zaragoza and Soria.

Oversimplifying, the greenery, water, tourism, the proximity to France and the spectacular mountains of the Pyrenees have favoured a stable population and the existence and continued generation of resources. However, in the moorland areas, depopulation has devastated the villages. This extreme circumstance means that resources are much more limited, mind sets are less open and the possibilities for change are much more difficult. Local institutions remain anchored in the past and this is a major handicap for any project that intends to start its course in these areas.

We asked the representatives of each project about their management models, how each of them is sustained and what their links are with the institutions with which they usually interact. We already knew many of these places, as we shared adventures. As part of the research, we had a long, leisurely conversation with some of them over the internet, and with others we had the opportunity to visit them at their homes. Through this humble chronicle we invite you to get to know them.

Participants

As always, behind every project there are people, and there is so much courage and determination behind every initiative! Thanks to the fact that there is someone willing to listen, collaborate and generate joint workspaces where serious and real agreements can be reached, activities can be funded and culture can reach people living in rural areas.

We have interviewed representatives of various cultural projects in rural areas and members of local administrations, as well as personalities related to universities. Each of these projects is nourished - in part - by the relationships that they establish with the officers and politicians to whom we have been directed to carry out this research work:

MANTEL Y MÁS

Ruth Ballano

leads us to: Townhall of Maluenda (Carmen Herrero, Mayor).

ARTMOSFERA

Berta Gascón Larraz and Jorge Ignacio Rodríguez leads us to: County of Los Monegros and Townhall of Robres (Olga Brosed, Mayor and County President).

FESTIVAL DE ESPIELLO

leads us to: County of Sobrarbe (Patricia Español, Cultural Officer).

3 PIEDRAS

Luis Berruete

leads us to: Townhall of Jaca (Jorge Mur, Cultural Officer).

PUEBLOS EN ARTE

Lucía Camón

leads us to: Local Development Agency (Maite González, Manager of *Adefo Cinco Villas*).

ESTOESLOQUEHAY

Pablo Pérez Terré

MUESTRA DE CINE DE ASCASO

Miguel Cordero

CAN FARRERA

Lluís Llobet

KANPOKO BULEGOA

Marc Badal and Anne Ibáñez Guridi

LUIS SÁEZ

Chair of depopulation and creator of the *Arraigo* programme.



RURAL TERRITORY, a place for experimentation

In the most unpopulated rural areas, the possibility of change is now beginning to be felt, and perhaps in some quarters, this curiosity can be perceived, this desire to participate, this desire to take ownership of the movement, to be up to date and participate in this new way of doing things that is timidly echoing in the different political circles. Perhaps it was power that moved with its following of artists to the big cities, leaving these vast territories orphaned of creative motors.

In the most depopulated areas, projects and people with ideas are beginning to appear, but the de facto powers look sceptically at these initiatives that shake things up and change things that have been quiet for too long. Let us accept that many villages will die, so we must decisively support all those who are moving forward: inventing rules to facilitate the direct sale of food, recovering our food sovereignty, supporting local markets, art fairs, theatres, artistic residencies and any other initiative that arises in rural areas to settle the population. Make life easier for those who are already working in the territory, for people who invent and carry out work in rural areas.

It is necessary to trust in the people who live in rural areas, to give them wings and generate activity and movement from within. For many years, political solutions have been proposed from outside, with the intention of attracting new population by giving them incentives. This paternalism never works; the people attracted by these "repopulation" programmes come with the intention of having their lives solved just because they live in rural areas, and this leads to nothing, because as soon as the incentives and "special" advantages

end, they leave. The numbers speak for themselves. There have hardly been any success stories in this type of initiative.

However, if we look at places where people have come on their own, wanting to start up and implement ideas, then we do find cases of towns that are increasing in population. Focusing on those who live in rural areas is urgent and necessary. Therefore, supporting existing initiatives to settle and grow the population is the most logical solution.

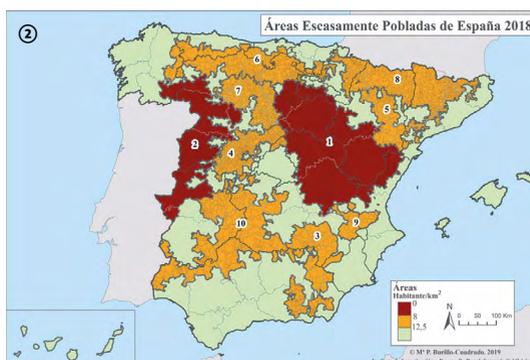
Perhaps the social reflexion after the recent restrictions and confinements has given a push to many people to take the step to think of the rural as a possible way of life, or at least, to be more aware of all that the rural environment brings to the urban, their interdependence. From these thoughts, some movements are emerging that may be reflected in a slight increase in the rural population. This new population leaving the city in search of quality of life is more aware of the benefits of culture and how necessary it is to keep a community alive and to generate new ideas in the territory to make it a more prosperous place.

Reinventing a new urban-rural balance while respecting the environment is nowadays a matter of survival. Let us not wait for water, food or energy to run out. Let's take back the helm of our villages and put complaints aside. The artistic projects we have approached are people with ideas and the will to carry through measures that adapt to each place and make it grow.

It is important that, just as a Mayor is filled with pride when speaking of a spectacular church, speaks with pride of those new inhabitants, artists or not, who have decided to come to live in the region, to take a chance and pursue something, because that will give prestige, visibility and generate a contagious movement that is capable of attracting more people by itself.

It is true that today more people want to return to the villages, but not just any village or in just any way. It is quite common that in towns where the population is increasing there has been a previous movement, in most cases, and this is not a coincidence, a movement related in some way to culture or ecology.

There is a big difference between the projects located in the Pyrenees, sheltered by those majestic mountains, and the projects located in the unpopulated wastelands of the lands of Zaragoza or Soria. The Pyrenees mountains, their tourism and their proximity to France have forged a more open and permeable territory, with policies that are closer to cultural projects. Especially in Catalonia and Navarre, investment and support for culture in ru-



① Map of the study area (yellow: north-eastern area).

② Map of sparsely populated areas in Spain, 2018. I+D+i Project: HAR 2015-68032-P. /IGN. INE.

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ral areas has been a constant feature of the territory, which is less depopulated than its Aragonese neighbours. Of course, there are a series of circumstances that converge, but looking at the map of the study area I am responsible for investigating, and the map showing the most depopulated areas of Spain, I could safely say that, at least in the north-east, the greater the investment in culture, the less depopulation we find.

In the Pyrenees we find long-standing and well-established projects that have received support from the administrations. We know cultural officers who work from the administration to help and work hand in hand with these private initiative projects without entering into any kind of conflict. However, in the wastelands, the silence of the administrations and the indifference of local politicians has been the norm; little by little, some courageous people from the administrations are standing out and unhesitatingly supporting these initiatives, forming part of the new projects proposed. Suddenly it happens that an officer, a mayor, a councillor or a city council as a whole is open to move, to look for alternatives and to reach agreements. This openness gets things moving.

It takes time, attention and patience to be able to work in these depopulated territories. Even so, we have known several cases in which precisely the municipality where the cultural project is located has its doors completely closed, but in the neighbouring municipalities they are happy to work with all the activities that these projects can offer. This strange situation makes us think about the insecurity of the institutions when it comes to trusting in something new, in what comes from outside as a possibility, in the action of culture as an added value to the territory itself and not as a competition.



RURAL CULTURE

Regardless of the amalgam of situations and bureaucratic problems, projects work, culture reaches the people and horizons broaden.

For example, we have been able to get to know a film project that has been running for more than 20 years in Boltaña (Festival de Espiello) and which has helped to make this municipality what it is thanks to the open-mindedness and to the spaces for discussion that film makes possible.

Likewise, in a tiny village (Ascaso), another small film festival has been able to revive the dream that this village is not finished forever. Both projects are supported by the administrations and have a long history.

Consistently, with funds and hard work, the villages and the culture of a territory have been able to grow, providing a place with established identities that go beyond agricultural activities, and that can be a springboard for strengthening other pillars of rural development.

Culture always arrives and, if it cannot be through a cultural project, it can be transformed into, for example, a restaurant that through the senses and flavours, makes you value the place where you live and in this way, the aspiration of those people, that passion that guided them (to give value to that landscape, to those orchards and to those people) reaches the public in a more subtle way - although no less effective - through gastronomy, in this case.

To mix, to be, to grow, to exist, to live in community... all these projects bring us together around culture in one way or another. Thanks to all of them for making this territory a better place.

LOCAL RELATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MODELS

At this point I will borrow the words of each one of them. The specific problems, the people, the phrases and the real and imaginary obstacles that both project leaders and local authorities have transmitted to me.

Perhaps deep down they all want the same thing: to reach an agreement, to make things happen, to live and have fun together. Often, solutions are found by sitting down and talking, communication is always the key. With the cost to fix a street in a village of 100 inhabitants, an artistic project can carry out many activities. In rural areas, it is perhaps more necessary nowadays not to fix the street and to get together more often.

When institutions use resources to support the culture that is generated in their territory, backing those people who have decided to dedicate their lives to this so needed immaterial good, joy is felt in the streets. Professionalising the management of culture in rural areas is everyone's task. Let's get to work!

The projects

I started with what was close at hand: one sunny morning I travelled a few kilometres to visit a neighbouring project that I knew no longer existed. I knew of its miniature nature, its fragility, which is why I chose it. In the pretty village of Maluenda we met Ruth, the artist behind **Mantel y Más**, a small project with soul and thought. Together with her partner, they showed me the site, deteriorated by the passage of the last frosts, the weather and binge drinking gatherings. They explained to me that, at the moment, it no longer has continuity due to the hard work that involved and the little time they have available.

The enthusiasm in her words as she recounted everything that took place thanks to the site that was once the parish house, what happened there, set the whole community in motion to transform that site into a delicate place to be: the women made moulds to make sculptures, the children created fish that swam in this dry and clayey environment, the young people planted aromatic herbs... There are several artistic interventions on the site, mostly sculptures.

**There are no more storms able
to wake up the snails,
there is no more trust in the hearts.
There are no more than a handful
of tongues inventing words
for the delirium of their confinements.
The little storms sweep away
the big dreams and the world is turned
upside down after the summer.
A thousand good things happened
in the village and I almost
didn't notice.**

Lucía Camón



The site of MANTEL Y MÁAS,
Maluenda.

Later, a sensitive artist, she shows me the paintings of her mother, a painter who worked from home and a teacher of painting in the region for several years.

That place full of art was left open, free, young people made it their own. Then the pandemic came and everything stopped. I ask her if she wants to reactivate the project and, from the bottom of her eyes, a smile, a possibility...

The mayoress of Maluenda, Carmen Herrero, tells me that it was beautiful, that she managed to unite people, that neighbours of all ages came together with a common goal: to recover together a space for the community. They transformed the site into a living space. Afterwards, the town council, on its own, regenerated more corners of the village. Ruth could now consider reactivating the artistic project and making it grow. However, the mayoress explains to me that there is no longer any possibility to freely make agreements with the projects that are of interest, neither on the part of the Diputaciones, nor on the part of the Comarca, nor on the part of any public institution (although agreements legally exist and are made in some cases). She also explains that contracting is becoming more and more complicated and that nobody wants to pay anything for a cultural activity, that everybody is used to everything being free and that this "cannot be". She has been mayor for many years and sees no future in culture.

After talking to her, I have the sad feeling that Ruth will not be able to continue, that her creative force will perhaps be sheltered in the walls of a private house, like her mother's work. That tur-

ning ruins into living spaces is not a priority in the world we live in.

And I ask myself, how can it be that a person capable of such magic cannot be funded by the town council of this dying town, by the region of these moors that are losing more and more of their population every day without any remedy? The wick of that plot of land ignited in the village, the wave of fresh air was felt. The teenagers have felt that place as their own and it has been their meeting point and also, logically, a place for binge drinking.

Then it was Soria's turn, the small and beautiful village of Arbujuelo that is home to the **La Noguera** project. Lucía, Raquel and Luna set up - with great tenacity and effort - a rural development project that included an educational, artistic and environmental part. When I met Lucía, I was very surprised by the current situation of the project: I had heard a lot about what these girls could do, about what they did, about their activities of all kinds, tireless, cultivating, communicating, doing... She tells me that all this was not really catching on, new users were not coming and they were not able to make a living from it. The town council did not support them, and even nowadays, the relations with the administration are non-existent. Arbujuelo has 10 inhabitants and is about to die, a group of young people come with new ideas and the town council is not able to support them or help them, but rather the opposite; death stalks these territories from within. They tell us that they had better response in the city of Soria and other neighbouring town councils. Likewise,



→ Lucía, Raquel and Luna from *La Noguera*
(Agricropultural Cooperative of Social Initiative)

they speak of endless proposals launched to the Diputación and going to waste, too much effort and no continuity, no support, deaf ears. Now they only maintain education projects with Europe and, unbelievably, have no relationship with the administrations of their territory.

How is it possible that a group of young people with training and good ideas who go to live in a town that is about to disappear receive no support from our administrations, neither local, nor provincial, nor autonomous, nor state wide? What are their priorities? Shouldn't they also be ours? What is going on?

Even so, life goes on. For these three women, believing in the vegetable garden as a way of life and the possibility of acquiring a space in Medinaceli (a nearby and more touristic town) encouraged them to think about opening a restaurant where they would serve their own products. They trained, learned and opened a hotel-restaurant with organic products. The pandemic forced them to close down and they struggled. Now, finally, this summer they are back in business with enthusiasm.

They have left behind the artistic and cultural projects. They still live in Arbujuelo, but now through this more conventional business, three people can live with a decent salary and use the hustle and bustle of people as a loudspeaker for their motivations, giving value to the micro scale, to the territory, to local products and bringing their philosophy to the table with care and affection.

The ideals and militancy of the early years have shifted towards a more transformative subtlety through a traditional business, as well as achieving a more sustainable way of life for them. *La Cerámica* is a reality, an old pottery workshop

converted into a restaurant and managed by Luna, Raquel and Lucía. It is beautiful to see the transformative capacity of courageous people. Even so, I can't help but wonder if this territory would not really need more a rural development centre dedicated to education and culture.

Near these two places, at the foot of the Sierra de Armantes and very close to Calatayud, is **Pueblos en Arte**, which began to be drawn up ten years ago and was founded in 2014. Back then there was no artistic residency in Zaragoza. The ideas they wanted to carry out sounded strange and local entities were not involved. Ten years later, with many projects underway and already established as a national reference, they have increased the number of municipalities with which they collaborate and carry out cultural activities to reactivate the territory, but there is still a resistance to new ideas that causes the region to languish and lose population year after year. Maintaining the status quo, whatever the cost, seems to be the priority in some places. However, it is the strength of citizens and community initiatives that are bringing the place out of their lethargy.

They programme activities of all kinds: performing arts, cinema and above all community culture. They also offer advice to people who want to come and live in the area. And for artists, they offer spaces and artistic residencies to work or rest.

Pueblos en Arte is funded mainly through public grants for projects, thanks to an exhausting rhythm and many hours of voluntary work by the five members who make up this association. They are also considering new forms of sponsorship and private investment that could broaden their horizons in order to achieve staff stability.

How can it be that a platform that is a reference in this country as a project of innovation in art

and depopulation, that has a constant presence in the media and is an example for many other people when considering leaving the cities, cannot have permanent staff? Are we in a country where success stories in rural areas are also precarious? Re-reading research articles, the following paragraph appears in a study by a university, for which this project was an example to be investigated. The phrase belongs to one of the founding partners of the project: "In the end art is like the possibility of another world. In any of its forms it is like an imaginary world. I'm also interested in the real world, but I'm interested in not losing sight of that imaginary world. I imagine a world in which a project like Pueblos en Arte can exist. You need to believe in it, it's not a mapped out path, so I want to believe in *Pueblos en Arte* and die trying". Ana Bettschen, artist and founding partner of *Pueblos en Arte*.

Pueblos en Arte suggests interviewing **Maite González**, president of the local action group in the neighbouring region of Cinco Villas, given her involvement in culture, and also to lend value and visibility to the profound development work that these local action groups carry out in the places they manage. This work is mainly based on field work and their own knowledge of local resources and their potential. The association has collaborated both with the local action group of the region where the project is located (ADRI Calatayud Aranda) with initiatives aimed at agro-ecology, promoting local products and the environmental dimension, and with ADRI *Cinco Villas*, with initiatives aimed at the socio-cultural development of the area. Through both collaborations, is emerging a need to involve the business community in the cultural requirements of the region, focusing on promoting the engagement of young people and the economic growth of the territory. The challenge of how to make culture a regular tool at the service of entrepreneurs and institutions also arises. In the conversation with Maite, apart from the need to use culture as a transversal development tool, both in the education sector and in immigration or social initiatives for young and elderly people.

From the institutions, it would be a good idea to carry out continuous programmes over time that include professional cultural initiatives aimed at specific objectives that favour development. The possibility of presenting subsidies for entrepreneurship was also raised, and also applying the so-called "rural tickets" to entrepreneurs of cultural projects, a grant that would come from Europe

and that would facilitate the start-up of many projects. It could be called "cultural ticket".

It would be interesting if the different sectors of rural society see these investments in culture as relevant, that they feel their values and that people can recognise their advantages from their own experience. Even if entrepreneurs support it, not only for the positive impact of sponsorship as a social good, but also as an indication of the economic growth of the place and its reputation, creating a local development that includes the improvement of the creative capacity of people and their well-being.

A few kilometres from Zaragoza in the direction of Huesca, in the heart of the Monegros region, we come across the huge **Artmosfera** house, a place dedicated to welcoming artists, self-managed by Berta and Nacho, also circus artists and managers.

The house is located between four villages: Frula, Montesusin, Robres and Grañén, a coincidence that has given them certain freedom to work with any of them. They carry out projects in the nearby villages as well as organising activities in their house. They have set up several spaces and have planted vegetable gardens; the house is powered by solar energy and is rented by this cultural association. It is arousing more and more interest among the inhabitants of the region. After five years of work, they have sown seeds that are being harvested, creating audiences and generating collaborative synergies. It started a short time ago and, thanks to the great energy that the two of them have, to a life without luxuries and to the support and collaboration of some politicians in their region, they are managing to move forward. They did not receive any public aid to set it up, nor do they have any for the ongoing maintenance. Everything was created with their own resources at the beginning. Now they work with local councils, apply for some public aid and sometimes receive volunteers from European projects. This project and the shows they put on is what allows them to continue to invest in improving the facilities. They hope that at some point there will be a continuous public investment that will help to support the maintenance costs of Artmosfera, as is already the case in other autonomous communities.

They tell us about their relationship with **Olga, mayoress of Grañén** and vice-president of the Comarca de Los Monegros. Together, they have initiated projects and lines of work that they conti-

**The challenge:
local development
that includes the
improvement of the
creative capacity of
people.**



Pueblos en Arte: Saltamontes Festival.

“ to include culture in territorial political programmes (...) allow projects to live in the long term and develop over time with ease”.

nue to develop with enthusiasm. She is delighted with this relationship and with the fact that they improve all the ideas she gives them; she likes to support people who live in the territory and who can significantly enrich the place through more professional cultural projects.

They are also promoting through the region the creation of a network of *Rural Women Artists* (MAR) together with the Government of Aragon. Talking to her, we realise how important it is the willingness of politicians to include culture in territorial political programmes. They sit down, talk and reach agreements between various institutions that allow projects to live in the long term and develop over time with ease. In addition to hiring them for specific activities throughout the year to be carried out in the municipality of which she is the mayoress, they have organised a programme of itinerant cultural activity throughout the region with local artists, among them Berta and Nacho. Undoubtedly, the president of this region feels that these two people who have committed themselves to this territory and its project are an asset for the place and she is ready to take advantage of it. If there is a will there is a way.

We continue travelling up north and we come across one of the most veteran projects in Aragon, the **Muestra Artística Rural “ESTOESLOQUE-HAY”**, which has been held every year in a different municipality in the province of Huesca for the past 20 years! This exhibition has been responsible for bringing contemporary art to the less touristy and more remote places in the province of Huesca.

The members of the association that manages it, with Pablo Pérez Terré at the helm, are tireless workers. They have been able to find the magic formula of obtaining a more or less stable funding and the commitment of the town council that hosts the exhibition every year to fund a percentage of the total cost of the exhibition. This commitment and the good work of the association achieve the impossible in each edition. They do not live or are not registered in the municipalities in which they work and therefore they do not have a vote in the municipality. They come from outside to improve and make the most of the town through the exhibition, which strangely enough makes the town councils work more freely.

They attract a peculiar and restless audience that mixes with the inhabitants of the municipality that hosts the exhibition, generating a different and cosmopolitan atmosphere that appeals to young and old alike. The Diputación de Huesca and the Government of Aragón are funding part of this interdisciplinary exhibition bringing the most avant-garde languages to the Huesca countryside.

Heading the beautiful space of **3 Piedras** is Luis Berruete, a generous soul who seeks to learn, have fun and contribute to the place he has chosen as his home: a stone house surrounded by a sea of pastures on the slopes of the Ara mountains, near Jaca. He tells me that sometimes, when coming back from a night walk and seeing the lights of his tiny village in the distance, he feels that he is right where he wants to be. This is a young project that has been transforming itself. Luis came to the vi-



llage as an architect with ideas for a big project in the house and has become a neighbour who wants to enhance the value of his territory and his house through artistic residencies and activities. He knows the tools of the field and knows how to do things well; also, a large percentage of the income needed to carry out the project comes from renting a holiday home. The projects he creates are alive thanks to the effort and desire that Luis is putting into 3 Piedras, a beautiful place to enjoy the landscape, art and life.

Luis recommends us to talk to **Jorge Mur**, a **cultural officer from Jaca**, awake and restless who, after years at the head of the NOCTE festival in Graus, is starting a new stage in the Jaca City Council. He is eager to collaborate with Luis and with all the rural projects in his area.

With Jorge we analyse again the usual lines of funding that exist in Aragon and their lack of flexibility. We mention the need for lasting agreements so that the spaces dedicated to art can subsist, meet their maintenance costs and work more comfortably. Likewise, he handles the existing tools with ease, organising quality culture and hiring local artists to give them visibility and opportunities. A cultural officer with ideas and a desire to work can move a lot of resources in rural areas; it is fortunate to count with such officers.

Something similar has happened in the small village of Ascaso. It seems that sometimes it is the place choosing the people. In this case, a couple from Madrid got to know the idyllic little village and bought a house to rest. One day they came up with

the idea of organising a film festival and invented the **Muestra de Cine de Ascaso**, "the smallest film festival in the world" (an apt slogan that made them famous all over Spain). Since the beginning, the link with the village and the environment has been growing. They have bought another house and spend more and more time in Ascaso and less and less time in Madrid, where they usually work. They feel that they have given a new lease of life to this small place and that, perhaps this time thanks to the cinema, Ascaso will no longer be another abandoned village.

We will finish our trip in Boltaña, very close to Ascaso. In this slightly larger place, the **Festival de Cine de Espiello** was created 20 years ago. Its director, Patricia, proudly tells us about the origins and scope of this seasoned project so closely linked to the land and its people from the very beginning, with their selection committee made up of local people. This project has achieved through cinema a space for conversation and debate from where the most open and flexible identity of these mountainous territories emerges. The Comarca de Sobrarbe covers the cost of the work of the festival director, who, as a cultural officer, and as well as the festival, is responsible for carrying out other cultural initiatives throughout the year.

Neither of these two festivals are the main source of income for the people who run them, having a significant number of volunteers who do a large part of the work required to bring them about. Is culture a way of life or is it doomed to be a secondary activity, carried out on a voluntary basis by



ESTOESLOQUEHAY 10^o edition.
Fonz. 2012 © Javier Rosa.



3 Piedras.

people who consider it necessary and vital for the community?

We were visited in our town by **Luis Sáez**, director until last year and since its beginnings of the **Chair on Depopulation and Creativity**. Economist, writer and an expert on the rural reality and its edges, Luis was also one of the main promoters of the *Arraigo* programme, the so-called *Rural Erasmus*.

He talks about the current funding mechanisms, which are scarce and erratic, although there are many potentials: from activities in high schools, old people's homes, rural schools, social action... looking for other disciplines and institutions with which to collaborate so that culture expands and reaches all ages. He mentions the need for traditional budgetary policies to be better applied in the medium and long term in order to develop projects calmly. He pointed out the possibility of introducing cultural activities with immigrants, from a social point of view. This could greatly help the integration and self-esteem of these groups, taking advantage of the ramifications of culture and its more participatory aspect.

Current economic indicators measure the cultural industry, which has nothing to do with the need for community that arises in the villages and which culture can cover. Seeking the professionalisation of culture or the advice of councillors dedicated to these areas would be an important step forward, which would significantly improve the quality and depth of projects.

The measures recently announced by our government on depopulation do not mention culture in any of their points. However, there are indicators that show that places with a higher economic level are also rich in culture. There is a need for acti-

vities that forge people, neighbourhoods, schools, roots and social fabric. The intangible areas are more important than anything else in these decisive moments for many towns. Allocating a generous percentage of each village's annual budget for culture can change the course. Investing in people, and not in things, must be a priority today. Countries that invest in creating good poets, good musicians, filmmakers or writers, are more cohesive, have more talent and more ideas, and therefore are richer countries.

Moving on to Catalonia, I have the opportunity to become acquainted with the **Can Farrera** project, the Centre de Art i Natura de Farrera, located in the province of Lleida. Through this contact, and by changing region, I realise the difference in the way in which the institutions, both local and regional, have treated this project since its inception.

This is a working residence for artists and researchers created in an old hayloft by a group of people who left the city in the 1980s with the intention of living in the countryside. After the first years of experimentation and research, the idea of creating this centre was born. The city council supported the initiative by building the place through public aid for several years and then handing over its management to the association. This openness on the part of the local administration to support a new initiative in the area, which has nothing to do with the agricultural and livestock activities typical of the region, demonstrates a capacity to adapt to the proposals made by new inhabitants arriving from the city and a commitment to the future, which is not at all common in depopulated areas.

We hear that although at first they were called "hippies" when they arrived, the neighbours soon



Espiello Film Festival.



Can Farrera. Centre d'Art i Natura.
Engraving workshop with Danielle Creenaune.

understood that they would be the guardians of their knowledge and memory, the future of Farrera. Today they all have allotments, children and form part of the landscape of the Pallars region and its people.

They collaborate with universities and research teams around the theme 'Art and nature'. They also collaborate regularly with the *Parque Natural del Alto Pirineo*, created a few years ago and which has become a good complement to the centre.

For many years, this centre, and many others like it, had a large and stable allocation from the Department of Culture of the Generalitat, which allowed them to work with continuity and ease until 2012. Then, after the recession and without warning, the policies drastically changed and cultural aid was cut by 90%. Even so, by increasing private income and reducing expenses, they managed to maintain salaries. Last year they received the Premi Nacional de Cultura de Catalunya with a financial endowment that helped the project to get back on its feet.

Visitors to the centre are artists and researchers who want to work in a quiet place, individually or collectively. The centre's users are mainly from Catalonia, also coming from other communities and from abroad.

In Catalonia, since the 80s and 90s of the last century, support has been given to artistic residency projects that arose, mainly in rural areas, precisely thanks to people who returned to the villages with the desire to stay without renouncing culture. These centres have had direct funding from the Generalitat, allowing them to work on projects of social significance, focused on regenerating the territory and designed with perspective. They organised themselves as a collective, creating a **network of**

Catalan artistic residencies: XARXA-PRO; through this organisation they obtained more support from the administrations of Catalonia for several years.

And lastly, we delve into Navarre to discover the **Kanpoko Bulegoa** project, an artisan workshop of applied thought that explores the frontier between the rural world and cultural production. Marc Badal together with Anne Ibáñez Guridi run it from a farmhouse located in the heart of the mountains. Their aim is to generate proposals for collective thinking in the rural world (primarily in the Pyrenees area of Navarre) around contemporary territorial dynamics, the agrarian system, today's life in the countryside... using cultural tools. The issue is to carry out processes of cultural intervention from a critical and well-placed point of view.

What they try to contribute to in a specific way, and what they have not found in other proposals, is precisely this emphasis on collective thinking, considerations on the historical processes that have led the rural world to its current situation and on the conditions of contemporary rurality. The way to get there is through words; debates, thought and books are always at the centre of its projects.

In addition to the projects organised exclusively by the collective, they have conducted mediation work in the last two editions of the **LANDARTE** programme, the only public contemporary art programme that takes place in small towns nationwide, through processes of co-creation between the local population and the artists selected in each edition. It takes place in very small towns (between 30 and 400 inhabitants), where there is already a certain social or cultural dynamic, and

one of its main objectives is to bring other points of view or other knowledge with which to enrich the cultural baggage of the local agents involved. This year they have worked in parallel with **Uholdeak**, a programme promoted by the Centro Huarte, taking place in slightly larger rural towns in Navarre. It is a travelling exhibition programme of artists from Navarre and aiming to take contemporary art out of its usual places of production and exhibition. The programme is complemented by a series of actions and small mediation projects in the different exhibition venues. For this edition of Uholdeak, Kanpoko Bulegoa has conceived and curated the *Claustrofilia project*. Apart from these relatively large projects (lasting one or two years), they have developed smaller activities and different training proposals. In 2021, for example, they have been in charge of a course on artistic-cultural production and rurality within the Master in Artistic Practices and Cultural Studies at the Universidad Pública de Navarra.

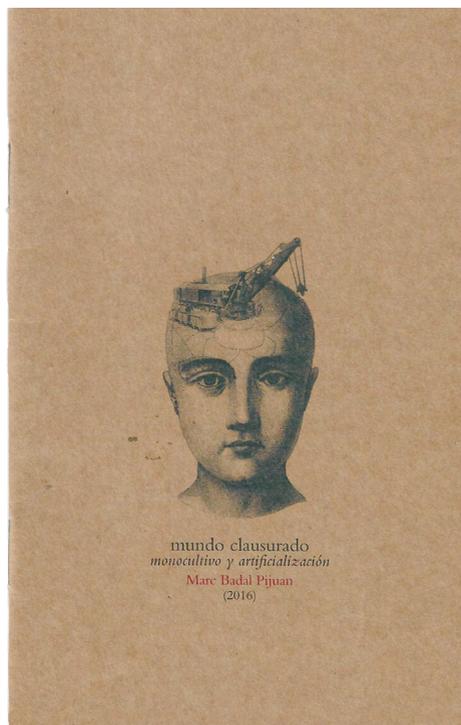
Talking to them, we saw that Navarre's support for culture in rural areas is real, as there is a cultural policy that funds it and establishes a continuous cultural connection between its towns.

Marc and Anne have been living for the last eight years in an abandoned property in the mountains of the Navarrese Pyrenees. Despite the work dedicated to culture, most of their time is spent recovering the place and working on it.

“The work we do outside is totally conditioned by what we do here, physical tiredness is one of the biggest enemies for concentration, for writing, for graphic design or for coordinating projects. The isolation of the place also means that we have to space out the projects we do away and that we can't get to know other projects or attend certain events. Our way of life is incompatible with travelling. We can't be where we have to be, nor can we take on projects too far from home because we don't want to give up our way of life and our way of inhabiting this small territory. If our proposals have any value, it is precisely thanks to the place from where we are making them”.

Marc stresses that there are many other initiatives working on art from the rural environment, in addition to the administrative proposals, with several associations and groups appearing with similar concerns and that will surely expand the cultural map of rural Navarre.

To conclude, he would like to emphasise that, apart from the lack of reflection, they are struck by the fact that contemporary art proposals in rural areas often seem limited only to the festive, playful, hedonistic sphere, and appears that there is a



Mundo clausurado, self-edited (2016).
Kanpoko Bulegoa

“

it seems that this dimension of culture, which nourishes and builds subjectivities, is reserved for the big cultural centres of the cities. That culture that moves you inside, that dimension of deeper connections is apparently denied in the rural world, where art-related events are closely linked to enjoyment (...)

.....

need to justify these initiatives through their fun or entertaining nature. However, it seems that this dimension of culture, which nourishes so many of us and builds subjectivities, is reserved for the big cultural centres of the cities. That culture that hurts and moves you inside, that dimension of deeper connections is apparently denied in the rural world, where art-related events are closely linked to enjoyment, sometimes appealing excessively to memory without thinking much about the present reality.

CONCLUSIONS

The journey has come to an end and the conclusions are waiting to be put down on paper. This journey brings with it the experience of approaching friendly projects, understanding each challenge, each territory and learning the chemistry that each one of us practices in our own place, in the one we have chosen.

Each project is unavoidably transforming the territory, life makes its way through art and the ripple effect is felt in the mountains as well as in the moors.

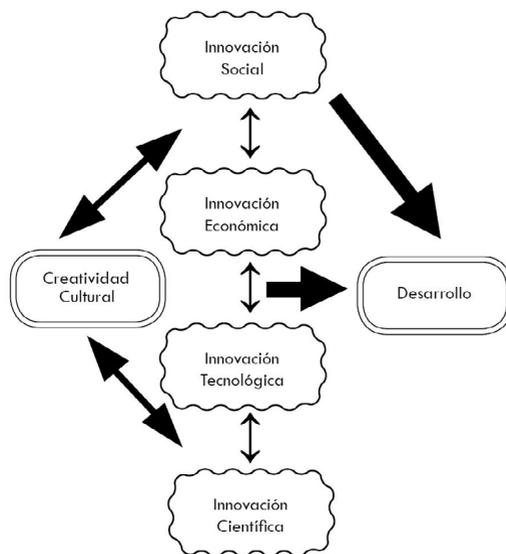
Cultural creativity translates into economic innovation and technological innovation, and these generate development. Therefore, for a place to develop, it is of the utmost importance to invest in culture. Surely, after the trip, one comes to the conclusion that **it is precisely in the places where investment in rural culture is made, which is Navarre, Catalonia and Huesca, where depopulation has not hit so hard.**

At this point I would like to quote a study by Maite González, which develops this premise in a simple way: "The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states: "As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biological diversity is for living organisms".

From the point of view of economic development, cultural and creative industries contribute to the strengthening of declining local economies, as well as the emergence of new productive activities, creating new sustainable jobs and increasing the attractiveness of regions and municipalities (Green Paper "Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries", European Commission, 2010).

Culture drives economic growth and development processes, mainly through creativity and innovation. According to Rausell and Abeledo (2012), cultural creativity also affects other spaces of cognitive production, influencing scientific, technological, and economic and social innovation.

Another important issue is the fact that the funding for culture in territories with depopulation problems is exclusively focused on cities and has a sense of cultural industry dedicated to enter-



tainment. **The concept of cultural industry coined in the 90s of the last century, which introduces all sectors of art into the capitalist wheel, does not make any sense in the rural world:** the motivations, ways of funding and the objectives are different. Here, culture is a right that is necessary to live and not simply a consumer product within the reach of a few. Neither is the recreational-festive approach to culture sufficient for the rural environment, because here it exists in a form very close to social interventions, especially in unpopulated territories.

The population of very small villages needs to be cared for through culture. These places urgently need activities that reactivate the community, that give value to their traditions and that gradually restore enthusiasm.

These actions are what, little by little, begin to generate a social fabric capable of reactivating the villages from within. Local authorities must start to make this a priority, as they are the ones who are losing the most. Then there are the provinces, which can do a lot to support these policies, followed by the autonomous regions, which can gain a great deal, due to the enormous rural territory that certain provinces possess.

The community culture that is carried out in the villages through the projects we have visited, among many others, is an absolutely urgent action in which community culture is a tool to alleviate

depopulation. Together we can generate a living territory, with an industrial and economic fabric as a result.

Many of our villages will die within 10 years. The people who are implementing or managing culture in the depopulated rural world live in precarious situation and this issue must have a joint solution, as they are, among others, the agents who can begin to change the course of these villages. The population itself is beginning to demand culture through associations and pressure groups. They are crying out for cultural activities, meetings, and growth and for young people to have alternatives to the “binge drinking”.

The fact that young people have no options for activities, that they want to leave our towns, is the responsibility of all of us and also of our institutions.

After getting to know the artistic trajectory of the different projects, I have the feeling that, in depopulated territories, the link with culture, heritage and art has been lost at some point through prestige and the different spheres of power. Since ancient times, kings and the powerful surrounded themselves with artists, were their patrons and funded them. Art served as a place of reflection and also as a loudspeaker for power. Between these two positions walked and lived the jester, the painter or the poet. It seems that today, in rural areas, artists do not form an important part of the centres of power in rural communities, nor in their political decisions.

The conclusions from the mountain territories are different. There, projects bear fruit, grow and develop. The care for culture demonstrates a more united and structured territory. We can name the case of Can Farrera, which, being an artistic project developed in a village of 40 inhabitants, received last year the highest award for culture from the Government of Catalonia. Established cultural initiatives earn respect, and translates, as appropriate, in the form of more stable funding.

We artists are also dedicated to caring for the territory, caring for people, caring for ideas and traditions, adapting them to the present times; this work is not in vain, this work sows seeds for shoots of life and illusion, it sows harmony and strengthens the community.

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RECIPES



3 Piedras (3 Stones)

Ara, province of Huesca, Aragón.
Luis Berruete.
<https://3piedras.org/ara/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2020

INGREDIENTS: This artistic residence located in a spectacular enclave in the Aragonese Pyrenees is set to face two contemporary challenges: to confront depopulation and to encourage the connection of human beings with nature. It aims to do so by generating meeting spaces that favour the development of the small rural nucleus to which it belongs. Utensils A rural house with flats to rent makes for an important part of the income of this young foundation. The landscape surrounding the house and the village is of great beauty. There is also a well-equipped workshop, a vegetable garden and chickens.

DINERS: The community of this small village (around 40 residents) has known the founder of the project for years and has been involved in this activity from the beginning. Moreover, the founder has very good contacts and puts them at the disposal of the project, providing the artistic interventions and events with good professionals who advise and accompany the artists.

Pueblos en Arte (Villages in Art)

Torralba de Ribota (Zaragoza)
Lucía Camón, Alfonso Kint, Ana Bettschen,
Fernando Quinta.
info@pueblosenarte.com
<https://www.pueblosenarte.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2014

INGREDIENTS: Platform formed by 5 artists who have inspiring spaces where they organise all kinds of meetings and artistic activities, as well as collaborating with other Aragonese institutions.

UTENSILS: The funders of this project live in the village all year round, so the neighbourhood is an important tool for their work. On the other hand, past links with Madrid, Barcelona and Zaragoza facilitate the flow of artists and creatives that feed back into the project. The spectacular adobe spaces and the relationships established with several town councils in the area are some of the other main elements of this project.

DINERS: On one hand it is aimed both at artists from the city who want to go out and at creatives who are used to working from the periphery. On the other hand, in the villages, the community participates in all the activities, as audience and sometimes as collaborators or even, in the community culture projects, as project developers.

Muestra de Cine de Ascaso (Ascaso Film Festival)

Ascaso (Huesca)
Miguel Cordero and Néstor Prades
muestracineascaso@gmail.com
<https://www.cineascaso.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2014

INGREDIENTS: The smallest film festival in the world is a festival carefully produced by two people from Madrid in a remote place in the Aragonese Pyrenees. A steep road takes you to this location, at an altitude of 1000 metres, formed by a church and six houses.

UTENSILS: A field, a starry sky and two beautiful people who love cinema and have a lot of affection for the village and its people. In addition, every year the festival has a large group of volunteers who make the festival possible. The *Enate* wine, served in glasses, a good sound system and a barn to shelter from the rain complete the team. The landscape, the nearby river pools and the isolation of the place make the evenings of this festival magic, bringing together a diverse and intergenerational audience under the warmth of a projector.

DINERS: Aimed both at local people from the region and at others who love independent cinema and the landscape, two ingredients that together attract an endearing and loyal audience that year after year gather in this remote place surrounded by forests to watch films.

CAN FARRERA

(Can in Catalan means house, but our CAN is formed by the initials of Centre d'Art i Natura, so it is the CAN of Farrera). Farrera, Lleida, Catalunya, España.

Lluís Llobet.

artinatura@farreracan.cat
<https://farreracan.cat/>

COOKING TIME: Since 1995.

INGREDIENTS: An Arts and Nature Centre located in La Bastida, a former hay barn, first a cereal dryer and then hay dryer until the 1980s. A residence space for artists and researchers. It also hosts workshops and courses related to landscape, illustration, writing, bio-construction, etc. Small spring and autumn festivals (*Poesia als Parcs* and *Aplec Saó: Arts i Natura a l'Alt Pirineu*), specific programmes, grants...
UTENSILS: Encouraging creativity, research and study in residence. To provide artists and researchers with a space where they can develop their own projects without interruptions, in a calm and relaxed working environment. Offering international and local grants for artists with unique projects. Community dinners, social space with healthy, local and organic food as far as possible, also creative, visual and sensory.

Networks: *Xarxaprad* and *Res Artis*, national and international, respectively.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, naturalists and researchers, local residents, users in general.

La Noguera / La Cerámica

Arbujuelo / Medinaceli

Lucía Fernández de Soto, Raquel Gregorio, Luna López

info@lanogueramedinacelies

[facebook/lanogueramedinaceli](https://facebook.com/lanogueramedinaceli)

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: They care about the management of the territory, trying to integrate the cultural, environmental, social and economic dimensions that form this complex interconnected reality. They cultivate a vegetable garden and carry out educational activities seeking a balance with the environment. A restaurant where they serve their own food is now their main activity.

UTENSILS: An organic vegetable garden, holiday accommodation in the rural house, quality organic food and a network of contacts connected to the culture that generate movement beyond the occasional visitor. Currently, their strong point is to give visibility to the value of km0 trade through their own work.

DINERS: Aimed both at occasional visitors who come to enjoy the delicious cuisine and at the network of friends that the project has built up over the years in the territory and region thanks to its previous work.

Festival de Espiello (Espiello Film Festival)

Boltaña (Pyrenees of Huesca)

Director Patricia Español Espurz

tteralevisarqueologia@gmail.com

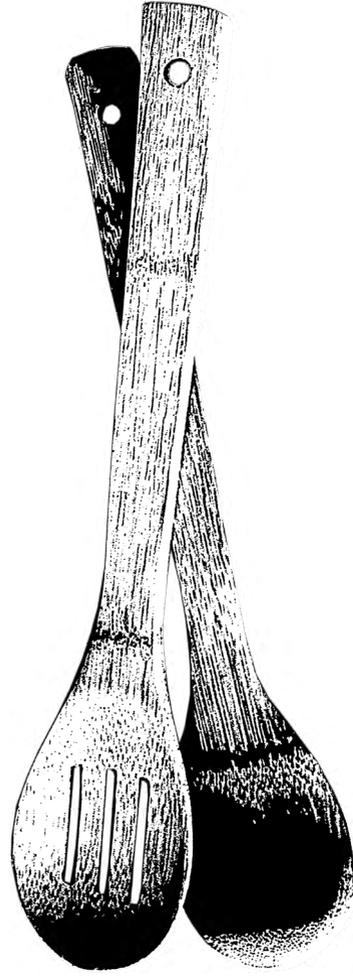
<https://masavterralevis.org>

COOKING TIME: Since 2003.

INGREDIENTS: The very specific ethnographic documentary nature of this old festival and the wide participation of local residents, who form the Permanent Commission for the selection of documentaries, make it an example of a cultural project that has helped to revitalise the region from within. This "mirror", as its name suggests, has fulfilled its function by generating debate and helping to get to know other cultures and, as a consequence, to value one's own.

UTENSILS: Discussion forums, visits by directors, viewing of hundreds of films on ethnography, hospitality and quality gastronomy in the mountains. The proximity to France.

DINERS: Aimed at the local regional population as well as film lovers looking for a different kind of weekend and researchers looking to delve deeper into one of the topics on the agenda.



Estoesloquehay (This is what it is)

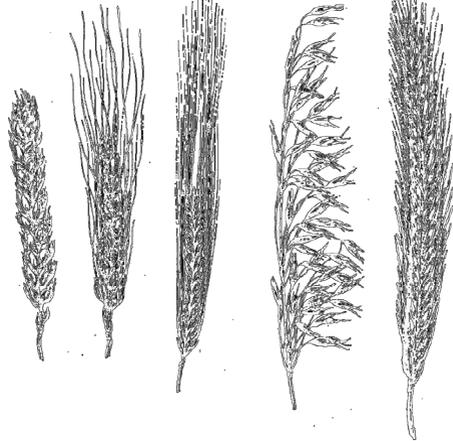
Rural art exhibition
(travelling around the province of Huesca).
Director Pablo Perez Terré.
<https://www.estoesloquehay.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2002.

INGREDIENTS: A compendium of experience, understanding and know-how, combined with a brilliant imagination when it comes to exploring and making the most of new spaces, make this nomadic experience a different adventure every year, for over 20 years now!

UTENSILS: Risky, quality and interdisciplinary programming (visual arts, theatre, music, performance, circus...), changing landscapes and spaces.

DINERS: Aimed at the local and regional population, city audiences eager for different rural experiences, emerging artists, and art and music lovers in general.



Artmosfera

Grañén (Los Monegros County, Huesca).
Berta Gascón Larraz and Jorge Ignacio Rodriguez.
asociacion@artmosfera.es
<https://artmosfera.es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2016.

INGREDIENTS: A huge house in the middle of four villages, ... (Frula, Montesusin, Robres, Grañén), self-sufficient and managed by a couple who love the circus and cultivate a vegetable garden. The founders' knowledge of the needs of artists makes this place a space where artistic creativity is possible.

UTENSILS: Large spaces, high ceilings, open spaces, many rooms and a desire to share.

DINERS: Aimed at artists who want to come and work, the public of the region, of Huesca and of Zaragoza in the events they organise and foreign and national volunteers who want to build something.

Mantel y Más

Maluenda (Zaragoza).
Ruth Ballano.
[facebook/Mantel-y-Mas](https://facebook.com/Mantel-y-Mas)

COOKING TIME: Since 2014

INGREDIENTS: A plot of land in the middle of a village in Aragón with a rich heritage and a resident with artistic sensitivity and a desire to bring to the village a more contemporary point of view linked to community culture.

UTENSILS: Residents involved in the life of their village, rich heritage, more abandoned plots and specific knowledge of different applied arts by the creator of the project.

DINERS: Aimed above all at the villagers and regular visitors. The spirit of this project is that those who walk the streets themselves are the ones in charge of transforming them.

KANPOKO BULEGOA (foreign affairs office)

Hidden hamlet on the northern slopes of the Navarre Pyrenees.
Marc Badal and Anne Ibáñez Guridi.
kanpokobulegoa@gmail.com

INGREDIENTS: An artisan workshop of applied thought that explores the frontier between the rural world and cultural production, generating proposals for collective reflection.

UTENSILS: They combine their work in the farmhouse with processes of collective reflection on the territory, the agrarian system, contemporary lifestyles in rural areas... using cultural tools. They conduct interviews, meet with local agents, collaborate with artists and artisans, generate spaces for debate always in the company of literary readings and essays that lead to their own texts such as *Mundo clausurado* (2016) or *Vidas a la intemperie* (2014).

DINERS: Inhabitants, mainly from Navarra, interested in reflecting on rural territories and their current development capacities. Kanpoko Bulegoa launches different mechanisms that help us understand the most daily reality in rural areas.

Lucía Camón

Poet, actress and cultural agitator, she currently directs the **Pueblos en Arte** project. She mainly creates about and from the rural in various formats. After studying law at the University of Valencia, she trained as an actress at the prestigious William Layton Theater Laboratory in Madrid. In 2010 she published her first book of poems "Siete vez si" (Libro Albedrío). From *Pueblos en Arte* she is in charge, among other projects, of the *Saltamontes* [Grasshopper] and *Poetodos* Festivals, two festivals in the rural world. From there she coordinates the artist residencies of *Pueblos en Arte*.
<https://www.pueblosenarte.com/>



Berta and Nacho, ARTMOSFERA.

NORTH-AFRICAN AREA



north-african area

Canary Islands

Morocco

NORTH-AFRICAN AREA



La Madre Monte

In order to carry out the research of the African Area of Culturarios, the heads of ten projects were interviewed, nine of them in the Canary Islands and one in the south of Morocco, as the field in Ceuta and Melilla is very limited and no relevant projects directly linked to the rural area were found.

During the development of the project, four institutional representatives were also interviewed, including Jennifer Torres, Councillor for Culture, Youth, Citizen Participation and Tourism of the City Council of El Rosario on the island of Tenerife, as well as, on behalf of the Cabildo of Tenerife, the officer of the Area of Water, Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Estefanía Daswani; the officer of the Area of Sustainable Development and Fight against Climate Change, Sonia Rodríguez; and the officer of the Area of Roads, Mobility, Innovation and Culture, Tomás Antonio Afonso. An attempt was also made to arrange a meeting with the General Director of Culture of the Institute for Cultural Development of the Government of the Canary Islands, but in the end there was no response and it was not possible to hold a meeting.

Although each of the projects presented here has a different way of approaching the rural environment through artistic and cultural mediation, they have been chosen for their contribution to knowle-

dge and particular experience managing their work. As for the institutional sphere, they have been approached from a municipal, insular and regional perspective, and not only from their areas of culture, but also seeking transversality and encounter with other areas, such as sustainable development and rural development departments of the Cabildo of Tenerife.

From a methodological point of view, the research has focused on interviews with each of the responsible figures for the projects, or the people who launched them, taking advantage of their experience to gather and make visible a methodological aspect, a management model, a way of approaching a specific problem, generally linked to how to address a process of artistic or cultural mediation in the rural environment. Hence, this research is full of questions, possibilities and subtleties that allow for the analysis and description of specific projects and interventions, especially when they are approached from the point of view of their promoters. In the following pages we propose a journey to an oasis in the south of Morocco and a leap to the different rural areas of the Canary Islands, from the semi-desert territory of the island of Fuerteventura to the landscapes of El Hierro, the southernmost point of Europe.

Here we go!

Caravane Tighmert

THE COMMITMENT OF AN ARTIST WITH THEIR SURROUNDING

Carlos

Carlos's first contact with the desert took place in 2010 through the proposal of an artist he had met when he was still a student at the School of Fine Arts in Tetouan, who suggested that he visit the south of Morocco, specifically the oasis of Tighmert, where he was originally from. This oasis is located 17 km from the city of Guelmim and is one of the four Saharan ports, points of arrival and departure of caravans to Mauritania and Mali, which connected the Sahel, the Sahara and the Maghreb with the whole of Europe and were used from the 9th century until the 1990s.

After this trip, Carlos began to redirect his research on "architecture on land" towards a more artistic and holistic perspective, as he realised the many aspects that define and shape the desert. From there, he began to investigate how an oasis works; how the agriculture of the oasis works; how the irrigation system is produced; the structure of its economic system; its social composition, the history of its tribes and the current problems they face both socially and culturally.

In July 2015, the first edition of what was then called the *Caravane Tighmert Festival* took place in this same oasis, without any institutional funding. This festival consisted of workshops for children, young people and women, and three nights of concerts with artists from the area and also from Marrakech. Since then, the project has evolved, and now lasts on average about 10 days a year, and is called, just, *Caravane Tighmert*.

Since the second edition of *Caravane Tighmert*, the budget has raised from 400 to 1000 euros, and has been financed by the organisers and donations from some of the people living in the oasis. Each year, in their call for artists, they specify that they do not pay for travel expenses, and only cover accommodation (in the homes of the residents of the oasis), as well as living expenses. They do not pay either for production, among other things, as Carlos himself comments, "because it's not about making exhibitions".

For the residencies offered to artists, the organisation proposes three possible alternatives:

① That the artists go there, and if they know the desert, because they are from the area or have been there before, they can produce "something", but by their own means and with what they find in the oasis itself.

② That the artists develop workshops with children, young people and women, or with the part of the population that they want. This is not about doing workshops to entertain the population, but to use them as a way to introduce themselves to the society of the oasis. This option is valid for visitors as well as for locals coming from non-desert areas.

③ Do nothing. Just be there, listen, watch or walk around the oasis.

This last option of "doing nothing" is the one that puzzles the artists the most, especially the foreign ones, as well as the fact that when they have to send their proposals they don't have to send a project as such, but just answer the following two questions: "why do you want to go" and "what would you like to research? These two questions allow the organisation to filter the applications and prevent the residencies from becoming a form of free tourism.

According to the organisers, one of the strong points of *Caravane Tighmert* is the contact established between the artists attending and young people from the oasis, and with key people depending on the topic they are interested in researching. Another key aspect is the accompaniment of the artist, not only during their stay, but also by sharing with them all the information that exists and that has been compiled during all the years that *Caravane Tighmert* has been active, as well as through the many interviews that have been carried out with the nomads and the inhabitants of the oasis. In the desert, although it is true that there is a lot of information, it is completely dispersed (especially in relation to very specific topics), as pointed out by Carlos. Thus, one of the aspects that makes it easier for them to work with the artists is to relate all these elements, which are apparently disconnected, but must be taken into account in order to develop their research in the field. In the end, he says, the important factor is that there is coexistence, and not that the artists are isolated from the local population, but that tasks are carried out in collaboration with them.

Every year, new elements are added to *Caravane Tighmert*. So, a few years ago they introduced the theme of "nomads", as there are still many nomadic people who pass through the Tighmert oasis and end up settling there. As Carlos tells us, "with time you realise that they settle down because the Tighmert oasis is a place that is supplied with water by a spring that is 6 kilometres away. When you start walking with the nomads and you see that the journeys made in the desert to get from one point to another depend on whether or not there is water in the wells, you realise what it



Gilles Aubry and Marion Lecribain.
Caravane Tighmert, 2017.

means to have the certainty that there is a place where you can be sure of having access to it”.

In relation to the impact that the workshops have had, Carlos states the difficulty they have detected when it comes to some artists being able to communicate with the people of the oasis due to the language used, especially when it comes to explaining to someone who lives in the desert what it is they want to do or work on. According to Carlos, “when the artists are with a child, a young person or a woman explaining certain concepts, or how a photo or video camera works, it is from the fourth day onwards that things start to go more smoothly and they invite them to their house or begin to explain many aspects that could pass completely unnoticed before their eyes. Here the artists also have to make an effort to lower their ego and try to stop thinking that, as they are people who don’t know contemporary art, they won’t understand anything. This is one of the strong points of being able to make things in the desert, the fact that you work with total and absolute ignorance of the medium”.

This fact, moreover, leads in most cases to direct contact between artists (whether from Morocco or abroad) and the local population, facilitating encounters and the exchange of knowledge. These meetings and exchanges of information have also enabled some artists to work on traditional dances (in particular the Guedra), on the use of henna, the making of tapestries and their iconography, irrigation systems, canals, etc. Another impact of these meetings is that many young people who thought that their own culture was not interesting, or that they could not do anything with it, have been encouraged to take up writing poetry or photography. In particular, a young man from a high school who helped in Caravane Tighmert in

2017, and who is now part of the organising team, ended up entering the School of Fine Arts in Tetouan.

Administratively, they operate as an association under the name of *Los Amigos de Caravane Tighmert*, a legal form through which they have tried to apply for grants. However, Carlos criticises that “when it comes to requesting subsidies for this type of project and when you have to explain the impact of your activity, they ask you how many workshops you have done, how many children have benefited, for how many hours and days it has taken place”. As a collective, they refuse to do that, as they understand that the real impact of their interventions is the fact that a 6 year old child who in 2013 started doing workshops with the first artists who came to the oasis is now, 7 years later, still doing workshops once, twice or three times a year, not only in *Caravane Tighmert* (some artists have specific projects throughout the year and they accompany them). On the other hand, he points out the impossibility of being able to justify in a call for proposals that the artists have done nothing or almost nothing, just interact with the environment. This aspect goes totally against the productivist concept that institutions have of art.

Every year, the *Caravane Tighmert* team produces an epilogue where the artists talk about and share the intervention they have made in the oasis, what they have learned during their stay and experience, as well as what they would change about it. This helps the organisation to maintain a constant self-critical attitude, which has allowed the project to evolve over time. They are now also working on developing interviews with the people of the oasis in relation to what has changed for them as a result of the artists appearing there periodically.

Territorio Imaginario

WHEN THE LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT EXHAUSTS THE POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Silverio

Silverio has lived in Fuerteventura since 1980 and has dedicated himself to the recovery of traditional pottery, although he has not been a potter for a long time because, as he says, “these are Neolithic techniques and nowadays it is very difficult to make a living from them”. However, he has always been concerned with recovering ancestral knowledge and sharing it with others.

His connection with the countryside goes back to the island of Gran Canaria when he was 15 years old. There he came into contact with photography and ceramics, and grew interested in and motivated by everything to do with the rural environment. From 1996 onwards, and after setting up the space of La Rosa del Taro, his objectives were directed, together with his partner, towards the development of art and nature encounters based on the commitment and care of the environment. The work in the countryside, according to Silverio, “is not based on putting objects in it, but on a relationship of coexistence between craftsmanship, art and nature”.

It was during a meeting of traditional Canarian potters in 2000, in the surroundings of Rosa del Taro, that the project Territorio Imaginario was born. In order to manage this project at a bureaucratic level, they had to form an association, since as individuals or as an informal collective, it was not possible. Finally, the association, which bears the same name (*Territorio Imaginario*), was made up of Chano and Virginia, from *La Furgoneta Fantástica*, Silverio’s partner and himself.

This project has been self-financed and purely militant. They have encountered difficulties in applying for and receiving subsidies, and have lost several of them. They consider the excessive bureaucracy and management that has to be done to access the subsidies offered by the institutions to be a mistake. Silverio, personally, has had doubts and has felt mistrust regarding the presentation of projects, so he decided to reduce the number of interventions and activities and to self-finance through the collective itself, which participates by contributing a financial amount and their work to move the project forward.

They have been in charge of developing actions such as talks, courses and other activities with



Clouds workshop/
Fog catchers.
Territorio Imaginario.

groups in institutions, institutes and schools in the surrounding area, as in the case of Puerto del Rosario, the capital of the island of Fuerteventura. In order to carry out these activities, they would have liked for the participants to come to the space (*La Rosa del Taro*) but, although the distance from the capital is only 11 km, they discovered that it was very difficult for those interested to travel to do any activity on a continuous basis.

Through practice, Silverio realised that imparting courses and workshops alone was not enough, and that in order for the traditional culture to be maintained and not to die with the elders, it had to exist a line of information and dissemination in schools. “But not just the typical Canary Islands Day course,” he points out, “or in the neighbourhood association, but classes on craftsmanship should be given in formal schools where children are taught about traditional knowledge. He also explains that it would be necessary to create a space where crafts can be preserved and developed (at the moment, the spaces that have the greatest projection are the pottery centres of Gran Canaria and Tenerife, which are either managed by institutions or occasionally loaned to certain associations). Silverio’s reflection is that, in the end, everything remains in preservation: “It is necessary to have clearer objectives, and it is not possible to have a pottery centre and expect people to just go and take a course. The managers of these spaces must have a medium and long-term objective linked to specific courses”. As he points out, at the level of education, therefore, more planning is needed. Silverio speaks of training for people interested in continuing and experimenting with a technique, and not just focusing on the development of traditional techniques or the

reproduction of pre-Hispanic aboriginal pieces. It would be desirable, he says, to evolve these techniques through research into the use of new pastes and materials, as well as their combinations.

Silverio also explains the need to train people in the consumption and use of crafts, as well as a greater presence of crafts in other environments than just fairs and/or on special occasions.

The space *La Rosa del Taro*, has been made available to people who want to spend time in a rural environment, and are now looking for people who can run it in the future. Silverio indicates that the ideal way forward would be for new people to manage it so that they can live and take over the space with their own personal projects. The project *Territorio Imaginario*, at present, is pending re-elaboration. No activities are being carried out in the space itself.

Canary Islands End to End WORKING FROM CLOSE PROXIMITY

Manolo y Amalia

Manolo is an urbanite from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria whose interest for the rural environment came after realising during the search for his identity as a Canarian, that the urban environment had nothing to do with the natural territory in which he is located. After looking for ways of self-employment and following several unsatisfactory work experiences, he reached a turning point in his life in which he preferred not to be negative or critical and took a position to generate changes that could positively affect both himself and the people around him. As a result, he began to look for possibilities managing alternative accommodation. This way, in the La Isleta neighbourhood of Las Palmas, he found a guesthouse that was about to close and had enormous potential to develop ideas oriented towards a new cultural approach in the city. After talking to the owners, he rented the space for a very reasonable price and decided to found the *Asociación Atlas (Alternative Travel Local Association)*. From that moment on, this space, together with two other spaces, a mountain refuge designed for hikers and the *Acusa Seca* cave, which is in the surroundings of one of the most important archaeological sites on the island of Gran Canaria, generate a profit that allows him to develop on a larger scale socio-cultural projects bringing benefits to the community; the common spaces can be used completely free of charge, with

the profits from the activities taking place going directly to the people who propose them and carry them out.

In the midst of this process, he received the news of the existence of an infrastructure called GR-131, a 550 km trail running along the Canary Islands from La Graciosa to El Hierro. In 2014 he hiked this trail in one month across the archipelago, and the experience was a paradigm shift for him. He saw the potential of this resource, which could have incredible effects for the population of the islands. This route was something totally unknown to the public and he had many questions and doubts about how to approach it. First, it was through a personal experience of the trip itself, but then that was left behind, looking for what use could be made of this resource to really be something transformative for the whole of society. Thinking about how to show it to the people, his partner Amalia entered the project offering to document it through her work as a photographer. It was then that they planned a second trip along the route for a month, in which they used analogue photography to record a "sincere experience without digital retouching". With these photographs, a book called *End to End* was published, with no expectations. During this second trip, it became clear to Manolo that this resource had to be approached at the municipal level, as the GR-131 route was little known, and required visibility through informative talks in the villages of the islands.

A year after the publication, in collaboration with Amalia, they repeated the journey making presentations of the photobook throughout the islands in municipalities, towns, associations and cultural spaces. The photobook then became an excuse for dialogue and conversation. The aim of its creation, he says, was never to publish a guide to the trail, as they did not want to attract people so that the route would become just another tourist resource, but the objective was to talk to people to seek feedback and to find whether or not they really found this publication interesting. This generated a process of horizontal exchange that was never focused on telling a personal story, the traveller's own story. Should the publication had not been well received, they would have stopped disseminating it, says Manolo.

He made another trip two years after the publication of the photobook, this time with a small team, for which he sought financial backing. He spoke to the Regional Ministry for the Environment, which gave him a small amount of funding, and once again travelled to La Graciosa with the intention of reaching the island of El Hierro, giving informative talks in every village they passed through.



“Canary Islands
End-to-End”
Amalia Márquez.

Apart from that, they have recently completed a new project called *Contramapas*, developed together with Amalia, also linked to the GR-131 route. If the *End to End* photobook gave visibility to a landscape and a territory, *Contramapas* gives visibility to the people who live in that territory. A double mission that, after a year of cultural hiatus, shows how people from the cultural world have lived this last year and the perspectives they have, always maintaining the conversation with the territory and its people.

One element that has inspired Manolo a lot in this process are ideas about economic sustainability, as he believes that in order to stop the depopulation process currently experienced it is necessary to bring new ideas to the rural areas of Gran Canaria. An example of this would be through the implementation of cultural and creative projects through visual language that have a future objective. He also makes it very clear during the interview that his intention is not to generate projects that are aesthetically very beautiful, but that remain just that.

What Manolo would like is for “a kind of collective or association to be generated in a formal or informal way, in a network format, linked to the rural environment, to develop a working methodology that involves the activation of spaces in a sustainable way”. For him, the three pillars of sustainability, which could move the Canary Islands forward, are environmental, economic and socio-cultural. He is clear that in order to continue attracting people and overcoming the imbalance that exists between those from outside and those

who live there, has to be done through culture and artistic proposals: “Otherwise,” he points out, “what will continue to gain ground will be the extractive economy that steals natural spaces and the identity of the Canarian people”. That is the reason why he believes that things have to be done little by little, and approached from a community perspective.

Also, Manolo considers that in the Canary Islands, due to its own idiosyncrasy, the approach to this type of rural or community work must be from the chaotic. He does not imagine it as structured or framed as other proposals that exist in other territories. He believes it is a mistake to fall into the clichés of the traditional with ideas such as “how good it is to live in a rural environment” or “how beautiful and idyllic the life of a farmer is”.

In relation to the search for funding, Manolo considers that dialogue with the institutions is necessary, “but the idea cannot be exclusively to approach them to ask for money, but for a project to succeed, funding has to be sought from other places”. It is from there that the relationship with the institutions can change, as it allows you to work with much more freedom. By building a strong economic base through prior self-management, generating profitability, Manolo keeps the institutions a bit on the sidelines, allowing him to better see where he wants to go and where he is not willing to go.

Las Paradas

THE LEAP FROM URBAN TO RURAL SPACE

Pablo

Pablo, a member of *La Parada*, lives outside the city, immersed in the countryside. For him, seeing how proposals were generated in natural spaces during the years spent living abroad, was his motivation to propose this type of format on the island of Gran Canaria.

The artistic association *La Parada* is a fusion of artists promoting art in new and different formats aimed at proposing artistic interventions in the rural environment. The approach to the rural world of Gran Canaria came about in an organic way: reaching out and exploring the values and possibilities offered by these spaces every day to its members. They feel that the rural environment is very varied and always offers something completely different. During this process of getting closer, they also realised that there were many areas in Gran Canaria very deteriorated by man's footprint.

The interest in developing this project arose after Pablo's return to the Canary Islands, when he realised that there was a social requirement for this type of artistic intervention, not being developed on the island. As a collective, and individually, they felt that art in Gran Canaria was too institutionalised and directed towards the theatres, where the same type of artistic proposals were always given, such as musical concerts and the odd festival, leaving other proposals aimed at the rural environment out of the circuit.

The project is self-managed and is sustained by the contribution of the members in the events. Public entities, for the moment, are on the sidelines, as they do not receive any subsidy from any institution.

The idea is to bring the rural environment closer to the public and to dignify it with the commitment to leave the space always better than it was found. Their proposals focus on expressions of performing arts (living arts) on-site, which are recorded and photographed to be documented. They intervene in very diverse rural spaces: they have carried out actions in an abandoned space where there used to be a spa, now invaded by nature, also in the pine forest of Tamadaba, in the summit area, on the coast and inside caves; each event and their interventions on the space are completely different from one another. They also



generate inter-artistic relationships so that people get to know each other and different forms of artistic expression merge and connect both during and after the events.

Las Paradas are events where the public donates an entrance fee of between 10 and 20 euros. The public has no prior information about the event, only the title. To go to the event, they are picked up in a bus at a specific place and at a specific time, and are then taken to the indicated space to live the experience.

When choosing the rural environment, the first step is to find information about it, getting to know it, talking to people and neighbours. After the first visit, they examine what the environment made them feel and from there, after a joint brainstorming exercise, look for a name, a word or a small phrase that simplifies everything they have experienced and felt. This information is then passed on to the artists who will present a proposal for the event. From here the artists create their own piece. They never want to leave a footprint in the space, so they do not create physical installations that remain in the environment.

At the beginning, their only way to communicate information about the events was simply to pass it on between friends, word of mouth, through whatsapp. The maximum number of attendees was around 50 to 60 people, the approximate number of seats on a bus, in order to avoid overcrowding (invasion) of the space. They worked with this format for a while, until a member of the association, with notions in social networks, allowed the information to spread to more people interested.

Their approach is to get closer to the people who live in the area, inviting them to know what is happening on an artistic and creative level, living the experiences with them.

La Furgoneta Fantástica CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A TOOL FOR NEIGHBOUR- HOOD COHESION

Virginia y Chano

La Furgoneta Fantástica (The Fantastic Van) arose from the need to bring together all the pedagogical concerns of Chano and Virginia and link them to the world of dissemination, didactics and learning processes related to artistic and heritage education. The initial idea was to create a project that would have a van equipped with all kinds of materials which, in an itinerant way, could travel to the most disadvantaged rural areas where activities never reach. This van would arrive at the village square, deploy all its paraphernalia and, for as many days as necessary, attend to the needs and concerns of the people who live there.

Without initial funding or backing for the van, and after presenting the idea to some institutions and organisations such as museums and interpretation centres interested in developing this type of dynamic, they realised they didn't really need an equipped van after all. Their conclusion was that the van, which could involve a whole deployment of material resources, could not compete with the personal relationships generated with the neighbours sharing their interventions.

So, the van ceased to be a material possibility and became a thought, an idea or a concept, while maintaining the initial itinerant nature of the project by going to the places where it was most needed: the idea was to decentralise the service and to take care of everything they did with people to make them feel good about themselves, encouraging personal growth from the individual and the collective. In the same way, they developed the idea of life in community and life in collectivity, from the sense of neighbourliness. For them, the concept of "itinerancy" gives them freedom of movement, as well as the opportunity of "inventing" according to their needs and seeking creative solutions to what they want to do in each context. These difficulties have enriched the project, building it and maintaining the tension because, most probably, in 10 years' time it will be something very different from what it is now. As they see it, moreover, heritage is not a fixed picture but something in constant change, movement and dynamism, and at the same time, they try to distance their way of understanding and approaching it from the commonplace of a pseudo-folklore and the series of clichés on which the so-called Canarian identity has been built.

The reason why they have always been very interested in traditional popular culture and anything to do with cultural heritage is because from a very early age, they point out, they began searching for self-knowledge on a personal level, and as people. This background is what has led them to work in the context of the rural world.

The concept of the *Furgoneta Fantástica* is Virginia and Chano themselves and their whole life, which is "riding" on it. Both come from the world of pottery and worked for a few years in their workshop until the economic recession of 2008 arrived, sales dropped and they felt the need to stop doing the same thing and discover what else they would like to do. Then they started with the theme of disseminating "new pedagogies". Throughout this process, they began to work on a different model of interpersonal relationships based on learning processes in coexistence. Also, as they began to disassociate themselves from the production of ceramics and painting, they became more and more involved in projects that had to do with the social sphere.

The *Furgoneta Fantástica* is characterised by their work within the inter-generational sphere, never working specifically with associations for the elderly or with school children, but with neighbours of any age, reinforcing the character of neighbourhood over that of citizenship (in which they do not believe). As part of a community, they reach out and address any interest or need that people have regardless of age or background. This way of doing things has been focusing on placing heritage at the service of people, using it as a tool for personal growth and strengthening the sense of community and people's health and well-being.

The *Furgoneta Fantástica's* travels daily, step by step, focused up until now on the islands of La Gomera and Tenerife. Their way of working consist of arriving at a place, familiarise themselves with it and then set up projects according to the needs detected there. For example, in the case of Alojera on La Gomera, they saw the need to promote good care for children and to create positive parenting projects. At that time, Virginia was working as a children's educator for a local council and the *Furgoneta Fantástica* was providing its services selflessly and free of charge for two years to the children and families of the municipality of Valle Gran Rey. In Los Altos en Arure, they also developed different projects that had to do with creation and creativity, using play as an axis for learning and emphasising the development of self-esteem. In this way, they encourage self-confidence and inspire people to trust in their neighbours, to feel capable of being and doing things for themselves.



La Furgoneta
Fantástica.



They are happy with their interventions as long as what they do has an impact on the people with whom they work directly, and on their environment. Therefore, the idea of arriving at a place, setting up some kind of action, for example, and leaving without developing all that parallel work with the community is not sufficient for them.

All their work, in fact, is based on processes and not on products. These are vital processes that tie in with needed dynamics and are based on life itself unfolding. The idea is to generate participation, creating emotional links with the territory and with the neighbours, and ending up with work that takes place for the people and for the community, not for external projection. Their work is very personal, which is why there are no exhibitions at the end of the workshops, nor do they participate in anything that is merely an exhibition.

Collective participation always depends on the resources of the territory itself; they don't usually bring experts or professionals to show their work or methodology because they try to make anyone who participates to feel like protagonists and not spectators: producers of culture, not consumers. In any case, they make dialogic readings of other, more contemporary ways of creating, debating and commenting on them. They are aware that "one of the shortcomings of the rural world is the lack of self-esteem and, if we don't value what is around us, and everything is based on bringing great authors and creators, we do a disservice to the neighbours, telling those who live there that what they have, or know, is useless and that what is good is exclusively what comes from outside". This does not create culture," they continue, "but rather destroys it. What they try to value and preserve, is when they arrive in rural communities and find people who carry the ancestral baggage of a culture.

For them, the word sustainability has become like the word utopia: it has been overused. They understand it as a way of existing in harmony and balance, above all, in an ethical sense. All their work is based on Kantian ethics, that is to say: "what concerns you concerns me and I do nothing that could harm you or the environment in which you live". They define their work as sustainable with this ethical criterion. Similarly, they address economic sustainability, with projects that are not expensive, as well as addressing the sustainability of the environment, as people who participate begin to acquire a degree of awareness allowing them to play a fundamental role in this chain of shared responsibility. Thus, they understand sustainability as a concept of practical use for the people with whom they share their interventions.

One of the techniques applied in their methodology is based on *Creative Education*, developed by Arno Stern in France, which is focused on facilitating a space for creation without judgement and without patterns to follow, and where what is worked on, although may look like art, is not art, but "a personal work of expression". With this same technique they develop all of their workshops: creating a symbolic social space where the materials are used and shared and where nobody has the right to comment on whether what the other person does is good or bad, whether it is beautiful or ugly. They are also very careful not to bring into the rural world criteria from the urban realm nor from the industrialised and mercantilist society, such as the concept of plastic arts, for example. Trying to filter this context, when someone expresses themselves or has the skills or capacity to create a piece of art, they don't lose themselves in imagining their exhibition in large art spaces, but rather the idea is that this person continues to develop this process for themselves.

They try to be as inconspicuous as possible and clearly dissociate themselves from the figure of the socio-cultural animator. They are not very talkative, but calm, when intervening with people, a result of their training in non-directive techniques. Leaving the group to run on its own, they are only present to facilitate, always in a respectful way. The idea is that the facilitator leaves no trace, other than helping the group or person to walk on their own. Caring and attending without being the main axis, thus avoiding explanations, they use more the Socratic technique linked to Paulo Freire's "pedagogy of the question".

Fortunately, they have always had and received the trust of the institutions they have worked with. Their projects have been financed, among others, by the Cabildo de La Gomera and Cabildo de Tenerife, and the Dirección General de Patrimonio del Gobierno de Canarias. Their project is so innovative that they have never had to knock on many doors and have always found a favourable response to their proposals. Nor have they had any problems finding funding, as their approach to the community is genuine and novel in the Canary Islands. The projects they develop try to be long term so that they are really effective and have a real sense of transformation in the community. However, in order to achieve the objective of long-term work with the community, sometimes, due to funding issues, they are forced to string together several consecutive projects. Thus, as they say, these are vicissitudes and strategies that must also be developed with the administration and institutions in order to achieve the desired long-term mediation objectives.

Las Eras de El Tablero
Rural Festival of Creation



Las Eras de El Tablero Rural Festival of Creation THE DEFENCE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PASSING ON THE GENERATIONAL TORCH Felipe

The *Las Eras de El Tablero Rural Festival of Creation* was set up to defend the village of Tablero itself, which until a few years ago was rural and in which our grandparents and, practically, also our parents lived from what they cultivated there. Politically, El Tablero has been part of the municipality of Santa Cruz de Tenerife since the 1970s when it became a district of Santa Cruz, having been handed over by the municipality of El Rosario. However, they still consider themselves to be a village, even though some want to define them as just another neighbourhood of the capital.

Few want to turn them into a residential area without their own personality and they are rebelling against this. Specifically, they are against the General Plan for Urban Development, which eliminates aspects as typical as the old threshing floors, from which the festival takes its name. Their intention is to defend their historical heritage so that El Tablero does not become an impersonal place, as if it was a place that has emerged from nowhere in the last 15 or 20 years. In fact, El Tablero has its own history dating back to pre-colonial times and has many pre-Hispanic remains. For some years, the driving force behind the festival was the artist and journalist Ana Beatriz Alonso and the teacher Michelle Mejías. They met with Roberto, who at that time was the president of the Neighbourhood Association of El Tablero, and as a result of that meeting, a festival with unique characteristics emerged, "as had not been seen until then in relation to the use of the old threshing floors as a stage, as well as the alleys, plots and old houses of the village".

After those first years, it was the Neighbourhood Association itself that continued with the project, creating an association called Asociación las Eras de El Tablero, that has managed the festival for the last six editions. The organisation continues to be made up of those people who were already fighting for the defence of the territory and were really committed to the idea from the beginning.

According to Felipe, it is difficult for art to reach an area like El Tablero, as all cultural offer tends to stay in the centre of the capital of Santa Cruz and its cultural spaces. For this reason, they saw

the need to generate artistic activities directly in a place like El Tablero.

The establishment of the association was necessary for bureaucratic reasons. However, internally, they work on an egalitarian basis, and every year they are joined by people who collaborate and participate in the festival. The team that manages the festival is currently composed by up of seven people, most of whom are residents of the village. In addition, they are registered as a social association, not only cultural, as it also allows them to widen their scope to, for example, advising municipal officers in relation to possible actions to be developed and the recovery of traditional knowledge in their villages. As an association, they also endorse and support projects with which they are aligned, if not financially, administratively.

Everyone involved in the organisation of the Festival de Las Eras de El Tablero has their own personal jobs, but their love for their village and their environment pushes them to manage and carry out the Festival. They are also united by the desire to attract contemporary artistic proposals to the village and share them with their neighbours.

The Festival Rural de Creación Las Eras de El Tablero has been running for ten years now and has always chosen a contemporary artistic language, understanding that folklore and carnival, for example, are cultural milestones with already enough spaces of expression on the island. In the village, the festival has been very well received throughout its history and, according to Felipe, it is not necessary for people to come from an exquisite cultural background to be able to enjoy and appreciate, for example, contemporary dance and music.

The primary objective of the festival is to generate interest in visitors and to make them aware of the reality of El Tablero and how the town can be transformed. The role of the festival, therefore, is to serve as a vehicle and to inform anyone who wants to know what it is like and the transformations that could take place in this environment. To this end, during the seminars they organise, they invite academics and researchers to participate, carry out studies and to contribute ideas.

During the first eight editions of the festival, the morning sessions began with an interpretative route through El Tablero. Various itineraries were proposed through different areas, describing the type of traditional farming that took place and how it was cultivated, explaining how it had been recovered, how people could make a living from it and, of course, how they could continue to make a living from it now. The Festival continues to be structured along the same lines as it was originally organised, based on seminars where the residents participate with their ideas, stories and artistic

proposals. Every year, there are also artistic murals around the town, one of the festival's characteristic activities, although, according to Felipe, "some of them have already been lost due to the town council destroying them, or due to the needs of the owners of the properties". The are still artistic activities taking place in the threshing floors, literary presentations, storytelling, music, theatre, dance, etc.

The most important issue for the future, according to Felipe, is to integrate young people who are interested in continuing the work and incorporating new ideas into the project. This is what worries them most, as the organisers of the festival are currently all over 40 years old. He also points out that "it is difficult to connect with the youth of El Tablero, as the leisure offer generated by the capital is so close by". They consider that the young people are being uprooted, because "in El Tablero, when the children start secondary school, they have to go to the capital to continue studying and so they lose habits like walking to school every day and the direct relationship with the rest of the people in the village".

Financially, they try to optimise their scarce resources. They receive some subsidies from the Organismo Autónomo de Cultura del Ayuntamiento de Santa Cruz and until a couple of years ago they received a small grant from La Caixa, the first one to reach them and what made possible to get off the ground. In addition, they also receive contributions from small local businesses and organisations and from the surrounding area, but, as Felipe says, "they always have to end up doing magic with these contributions to be able to carry on". Regardless, the aim of the association is to continue with the festival.

Their idea is to continue preserving and recovering all the threshing floors in the village, as well as the royal paths, believing that "many of these paths, if they were repaired, would be used again, but it seems that the town council is not interested in repairing them", as they say. If they did, it would boost the town's economy, the bars, restaurants, markets, etc. It is a pity," says Felipe, "that the whole archaeological area between Santa Cruz and El Rosario is abandoned and deteriorated". Over the years, they have learned that it is very difficult to fight and work with the administration, or to get them to commit financially to the projects, even though, they criticise, "they boast about the festival, which has even appeared in international magazines". For this reason, the organisers always try to make use of private spaces, not public ones, "so as not to be constantly dependent on the institutions, the politician who runs them, or their agendas", concludes Felipe.



Crecer con la Tierra DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE LAND

Gloria

Gloria's main material is clay, which she has been studying over time through the history of ancestors that used it as means of survival in their environment, and which in current times, believes this artist from Tenerife, is absolutely necessary to recover. Her interest also focuses on how ancestral wisdom has been passed on through this material, from generation to generation, to cover the basic needs of everyday life: from knowing how to grow crops to building houses and repairing walls and roofs. Starting with sculpture and learning in artisan workshops, she has been able to learn first-hand how this material was worked in ancient times, redirecting her work towards bio-construction.

Natural materials such as pigments, clays, plants or vegetation that she works with, picked up directly from nature, are a way of connecting with the history of the land, allowing to move forward without forgetting the past. Her approach is to do so through its contemporary use, adapting them to current needs. She feels that it is complicated to work with the land if you are not in that environment, "as it is heavy work, sometimes the materials are found in large quantities and you have to make quite a physical effort to work with them". For this reason "it is better to get close to the environment where the materials are found". The whole process has brought her closer to life in the countryside, where she has sought wellbeing and tranquillity, and, for Gloria, it is essential to have and feel a direct relationship with the environment in which one lives and works.

Gloria's project is called *Crecer con la Tierra* (Growing with Earth) and the activities she carries out are usually developed in open spaces, identifying the needs of the place itself, as well as the interests and abilities of the groups she works with in order to form a collective learning process.

The activities are hands-on and focused on learning through direct experience. The workshops have a theoretical part about natural materials, their colours, composition and their different uses and applications through history. This theoretical part lasts half an hour and then the group spends the following hours of the day practising, touching and feeling the mixtures, the thickness, the temperature of the material.... The aim," she says, "is for people to feel the energy that passes through their hands through direct contact with the material".

Crecer con la Tierra develops collective activities through the use of natural materials in everyday life. All the works produced aim to generate a connection and contribute something to the environment in which they were developed. The aim of these workshops is also for people to use in their daily lives the techniques learned by restoring a space in their homes or making other types of constructions.

Gloria works with audiences as young as 5 years old, with teenagers in schools, adults, and also with architecture professionals who are not used to working with natural materials. She points out that it is with the youngest children that we learn the most, as we don't have to give them any guidelines, but just see how they develop themselves



Crecer con la tierra.



La Madre Monte.



in the environment through the use of the material. *Crecer con la Tierra* also reaches out to groups of women and immigrants and other vulnerable groups, facilitating the generation of support communities for people by using their own skills.

One of the plans for the future of the *Crecer con la Tierra* project is to develop a network of women builders for sustainability. The project has already been presented to town councils in the northern part of the island of Tenerife, where Gloria has been well received, also to political representatives, all interested in integrating and reviving rural life. These are, she says, “active town councils and small villages where it is still possible to have a constructive conversation, because they are interested in taking back abandoned land, although due to changes of government, these offers, to date, have not progressed”. It has been difficult for her to regularise her situation as a self-employed professional, although she has been living and working in a paid job for years. This has been, to a large extent, thanks to the work developed with certain collectives on the island of Tenerife such as Maye (Movimiento por la Autogestión y la Educación), which has allowed her to carry out her professional activity and organise workshops aimed at people interested in getting back in touch with the land on the basis of exchange of knowledge.

Crecer con la Tierra is bio-construction, art and permaculture, and Gloria has not had to work hard to get the attention of people interested in this type of activity. Rather, it has come about as a spon-

taneous process: the need to use traditional materials to make a work like an ephemeral oven for baking bread, or a dome for shelter. Just the simple process of generating these structures using natural materials empowers people, says Gloria. She concludes that creating functional things, with a low economic and environmental impact, is something that people increasingly demand and/or need nowadays.

La Madre Monte QUESTIONING YOUR OWN REALITY

Irene and Fidel (self-interview)

La Madre Monte are Fidel, Irene and Rocío. Fidel has lived in the countryside throughout his childhood and adolescence when he spent summers in the village of his great-grandparents in León; Irene currently lives in the rural environment of La Esperanza (Tenerife) and Rocío grew up in a small village in the Pyrenees of Huesca.

La Madre Monte Association has been active since the beginning of 2020, with the project born in 2015 thanks to the confluence of several circumstances, such as in the case of Irene’s experience, of motherhood, during that period. At that time Irene began to question the places of creation, living in a rural space and realising the importance

of working collectively when developing artistic projects. From then on, she began to think about a project that could be collective and that could also be developed in accordance to values that were sensitive to caring for nature and rural environments. Coming from the field of economics and business, she has always questioned the models of the current economic system and how to transform them by generating income while developing social and cultural work of an artistic nature and returning the benefits to the local community.

When Rocío joined *La Madre Monte*, she and Irene began to work together developing projects related to art, photography and audiovisuals, offering experiences to approach the rural environment in a sensitive way through proposals linked to environmental education. Meanwhile, they continued to question how to relate to the people they worked with, beyond the client format. In 2017, began to work with different groups in rural areas and start a process of familiarisation with the concepts of artistic and cultural mediation as a way of developing the group itself.

Then, in 2018, Fidel joins the team and from that moment on they focus their work on the design and development of projects based on the needs and interests of the collectives and communities, as well as the reality of the environment to be intervened. These works would be based on the principles of research and experimentation in a constant exercise of “learning by doing”.

Their work methodology is based on the use of contemporary artistic language to approach the rural environment with sensitivity and respect for its traditional culture and making these traditions known and shared through the use of audiovisual language as a tool to bring these stories and realities to new audiences.

In 2019 they develop the first *Rural and Ecological Film Festival* of Tenerife “La Pinochera”, bringing contemporary audiovisual art to the rural space of La Esperanza, proposing new possible ways of communication and experimentation between both worlds. Since then, all of their projects have been monitored over the long term and their sustainability has been analysed by calculating, through an external company, the carbon footprint generated by their events. Through surveys of participants and the general public, they also analyse the impact of their actions both personally and on the local community.

As a collective, they are very focused on disseminating, spreading and communicating these ways of doing aimed at sustainability and care from a

perspective that respects nature and people.

La Madre Monte would like to put the Canary Islands at the centre, looking inwards and questioning their own Canarian identity: who they are and where they come from. The Canary Islands is an amalgam of cultures, races and mixed nationalities, with a population of over 2,000,000 inhabitants,” they say. That is why their focus right now is directed towards how to devise other forms of financing to be able to move projects forward, or to build and facilitate new forms of collaboration, devising new ways of creating and building together in diversity and from the local.

The next step for *La Madre Monte* is to establish and activate a physical space for them, and other collectives or people who live or work in the rural environment, to make use and develop artistic projects. This physical place would be located on the La Esperanza mountain, where Irene lives. They are currently in the process of creating and designing a space for self-care, both on a personal and professional level, which can be projected outwards in specific activities. Their final objective would be for this space to facilitate encounters with other people and local projects and to develop them together in order to generate effective care networks among the Canarian agents working on artistic mediation projects in rural areas.

Experimenta La Plaza THE NEED TO MEET AND FIND EACH OTHER Susana

Susana has been working as a cultural manager linked to the rural environment almost since the beginning of her career. She was born in Madrid, and her parents and grandparents are all from the city. For her, it has been a challenge and a learning process to adapt to life in a rural environment, not having been able to do it with her family from childhood, so she has had to adjust little by little. Choosing the rural environment as a way of life has changed her perspective, allowing her to slow down and to value her time and living space much more, as well as appreciating the silence and the ability to need very little to be well and have a good quality of life.

The *Colectivo Lento*, a creative group linked to the rural environment, cultural management and the plastic arts, is formed by Susana and her life partner, Rafael; they have been living in the Canary

Islands since 2014. Other people have joined and left the collective over the years. They have very young children, and for this reason their artistic interests in the rural environment are combined with personal interests that have to do with upbringing in the early years of life and the reexamination of the view of childhood from the rural setting. For Susana, it is essential to seek an integrating culture that generates meeting and relationship spaces, because, as she says, “it is from there that life arises and friendships, personal relationships, proposals, projects, new families are generated, in short, a community is created”.

After several years of living in the municipality of Puntagorda, on the island of La Palma, the *Experimenta la Plaza* project was born with the aim to revive the social and cultural dynamics through processes of encounter and relationship in the squares of the municipalities in the north of the island. These squares are aesthetically very beautiful, they say, but they do not have much activity, so they decided to bring them back to life and claim the use of these public meeting places through contemporary culture and creation.

Susana admits that it is precisely the local people who still “elude them”. However, they have had some experience of effective outreach in the educational environment, especially in the class of their eldest son (who is four years old), where they managed to influence the local population through the classroom, but, as she tells us, “it is a very complicated process”. During the development of the *Experimenta la Plaza* project, which had a high level of participation, only one family from La Palma signed up, she regrets.

For this reason, Susana is considering developing a process that could really help to grow these relationships a little more, as according to her experience, people from outside are more interested in culture and contemporary creation than local people. It is necessary to investigate how they can make an impact, as reaching out to local people is fundamental in this type of mediation process. On one occasion, in fact, they tried to reflect on the issue during a workshop for *Experimenta la Plaza*, and the only person from the village who was present told them that “those meeting spaces that they wanted to facilitate and create already existed, and local people were not interested at all, as what they want is to go to Los Llanos [which is the nearest “urban” space], where they can see things or participate in other types of activities”.

Susana’s way of developing projects in rural areas is based, first of all, on generating a link through the use of different methodologies to meet people



Experimenta
La Plaza.

and to allow for a prior interpersonal relationship that facilitates the process. The idea is to offer a return, something that enriches them, so it does not seem as if they are just trying to retrieve information from them. Susana is clear that it is through closeness and bonding that these barriers could be broken, and that it is through creative and cultural proposals that this exchange could be generated.

Regarding the way to attract public in rural areas, she believes that the best way is face-to-face contact and that “the trick is that you speak, they listen to you, the links are generated in the communication”. As they have only started working with people in La Palma a few years ago, they have not yet evaluated the impact of their interventions on the local population, although this is something they would like to be able to do and develop as a methodological tool over time. Included from the beginning in the *Experimenta la Plaza* project was the objective of creating a group of people from the village to promote these meeting places in a participatory way, so that, somehow, how the process is evolving could be collected through different diagnoses.

Susana feels that the institutions, especially town councils, are not protecting the traditional culture of life in the countryside and the focus is constantly on the elderly, idealising the way they used to live in the past, when the reality is that not all people who live and lived in the countryside have the same perception. *Colectivo Lento* has had a very good relationship with the Cabildo of Tenerife and the Town Council of Puntagorda, and not so good with the Town Council of Garafía. Their reading is that the pandemic generated fears of creating meeting places. They are beginning to establish a link with the Cabildo de La Palma; they

have not yet been able to establish direct contact with the Canary Islands Government, as they have no office in an island as small as La Palma.

To conclude, she considers that the place where they are and live right now, especially in times of pandemic, is a real privilege: "But it is also true that those who come from outside value it very much and the people who have lived there all their lives are more ambivalent, valuing and appreciating their environment, but also experiencing the tension of seeing what is outside as something negative that invades them". Susana believes that many things are being lost because they are not given their right value, and this makes her wonder whether people from outside will be the ones responsible for giving them their lost value.

Isla de Ferro. The poetics of island colours

THE POWER OF HOPE

Alexis

Alexis W was born on the island of El Hierro in 1972 in a context where the way of life depended on the relationship and balance with the countryside and food self-sufficiency. At home they had a donkey and four goats, and he still remembers milking them before going to school, or how they planted barley with which his mother made the *gofio* that was an important part of their diet.

Alexis is now a self-taught photographer who loves shared creative experiences, and who learned his work through the eyes of others, through their contributions. He does not work with certainties, but firmly believes in the power of hope and, after many years living in Madrid, he decided seven years ago that El Hierro was the place where he wanted to live and where he wants to project himself professionally. Alexis was always brought up to love his people and his island, and what motivates him most is, apart from his personal involvement, the fact that El Hierro is a worldwide reference for sustainability where practically 80% of its territory is protected, where "anything is possible".

Isla de Ferro is a project promoted by this Canarian artist, that arose from the moment he was told about the knowledge and use of a colour discovered in a pit on the island of La Palma. From then on, he began to reflect on the possibilities that the application of this colour could offer as an activator of consciences within a project linked to the idea of a sustainable island.

Isla de Ferro is a chromatic range achieved through a process of oxidation. According to Alexis, "the texture of this product is like sea salt, emerald green in colour, and when a stamp is taken and dissolved or diluted in water and is applied with a brush or a sulphating machine on the cement, it generates a chemical reaction. The iron sulphate deposited on the cement transforms its colour to reddish, yellow, orange, ochre...".

When he began to map out the chromatic range of this colour, he discovered a coincidence: "this whole range," he said, "is reproduced in the Herreño landscape, in the road cuts, in the mountains, in the *lajiales*...". From this moment on, he realised that it could be a marvellous tool to confront the current need of the islands to save the landscape and a territory visually deteriorated by the stains of cement and its uncontrolled use. For him, the interesting thing is that, when this process of oxidation is applied to the cement, the colours of the landscape are being incorporated into this deteriorated space, and at the same time, the imposition of a colour is avoided. Alexis then began to transmit all this knowledge and potential to the neighbours, until the moment came when he realised that, through this tool, if incorporated into the strategy of the administrations, great things could be done. And the fact is," he continues, "with a single 20 kg bag, which costs €9, you can paint approximately two tennis courts, so the level of performance is very high with a very low budget".

The three lines of work and intervention of the *Isla de Ferro* project are:

① The high-brow universe, where the discourse on the poetics of the island's colours is theorised with the involvement of the School of Architecture of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the Environment Department of the *Caibido* de El Hierro. Also, a team has been set up to carry out research work and map out and dissect by zones the entire territory. They have managed to gather 18 texts related to the colours of the island of El Hierro and have discovered a 30-page linguistic study in which Maximiano Trapero talks about how the Herreño shepherds had their own nomenclature for naming animals based on the colours of the goats.

② Direct work with people or institutions that have a responsibility towards the territory. The aim of this work is to transmit the knowledge acquired in an effort to jointly develop an island project through the poetics of island colours. Generating our own "pantone" from which to dream of the island as a great watercolour that is painted by



“Pantone Ferro” e
intervención “Amar la isla”
proyecto Isla de Ferro.

everyone in a context such as El Hierro, where the human and geographical scale allows us to work with the premise that everything is possible there. Institutions such as the Tourism Department of the Cabildo of El Hierro, saw the results and possibilities of the project, and understood that it could be a very good tool to invite visitors and locals to experience and rediscover the island through the poetics of colours. The politician doesn't have to understand your language - you have to adapt it, Alexis says. They also work by involving and inviting all people from El Hierro, the Canary Islands or outside the islands with the sensibilities or professions suited to join the project with the aim of preserving the territory of El Hierro.

③ Direct action with neighbours, the most important part, according to Alexis. If there is no interaction with neighbours and no formulas are found to involve, excite and bring the language of the island project closer to them, nothing is achieved, he concludes.

In his own words, *Isla de Ferro* is a project for everyone, an island project and a project full of enthusiasm in which Alexis is simply a transmitter of knowledge, and now a kind of coordinator or manager, whose job is to create synergies, meetings and build bridges between people and institutions.

Isla de Ferro is therefore also a tool that with the capacity to involve the neighbours, incorporating them into the community project and making them aware of the need to maintain and care for the environment, while generating an aesthetic debate among them.

It is a personal, non-profit project, in which the money for its financing could be requested from the institutions once it has been set up, “but it is not really even necessary,” says Alexis, “because it is already rolling on its own”. The aim of the *Isla de Ferro* project, in short, is to recover as much of the deteriorated territory as possible.

The differentiating element of *Isla de Ferro* is that it wants to project the island's natural heritage and its avant-garde tourism model based on the rural memory directly linked to the primary sector. Although the project is being developed on the island of El Hierro, Alexis would like to take it beyond the island context and reach the rest of the islands, as the issues it addresses are common to all of them.

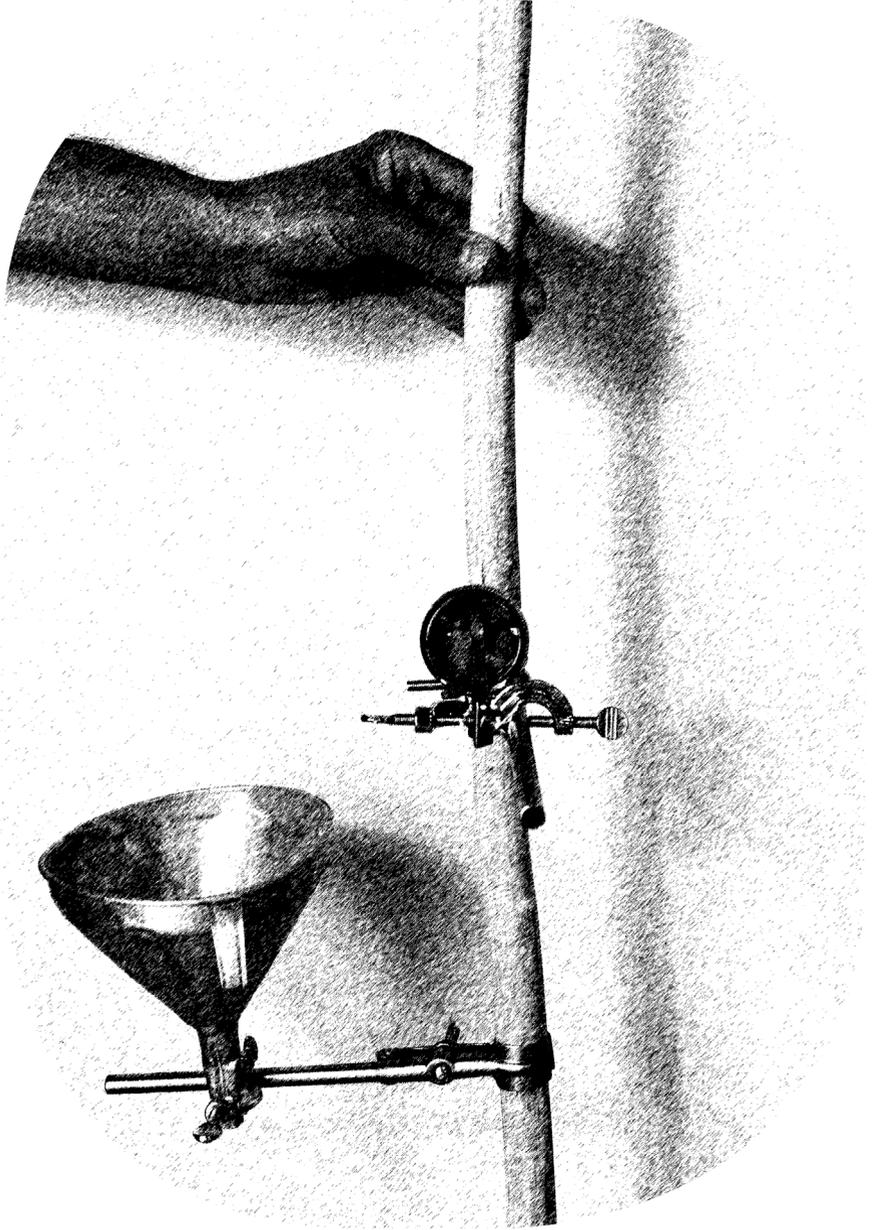
CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the projects and institutions interviewed:

- It is clear that there is no homogeneity in the methodological approach to the rural environment or to working with the people who live there. There does seem to be a certain generalisation of “learning by doing” and also an interest in learning from local and traditional ways of doing things.
- Only one of the projects interviewed carried out an analysis of the carbon footprint generated by its events. This tells us of the impossibility of verifying the sustainability of the projects in terms of their impact on the environment.
- All projects advocate the creation of meeting places between traditional and contemporary culture, not only in the development of their artistic proposals, but also as a way of bringing these two visions to a wider public.
- It is necessary to seek the self-sufficiency of the projects in the very environments in which they are developed, facilitating their continuity, as the sensitive nature of the proposals themselves can cause them to collapse at any moment if there is no solid support from the community.
- There is a very rapid ageing of the traditional population centres in the Canary Islands, and there is no generational replacement in certain types of arts and crafts, which are being lost.
- Although there are different experiences in terms of the relationship with the institutions, it is necessary to stop leaning exclusively on their funding and support, as this will always depend on the particular interests of each administration or whoever is able or willing to provide resources. At the same time, there is also a need for institutions to provide other forms of grants or collaboration than just agreements, minor contracts or tenders.
- All projects point out that the excessive politicisation of culture makes it very difficult to maintain them from one legislature to the next, and they ask that the timing of these projects be respected, regardless of who is in government. They also call for a lesser orientation of cultural policies aimed at the elite or designed only for urban areas, and more support for projects aimed at rural areas.
- Institutions need to understand that the dissemination of traditional culture is not at odds with the new artistic languages, and that this symbiosis can be very positive for both.
- Some project promoters point out that it is necessary to stop idealising life and work in the countryside, as everyone has a different experience of it.
- Several projects have enjoyed the support, subsidies and collaboration of institutions in other areas, not only cultural, but also in the areas of tourism, sustainability, environment and rural development.
- Several projects have had to gain the legal status of “association” in order to apply for grants, but it is not clear whether this form would be the ideal one to deal with the administration and management of artistic and cultural mediation projects in rural areas.
- Covid has exposed culture not only from an artistic perspective, but also from the precarious situation of the artist, who has no protection whatsoever. The precariousness of employment and the current lack of a legal framework to protect them, both from the regional and state governments, makes the professional work of cultural mediators very difficult.
- The artistic sector, and more specifically that linked to artistic and cultural mediation in rural areas in the Canary Islands, is very disconnected and hardly knows each other, so it cannot lobby or have any specific weight with the institutions. This fact highlights the need to generate and organise a network of professionals in the field in the islands.

RECIPES

Aperos inútiles, [Useless farming tools] ... as use(less) as playing.
Virginia López, 2019.
Reminder tutor: times are not marked by the clock, the microscopic gaze of the farmer is needed, observe the skies, listen to the bird that announces the rain, collect every little drop of water...

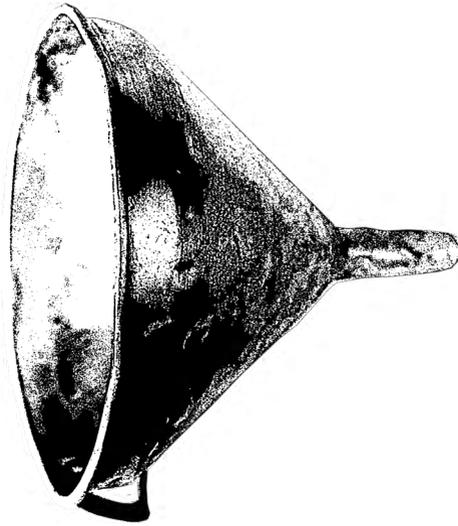


Caravane Tighmert

Oasis de Tighmert -Morocco.
 Carlos Pérez, Mohamed Arejda, M'barek Bouhchichi, the Asociación Los Amigos del Festival Caravane Tighmert and the research platform Marsad Drâa.
caravanetighmert@gmail.com
<https://caravanetighmert.weebly.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2015.

INGREDIENTS: Caravane Tighmert is a contemporary artistic laboratory in the desert, working around the culture and current reality of the Tighmert oasis in southern Morocco.
UTENSILS: Caravane Tighmert is a platform for artistic research that puts artists in contact with the people of the oasis, where the key aspect is that the artists themselves get to know first-hand the daily life of the inhabitants and experience their knowledge of the desert. This approach is proposed from the creation of workshops, through artistic creation with the elements found in the oasis itself, or from "doing nothing" —simply listening, watching and learning about life in the desert—.
DINERS: People of the Tighmert oasis, desert nomads and national and international artists of all disciplines.



Canary Islands End To End

Gran Canaria.
 Manuel Cabezudo (Asociación Atlas).
manuelcabezudo@gmail.com
<facebook/asociacionatlascalgrancanaria>

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: Horizontal knowledge exchange process with the people who live in the towns and villages of the Canary Islands connected by the GR-131 trail, a 550 km long route that runs from the island of La Graciosa to the island of El Hierro.

UTENSILS: The different trips they have made along the GR-131 route over the years (and which have been materialised in a photobook) have served as an informative resource of the path, as well as an island interconnection that generates dialogue with the territory and its people in a process of self-affirmation of the Canarian identity based on sharing the reality of each municipality and village along the way.

DINERS: Population of the different municipalities of the Canary Islands, associations and cultural spaces.

Crecer con la Tierra

Tenerife (Canary Islands).
 Gloria Peña.
creacentierra@gmail.com
<instagram/gloria.sombra>

COOKING TIME: Since 2018.

INGREDIENTS: *Crecer con la Tierra* is a collective learning process based on bio-construction, art and permaculture.

UTENSILS: The activities are of a practical nature, with a strong emphasis on learning through direct experience, contact with natural materials and their use in everyday life.

DINERS: General population, students, construction professionals and groups at risk of social exclusion.

Territorio Imaginario

Puerto del Rosario (Fuerteventura).
 Silverio López (Asociación Territorio Imaginario). Atalaya de La Rosa Taro.
fuerterrural@gmail.com
<https://territorioimaginario.blogspot.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 1996.

INGREDIENTS: An associative project and open space dedicated to the recovery and dissemination of traditional pottery, the development of art and nature encounters based on commitment and care for the environment, as well as work in the field based on a relationship of coexistence between craftsmanship, art and nature.

UTENSILS: Workshops, talks, courses and other activities such as round tables, conferences, seminars and all kinds of educational and research activities, exhibitions, etc., have been held in the space. (The Territorio Imaginario project is currently pending re-development).

DINERS: The population of Fuerteventura and visitors, as well as institutes and schools on the island, artists, organisations, collectives and researchers.

Las Paradas

Gran Canaria.
Pablo de Rada (Asociación La Parada)
a.laparadagc@gmail.com
[facebook/laparadagc](https://facebook.com/laparadagc)

COOKING TIME: Since 2018.
INGREDIENTS: Artistic initiative of intervention in the rural environment through stage proposals in natural spaces, promoting art in other formats and spaces from a respectful approach to nature.

UTENSILS: Las Paradas are events in which the audience is taken by bus to the rural space where they will take place without any prior information about what is going to happen. The idea is to bring the rural environment closer to the performing arts audience by generating new and surprising exhibition spaces in nature with the commitment to leave the environment always better than they found it.

DINERS: Rural population, artists in the performing arts and general public.



La Furgoneta Fantástica

La Gomera and Tenerife. Canary Islands.
furgonetafantastica@gmail.com
<https://lafurgonetafantastica.blogspot.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2011.
INGREDIENTS: Itinerant socio-educational life project linked to dissemination, didactics and learning processes related to artistic and heritage education, making use of heritage as a tool for personal growth and reinforcement of the sense of community and people's health and wellbeing.
UTENSILS: They generate dynamics of social participation of an intergenerational nature through play, expression and creativity workshops, facilitating the development of affective links between neighbours and their territory. Its methodological foundation is based on learning processes in coexistence, as well as on the principles of *Educación Creativa*, with the premise of facilitating spaces for creation free of judgement and role models.
DINERS: Neighbours of all ages from areas less favoured by the usual circuits of cultural programming on the islands of La Gomera and Tenerife.

Isla de Ferro. The poetics of island colours.

El Hierro. (Canary Islands).
Alexis W.
isladeferro@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2011.
INGREDIENTS: A project of collective enthusiasm that is proposed as a tool to confront the need in the Canary Islands to save the landscape and the territory deteriorated by cement stains and its uncontrolled use.

UTENSILS: *Isla de Ferro* is a chromatic range produced through a process of oxidation, with a discourse based on the poetics of the island's colours. A research work mapping the territory and involving the institutions and neighbours of El Hierro for the projection of the island's natural heritage based on the rural memory directly linked to its primary sector.

DINERS: CResidents and visitors to the island of El Hierro, public institutions, businesses, educational institutions and researchers.



Rural Creation Festival of Las Eras de El Tablero

El Tablero, Tenerife. (Canary Islands).
Felipe Díaz (Asociación Las Eras de El Tablero).
festivallaserasdeeltablero@gmail.com
<https://www.festivalruralaserasdeeltablero.es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2010.

INGREDIENTS: The mission of the *Festival Rural de Creación de Las Eras de El Tablero* is to add value to the village of El Tablero by promoting and bringing contemporary art closer to its neighbours, as well as generating interest in visitors, through the use of its old working fields as stages for art.

UTENSILS: During the Festival, interpretative routes through the village and seminars are held, to which academics and researchers are invited to carry out studies and to contribute ideas on the ground, as well as the residents themselves, who also participate with their ideas, stories and proposals. There are also artistic murals and activities throughout El Tablero, such as literary presentations, storytelling, music, theatre and dance activities.

DINERS: Population of El Tablero, visitors to the village, artists and researchers.

★ LIST OF PROJECTS
THAT HAVE NOT BEEN INTERVIEWED

Osa Polar

La Palma (Canary Islands).
Osa Polar Creation and Coexistence Space.
<https://festivaldelmonte.com/>

Festival Millo

Tenerife (Canary Islands).
Network platform that generates projects related to Culture, Art, Entrepreneurship and Ecology (Tenerife).
<https://lawebdemillo.com/>

Experimenta La Plaza

La Palma (Canary Islands).
Susana Gutiérrez and Rafael Martínez (Colectivo Lento).
experimentalplaza@gmail.com
<https://experimentalplaza.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2020.

INGREDIENTS: An inclusive initiative of social and cultural dynamisation that generates meeting and relationship spaces in the squares of the municipalities in the north of the island of La Palma.

UTENSILS: A Experimenta La Plaza, through the development of open contemporary artistic and informative processes, aims to bring to life and generate community and reflection on childhood, care, village life and the family.

DINERS: Residents of the north of the island of La Palma, general public, artists and artistic collectives.

La Madre Monte

La Esperanza, Tenerife. (Canary Islands).
Fidel Darias, Rocio Eslava and Irene Sanfiel (Asociación La Madre Monte).
casadartistes@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2015.

INGREDIENTS: Collective project focused on generating spaces for meeting and communication in the countryside through art by promoting sustainability and care from a perspective that respects both nature and people.

UTENSILS: Its work methodology is based on the use of contemporary artistic language to approach the rural environment and its traditions from an intergenerational perspective, making specific use of audiovisual language as a tool to bring these stories and realities to new audiences.

DINERS: Rural population, general public, students, researchers, artists and artistic collectives from all disciplines, public institutions and the business world committed to sustainability and care for the environment.

La Madre Monte

La Madre Monte are Fidel Darias Arenas (from the countryside I have the aroma of oak and the hardness of the quarries with which my great-grandmothers Faustina and Virgilio built their home together in the village of Primajas more than 100 years ago) and Irene Sanfiel (I have trained in cultural management and I dream with my feet on the ground, feeling every trace of clay, seeds and pine needles that runs through the mountains of the town of La Esperanza in Tenerife, where I have come to live, like a goat, in the mountains. to bring art and the countryside closer through artistic proposals of live arts).

<http://lamadremonte.com/>



*"Canary Islands End-to-End".
fotografía de Amalia Márquez.*

MEDITERRANEAN AREA



mediterranean area

Almería

Murcia

Valencian Community

Catalonia

Balearic Islands

MEDITERRANEAN AREA



Campo Adentro/Inland

Invited by *El Cubo Verde*, we, at *Campo Adentro/Inland*, immersed ourselves in a journey that would undoubtedly be unforgettable. Thanks to their knowledge, their way of doing things, but above all, thanks to the people who selflessly welcomed us in their centres in Almería, Murcia, Valencia, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. These words that you are about to read are an attempt to transmit what we learned in this process, although it is difficult to put down on paper all the experiences and warmth they gave us in their homes.

Day 1: Desert, sea, valley

It's 09 a.m. and we start walking through the desert in a south-easterly direction. Far from being reminiscent of a Western, we soon catch a glimpse of a white glow which, at the end of a steep climb, surprises us with an endless layer of immaculate plastic stretching for miles at both sides. We continue walking in the same direction and leave the greenhouses behind us. Now everything is an arid landscape. But, in the background, we begin to glimpse the blue of the sea. After a while, we pass by a large old olive tree. Later on, we discover that it was a thousand-year-old specimen. We finally reach our first stop: **Aguamarga**. We are in the Cabo de Gata-Níjar Park. Javier V. welcomes us,

reciting Joaquín Araújo. "There is no culture without nature. But there can be, there is and there always was nature without culture. That is why preserving nature is more than anything else, a cultural act". He manages *Aguamarga Arte Cultura y Educación*, and is optimistic about the future of the project after the health crisis. Despite not having been able to publish a call for entries in 2020 and not intending to do so this year, and thanks to the support of the *Cultura Viva* prize from the Cruzcampo Foundation, during the "annus horribilis" he was able to nourish the project's website with content based on the idea of leaving an imprint. Thus, he was able to write a report of the project through the testimonies of all the artists who participated in the first edition, either through residencies or through parallel workshops. *Aguamarga Arte Cultura y Educación* exists thanks to a network of alliances between the private sector, the public administration and non-profit associations. Coordinated by *BUM Creaciones*, a production and publishing company directed by Javier himself, the project got underway in 2019, after two years of field work by the people who set it up; it was clear from the beginning that the philosophy they wanted to follow was to count on and engage the local people, the people who are really living in the environment of the natural park. Without a legislative framework to facilitate the public financing of the project, a private com-

[editor's note,
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"Natural
Convergents" project
by María Matas and
Daniel Ausens,
Aguamarga, 2019.



pany was able to provide an apartment for them at a cost well below the market price. His love for the territory and seeing how it has been transformed over the years meant that he did not mind that, from a business point of view, his idea turned into something fully philanthropic. Quoting Machado, he assures us that it is foolish to confuse value and price, and in Aguamarga there are things that are not quantifiable, that have no price and that must be valued for what they are.

Javier's personal motivation, his love for the territory, is directly linked to an environmental problem that we have been observing before arriving at the first stop on our journey. Our cultural manager from Almeria has seen the transformation of the landscape from the 1970s to the present day with intensive farming produced in greenhouses, under plastic. His greatest concern is the amount of waste that this generates and how it reaches the sea through ravines and rivers; and, as the sea, the wind and the land do not understand boundaries, he sees the need to take care not only of the areas that are protected, but, as he says, "you have to be extremely careful from the door of your house inwards and outwards". To do this, his clear tool is education, which is why he enlisted the help of Sofía de Juan, Irene Pomar and Eva Sanguino and set up the art and education side of *Aguamarga*, working the first year with the schools of Campo Hermoso, Carbonera and even other areas of Almería, such as the Alhadra Institute.

Keeping these pillars of art, education and nature in balance, the project has decided to open up "a little further afield, along the entire coastline of the province and a little beyond the border of the park, precisely because the park already has its own protection".

During our conversations with Javier, one major concern that transpires about the project is its sustainability in time. He is aware that the philosophy will endure, but has doubts about being able to maintain a public call for entries with the same characteristics as in the first year. He talks to us about artists who were selected in the first edition and who, to this day, continue to live in *Aguamarga* and do workshops there. And this remaining stamp endures thanks to the philosophy that permeated the whole project: it was clear that it couldn't be done without the people there, "it is absurd to do a project of these characteristics without listening to the territory, and the human territory".

He also talks about other key issues for the project, such as coherence with the materials when developing artistic projects: not just any material will do, it is necessary that the artworks do not leave traces that could condition the landscape and the environment. It is from this perspective that we can confirm that they work with the ephemeral: for the people who stir Aguamarga, it is more important what happens to the person than generating something that can remain for posterity; the work really has to permeate throughout people. And for Javier, the best tool to achieve this is the landscape and the territory, an arid, mining landscape hiding a great secret when reaching the beach: below Mesa Roldán there is a biosphere protection area where we can find the *posidonia* meadows that every dawn fill the beach of Aguamarga of rhizomes of a plant so important that it can generate three times more oxygen than the Amazon.

We recharge our batteries by the sea and decide to continue our journey along the coast for a while, gradually heading inland. Heading North,

we start to see a semi-desert landscape, until an unexpected valley opens up below us: the Segura River rules the landscape of our next stop. We are in Blanca, Murcia, and we don't even have to dive right into the streets of the town. **The Centro Negra**, run by the **AADK collective**, is in the last ring of the village, close to the mountain. Giuliana Grippo welcomes us there.

The *Centro Negra* began its activity in 2012, when Abram Hurtado, one of the founders of the AADK platform, received funding to generate a series of interventions in the town of Blanca: sort of blind dates with artists whom he invited to carry out an action in situ, linked to the context and for the duration of a week. The project was developed for two years and when the funding they had available ended, it was proposed to create the residency centre, among other things, because the Town Hall wanted to continue with the use of the building. In contrast to our previous location, Giuliana emphasises their good relationship with the public administration, mainly through the loaning of spaces (punctually and regularly).

The AADK collective has often gone out of the *Centro Negra*, on Museum Day or on local and regional festivities; they have organised series of talks at the Pedro Cano Foundation, one of the main art centres at a regional level, etc. However, at an economic level, the main pillar of funding for the *Centro Negra* is the residency programme, occasionally complemented by grants from entities such as the Carasso Foundation. In terms of users, Blanca has the particularity of being a small municipality, which, added to the support from the town council, makes the response from the neighbours very good. So much so that, reacting to the difficulty that the older residents of the village had in getting to the *Centro Negra*, this year they have developed an exhibition plan in the centre of the village, in an old fruit warehouse: Open Studios introduced by the residents after prior work with them in meetings, discussing the works, etc. In part, this new format was born as a response to the situation in which the health crisis left the *Centro Negra*, mainly nourished by the residencies of international artists and whose nature, they decided, could not shift 100% to the digital format; and as Giuliana tells us, due to the type of project, the surroundings and the links that nourish the space, it was important to them that the physical presence could continue to be there.

It seems that with this redirection they sought to complement the research programme with a pro-

duction programme also aimed at local creators. Not only artists with an experimental or research approach, but all kinds of creators, providing spaces for meetings and strengthening links.

Centro Negra, and the AADK collective in general, is a project in constant growth and mutation: nobody on the platform expected it to take on the dimensions that they currently understand it to have. It went from being a fairly one-off project, with a two-year grant, which is what triggered the idea of being here in Blanca, to having the space, and from there continuing to grow and move towards new projects and sensibilities. The collective also grew in number (6 people now form the platform), and a series of complementary programmes began to be generated: in addition to the residencies, festivals, sound programmes, different actions, some on-site specific, some that last longer in time. But, above all, began to consolidate a network of collaborators: more than 300 artists have already passed through *Centro Negra*.

Far from limiting themselves to contemporary art, exhibitions, etc., *Centro Negra* and the AADK platform focus their ethos on the "glocal", which is why, as they say, drop by drop, day by day, they are permeating the town. In *Centro Negra* we can find artists who decide to work with neighbours in the community, others who decide to develop their project in schools with the children, other artists go on a walk, etc. In addition, the team is always there, so that a link from *Centro Negra* is generated day by day, from shopping at the market and chatting with the neighbours to the different artistic interventions. This also means that the programme does not feel like something "imposed" or closed, but rather that *Centro Negra* is completely open to new ideas and each person who arrives feels that has something to contribute. There is no a single recipe and if there is something specific about the AADK platform is that they are very adaptable and changeable. There are no great ideologies, there are no great projects to look at. It is the collaborators, friends, people who pass through *Centro Negra*, who the managers look to; they believe "that this type of initiative so linked to one context is difficult to extrapolate to others". Before continuing our journey, we decide to take advantage of the coolness of the valley to rest.

The next stage has a very different landscape and projects to those we have visited so far. We enter Valencia, land of orange trees; and we start in a unique village: Carrícola.

the artistic intervention allows for learning to be experiential, fun, unique and rich in local cultural references.

En Carrícola, desde los años 80, se lleva apostando por proyectos sostenibles y todo mediante una modelica gestión pública e implicación vecinal. Desde este compromiso y vínculo con el entorno ambiental, surge en el 2010 *Biodivers*: itinerarios artísticos con obras integradas en el paisaje.

Image: *El camperol* by Antoni Miró. *Biodivers*.



Day 2: Land of orange trees

Carrícola is and is not a project. Nor a centre. To speak of Carrícola is to speak of the most ecological village in the Comunidad Valenciana, and of a village that breathes fresh air. This municipality in the Vall d'Albaida, located in the shadow of the Benicadell, chose its own path many years ago: the survival of a small rural municipality in harmony with the environment. Carrícola, since the 1980s, has been committed to sustainable projects through a model with the engagement of the neighbourhood, worked out diachronically with very measured initiatives, unhurriedly and at street level. Waste management, the use of waste water, etc. are some of the areas where Carrícola is a role model for public management. For this town, the separation of organic matter when collecting waste for subsequent composting is nothing new. The water is managed in a completely natural way, by means of a phyto-purification procedure based on the action of plants and gravel in artificial wetlands and ponds at different levels; this avoids odours and noise, and the "purification plant" is completely integrated into the landscape, with a children's playground next to it. All this in a municipality of less than 100 inhabitants, whose governing team rejected allowances and paid expenses in favour of a larger budget margin for the council.

Carrícola launched **Biodivers** in 2010, one of their most emblematic projects, possibly best known for its enormous visual appeal. Arising from commitment and connection with the environment, it generated artistic itineraries with artworks integrated into the landscape. Susana, the

town's mayor, tells us that there are interventions from that first edition in 2010 that have deteriorated or have been integrated into the environment, but some others in the urban environment have become iconic. The town council has had to reprint maps of that edition, to their surprise (they didn't even expect to sell out the first print run). The invitation brought together up to fifty-seven artists in the first edition and twenty-seven in the second (2015) who created and distributed their artistic interventions both in the municipality and in the surrounding natural landscapes, with an aesthetic, respectful and coherent vision.

The wealth of *Biodivers* lies in the fact that, in its context, art works as a tool to revitalise the territory in several ways: firstly, it revalues the natural and architectural environment, preventing its oblivion and degradation by recovering disused areas that are now *Biodivers* routes. Secondly, many of the works are based on the wishes and specific knowledge of the inhabitants themselves, who become protagonists and/or co-creators. This collaboration strengthens their connection to the works and their identity as they participate and share their own story. As a result of the programme, a number of complementary programmes have emerged. The most relevant is probably the educational collective of local people, the *Fardatxo*, which aims to raise awareness of the municipality, its natural environment, its heritage and organic farming, focussing its programme on the sculpture park. Every year, dozens of schools and institutes visit the three signposted circuits mapped in *Biodivers*: the water paths, the urban circuit and the path of the ravine and the castle. In this way, the artistic intervention allows for learning to be experiential, fun, unique and rich in local



"La Pantaná", Centre Habitare.



cultural references. Its programmes for children and young people promote a change of attitude towards the environment, strengthen the capacity for observation, empathy and awaken artistic skills while encouraging responsible consumption habits, ecological agriculture and critical and supportive thinking.

Highlighting the local heritage has also been one of the main lines of work in a municipality that is surprising, considering its small size, for the quantity and variety of initiatives. In this sense, the recovery and refurbishment of the Paratge Natural Municipal de les Arcades stands out, recovering the hydraulic heritage, with aqueducts from the Islamic period and other irrigation systems.

We should point out the public nature of the entire *Biodivers* project, and of *Carrícola* in general, regarding funding. Being a village of just over 90 residents, all the activity was and is generated by the public administration, even though the funding of a town council of such characteristics is quite scarce. In its first edition, they tried to obtain some subsidies from a higher body, but they did not have the capacity to subsequently assume the responsibilities required of them.

We don't have far to go to reach our next location. In Beneixida, Rafael T. is waiting for us to open the doors of **Centre Habitare**, a project that rises from a space with renewed uses. Starting

the project in the church of the old village, it aims to generate a series of routes and interventions (workshops, conferences, lectures) to encourage discussion about both the present and the past of the village. In 1982 took place one of the biggest catastrophes that has affected the territory, when torrential rain (*gota fría*) and the negligence of the Tous dam and reservoir project coincided: some 200,000 people were displaced from their homes in Beneixida since the old houses where they lived had been built without foundations. Later, after years of struggle, the village was rebuilt, but the engineers planned the new village in a different location. The people did not want to move there, but they had to make do, says our host.

Urged by the COVID, but developing an idea that they had been thinking about for some time, they decided to work with the imaginary of the people of Beneixida itself. For this reason, they have focussed their efforts on generating a series of routes that reflect on contemporary habitation. They decided to set themselves up as a cultural association, understanding that this formula allows them to have a better relationship with the public administration. Thanks to this, they receive a series of grants, although, as feared, the funding is not sensitive to the very specific nature of the project: to create a space for thinking about contemporaneity from a rural environment. They also complain about the University's lack of interest in the project, especially in comparison with other territories such as Castellón.

Centre Habitare rejects a folklorist vision of work in rural areas. They are looking for long-term projects. Once again, as we heard in Almería, we find a search and concern to leave a mark. This concern materialises in the transmission of knowledge, which is being lost as the patterns of subjectivity were associated with other power dynamics. Work in the fields is rejected, even stigmatised. Another problem that Centre Habitare and Rafael draw attention to is the disregard for the indigenous landscape, especially the riverside forest, which has been completely engulfed by farming that has multiplied in the area.



Mandarina Borda: vegan cheese.

Following the orange groves, a respected species but whose workers, according to what we are told, do not fare particularly well in the economic and productive system, we reach our last stop in Valencia. We find ourselves in Palmera, where we are welcomed by Enriqueta Rocher, from the **Mandarina Borda** association. From here, like a village of indomitable Gauls, she is committed to organic farming in the middle of an area full of orange monoculture for commercialisation, which, she says, leaves her in a difficult position when it comes to working with her town council.

Since 2013, she has been developing an *Art and Agroecology Show*, which has rarely had real and sufficient support from the local administration. In this exhibition she brings together different artists to reflect on and share, through their creations, the concept of ecosystem, understood as a process that is expressed from the singularity and that as a whole constitutes what we call "Nature", under the condition that this ecosystem is self-regulating and lacks pre-established laws by human beings. "We call this process life, so what interests us is how this life develops and is maintained, and what conditions make it possible".

The vital dimension that they give to agroecology is key to the projects developed by *Mandarina Borda*, hence the importance of the mandala garden, food (the link between landscape and body) and the concept of identity of place: "We understand landscape as a phenomenological construct that the subject elaborates through its interaction with the environment. Both the territory and the body become a place to the extent that we feel identified with it. But identification is not synonymous with identity; identification implies feeling the other as one's own, perceiving the resonance of the other in oneself, while identity would be the set of landscapes elaborated from multiple identifications".

"(...) identification implies feeling the other as one's own, perceiving the resonance of the other in oneself"

Enriqueta completes the programme with activities that focus on food: a culinary laboratory, where food is understood as an alchemical process that begins in the earth and develops through the five elements, the five seasons and the five senses, which, in conjunction with the climate, determine the state of a body's tissues. Periodically, they prepare menus based on one or two foods (wild or cultivated), developed through different flavours, textures, aromas, etc., and taking as references the traditional local cuisine, macrobiotics and energetic cuisine. Food that is in tune with the natural processes of life, with the aim of enriching the local recipe book and generating healthy eating habits.

With this approach, what better place to get your strength back after this second day of the Mediterranean route!

Day 3: Rapeseed, pine trees, ovens

After recovering our strength, and with a good basket of oranges, we continue our long journey. We have to reach the foothills of Montserrat, specifically El Bruc. Sophie awaits us in a huge, majestic Catalan farmhouse. Sophie is the director of the limited company that manages the **Can Serrat** space. Although she is a small businesswoman, the principles that rule the project, she tells us, are community, environmental sustainability and interculturality.



"Physis" series, water chromatography (pomegranate juice),
Enriqueta Rocher, 2017. Mandarinina Borda.



Mandala Orchard. Mandarinina Borda.



Can Serrat.



"Cartografía de sal" project by the artist Lucía Loren at CACiS during her residency in 2014.

The management model is mainly based on a continuous reflection on the needs of the people who inhabit or wish to inhabit the space, within the possibilities of the available equipment, and in close relationship with the territory. At the economic level, *Can Serrat* survives with an almost 50-50 balance between its own funding and public funding. Faced with the COVID-19 crisis, they were unable to offer their residencies to international artists, so they promoted a rural coliving service, opening rooms in the house to people who wanted to live in community and generating environmental sustainability projects at the foot of Montserrat. This, together with other activities such as a consumer cooperative and seminars and workshops, is helping them to get through the health crisis. *Can Serrat* receives financial support from the town council of El Bruc, with whom they have a very good relationship, as well as a subsidy from the Department of Culture of the Generalitat de Catalunya. They often receive aid from European funds and international institutions, depending on the annual collaboration projects in which they participate.

El Bruc, where *Can Serrat* is located, is a rural and urban environment at the same time: located between Manresa and Barcelona, the village can be easily reached by car or bus, but at the same time, this proximity gets on the way to generate its own strong identity in terms of cultural activities. The location means that we can even call El Bruc a “dormitory” town. In fact, the landscape combines elements typical of the rural environment (the agroforestry mosaic with scattered farmhouses such as *Can Serrat*, and some rural centers of historical origin), with elements more typical of peri-urban environments and of low landscape quality. Even so, in the village you can find several artisans and local producers, and we can see a large number of hectares of land worked by organic producers.

Oil is the main crop in El Bruc, and after many years almost abandoned, there are now several local producers working to recover and optimise their farms. The varieties that dominate in extension are the palomar, and above all the vera, both typical of this region and often unknown, even by the neighbours of El Bruc. Vineyards, in turn, have gone from being very important in Bruc in the mid-20th Century to being almost a token production, not even within the geographical scope of any D.O (Denomination of Origin). There are currently some small vineyards for family consumption, but most of them have been

abandoned. Montserrat Canudas, the farmer with whom *Can Serrat* collaborates, apart from having an incredible organic vegetable garden, is one of the last, if not the last in the local territory to cultivate *Sumoll* vines.

This ecological model is what interests the residents, managers and visitors to *Can Serrat*. The centre questions the very need to produce, and the purpose for which it is produced. Thus, they participate in the programme ‘Terra, Teca, Traca’, closely linked to local and sustainable agriculture, which is nothing more than an opportunity to reflect in a network, around Catalonia, around the dialogue between art, science, production and consumption, on rural and urban realities, their current dynamics and food for all. The project revolves around a series of artistic residencies in different rural areas of Catalonia in which actors from the fields of agriculture, livestock and fishing interact with artists and scientists, working together on the production of a travelling exhibition and a series of debates to reflect with the public on the present and future of the rural world and agri-food systems in the face of global environmental changes.

Terra, Teca, Traca

to reflect with the public on the present and future of the rural world and agri-food systems in the face of global environmental changes.

Leaving behind Montserrat, Manresa and this great place and location we reach the municipality of Calders and change the olive trees and vineyards for rapeseed crops and a much more industrial landscape. Our next stop is at **CACiS El Forn de la Calç**, where Rosé welcomes us. She manages a space based on ecology and heritage recovery. As for the landscape, she tells us that most of the crops are destined to produce biodiesel, which is why new industries are being set up in this area. Our hostess tells us that this is causing Calders to have an agricultural population totally dependent on European subsidies, while the landscape is being modified by large yellow colours or, if we think about paper to make money, brown.

Their space is located on a private estate, and was launched in 2007, when they decided to recover some old lime kilns, made with dry stone, a technique that requires periodic revisions. At that time there were major leaks and some of the kilns were in very bad condition. Rosé and her colleagues found no help other than a small contribution from Tourism and worked privately and individually. When they managed to solve the problem of the leaks and their structural stability, they decided to restore the most robust part of the building and create some spaces to host artists, because within their ecological philosophy they saw the need



“Parlant amb les pedres” by Stefan Cools at CACiS during his residency in 2010.

to recover a heritage asset and give it new uses. As a result, their space, *El Forn de la Calç*, is listed as a *Cultural Asset of Local Interest* and is included in the list of the 150 best elements of industrial heritage in Catalonia by the Department of Culture of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

CACiS summarises its activity in different areas: art, heritage and education; it is a centre for artistic production through international calls for proposals, where the projects selected must deal with sustainable models of economic development. Given that they understand art as a language that facilitates the understanding of more complex structures, they maintain a small exhibition room (where the majority of the projects carried out at the centre are shown) that complements an educational project that has been running for more than ten years: they open the centre for schools to visit, hold workshops and, as the centre is supported by an industrial heritage structure, they complement their programme with visits focused on heritage.

Financially, Rosé tells us that over time they have managed to reverse the initial situation of abandonment by the institutions with a strategy similar to the one used by the mine workers in the old days, which consists on a lot of stone-chopping and hard work. A long and committed process that has allowed them to gradually weave networks to disseminate these new thoughts, establish a dialogue with the local population in a horizontal and non-invasive way, and alliances and collaborations with the local councils in the area. In addition, they have received support from the county councils, and receive a yearly grant from the Generalitat de Catalunya.

Rosé strongly defends the existence of small spaces, as she believes that it is more sustainable to create a circular economy in a small space than to have to support large infrastructures with the expense that this entails (human resources, consumption, management). At CACiS they believe in spaces that are managed and self-managed, on a small scale, although with the work they do with schools they manage to reach the whole of Catalonia. Perhaps the key lies in mainstreaming their proposals; for CACiS contemporary art is nourished horizontally and dynamically by the context, connecting different fields of knowledge. In fact, they feel “very fond of fibrillating and feeling open to other disciplines and other elements”, as they understand that it is in this transversal work where the future really lies, without frontiers, without obstacles to the dialogue, facilitating richer processes and results.

Due to the health crisis, CACiS decided to close for the whole year. They had just finished two international calls in which the jury had already selected the resident artists, but due to the protocols and the health emergency, travel was not possible. Also, the schools were not able to visit either, in other words, there was no point in having the centre open. Rosé and the rest of the team have always thought of the project as something organic and saw that it was not possible to have a solid structure in a changing reality, but that they had to adapt to the different changes, especially when these changes imply climatic, economic or health changes. They took advantage of the hiatus to consider some reformulation and explore what they were doing well.

After visiting this unique and special space, with such interesting approach to heritage, we continue North, but don't travel very far, making another stop a few kilometres away: Avinyó, where we meet Quim, one of the people who manage **Cal Gras**. A non-profit organisation, under the umbrella of a hostel, this space is a house in a rural setting, open to research and cultural and artistic production, aiming to support creation. It also functions as a rural hostel, open to all those who want to enjoy tranquillity and coexistence in a creative environment, creating a node and meeting point for artists and, at the same time, serving as cultural providers in different spaces in the area.

Financially, its main challenge is to be a self-sufficient. Public aid covers one-off projects, with added difficulties since the residency concept is not taken into account. They receive very little aid for visual arts, but get a little more in the field of the performing arts, as they have a more obvious return. In short, it is the parallel work carried out by the people who make up the *Cal Gras* team that serves to pay for an important part of the project. *Cal Gras* also used the lapse due to the health emergency to rethink the project, but they continue to be clear about certain premises and ways of doing things: accompanying the artists they welcome throughout the development of their project, and having a calm outlook. Because at *Cal Gras* everything has a place: music, theatre, performance, literature, etc.

We decided to spend the night here. Tomorrow we fly to the islands. We will finish our trip in the Balearic Islands, visiting two enormously singular centres.

Final journey

We land in Menorca to conclude our trip. After a few days of unforgettable experiences, we still have an intense day ahead in which we can enjoy good documentaries and dance while savoring the sea breeze that wraps around us as soon as we arrive on the islands. We head straight to our first appointment: Es Mercadal, a town located (almost) in the centre of the island. There we are welcomed by Marina, one of the people who manages the **Es Far Cultural** association. This collective carries out different projects: a radio station with the aim of archiving the memory and intangible heritage of the island's villages, a documentary film festival and the management of residential spaces such as the one where we are staying: Casa D'Artistes.

Casa D'Artistes was set up in 2014 and is a space dedicated to art, training and research. They are not closed to any specific discipline, but their most thriving projects are a documentary film festival and a radio station.

No doubt the reason for this probably lies in the way they are forced to work in order to maintain the sustainability of their activities. Although they receive a fixed grant from the city council, it is a "practically ridiculous" contribution, so the rest of the public funding, they tell us, comes on a project-by-project basis. In this way, they move away from subsidies and their requirements. Regarding the radio, which seeks to maintain the history and oral memory linked to the villages of the island of Menorca, and thanks to the voluntary work of the people who make up the *Es Far Cultural* association, they have managed to move forward with a special form of financing: they have set up a trickle-down system. It is no coincidence that one of the principles that directs their ideology is that of cooperation. However, they are equally critical of the funding for culture in general on the islands. They tell us that there is no real public recognition of the work they carry out, probably due to the way in which the music circuit is given priority over other cultural manifestations, or how the management of the islands focuses on tourism. They also miss the existence of longer-term calls for proposals, and not just once a year. They distance themselves at all times from those cultural projects developed on the island which involve the sale of alcoholic beverages and/or have mass audiences as their target. At *Es Far Cultural*, they believe in change little by little and through small-format activities. This puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to funding (not direct aid) for festivals, the model they say prevails in the cultural sector in order to reduce costs and in which they would compete with, for example, *Atlántida Film Festival* de Filmin. Nor, we are told, is there any help for artist residency spaces, *Casa D'Artistes* being the only one on the island. At the Euro-regional level, they have managed to set up the "DeltArt" project thanks to collaboration with other entities in Occitania, which includes Northern Catalonia, Southern France, the Pyrenees, Montpellier and the Balearic Islands. This international aid allows them, for the first time, to work with funding for 2 or 3 years.

The location of the project on an island means that the regular public is the island's own residents, which requires a clear cooperation with their neighbours. Every artist and every person who stays at their centre is enriched by the environment, by the local context. They see the created synergies under the umbrella of *Es Far Cultural* more and more clearly. As far as we can see, the artists (or



Casa D'Artistes.
Es Far Cultural.

anyone who, like us, stays at the house) are surrounded by an air that smells of the sea, but also of the countryside; *Es Far Cultural* shares the estate with various organic producers, small livestock farmers and even hunting groups. Wine, milk, cheese, yoghurt and wine are some of the products that can be found in the face of the harsh reality that plagues the island, which is tourism. They firmly believe that their work, through practices such as contemporary art, represents an important bastion of resistance. One of the reasons for this is their remoteness from large urban centres such as Madrid or Barcelona, which act as a magnet and where culture is concentrated.

Apparently, the health crisis has not particularly affected them, apart from lowering expectations and changing dates, as *Casa D'Artistes* already came with an idea of change, of mutability. In fact, *Es Far Cultural* was born from an old association that already carried out cultural activism. With this as a starting point and taking up the work done with the territory, popular wisdom and the environment, they have always thought of themselves as a path, with a very ambitious or long-term objective: to go through culture, to be able to transform society and improve themselves with it. The projects developed by *Es Far Cultural* are born as much from the context as from the organisation itself: both, the realities of the island itself and the interests and feelings of the people in the association are the seed of the *Documentary Film Festival* or the *FAR radio station*. The fact that Marina and her colleagues are natives of

the island makes it impossible to ignore or avoid the development of this two way direction.

After exploring this interesting and all-encompassing project, we set off for the big island of Mallorca, to the village of María de la Salut. There, Maria Antonia welcomes us in one of the two halls that she manages from **EiMa**, a project that combines the management of spaces with research and creation in the performing arts. In addition, the cultural association that gives body to the project develops a dance festival that takes place during the month of August.

EiMa carries out its work in a former convent of nuns in the village, which has been loaned by the local council, together with electricity, water and internet. In fact, their relationship with the public administration goes beyond this, albeit at other levels. *EiMa's* main supporter, after the town hall where they are located, is the Teatro Principal de Palma, which is a great complement to the association in terms of direct funding, being part of the network of creative spaces that this institution supports.

EiMa's work focuses on accompanying the artist, the choreographer, the playwright, at all times, but without questioning or influencing their work. From *EiMa*, with the artists, they discuss networks, different dramaturgies, research, but leaving total freedom in terms of the production. Moreover, for this process, they also have the support of the Institute of Balearic Studies, a branch within

in the face of the harsh reality that plagues the island, which is tourism, they firmly believe that their work, through practices such as contemporary art, represents an important bastion of resistance.

the autonomous government that supports them in the parallel work they develop: the exchange of projects with other centres of similar characteristics such as *Espacio Azala*, in Álava or *L'Animal a L'Esquena* in Celra, Girona. In addition to all this, little by little they hope to open up to regional aid on a Latin-American level or within the *Creative Europe* programmes. The point is clear: *EiMa* does not want to cover more than its own reality allows, since the association's permanent team is made up of only three people, although the number of collaborators grows from time to time during the festival.

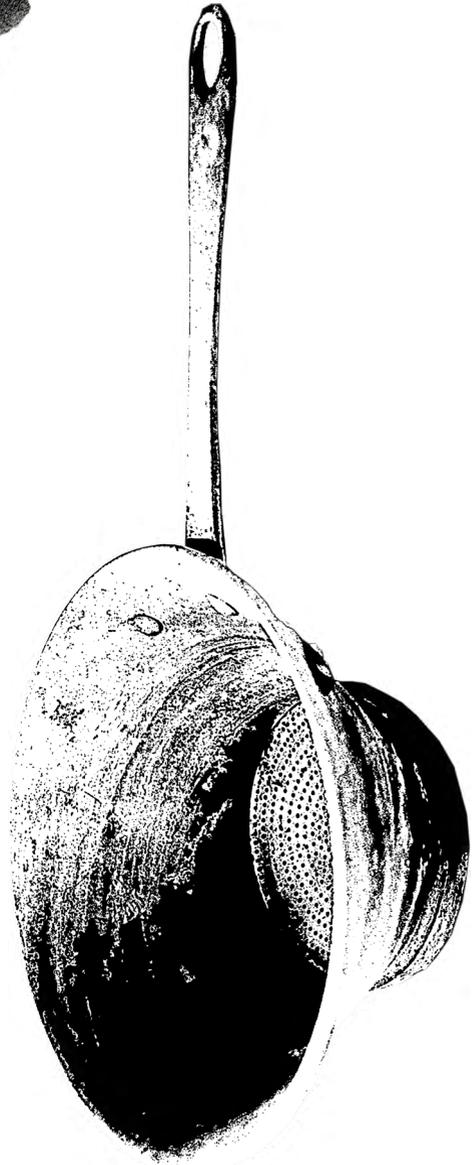
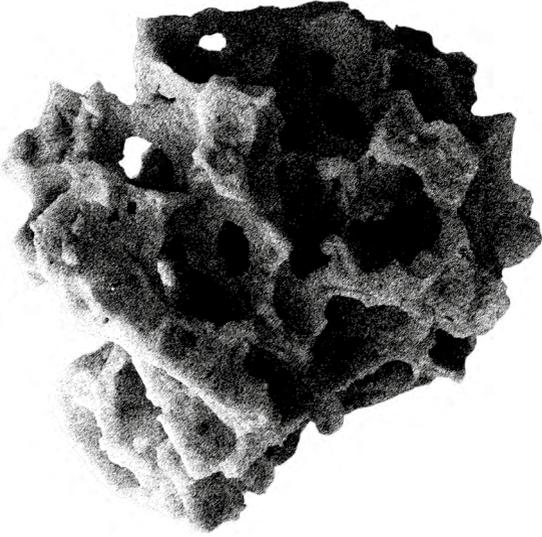
This project was born out of the need of a dance company to find a space to develop their work, and little by little came the realisation that from *EiMa* they were starting to develop a space for management and liaison and networking with the people of the town. The local people are the first recipients of everything that is produced from their space, given that practically all of the projects are presented publicly and mostly in open-air spaces, which is why their activity was not affected in a very profound way during the health emergency, apart from delays due to confinements on the first few months and the loss of face to face communication. They have often worked with older people, moving now to a second phase of work.

They seek to intervene more in the territory by developing an archive of different types of listening and in a bidirectional way: listening from the projects to the territory and from the territory to the projects. *EiMa* understands that artistic actions are not one-off or extraordinary events, but something that happens accompanied by a continuous and normalised gaze. They try to ensure that their work is understood as just one more in the village, "on the terrace of the bar, next to the carpenter or the hotel worker". They don't deny that part of their audience comes from tourism: although this is not an area of mass tourism, neither is it a dormitory town, a very heterogeneous population surrounds them: in their more rural context, a large part of them, although they may not work the fields, live in it, and this conditions them and makes them be in a certain way... as well as encouraging the artists to work in a certain direction. *EiMa* makes use of the development of permaculture, for example, as an opportunity: a large part of the population and the families that live in the village are organised in smallholdings, making it easier for the centre and the artists to develop work that often comes out of their own space. Not surprisingly, of the artists in residence this year, none of them wanted to make a production for a closed space, but rather to dialogue with the local people. They have often received creators who are

looking to make journeys around the geography of the island and the village. This has led them to embark on a major undertaking: building a hut-residence, complete with an open-air amphitheatre to encourage encounters with the local population. In addition to their own project, they also want to work for the village with a radically different project: the management of a garage where families can exchange objects that they have in disuse, instead of just throwing them away in the recycling facilities.

And with the smell of the sea and the strong wind that blows through the islands, we bid farewell to a journey in which we have been able to soak up the wisdom and different ways of doing of a number of centres, associations and groups that, from a firm commitment to society and the environment around them, aim to make a better world for their neighbours and for the territory they inhabit, always listening and seeking to keep alive the memory and the feelings of the people. Spaces that, to a greater or lesser extent, manage to survive thanks to the timid support of public entities, but above all they move forward thanks to the great work done selflessly and out of pure conviction by the people who make up the associations and collectives that have sheltered us day after day.

RECIPES



Aguamarga Arte Naturaleza Creación

Níjar, Almería, Andalucía, Spain.
Javier Viana.
creagamarga@gmail.com
<https://aguamarga.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2019.

INGREDIENTS: An artistic residency project in the Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park looking to reflect on the diverse relationships between biodiversity and the human community that inhabits and passes through the natural and urban environment of the Park.

UTENSILS: Investigating creative ways of favouring participatory artistic processes and educational actions to expand critical reflection on our relationship with the environment and find new ways of looking at and being part of the natural and cultural environment that we build and that builds us. Maintaining coherence with the materials when developing artistic projects and trying to ensure that the creation does not leave a footprint that could condition the landscape and the environment. In other words, that is, taking care of the materials and working with the ephemeral.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, schools, local residents.

Centro Negra – Plataforma AADK Spain

Blanca, Murcia Region, Spain.
Giuliana Grippo, Elena Azzedin.
info@aadk.es
<https://aadk.es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2012.

INGREDIENTS: Centro Negra is a space managed by a platform of artists that offers artistic residencies for the production of works ranging from performing arts to sound experimentation.

UTENSILS: To generate a space for contemporary creation with an emphasis on experimentation and exploring mainly the notions of body, territory and spatiality. To support the decentralisation of culture and promote creation and access to contemporary art in rural areas, establishing a gaze that moves from the local to the global. To look again at rurality, space, territory and landscape, in view of the ecological and environmental crisis, the collapse of cities, etc.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, art curators, local residents.

Mandarina Borda

Palmera, Valencian Autonomous Community, Spain.
Enriqueta Röcher,
mandarinaborda@gmail.com
<https://www.mandarinaborda.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2012.

INGREDIENTS: A space for creation and research from which to rethink the identity of a place linked to nature, trying to build a landscape with which to feel identified, through a mandala garden, an energy kitchen and a body map; and always with art as a catalyst for all these processes.

UTENSILS: We make a double journey to build our identity: an outward journey through which we express ourselves and interact with others to open ourselves to the world; and, on the other hand, this interaction provides us with new experiences, knowledge with which we feel identified, and therefore we take it inwards, making them our own, resignifying ourselves with each new turn. Both the territory and the body become a place to the extent that we feel identified with it. In the field of art, the representation of landscape has reflected the different ways in which a society relates to nature, defining the way of seeing, interpreting and inhabiting the territory.

DINERS: Schools, artists.

Biodivers – Carrícola

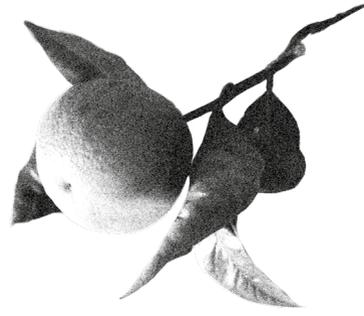
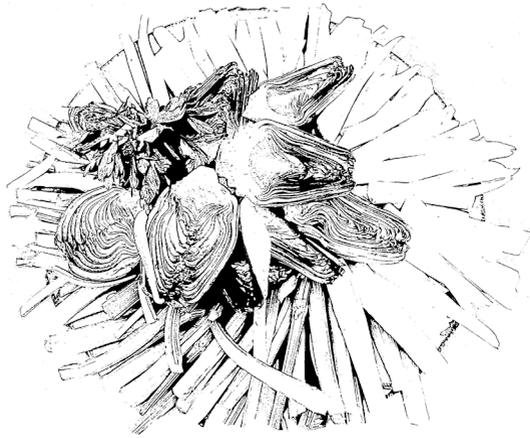
Carrícola, Valencian Autonomous Community, Spain.
Susana Cháfer.
susanachafter@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2010.

INGREDIENTS: An artistic itinerary integrating artworks within the landscape of Carrícola, a Valencian village that has made a complete commitment to sustainable projects; with a model involvement of the neighbourhood, carved diachronically with very measured initiatives, worked unhurriedly and at street level.

UTENSILS: Dialogue with nature, with special sensitivity to the recovery of degraded spaces and using exclusively materials of vegetable or mineral origin.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, residents of the village.



Centre d'Art Contemporani i Sostenibilitat. El Forn de la Calç (CACiS)

Calders, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya. Spain.
Rosé Oduber.
roseroduber@cacis.cat

COOKING TIME: Since 2008.

INGREDIENTS: The recovery of a former industrial space and its use as an art and education space, providing support for production and creation, networking, experimentation and training through approaches to LandArt and with ecology at its core.

UTENSILS: Focusing on ecology and sustainable development, and starting from the understanding of art as a way of expression and understanding of more complex elements and structures, to generate an educational and artistic project that combines the recovery of industrial heritage with educational and exhibition projects, working on new languages and thoughts linked to art. The development of transversal work without frontiers, without elements that distance the dialogue with traditional practices in the field of agriculture and livestock farming and craftsmanship for their effective recovery.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, schools.

Centre Habitare

Beneixida, Valencian Autonomous Community. Spain.
Rafael Tormo.
info@centrehabitare.org

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: Starting from an autonomous space such as the church of the old village of Beneixida, transcending it and working with the imaginary of the village itself, to generate a series of routes and actions (workshops, seminars, conferences) that help to think about both the present and the past of the village.

UTENSILS: Emphasising that knowledge entities or knowledge providers should relate to organised civil society. Transmitting the knowledge of people who have dedicated themselves to the field, overcoming the subjective models that were associated with other power dynamics.

DINERS: The residents of the village of Beneixida, the schools and educational centres in the surrounding area.

CAN SERRAT

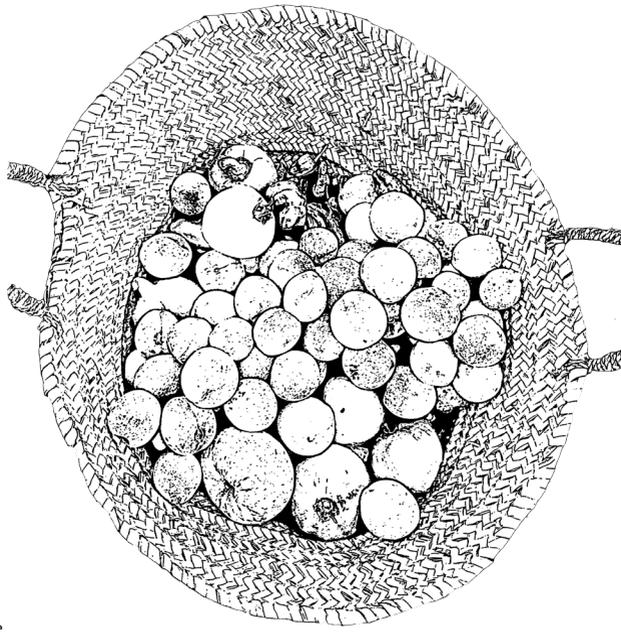
El Bruc, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya, Spain.
Sophie Blais.
canserrat@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 1989.

INGREDIENTS: Can Serrat is a large farmhouse that lends 4 multidisciplinary studios to artists through residencies, self-organisation, community, interculturality, displacement, rurality and local production.

UTENSILS: A network of drifting reflections and processes, the exchange of knowledge, community and coexistence, collective work, roots, fermentation, translation, territory. Generating a multicultural artistic and literary community at the foot of Montserrat. Making the need and pressure for results disappear as the main objective and the only response to production, whatever it may be. A house with multiple identities, against the tide of identity from expertise and single focus, as a response against mono-production.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, local people: local women farmers, artists, writers, etc.



CAL GRAS

Avinyó, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya, Spain.
Quim Moya.
calgras@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2008.

INGREDIENTS: Cal Gras is a house in a rural environment, open for research and cultural and artistic production, which wants to support creation. A cultural centre for artistic production that also functions as a rural hostel, open to all people who want to enjoy the peace and quiet and coexistence in a creative environment. A node and meeting point for artists and, at the same time, cultural providers in different spaces in the area.

UTENSILS: Reflection and practice in all imaginable and utopian aspects, dealing with natural resources, sustainability, history, culture, society, education...

DINERS: Contemporary artists, local residents.

EiMa

María de la Salut, Mallorca, Balearic Islands, Spain.
Mariantònia Oliver.
eima.creacio@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2004.

INGREDIENTS: EiMa manages a space that accompanies artists, mainly dance artists, in research, exchange and innovation, through dialogue with their context and the residents of the village.

UTENSILS: Accompanying artists in a process of research and networking by listening in a bidirectional way, from the project to the people and from the people to the project.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, local residents, schools.

Casa D'Artistes – Es Far Cultural

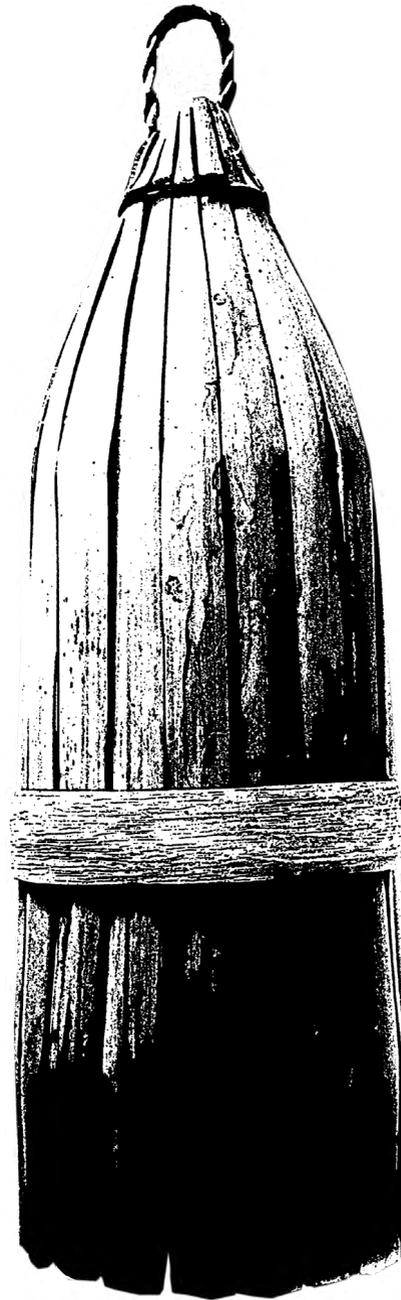
Menorca, Balearic Islands, Spain.
Marina E.G.
casadartistes@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: The Casa d'Artistes are different spaces on the island of Menorca designed for artists' residencies with the aim of developing a creative and/or research project. At the same time, Es Far Cultural, the association that manages it, develops activities such as a radio station or a documentary film festival.

UTENSILS: Training, art and research, seeking personal and social growth, both individual and collective. Working on education through contemporary art to build, create and develop critical thinking and discussion about the environment that surrounds us, the ways in which we relate to each other. Sharing between public and artists to think about what has already been thought from other points of view.

DINERS: Contemporary artists, residents of the village.



INLAND / Campo Adentro

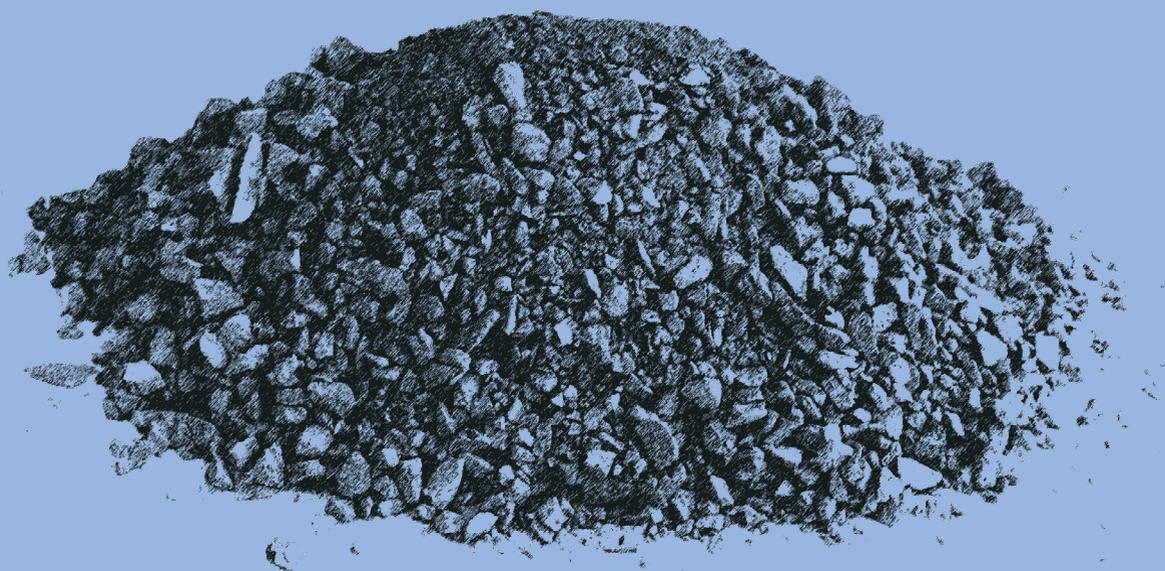
Artistic collective dedicated to agricultural, social and cultural production. It was created in 2009 as a collaborative agency and an organization that involves territories, culture and social change. INLAND works as a network that opens spaces for the collaborations of economies and communities with land-based practices as a substrate, and involves the cultural forms of contemporary art. It publishes books, produces shows, makes cheese, etc. They advise the European Union Commission on the use of art in rural development policies, while facilitating the movement of shepherds and nomadic peoples. It recovers abandoned towns for collective artistic and agricultural production. INLAND has presented work at the Istanbul Biennial in 2015, at the Casco Art Institute in the Netherlands, PAV Torino in Italy and the Maebashi Museum in Japan. In 2017 Inland has been working at Contemporary Arts Glasgow, MALBA, Matadero Madrid, and the Museo de Arte Moderno-Medellín, and has developed field actions at the TRANSART Festival Bolzano and Puglia in Italy, and at the Jeju Biennale in South Korea. INLAND has been awarded prizes from the Council of Forms, Paris, and the Carasso Foundation for the completion of *New Curriculum*: a project dedicated to the training of artists and rural agents of the future. In 2019 it has been presented at Serpentine London, Pompidou Paris, Savvy Berlin, Città del Arte Milan and Casa do Povo, Sao Paulo. INLAND has also made proposals for the Baltic Art Center in Newcastle; Museo Madre-Napoli and Documenta Fifteen.

<https://inland.org/>



Mandarina Borda: apple cupcakes.

SOUTH AREA



south area

Sevilla

Huelva

Córdoba

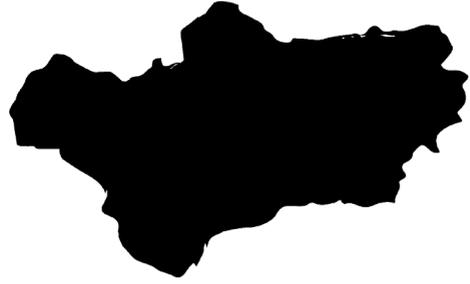
Málaga

Granada

Jaén

Cádiz

SOUTH AREA



Singing to the ground:
cultures in love with the earth.

Bee Time

When man feels like Time
without space, out of his flesh,
transcendent ecological respect
when he is generously programmed,
mortal, out of his days,
when he plants olive trees for those who succeed him,
he will fulfil his destiny. He will be arriving.

José Val del Omar

Taking care of human spaces. That's one of the things we artists can do. To take care of what humans have produced. To take care of history.

One of our neighbours here in the village needs someone to look after his house. He "demands" it from his daughter. Because she is a woman and she is his daughter. His house is a human space to take care of. Perhaps an art exhibition in his house could help our neighbour to rebuild (or regenerate) his relationship with the feminine. Or maybe he can get it cleaned by a man and then receive affection and anger in return, because he will inevitably call him a "faggot" or a "chacha", even if only half-jokingly.

What are the daily problems of our cohabitants in the villages of the South? In what sense does the cultural mediation of the projects of Southern Spain affect the quality of this coexistence? What is the quality of the institutional support they receive? What is left of the ferment and fever of Southern art?

These are the fundamental questions that have guided this research, or rather its subsequent reconstruction in text form. We visited eleven pro-

jects in Andalusian villages and interviewed nine administrations. As a general (but not generalised) feeling, we are left with the sensation of being faced with a lack of self-esteem of what is theirs, of what is Andalusian and Southern, which seems to want to consider itself as a second-rate culture. Cultures whose character sometimes has to be excused and in which lies the feeling of being in a continuous vortex. An unsolvable portal that communicates doing and undoing.

To the contempt, to the lack of appreciation, we add (to make the list even longer) the political isolation that the right-wingers insist on, erasing everything that smells of anarchy and red. We are totally lost in the scant knowledge of our Southern history, and so figures such as Val del Omar are little known, little claimed and hardly studied at all in the centres of education for sensitivity (they do exist).

Val del Omar rescued in his pedagogical mission¹ the culture of the "rednecks". A cultural practice woven with life, which does not understand high-brow academy. In this act, Val del Omar assessed that our Southern cultures insist on deforming themselves in speech, grace, waiting...



Seedbed window in Culturhaza - Villarrubia, Córdoba

Perhaps the connections that have been the subject of this research, between population, projects and administrations, are still subordinated to this insistence of our Southern identity on not enclosing itself, on not considering culture that which imposes itself as a non-deformable object. Care in the face of human debris and its productions (that kind of continuous act of throwing away apparent worth) also appears as an ideological space that belongs to us. When singing in the South, one throws the cante on the ground. As if in order to have it, you have to get rid of it.

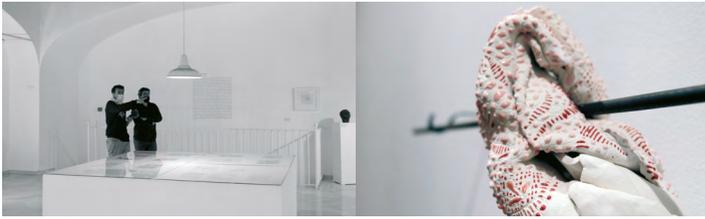
The same neighbour we referred to at the beginning, Antonio "El Pingui", said to us one day, interrupting a conversation, "all that mess you people get into...". On many occasions, here in our village, we also see how what we do connects and disconnects with the identities that make up the territory. To be able to talk about "the feminine in the cultures of the South" with Pinganillo, you have to do it after having put your arm around him and listening, for many nights, before talking. Because it will be a long, perennial conversation. Like the very act of caring for those other things that are neither objects nor impositions; that back and forth between matter and the invisible.

Attending to the vulnerable / Keeping secrets

(Town hall of La Puebla de Cazalla / Alegría and Piñero / Miguel Ángel Moreno Carretero / Provincial Council de Granada / Marta Moreno Muñoz / Francisco Montiel)

*Those who rhyme without wanting to
are loved without knowing
Portuguese saying*

On the eighth day of the first leg of our journey we visited the sculpture² that **Alegría and Piñero** had installed in Loja in honour of Val del Omar (we later learned that it was the first work they had done as an artistic couple). We arrived late, at night. Someone had intervened and we sent a photo to the artists, asking if they knew what had happened, the sculpture's nails and eyelids painted with permanent marker. Alegría replied that she was looking forward to seeing it, admitting that the sculpture of course did not have painted nails or eyelids, nor a triangle also painted where the sunlight enters the sculpture, which makes the piece to function as a camera obscura. The kids who use the square had appropriated it.



Jorge Gallardo and Miguel Ángel Rivero at the Jose María Moreno Galván Museum of Contemporary Art / Detail of 'Ablution Cloths' by Paloma de la Cruz

After seeing the sculpture, weeks later, we visited the artists to begin the second stage of our journey. Alegría and Piñero have had one of their centres of activities for some years in La Puebla de Cazalla. There we are welcomed by Miguel Ángel Rivero, councillor for culture, and María José Sánchez Gago, cultural officer of the same town council. The *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Jose María Moreno Galván*³ exudes a Southern discourse that is not lacking in self-esteem. As we stroll around the first floor, those in charge tell us "people come to the museum after going to mass and even teenage girls pass by, look in and say *Let's see what they've put up this time?*".

The museum is dedicated to one of the main "spokesmen" of the post-avant-garde movements of the fifties and sixties. Miguel Ángel and María José tell us that due to the sudden and premature death of the art critic, the city council decided to create the museum which houses Jose María's collection. This collection has been enlarged over the years thanks to the work of those in charge. We were impressed by the diversity of the collection (with names and surnames), but also by its connection with Art Brut⁴ and its sensitivity in reserving one of the rooms on the first floor for the posters that serve as a presentation for the *Reuniones de Cante Jondo de la Puebla*⁵. In the showcases of the room there are also pieces of napkins full of Jose María's brother Francisco's lyrics, sketches and sheets of paper full of ideas. The pedagogical activity launched from the museum to the population, welcoming schools and groups, has a very singular support in these posters. The very identity of the town, with its local creators and events with tradition, has an impact on the aesthetic education of the people, who are used to seeing in their history, a history of art, with its political implications, of "taste" and of struggle.

Like many other municipal projects, they lack direct support for their initiatives and have to find ways to be resilient with the general funds that

come to the town from the provincial council. Few of the projects we have visited have had good things to say about the Diputaciones. Fewer still about the Junta de Andalucía or the Ministries. Many of them are projects that have been forgotten by "the big guys". But some town councils not only follow closely the projects that take place in their areas, but also promote them, create them, make them grow, and manage them administratively and legally. In the end, they watch over them.

Ideas created in love, grown through love.

Love for the human

Alegría and Piñero⁶ work on vulnerability with the remains of light. Their activity is a kind of itinerant workshop on pre-cinema. In La Puebla they use film at its most artisanal and analogue stage to develop work in collaboration with the Occupational Centre⁷ for people diagnosed with functional diversity. In a certain way, this overdose of light (or

this human capacity to take charge of it) is placed at the service of people who normally access art as a "pastime".

Alegría came to La Puebla de Cazalla thanks to a post offered by the town council. She thought she was going to work in the museum. She had even bought some more formal clothes, she tells us, for what she thought was going to be her job as a museum guide. When she arrived and found out what her real position was, she was left in tears. Insecurities and fears that were dispelled in just a few days of living together in the Occupational Centre. With honesty, she spoke of the work they had already been doing with Piñero on the origins of cinema and the challenges of the eye that knows the artefact. Soon, the idea of the handicrafts workshop was dropped and the artistic creation workshop began. Seven years after this first meeting, they say that this collaboration with the centre, which continues to grow, is one of the best experiences of their lives.

"Over the years, we ended up involving the oc-

Our line of work does not really feed off the rural context in which it is developed, but it does feed off the human context.



Alegría Castillo and José Antonio Sánchez Piñero in their workspace at the Occupational Center, showing us the mechanism and works carried out for their latest project: "Mobile Panorama"

cupational centre with the museum and in one of the programmes, the users of the centre were the ones who mediated the contents of the museum to the rest of the population, both of the permanent exhibition and of the works that they themselves were exhibiting. We turned them into museum guides. Their explanations were very good, the project took a turn for the better and they no longer presented themselves as the group of people to be integrated, but as the people who integrated art in the village".

Attending to the vulnerable with the remains of light, knowing closely the tricks of the eye, the ancient artefacts that can lead us to glimpse within the moving image that which is other, between the real and the unreal, has led this pair of artists to relate La Puebla de Cazalla, once again, to the avant-garde without a pedestal. In this case with Art Brut.

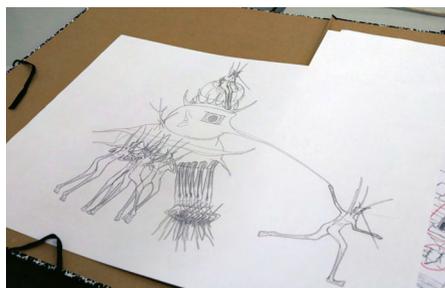
Alegría and Piñero were a key point for our research (but not the only one) as their work is detached from the idea of the rural or its reconstruction. Their work functions and makes sense both in and outside the city, and this made them unique within the field⁸. In addition to the dismantling of the image that they propose, they also dismantle sound, words and silence⁹. An example follows:

"Our link with La Puebla is through the occupational centre. Our line of work does not really feed off the rural context in which it is developed, but it does feed off the human context. Perhaps this could have happened elsewhere, but it is difficult to imagine it with other people. It is true that we have felt comfortable since we arrived. There is a continuous creative euphoria that is contagious all the time... And you arrive at the workshop with a different energy. They are amazing people, with no fear whatsoever of the blank page, people who don't need to reach creativity through complex processes. That's surprising and very rewarding. They totally displace the idea of virtuosity, they transgress the reality of the image to focus on the truth of the drawing". "As such, the Centre puts creativity into everyday life, thanks to the work

that goes on inside. It is also a place to create employment and resources, and that has given us a lot of food for thought about professionalisation within the arts field... Who do you do things for? Apart from the exhibitions, which are very gratifying for everyone, the sale of work is something we are not yet considering, but reproducing things in a way that is affordable for local people is something we are working with, without going much further. The idea of the sale of work as a luxury object is something that we have been ruminating about, but at a very high level, looking for non-corrupt or uncorrupted systems of commerce. For now it is a point of reflection. The important thing is to be able to preserve the creative freedom of the Centre".

After five years of effort, the twists and turns with local administrations that "want to apply the same bureaucratic protocols that are applied, for example, to the construction of a building", have been resolved in the case of Alegría and Piñero and their work on the Occupational Centre, in which they have sought, together with the Social Services and Culture departments, the legal way in which the project can be accommodated within the general budgets of the town council. All this "labyrinth" has been solved without finding really solid examples in other localities in order to follow a legal and realistic formula with the specific needs of the projects.

"The garden of the oceanic Atlantics" Project in progress by the user of the Occupational Center, Fátima Calderón.



For our part, we have to point out that this is something that HAPPENS IN ALMOST ALL PROJECTS. Collaboration with private entities in the form of subsidies can guarantee the survival of the actions for a period of time. But the moment when the local councils start to relate continuously with the projects, their ideosyncrasy makes them very difficult to be legally resolved. We should call for an INTERLOCAL REGULATION that could guarantee sustainability and facilitate administrative processes, with a formula that is close to the real needs and powers in each case. Even more so when the degree of involvement and social profitability of the projects has been demonstrated.

Love for the secret human

Miguel Ángel Moreno Carretero¹⁰ welcomes us in Granada with a magnificent smile. We converse about the secret human, in many directions, also in the administrative sense. His project SCARPIA¹¹, which had become a clear reference point for land art and community culture projects among the people of the South, was despicably usurped by the town council of El Carpio. The council appropriated the brand and 14 years of experience with the stroke of a pen. Even the heritage accumulated during those 14 years has been and is being literally erased by the current town hall, which has even eliminated some of the most emblematic works of ORIGINAL SCARPIA. The fight in which he was involved for years did not leave him and his team defeated. Together, they organised FAR¹², again, dwelling on the relationship between spaces, people and landscape expressions, crossed with contemporary art and relational art.

In Granada, Miguel Ángel takes us to discover one of his latest projects. A project in the city that also serves to break down the dichotomies between the rural and the urban. "Casinvisibles"¹³ is a camouflaged public art operation. Secret installations that are located very close to the "Espacio Lavadero"¹⁴, the place where Miguel Ángel continues to be involved with public art and relational art, but this time from the city of Granada.

In an abandoned lot, a door with an upside-down peephole subtly invites you to look through. In the background, the work of Julio Anaya Cabandig¹⁵ copies the painting "El embovedado" (Jose M^a López Mezquita.1904), with the frame included, in a hyper-realistic way, on the wall. Miguel Ángel tells us that this landscape, even in the original, was fiction. It came from the painter's memory of the river before it was buried. A game of secrets, imagination, undergrounding, nature depleted by the city and silence that leaves us amazed.



Miguel Ángel Moreno Carretero at "Espacio Lavadero" / "José María López Mezquita. The Vault" by Julio Anaya Cabandig on the site of Nicuesa Street, Granada.

Love for the human has very different characters and in this case, love for the artifice that insists on remaining hidden, elevates to the quality of treasure the little piece of heart that has been put into it. Perhaps it is not possible to speak in clear terms about the distinction between actions that take place in the city and in the countryside, but examples such as Miguel Ángel's speak of a trajectory occupied with questioning our ways of inhabiting, and it seems to us that this takes us into a dialogue. "Contemporary art is uncomfortable on a political level. I'm talking about an art that is not immediate, that is not subject to entertainment, that works to reactivate citizen knowledge and deactivate the status of inequality. And in the case of action in villages, it's the neighbours themselves who make you to be demanding".

This is also a common issue in several of the projects visited. Their insistence on giving value to the imperceptible and promoting the observation of the landscape as a web of relationships.

Before we say goodbye to Miguel Ángel, we speak briefly about the Provincial Council de Granada, and the lack of clarity there. We receive kind and detailed answers to our mail. As to whether they are aware of the projects being developed in the municipalities of their province, they reply: "Bearing in mind that the province of Granada has 180 local entities, not including associations of municipalities, it is difficult to have an exhaustive knowledge of all the spaces and projects in the territory, given that some of those used are not exclusively cultural spaces and bearing in mind that not all the cultural and artistic projects in the province are managed by culture". Once again, the dis/re/connection between projects is a kind of *modus operandi*. Now, we leave Miguel Ángel, wrapped in the same smile he gave us when he welcomed us, with a note about the project *Calles en Flor*¹⁶, in Cañete de las Torres, for which he also works. We left Granada fleeing the noise of the cars and thinking about the underground nature and all the spirits that miss it.

Love for the human and the non-human

There is a wind in our area, from the Southeast, which the elders call the “upside-down tuna wind”. “Tuna are also caught when they come from spawning in the Adriatic. They go as far as Slovenia”. Our friend Paco “El Coni” comes almost every day to the village to see Pepe “Alforja” and Antonio Esquivel, whom he calls “the father”. Paco says that this wind is very favourable for the tuna, when they come back from the Adriatic, and they come close to the coast of Barbate, where they are caught and placed in the fattening pools. “Don’t you know what these winds are called? Write there: levante puro, levante bajo, poniente, viento gaditano, vendabal, rondino...”.



We met **Marta Moreno Muñoz**¹⁷, with whom we had a number of affinities and coincidences that were more than strange. Several voices referred us to her. Her involvement with the *Extinction Rebellion* (XR)¹⁸ movement, her trajectory as a mediator in residencies inside and outside Spain, and the temperance of her work, gave us a sense of urgency to visit her.

As an artist and activist fully committed to *Extinction Rebellion* (an international social movement with the aim to influence world governments and environmental policies through non-violent civil disobedience to minimise global warming, the loss of biodiversity, mass extinction of species and risk of ecological and social collapse) her latest performances internalise the serious ecological and civilisational crisis we are facing in the current context of planetary emergency. In our first exchanges, she told us with surprise that her project had no involvement with the rural world. “That’s why we want to see you”, we told her. Many of the cultural projects in small towns, as well as focussing on what is close at hand, embrace the paradigm of “the diverse”, as an agency with which to relate to the rest of the species and non-species that inhabit the planet.

We have no time left, we are experiencing a global extinction of species. Meanwhile, some of us humans insist on doing tourism, producing works of art...

Marta tells us about XR and 2020: *The Walk*¹⁹, an art and activism project in which she plans to walk from Granada to Helsinki, with some trains and ferries, raising awareness along

the way about not flying and helping to spread the *Extinction Rebellion* movement by giving talks and training in *Nonviolent Direct Action* - ADN. Along the 4000 kilometres, she will connect with fellow rebels and other climate activists from like-minded movements between the waves of rebellion - and some of them will accompany her on sections of the walk as a regenerative period, visiting XR nodes and helping to create new ones in Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. 2020: *The Walk* will be documented on video, with the process disseminated on a blog and social media, and a book will also be published. As the artist tells us: “We are not prepared for the dangers of the future. We face floods, fires, extreme weather, crop failures, mass migration and the collapse of society. The time for denial is over. It is time for action. Rebellion is a sacred duty.”

The way in which we relate to territories, thinking about all that this implies, not just the human and its productions and waste, all this touches us here, in the village. And it touches the work of Marta Moreno Muñoz in a planetary sense. We have no time left, we are experiencing a global extinction of species. Meanwhile, some of us humans insist on doing tourism, producing works of art, arming ourselves with culture in the face of what is coming or what has already arrived. Marta is determined, she had to interrupt her departure because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but she has already organised to leave in the spring-summer of 2022. We say goodbye to Marta after picking up oranges in her garden at the entrance to the Alpujarras. We take the oranges to Víctor Borrego and to other beings and non-beings who accompany us on this dislocated journey of planet earth.

Love for love

When we met Francisco Montiel, administrator of the “*Casa del Carril*”, we sat down to eat in one of the few places in Carhelejo still in operation. Over coffee, we were joined by the last person who still knew how to work with dry stone, Gaspar Ramírez. The area, they both told us, was once



In the Casa del Carril and views from the new space in the foothills of the mountain.

renowned for its quarries and master craftsmen. Gaspar's father didn't want him to know about the work because he considered it a poor man's job. "But I like stone. I used to say to him, Dad, I'll stay here, quiet, and watch you". And the son learned the work by looking and touching the stone, despite his father. Francisco Montiel has been developing cultural mediation programmes in Carchelejo for almost ten years, without really understanding what mediation is. "I think it's the neighbours who do me a favour every time I put on exhibitions. I'm not doing anyone any favours..." Gaspar shakes his head. "When you did the tribute to the stonemasons and I saw the things my father had done, I tell you, I was very moved. It was very nice, very nice". Paco Montiel insists "I don't know if my community needs a cultural mediator".

Perhaps it is this reductionist vision of the word culture that makes us doubt. Culture of the poor, culture of the rich and culture of rebels. The cultures of the South think that of all that constitutes art, the greatest thing is the one that is shared. Again this throwing away the remains on the ground. The remains of light, the remains of voice, the remains of knowledge. Like an act of arrogance of the poor, of rebellion of the tired body, for which there is no surplus value that can be accumulated.

After passing by "La Casa del Carril", Francisco took us to see the space where he is now investing his time: an old house with stables that overlooks the mountain. Before arriving, we walked through the village, intervened by another cultural project that "mediates" in the village. For him, the imposition of forms, the culture made without much attention, does not seem to have the same interest. From this periphery of the periphery, Francisco accumulates pleasures, jobs and ideas. "In the summer I'm going to Berlin. First, we'll take Manhattan, we think.

Good luck with the money

(Algarbia / MUTI / Town hall of Arroyomolinos de León / Fundacion Boti / Department of depopulation of the Provincial Council de Málaga / Provincial Council de Cádiz)

*They sentenced me to 20 years of boredom
For trying to change the system from within
I'm coming now, I'm coming to reward them
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin*

Enrique Morente with words by Leonard Cohen.

1 The cultures of the South had to get used to the nibbles of hunger, counting on the fact that the money was always in the hands of a few. Those of us who work here are heirs to this "culture of the gentry" (and rebels), and we have to come to terms with it.

On the last day of the first part of our trip, we visited the least structured project on our list. "**Algarbia**"²⁰ is a community that promotes circular economy. We think that making healthy money is an art. From here, from where we speak. That's why we wanted to at least stress the importance of projects like this one being included in research.

"We are forced to continuous growth because the economy contemplates a geometric interest rate... But we cannot continuously grow in a finite environment. Eventually there is a collapse. And that's something we ignore as if we could be able to overcome all that with technology and knowledge. We can adapt with technology. But for now we should change the paradigm of growth". Iván Salvía, our contact in *Algarbia*, was trained in business but turned down a job in banking, became involved in environmental education and, after an accident, devoted himself to rest and to studying "alternative" economy. He prefers to speak of a "complementary" economy, which does not come to replace the prevailing economy but to propose a system that coexists with it, that reduces the impact, that allows for other types of exchanges within capitalism, rather than a direct confrontation and demand.

"The debt dynamics of the system force you to grow continuously. What we do is to put into circulation a currency that promotes exchange, but which does not serve to accumulate value". Ivan is interrupted every quarter of an hour. In one of the interruptions, a user asks how the platform works. Iván responds with a smile. He recognises the value of the gift.



The new MUTI office in Arroyomolinos de León, Huelva.

IVAN

The accumulation of value, in our case, is a new tree you plant on your farm, it's a relationship you establish with a neighbour, that's the chain of value. And currency is simply an instrument for exchange.

BeeTime

This relationship between debt accumulation and competitiveness...? I mean, could you tell us that what you are doing is generating a collaborative culture?

IVAN

Yes. Look... we believe in competency but not in competition.

BeeTime

how nice!

IVAN

You see, competition gives you rules that are the same for everyone, it makes you uniform and puts you in a fight. What competency does is to make you unique in your species and to show and give the best of yourself to others. And generate bonds of collaboration and mutual support.

CARLOS

Oh, you're recording!

After the new interruption, Iván tells us technology is skilled enough to easily generate a system of collective exchange, but where the key of the matter lies is in knowing how to manage the community, make it grow and give it the capacity for self-organisation. Algarbía has a support group, another to organise the market, a school of peasant knowledge... When we came to see him, at one of the markets they organise near Coín, we came across a platform that was self-organising in order to be able to buy land and protect it. It was the Valle del Río Grande, where a photovoltaic farm ²¹is to be built. A fertile territory whose soil will be depleted.

IN MANY WAYS, COLLECTIVE AND PRIVATE INITIATIVE TAKES OVER WHAT PUBLIC POLICIES LEAVE IN THE LURCH. Perhaps they act in this way because of a lack of complex information, because they continue at the speed imposed by the system of continuous growth and they give in to pressure from the lobbies of the new "green industries" and the European institutions that regard them as the solution.



Our host Ivan Salvia at the weekly social economy market.

2 On the last day of the second leg of the journey, we met Bosco Valero²² in Arroyomolinos de León, a small village in Huelva. We came to the **MUTI Association**²³ interested above all in their work for the democratisation of energy production processes. MUTI has been working on other issues, promoting a participatory culture in the region, recovering knowledge that has taken the form of songs or stories. Bosco receives us after having met previously with the mayoress and the councillor for culture of Arroyomolinos. We have breakfast in the sun and talk about various things, including how his work with energy sovereignty began.

“All this started because we decided to join the social germinator of *Som Energía*²⁴ with the idea of creating a rural energy community, but we can't stay with the figure of prosumers. We have to influence the energy culture. In attitudes, behaviours, skills. And generate different traditions”.

Hence the educational work.

“For the work with schools, we start with a standardised methodology, Euronet²⁵ 50/50, which makes it easier for the kids to learn how energy works and at the same time to do an energy audit of their school. The big thing is to work with the kids on energy efficiency and show them how the concepts can be applied to the school building itself. In all these work meetings, you get to talk to the kids about concepts such as energy poverty, about what energy is, how it is produced or how it is spent, energy is a right or not a right... And they themselves end up thinking about what can be done to improve energy efficiency in the school. “

At the Arroyomolinos town hall, we were welcomed by **María Jesús Bravo**, mayoress, and **Ibán López**, councillor for Education, Culture, Equality, Social Affairs, Tourism and Health. She tells us that they have fourteen people on the team, plus two extra people who work for the association of

villages, mancomunidad, and one more from the Provincial Council and the councillors. María Jesús answers the phone for a moment (apart from being the mayor, she is also the president of the mancomunidad) and in the meantime Ibán tells us about the relationship between the town council and the groups in the area. “Not only do we have a relationship with MUTI, but also with *Alma Natura*²⁶, which is another very interesting collective that is trying to promote economic innovation in this area. From the town council, we have also touched on the issue of historical memory, getting involved in the search for mass graves, in addition to the ongoing work we do on equality, which is one of our fundamental strands.” In fact, one of the projects they were able to carry out during the first period of the pandemic was a workshop on emotional wellbeing. We asked them about their budgetary capacities.

“The relationship with the provincial council is good and direct. Normally, we are well considered in the subsidy allocations because we are a town of less than five thousand inhabitants. We normally use this money for culture and sport, above all through the music classroom²⁷, which is the most remarkable work of all that we have done during the six years that this government team has been in office. In fact it is one of the biggest items, almost €20,000. We have disassociated the music room from the mancomunidad and the town council has taken on the contracting of the five teachers, after adapting the building”.

Perhaps this starting small is one of the tactics adopted by some of the projects in rural areas. Bosco told us how at the beginning of the project, with the idea of creating an energy community in Arroyomolinos de León, it occurred to them to use the picón as a symbol as a source of manageable and nearby energy. It is not only a question of bringing together processes that seem complex and alien, such as money and energy, but also of doing so from the identities present in the rural landscape.

3 **The Boti Foundation**, as part of the Córdoba Provincial Council, has been working since 1999 to support long-term projects in the municipalities of the province. "It was identified that a number of projects in the province had a consolidated entity, so a specific programme was designed to act as an umbrella". Alfonso Muñoz talks to us about *Peripherals*²⁸, this time telematically. "Let's say that the artistic sector in Cordoba is very involved in the foundation, because it has many years of experience and work". "From the institutions we have to be clear that we have to make resources available to the sector, especially in this context of crisis, but it is true that our resources are what they are. Moreover (and this is a personal consideration) I believe that a cultural sector totally dependent on the institutions is a mistake. At least in Andalusia, where the sector is very, very dependent. If there is a political change and managers with other cultural interests come in... What do we do? But this is a debate for the cultural sector itself to reflect on. As an institutional worker I can support it, but it's not up to me to do it. In the field of art in the rural sector I think there are options. Interestingly, it's true that in these villages, doing absolutely contemporary things that theoretically in many cases are not in the mainstream, these villages welcome it very well".

The accumulation of value, is a new tree you plant on your farm (...)

Weeks later we interviewed **Mario Montes** and **José Antonio Mañas**, officer and head of services of the Area of Citizenship and Attention to Depopulation of the Provincial Council de Málaga²⁹. They speak to us from their homes, by videoconference. "Just this week we have a virtual fair³⁰ on social innovation projects that address depopulation. And we are also continuing with the "balconies of inspiring experiences"³¹, so we are still very active even now in times of pandemic. This "zoom game" is like the juego de la oca (a type of board game)...". Jose Antonio and Mario treat us with great kindness and interest...

// We are working along many strands: on mobility, financial exclusion, education and health. Without forgetting the "great legislation", which often from supralocal organisms forget or do not attend well to the needs and particularities of the villages with few inhabitants. We are trying to alleviate this situation, with a lot of projects. We have made studies of plans of opportunities for the Axarquía Alta and the whole part of Ronda. And in all of them two themes related to have appeared: the historical-artistic heritage and the settlement of young creators in depopulated areas, with localities that can give them opportunities to create".

Jose Antonio gives way to Mario, who tells us what is happening in Villanueva del Rosario, where an artists' collective is organising the RARA³² residency programme. We ask them about the relationship between fixing the population and sustaining rural identities. In other words, we asked them to what extent they would be happy with the idea of turning the countryside into a place for people who work for the screen, "for google".

// From the depopulation service (which was created a year and a half ago, in 2019) we have developed several initiatives that are gathered under the idea of rural pride, even supporting an initiative to be able to commemorate it on 16 November. Another initiative is aimed at alleviating the two-year effect, which is the period during which people "endure" living in the countryside. We have set up a reception network for villages where the degree of depopulation is most alarming. Now we have started with a pilot experience in Axarquía³³ and the idea is that there will be a group of people who can take in the new people who come to live in these villages. We want it to be a network that is alive and that is maintained".

4 To round off our interviews, we visited **Antonio González** and **Paco Mármol**, deputy for culture in Cádiz and in charge of exhibitions at the same deputation, respectively. Antonio and Paco took us on a tour of the two exhibition halls that the Provincial Council has in the city of Cádiz. In one of them they took us up to the terrace. Our eyes were twinkling as we imagined places where art assaults you from a corner, with bars full of mojitos and caipirinhas. We sat down after the visit to chat with both of them. With great sincerity and affection (they like the way we beetimers do what we do) they answer our questions. Paco starts telling us stories of when he was a student and punk singer. We are also won over by his way of doing things³⁴.

BEE TIME We know that you have diversified your support quite a lot, but what are the changes you have made to the grants and why?

ANTONIO Well, we begin by refocusing and reorganising resources and themes in order to be able to take content to the towns and neighbourhoods of the province. We are one of the few administrations that has reinforced the budget, but this is not because of a political issue, but because there is a team of sensitive colleagues behind us. We also understood that we could not be so inflexible, as there are initiatives that make you understand that culture is very dynamic and transversal. That is what I am learning about culture. In the province of Cádiz we have a number of projects that leave their mark on the territory (and I'm

not talking about big names) but about quality, cross-cutting and committed projects that work to improve the environment. And this has to be valued, by paying for it.

BEE TIME There is a novelty that has left us a bit flabbergasted, because now finally in the subsidies it is possible to justify the salaries of those who work carrying out the projects. Is this a measure that comes from Covid or is it something that you were already working on by looking at the fabric? Because in principle, with the previous system, the money goes in and out of the company without affecting the workers.

ANTONIO Of course, of course this has helped us to assess things differently. Because perhaps we didn't hear these complaints from the sector before. We wanted to do things well, and to recognise that artists have to be paid for their creative power. From the administration we have to set an example, because we are the best showcase, and make society understand that culture cannot be free. We have also recovered important contacts, such as our dialogue with GECA³, which has placed us in a better position to face the reality of cultural mediation in Cadiz.

BEETIME And are the collaborations with the city councils very much conditioned by political leanings or not so much? Is there faith in the collaborative work with the Provincial Council?

ANTONIO I would be lying if I told you that this did not exist. But you have to understand the administration as a guarantor of public services. Fortunately, in the government I am in, this does not happen. We stick to the data that is handled with absolute transparency. Our administration is not subject to this kind of wheeling and dealing, we respect the legitimacy that citizens give to the parties they elect.

BEETIME What are the relationships between the different departments of the Provincial Council? Because we were talking earlier about culture being transversal, could you imagine that this would be reflected in some way in a governing body, such as culture being present in other areas?

ANTONIO This depends on the momentum and the politician's willingness to engage in dialogue, with respect to other areas or delegations. It is true that in certain cases we have lacked dialogue. But it is something we are honestly working on. With will.

Within the distribution of money, with good intentions, we are often confronted in the South with a system of retroactive payment that conditions the sustainability of the projects quite a lot. Subsidies normally cover expenses already incurred and few administrations provide the money in advance to be able to implement the projects. Without a substantial enough residual balance, the projects are forced into a continuous debt, however minimal it may be, and to wait to recover the money advanced.

Let's stop making art and start cooking healthy food (Javier Orcaray + Culturhaza)

Javi welcomes us to **PLATA**, his new action space in the city of Córdoba. After exploring the peripheral territories, we decided to visit another city project. Javi and Gaby have a powerful experience in cultural mediation in towns, with a project that, like Scarpia, was a reference and pioneer in the beginning of the 21st century: *La Fragua*, which began its journey in 2010. "The important thing is to evolve in the residency model, the Fragua model, the Combo model... What the institutions are interested in is contracting artists so that afterwards they can visually demonstrate that they have worked. Let's see if once and for all we are capable of working in the organism itself, without replicating what is already happening in the system. Many residencies (of rural art) have become hotels for artists. Models integrated into capitalism, where rich artists can and poor artists can't. So now we are asking ourselves how we can work in the organism itself, without replicating what is already happening in the system. So now we're looking at how to get funding if the return is going to be invisible".

Many residencies (of rural art) have become hotels for artists

To the importance of being able to place artistic work in a place where return is not necessary as a means to an end, Javi and Xavi (one of his companions in **PLATA**) add the need to inhabit an oral and infinite cultural universe. Before ending the first part of our conversation, we launched a tricky question: "What do you think about all this, do you think it's necessary in order to stay on the margins to approach non-replicable systems? After admitting that it was a very tricky question (replicability is one of the most unquestionable values for grant systems for cultural mediation projects), Javi opened the trap: "You know one of the coolest things for me when we closed the Forge? I woke up one morning and I thought, I hope the warehouse where all that was left burns down and I hope everything disappears". "Did the warehouse burn down?" "Well no, but more and more, I just want to invite artists who do less".

We visited Javi also for his knowledge about the relationship between the institution and cultural work, about what is promoted and how. "There is no vision to see contemporary art from within new forms of mediation. In the Junta de Andalucía, in this last change, a whole group of artists who are not at all experimental have been recovered, who have placed themselves in the



PLATA
a germinating
and multidiverse space.

avant-garde, justifying it with public attendance figures that break records, in order to be able to say “now yes, this means, this is art, what was there before wasn’t... The bureaucratic obstacles of the administrations are added to the fact that the technical teams are not trained to understand the new ways of doing that are being proposed. But we must also bear in mind that we are a very small percentage within the cultural sector... If the fundamental question of this small sector that is thinking about new strategies is how do we live together, how are we together...? The cultural sector is not giving an answer to that”.

We saw in digital death (...) the sign of a voluptuous life.

landscapes. All the wisdom we have as a species is there”. Xavi goes on to talk about the “agricultural monumental knowledge of the landscape” and Xavi adds “how nice it would be to at least add to the failed tourist model the value of the biodiversity that surrounds the city. We live in an agricultural city and that has to come out somewhere”.

In *BeeTime* we had a feeling about Agripino and Protasia (*Culturhaza*). We saw in digital death (*Culturhaza* has had a blog that hasn’t been updated for more than ten years) the sign of a voluptuous life. “They are minimal stories that can come to deconstruct powers. *Culturhaza* is always on the fringes of what is becoming a new arm of power. We know that organic farming is already a hoax... Trucks of “organic” tomatoes leaving Almeria for Germany... The important thing now is to recognise that there are ways of existing that are not pro-

ductive. This is what we can tell people and I think this is where the challenge lies”, Xavi tells us.

We went to eat at JUGO, where Gaby had set about cooking for us. There we met Agripino and Protasia. The conversation grew longer and unfolded. We began to talk about the impact of the “green revolution” carried out by the dictatorship in Spain. From the most absolute ignorance, we started to put together a lot of loose pieces.

Culturhaza (Agripino and Protasia, Protasia and Agripino) began their work a few decades ago. Their centre of action is in Villarrubia, a few kilometres from the capital of Cordoba.

“We will show you along the way how they are destroying a place that should be a heritage site. What is happening here in the Vega (of the Guadalquivir) is terrible. Very, very fertile areas, which could promote full employment, are being destroyed by agribusiness. There is no generational renewal and the few agricultural projects that remain are not going to last. Nor are there any local councils taking a stand. We have spoken to everyone, with left parties, with the PP, with the PSOE.... And they all say Oh, it’s a wonderful, fantastic idea! But then there is no interest. The administrations should be the ones taking charge of this situation of lack of people dedicated to agriculture. The administrations have to consider that the recovery of agricultural areas implies the recovery of natural areas. And this is not a burden that should fall solely on farmers. Because they can’t, neither economically, nor physically, nor psychologically.. Whether we like it or not, agriculture is not just about production, it also involves a vision of the environment through human contact. It must be seen as fundamental. This is agroecology.

The mechanisation of the countryside has led to a kind of dispassion in farming and a dehumanisa-



A conscientious team-CULTURHAZA.

tion of food processes. The challenge is clear. Even under the brand of ecology, in order to sustain the discourse of the ultra-economic profitability of agribusiness, it is necessary to falsely qualify agro-ecological processes as unprofitable or not profitable at all, which are closer to multi-cropping, soil regeneration, the recovery of local seeds and varieties and dialogue with the wild. In many cases, it is the bureaucratic processes that slow down and make these processes more expensive.

“The support through subsidies to large monoculture plots hides a process in which biodiversity is totally depleted. And not in one generation. But in four or five years. That wipes out everything. The bond with the land of the people who work it is much stronger, and we don’t count on that. A neighbour said to me one day crying, “Antonio, what am I sowing, I am in the hands of the banks”. Now production is mostly drip-fed and intensive... and the organic matter layer of the soil is going to hell. But this is only the first step for agribusiness, which knowingly deteriorates the soil and then promotes the use of phytosanitary products and chemical fertilisers. Because for them the land is no longer land. It is just a medium.

How can we here in the South not feel, after so many years of exploitation, like a second-rate culture? We need to admit that spaces of resistance should not be romanticised, but empowered as a remedy to cultural destruction. The real work of cultural mediation in the countryside of the South has been and is being done by agribusiness: its work of knowledge destruction precipitates its inhabitants into a reconstruction on emptiness. In this situation, the burden cannot fall on the backs of the villagers. These spaces of resilience, like *Culturhaza* and so many others, should be reclaimed

as master places of regeneration and adaptability in the face of ecological crises.

As Javi told us “we have to re-imagine ourselves as beings capable of producing food”. Agripino adds “We have to recover land, seeds and the culture of the peasantry. There is no other way. Protasia is clear: “Herbicides are a scam”. Some girls who had sat down to talk to them before picking their basket of vegetables, followed the thread: “it is a very thorough and deep work that reaches generations of grandparents who already have the concept in their veins”. This cultural idea of false agricultural hygiene, according to Agripino, comes from the Green Revolution. “And the administrations have to educate themselves, because they still have the old model in their programmes and consider us as an agro-industry. And it is the people who practice agroecology who often have to train the inspectors”.

The real work of cultural mediation in the countryside of the South has been and is being done by agribusiness.

Agripino and Protasia grow spelt, an ancient wheat with corrosive properties for self-replicating systems that massively fill the fields and the guts. For a few years they multiplied a few seeds they brought from Asturias, then bought a stone mill that removes the husk from the wheat and another that grinds the grain. Agripino grinds at night, to save as much electricity as possible. “We grind the spelt we grow, the hens use the remains of the milling and at the same time integrate the husk, which is rich in silicon, into the soil. We have to close the cycle”.

These practices were part of our southern cultures, a way of sustaining life, of preserving ourselves for the future. The act of cultural mediation promoted by agribusiness has put an end to it. Now recovering it seems like a feeble act, an act of poverty.

The rural doesn't exist

(Victor Borrego, with a special appearance by Álvaro Albaladejo)

What could the alternative be?

Well, to begin with, perhaps to stop reflecting on grandiloquent questions.

And to start thinking about what one's natural shortcomings are.

I can also get grandiloquent and think.

"we are going down the drain because we can no longer embrace each other".

Álvaro Albaladejo

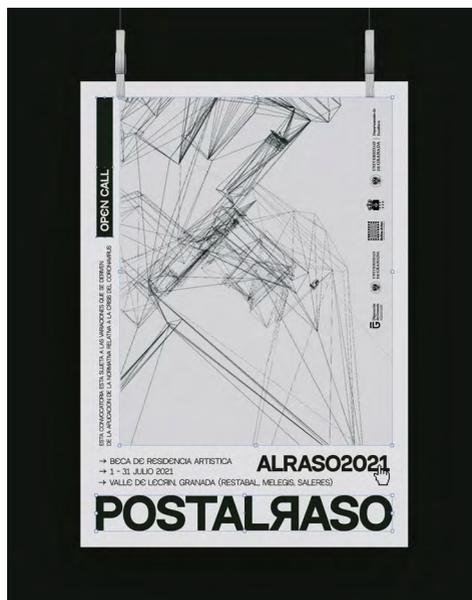
We met with Victor Borrego in Granada, to talk about the *Al Raso Scholarships*³⁶, which take place every summer in the Lecrín Valley. "I'll be wearing a woollen hat and reading," he told us in his last message. Victor is a lecturer at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Granada and tells us first of all how he came to the Lecrín Valley. Before that, Álvaro Albaladejo told us that Victor was a very singular person, a great one. We can vouch for him".



Victor Borrego in Granada, March 2021.

Victor arrived in the valley when there were still remnants of rural life. He lived through the last years of its breakdown. Victor speaks of how the kids in the valley use Instagram, shop like their fathers and mothers in Mercadona, and have little or no relationship with the nature that surrounds them as a provider of resources and knowledge.

Victor's vision of rural territory is tremendously demystifying. And this also permeates the way of doing things in "Al Raso". The scholarships seem to us to be an anti-mediation programme. "We have to demystify the analysis that art can make of reality. Stop looking for the natural voice, the natural gaze. There is no hope in the word either. The space is crazy and the word is trying to ground it too much". The principle of the *Al Raso Grants* is to relate to the lack of intentionality and



Scholarships Poster
Al Raso 2021

the possibility of entering into dialogue, if necessary, with the local madness.

In our village I talk to Dani, a boy who is about to turn 19 and who also comes to interrupt me while I write. "If you're an influencer you can get two thousand euros for uploading a photo, but you work eight hours for fifty lousy euros". Then he says: "I don't like Chiclana wine, I prefer Frizante".

The "crazyness" reveals a coexistence of post-rural realities. In spite of, or thanks to this reading, the *Al Raso Grants* have managed to become, after twenty calls, a place where one can meet with a sense of space and time that is different from that

"We have to demystify the analysis that art can make of reality (...) There is no hope in the word either. The space is crazy and the word is trying to ground it too much"

with diverse guests for a month. With the rigour that comes from a good analysis, one that is made knowing its limits. "We survive because the structure is very simple, without aspiring to anything great, on the contrary. We have to try to be as self-sufficient as possible, without tying ourselves to any institution or model".

of the city or the academy. Ten scholarship holders share their most ragged, punk, post-internaut, anomalous, impulsive and pre-conscious lines of work

Each year the call for entries is curated by the first two names on the list of substitutes. They write the rules and design the theme, the guests and the entertainment. Victor (and this intermitency in *Al Raso*) has allowed the programme to become an example of anti-mediation. This is the peculiar form of dialogue that “Al Raso” proposes. A place to experiment with that which has been left out, with that which perhaps cannot be done within the academic. Without thinking that the creative act needs to communicate with a supposed idea of rurality imposed on the territory. Without culturising or pretending to, admitting that everything is done simply for the pleasure of dreaming and making things TOGETHER.

In Cordoba we also visited **Álvaro Albaladejo** (to whom we offer the highest degree of gratitude for providing us with a list of contacts and projects unknown to us and to “El Cubo”). “We’re really tired”, a man said to me as I entered the doorway, rushing for time barely two minutes after the curfew in Córdoba. The level of tension that cities have undergone in these times of pandemic came over us in an instant. In the village, everything is more relaxed.

In the early hours of the morning, we spoke with Álvaro about the meaning of care after the pandemic, about the emotions in the city with a curfew, perhaps without sirens, but with nerves. “It seems to me that there are a series of mechanisms that are being put in place, which are very Spanish or international, that have to do with commenting on what we would like, but then making it up along the way”.

Perhaps the rural no longer exists, or there are a series of diverse post-ruralities in which it is no longer so important to think about identity, about how we look after ourselves as a community. Identity seems to be that which happens to us as we answer the question of who we are. To admit this is perhaps also to admit that we know nothing about affection and care.

Making memory / making patchwork

(El Cortijo / Navas de San Juan Town Council / Delegation in Cádiz of the Department of Culture of the Andalusian Regional Government / Genalguacil Pueblo Museo / Asociación Matilde)

The mess of memory, of wanting or not wanting to recover it. Of assuming or not assuming that memory, too, will be a dead animal. This is the big mess in which many rural projects find ourselves, even more so after listening to people like Víctor. In principle, everything seems alien. Each project finds its own logic to relate to the neighbourhood, to (re)grow from it, to get closer to it.

In the town council of Navas de San Juan they talk about the difficulties of connecting the population with any cultural activity that goes beyond tradition (and they have a strong and peculiar one). The Pilgrimage of the Virgen de la Estrella³⁷ is more than religion. A preserved narrative, a memory that hardly needs the building. But the building exists and its corners are filled with history, at the same rhythm as the countryside fills with people, tablecloths, cars and drunkenness. “Besides, this is a town of fairgrounds and seasonal workers; at any given moment, it is the way it is”. We walk with Antonio Fernández, head of *El Cortijo, Espacio de Creación*³⁸ through the village where he was born and where he works. “Our biggest fan lives here; she is an old woman who always comes to everything”. Before seeing him, we met with the Mayor of Navas, Joaquín Requena, and the Councillor for Culture, Paqui Palomares. Both talk about how they included Antonio’s project after its second edition in his grandmother’s farmhouse. “We suggested bringing the project closer to the village, we thought it was a very interesting proposal and already in the third edition the event was held with our support. Practically everything is innovation outside of tradition. Villages need to be recognised for other things apart from what we have traditionally been recognised for”.

Una fábrica abandonada, vecina del antiguo lavadero de Navas de San Juan (Jaén).



Continuing with the walk, Antonio took us to the village public wash house, a semi-restored space whose use has been changed. A trailer carries the water that passes through the stone pylons to the pool. "The water is used to water the animals".

In Cádiz we met with the delegation of culture of the Junta de Andalucía, thanks to Juan Manuel Polaina, from *Andalucía Emprende*. Diego Herrera Plata, the secretary general, and Carmen, one of the delegation's most senior officers, met us there. They tell us how difficult it is for them to implement the idea of respect for the material heritage. We recall the restoration work on the aqueduct³⁹ in our village and the chapel of San Ambrosio in Barbate⁴⁰. Examples (among many) of memories summarised in architecture that were restored at the time. Both cases ended in subsequent destruction, due to vandalism, lack of content, means, or other reasons. "Restorers should have been trained, going into the specific subjects in detail, with more knowledge", says the officer, reminding us that at that time the school workshop was in charge of "re-equipping these spaces". Diego tells us that the delegation is "in the process of emancipation" as it has traditionally been a delegation merged with other areas such as sport or development. "It will be a small delegation, but it will be able to focus more on its specific objectives, which have to do with conservation and heritage protection". In addition to trying to bring all the local administrations together to look after heritage, one of its most relevant initiatives is the *European Heritage Days*⁴¹. "Every year it is a monographic event in which rural heritage is highly praised, and we normally focus on the mountains, which is a territory that seems to be more forgotten," says Carmen. Her contacts with associations dedicated to research and heritage protection, connect the delegation with very local interests, taking up and creating records to encourage heritage protection, connecting tangible, natural and intangible heritage. "For example, we have been in dialogue with the environment department so that the pastures of Baelo Claudia can be used as food for cows, but without infringing on heritage assets," says Carmen.

Diego tells us about the site of Asta Regia⁴² and the communication established by the delegation with the association *Plataforma por Asta Regia*⁴³, with whom they are working. "From a regulatory point of view, it is very difficult for the Junta de Andalucía to intervene on privately owned land. If there is sufficient social interest, there is a right of purchase. In this case, after much work, con-

sidering what is suspected (and I say suspected because on some occasions Strabo, the Greek historian and quasi-poet, is used) is that the city of Tartessos may be there. And it may be that there is more than one Tartessos and that each of the claims made for it in other territories is true". Carmen adds "the interesting thing would be to be able to develop an entire project that would then allow the whole process involved in bringing something to the surface to make sense". And it is clear that the interest is not simply to be able to exploit the buildings as attractions. "Obviously culture cannot be measured only in economic terms. The interest is also social, even in the first place, and administrations should work to develop links that make you feel part of your own roots. And not in a chauvinistic way. The link we dream of, when the practical part of the projects is fulfilled, is to reinforce heritage with education. Making it permeate." "With serious conservation criteria," concludes Carmen.

That lost wisdom becomes one of the main agents to dialogue with

Preserving memory and filling it with content. Interpretation centres and buildings with ancient uses that become relics where other cultures, often presented as alien, are preserved. It is this multiplicity of past identities that keep the cultures of the South in a continuous process

of indefinición. But the monuments remain as a grandiose space between the present and what the mind thinks it remembers, which appears as a dramatisation of our past and is effective for the passer-by and the tourist, because of the astonishing evidence produced by the simple contemplation. Perhaps for the inhabitants, the impact is not so clear. The peasant, working class, everyday memory, that which is more immaterial and which corresponds to habits of relationship, is an almost unquestionable working material for almost all the projects we have visited. Recovering it seems to give us back our roots, to cling at least to the story 'even if we have lost the fire'⁴⁴. Coupled with this, much of the art and culture projects in the countryside here in the South, with bits of memories retold, fictionalised anew. That lost wisdom becomes one of the main agents to dialogue with. It takes a lot of listening and little fear of silence.

The souls of the valley

Genalguacil was the first station of our trip. We went to see Miguel Ángel with an almost broken car. The mountain road was leading us into a breathtaking landscape, with cyclists' attractions, viewpoints and streams. To get to Genalguacil



Going down the mist spiral
towards Miguel Ángel Herrera
and Genalguacil / Painting:
Abies Pinsapo by José
Ganfornina.

you have to be prepared not to continue; the road starts and ends there. The history of the project of mediation and contemporary creation⁴⁵ in this village “lost by the hand of the goddess” is long. But the expression is not worth the effort. The energetic concentration that surrounds Genalguacil seems conducive to welcoming spirits and souls, protective and threatening.

Miguel Ángel welcomes us in the recently reopened museum with a retrospective of the last twenty-five years of activity⁴⁶. In the upper room we are captivated by several works, among them “Gemini” by the couple formed by Alba Moreno and Eva Grau⁴⁷ and Lola Guerra’s⁴⁸ laborious installation “The Twins”. In the lower room, portraits by Arturo Comas⁴⁹, and various documented work processes such as “Arco del Viento”⁵⁰ by Isidro López Aparicio, give an idea of the persistent work carried out in Genalguacil. Work that has been gaining in precision over time and that leaves traces as precious, invisible and secret as Juan del Junco’s⁵¹ photographs “Compulsively searching for golden oriole”. Miguel keeps it all in his memory. IT IS UNUSUAL TO BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART WITH A MAYOR, and even less with the level that Miguel does. He is extremely knowledgeable about the field, about what is going on, and he understands mediation as a work of communication between the people and the project, seeking a balance between “above” and “below”. “The project has to help the people at all levels. It has to be able to make the most of the essence of the people through contemporary art, relying on the best, on the best of the emotional and intellectual”.

Miguel recounts anecdotes. Each advance in the project usually has a touch of bizarre, fortuitous and amusing behind it. He tells us about the souls

that inhabit the mountain, about the lights that sometimes appear on the road, about the steep bends behind which you can suddenly find yourself in the multiverse. “You have to listen to your heart, not your head”. Miguel Ángel seems to us more like a believer than a mediator. “We all need people to protect us, but I don’t give up when I sometimes find myself alone. To give up I have to be dead. And I’m not going to let them kill me either”.

The uncultured politics of culture are one of the evils of the institution.

Miguel Ángel’s dedication to the project and to the town is absolute. He is the mayor and the main facilitator of everything that is generated culturally in Genalguacil nowadays. He looks for funding, confronts the institutions with his ideas about culture, gets involved in the contents, puts nails when needed, takes care of the sculptures in the windows of the neighbours. You can see the love in his eyes. “On one occasion, the Provincial Council of Málaga decided to withdraw its support two weeks before the start of the programme of art encounters. The artists had bought their tickets and everything was ready. The people of the town went all out for the programme, they were bringing me money to the town hall!” That year Miguel managed to get the project off the ground, but every time he talks about it, he gets emotional. That emotion allows Miguel not to hold back. “The UNCULTURED POLITICS OF CULTURE are one of the evils of the institution. It is endemic with people. It is a sect. There are managers who think that setting up an exhibition is decorating and others who do not seek professional advice because they prefer to put their daughters and sons in certain posts”.

Bit by bit, with well-directed efforts (strategies designed in terms of economic support, communication, building and intervention) Genalguacil has managed to “generate desire” and establish a minimum direct economic return of thirty percent of the investment. His training as a businessman makes him think of “efficiency”, while at the same time keeping in consideration, very much at the centre of his vision, a certain degree of exquisiteness available for the communal construction of the landscape. “When I was a child I used to sell pears in a trolley and bring them along a road from my father’s farm to the village. Now the road is closed, because it seems to belong to a farm now. We reclaimed the road once, with a group of neighbours. One day, we will reopen it. Exquisite roots, horizontal horizon.

On the stairs that connect the three floors of the museum are the names of all the residents of the village, with their surnames, taken from the census. The building was renovated in the first stage of the project, using the structure of an old mill. Miguel Ángel is not very happy about this, but he finds a solution. “I have obtained an oil can from the seventy-eighth century, from the last time olives were milled here, in this very building. And I want to present it as an emblematic work”. It also seems to us that in this act of creation, Miguel is a key architect. His vision of art, quality, excellence, makes us think within the team how a touching dialogue can be achieved between the layers of memory that make up a territory and contemporary creation. We recall Virginia’s words for the *Cubo Verde manifesto*. To persist, “to be a drop”, to remain.

We have to break with the idea of the universal public.

As much as Miguel Ángel does not forget the economic obligations of the project, he is very clear about his work as a content mediator. “We have to break with the idea of the universal public. You can’t force people to be interested in art.

Each one has its own reality and within it there are all sorts of things”. We get goose bumps again when he says: “**the key is to help each other to gain freedom. Instead of working for general taste, work for the common good.** Do from ourselves, to regenerate what is outside”.

We were moved by Miguel’s words several times. Perhaps at other times we could have seen him as a dealer or a seller of ointments. “Miguel, what are you going to do when you can’t even fit one more work in the village? From Miguel’s car and then walking around, we see all the building sites that fill the streets of Genalguacil, from the beginning.

“Now we have to think about creating self-sufficient communities, but also imagine Genalguacil as a place capable of bringing together the best of creation”.

Without denying the point of criticism for the excess of what Genalguacil offers (in which creations from the first and second stages overlap), it is true that in its streets one breathes an unavoidable coexistence of the quotidian with art. We are left with that pseudo-mystical vision of reality, that sparkle in Miguel’s eyes talking about the souls of the valley and with the passion that the project places in the human relationships that it has been weaving. “We have met some very generous people and little by little the Genalguacil family has been created. The excitement is contagious and the network grows. Dreams are endless and the strategy to reach more is to follow the plan of the stars”.

From the opening of the channels that was our first station, we thank the souls that helped us on the journey and that allowed the car not to break down so that we could take away from this visit a brilliant quartz grafted on the diaphragm.

A lesson in temperance

Our neighbours should inspire us with great respect. We should regard them as our hope. They are the place where we are going to sow ourselves.

José Val del Omar.

We arrived in Riotinto shocked by the landscape. A totally different context, nothing to do with “rural” at first hand. We went up to “Alto de la Mesa” and looked for the headquarters of the **Matilde Association**, the “Matilde Gallardo” Anthropological Interpretation Centre⁵².

“Alto de la Mesa is the oldest neighbourhood built here in Riotinto”. The person who speaks to us is Francisco J. González. Our first contact with the association, Leonor Fernández. The impact of the landscape on us was tremendous when we arrived at Rio Tinto. The contrast between that TOTALLY INDUSTRIAL desolation and the affection that Fran, Leo and their network showed us, seemed to be part of a normalised plan: to take care of us and raise us among humans, nevertheless.

“Matilde Gallardo lived here for more than 40 years; in the other two rooms of the house we talk in a more personal way about her life in order to make visible contents that have been hidden, especially those that have to do with gender equality and the invisible economies that are associated with women”.

Leo also tells us about the relationship between the territory and the British mining company that established itself there in 1873:

“The neighbourhood was built to relocate the workers who had settled in self-built shacks. Everything here was the property of the mine, since it bought the right to use the land, the subsoil and the sky from the Spanish crown, which was in crisis, for ninety-six million pesetas, which was paid off in six years. It is also very interesting to visit the mining museum, born out of the Riotinto Foundation, because there you get a very historicist vision, complementary to this one, and of course the gender and the perspective of the local population is left out. The first thing they created was a system to burn the copper pyrites in the open air, teleras, with which they polluted everything and destroyed the natural environment. This was a cultural landscape of pastures, as is the case in the whole of the Sierra de Huelva. At that time they had everything under their control, they controlled the mines, which were theirs, the workers’ houses, which were also theirs, and even the vegetable gardens, which completed the precarious economy, which they rented out. The neighbourhood was created with a grid structure, so that the foremen lived on the corners and had everything under their control. Eighty percent of the wages were paid in vouchers that could only be spent in the local grocery store, which was over there on that corner.”

Leo pointed to the right. In our common heart (the one at the centre of the dialogue) there was a very strange mixture. Fear of the past, fear of seeing, fear of recognising what remains of fear in the bowels of earth. In less than twenty minutes, even without entering the interpretation centre, Leo and Fran had us positioned. But the grip became even tighter.

“With this (the mining company) controlled the prices, apart from killing the local trade, with the excuse that the workers spent it all on drink. Moreover, every time there was a strike, they would raise the prices even after the strike was over, to teach them a lesson. In fact, this was one of the places where the workers’ movement began to rise up, but it was so expensive that they never did it again. I don’t know if you know the year of the shootings⁵³... on 4 February 1888, the people of Riotinto demonstrated, mainly because of the environmental conditions, as the fumes from the mining by teleras were affecting people’s health. This was the first known environmental demonstration in history, which was held peacefully, with

orchestras and families. The crown sent the army. They buried them in land that later became a cemetery, so that no one would find them. Because nobody would dig under a cemetery”.

The neighbourhood was out of work for a long time when the mine closed. Local agricultural activity could no longer exist, because of the pollution caused by the type of mining. That is why the Matilde Association works not only in the interpretation centre, but also in the vegetable garden.

As poverty is inherited, poverty is nowadays transformed into an existentialist dependence on the system in which we live.

“We not only work here for the recognition of the interpretation centre and the neighbourhood as an asset of cultural interest (which is recognised by UNESCO but does not have the visibility it deserves), but also work to improve the social and structural conditions of this neighbourhood, which have been changing. As poverty is inherited, poverty is nowadays transformed into an existentialist dependence on the system in which we live. We want this natural resource to

be able to generate continuity with a perspective of economic growth, creating employment for the youth here, such as the project “De la mata a la mesa” (From the bush to the table). We work with young people in the garden with the possibility of creating their own initiative to use these resources and the culture of the neighbourhood. In fact, one of them, Balbino, showed us around and said “our neighbourhood is alive because we keep it alive”.

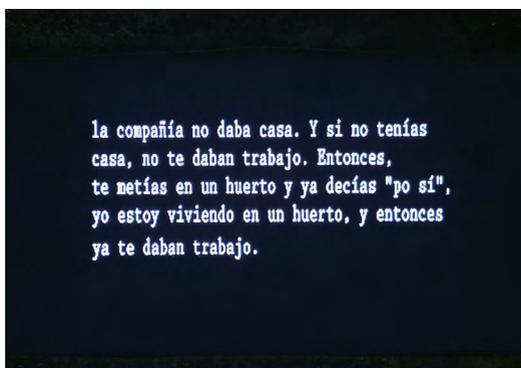
Once inside the “Matilde Gallardo” ethnographic interpretation centre⁵⁴, Fran tells us with the same passion what the centre contains. “Riotinto is known for its mines and its industry. And to talk about vegetable gardens in Riotinto is a bit strange. It is not something characteristic or something to say much about. That is part of our discourse, trying to rescue the historical importance that these plots have had”.

In one of the rooms Fran shows us a plan based on a photograph from 1904. “The teleras, as a method of calcination, had not yet been discontinued here. In fact, they were not suspended until 1907. But in the photograph, you could see the impact that these teleras left on the territory. They left it as a barren land, but in certain environments it had the capacity to re-emerge as fertile land, thanks to the work done by the mining families”.

In a different room there are documents recording the number of material inputs with which each allotment was rented (wells, houses, walls, beehives...). An accident, the sign of love. That way of loving each other in stages, with a continuous and sudden falling in love again. Perhaps this is not



The mines /
The Orchards



la compañía no daba casa. Y si no tenías casa, no te daban trabajo. Entonces, te metías en un huerto y ya decías "po sí", yo estoy viviendo en un huerto, y entonces ya te daban trabajo.



Inside the "Matilde Gallardo"
ethnographic interpretation
centre, Riotinto.



The main hosts, who made us fall in
love with their work: Francisco J.
González / Leonor Fernández.

the place to return the affection, to reactivate it and send a message. But this has also been *Culturarios*, and it is important to say so. We have been able to meet, with unveiled faces behind the muzzle and share accidents and mistakes, thoughts and love, face to face. The immeasurability of love also filtered through the visits and meetings that have served as a romantic bed to create this book.

As soon as the visit to the interpretation centre was over, we threw to Leo, still wearing his

muzzle⁵⁵, a comment following his sentence about how difficult it is for us to speak from the positive, in a territory that is so trapped by destructive power. "It's very difficult not to get angry... And we, who come from anthropology, and anthropology is profoundly critical, imagine.... We need an applied anthropology in these times. We need to think about how we can transform this negative vision and move forward. But this doesn't happen overnight, it's very slow work".

End of the journey CONCLUDING

*"We, Andalusians want to
to become what we are again".*

Misappropriation and modification of
part of the song "Mençaha der Profeta"⁵⁶
by Califato ¾ feat Antonio Manuel⁵⁷.

With the remains of light, with the hummus and with the leftovers, blessed by privileges, harassed by the suppression of freedoms, in the dark, where there are corpses, there will be fertility.

Beyond all that remains in our bodies, moved by the journey, without tears or smiles, with blows, WITH DETERMINATION, we return to the vision of the cultures of the South as second-rate cultures, to add a nuance, that of the brazenness or *desparpajo*. The Indo-European root of the word (*sper-), like its Latin and Greek variants, is related to the idea of "the seed that is sown in the wind". The *cante* is thrown to the wind (perhaps not so much to the ground) so that the wind can carry it as a seed. Because art is born to spread and be preserved later, in the form of sperm or spore. A culture without pedestals for what has been made. A culture made with seeds kept in places as accessible as our speech.

It is in this freedom from the narratives imprisoned by power where the work of art projects in rural areas could be more related to the co-education of communities. Rescuing the fossils, cleaning them and loving them, is another thing that we artists can do in the cultures of the South, even if they don't let us, or only let us a little.

The projects visited push first and foremost, not the beauty to manifest and spread, but the administrations to let them do it. We believe that politicians in charge of culture should be trained before taking up their posts, and that they should continually update their knowledge while they are in office. Especially when it comes to the diverse memory of our Southern cultures. Popular sensibilities, poor in leisure and in this sense proud and beautiful.

In a micro vision, protocols should be agreed upon to guarantee a streamlining of procedures in the alliances between projects and town councils and to analyse cases such as *Scarpia*, in order to understand that independent agents guarantee a way of working that in many cases breaks down

precisely because of the lack of training of the people who hold positions of public power.

Turning to the provincial councils, we note that the work could go in two directions. One in which the different areas of the provincial council are coordinated, in order to put an end to the understanding of culture as a watertight AND MINOR activity without relating it to other areas of knowledge. The second is to improve communication networks so that what is being done between provinces is known.

In a macro vision, and surely detected in other territories, we have noticed how many administrations promote and work on a vision of culture as merchandise. A souvenir to be added to the rest of the tourist attractions that Spanish territories have.

We need more systems that nurture, more public officials who ask themselves for whom and what it is to mediate, but above all we need to rediscover a fondness for the sparse and to see there a possibility to forge processes of degrowth, devolution of autonomy and sovereignty over our own resources. Natural, cultural, spiritual, sensitive and above all historical resources.

We end the text with the words of our friend Val del Omar:

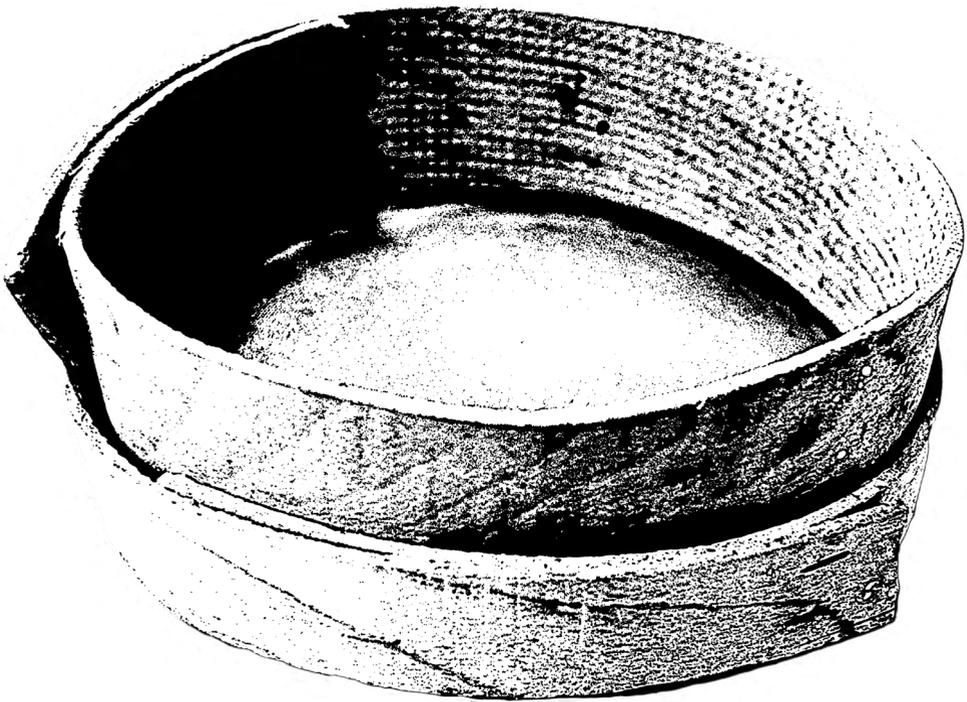
"Culture today is a chore, between clay and electronics, an advance from the document towards the mystery, a life of stroking the terrestrial globe in our hands, a feeling of being immersed in a general phenomenon of Cohesion-Love (...) Culture is divine grace, and as grace it is subliminal. The phrase "popular culture" is misleading. It is a matter of worshipping the growth of culture that (...) hides in shame behind the household appliances".

Loving is another window through which we, artists, can throw ourselves.

Notes & Links:

- ¹ http://www.valdelomar.com/pdf/text_es/text_28.pdf
- ² <https://encicloscopio.com/obra/proyectos-site-specific/val-del-omar/>
- ³ <http://macmorenogalvan.pueblacazalla.com/>
- ⁴ http://macmorenogalvan.pueblacazalla.com/art_brut.php
- ⁵ <https://reuniondecantejondo.wordpress.com/>
- ⁶ <https://encicloscopio.com/>
- ⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/Centro-Ocupacional-La-Puebla-de-Cazalla-728201457259105/>
- ⁸ In *Cubo Verde*, a debate was created during the incubation of this project, not having anything to do with its development. It was about our possible involvement in another emerging network in the Spanish territory: REACC, *Red de Espacios y Agentes de Cultura Comunitaria* (Network of Community Culture Spaces and Agents). It should perhaps be noted that the projects that have to do with the rural, are also involved with the diverse and the neighbouring, and that this involvement makes ideas transferable between cities and towns. Hence our indecision as members of the green cube and our capacity for lack of definition.
- ⁹ <https://encicloscopio.com/obra/enciclolalia/persistencia-del-lenguaje/>
- ¹⁰ <https://miguelangelmorenocarretero.com/>
- ¹¹ <https://miguelangelmorenocarretero.com/proyectos/scarpia/>
- ¹² <https://www.foroarterelacional.com/>
- ¹³ <https://espaciolavadero.com/casinvisibles/>
- ¹⁴ <https://espaciolavadero.com/>
- ¹⁵ <https://vimeo.com/user95914502>
- ¹⁶ <http://callesenflor.blogspot.com/>
- ¹⁷ <http://theunifiedfield.net/>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.extinctionrebellion.es/>
- ¹⁹ <http://www.2020thewalk.org/>
- ²⁰ <https://communities.cyclos.org/algarbia>
- ²¹ https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupaljda/tramite_informacion_publica/20/09/9478_2019d_SE.PDF
- ²² <https://es.linkedin.com/in/bosco-valero-74252448>
- ²³ <https://asociacionmuti.com/>
- ²⁴ <https://www.somenergia.coop/es/>
- ²⁵ <http://euronet50-50max.eu/es/>
- ²⁶ <https://almanatura.com/>
- ²⁷ <http://www.arroyomolinosdeleon.es/es/ayuntamiento/sala-de-prensa/noticia-en-detalle/Arroyomolinos-de-Leon-se-embarca-en-un-nuevo-reto-con-su-Aula-Municipal-de-Musica/>
- ²⁸ <https://fundacionrafaelboti.com/perifericos/>
- ²⁹ <https://www.malaga.es/areaciudadania/>
- ³⁰ https://www.malaga.es/comunicacion/2746/com1_md3_cd-42922/la-i-feria-virtual-de-innovacion-y-emprendimiento-social-frente-al-despoblamiento-de-la-diputacion-contara-con-50-empresas-y-ponencias-de-expertos-los-dias-28-y-29-de-abril
- ³¹ <https://www.malaga.es/lanoria/8096/balcon-de-experiencias-inspiradoras>
- ³² <https://cargocollective.com/rararesidencia>
- ³³ https://www.malaga.es/lanoria/3605/com1_fb-0/com1_md-3/com1_md3_cd-37140/1-encuentro-pueblo-acogedor-creando-vinculos
- ³⁴ <https://www.pacomarmol.com/templum/>
- ³⁵ <https://gecaandalucia.org/>
- ³⁶ <https://www.elvalle.es/deportes-2/becas-al-raso/>
- ³⁷ <https://www.navasdesanjuan.es/el-municipio/feria-y-fiestas/>
- ³⁸ <https://elcortijospaciodecreacion.org/>
- ³⁹ http://www.conocetusfuentes.com/ficha_detalle_otros_tipos.php?id_fuente=398
- ⁴⁰ <https://www.prehistoriadelsur.com/2013/12/ermitta-de-san-ambrosio.html>
- ⁴¹ <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/agendacultural-deandalucia/evento/jornadas-europeas-de-patrimonio-en-cadiz>
- ⁴² <https://arqueojerez.wordpress.com/asta-regia/>
- ⁴³ <https://www.astaregia.es/>
- ⁴⁴ We refer here to Giorgio Agamben's publication "The Fire and the Story".
- ⁴⁵ <https://pueblomuseo.com/>
- ⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6b75189aDO8>
- ⁴⁷ <https://www.albamorenoevagrau.com>
- ⁴⁸ <http://www.lolaguerrera.com/>
- ⁴⁹ <http://www.arturocomas.com/auto-retratos/>
- ⁵⁰ <https://vimeo.com/189200217>
- ⁵¹ http://www.juandeljunco.com/busacndo_oropendolas.htm
- ⁵² <http://www.asociacionmatilde.org/index.html>
- ⁵³ <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/historia/ano-de-los-tiros-masacre-riotinto-huelva-1888>
- ⁵⁴ <http://www.riotinto-etnoecologico.com/el-centro-de-interpretacion/las-salas-del-centro/>
- ⁵⁵ https://i1.wp.com/barba-t-expo.beetime.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Frases_con_corona_30x42_150pp-07-1.jpg?resize=725%2C1024&ssl=1
- ⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hS9Xtfxh5g&list=PL9g-vod6bqgl3oNW84F7-nlM-Z21XjGolV>
- ⁵⁷ <https://antoniomanuel.org/>

RECIPES



Alegría and Piñero

Alegría Castillo Roses and José Antonio Sanchez Piñero
(La Puebla de Cazalla, Sevilla)
<https://encicloscopio.com/>
<http://artecentroocupacional.blogspot.com/>
info@encicloscopio.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2011.

INGREDIENTS: Independent duo who develop their artistic research under the name of a single project 'Encicloscopio' - a chest of analogue artefacts that transcend visual language. At the same time they develop an extensive training project, giving workshops and conferences about their creative process, as is the case of the Occupational Centre of La Puebla de Cazalla where they have been working for 5 years with people with functional diversity. At the same time, they coordinate the Centre's Artistic Residencies project and the Art Brut Conferences.

UTENSILS: Artisanal cinema and its mechanisms outline the silhouette of Alegría and Piñero's work. Contemporary art finds its most fertile ground in the creative processes they develop together with the users of the Occupational Centre, who represent the voice of the people without special effects. Art as a centre for all the peripheries that cross us. The small, invisible, untouched and unwrapped. The creative process with no pre-established end illuminates another way of doing in the deep and human ecology.

DINERS: Thanks to its initially temporary practice in the Occupational Centre, the team currently has the support of the town council of La Puebla de Cazalla and the departments of Social Services and Culture. Its main allies are the users of the centre and their community, and artists interested in creation from the margins.

Espacio Lavadero (with flavours of the original *Scarpia*)

Miguel Ángel Moreno Carreteto
<https://espaciolavadero.com>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: Espacio Lavadero was born in the centre of Granada with the intention of becoming a creative laboratory. Its aim is, on the one hand, to provide the public with a working space and, on the other, a platform for the dissemination of creators close to Granada. A monthly exhibition programme is developed, which is complemented by various projects to promote contemporary ceramics and urban art, artistic residencies and training programmes from a relational perspective and in the spirit of public service.

It is managed by the Asociación Lavadero, created specifically for this purpose, which receives funds from donations or the sale of works and rentals of coworking spaces. The space has an exhibition room, a coworking area with four workshops, an independent office, library, meeting space and a small kitchen. **UTENSILS:** The team's holistic vision of art and previous experience with cutting-edge projects such as SCARPIA and FAR provide them with a subtle and powerful toolbox in this creative laboratory, this time for its sustainable independent. From this solid foundation, they share an open process of contemporary creation that blurs the boundaries between science, art and life.

DINERS: Through different agreements with Fine Arts faculties and art schools, Espacio Lavadero carries out a programme of internships and workshops in collaboration with FAR, artists, creatives and the general public.

Marta Moreno Muñoz

www.theunifiedfield.net/
www.2020thewalk.org

COOKING TIME: 2010 - 2017 (The Unifiedfield). Since 2019: in a sacred relationship of activist engagement with *Extinction Rebellion*.

INGREDIENTS: Artist and activist working in different disciplines such as action art, video and other time-based arts. Graduated in Fine Arts in 2002, her work has focused primarily on themes such as "feminine" subjectivity, the dissolution of the ego and the notion of pre-oedipal nostalgia, in response to a patriarchal reality. Currently based in Granada, she is immersed in the conceptualisation of new projects exploring the relationship between performance art and film language, researching for her doctoral thesis "Art as an experience of dissolution of the subject". Towards an artistic practice in times of collapse"; directing *The Unifiedfield* until 2017; and producing her next project 2020: The Walk with Extinction Rebellion.

The Unifiedfield: Self-managed artist collective and independent nomadic art space/artist residency focusing on the experimental aspects of sound, video and performance art (Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Granada and Castellar de la Frontera, Spain; Singapore; Philippines).

UTENSILS: Artistic activism, disruptive action planning, direct action (sometimes poetic) and non-violent civil disobedience

DINERS: The XR (Extinction Rebellion) movement, artists, activists, the general public and the web of life that inhabits earth.

Al Raso Grants

Granada.
Victor Borrero.
<http://www.ugr.es/~alraso/index.php>

COOKING TIME: Since 2001.

INGREDIENTS: Creation grants for art students which are held annually in the Lecrín Valley municipality of Granada, which includes the villages of Saleres, Melegís and Restábal.
UTENSILS: *Al Raso* takes the metaphor of its name to the field of the real experience of 'being' in the open air. The residences offer a place of creation and coexistence, proposing dialogue in the absence of tools, gadgets and means. The philosophy of 'less is more' and 'the last is first' also gives way to focus on the development of rejected ideas, those that have never found their place. Each edition is coordinated by those not admitted to the previous one. Sustainability in self-management and non-hierarchy offers a space for pure experimentation.

Al Raso was born out of the University of Granada and has the support of the Lecrín Valley council and the Provincial Council of Granada.

DINERS: Created mainly for art students, the residency, after its 20 years of existence, has established itself as an open meeting place, keeping alive the paradoxical relationship between the contemporary and life in the countryside.

El Cortijo. Espacio de creación

Navas de San Juan, Jaén.
Antonio Fernández
<https://elcortijoespaciodecreacion.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: Artistic residencies and Art Encounters in the Rural Environment that are held in biannual editions in the village of Navas de San Juan (Jaén) with a focus on site-specific creation and research, around the local community, the rural, social and cultural values of the environment.

UTENSILS: The programme was created with the aim of activating citizen participation through art and research, supporting creative and educational processes that are nourished by the idiosyncrasies of the place; accompanying its integral development with a special focus on reconnecting with nature.

DINERS: Since its second edition, the programme has been supported by the Navas Town Council (Provincial Council of Jaén), which has embraced the project initiated by the artist Antonio Fernández. The residencies and meetings are focused on creators who are sensitive to rural and community culture.

Genalguacil Pueblo Museo

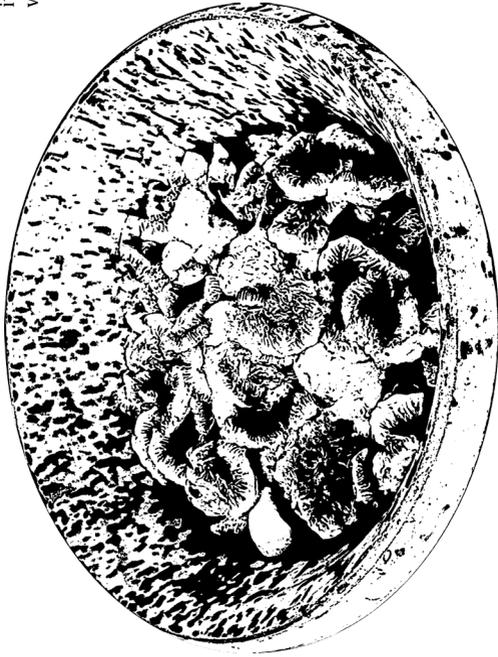
Genalguacil, Málaga.
Miguel Ángel Herrera Gutiérrez
<https://pueblomuseo.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 1994.

INGREDIENTS: Genalguacil is an inhabited and living museum village. Located in the mountains of the Genal Valley (Málaga) and with only about 400 inhabitants, the project chooses culture as a means of development in the face of depopulation. In addition to the *Art Encounters*, which celebrate 25 years in 2021, there is the 'Live Art Week', exhibitions in the Museum of Contemporary Art Fernando Centeno López and from 2019 the *Lumen Festival*.

UTENSILS: The projects are curated and are committed to a relational aesthetic in all the initiatives that are developed on a biannual and continuous basis, offering a cultural agenda in constant relationship and dialogue with the inhabitants and the natural environment of Genalguacil.

DINERS: The initiatives, promoted by the town council itself and the collaboration of the Provincial Council of Málaga, are currently managed by the recently created "Genalguacil Pueblo Museo" Foundation, which draws on both public and private funds, with a commitment to integral excellence: artistic, social and economic. The project offers its living legacy to creators and visitors from all over the world.



Asociación Matilde

Riotinto, Huelva.
Francisco J. González Herrero, Leonor Fernández Cañuelo and associates
<http://www.asociacionmatilde.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2012.
INGREDIENTS: From an anthropological point of view, the *Matilde association* works through the 'Matilde Gallardo' Ethnological Interpretation Centre located in the old mining district of El Alto de la Mesa and several traditional allotments in Minas de Riotinto (Huelva).
UTENSILS: The team works with the history of the place (heavily violated socially and environmentally by the mining industry) as the main axis to raise awareness and contribute in an active and collaborative way to the social, economic and environmental regeneration of the environment. They carry out educational and recreational activities, focused on awakening new ways of relating to nature; placing value on the role of women and youth in society and projecting towards a resilient and creative community that is capable of sustaining itself in a self-sufficient way.

DINERS: They collaborate with the Minas de Riotinto Town Council, artists and people of various kinds interested in creating from the periphery.

La Casa del Carril

Carchalejo, Jaén.
Francisco Montiel Bailén
<https://www.facebook.com/lacasa.delcarril/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2002.
INGREDIENTS: Launched as a space for meeting and contemporary creation, *La Casa del Carril* offers an exhibition space, meeting room and library in the centre of Carchalejo (Jaén), and several creative workshops in the suburb of the Sierra Mágina village, whose main economic activity revolves around olive groves and the meat industry.
UTENSILS: Its host, Francisco Montiel Bailén, a native of the village, acts as a natural bridge between the artists invited to the artistic residencies and the community of the municipality, challenging the boundaries of cultural management focused on empowering in an almost invisible way the richness of the place, its people and trades.
DINERS: The self-managed artistic residencies are offered to artists of all disciplines, sensitive to subtle work, from and for the field. The project collaborates with the town council of Cárcheles and the *Cooperativa de Aceite San Roque*, which hosts part of the artistic exhibitions.

Algarbía en Transición

Exchange Community of the Guadalhorce Valley, Sierra de las Nieves and Costa del Sol, Coín (Málaga)
<https://communities.cyclos.org/algarbia>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.
INGREDIENTS: *Algarbía en Transición* is a social currency, an exchange community whose aim is not to create money but to create relationships of exchange, solidarity and mutual trust. Registered as an association in 2018.
UTENSILS: Currently with more than 500 users, the community includes all kinds of skills and knowledge (from agriculture, electricity or art), and builds through the circular economy a community culture based on mutual support. The regeneration of the social and environmental fabric is one of the main pillars of the project.

DINERS: Independent of and complementary to the current economic system, the initiative offers a sustainable development possibility to anyone who believes in interdependence.

Culturhaza

Villarrubia, Córdoba.
Protasia Cancho and Agripino Terrón
<http://culturhaza.blogspot.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2005.
INGREDIENTS: A seven and a half hectare agro-ecological farm where healthy food production and contemporary art projects coexist hand in hand; the recovery of local seeds and the creation of resilient communities.
UTENSILS: Agroecological, radical and silent production, expanded education and contemporary art.
DINERS: A community of sensitive farmers, people and groups involved in organic consumption and the artistic community, which is committed to a work that goes beyond aesthetics.



Asociación Multi-espacio evolutivo

Arroyomolinos de León (Huelva)
<https://asociacionmuti.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: The project develops citizen laboratories, creative and practical workshops and active communities around sustainable development in the rural world. In 2019, LA ALTERNA "Itinerant Energy Office" was developed, a pilot project to serve the rural community, providing advice on the efficient and intelligent use of energy in the home, actively combating energy poverty and climate change. In 2020 and following the "ALUMBRA energy from rural areas" conference, Muti launched a Local Energy Community process in Arroyomolinos de León (Huelva). Also develops other projects on citizen participation, gender equality, natural and cultural heritage, weaving alliances with social movements linked to ecological and social transition.

UTENSILS: The general objective of MUTI is to work for the sustainable development of the rural world in an integral, participative and inclusive way, where common sense, culture, cooperation, respect for diversity and the environment are the signs of identity.

DINERS: Depending on the projects, MUTI collaborates with local councils, schools and different associations and individuals in the municipalities participating in its activities. Its work is also supported by public and private administrations at national level.

*LIST OF PROJECTS

THAT HAVE NOT BEEN INTERVIEWED due to lack of time

1. Art.Sur: Contemporary Art Festival
2. La Transicionera
3. Pueblos en flor
4. Airgentum Hoja de Ruta
5. Alanís, casa de las Artes
6. Valdearte
7. Artecongusto

/ And many more for sure!

Jugo y Plata

(with iron scrapings from Fragua)

Córdoba.

Gabrielle Mangeri, Javier Orcaay, Xavier Guillem and Richi.
<https://www.platalugar.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2010.

INGREDIENTS: Jugo and Plata are the same conceptual project of two different branches: a healthy and local food shop (JUGO VINOS VIVOS), and a Laboratory of ideas (PLATA). The artistic couple Gaby and Javi, who started their first joint project *La Fragua* (Belalcázar) in 2010, are currently working on a collaborative project of community and sustainable culture in the city of Córdoba.

UTENSILS: PLATA represents a hotbed of culture and art projects - a space self-managed by its four hosts, offering research, social, environmental and art ecosystem art residences, library, production and expanded education activities.

JUGO VINOS VIVOS hosts exhibition projects in an organic wine and sustainable food venue, which looks after the food security of the community from a political-economic-creative perspective.

DINERS: Jugo y Plata works closely with agro-ecological producers in the Córdoba region, the consumer community and a select family of artists who are militant in the creative politics of everyday life. Its work is focused on the general public and anyone interested in artistic research as a vital practice.

Beetime

Research projects in art and ecology, initiated by Karmit Evenzur, Jorge Gallardo and Pol Parrhesia
<https://beetime.net/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2005.

INGREDIENTS: *Beetime* was born out of the idea of creating a natural beekeeping learning community (*Apijanda*) in the area of La Janda (Santa Lucía de Vejer). The artistic research residencies, initiated a year later with a main theme: the life of the honeybee, expand the complexity of the relationship of its members with the natural and socio-economic environment that surrounds them, leading them to open the field of community action through social film projects, mostly made with teenagers, and the systemic exploration of the environment through other bio-indicators such as water.

UTENSILS: Systems thinking, sociocracy and mysticism are fundamental pillars in the philosophy that nourishes Beetime's projects. Art acts as a simple language, through which to relate and contribute to the regeneration of the territory that welcomes its makers

DINERS: Depending on the specific projects, Beetime collaborates with international public and private administrations and focuses its activity on the integral regeneration of the territory through a network of collaborations with artists, scientists and agents of community culture.

Acción "Antes de amasar el
pan trabajaremos la tierra"
by Virginia López.
Habitantes Paisajistas PAN.
2017.



Bee Time

It is the act of weaving what we can call our art. Our needles are bee stingers, the warp are pieces of stories, memories we see. We value what is weak, what is broken, what is constantly being remade. Baskets, hives, texts and contexts. BEE TIME · RESEARCH PROJECTS IN ART AND ECOLOGY is done through Pol Parrhesia, Jorge Gallardo and all their living, visible and invisible interconnections.

<https://beetime.net/>



BEE TIME
RESEARCH PROJECTS IN ART AND ECOLOGY
Santa Lucía - Vejer.

CENTRAL AREA



central area

Castilla La Mancha Community

Madrid Community

Segovia

CENTRAL AREA



Regions in cultural emergency

Alejandro Piccione Vázquez

Introduction: New departures from obscurity and uncertainty.

"When it no longer matters to roll the dice, because all their faces are dark, indistinguishable; when the shadows are equal to the bodies, and the only perspective is a blind horizon; when we reach with our rock a summit without sky and without lies, and we do not want to get off it; when we walk upside down and the sky is the abyss; when silence devours the whistling, as if our tongues had been cut out; when we feel that life is already a black dice, thrown on the dark page of time; when we are the black... then we begin to live again". (Cañas, 1997, p.67).

This poem by the poet and artist from La Mancha, Dionisio Cañas (Tomelloso) gives its name to, and establishes, the imaginary on which the *Dados Negros*, Black Dice art centre is based. Its prose, on the one hand, exercises resistance facing extreme adversity, while on the other alludes to the holographic technique that allows an image to be obtained with a three-dimensional optical effect through the use of a laser beam in a framework of darkness and which is disseminated in the centre of artistic creation mentioned above (which, inevitably, will have its own space within this text).

However, it is the first allegory, given the current situation of global health emergency and the devastating collateral effects that arise from it, which today each individual could identify with to the extent to make them carry this poem as their own banner. This is especially palpable in the dissemination of culture and artistic practices, at least in terms of the enjoyment and delight of these experiences when they are shared: in concerts, in exhibitions, in popular festivities or in any of the physical and tangible materialisation of artistic expression. In those where the public becomes a community and participates in the same experience.

But what happens in rural areas? What happens when certain manifestations of local culture rest on the links between its inhabitants? How do we deal with maintaining its most ancestral traditional traits, while its population is decreasing? And even if these are not available in a defined way, what kind of participatory practices can be used to generate a culture of identity of its own?

To all these questions we could add one more since the fateful March of 2020: How can the heartbeat of cultural mediation in the villages be maintained when the possibility of meeting is restricted (or we are directly deprived of the right to do so)?

It should not be forgotten that what differentiates a given region, what makes it recognisable, identifiable or "placed on the map" in an obvious way

from different places, as opposed to another unknown, forgotten or abandoned region, is the maintenance of its most primordial essence through the confluence of its inhabitants, through their own interest in actively asserting their presence and their cultural identity, which cannot and must not stagnate, if it is to avoid absorption by globalist neo-liberalism (Castells, 1997).

Having internalised the need for the dynamism required for the durability of a cultural identity, and always bearing in mind how essential it is to maintain its roots, the current situation in rural areas will require the integration of resistance, creativity and, in a very accentuated way, a certain feeling of rebelliousness.

Taking up again, then, the last question asked and taking into account all the testimonies that I have been able to "collect" through different meetings with cultural agents who develop their actions in the centre of the peninsula, I can only anticipate to the reader part of the answer for the moment, beg them to be patient and urge them to continue with this reading. And what is this part of the answer?

That part of the answer takes the form of the most popular resource that has been prominent over the last year and a half. This has been none other than to direct efforts almost entirely to the digital world. The creation of banks of cultural archives, the construction of networks and mapping processes have already been the "future to come" in recent years. The Red de Espacios y Agentes de Cultura Comunitaria (REACC) Network of Spaces and Agents of Community Culture, the Asociación de Mediadoras Culturales de Madrid (AMECUM) Association of Cultural Mediators of Madrid, the initiative of the Ministry of Culture, Culture and Ruralities or the creation of the network of artistic spaces in the countryside, The Cubo Verde, were already taking advantage of contemporary technologies in their commitment to models of cultural congregation, giving rise to horizontal and collaborative non-hierarchical formats.

However, we could speak of consensus when it comes to affirming that working with cybersocial tools should be a complement and not a substitute. That our identity traits at the individual or community level run the risk of mutating in a fateful and irreversible way, if there is no firm emphasis on our most primitive ways of relating.

Therefore, in the current context, the state of cultural mediation in local populations requires a comparison between two scenarios:

we could speak of consensus when it comes to affirming that working with cybersocial tools should be a complement and not a substitute.

Prior to March 2020, in which presence was the norm as there were no limitations to meetings or capacity of venues. A framework in which, despite an excessive centralisation of cultural manifestations around the cities, cultural proposals in rural areas had a greater capacity for dissemination. And after the confinement of last spring. When the population is forced to familiarise itself with a new normality, which has nothing more than the term "normal" and requires reinventing itself between caution and resilience, in the light of restrictions that have been poorly thought out in terms of their impact on the different livelihoods of society and what they represent within the totality. Measures that, in an attempt to preserve people's state of health and life, violate precisely those traits that make us people and give us life. For this reason, and being close to the seventeenth month since human interaction was altered, "...it is important not to forget that the coronavirus is the domain of virtual life, that one has to be attached to a network to communicate and know oneself in society" (Galindo 2020, p121). This should make small populations understand that the survival of the smallest cultural identities depends to a large extent on fighting this premise by defending conventional forms of social relations. With regard to this fight, this rebelliousness, it is not a matter of promoting an aversion to technology, but of encouraging a capacity for creative response and knowing how to materialise it in the form of a requirement. To make a collectivity of agents understand, from those within the institutions to the cultural managers and mediators of projects of different scales, that not even the most deadly virus should endanger the health of the social fabric that is required in artistic and cultural practices. And even less so in our villages.

Methodology.

In order to establish a reading or diagnosis of the state of cultural mediation in the communities of Castilla La Mancha, Madrid and in the province of Segovia (the Central Area established within the framework of the research project *Culturarios Cultural Geographies*), it was decided to interview representatives and managers of different cultural spaces and/or projects in rural areas (thirteen in total), and some of the public administrations that encompass them, in order to evaluate the following aspects:

The management models of the different proposals, the relations between the different cultural agents, the links with the neighbourhood commu-

nities and the transformation processes based on the limitations imposed by the health crisis.

Another of the fundamental aspects that have been taken into account are the "imaginaries" and feelings on which these initiatives are projected, in order to try to reflect the dimension and heterogeneity manifested in the rural culture of the centre of the peninsula.

For this purpose, it has been essential to travel to different geographical locations in order to appreciate the various situations and needs at first hand. In those cases where meetings were not possible, dialogue was established by means of videoconferencing or conventional phone calls (these being the tool of communication chosen when talking to the different political officials). To conclude all this fieldwork, a final virtual meeting was held with many of the agents who had participated previously, which favoured the pooling of a series of shared interests, needs and a joint analysis of the demarcated territory.

The participants.

The various meetings have been divided into two main categories:

- Representatives of artistic and cultural projects from different regions of the central peninsula: Iraida and Mauro Cano from the farm El Arreciado (Toledo), Mónica Dolores Martínez Bordiú from the project La Naturaleza del paisaje (Ciudad Real), José Jurado from Datos Negros (Ciudad Real), Francisco Brives from the artistic creation space Kárstica and Mario Rodríguez from La Harinera del Paraiso (Cuenca), Sara Arias Ortega from the artistic education project Desde el Centro, Esther San Vicente from Al Fresco. Museos Efímeros (Madrid), Ana Matey from the space NeoMatsu (Madrid), Fernando García Dory from the Centro de Acercamiento a lo Rural de Madrid (CAR) as part of the Campo dentro project, Miguel Ángel Invarato from the space Traductores del Viento (Madrid), Daniel LLivas from the Escuela de Bio Arte C.U.A.R.S.O.S. (Madrid), París Uki and Julia Weingaertner from the Asociación P.L.A.Y. (Madrid) and the Segovia AP Gallery projects by Marta Maíz, Enrique and Andrea Herrada, on the one hand, and Arte en La Naturaleza: Festival de Graffiti in Espirido by Chema San Segundo, on the other.

- Cultural Departments of municipalities, provincial and regional governments:

First of all, contact was established with the cultural departments of some of the municipalities where the selected projects were located. Fol-

lowing the administrative hierarchy in an ascending order, it was decided to include the cultural departments of the provincial councils and the governments of the communities of Madrid, Castilla La Mancha and the province of Segovia. Only the Segovia Provincial Council replied to us.

On certain occasions, contact was considered with representatives of the areas of Environment, Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, due to their importance in regional areas and their required contact with local cultures. However, in all cases, these areas either did not understand this connection or did not feel directly involved. This fact has been decisive in focusing the framework of this research almost exclusively on municipal areas of culture.

- In reference to the (mostly positive) contact with the municipal areas of culture, we cannot speak of total participation either, so that, in keeping with the popular saying, "no están todos los que son, pero sí son todos los que están" "not everyone who matters is here, but all those who are here matter", we will now name those participants who come from the institutions:

José María Bravo Gozalo and José Emilio Lázaro, Deputy Delegate and Head of Service of the Cultural Department of the Segovia Provincial Council; José Francisco Valverde García, Councillor for Culture, Press and Youth of Villanueva de los Infantes (Ciudad Real); María Cuesta, Mayoress of Espirido (Segovia); Faustino Ollero Sánchez, Mayor of Sevilleja de La Jara (Toledo); Almudena Sánchez Acедера and Marisa Artigas, Councillor and Technician, respectively, of the Cultural Department of Soto del Real (Madrid); Pepa Albarra-cín, Coordinator of Culture of Bustarviejo; Mari Paz Herranz, Head of the Coordination Service of the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla La Mancha in Guadalajara and finally José Fernando Sánchez Ruíz, who is currently in charge of the Casa de Castilla La Mancha in Madrid, a reference and showcase for Manchegan culture in the capital, and had been in charge of the Patronato Municipal de Cultura de Alcázar de San Juan (Toledo) for almost 40 years.

In addition to the two main categories, there was also a meeting between the artists Lucía Loren and Coco Moyá, so that they could talk about the projects they are developing in the Madrid regions of the Sierra Norte and Cuenca del Guadarrama, respectively. Likewise, the art historian and teacher Dolores Fernández Martínez was visited at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) to talk about the research projects that operate in the faculty, focussed on the study of the relationship between art and nature.

Finally, the consultant in rural repopulation and sustainability Albert Brand, author of the most recent guide at national level on this field, was contacted to obtain information about repopulation projects based on the promotion of culture and to present to the author networks of cultural spaces in the countryside, such as Culture and Ruralities of the Ministry of Culture and the The Green Cube.

Through these interviews and a final meeting with many of the contacts, the aim has been to obtain a reliable x-ray of the territory framed by this research, in order to draw conclusions that may be useful for those who face, every day, the rural reality in Castilla La Mancha, the Community of Madrid and in the province of Segovia.

The territory: from incentives to fight depopulation to the gentrification of rural areas.

Portraying common points between the central territories of the Iberian Peninsula addressed by this research can become complex, given the demographic differences and the economic contrast between them. While in the land of Cervantes we find the living representation of what the media likes to call "empty Spain" (a term which, in reality, is not so well received in the small communities of La Mancha), in many towns in the Madrid region we find an opposite scenario which translates into uncontrolled demographic growth.

Whether a real or symbolic measure, it is certain that at the beginning of 2021, the Government of Castilla La Mancha became the first body in the whole of Spain to promote tax benefits for those citizens who seek to reside and register in their municipalities in an attempt to alleviate the progressive exodus from these areas. Meanwhile, in the rural areas of the Community of Madrid, as a result of a "call-effect" generated by the total confinement of 2020, populations have increased.

The growing demand for real estate has therefore accentuated an already existing process of rural gentrification in the autonomous community, leading to a rise in sale and rental prices of up to 35% in most of the municipalities along the Cuenca del Medio Jarama, the Guadarrama or the Alta del Manzanares (only in Soto del Real, its councillor for culture, Almudena Sánchez, assures that the census increased by more than a thousand inhabitants in 2020). It is true that in the Sierra Norte re-

gion, municipalities such as Piñuécar-Gandullas, Madracos or Robregordo, remain on the fringes of this gentrification process, which other regions of Madrid are experiencing, but contrary to what is happening in other parts of Spain, it is not possible to speak of a demographic decline.

A separate case is the province of Segovia in Castilla y León (the only province of this community included in this Central Area), which serves to exemplify (on its own and on a small scale) the contrast between the previously mentioned autonomous communities. On the one hand, the capital Segovia and municipalities such as La Granja or Pedraza have an abundant population, always sheltered under the shadows of the capital of the country and the capital of their own province. Meanwhile, in municipalities such as Santa María la Real de Nieva or Lastras de Cuéllar, they are yearning for tax exemptions for their territories in order to encourage the arrival of a productive population, or for the implementation of the new Rural Erasmus programme promoted by the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, which could be key to this purpose. Given these demographic particularities, logically, the needs in terms of cultural mediation vary and cannot be understood in a single way.

Disassociating education from culture means that we do not fully understand the transforming depth of the cultural projects that take place in the villages.

What does culture mean in rural areas? What does culture mean depending on the territory?

To answer these two questions, what could be better than to draw directly from my contacts their different conceptions, feelings and opinions in this respect?

|| Culture cannot be conceived as a partial or concrete question, on the contrary, we must have a global conception in a clear sense of an intervention project. From my perspective, culture has to do with two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, with the growth of people and with the provision of skills and abilities to live in a complex environment (such as the contemporary rural environment). On the other hand, with what is a social and economic sector like any other part of human activity, which is part of the gross domestic product. Therefore, the cultural question has to be dealt with from both points of view: from the growth of the person and from the social and economic facts, and for each of these, one has to have two universes in one's head. Culture is alive and is in the street; and there are the citizens and entities and associations and institutions. And the latter should facilitate access to culture and try to help train citizens to interpret it" (José Fernando Sánchez Ruíz).

|| When the territory changes, so does the concept of rural culture and its more direct link with geology, ethnobotany... It changes everything" (Ana Matey).

|| That poetic act of writing, that poetic act of constructing with images, or through sounds... That intimate poetic act in which one puts one's affection, must be analysed in such a way that it generates a new paradigm for Culture. I also believe that the only way to rescue the concept of culture is to internalise it, because etymologically it is also that, it is the act of cultivating and carrying affectionately" (Migue Angel Invarato).

|| Disassociating education from culture means that we do not fully understand the transforming depth of the cultural projects that take place in the villages. (...) We must assimilate culture to personal, collective and territorial development in order to give meaning to these cultural initiatives in the countryside" (Esther San Vicente).

|| Culture in the city implies a continuous repetition of rituals, but going to a village in Segovia - or Burgos! to listen to a serenade in front of a waterfall (for example) has something different, something secretive, something adventurous... you don't know what you're going to find" (Chema San Segundo).

The journey that could have been only half a journey or two travel concepts in one.

The popular saying "Para este viaje no hacía falta alforjas" "You didn't need saddlebags for this trip" takes on a new meaning in these times of pandemic, marked by the second digital revolution. This journey combines kilometres of road travel and fibre-optic data consumption. It is a particular journey that lies between the satisfaction of a visit and the desire to visit, between the discovery of a place and the imaginative projection of another.

The impossibility of visiting certain places for security reasons, due to the spread of SARS-CoV-2, even with a "Covid-pass", has led in practice to a series of non-trips. In addition to this, both, my contacts and I, if we chose to meet in person, we have turned this journey through the central part of the peninsula into a half-trip. This fact leads me to ask the reader to carry out an exercise of the imagination in a gesture of complicity with the author of these lines.

Imagine then our moment of departure. We are walking through the Montes de Toledo among holm oak and gall oak groves. Feel free to dip your feet beside me on the banks of the Cijara and allow me to be your squire, emulating Cervantes' anti-hero in his passage from the Campos de Montiel to the grassy plain of Aranjuez (Cervantes, p.314) and then turn off a little further east, following the course of the Tajuña, between the brambles of Atocha, through the Madrid region of Las Vegas. Head even further east with me. We will see kites and great bustards on the heights as we pass through cork oak groves on our way through Campos del Paraíso. Let us then descend, still through the province of Cuenca, to witness the visual spectacle of the karst lakes that inhabit the Serranía Baja. Once there, I will suggest that you set off towards the regions of La Alcarria and Señorío de Molina in Guadalajara, through forests of junipers. To cross the provincial border with Segovia, we cross the Sierra de Ayllon mountain range, walking through pine trees until we reach the region of Tierras de Riaza. We will continue our walk through the Meseta Central: we will cross the Sierra de Guadarrama, crown Peñalara, Los Siete Picos and Monte Abantos on a path with the aroma of rockrose, which will connect us with the Sierra Oeste de Madrid, where we will finish the route.

Imaginary for the transformation of territories.

The first stop on this mixed journey between the physical and the digital, led me to interview virtually Mónica Martínez Bordiú on the twenty-third of January of 2021, given the impossibility for both of us to meet at **La Naturaleza del Paisaje (The Nature of Landscape)**, the estate in the municipality of Horcajo de los Montes that houses her project.

This project was born as a result of a doctoral research into the relationship between Spanish artists and the natural landscapes of Spain, and specifically with the landscape that the project itself inhabits: Toledo Mountain Range.

The long-running "neighbouring" project, El Arreciado, and the Arte en la Tierra Land Art competition directed by the artists Rosa Castellot and Félix Reyes, led Mónica to become interested in the capacity of these agents to bring together the work of different artists in a specific geographical territory. The precise object of her study is that which covers her estate, the Estena river meadow, next to the Cabañeros National Park. Fortunately for Mónica, having a vast plot of land in this La Mancha location is allowing her to study the relationship be-

tween the Castilian landscape and the vision of different national artists towards it. For the prelude to her study, she proposed a programme of artistic residencies to Alessandro Taiana, Lucía Loren and Enrique Radigales, who would be joined by others in the future: Ana Balboa, Marta Linaza and María Jesús Abad from the project *Conversaciones con el Paisaje* Conversations with Landscape (supported by the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos); Marta Chirino, Alejandro Bombín, Alberto Bañuelos,... While it is true that some of these artists have yet to start or finish their work, more are becoming interested in being able to come to the space, a symptom that the project, beyond academic research, is destined to endure over time.

Another project resulting from a doctoral thesis that would lead me to visit Guadalajara is called **Desde el Centro (From the Centre)**. It is an educational initiative that the artist and teacher Sara Arias Ortega would undertake in 2019.

The research is based on the need to encourage young people to commit to their villages through art education. Concern about a problem such as depopulation has led Arias to tackle different educational strategies and to build alliances, such as the one carried out with the National Association Micorriza (where they in turn build others with Museums of Molina or Red de Custodia del Territorio) or the Centro Rural Agrupado. Through connections with different rural schools in the province of Guadalajara, educators and students become cultural producers (Acaso and Mejias, 2017 p.135) through the painting of murals, interventions in nature and other workshop formats that value the territory, connecting it to the youngest.

Between January and February of 2021, as a result of Sara's work with various rural schools, the exhibition *Rural Futures* took place. Mari Paz Herranz (who I will talk about in more depth later) played a fundamental role for this to happen. At that time, as Head of the Coordination Service of the Junta de Castilla La Mancha in Guadalajara, she facilitated the loaning of the Sala de Arte Antonio Buero Vallejo of the Delegación of La Junta Provincial, the place where Sara and I met.

For Sara, as a teacher, this exhibition is a double testimony: The first comes from the children who participate in the exhibition. Through their paintings and drawings we can get closer to their perceptions and the values that belonging to their rural reality brings them. The second, which draws directly from the first, shows, once again, that ar-

tistic expression, placed at an intermediate point between formal and non-formal education, is a powerful tool for transformation.

Precisely this intermediate point, in which artistic education is located, leads me to learn about a new concept of teaching around the practice of painting, in the Madrid municipality of Soto del Real. It is offered by the **CUARSOS (Culture and Art for Human Diversity)** bio-art school.

The methodology of this school is based on the opposition to contemporary pictorial processes, which are based on materials derived from industrial processes (oils, acrylics, brushes, synthetic surfaces,...). On the contrary, it seeks to move within the limits of entropic deficiency, based on a study for the elaboration of natural colours and dyes, inspired by the dyeing techniques of cultures such as the Mixtec or Mayan. For one of its ideologists, Daniel Llivas, an artist and sociologist with a degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the beginning of artistic expression in human beings comes from their direct relationship with nature. The proposal of his courses revolves around the construction of

Concern about a problem such as depopulation has led Arias to tackle different educational strategies and to build alliances ←

a range of colours from the extraction of pigments, in combination with different mordants (both) of natural origin making a chromatic scale governed by the degree of alkalinity or acidity of the colours. Llivas, and his sister Diana (also an artist), had been imparting this knowledge of ecological art for years in the Tlalpan district of Mexico City, until they split between the shores of the Atlantic, when the former decided to take his knowledge to the south face of the Sierra de Guadarrama at the end of 2019.

←

The short time Daniel had been in Spain before the beginning of the pandemic made it difficult for him to adapt his project in Soto del Real, but this has not prevented him, on the contrary, from getting to know and intermingle with other artistic projects that inhabit the Madrid mountains. So it was that, as a result of his recommendation, I decided to continue my physical journey through this area to meet the **Asociación P.L.A.Y. (Participation Learning Art Youth)** in Navalafuente. There I was welcomed by their coordinators: psychologist Paris Uki and sociologist Julia Weingaertner, to talk about their initiative Theatre for Inclusion. Under this name, social and community intervention projects have been taking place in Navalafuente, based on art and theatre, promoting the use of theatrical improvisation to generate networks of support, cohesion and social inclusion. Paris tells me that the starting point of the project arose during her stay in Vienna, in the years prior

to her return to Spain in 2018. When she landed in Austria, from her experience in educational inclusion, she saw her role reversed and she moved to what she calls "the other side of the fence". As a psychologist, she understands that this reversal brings with it the consequent barriers to access social and cultural life, which leads her to make theatrical improvisation a livelihood tool. The psychologist, in collaboration with the artist Irene Lucas (a friend and classmate of Lucía Loren's), combined her interest in art in neighbourhood community spaces with the other's interest in intervention through art in educational spaces, in a project they christened *Improespañol*. From these experiences, together with a base on Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1931-2009) and other techniques integrated in the field of the performing arts, P.L.A.Y. would be indebted, in turn, to the questioning: how can a cultural association generate a legal structure to develop all this compendium of work in a rural environment? Once the association was consolidated, a house they called La Descomunal was rented on the outskirts of Navalafuente, which would serve as the headquarters for meetings to design proposals, for workshops and rehearsals.

La Descomunal is only six kilometres from my next stop on this journey, the old railway station of Bustarviejo-Valdemanco. At arrival, I take some time to reflect on the platform of this halt, a vestige of one of the penal detachments that, during Franco's regime, with the aim of finishing the works on the Madrid-Burgos route, held numerous political prisoners between 1944 and 1952: What if the way to keep the memory of these historic places was to replace the emotions and concepts that conceived them in the first place? What if they could be transformed into places of peace and encounter? What if, without forgetting the atrocities that took place, we could contribute to redeeming that awful aftertaste that these places often carry? Probably the photographer and cultural manager Miguel Ángel Invarato must have thought something similar when, looking for a space for a project he had in mind, he came across this old train station in 2019. The photographer had contacted the Administration of Railway Infrastructures (ADIF) to assess the possibilities that the Programme for the enhancement of the Public Entity's real estate assets could offer him. He did not need to visit more stations, this would be the one to house his project **Traductores del Viento**. Inside there are traces of the period, such as a solid granite wall without a supporting purpose, built

(...) promoting the use of theatrical improvisation to generate networks of support, cohesion and social inclusion.



The challenge is to produce without materials or from those found *in situ*. →

by Republican political prisoners, or an old scale for suitcases. To these are added other objects of historical value that have no relation to the space, such as a table and a mirror that formed part of the studio of the photographer Nicolás Muller, whose daughter gave to Miguel Angel as a gift of friendship. The renovated station seeks and wants to be, above all, a meeting place around the culture of peace. It has rooms for resident artists and an exhibition room on the first floor. In addition to a work area, there is an engraving and a 19th century photography workshop and another with the latest Digigraphie printing technology, as was the case in the photographer's predecessor project, *Imagen Positiva*.

The path laid out by old industrial complexes takes me to the opening of the exhibition *Andar, Recorrer, Transitar... Pararse (To walk, to travel, to journey... to stand still)* by the audiovisual artist and performer Ana Matey at *Zapadores Ciudad del Arte* (part of the network of *ArtHouseSpain* spaces). After a chat with the artist, we agreed to meet digitally a few days later. I also had the chance to meet Francisco Brives, one of the two souls behind the conception of *ArtHouseSpain*, and whom I would contact almost at the end of the research to talk about *Kárstica*, the creative space he manages in the *Serranía Baja de Cuenca*.

Ana Matey tells me that she and her partner Igor Sousa have been forced to abandon their previous space. **Matsu Studio** (a name that comes from the word wind in Japanese and a play on the surnames of the artist couple) had been operating for the last decade in the vicinity of Villaviciosa de Odón but has now moved to Santa María de la Alameda, in the Sierra Oeste de Madrid, with the intention of maintaining the same spirit: being a work space for its creators and a meeting place for other artists. The art in Matsu, or now, Neo-Matsu, does not seek to label itself as rural art, but to be art that is fruit of its relationship with the territory. It does not seek a material production around it, but to make use of what the environment has to offer. The challenge is to produce without materials or from those found *in situ*.

To construct a reflection on the territory through what it narrates and offers, and the discourses that derive from this practice.

I don't even need to switch off the computer at the end of the video call with Ana, as almost immediately, on the other side of the screen, Fernando García Dory, artist and one of the main intellectuals behind the creation of **Campo Adentro (Inland)**,

is waiting for me. Created as a legal entity in 2009, Fernando places its beginnings during an event in 2007 in the Casa Encendida in Madrid that linked art and the rural environment (something that according to him, at the time, could still sound extravagant for certain audiences).

In addition to the work spaces in Picos de Europa in Asturias and in the Sierra de Tramontana in the Balearic Islands, the **Centro de Acercamiento a lo Rural (CAR) (Centre for Approach to the Rural)** is of vital importance and concerns this research. This building in the district of Ciudad Lineal, loaned by the Community of Madrid in 2017, seeks to establish a connection between the city and its most immediate rural horizons. This Madrilian building is joined also in Madrid by *El Aula Rebaño Bosque (Forest Herd School)* of La Casa de Campo and *La escuela de pastores (Shepherds School)* de la Sierra de Guadarrama. The *Aula Rebaño* has 300 sheep and hosts a variety of initiatives, from the recent programme of Development of Creative and Technical Investments in Shepherding in alliance with Medialab Prado, to visits by schools and institutes. The Sierra de Guadarrama *Escuela de Pastores*, for its part, teaches traditional shepherding as part of an itinerant model in the different municipalities that make up the Sierra de Guadarrama.

Inland's actions through these work spaces in the capital are based on multiple visions. One of these is to generate imaginaries based on rural pasts, given that the neighbourhood is largely the result of the rural exodus of the 1960s. From these relationships and others that are also prolific, such as those with the Peruvian Women's Section, the *Moroccan Women's Association* or the *Chinese Diaspora Community*, among many others, the character of the CAR's commitment to an open and hybrid rural life can be extracted. Continuing with the actions to bring people closer to the rural world, we could highlight, among many others: The "andariegas" or walks through the countryside, the promotion of the practice of esparto grass in the Alcarria de Chinchón and in the region of Las Vegas in alliance with the *Al Fresco* project; or the strengthening of other crafts such as clay in the area of Campo Real. Another line of action is aimed at establishing partnerships with local producers of craft beer, cheese and other agricultural and livestock products. The combination of the artist residency programmes, the grocery store and the editorial line configure a multiplicity of permacultural facets in the CAR, in a bid to enrich an agro-urban dialogue that is essential for sustainable development in the contemporary framework.

On my return to Madrid, I meet the cultural manager Esther San Vicente in front of the Torre del Ho-

menaje in Villarejo de Salvanés. Esther feels that the mission and vision of the project she captains, **Al Fresco. Museos Efémeros**, comes from the need to create a community culture and to encourage the recovery of the transmission of knowledge towards certain practices, such as esparto grass craftsmanship or traditional sustainable agriculture, taking philosophy and art as the main pillars.

Esther tells me that, in the Comarca de Las Vegas, the production of oil and wine is progressively recovering outside of extensive practices. For her part, through her relationships with the local "esparteros" (among them the artist José Luis López Antolín), she is managing to revitalise this traditional craft in the area. A craft that, according to her, still carries certain negative connotations,

Crafts still carry certain negative connotations →

due to a vision of contempt influenced by the sacrificed nature of its practice, when in the past, people depended on it for their livelihood. Esther's involvement in the promotion of esparto

grass is tireless. In 2019 she coordinated the programme of artistic residencies *Habitar el Esparto*. Without having yet reached the halfway point of 2021, she has devised, in alliance with *Inland*, the creation of an educational board game based on this craft, which she presented at the latest edition of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR) in Madrid. *Al Fresco* also seeks to encourage the painting of themed murals to pay homage to the inhabitants of the village. The most recent, from 2021, pays homage to its seamstresses and was done by the artists and designers Rebeca Figueroa Domingo, Iris Giménez and María Ayuso. Esther believes that it is vital that these practices are understood and valued in rural areas, as only then can they be replicated, because in her words, they are concepts of great beauty tied to the territory.

It is precisely beauty the term that comes to my mind, when sharing a coffee with siblings Iraida and Mauro Cano in Madrid's Calle de Pintor Rosales, as they begin to talk to me about a farm (which is their life) and which goes by the name of **El Arreciado**.

The acquisition of the *El Arreciado* estate is based on a perspective ahead of its time: that of acquiring land almost exclusively for its ecological and natural value as opposed to merely its productive value. Iraida and Mauro Cano's father, a native of Guatemala who grew up on coffee farms, had already understood this intrinsic value, back in the 1970s, when he and his partner (of La Mancha origin) acquired a farm in the province of Toledo, on the banks of the Cijara reservoir at the confluence with Ciudad Real and Cáceres. Even though the

family's interest in the environmental value of the surroundings prevailed, the children began to take over the farm's operations at an early age. Iraida's training in different artistic disciplines leads her to take advantage of the natural environment of the farm to initiate informal encounters with other artists. *The concerts De Sol a Sol (From Dusk until Dawn)*, which, as their name suggests, took place between sunset and sunrise, were one of the first initiatives held on the farm as a result of the collaboration with the sound artist Llorenç Barber, whose performances have been held every September since 1990 until today.

With the passing of time, and above all with the passing of experiences, the activities linked to plastic creation or intervention in nature gave rise to new and different formats. From one of an educational nature, *The Stone Horse*, in collaboration with Marta Linaza, Ana Balboa and Raquel Sardá, to others such as *El Simposio del Barro*, which is nothing more than a coexistence between these artists and other artists and friends (Mila de Blas, Bárbara Fluxá, Alicia Sen,...) around work with clay. Among this diversity, there is an initiative that in *El Arreciado* has been able to bring together the opposing dialogue of the two views of the rural territory: the utilitarian peasant view and the tourist view more linked to aesthetics (Badal, 2018, p.151); this is the *International Wool Symposium*. Here, artists from all over the world (Osvaldo Giuliani from Argentina, Mariël Bisschops from Holland, Gu Jing from China,...) have been gathering every year since 2012 at the farm, to participate in the shearing of the Talavera sheep (a native breed in danger of extinction) and to develop a work in situ with wool as the main element. The testimonies of fascination on the part of the artists who have been able to work with this raw wool are almost as diverse as their works. The plastic properties of wool of this quality, freshly shorn and full of lanolin, show that the practice of the useful can lead to the aesthetic.

The architects Marta Maíz and Enrique Herrada also started from this intermediate point between an aesthetic and utilitarian vision of the countryside when they conceived their gallery **Arte y Paisaje (AP Gallery)** in Riaza (Segovia). The main reason that brought them to the Segovian village of Martín Muñoz de Ayllón was the need to raise their children in nature, to see them running free in the fields or to share stories with them sitting on bulrush chairs around a fire, ... something that, as they emphasise, could be done in this enclave twenty-five years ago, and still today.

As they integrated into the village, inspired by the art of Andy Goldsworthy, they began to make artistic interventions in the landscape and to build what was originally going to be an architectural studio that would end up becoming the AP Gallery. Both maintain that the conception of their gallery derives from a process informed by many of their life experiences:

Earlier, when the architects were about to finish their training at the School of Architecture, their teacher Juan Daniel Fullaondo, in relation to the 1984 International Preliminary Design Competition for the new San Sebastian Cemetery (now Ametzagaña Cemetery), selected the then young pair of architects to work alongside Jorge Oteiza and himself. From the collaboration with those "monsters" (as Enrique would literally define them), and from the experience of the dialogue between contemporary art and nature that had materialised in that project, the seed would grow that would later lead Marta and Enrique to make small interventions in the landscape. The interest shown in their artistic work by the Coordinadora para el desarrollo integral del Nordeste de Segovia (Codinse) materialised when securing European funds, which help them transform the architectural studio into an exhibition space for creation and intervention in nature in a unique enclave included in the list of Sites of Community Importance (SCI) of the European Union.

Its residencies encourage the creation of multidisciplinary work teams and focus on the artists' relationship with the local environment.→

I have barely finished the call with the architects and I am already making the next one. In this one, the artist and curator José Jurado would speak on behalf of the board of the **Pepe Buitrago Foundation**, the patron of the creative space in Villanueva de los Infantes (Ciudad Real), **Dados Negros**.

This space represents the personal commitment of the artist Pepe Buitrago to propagate the holographic technique and the dissemination of contemporary art, very much based on action art, inspired by the rise of the works of artists such as Esther Ferrer or Concha Jerez, and of all those works that reflect on how the body inhabits space.

Its residencies encourage the creation of multidisciplinary work teams and focus on the artists' relationship with the local environment. A good example of this can be found in the action that the artistic tandem Dos Bengalas (Alessandra García and Violeta Niebla) carried out in the town of La Mancha under the name of *La lista de la compra* (The shopping list), where the everyday act of doing the shopping becomes an artistic expression, in which synergies are established with



1- INLAND/ CAR. Classroom-Herd-Forest in La Casa de Campo, Madrid.

2- DESDE EL CENTRO. Coexistence of generations and visual languages.



3- AL FRESCO.MUSEOS EFÍMEROS. Knotting the esparto grass and old esparto spinning wheel in front of the Torre del Homenaje in Villarejo de Salvanes.



4- Asociación P.L.A.Y. "Excluded voices" in Plaza de Navafuente.

5- *The donkey and the flute*. A living fable in the meadows of EL ARRECIADO.



6- LA NATURALEZA DEL PAISAJE. Viewing tower in Cabañeros Park.



7- *Bajo el agua*, Isabel León, "Here&Now" series, VI Meeting of Living Arts in Nature, Matsuo 2017.

8- LA HARINERA DEL PARAÍSO.



9- TRADUCTORES DEL VIENTO. Bustarviejo/Valdemanco train station a few months after its opening.

10- talking to Chema San Segundo from ART IN NATURE. Spirdo Graffiti Festival.



11. C.U.A.R.S.O.S. Natural pigments for an ecological painting.

In the middle, a chicken coop in the artisanal area of Montejo de la Sierra, Higuera highway and sunset walking towards the lagoon...



4

5



the local population. Among the numerous artistic productions that have been taking place, are particularly noteworthy artists such as Asunción Molinos Gordo, Luis Camnitzer, Eugenio Ampudia, Miguel Braceli and the poet Dionisio Cañas, whose poem *Dados Negros* (Black Dice) inspired the name of the centre.

And as far as inspiration is concerned, it is pertinent to refer to my own in the following lines. Those that would lead me to visit the **Faculty of Fine Arts of the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM)**, where I trained, for two research projects with strong roots in the rural landscape.

The art historian and teacher Dolores Fernández Martínez introduced me to the project she heads together with other lecturers in the painting department: *Eco*. From the nature of landscape painting to the art of landscape thinking. This research group focuses on the study of landscape and its evolution through an artistic imaginary incorporating ethnobotanical, geographical, environmental, mythocritical and agroarchaeological studies. Dolores only regrets the difficulty in getting it fully established. A bureaucratic constraint around the number of full professors required prevents them from being assigned to the UCM for the time being.

On the other hand, since it has a larger number of full professors assigned, the *research group Climatologies of the planet and consciousness*, does have the required funding. Its lines of research are based on the analysis of the work of art as a tool for transforming consciousness for a new ecological sustainability. It is directed by the cultural manager and university lecturer José María Parreño, who has also been a key figure in the conception of The Green Cube. During the 2015 Master's Degree in Art and Creation Research (BBAA, UCM), he advised two very special students on the creation and shaping of a network of art spaces in rural areas: Lola Mansilla and Coco Moya, the mothers of The Green Cube.

It would be the musician and sound artist Coco Moya, who would accompany me, on the last Sunday of February 2021, on my way to another of the stops on my journey: Montejo de la Sierra, in the Sierra Norte region of Madrid. Lucía Loren, also an artist, was waiting for us there. On this occasion I decided to limit myself to facilitate a dialogue between the two artists, so that they could share their feelings about the villages where they live and the projects they develop there.

Lucía Loren herself spoke to us about the contrast between the relative ease with which her work

has been in demand for years outside the Sierra del Rincón and the delay encountered to be able to become active in this territory. Reflecting on this fact, and bearing in mind that the local population ranges from fifty to three hundred and fifty inhabitants in Montejo de la Sierra, the wicker weaver maintains that perhaps the key to this activation has been to establish a conscious listening to the territory and the needs of its people. "Initiating projects that generate a cultural and social network in my territory seemed vital". The artist expressed with enthusiasm, before telling us about the project that had taken so long to arrive: for four years now, Lucía had initiated, in collaboration with the association *Plena Inclusión Madrid*, a nomadic artistic residency programme in the Sierra del Rincón called *Paisaje Abierto* (*Open Landscape*), which favours the meeting and work between artists within the territory with and without functional diversity. A generator of coexistence and inclusion that integrates occupational centres, homes for the elderly and educational centres where, in turn, it encourages the dynamisation of other social inclusion projects.

For **Coco Moya**, on the other hand, living in Cercedilla is almost like living in a small town, given that compared to the 363 inhabitants of Montejo de La Sierra, Cercedilla has more than 7000. Among the synergies established by Coco Moya in the Sierra de Guadarrama, as well as actively participating in the Cercedilla Craftsmen's Association, is the one established with its Cultural Foundation, within the *SierraLab* project for the celebration of the *Montaña Sónica* festival, which began in 2019 and will have a new edition in the summer of 2021. It is a laboratory that combines education, nature and sound creation in alliance with Las Dehesillas Secondary School, with the financial support of the Carasso Foundation through the Claves grant.

A few days later I found myself having lunch on a terrace in Cabañas de Polendos (Segovia) with Chema San Segundo, Head of the Service for the Promotion of Initiatives, Municipal Innovation and Tourism, and promoter of cultural initiatives such as the Pan Duro poetry festival or the always wonderfully bizarre **Arte en la Naturaleza (Art in Nature). The Espirido Graffiti Festival**.

This particular festival takes place in the fields surrounding the road that links the villages of Espirido and La Higuera, in the Mancomunidad of Fuente del Mojón, in the province of Segovia. At some point in the summer, when it is time to compact the straw bales, the farmers give up their land for a few days so that both new and established graffiti artists can paint on the cardboard covering of the bales. With the passing of time and the consequent popularisation of the festival, the Espirido

Town Council took over its management, which led to the creation of alliances with Writers Madrid (a shop specialising in spray paint ranges), resulting in the participation of renowned graffiti artists as Ze Carrión from La Mancha and Masaki Hasegawa. Another institution that facilitated the transfer of consolidated artists in 2018 was The Neomudejar museum of the ArtHouseSpain network of art spaces.

The next project on my list comes from the *ArtHouseSpain* network of spaces: **Kárstica**, a space for artistic creation in Cañada del Hoyo, Cuenca. Francisco Brives, one of the thinkers behind **ArtHouseSpain**, explains that this network of spaces was born as a result of the philosophy of the rhizome and collaborations based on affection and commitment. Another of the particularities of this network is that it takes advantage of disused industrial infrastructures. As in 2013 with the museum La Neomudéjar, in 2018 with *Zapadores* and with *Kárstica* since 2019, it takes an old railway station located this time in Cañada del Hoyo. This is one of the nine works, practically identical, that the architect Secundino Zuazo built for the Cuenca/Valencia network during the Franco regime. The founders of *ArtHouseSpain*, Francisco Brives and Nestor Prieto, although not initially linked to the Castilian province, were attracted to it by the mark left behind by artists such as the painter Fernando Zóbel and the *El Paso* collective, and saw in the territory of Cuenca the opportunity to bring people closer to their natural roots. As the first *ArtHouseSpain* space conceived outside a city, it has sought to put the territory and the landscape (which stands out for its lagoons and torcas of karst origin) in the first place, and to encourage eco-sustainable interventions by the resident artists.

Apart from *Kárstica*, there is one more young project in Cuenca that takes another disused industrial building.

The contemporary graffiti artist and muralist Mario Rodríguez (Mr. Trazo), acquired part of the old flour mill in Carrascosa del Campo in 2019 to convert it into a centre for artistic creation, **La Harinera del Paraíso**. As an urban artist, Mario had always been attracted to the industrial architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the decision to procure part of this complex stems mainly from the unfeasibility of renting or buying a house and studio in the city at a reasonable price, due to the extreme costs brought by real estate speculation. This decision would lead him to rethink his own huge workspace and to immerse himself in the planning of a model, which would integrate artist residencies, concerts and

exhibitions. As part of this model, he would try to involve institutions and other local agents so that other types of projects could be integrated into the remaining sections, in order to give rise to a dynamic strategy that would preserve the heritage value of the building. From the synergies that were established, proposals emerged such as: an industrial museum, an ethnological museum, an interpretation centre and an archaeological museum based on the vestiges of the Visigothic and Roman cultures, which abound in the area. Unfortunately, Mario was to understand sooner rather than later that, despite his determination, his work and his effort, the support from the administrations is normatively scarce, and does not always respond to what should be common interests.

Another of the particularities of this network is that it takes advantage of disused industrial infrastructures.



Local relations and management models.

Mario tried to pull as many strings as possible. He held meetings with the Cuenca Provincial Council, who praised (but not endorsed) his project. He also initiated contacts with the local town council to try to find a way to take advantage of the other part of the industrial complex, so that support for a project could be considered. But this did not happen. He maintains the belief that the general profile of the local people, predominantly dedicated to extensive agriculture, is not sensitive to this type of proposal, as opposed to the occasional inhabitant, who may have a greater interest in the historical, ethnological and artistic features of the territory.

The opposite case was for architects Marta Maíz and Enrique Herrada. Although their gallery in Rianza is not their main professional activity, for them it was decisive to have funds from the European Community through Codinse, who had developed an interest in their artistic interventions back in 1994. These funds were of great help in the start of the administrative process, although they took too long to arrive (they were received between 2009 and 2014), but when they finally arrived, they did so at the right time. Since 2014, the couple of architects have been managing their *AP Gallery* space autonomously, as they could not depend on the local administration of such a small municipality as Rianza, for which they feel a sense of love and affection. When they look back, they cannot help remembering the Martín Muñoz de Ayllón of twenty-five years ago, when there were still shared works and the village still had more

than twenty inhabitants (today there are only six) or, in other words, eight or nine "fireplaces" (as the populations in these districts were counted in the past). This feeling must be mutual when the inhabitants feel that the gallery is their own, having witnessed the whole process of creation and evolution.

Mónica Martínez Bordiú manages *La Naturaleza del Paisaje* and the programme of artistic residencies that stems from her academic research out of her own pocket. It is the artist herself who bears the living expenses, who transports the artists to the estate and who provides materials and infrastructure (as during the stay of Alessandro Taina, for whom she built a wooden turret to provide him with a better panoramic view of the landscape). For the moment, the artist and researcher has no support from the municipal government of Horcajo de los Montes or any other public or private organisations, but she feels grateful, as she recognises that the viability of her model of self-management is only possible when one has a natural space of these characteristics of your own property. The communication I established at the time with the Horcajo de los Montes Town Council were not fruitful and resulted in administrative silence (which has been the predominant theme of the response of many of the administrations contacted during the fieldwork carried out). Nor was there any greater success in contacting the management of the Cabañeros National Park. Fortunately, both the artist's relationship with the management of this nature reserve, as well as with the local people, is cordial and frequent, as it goes back a long way. All of the above does not exempt Mónica's drive in her search for support.

On the *El Arreciado* farm the situation is similar, although there is a subsidy from outside the artistic sector. Despite the fact that the wool production market in Spain is devalued and scarce, through the creation in 1992 of the Asociación de Ganaderos de Raza Ovina Talaverana (AGRATA), of which the Cano brothers are part, a line of aid was established for the improvement of sheep production through the Orden de la Consejería de Agricultura y Medio Ambiente of 15/12/1993 setting up the Reglamento del Libro Genealógico de la raza ovina Talaverana (Stud Book Regulations for the Talaverana sheep breed). Subsequently, following the Order of the Regional Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment of 17/12/1995, more were added. However, the farm does not receive any type of economic support from the artistic and cultural sectors. Although its proposals may be based on the use of wool or cork, they have always been managed at a private level. There has been close contact with the town council of Se-

villeja de la Jara, and its mayor, Faustino Ollero Sánchez, acknowledges that, to date, no aid has been provided for any of the cultural events held on the estate. He adds, however, that he is aware of the impact and importance of the Simposio Internacional de la Lana (International Wool Symposium), which moved him in the past to try to obtain (without success) funds from the Diputación de Toledo that could be used to support the artistic activities that take place at *El Arreciado*.

A similar case in terms of interaction with the municipal government can be found around the *Dados Negros* project, where relations between Pepe Buitrago and the Cultural Councillor José Francisco Valverde García exist, but are thin. The latter understands the magnitude of the project and the benefits of establishing an exchange of resources but for the moment, although the mayor's office has made appearances at presentations of the centre taking place in the in the Convent of Santo Domingo, only five hundred euros have been allocated to the centre on one occasion. The Luciérnaga Association, however, has defined annual allocations. *Dados Negros* manages its funds mainly through a system of sponsorship with the Pepe Buitrago Foundation offering companies and individuals the opportunity to collaborate financially in support of contemporary creation, research and knowledge.

The survival of the project *Al Fresco. Museos Efímeros* is based on two factors: The main one lies in the work and personal involvement of the cultural manager Esther San Vicente. Thanks to her work in parallel with the Villarejo Educa Association and in communication with the Villarejo de Salvanés town council; but above all to her skills when it comes to building different synergies (Campoadentro, Carlos III University, Association of Moroccan women,...) and securing subsidies through public calls for proposals. Esther rightly points out that this personal involvement must be shown in the right measure: "It is necessary to establish a point of balance that allows initiatives to materialise", she says. "But it can never lead to burnout or to giving up trying again when that doesn't happen". The relationship of the projects and activities with the local population is palpable to the extent that, in collaboration with the expert in esparto grass crafts, Julia España, they are managing to recover and disseminate this ancestral practice in Villarejo de Salvanés, Perales de Tajuña and even in Pinto. All three towns have loaned space in their Casas de Cultura for workshops. Although the funds secured through calls for proposals do not usually achieve the desired amounts, the efforts materialise in the growing participation of the inhabitants and in the respect they show for

the audiovisual screenings, the esparto grass workshops or the murals dedicated to the town itself (such as the one in the Casa del Mayor, which pays homage to the work of the esparto grass workers, by the muralist Murphy, or the more recent one dedicated to the work of the seamstresses).

Although Esther is grateful for the support she receives from the Town Council, which I was able to corroborate when she introduced me, among others, to the Cultural Councillor, Mónica García, I was extremely surprised that, despite my insistence, the Councillor refused to grant me an interview a few days later. It would have been of enormous value to contribute to reinforce the interest on the part of the council for some projects, which are already a boost in the relations between the municipality's neighbours.

The *PLAY Association* has recently been having a similar experience with their work in Navalafuente. The reception Theater for Inclusion had received in 2018 had been promising. *Voces Excluidas* was presented as an open-air play that advocated social inclusion and encouraged citizen participation. The good response by the City Council and the local population did not make the association

suspect that (first due to a change in the municipal government, which resulted in the withdrawal of certain budgets they had been beneficiaries; and then the arrival of Covid19) their projects could be hindered in such a sudden way. Relations with the administration stagnated, cooled down and entered a phase of deterioration that to this day seems irreversible. When I initiated contacts with the local town hall secretariat, I was informed that the deputy mayor in charge of culture categorically refused the possibility of holding a conversation with the author of these lines. In a way, this shows that the relations to be established with the administration in this municipality are not at all easy.

"... if, despite of everything, you are unable to maintain good relations, you are forced to leave the village with no other option. And the smaller the municipality, the worse it is" (Lucía Loren).

With regard to these words of Lucía Loren and the situation that the *PLAY (Participation Learning Art Youth)* is going through in Navalafuente, it is necessary to clarify the difficulty and importance of maintaining relations with smaller local populations. Although relations are always bidirectional, or directly multidirectional, and on occasions it is not possible to have control over the way they drift, it is worth stressing the caution with which one must act in the clusters with the smallest populations.

Although the funds secured through calls for proposals do not usually achieve the desired amounts, the efforts materialise in the growing participation of the inhabitants



The previous paragraph does not exempt us from adopting the same caution in places with a higher population density. In this sense, despite the difficulties Miguel Ángel Invarato has faced in starting his activity in La Estación de Bustarviejo, the idea of bringing together in a first exhibition different artists from the Sierra Norte region has probably been an unbeatable starting point for the relationship with the locals.

Traductores del Viento has sought to be, from the beginning, a space able to start from an initial lack of resources. The agreement with Adif stipulated the start of activity at the station for June 2020, after which the period of lack of resources, drawn in the agreement, would come to an end. This condition did not take into account the confinement during the spring of 2020, which would halt the works for the refurbishment of the space for a period of time. Another consequence of Covid's arrival was the variation of the initial crowdfunding for the project, which saw the contributions redirected towards aid for the health sector. Miguel Ángel did not find support from the different foundations that normally back cultural initiatives, neither of the institutions or territorial administrations as Community of Madrid or Local council, which led

him to design a program of solidarity donations and micro-loans, together with the "Súbete al Tren de la Cultura" (Jump on the Culture Train) campaign, in which communication professionals, music, dance and stage artists offered their determined and disinterested help in a call to society.

The economic sustainability of the *CUARSOS* bio-art school is a question of resistance that is quite different from the previous one. In this case, it depends mainly on family support and on the students who trust and appreciate the transmission of environmental concepts through painting.

Daniel LLivas, maintains that his project in sustainable pictorial education always started, from its beginnings in Tlalapan, as a civil society organisation that does not seek to depend on any political party or private company. They have always sought to be completely autonomous and in view of the relations maintained before the beginning of the pandemic with the cultural area of Soto del Real, they believe that it is best that they continue to be so. In his case, he feels that the relationship with the administration is an obstacle rather than a support. At the time of his contact with the area of culture, he only needed the loan or rental at a low cost of a classroom in the Casa de la Cultura to teach his painting classes and a small space of just four or five square metres to set up a "colour garden" for a simpler extraction of pigments

to provide for his students. To this end, he would also contact (unsuccessfully) the municipal youth department, which manages a space with a plot of land that suited his needs. Daniel's attitude does not seek to express criticism in a literal way, and he even understands that the beginning of the first state of alarm altered his framework of action and hindered relations with both the administration and the local environment. However, following the amicable contact that I established with the cultural department of Soto del Real, almost a year after the beginning of the pandemic, and an exchange of emails between the cultural department and Daniel himself, he has now reaffirmed his position of not wanting to depend on the institutions.

The *Inland CAR* secured its space in the Madrid district of Ciudad Lineal through a ten-year cession agreement with the Consejería de Cultura de la Comunidad de Madrid. In addition, the project has a contribution from the Community of Madrid which, to this day, continues to be renewed. On the other hand, the city council of the capital demands a payment of 6000 euros per year for the place occupied by *El Aula Rebaño* in the Casa de Campo. On a general level, *Inland* is managed on the basis of a mixed model that includes a non-profit cultural association and an entity in the form of a Cooperative Society of a commercial nature that operates in parallel, designed for those activities that require this system, such as the production of cheese, the trade of other local products or the publishing project. From 2010 to the present *Inland* has evolved in many ways, mainly in its internal organisation and in its priorities for action. There are now a number of people linked to the association and others who invoice for the work carried out for the association. There are also members of the association who contribute and receive resources on an equal basis, but who are not directly involved in the management of the projects.

As for the mixed management model that also exists in *ArtHouseSpain*, Francisco Brives prefers to describe it as follows: "As Galicians that we are, we conceive the management of our network of spaces as an octopus model, with a central thinking head and many tentacles that operate, and that even if they are cut off, can grow again on their own. The main idea is that each of the departments of these tentacles can look for sufficient economic resources so that the project can be developed or put on hold to be reactivated at another, more favorable moment". Its museums and creative spaces have developed

over the last decade without depending on public subsidies (although they have been missed). *Kárstica* was not going to be an exception, since, despite having the Diputación de Cuenca as landlords of the Cañada del Hoyo station, they have not received a reply regarding a meeting to evaluate the possibilities of the centre. This is also the case with the Junta de Castilla La Mancha. Neither are they considering support from the town council (as they do not believe that the institution would be able to afford it), nor from the local population. They have maintained an unbeatable relationship with the locals, for which they feel very grateful. Francisco says that, both during the 2020 confinement and during the Filomena storm, many neighbours frequently visited the station in order to assess its condition and report on it periodically to their tenants during their prolonged absence.

Desde el Centro is not legally defined, but Sara Arias knows how to keep her initiatives active through the synergies established and, as with *Karstica*, through good relations with the local population. Among those previously mentioned, Sara has had the good fortune to come across Mari Paz He-

rranz, who has moved in recent months from her previous position in the provincial delegation of the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla La Mancha in Guadalajara, to the general secretary of the Subdelegation of the Spanish Government in the same province. Neither of these two positions is linked to an area of

culture, and yet we encounter a professional with a great sensitivity to what cultural dynamisation represents in the less populated municipalities of the Señorío de Molina and Serranía de Guadalajara regions. Her involvement in these territories can be seen through the sculpture and painting sessions of *MolinArte*, a platform that promotes the diffusion of new artists through exhibitions in locations such as Sigüenza, San Pedro or Alustante. She also directly promotes the *Tierra de Voces* choir based in Pobo de Dueñas, which brings together vocalists from the municipalities surrounding Molina de Aragón. These initiatives are not the only ones that Mari Paz brings to the province of Guadalajara, but they should be enough to reflect an involvement in cultural promotion that unfortunately, for the moment, neither Sara Arias nor I have found in the Department of Culture of the Guadalajara Provincial Council.

Perhaps it is still too early to talk about the repercussion of *Neomatsu* in the town of Santa María de La Alameda, although Ana Matey confirms that the initial reception from the neighbourhood has

Inland is managed on the basis of a mixed model that includes a non-profit cultural association and an entity in the form of a Cooperative Society of a commercial nature

fortunately been warm. Matey, although self-managing her project on a private level, can talk about mixed management models given her professional background. Of these, the most significant case may well be the *Exchange Live Art* project conceived in conjunction with the performer Isabel León. Active since 2013, this festival proposes an investigation into communication through the exchange of performance scores between artists from different countries. As a result of these international relations, financial support was obtained through the European Economic Area (EEA) grant strands that integrated institutional collaborations between Spain and the EEA member countries: Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. This grant, as has happened with others, was a consequence of the fabric that Isabel and Ana herself created through alliances with different associations and administrations, both in Spain and abroad: Museo Vostel, Junta de Extremadura, the Norwegian Embassy, the Performance Art Oslo Association (PAO) and the Al Handka Association of Morocco, among others. Ana believes that it is easier to obtain financial support when you involve institutions from different countries, but above all when your work is already known.

There has been no need to build direct alliances abroad in the case of the Espirido-La Higuera Graffiti Festival, as it represents an excellent case of good practice on the part of a local administration. The mayor, María Cuesta, who had already chosen to support the event institutionally since 2018, did not hesitate to continue to do so in 2020, having been able to confirm years ago what this festival had meant, on many levels, for the town and its people. María reassures that this will be the case in 2021, despite the development of the health emergency.

Framework change: COVID19

Despite the fact that in the current context, the interest and communication with cultural mediators on the part of the administrations is by no means generalised, it is good to know that it is not only the mayoress of Espirido who makes an effort to maintain and adapt artistic and cultural initiatives: In the region of Las Vegas for example, the esparto grass workshops given by Julia España have been allowed to continue by the councillors of Villarejo de Salvanés and although with a little more delay, also in Perales de Tajuña. The councillor for culture in Santa María de la Alameda, Miguel Ángel La Torre, for his part, has maintained the annual allocations for theatre companies in the municipality,

even though they have not been able to perform most of the time.

When, at the beginning of this article, I emphasised the need to be creative, ingenious and to adopt a somewhat rebellious position with regard to digital pigeonholing, I wanted to imply how essential it is to keep alive in the towns face-to-face encounters between their people. That their inhabitants should never cease to build their own identity despite the complexity of the situation, because "the most important issue to keep culture alive is that it is kept alive by the people of the village" (Brand, p 117).

it is easier to obtain financial support when you involve institutions from different countries, but above all when your work is already known.



Sorpresoto is one of the formulas chosen by the Soto del Real council to implement different cultural proposals throughout its streets. This proposal suitably symbolises the ingenuity of

which I speak, since in practice, it is a series of parades, recitals, concerts and performances with no fixed location or timetable, taking place during the 2020 summer season. In an original and surprising way, *Sorpresoto* helped to re-establish cultural activity and neighbourhood ties in the town, while at the same time avoiding the protocol constraints derived from the current health situation, which would have been the case if it had been organised with a fixed timetable and location.

As a general rule, the replies of the political officials interviewed revolved around the cancellation of events or a timid adaptation by means of a commitment to reduced seating capacity (which in most cases entails economic unsustainability) when not resorting entirely to a digital orientation.

The Culture Department of the Segovia Provincial Council has chosen to maintain the lines of support for the culture of its two hundred and fifty municipalities and has encouraged attendance in the majority of proposals, albeit with limited seating capacity. The deputy for culture, José María Bravo Gozalo, believed this to be fundamental, as interrupting or hindering the continuation of the cultural fabric in municipalities that rarely exceed three thousand inhabitants could soon become a factor of depopulation that would be difficult to tackle.

However, the variety of situations arising from Covid in the researched areas is only comparable to the diversity of their imaginaries.

In order to make Pepe Buitrago's permanent collection known, *Dados Negros* has preferred to undertake the expense of returning a group of

works that were to make up the exhibitions in 2020 (which will finally be resumed in the summer of 2021) and to redirect the exhibition proposals, while coexisting with the closures and the reduced seating capacity.

The IX Symposium of La Lana and the thirtieth anniversary of the *Sol a Sol* concerts have been cancelled at *El Arreciado*. Iraida believes that, in due course, they will be held again; she is taking advantage of this time to reflect and write about the farm she has grown up with and constitutes her life.

For Sara Arias, the health emergency has made it impossible to directly monitor some of the initiatives concerning her research. Her current efforts are focused almost exclusively on obtaining funding for her project and on her work as a teacher at the Miguel Delibes Institute in Mejorada del Campo.

At *AP Gallery* and *La Harinera del Paraíso*, all activity has simply stopped. As a result of this "standby", Mario is devoting himself for the time being to art education at the Escuela de Arte de Albacete.

In the Community of Madrid, we can find two particular aspects that have led to their own idiosyncracies within the State of Alarm:

On one hand, being the most lax community in terms of restrictions, cultural and exhibition spaces such as La Casa de Castilla La Mancha have continued their activities with the sole exception of being forced to reduce their seating capacity. On the other, concerning to the periphery more exclusively, the increase of rural gentrification processes (already mentioned in this paper) derived from the call effect to the countryside due to the total confinement of 2020. The fear of another confinement within the urban environment has led those who can work from home to move to the villages of the Community, giving way to property speculation and causing property prices to rise significantly. As a result, two of the projects under investigation have been forced to abandon their usual spaces: Matsu (now *Neo-Matsu*) has moved from the outskirts of the metropolitan area to the Sierra Oeste, while the *PLAY Association* has been warned to leave La Descomunal during the month of June and its fate is still uncertain.

The *CUARSOS School of Bio-Art* has sought to sub-

sist through online classes and workshops, although with the arrival of the summer months it will seek to resume face-to-face activity in a natural environment.

At *Traductores del Viento*, they had to delay the opening of the station for a whole year, as well as being forced to completely change their programming. If they finally managed to achieve some objectives, it has been at the cost of an enormous exclusive dedication, through small contributions and ultimately through the popular campaign "Jump on the Train of Culture".

According to Francisco Brives, *Karstica* had to replace an international exchange with artists from the Spanish cultural centres in Nicaragua and Costa Rica by voluntary residencies called De Autoconfinamiento, offered to the residents of Zapadores. Among these, the artist Miguel Sbastida spent almost a month developing his work and was invited to participate in a festival of ecology and art in nature in the United States, through the network that *ArtHouseSpain* has established with cultural agents in Los Angeles.

So, although the activity in the space was less than what intended, it has been of high quality and very fruitful.

Time has also been very fruitful for Mónica Martínez, who has used it to continue her academic research and to monitor some of the works by the residents that were still to be finished, as well as

scheduling new visits by other artists, with a view to the future in *The Nature of Landscape*.

Fortunately, given the diversity of strands at *CAR*, the health emergency has not forced a general shutdown. However, all the activity linked to meetings has been lost: the research groups seminars have been forced to migrate to a digital format, while the artistic residencies are being kept behind closed doors. The consumer groups of local production are still active, as is the shepherds' school, which, even within this pandemic framework, is gaining more and more followers. They would have liked for the Madrid City Council to stop or reduce the rent of the *Aula Rebaño* space, given that all activity had to be delayed for more than a month due to the damage caused by the Filomena storm in the Casa de Campo.

Conclusions.

After all said in this paper, the following series of unequivocal conclusions can be drawn. Most importantly, when I began to immerse myself in this research I realised that it would take a minimum of three hundred pages to narrate what is happening in the broad spectrum of cultural mediation at the centre of the peninsula. There are numerous spaces and projects which, due to space limitations, could not be included (El Dorado in Toledo, El Museo de Cerámica Nacional in Albacete,...) and those that were selected probably merit a more in-depth study. Far from being negative, this fact highlights the diversity of cultural features in this Central Area and speaks of a richer culture than spectators more linked to the metropolis can probably even imagine: Traditional crafts, popular dances, exhibitions and educational projects rooted in the land coexist in a myriad of locations of high environmental, heritage and archaeological value, shaping different features of a culture with its own character in this geographical centre of the Iberian peninsula, which would require to be studied and reviewed more regularly and in depth.

The dissemination of the knowledge arising from a mosaic of such heterogeneous cultural proposals could well be one of the pillars on which to build new lifestyle models and thought for the future. And in the light of the environmental sustainability that appears as the main roadmap in current policies (such as the Green New Deal), another pillar should be the imperative of putting these models into practice immediately. As argued by *Standart Thinking*, "The contemporary crisis is not the crisis of a country leader or conflict, but the collapse and disappearance of old and broad social structures and ways of thinking" (2020, p.33). Following the general analysis of cultural mediation in the Central Area, an oscillation between the preservation of the ancestral and the reinvention of identity of rural populations that are re-emerging, or directly emerging can be seen. The progress of these models could well represent a response, a new roadmap.

This organic evolution of local cultural identities contrasts with the immobility of a large part of the institutions, which often do not seem to understand that these proposals have a value that goes far beyond the quantifiable and that they are the key to the repopulation and sustainable rehabilitation of villages that would otherwise be condemned to disappear.

Property speculation is another aspect that prevents or blocks social access to the national coun-

tryside. This is exemplified mostly in the periphery of Madrid through its processes of gentrification of rural areas, where the new settler, as a general rule, ends up imposing their urban habits, instead of establishing links with the people and participating in the construction or maintenance of the identity of the place. On the other hand, when this trend is reversed in places in demographic decline, property owners that usually no longer live in the municipality, guided by a purely personal interest, see the prices of homes that they practically abandoned some time ago start to rise. This generates a speculative funnel for the development of occupational and cultural proposals.

Returning to the discussion on what the health emergency means for cultural mediation in rural areas, a debate should be held on how much longer the convergence of the different relationships established between civil society should continue to be sacrificed. For it is from the very act of gathering that the construction of a defined local culture derives, that which brings out its identity traits through the maintenance of its crafts, its popular traditions or simply its meeting places, which is precisely where collaborative practices take place. Precisely, both to ensure the survival of the most ancestral ways of life and the configuration of new models based on tradition, the transfer of relationships and ways of working towards the virtual realm will only harm the community fabric of our villages, as they were not conceived as substitutes for our social relations, but as 21st century communication tools, in order to facilitate them.

On the contrary, the practice of handicrafts, as well as the processes of harvesting in traditional orchards and fields, immerse those who take part in them in a conscious state of collaboration and community integration. In the same way that attending an exhibition in company or revitalising the practice of a regional dance helps to weave rhizomatic systems that reinforce the sense of identity.

This set of practices, so common in many of our towns, could become impossible if we continue to promote, without control, our relationships through digital media, and we do not set aside time for the defence of face-to-face encounters. If we do not adopt, as pointed out at the beginning, an attitude of rebellion against digital domination, it will be irrelevant whether we seek to keep crafts alive, encourage local production or bring exhibition proposals to a village. Nor will it matter if we organise a travelling choir around the region or make installations with wool, or hold a sound art festival at the foot of a mountain. This is not only what matters, it is what it is fundamental.

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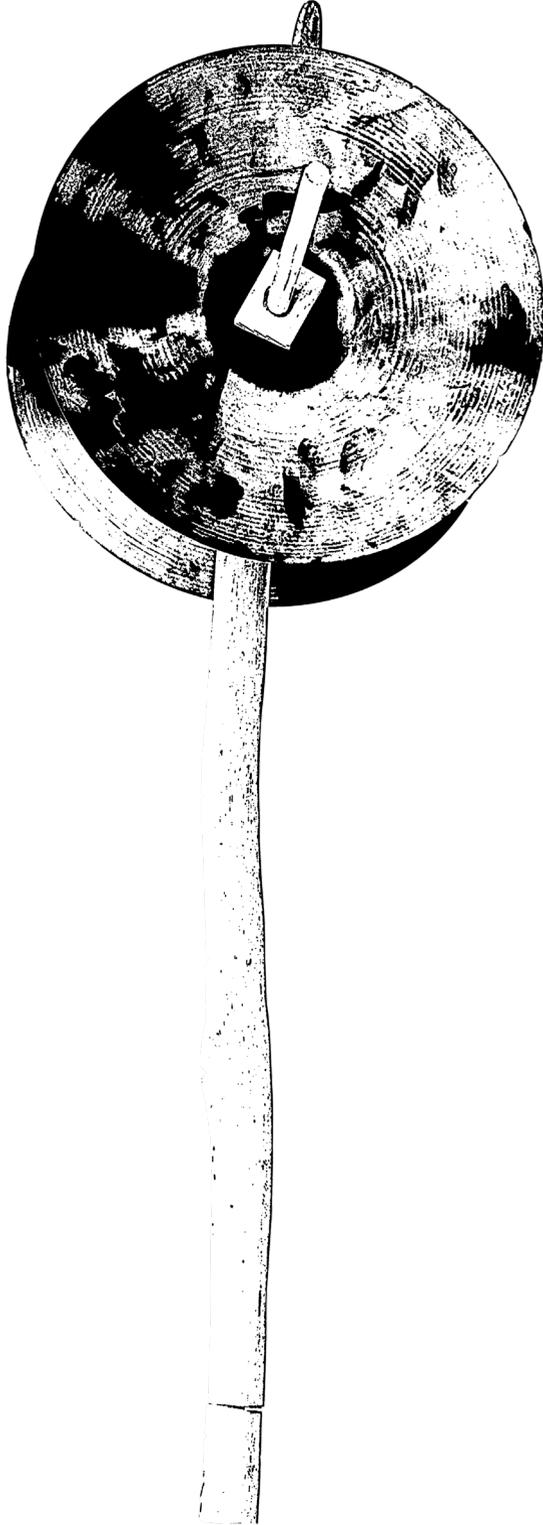
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RECIPES



Aperos inútiles [Useless farming tools], Virginia López, 2019.
Plow the earth, rock the cradle, light grooves, solar, musical cymbals.

AP Gallery

Martín Muñoz de Ayllón, Riaza. Segovia. Spain.
Marta Matz, Enrique Herrada and Andrea Herrada.
apgallery.info@gmail.com
<https://www.ap-gallery.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: Art gallery dedicated to the dissemination of artistic languages, as well as their relationship with nature and the cultural landscape, through exhibitions, training workshops and interventions on the landscape.

UTENSILS: Interventions in nature are combined with an exhibition space set in the natural environment of the Sierra de Ayllón, which in turn integrates its landscape through an architectural language of transition between indoors and outdoors. Welcomes proposals for installations, photography, sculpture, painting... while offering two spaces for a programme of artistic residencies: the *Atelier* and the *Casa del Prado*. A second gallery in Ibiza is active during the summer months.
DINERS: Collectors, curators, artists from all disciplines, institutions and contemporary art lovers.

Arte en la Naturaleza “Festival de grafiti de Espirido”

Espirido, La Higuera road. Segovia. Spain.
Rafael Tormo, Chema San Segundo and Laura Melino.
innobarte@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2008.

INGREDIENTS: Graffiti festival displayed on duly protected straw bales. Since 2018, the City Council of Espirido has taken over as the promoters of the initiative.

UTENSILS: The festival takes place on land donated by farmers on both sides of the Higuera road, which links the Higuera village with Espirido. The first step is to line and protect the bales so that the paint does not damage the straw, which is later used to feed the livestock. Since 2018, the paint sprays have been provided by Writers Madrid. The initiative is the brainchild of Chema San Segundo and Laura Melino, who also shaped the poetry festival *Pan duro*.

DINERS: Inhabitants from Espirido and La Higuera, artist (anybody is welcomed to come and paint, including already established artists).

Al Fresco. Museos Efimeros

Villarejo de Salvanés. Madrid. Spain.
Esther San Vicente.
info@alfrescomuseos.com
<http://alfrescomuseos.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: Through art and philosophy, working on participatory cultural practices. The aim is to recover forms of co-existence that are almost extinct and to reinforce the identity of the municipality of Villarejo de Salvanés, as well as the links between the community and its environment.

UTENSILS: Residency programme based on creation with esparto grass and mural painting. Questioning the frontiers between the countryside and the city. Living art and ephemeral art. Esparto grass craft workshops and audiovisual screenings.
DINERS: Inhabitants of Villarejo de Salvanés, Perales de Tajuña and other nearby municipalities. Artists and other professionals interested in maintaining sustainable cultural and social practices in the villages.

Desde el Centro

Guadalajara. Spain.
Sara Arias Ortega.
proyecto.desdeelcentro@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2019.

INGREDIENTS: *Creative thinking* or *art thinking*, through “re-latographies” and images as an engine for the dynamization of different proposals that seek to reinforce a strong foothold on the primary sector among the youngest population within for the municipalities of the province of Guadalajara.

UTENSILS: Lectures, workshops, mural painting, concerts, exhibitions, performances, guided tours, communal meals, developed by the association of the art educator Sara Arias Ortega with rural schools, through different educational centres CRA (*Grouped Rural Centre*), associations such as the National Association Micorriza or ADEL, the Association for the local development of the Sierra Norte de Guadalajara, with the support of the Junta de Castilla La Mancha in Guadalajara.

DINERS: Families who wish to educate their sons and daughters in contact with nature.

Escuela de Bioarte C.U.A.R.S.O.S

Soto del Real. Madrid. Spain.
Daniel and Diana Llivas
cuarsosarte@gmail.com
<https://cuarsoscom.wordpress.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: School dedicated to the extraction of natural pigments for the elaboration of colours by means of mordants and their subsequent use in the practice of painting, based on a range of colours from the most acidic to the most alkaline.

UTENSILS: Pigment extraction workshops can take place in different natural and open spaces. Depending on the vegetation or morphology of the place, different pigments can be extracted. Creation of colour orchards and an auxiliary classroom for painting.

DINERS: For anyone interested in the production of colours from natural pigments using non-conventional, environmentally friendly methods.

Karstica

Cañada del Hoyo. Cuenca. Spain.
Francisco Brives and Néstor Prieto
info@arthousemadrid.es
<https://www.karstica.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2019.

INGREDIENTS: Art space managed by *ArthousSpain*, a train station built in 1957 by the architect Secundino Zuazo, which has been set up as a space for creation.

UTENSILS: Multicultural encounters, artistic residencies and exhibition space. Within the framework of artistic expression, based especially, given the environment it inhabits, on the intervention on the landscape.

DINERS: National and international artists.

Dados Negros

Villanueva de los Infantes, Ciudad. Real, Spain.
 Pepe Buitrago, Víctor Buitrago, José Jurado, Mercedes Laso,
 Ignacio López and Ramón Molina.
contacto@dadosnegros.com
<https://www.dadosnegros.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2014.

INGREDIENTS: Centre for artistic creation that emphasises action art and the dissemination of the holographic technique in art.

UTENSILS: The Dados Negros Holography and Arts Centre hosts multidisciplinary work and research groups. It has a library, exhibition and conference room, multimedia room, holography laboratory, multi-purpose workshops and accommodation for an artist-in-residence programme. This framework is supported by the Pepe Buitrago Foundation (an artist specialised in the use of holography and director of the centre), which is a private, independent and non-profit institution.
DINERS: The activities, workshops and research are aimed at a wide range of audiences from different fields: scientific, artistic and cultural.

La Naturaleza del Paisaje

Horcajo de los montes, Ciudad Real, Spain.
 Mónica Dolores Martínez Bordiú.
monmar06@ucm.es
<http://www.lanaturalezadelpaisaje.es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.

INGREDIENTS: The project stems from research for a doctoral thesis aimed at documenting and disseminating the different ways of understanding and relating to the landscape, with the Montes de Toledo as the object of study.

UTENSILS: Artistic residencies focused on the appreciation of the landscape of the Montes de Toledo (adjacent to the Cañaberos National Park).

DINERS: Painters, illustrators, photographers, sculptors and, in short, any national artist or any artist who feels challenged by the poetics of landscape.

El Arreciado

Sevilleja de la Jara, Toledo, Spain.
 Iralda and Mauro Cano.
<https://www.elarreciado.net/>

COOKING TIME: Since 1971.

INGREDIENTS: An agricultural and mainly sheep rearing farm with an ecological character that serves as base for artistic creation.

UTENSILS: Different activities are held on this private estate on the banks of the Cijara reservoir in Toledo. The first meeting of artists dates back to 1991, and concluded with the music cycle De Sol a Sol From Dusk to Dawn by the musician Llorenç Barber, which from then on would be held every summer until 2020. In 2012, the International Wool Symposium was created in connection to the shearing of Talavera sheep, bringing artists of different nationalities to the farm every year to work with freshly shorn raw wool.

DINERS: Friends, artists, musicians, clay craftsmen, potters and all kinds of creative agents in tune with the times of nature.

Traductores del Viento

Bustarviejo Train Station, Madrid, Spain.
 Miguel Ángel Invarato
traductoresdelviento@gmail.com
<https://traductoresdelviento.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2020.

INGREDIENTS: A space for creation, thought, for the blending of knowledge and for Peace, successor to the former *Positive Image* space. Designed to host exhibitions, audiovisual cycles, concerts, workshops and artistic residencies. It has three work spaces, one of them specializing in analog photography and engraving and another for digital printing.

UTENSILS: The old Bustarviejo/Valdemanco train station (a heritage structure of Adif), converted into a cultural space, thanks to a group of creators, constituted since 2018 as a non-profit cultural association. They have launched various initiatives of micro-patronage and citizen micro-loans, in order to finance the rehabilitation of the building and start the project.

DINERS: All kinds of artists, all sensitive people and cultural agents who want to exchange knowledge.

La Harinera del Paraíso

Campos del paraíso, Cuenca, Spain.
 Mario Rodríguez (*Mr. Trazo*)
<http://laharinera.es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2019.

INGREDIENTS: A project for artistic creation centred on muralism and based on an industrial complex from the early 20th century (flour mill).

UTENSILS: Programme of artistic residencies focused on urban art and graffiti.

DINERS: Urban muralists, musicians and other creatives.

Neo Matsu

Santa María de la Alameda, Madrid, Spain.
 Ana Matey and Igor Sousa.
matsuestudio@gmail.com
<http://www.anamatey.com/neomatsu/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2012.

INGREDIENTS: Professional photography and artistic production studio conceived to be a meeting place.

UTENSILS: Workshops in nature, artistic residencies, action art, performance, photographic production. Live art and ephemeral art, indebted to the Fluxus movement, from which to question the frontiers between the countryside and the city. Co-organisation with Isabel León of the *Exchange Live Art* performance festival.

DINERS: Artists and creatives interested in action and audiovisual art.

*LIST OF PROJECTS
THAT HAVE NOT BEEN INTERVIEWED

Espacio de Arte el Dorado

El Dorado Art Space (Toledo).
Active.

Conversaciones con el Paisaje

Conversations with the Landscape (Madrid)
Active.

La Nave Indeleble

The Indelible Vessel
(Madrid)
Active

Bokacción

(Madrid)
Inactive.

Museo de la Cerámica Nacional

National Ceramic Museum
(Albacete)
Active



Asociación P.L.A.Y

(Participation_Learning_Art_Youth).

Theater for Inclusion

Navalafuente/ La Cabrera. Madrid. Spain.

Paris Uki and Julia Weingaertner, Celia Teira and Raúl Ma-
raña.

contact@theaterforinclusion.com

<https://asociacionplay.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2018.

INGREDIENTS: Theatre for inclusion is the social action strand of the P.L.A.Y. Association based on improvisational theatre. It follows the path of the theatre jamming of Lavapiés and above all of the Improespañol collective, the previous project developed by Paris Uki in collaboration with Irene Lucas in Vienna. Projects of socio-community intervention through theatre and art.

UTENSILS: Several lines of action based on theatrical improvisation as an inclusion tool for the creation of support and affection networks.

Territorial dynamisation through action theatre in the street. The activities, workshops and rehearsals take place in the space *La Descomunal*, in the municipality of Navalafuente. As a legal entity it operates as a cultural association and is supported by the contributions of its members, donations and some occasional subsidies through public calls for sponsorship.

DINERS: Anyone interested in community intervention, inclusion and youth dynamisation processes, as well as performance agents who understand theatre as a tool for action and social transformation.

**CAR (CENTRE FOR THE APPROACH OF
THE RURAL)**

Madrid, Spain.

Fernando García Dory, Amélie Aranguren, Begoña Arechederra, Rocio Sanz, Disbel Roque, Manuel Ortiz and Manuel Romero.

coordinacion@inland.org

<https://inland.org/> <https://car.inland.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2012.

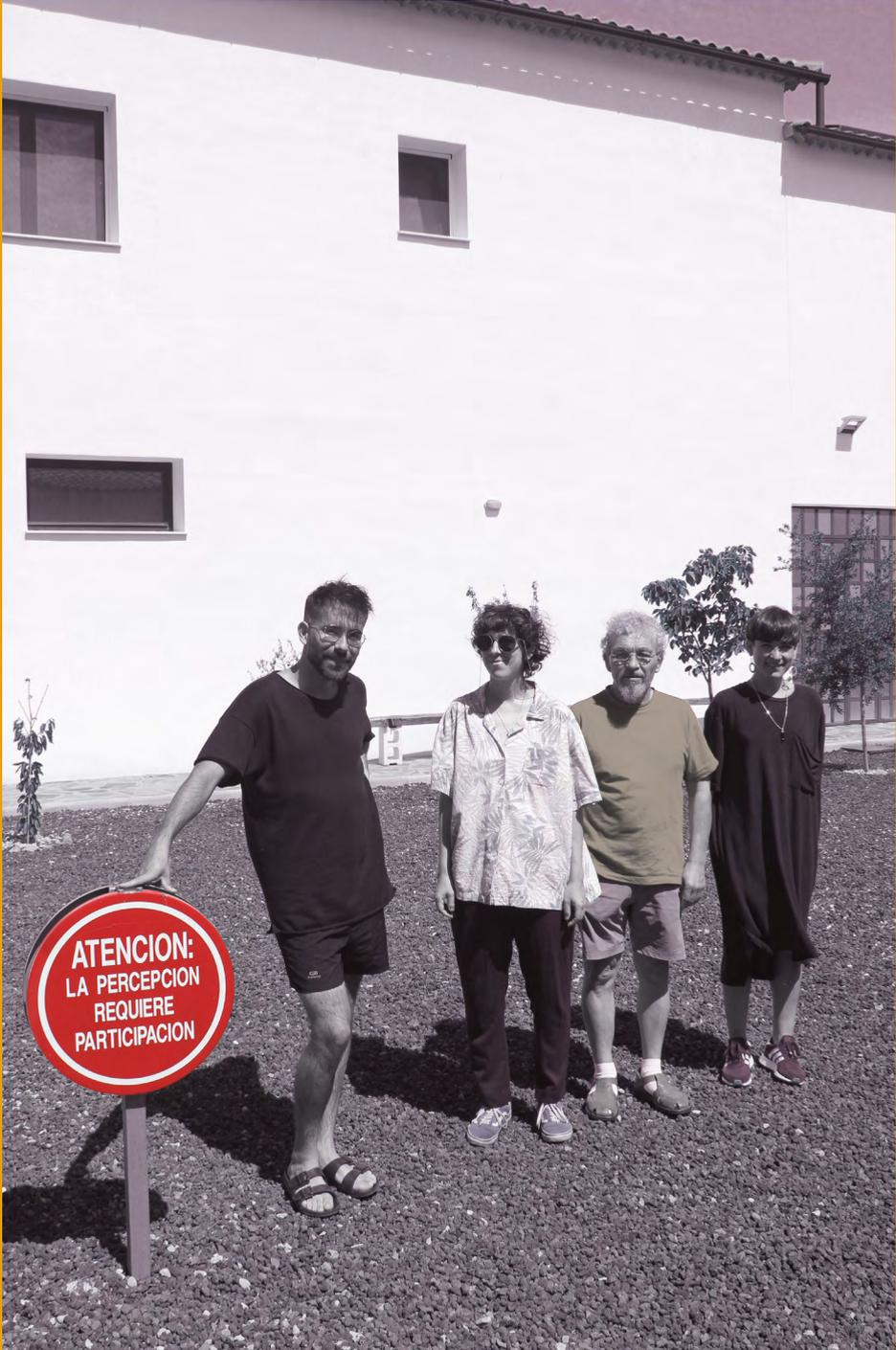
INGREDIENTS: Traditional shepherding, preservation of craft techniques, literary publishing and production of cheese and other local products. Multidisciplinary working groups are created through workshops that bring people closer to life in the countryside. Mentoring, exhibitions and residencies for artistic creation and research with an ecological perspective and based on a non-profit cultural association and a commercial cooperative society.

UTENSILS: *Forest herd school* in La Casa de Campo. *The school for shepherds* in the Sierra of Guadarrama. The CAR (*Rural Outreach Centre*), was created from the cession of a space in Madrid by the Regional Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sports. *Inland* also has offices in the region of the Picos de Europa in Asturias and other located in the Sierra de Tramontana mountain range, Palma de Mallorca.

DINERS: Agents from different fields of knowledge with the intention of generating learning and practices in relation to the rural environment.

Alejandro Piccione

Graduated in Fine Arts, researcher, educator and artist. His research and work focus on the coexistence between technological advances and natural systems, the preservation and enhancement of rural identity as the basis for a sustainable life. He is also a defender of an education and artistic creation based on critical thinking that favors the dissemination of knowledge and the visibility of different problems.



Centro Dados Negros, 2018.

NORTH-WESTERN AREA



north-western area

Galicia

Asturias

León

NORTH-WESTERN AREA



No more villages without festivities!

Lorena Lozano

An unfeasible route

In December 2020, I was given the task of talking to a group of cultural agents located in the Northwest of the Cantabrian Mountains with the aim of learning about their ways of working. The itinerary from Asturias was an incursion into the mountains of Leon and the primitive St. James Way reaching into the interior of Ourense. An itinerary that, although attractive, turned out to be unfeasible due to the restrictions of the pandemic. Despite this, new technologies allowed me to approach a total of eleven projects located in rural areas whose objectives are the development of cultural, artistic or tourist activities in relation to the territory. This text transcribes and synthesises these conversations and highlights different key points related to identity diversity, cultural mediation, management models and the consequences of the health crisis.

The itinerary begins at *PACA_Proyectos Artísticos Casa Antonino*, located on the outskirts of Gijón, a fragile and complex landscape where, amidst a growing fabric of industrial infrastructures, a few small family farms survive. As we move away from the metropolitan area of Asturias, towards the East, the Biosphere Reserve of the Villaviciosa Estuary shapes forests and gentle valleys dotted with farmhouses, orchards, vegetable gardens and a magnificent pre-Romanesque architectural heritage, where the *Bienal de*

Paraisu Rural is held. From Oviedo heading West, following the river Trubia, is *La Ponte-Ecomuséu*, in an area of fertile plains and forests of chestnut trees, oaks and (unexpectedly) holm oaks, where some archaeological sites have been excavated. From here, in the direction of the coast, the county of Candamo opens up, whose agricultural activity produces vegetables and rich fruit, maintains a small tourist flow attracted by the Palaeolithic caves in the area and where the *Néxodos* collective organises the *Bienal de San Román*.

The foray into the mountains of León takes us to the Llaciana Valley covered with yew and oak forests, brañas for subsistence livestock farming and a network of ancient pre-Roman castreño settlements among the mountains. Coal mining shaped a landscape of opencast mines, waste dumps and polluted water that is gradually recovering. To the East, near the Biosphere Reserves of Los Argüellos and the Valleys of Omaña and Luna, is the *Fundación Cereales Antonino y Cinia*, in a region with villages on the banks of the river Porma and whose plateau landscape has been fundamentally shaped by agriculture and livestock farming, the economic base of the area. The primitive route of St. James Way to Santiago takes us to Lugo, to the Terras do Miño Biosphere Reserve, where the *Nenea educational project* is active, among large fields of crops and forests of oak and chesnut trees. Old

stone family houses and other refurbished properties, form a kind of architectural collage that takes us to the geographical centre of Galicia, where the *Agrocuir* collective is located, and whose festivities emerge among other innovative agro-ecological initiatives. Crossing inland the curved lines of the valleys and mountains, the verticality of the eucalyptus trees and windmills bursts through to enter one of the most depopulated areas of Europe, the Parada do Sil, where we find *A Fábrica de Luz*, a hostel surrounded by ancient pine forests and terraced vineyards. In the South of Ourense, on the tributary of the river Miño, the smallholding of vineyards dominates among oak, pine and acacias and the *Viticultura Performativa* project is trying to restore the vineyard landscape. Already in the Limia plain, with hardly any tourism and immersed in a lagoon drained 60 years ago for the cultivation of vines, is *Matrioska*, a meeting point for music and visiting artists.

Certainly, we find great diversity in a mountainous territory where Biosphere Reserves follow one another from East to West, forming landscapes of great beauty, places that have been home to communities for millennia, as attested by the presence of prehistoric caves, archaeological remains and architecture of great heritage value. Its more recent social history is marked by a mixture of agricultural and mining identities that are almost extinct, with the distinctive feature of the survival of medieval languages and dialects. Today, the villages that dot these landscapes are increasingly sparsely populated and their populations are ageing. Agro-farming is under great pressure due to European guidelines and the tertiary sector produces services for an urban lifestyle, cultural tourism, agro-tourism, sports and nature tourism, gastronomic tourism, etc. Livestock farming families, small agri-food businesses, retired miners and hoteliers coexist with these small mentioned cultural sector enterprises, which are led by professionals, activists, entrepreneurs trained in the fine arts, in cultural management, in journalism, in tourism, etc. The conversation that opens in the interviews¹ details the origin of each initiative, their personal or professional motivation, their reference projects and their poetic visions or ideology. We also analyse the public, audiences, participants and/or communities involved, as well as their impact and sustainability. We end by discussing management and funding models, their relationship with public institutions or administrations, and the impact of the health crisis. In the text that follows are outlined some key issues that emerged and that bring to the table questions related to identity, cultural mediation, management models and the consequences of the health crisis.

Around identity issues

Paying attention to identity discourses is key to understanding the nature and impact of the initiatives we collect. In the conversation that opens up during the research, all managers convey enthusiasm, strength, openness, creativity, attachment to the land and to their past, and a clear manifesto of living rural life in ways that are different from the traditional ones. Their narratives project a myriad of concepts such as *peripheries*, *rurality*, *neo-rurality*, *queer*, *agro*, *dark heritages*, etc. among an almost extinct traditional peasant identity. The productions and programmes they propose represent, through different aesthetic codes, images and narratives, a discourse that reaffirms and manifests the possibility of multiple ruralities and different ways of relating to the territory.

Among the typology of humanised landscapes that we find in our itinerary, the mining landscape is perhaps one of the most ambiguous. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the mining areas have focused most of their resources, both material and human, on the exploitation of coal. This phenomenon consolidated a strong cultural identity around mining, leaving aside many of the area's resources that represent other more sustainable economic sources while investing to a lesser extent in certain leisure traditions, culture and alternative economy. This is the case of Llaciana which, with the closure of the mines and in the context of the "empty Spain", finds itself almost depopulated and with a depressed economy. The mining that gave meaning to the place and forged its identity is now gone. However, it possesses an exceptional archaeological heritage in the form of a network of ancient pre-Roman fortified settlements among the hills. In 2013, initiated by the Town Council, the Aula de Interpretación de los Castros was created in the old schools, an infrastructure that, like so many others built for similar purposes, never got to be operational. Another push by the Town Council made it become, since 2019, the Cultural Centre of Llaciana housing the *Caminus* project, an exciting cultural programme proposed by a couple of young managers inspired by the important historical and natural heritage of the area and by the strong educational legacy left by the Institución de Libre Enseñanza. In their programme, they try to structure participation, in-

¹ After the first telephone or email contact with the managers, we worked with a questionnaire that allowed me to prepare an in-depth interview in video-call format. The interviews were transcribed and at the end of the process we organised a virtual meeting with all participants with the intention of getting to know each other and finding ways to help one another.



Pandeiro and photograph of a family from San Miguel de Llaciana. Proyecto Camminus.

novation and the enhancement of heritage by developing actions such as the creation of a collaborative archive of the valley's memory, residencies for artist mediators, meeting spaces, workshops, training, etc. Bold and courageous, this necessary programme struggles with uncertain financial funds, preventing it from developing over time and penetrating into this dark heritage marked by uprooting and trauma, and restoring the ambivalent paradigm of a mixed mining and agricultural identity.

Transgression is really transgressive when it sometimes occurs naively. This is what happens with the *Agrocuir Festival* (Monterroso, Lugo), which makes sexual diversity and the celebration of LGBTQ+ pride visible in rural areas. This collective reinvents the popular pilgrimage, an intergenerational and open-air festival with popular food in which the whole neighbourhood, families and children participate. The particularity of their programme is a clear manifesto to the possibility of conceiving and inhabiting the rural space in a non-normative way, claiming it as a living place. The identity mix they propose is reflected in their name: *agro* refers to the countryside and *cuir* is the Spanish version of the Anglo-Saxon concept of *queer*, a set of ideas about human sexuality that maintains that gender, identity and sexual orientation are not essentially inscribed in human biological nature, but the result of a social construction, which varies in each society. Although rural areas maintain traditional lifestyles and festivities, this particular celebration has been accepted by the

community in a natural way, partly due to the festive and folkloric character of the region, but also because the collective has always respected the environment and has gradually generated bonds of confidence. The event is also a meeting point for the exchange of knowledge, awareness, reflexion, experience of sexuality, gender, but above all, and in a subtle way, a forceful challenge to the traditional family model, the basis of the agrarian economy for centuries.

Looking at all the initiatives, we can interpret a mixture between what Castells (1998:30) calls "resistance identity", which proclaims principles different from those of the institutions, and "project identity", when social actors, on the basis of the cultural materials at their disposal, construct a new identity and redefine their position in society. Moreover, the coexistence between locals, visitors and new inhabitants confronts different ideologies, on the one hand, that of the eternal "enlightened exodus" that seeks success and progress in the cities, and on the other, that of the "rural idyll" that idealises the countryside in an unrealistic way. But, in addition, our initiatives are a kind of "enlightened return", or recolonisation of the countryside, that seeks in the landscape a source of well-being and intellectual interest (Lozano, 2019).

Experience tells us time and again that in order for local and community experiences to be territorialised, it is necessary to search for elements of identity in which to recognise themselves. It is clear



Paraisu Rural. Pollination. 2016. Photo: Kantfish.



La Ponte-Ecomuséu.

that globalisation is leading to the breaking down of borders and historical boundaries, and we find ourselves in a scenario in which the traditional order of space based on a clear hierarchy between urban, rural, local, global is mutating. A place no longer offers us a static space associated with a single identity with a repertoire of homogeneous and unique representations and senses of place (Massey, 2001). We need to rethink the concept of landscape as a meeting place for a multiplicity of views and discourses - and even conflicting interests - as a constructed place where different social groups generate different meanings for the same space.

Around cultural mediation

When we bring together cultures, societies or actors with no common tradition and memory between them, we are faced with great communication challenges and it is necessary to seek and create new common signs between all players. For this to happen, mediation tools are sometimes necessary. According to Lev Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychological theory (1978), cultural mediation is one of the distinctive mechanisms of human development. One of his premises is that tools and signs are something shared between individuals in society and without this collective process, individuals do not internalise them. We could then think of the rural school as one of the first links of cultural mediation in villages, a space in which children internalise all those tools, signs and cultural references of their environment that will mark their perception and later understanding of the world. Galicia, like other autonomous communities, is so geographically dispersed that the role of rural schools is essential in order to bring education closer to the children spread

throughout the territory. These schools bring together children of different ages in the same classroom, but they are increasingly losing weight. Not so long ago, the lack of transport made it impossible for pupils to travel dozens of kilometres to go to school. Nowadays, despite the development of transport and infrastructures, the number of children has gone from thousands to hundreds, and the countryside is emptying out to fill the cities.

There are private educational initiatives in rural areas and among them is the educational project *Nenea* (Lugo), which aims to become the first nature school in Galicia. It is dedicated to the pre-mandatory stage of pre-school education and was founded five years ago by two educators, artists and pedagogues with a philosophy based on eco-literacy: children spend their early childhood playing in a forest. Throughout its history, the pedagogical team has been able to connect with different parts of the region through the families who bring their children to *Nenea*, a climate of coexistence has been re-established between the children and the rest of the village; they collaborate with the University of Santiago de Compostela through an internship agreement and work together with EDNA, Federation of Education in Nature, to achieve a legal framework that recognises their work and their school model.

Despite of all this, institutional support is insufficient and, like many alternative initiatives to the formal education system, it faces clear administrative obstacles to be able to have its activity officially recognised. Paradoxically, the political discourse and that of experts proclaims the need to fix population in the villages and to ensure that rural schools do not disappear, but shows no interest in projects with the potential to make this possible.

If this first link of cultural mediation is missing, it would be difficult to find mediation tools in the

other spheres of rural life. Another of the serious problems of the rural exodus and population ageing is the almost non-existent exchange of knowledge between older and younger generations. This means that traditional forms of cultivation, understanding of the climate, food processing, and the names and functions of flora and fauna, among other things, are being irretrievably lost. We learn this repertoire of knowledge in urban schools through the prism of science and technology, totally detached from the environment to which they refer. This is what the project *Viticultura Performativa* (Leiro, Ourense), with a didactic vocation, has been trying to achieve since 2015, restoring some vineyards in the wine-growing region of O Ribeiro do Avia through the practice of viticulture inspired by traditional cultural work and respect for the environment. To do this, Lucía Álvarez has learned the methods, vocabulary, techniques, auxiliary species, etc. from the last generation of peasant winegrowers, and dreams of developing an international programme for the adoption and sponsorship of this type of viticulture. This work not only contributes to the conservation and critical revaluation of traditional knowledge, but also maintains channels for the exchange of intergenerational knowledge.

With regards to cultural mediation, Jesús Fernández de La Ponte-Ecomuséu states: “a class union, like those that were founded in the 19th century, were nothing more than forms of solidarity and mediation. [...] Of course, instruments of mediation between equals are necessary, in towns or cities or in any community. This is positive because, among other things, having good mediation instruments is, at least, a guarantee that conflicts can be resolved more easily [...] Societies with more mediation instruments are more peaceful, sustainable and inclusive societies. And in rural areas, yes, mediation can also be useful in many ways, in fact, that is what we are working on, the work of mediators between academic contexts and the local communities themselves. Our dissemination work, for example, is still a form of mediation”.

But, in addition, to speak of cultural mediation in terms of contemporary culture inevitably leads us to speak of public, audiences and participants, something that is sometimes diffuse and complex and which worries the administration so much. Virginia López of *PACA Proyectos Artísticos* expresses her way of understanding participation in the activities she organises in this way:

Paradoxically, the political discourse and that of experts proclaims the need to fix population in the villages and to ensure that rural schools do not disappear, but shows no interest in projects with the potential to make this possible.

“Any ear is good, the project is open to everyone, from the countryside or the city, mixed beings, old and young, another question is what we do to make this contact and this influx happen. In PACA a sort of artistic community of like-minded people has also been created, it tends to happen and this, as far as it goes, is easy. Contact with other communities, with the foreign, with the different, with the unexpected, is more complicated. I’m not going to use eco-rhetoric or bucolic participation. All we do with the intention of bringing people closer to the projects we develop is to make them of common interest (or we try), that what we are interested in can be contagious, using a friendly and understandable language, walking the roads and becoming neighbours (as far as the local community is concerned), taking it easy and not getting demoralised by the numbers (sometimes many people come, sometimes there are three of us). We don’t count audiences and we hate to do it, but it certainly makes us happy when we create a little transmission and traverse sensitivities”.

Much has been written and claimed about how artists working with new media can contribute to create new cultural possibilities. Their activity can enrich the testimonial character of knowledge to make it visible and create profound processes of territorialisation. The work of communication, documentation and archiving, the generation of subjectivities and aesthetic experiences, as well as the cultivation of appropriate technological skills can be the drivers of a new sense

of community, emancipation and the collective construction of knowledge. Through representations and tools, voices are revealed and amplified that re-signify the cultural links with the territory. To do this, it is necessary to handle different languages and categories, symbolic universes and aspirations, to be those “intercultural translators” that Santos and Meneses (2010) call for in their ecology of knowledge. However, in the face of the dominant discourse, Gayatri Spivak (1985) warns us not to consider this mediation and representation, these “first world intellectuals”, as essential to giving voice to those who have no place from which to be heard.

Spivak’s warning is something that Matrioska (Os Blancos, Ourense) has empirically verified and that Cuco expresses as follows: “I believe that the key is to understand the needs and involve the population so that the things you are doing are contextualised. For me, the failure is often to



educational project Nenea (Lugo).

want to create something that you are very excited about, but suddenly you realise that your idea doesn't make any difference in the place. Being neighbours, being there within the community is the way forward and in our experience is what the people of the village want, because here in Os Blancos you have no idea how afraid many people in the village are that we could leave. When we arrived they made bets to see how long we would last, but in the end we integrated and continued. [...] The rural population is not used to "cultural activities", the first few years we were determined to put on programmes for the people of the village, whether summer cinema, barter market, this and that... and we realised that they don't want us to make their lives more dynamic, for them the important thing is that we are here, in their daily life and that they hear music and jovial voices in the village or that you help them cut firewood or things like that. It's a question of neighbourliness.

Diversity, listening, dialogue, neighbourliness, trust... essential ingredients for the development of these initiatives. Trust, in particular, is intrinsic to any communication and/or collaboration process, its establishment requires an attitude of active listening and dialogue between actors and institutions. For Sanchez de Serdio (2018) trust is a reciprocal relationship of "sympathy" in the face of uncertainty that has to be understood as a territory of negotiation. Regardless of the management model, all the initiatives studied are possible, above all, because an environment of trust is established that enables exchange between managers, local actors and institutions of different scales. Appealing to trust may be naïve in the face of the extractivist and productivist logics of the dominant liberal order, which impose the evaluation

of community projects in terms of success or failure. It does so, moreover, exclusively according to effective and quantifiable results, while penalising the understanding of underlying processes and qualities. Whatever the identities they proclaim, whatever the forms of mediation, whatever their management models, these initiatives have an impact on the territory that contributes to a large extent to its revitalisation.

On the one hand, the creators are forging meeting points and communities of like-minded people from different fields, creating spaces where they can keep artistic creation alive and generate their own narratives of the place. The flow of people attracted to the villages has an economic impact on local businesses and some programmes try to ensure that training activities have an economic impact on the region and on the so-called circular economies, such as beekeeping or the recovery of local vegetable varieties, as in the case of the Fundación Cerezales and *Caminus*. In some cases, the village is involved in the organisation of events, as in the case of the San Román de Candamo Biennial of *Néxodos*, which generates an atmosphere of conviviality and enjoyment that benefits the community as a whole and favours a positive state of mind in view of the possibility that it gives to the village to project itself to the outside world. In *Matrioska* and in *Paraisu Rural*, the residency programmes dust off old stories and experiences of the villagers, bringing them beyond the village boundaries and weaving social memory. Their presence generates opportunities for reunion and new emotional ties. Not to mention the exchange of knowledge between generations that *Viticultura Performativa* proposes for the maintenance and restoration of the vineyard landscape.



PACA_Proyectos Artísticos Casa Antonino.
 “Towards an agropolitan citizenship”
 project, 2021. Photo: Ana López

Around management

All projects that participated in the interviews were born from a theoretical or utopian idea and in practice evolve according to their needs. The process is an apprenticeship that sets in motion the more classical formats of pilgrimage, school, museum and shelter. In them, the functions overlap and diversify into different contemporary interpretations, such as the archive, the ecomuseum or the cultural centre whose proposals vary between workshops, exhibitions, guided tours, musical events, etc. To materialise all this into practicable activities requires a significant management workload. To manage is to assume and carry out responsibilities for a process that includes the provision of the necessary resources and structures, coordination and planning of activities, interactions and administrative procedures. Logically, larger entities can maintain an organisational structure that is able to differentiate profiles and competences in the team, which creates more solid and sustainable projects, as is the case of the Fundación Cerezales (León). This institution was born as an idea to reinvent the rural school and is kept alive thanks to philanthropic work and a very committed and cohesive team.

Citizen proposals, although with fewer resources, can also be clearly organised, such as La Ponte-Ecomuséu (Asturias), a space for research on history and heritage promoted by people linked to the region. It carries out archaeological excavations, site maintenance and raises awareness and responsibility for the territory. It is established as a cultural association and its members are neighbours of the village and other experts. It has pro-

professionals in archaeology, anthropology, social work, tourism and mediation and, depending on the projects, they differentiate between professional and technical skills, have a scientific advisory board with representatives from different universities and it was created with the desire not only to activate local heritage, but also to generate employment. These structures could inspire the delicate leap from activism to professionalisation, overcoming precariousness, generating employment and the search for economic alternatives or alternative economies, circular economies, economic diversification and cooperativism.

In pure management terms, the most pragmatic case among those studied is *A Fábrica da Luz* (Parada do Sil, Ourense), a hostel created after the rehabilitation of the building of an old hydroelectric power station from 1914 by the City Council. The space is located in one of the most depopulated areas in Europe and its management is carried out by a young company as a tourism and heritage project of an environmentalist nature that focuses on cultural exchange. The magnificent natural environment is perfect for sporting activities and guests and locals interact through musical, sport and scientific events. It is part of an international network of young people who stay in exchange for voluntary work caring for the environment and assisting in events. This initiative, in addition to the global character that brings to our story, is a practical example of an hospitality activity that inspires other initiatives with a vocation for economic diversification.

Performative Viticulture Xoirexe_Leiro_Ourense_

the recipe

Cooking Time

Since 2015

Ingredients

To start this site-specific landscape restoration project we have needed:

1 large amount of critical vision.

2 women's hands.

1 human heart broken in half and filled with life and resilience.

1 *cavadura** of ground.

300 vine plants (*Vitis Vinifera*).

700 branches of *mimosa* (*Acacia dealbata*), approximately.

Mimbre o vimbio (*Salix viminalis*).

Natural Raffia.

Just a pinch of own salary.

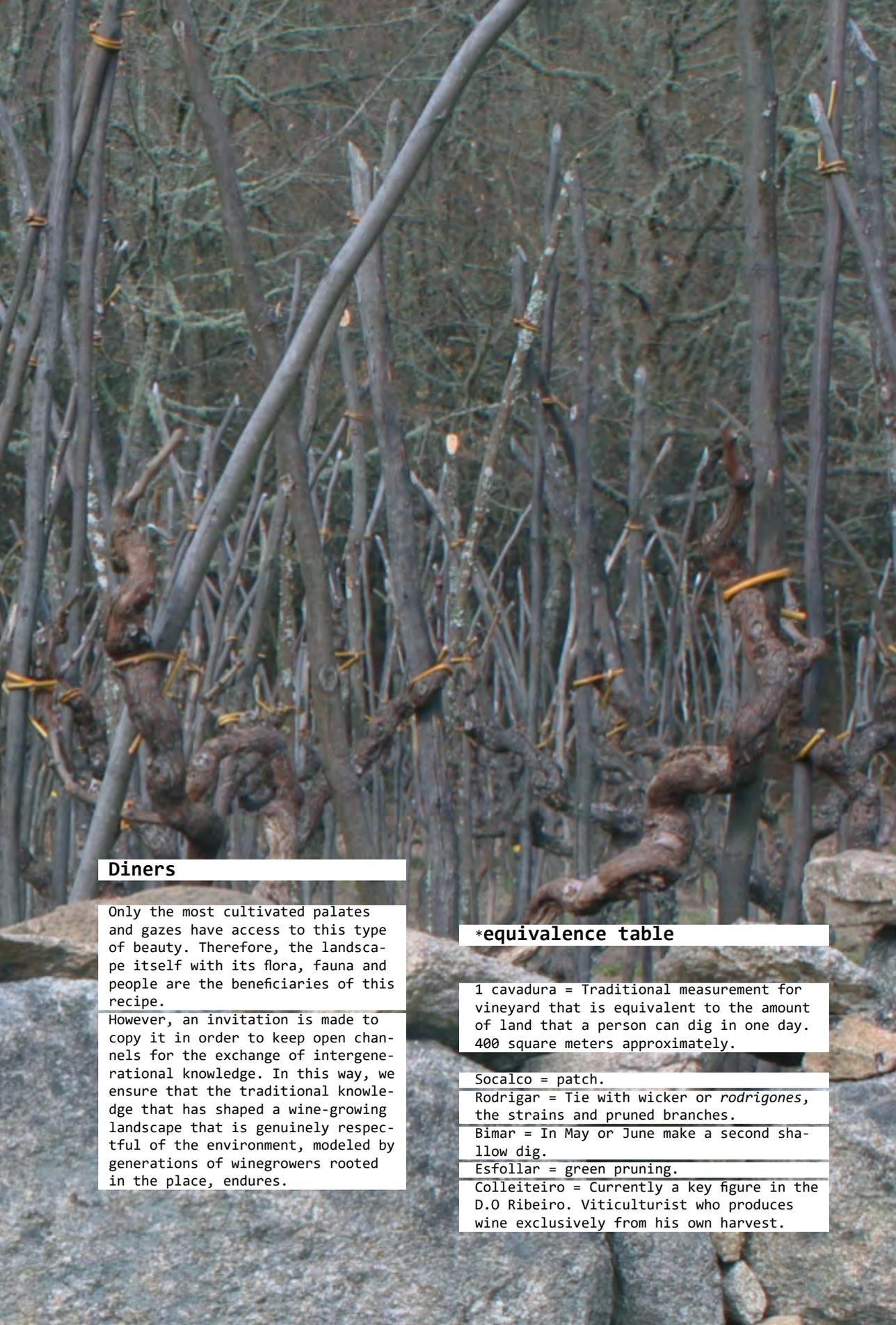
Preparation

Previously collect and prepare the vegetable ingredients. Mimosas, wicker and raffia grow naturally around the vineyards. The socialcos, the most suitable containers to contain the earth, are made with dry stone walls, which in turn are a refuge for beneficial fauna.

For *Viticulture* add a measure of traditional knowledge of O Riberio do Avia transmitted orally. For *Performativity* add a generous amount of physical exertion inspired by activist practices. Mix the flavors of yesteryear with contemporary knowledge.

Let the mixture sit over winter. Simmer every vegetative cycle. Thus, actions, among others, such as pruning, manure, rodriagation, digging, *bimar*, scorching, branching and harvesting, follow one another consecutively. Add groundcover to taste. Align generously with conversations about time, life and death.

Serve at room temperature and accompanied by a *colleiteiro* wine. Stay out of reach of wolves in sheep's clothing.



Diners

Only the most cultivated palates and gazes have access to this type of beauty. Therefore, the landscape itself with its flora, fauna and people are the beneficiaries of this recipe.

However, an invitation is made to copy it in order to keep open channels for the exchange of intergenerational knowledge. In this way, we ensure that the traditional knowledge that has shaped a wine-growing landscape that is genuinely respectful of the environment, modeled by generations of winegrowers rooted in the place, endures.

*equivalence table

1 cavadura = Traditional measurement for vineyard that is equivalent to the amount of land that a person can dig in one day. 400 square meters approximately.

Socalco = patch.

Rodrigar = Tie with wicker or *rodrigones*, the strains and pruned branches.

Bimar = In May or June make a second shallow dig.

Esfollar = green pruning.

Colleiteiro = Currently a key figure in the D.O Ribeiro. Viticulturist who produces wine exclusively from his own harvest.



Matrioska (Os Blancos, Ourense).



Néxodos-San Román de Candamo (Asturias).
“Intersecciones” installation by Jose Ignacio Gil, 2019.

If we were to highlight a significant case in terms of a private self-management model, it would be *PACA Proyectos Artísticos*, located in an old farmhouse in the rural area of Gijón. The initiative aims to combine artistic production by entering the markets of the cultural industries and, at the same time, to maintain a diversified micro-economy based on the products offered by the vegetable garden. It is defined as an “artist run space” and focuses on the diversity of contemporary arts, environmental and community practices, as well as education and artist residencies. The “artist run space”, or space managed by an artist, is much more popular in the Anglo-Saxon world given that it maintains a certain status or prestige and receives support from the public administration or private foundations. It is an initiative by artists to present their projects and those of others. It is close to a traditional art gallery, although they can take a markedly different approach in that they promote exchange, cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, networking, curating and setting ideas into action. They also play an important role in hosting international guest artists in residency programmes. Such spaces have existed at least since the 19th century, see the Pavilion of Realism, a building Courbet had built for his exhibition, or the politically engaged artists’ initiatives of the 1970s, such as AIR Gallery in New York.

Many of the initiatives mentioned in this chapter could be covered by this “artist run space” format, the only difference being that they are located in rural areas, not just in the city. The delocalisation

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of the economy and the ubiquity of production, consequences of globalisation and new forms of communication, are not alien to artistic production. In fact, the proliferation of this type of cultural projects in the rural peripheries of the Iberian Peninsula shows that the city and the urban are no longer the only spheres where the most relevant artistic manifestations are developed. Many of these initiatives are born of symbiosis between artistic collectives, social movements and/or institutions. They have different motivations, but they all converge in the desire to revitalise their environment and continuing with contemporary creation. It is essential to keep these types of spaces alive, as they constitute the roots of the infrastructure of art. Their presence (or absence) is a perfect seismograph of what is happening in the jungle of the cultural industries. Their weakness indicates that we are on the road to what Fran Quiroga (2020) calls an “extensive culture”, making an analogy with the great agri-food industry as the only model of production.

The projects presented in this chapter are far from producing a mere spectacularisation of culture; their motivations go beyond this, taking care of the context and thinking about circular economies.

The lack of resources makes it difficult to maintain a balance between the work of management and the work of creation itself and, at times, the wear and tear and the lack of external support paralyse the development of the projects. There is still a long way to go for the public administration to

come to understand this type of alternative spaces and much more to create alliances and lasting support. Few are the technicians of the administration who maintain a fluid dialogue with independent cultural managers, and even fewer are the politicians themselves. On numerous occasions, the rigidity of laws and regulations in relation to the management of natural resources, ethnographic sites or archaeological sites does not allow citizens to take ownership in order to contribute to their maintenance and/or management. The aid received by town councils or regional governments does not include project monitoring, and the future and sustainability of the initiatives are often at the mercy of the time of the legislature or to be used as an electoral tool. Perhaps we have not yet really taken on board what experience, as Dolores Hyden (1997, 73-74) tells us: "scale and cost are not the defining elements of a public project. Rather, it is the resonance of the metaphor used by creators in public life, without which the project fails".

S.O.S. no more villages without festivities!

Given its degree of ageing, the spread of Covid-19 has made the rural population extremely vulnerable. All the projects studied, due to their sense of responsibility, have paralysed face-to-face activity. This interim is providing an opportunity to question the attendance of spaces, evaluate impact and rethink programmes and objectives. Much of the effort is now focused on adjusting scales and looking at formats, organisation and logistics from different angles. The restrictions imposed make it difficult to create the close social environments proposed by the initiatives studied, and to compensate for the absence of live music, some are trying to reinvent themselves with collaborative work on road cleaning or popular meals. During the conversations held, there is a consensus that online formats allow for meetings between managers and collaborators and keep networks alive. However, trying to offer an online cultural programme, apart from the huge loss of quality and experience that entails, would limit access to culture to people who do not use new technologies and would create unhealthy competition between organisations.

the proliferation of this type of cultural projects in the rural peripheries of the Iberian Peninsula shows that the city and the urban are no longer the only spheres where the most relevant artistic manifestations are developed.

We could not finish our story without pointing out that in the summer of 2020 festivals and concerts were cancelled and we have seen, for the first time in a long time, villages without festivals. In addition to the festivities of each village, we are thinking about the sound and performing arts festival of the *Fundación Cerezales*, the chamber music programme supported by PACA, the local musicians playing in *A Fábrica de Luz*, the *Agrocuir Festival* in Ulloa, the *Reina Loba Festival* in Os Blancos, the musical visits of *La Ponte* and the smaller musical spaces of *Caminus*, *Néxodos* or *Paraisu Rural* where dance and performance are mixed...All of them, foundational and vertebral elements of a programme, confirm the social and collective identity-building power of live music. Nothing can compare to sharing the same sensations with a large group of people at the same moment, in the same place, it is something that radiates. In the same way that live music, as a universal expression linked to the human being, is an activator of encounters and relationships, popular festivals have functions and meanings that vary considerably in space and time.

Far from the old definitions of ritual as a cohesive element of the local community, popular festivals have become a set of heterogeneous practices. As evidenced by some of the examples presented in this chapter, the popular festival, recycled, transformed and altered, is a creator of new rituals and a powerful activator of identities (Ariño and García, 2006). We need to recover the presentiality and directness by being very cautious, not only in the face of a possible transmission of the coronavirus, but also caring for our environment. The number of zoonotic diseases that have emerged in recent years, including Covid-19, is growing with our increasing tendency to simplify ecosystems and reduce biodiversity (Vidal, 2020). The popular festival must remain alive as it constitutes a privileged field of production in society, but its function depends not only on subjective and social aspects, but also on an ecological context that allows it to be reproduced.

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AGROCUIR MANIFESTO

The rainbow is the range of possibilities of existence, in each color, there is a story, an experience, individual or collective.

We are male, female, lesbian, gay, straight, trans, bisexual, asexual, villager, urbanite, local, foreigner...

We are Agro because we live in rural areas, we coexist with the animal and vegetable world, in harmony, serenity and sometimes chaos.

We are Cuir because we value the freedom to feel.

Love and sensuality are bridges that join.

**Roots have no borders.
Deep down they are interconnected.
Each trunk has its shape,
each branch its direction and each flower its aroma.**

Respect, the process, the cycle... the fruit.

Tree, passage of time, source of life, memory.

Without measuring the consequences: cutting down a forest is to forget about entire generations...

**Express ourselves honestly.
Accept, be accepted, accepted.
We accept.
Differences make us unique.**

**art that heals,
that transcends the ego,
that materializes dreams.**

Magic.

The imagination we carry inside, potential treasure.



Mari Quintero. Photo Agrocutir.

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REST IN PEACE IF YOU SEE

WHO TAKES CARE OF THE VINEYARDS WITH LOVE
THAT "SOCALCOS" ARE NOT DESTROYED

THAT YOU CUT THE MIMOSAS IN THE
WANING MOON OF AUGUST
THAT YOU "RODRIGAS" WITH *SALIX VIMINALIS*
THAT YOU "ENRAMAS" WITH RAFFIA
THAT WE ARE HAPPY WHILE WE ARE PRUNING
THAT YOU DO NOT USE HERBICIDE

THAT YOU CULTIVATE YOUR SOUL WITH BOOKS
AND CONVERSATIONS

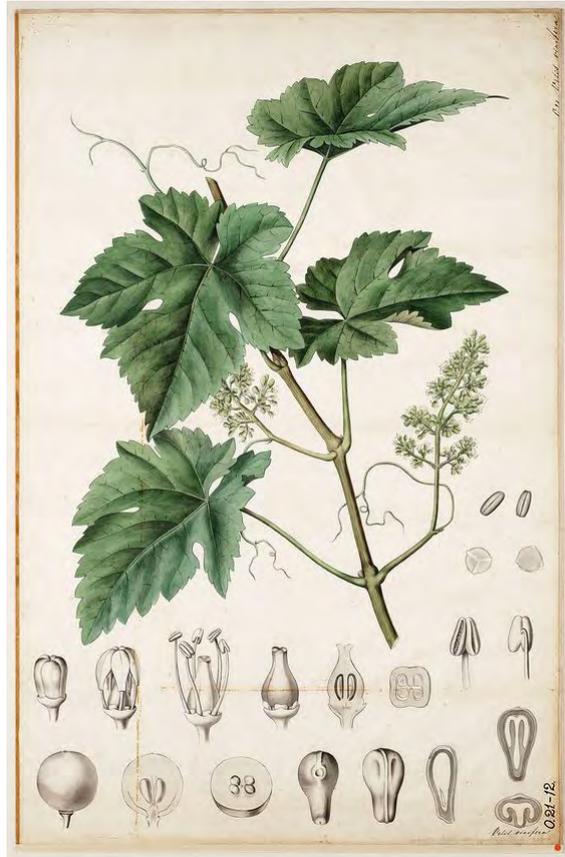
THAT YOU DO NOT LEAVE STERILE THE VINEYARD
THAT YOU DON'T ABANDON HER
THAT YOU GIVE HER UP FOR ADOPTION

YOUR VINEYARD WILL LIVE FOREVER
BECAUSE HEAVEN IS ON EARTH
AND HELL IS OURSELVES

NECROLOGICAL NOTE: THERE IS LIFE BEFORE DEATH BUT NO RETURN TO THE END.

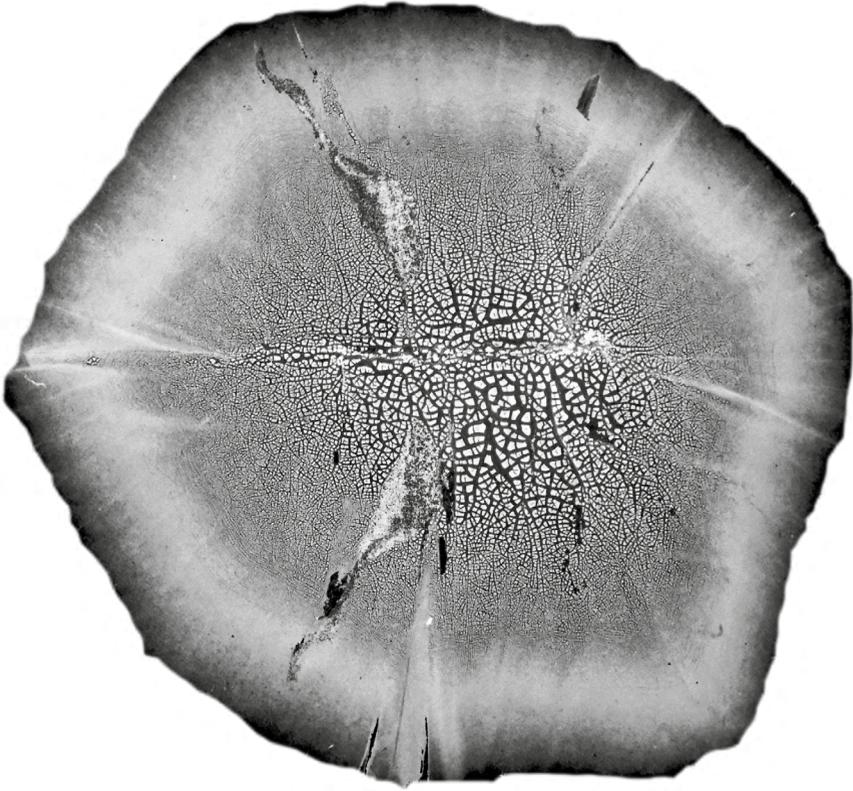
INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE:

- 1.- Cut along the dotted line.
- 2.- Distribute this *Performative Viticulture* Manifesto throughout the villages of O Ribeiro. *Performative Viticulture* is an artistic project by Lucía Álvarez Borrajo.
- 3.- This page belonged to the book "Culturarios", a project of El Cubo Verde sponsored by the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation.
- 4.- Make a paper boat...



Vitis vinifera. "The art of knowledge: educational botanical wall charts 1870 - 1960". (illustration 1882)

RECIPES



*Tierra cuerpo cedeite (earth celestial body). Virginia López, 2021.
Blu disc for extracting pigment by filtering *Lasia tinctoria*.
(Its previously cooked leaves can be used for delicious anchovy rolls).*

Festival Agrocuir Da Ulloa

Monterroso, Comarca da Ulloa (Lugo). Galicia.
Adrián Gallero and Regina Gisbert.
agrocuirsdaulloa@gmail.com
<https://festivalagrocuir.wordpress.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2015.

INGREDIENTS: Collective that organises a festival to make sexual diversity and the celebration of LGTBQ+ pride visible in rural areas.

UTENSILS: The *Colectivo Agrocuir Da Ulloa* includes people from different parts of the Ulloa region, aged between 24 and 64 and with different sexual orientations.

Every year they organise a two-day popular pilgrimage with a programme of music and shows, a popular meal, daytime activities for children, awards for visibility and the dissemination of a manifesto.

They are constituted as a cultural association and work in a self-organised and self-managed way, the team has an activist character that becomes more professional with the experience and growth of each festival. To cover the cost of the activities, they use traditional fundraising methods among the village's hotel and catering businesses, selling raffle tickets and merchandising, tickets at symbolic prices and collecting money from the drinks at the bar. In some editions it has also launched a crowdfunding campaign with the *Goteo Foundation*. They are supported by the services provided by the Council of Monterroso in terms of cleaning infrastructure, lighting, as well as small financial contributions from the Lugo Provincial Council.

DINERS: The target audience is very wide: locals, LGTBQ+ activists from other cities, tourists, pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago, etc. The festival gives the territory the opportunity to make itself known as an open, diverse and respectful place with the rights of all people. The media impact has also served as a tourist showcase for the region and has become one of the initiatives that generates the greatest economic impact in the area each year. It has also contributed to changing the perception of the local community in relation to the LGTBQ+ collective and joins the demand for a living countryside.

A Fábrica da Luz

Parada de Sil, Ourense, Galicia.
Sara Chico and Óscar González.
<http://afabricadaluz.com/?lang=en>

COOKING TIME: Since 2013.

INGREDIENTS: An initiative of the Parada do Sil Town Council to rehabilitate the old light factory as a place for leisure and training. It is currently managed by the company Tempo Sacro, whose mission is to contribute to the conservation, dissemination and enhancement of heritage, cultural and environmental resources.

UTENSILS: The old Ourense light factory is one of the first hydroelectric infrastructures built in Galicia at the beginning of the 20th century. It operates off-grid, using photovoltaic panels and a generator.

It is managed by two young entrepreneurs trained in tourism with an environmentalist view of their surroundings who have turned it into a meeting point for nature lovers and local visitors. The space consists of a hostel, canteen and auditorium and offers accommodation, local and "Km 0" gastronomy, and a programme of musical events, exhibitions by local artists and ecological awareness workshops (medicinal plants, beekeeping and mycology).

They started out as a civil society and have now become a limited company that is self-financed by the income received from their hospitality work. They collaborate with environmental volunteers and environmental associations that offer the contents of the cultural programme. For the organisation of concerts and sporting events, they receive small subsidies from local authorities. Every year, volunteers from a programme of young people from different parts of the world come and work on the maintenance of the natural environment and assist during the events.

DINERS: Inhabitants of the region, guests and volunteers. Over time, the space has become a meeting point that promotes coexistence and cultural diversity.

Espacio Matrioska

Os Blancos, Ourense, Galicia.
Cucu, Ana and Lucas.
contacto@espaciomatrioska.com
<https://espaciomatrioska.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2015.

INGREDIENTS: Artistic collective that began as an experiential project and is currently developing work of mediation, management and creation in the Galician countryside.

UTENSILS: Its main objective is to promote cultural exchange and artistic creation in all forms and possibilities, understanding art as a transforming social tool. They manage a municipal space provided by the Os Blancos Town Council and, recently, a coworking space in the city of Pontevedra. In Os Blancos they organise the Reina Loba Festival of Art, Music and Rurality, as well as a programme of artistic residencies, workshops and courses.

Through their activity, they try to generate experiences of coexistence and creative processes around contemporary music and the popular wisdom of rural life. The activities are self-managed and the collective maintains a horizontal assembly organisation with two parallel structures: on the one hand, they are constituted as a cultural association for the development of cultural management activities. On the other, they form a cooperative society thanks to the FEDER funds, with which they can undertake commissions and proposals for mural painting, screen printing or design.

They indirectly collaborate with Cultural Councils by participating in public educational centres with government financed artistic projects

DINERS: Depending on the project, the audience may be older people from Os Blancos, children or young people of different ages. In addition to the economic repercussion that the festival has on local businesses, the residency programme brings back to life old stories and experiences of the neighbours, taking them beyond the limits of the village. The presence of the collective generates opportunities for reunions and new emotional ties.

Camminus de Llaciana

Llaciana, León
Sara Álvarez Gómez
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<https://www.aytovillablino.com/proyecto-camminus/>

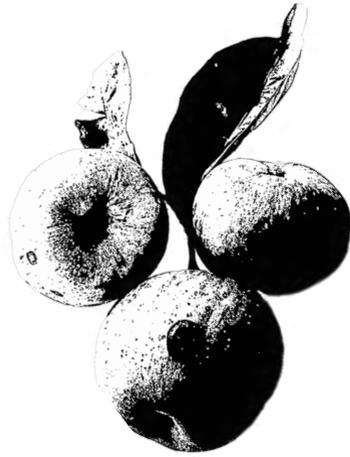
COOKING TIME: Since 2019.

INGREDIENTS: A project that supports participation, innovation and the enhancement of tangible and intangible heritage, based at the Castros de Llaciana Cultural Centre.

UTENSILS: The work is based on participatory dynamics. Develops projects such as the creation of a collaborative archive of the memory of the valley, residencies for artist mediators, meeting spaces, workshops, training, aiming to promote local trade, agriculture, livestock or beekeeping.

It has an annual budget provided mostly by a grant from the *Instituto Leonés de Cultura* and a small part from the City Council. This covers the running costs of the centre (staff, content, expenses, maintenance, communication, etc.) allowing them to offer the content openly and free of charge. They collaborate with the *Valle de Llaciana Biosphere Reserve*.

DINERS: The project is mainly aimed at the population of Llaciana and neighbouring counties, who are the ones who approach the project and participate in the activities, and with whom they work to rebuild an identity characterised by a strong uprooting and a fragmented social memory. They try to ensure that the training activities have an economic impact on the region and are also aimed at sustainable and responsible tourism.



Asociación Educativa Nenea, medrar creando

Escuela Unitaria de San Xoán do Alto, Lugo, Galicia.
Sofía Otero Álvarez
info@nenea.es
<http://www.nenea.es/es/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2015.

INGREDIENTS: Project of education in nature dedicated to the pre-mandatory stage of Infant Education, it is the first project of these characteristics in Galicia.

UTENSILS: It has its headquarters in an open building donated by the City Council of Lugo and carries out most of its educational work in a nearby forest of oak, birch and holly trees. Its philosophy is based on the importance of eco-literacy, in which children spend their early childhood playing in a forest. As a legal entity, is a cultural association organised through annual assemblies reporting on the state of the association, its programming, etc. They have their own pedagogical team made up of three educators, artists and pedagogues. The income comes from the monthly fees of the families that bring their children to the daily activities of the association.

They collaborate with the Lugo campus of the University of Santiago de Compostela through an internship agreement for the students of the degree in Primary Education, the Master's degree in nature activities and the formative cycle of Early Childhood Education.

DINERS: Families who wish to educate their children in contact with nature following non-conventional methods. At present, 24 children between 3 and 6 years old participate in the project and the building of the old unitary school is once again alive and occupied, but it is also connected to different parts of the region through the families who decide to bring their children to Nenea. The presence and collaboration of families, the relationship with older neighbours in the village, the organisation of small festivals and gatherings have re-established a climate of coexistence from childhood with the rest of the village.

Viticultura Performativa

Leiro, Ourense, Galicia.
Lucía Álvarez Borrajo.
zarataras@gmail.com

COOKING TIME: Since 2015.

INGREDIENTS: Site-specific landscape restoration project in the vineyards of the *Ribeiro do Avia* wine-growing region. This work is carried out through a viticulture practice inspired by traditional viticultural work and activism.

UTENSILS: The vineyards being restored cover an area of one cavadura, a traditional measurement equivalent to approximately 400 sqm. They are owned by Aurora, Mr. Tono and Benjamín. The varieties grown are Albilla do Avia, Ferrón, Caiño Tinto, Mencía, Palomino and Garnacha.

The method used for their care, among others, is to preserve the high goblet training with the pre-phylloxera conduction system by means of wooden stakes. In this particular case with mimosa (*Acacia dealbata*), and tied with wicker (*Salix x rubens*). This cultural work is called *rodriga*. The wicker is a female hybrid that reproduces easily by cuttings and grows in the vicinity of the site. So does raffia, which is used to guide the *gomariza*. The dry stone walls that form the characteristic terraces or *socalcos* are also a refuge for beneficial fauna. Traditional tools such as the *coteleo*, pruning shears... are needed. This is a private, self-managed initiative that has a didactic vocation and dreams of developing into an international programme of adoption and sponsorship of this type of viticulture, practised by the last generation of winegrowers.

DINERS: The beneficiaries of the project are the landscape itself with its flora, fauna and people, given the preservation of a wine-growing landscape that respects the environment. It contributes to the conservation and critical reevaluation of traditional knowledge and to the maintenance of intergenerational knowledge exchange channels.

PACA

Proyectos Artísticos Casa Antonino

Genero - Gijón. Asturias.
Virginia López and Giovanni Lanterna
pacaproyectosartisticos@gmail.com
<https://pacaproyectosartisticos.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2013.

INGREDIENTS: *Artist run space* focusing on the diversity of contemporary arts, environmental and community practices, as well as education and artist residencies.

UTENSILS: The initiative is housed in an old farmhouse in the rural area of Gijón, where cultural activities and training workshops in painting techniques take place, and includes guest accommodation. They encourage sensitivity towards the landscape and aim to favour the relationship with the community, the territory and its history. Among their activities they create, organise and produce cultural projects, theoretical studies and field work, promoting their dissemination and understanding through publications and digital tools.

It is a self-managed and private initiative that develops projects in collaboration with public and private institutions such as the *Fundación Municipal de Cultura de Gijón*, *Laboral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial*, *Fundación Sala Mendoza* (Venezuela), as well as different universities and national and international art galleries.

DINERS: The target audience is, on the one hand, the community of neighbours who come to some activities of a cultural and leisure nature. On the other hand, they have a more urban public that attends training activities and events. All of this is forging a meeting point for creators and a community of like-minded people from different fields who revitalise the area and create new narratives of the place.

La Ponte-Ecomuséu

Villanueva de San Adriano, Asturias.
Jesús Fernández Fernández
info@laponte.org
<https://laponte.org/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2013.

INGREDIENTS: Ecomuseum and research space on history, archaeology, cultural studies and heritage driven by people linked to the territory of Santo Adriano. Its mission is to activate the material and immaterial heritage of the area on a cultural and social level.

UTENSILS: Its activities range from historical, archaeological and ethnographic research to scientific and cultural heritage dissemination. They offer interpretative visits, some with music, art, architecture and landscape, both for adults and for educational centres. They also organise workshops and experiences of social entrepreneurship and community work. They publish an indexed serialised scientific journal that connects amateur writing and the academic world.

They are constituted as a cultural association and the members are local people and other experts. The team includes professionals in archaeology, anthropology, social work, tourism and mediation. Depending on the projects, they differentiate between professional and technical skills and try to generate employment. They have a scientific advisory board with representatives from the universities of Barcelona, Alcalá de Henares, Oviedo, UNED, León and University College London.

DINERS: Its non-local public participates in courses, heritage dissemination days and activities of an informative, cultural, awareness-raising, sensitisation and responsibility nature with the territory. The local public participates in free activities such as exhibitions or workshops in which they explore other heritages more related to memory, traumatic experiences and dark heritage. Its programme has been awarded the international Leading Culture Destination award and the *Hispania Nostra* award for Best Practice in Cultural Heritage Conservation.

Fundación Cerezales Antonino y Cinia

Cerezales del Condado, León.
fundacion@fundacioncerezalesantoninoycinia.org
<https://fundacioncerezalesantoninoycinia.org/en/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2008.

INGREDIENTS: A private institution focused on the development of the territory and the transfer of knowledge to society through cultural production and ethno-education.

UTENSILS: It is located in the old school of Cerezales del Condado, with new facilities since 2017. They maintain a philosophy focused on open culture and the production and distribution of knowledge in favour of citizenship. It develops three lines of work, a pedagogical one, centered on ethno-education, another on art exhibitions and a third one on sound and listening. It deploys its lines of action through concerts, workshops, seminars, residency projects, its own productions, co-productions with other institutions and agents, festivals, trips, routes, projects related to the study and respect for the environment and all kinds of activity formats typical of the knowledge society.

It is a sustainable project thanks to the support of its founder and benefactor, Mr. Antonino Fernández, a former resident of the village who emigrated to Mexico. Like all foundations, its annual budgets are audited by the Junta de Castilla and León. Its distinctive feature is that the president of the Junta Vecinal of the village is a member of the Board of Trustees and has a voice and a vote. They develop their activity in collaboration with the Town Council of Vegas del Condado, the Natural Reserve of Omaña and Luna, the educational communities of the Ribera del Porma and have begun to receive support from the Diputación de León.

DINERS: The target public is, on one hand, the regional community of residents and inhabitants of the rest of the province, who attend different types of activities. On the other, they also have a more urban public who come to see the exhibitions from different parts of the country. The presence of the Foundation and the flow of people it attracts has facilitated the creation of a rural accommodation business that did not exist before. In addition, as a result of the working groups on beekeeping and water uses, a local variety of bean has been recovered and an intelligent irrigation system company has been created.

Néxodos Encuentro bienal de Candamo

San Román de Candamo, Asturias.
Gerardo López (coordinación)
colectivonexodos@gmail.com
<https://nexodos.art/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2017.
INGREDIENTS: Artistic collective exploring the role of cultural mediator in the peripheries from a transformative stand. It carries out cultural activities and exhibitions in three rural towns in Spain: Portillo (Valladolid), Monzón de Campos (Palencia) and San Román de Candamo (Asturias).
UTENSILS: The collective manages the space *Nexo990*, a former slaughterhouse converted into a cultural space in Monzón de Campos, and also develops the project “re_hacer” that dialogues with the pottery tradition of the municipality of Portillo, and has recently launched *Vestíbulo*, a record label for sound experimentation. The *Encuentro Bienal de Arte Contemporáneo de Candamo* consists of 10 days of cultural activities ranging from talks and concerts to round tables and workshops. Under the common thread of memory and the archive of the emigration to America of the neighbours, opened a reflexion on the intimate space as a container of the stories that configure the story of the community.

The collective is a not-for-profit association whose highest decision-making body is the assembly made up by its 16 members. The work is organised as a network and has a small coordination team in each of the territories in which it works. In the case of the San Román gatherings, they collaborate with the Candamo Town Council, San Román de Candamo Development Society, San Román Neighbourhood Association and other companies and institutions on an ad hoc basis in each of the editions.

DINERS: The people of the village are deeply involved in the organisation and attendance, producing a stream of visitors and public from other parts of Asturias. All this has an economic impact on local businesses, but it also generates an atmosphere of relaxation, coexistence and enjoyment that benefits the community as a whole, promoting a positive mood with the possibility of the village projecting itself to the outside world.

Paraisu Rural

Valle de Boiges, Villaviciosa, Asturias.
María Gonzalez
paraisu rural@gmail.com
<https://paraisu rural.wordpress.com/>

COOKING TIME: Since 2012.
INGREDIENTS: Collaborative art biennial that contributes to the revitalisation of the Boiges valley by promoting artistic activity whilst maintaining agricultural work in the countryside. **UTENSILS:** The event takes place over several days during the month of September (3 or 5 days, plus a previous year of work with the territory), with a programme of activities taking place inside the houses or fincas of the inhabitants of the village, and public and communal spaces of the “caleyas” between the neighbourhoods of the Boiges valley. During the gathering, several artists display their projects in formats ranging from performances and musical concerts to sculptural interventions in the landscape or workshops related to the rural chores carried out by the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods in the valley (beekeeping, harvesting techniques, etc.) and collective memory.

It also develops an informative activity collaborating in different experiences in the field of heritage preservation and support for cooperation in the field of traditional culture with the Ministry of Culture, the Complutense University of Madrid, *Xarxaprod* of Catalonia and the *Cultural Factory* of Avilés, Asturias. It is a self-managed and private initiative that identifies with slow-movement and demands slower times and cycles in cultural management and production.

DINERS: Each biennial is an event where the local artistic community meets and creates a stream of visitors and audiences from the region and other parts of Asturias. In addition to the economic impact on local businesses, the programme unearths the stories and experiences of local people, taking them beyond the village boundaries, creating opportunities for reunions and new emotional ties.



Lorena Lozano

Artist and researcher, doctor in Art History. Her practice is markedly interdisciplinary exploring the intersections of art and science from the representations and methods with which we build knowledge about the biosphere. She is currently a consultant for the Degree in Arts at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) and also a teacher at the Consejería de Educación de Asturias. Since 2012 she has directed the project “Econodos. Ecology and communication».

<https://lorenalozano.net/>



Fréjol pinto. "Herbarium", Fundación Cereales Antonino y Cinia (León).

Epilogue

I. ASSIMILATING THE WORDS.

We are holding many words in our hands right now and, as expected from the beginning of this reading, the huge diversity that exists throughout the national territory requires that we look through a kaleidoscopic lens; for it is not the same to talk about the high coal resources in the Asturian and Leon basins in coexistence with the detriment of their extraction, as to analyse the influence of uncontrolled tourism on the Canary Islands archipelago, which disables the laws of protection of their ecosystems. In the same way that there is no similarity between the small mountain farms in some northern regions compared to the large estates in the South, nor is there any similarity between the coastal regions of the North and the coastal regions of the East of the peninsula. We live in a rural space of different rural areas.

However, there are points in common with regard to other issues concerning life in our villages and which are connected between them. Issues related to agriculture: the problems generated by agro-industry along the Vega del Guadalquivir or the Vega del Guadiana are not very different from those faced by the peasants in the Noya region of Barcelona. In the same way that we find similar problems due to the abandonment and misuse of agricultural roads, resulting from the exponential evolution of livestock farming, whether it be the Cañada de Espera in Jerez, the Cañada Real de Torreagüera in Murcia or the Cañada Real burgalesa as it passes through Valladolid.

There are also similarities in terms of the threat to biodiversity posed by the extensive monoculture fields of cereals and vines found in the two Castilian regions, Andalusia and Extremadura, at a time when we are full of praise for the New Green Deal. Policies continue to be rather generic and unspecific within a context of progressive globalisation of agri-food markets, to which the Spanish state is no stranger. As the colleagues of BeeTime say, "The real work of cultural mediation in the fields of the South has been and is being carried out by agribusiness: its work destroying knowledge pushes its inhabitants into a reconstruction from the void".

It is precisely this absorption of the traditional processes of the peasantry by industrial and intensive agriculture and livestock farming, which is emerging as a demographic drain, together with

the disdain for inheriting the rural livelihoods of our ancestors, which are the factors leading to the extinction of the identity cultures of the inhabitants of the countryside and the rupture of their neighbourhood ties. Francoism attacked our roots, our traditions, it uprooted us from the land; neo-despotism is still at work to make us forget that the land belongs to all of us, that our songs, our dances and our feelings for the land we walk on are real. Add to this the lack of education to raise awareness of the community values of the territory, and we have a ticking bomb ready to continue feeding the diaspora of rural dwellers.

Could it be that it is bad practices that all rural territories have in common? Let us hope not.

In this sense, and within the research framework covered on this publication, the figure of cultural mediation is essential in most cases. For it rescues, or at least seeks to do so, traditions and craft practices from oblivion, favours intergenerational communication and the exchange of knowledge, promotes participation and neighbourhood collaboration, at the same time that opposes cultural monopoly, culture of passive spectacle, which does not even feedback the citizens.

The difficulty in reinforcing the figure of cultural mediation is also a consequence of the very loss of identity of many of the municipalities themselves, whose inhabitants, stripped of their own culture, ignore their capacity to reactivate it or, haunted by economic and/or logistical problems, have no interest in doing so.

Assuming then that the population's lack of interest stems from the destruction of their own culture, intrinsically derived from the processes of global neoliberalism (and this is a cross-cutting rural-urban issue), there is a need to direct discourse towards the defence of community and intergenerational actions that aim to preserve and re-semanticise the heritage communities themselves¹, thus helping to enhance the value of the territory at identity, social and ecosystemic levels. To this end, as has been seen through each and every one of the different proposals in this research, artistic practices (in any of their variants) based on divergent thinking or the simple creation of new imaginaries nourished by the memory of the old, are proving to be one of the most basic and effective tools in our territories.

II. NEW PATHS.

All of this opens up new lines of action and thought within the social context of the 21st century, which has begun in the worst possible way (although also as a consequence of the ecological and climate crisis in which we have been immersed for some time):

We have been hit by a tangible crisis, the health crisis, in which we are still in the midst of, a crisis that has distanced us, that has separated us and led us to create networks through the web. A situation in which virtual relationships, the universe of the screen, became increasingly unsustainable, as many people were left out. Those of us who work face-to-face, in dialogue, in coexistence, have been particularly aware of this.

This has given us the opportunity to prove that there is no digital substitute (nor it is wanted) for community and artistic events and practices in villages, as they require the entirety of the relationship between their inhabitants.

For cultural mediation in rural areas, the successive states of alarm with their respective restrictions has meant a blockage in our practices, a suspension in activities and, most importantly, has weakened the social ties that are required for such purposes and directly, for a life in community. If "our bicycle" already faced steep slopes on rough roads, COVID19 has been the stick in the wheel.

We have no choice but to become aware of this and go back to the streets, to sit in the cool of the summer evenings (even if it is with the chairs a metre and a half away, so that the cooler air runs more freely), to get together again in the warmth of the fire (even with a mask, to warm our faces with our own breath), and to continue growing in small communities, which is the true path to follow.

¹ "Patrimonios serían el conjunto de los bienes comunes, tangibles, intangibles y relacionales, que forman parte, no solo de nuestro pasado, sino que cons-truyen nuestro día a día, nos implican como personas y como comunidad (...) Desde este enfoque comunitario, el patrimonio tiene sentido en la medida en que diferentes comunidades se apropian simbólicamente de él y son activas en su conservación, gestión y disfrute. En este enfoque, es el patrimonio más próximo con el que se pueden establecer los vínculos más potentes, sobre el que se puede actuar de forma directa y sostenible". (Montesino: Culturarios, 2021)

III. TRYING TO CONCLUDE.

The two sides of a sheet of paper will help us to try to find out what the conclusions of this publication are, and although we must predict the difficulty of concluding from so many realities and points of view, we must take the risk of doing so.

One side of the page shows us problems related to institutions, relationships that many of the projects that appear in this cookbook have to face, sometimes with good fortune, sometimes not so much.

We begin to glimpse that, in the first place there is no communication and a palpable connection between the administrations linked to culture and those of agriculture, livestock and/or the environment with the resulting aim of drawing up common policies or joint lines of action; if different cultural officers do not spend any time understanding what is happening, ignoring the initiatives arising from the population, such as any of those presented in this publication; then we would be talking about people in public positions that do not spend any time at all understanding what is happening, that ignore a growing number of projects that are reviving the life and roots of various populations in the rural areas of the state. Projects that even the Ministry of Culture itself has included in its Culture and Ruralities forums since 2017.

We would then be talking about public officials, at the very least out of date, who boycott, albeit unconsciously, citizens' initiatives that could solve the same problems that the politicians themselves face, assuming that is their intention. For this reason, they will also fail to raise awareness and encourage the population, through education, about these practices and the need to put down roots in the land.

Is there a need for a "school for politicians" for those in charge of culture? Is there a need to understand the language of culture before starting to think about what to programme or what to fund? Is there a need to understand the language of politics and the market before starting to think about what to programme?

Following the above, we find ourselves faced with a lack of listening to the population they serve, resulting in cultural automatisms that translate into the running of the bulls of a typical local festival and little else. This lack of dialogue also leads to a paternalism or contempt for local associations

that encourage the activation of neighbourhood ties. Therefore, with the administrations protected by a static and misunderstood tradition, any new proposal generates mistrust and in certain cases is perceived as a threat within certain power groups that often do not hide their desire for “everything to remain the same” in a municipality.

All this translates into an outright refusal to favour budgetary allocations to cultural proposals presented to public calls for proposals that are different. From a purely quantitative point of view, projects linked to the recovery of artisanal practices, sustainable agricultural methods or new projects and processes that encourage social inclusion are disregarded, when in reality these same projects, if they had continuity over time, could serve for the good of the local population and even attract, to a greater or lesser extent, external attention. It seems that the quantitative definitely does not like the small, the subtle or the deep.

Every side has an underside and, of course, so does this one. Those of us who inhabit the fields of culture also make common mistakes. Precisely, seeking the primary and direct attraction of the visitor becomes the perfect breeding ground for a certain initiative to fail or to become just a disposable tourist attraction. If the project reverses its path from the outside in, instead of from the inside out, it is very likely to encounter two problems:

On the one hand, its audience will be merely casual. Not only will it not share a closer relationship with the municipality, but also, as soon as the (apparent) need it was intended to satisfy has been met, it will not be continued. The main problem lies in the fact that as there is no connection with the neighbours, they will not recognise it, nor will they feel involved or challenged, but rather invaded.

Once again, lack of listening can lead a cultural mediator, even a well-intentioned one, to not detect the needs of the territory in which their project is located, and therefore to not understand how this can be the tool that satisfies them or at least makes them visible. It could even be that the neighbours’ intuition identifies it as a threat to be faced. We must be careful not to practice globalised copy-paste, importing/colonising our work contexts with completely foreign practices and methodologies without first doing self-mediation: listening, sometimes giving up, learning, adapting, finally trying to do.

Quite a different matter are the relations with other cultural agents at local or even regional level. In the first case, these relations can bring moral reinforcement or the achievement of continuous support. In the best case, it could consolidate a cultural tendency which could openly develop a series of concrete solutions in relation to the territory, devised by its own inhabitants.

It may be very pretentious for us, who also make mistakes, to propose solutions to so many different realities, but this journey has allowed us to perceive some issues that we believe need to be mentioned, even if they simply serve to open a debate, a discussion through which we can continue to grow. So here is our list (with possible errors).

1) It is necessary to generate more dialogue, between mediators, mediator and inhabitants, mediator and administration. It is necessary to talk and to listen. Hearing is in our body, and listening is a most pleasant quality. Something that all the researchers agreed on, and which Maria Montesino and Sabah Waild emphasised in a special way, is that “if we do not orientate our practices on the basis of conflict, they make no sense”. It is necessary to assume the habit of dialogue with those people who are distant from our ideologies or practices and even openly contrary in order to broaden the level of understanding of both parties and open the possibility of agreements and points in common.

2) If education does not work to value the collaborative practices and identity diversities of our people, it will be difficult to have continuity or a clear understanding on the part of a community whose own culture has been subtracted from them. It is essential to educate in these terms.

3) It is necessary to involve and empower audiences by listening to their needs. Only in this way will initiatives flow aligned with neighbourhood support and ownership.

4) With regard to the challenges of demographic sustainability and biodiversity, and in accordance with Law 42/2007 of 13 December 2007 on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity, which establishes the requirement to draw up inventories of traditional knowledge to enable its practical dissemination and preservation, and from which the “Inventory of Traditional Knowledge relating to

IV. THE RURALS, DIVERSITY, AND LOVE.

Biodiversity" was created, we believe it is necessary to extend the idea that cultural mediators can not only disseminate a large part of this knowledge, but that we must commit ourselves to this end to a certain extent.

5) We are on the way to creating models between ancestral tradition and the contemporary. New ways of doing, being and living. New models that embrace diversity and avoid homogenisation (both at identity level and when it comes to generating legal structures on which to support projects).

6) It is necessary to provide a tool of an informative nature in terms of practices that are considered to be of interest, which exposes the qualitative value of these artistic and cultural projects encompassing the rural areas of the Spanish state. It is difficult to be sure that the texts in this publication are such a tool, although they build a set of perspectives from which to extract a multitude of lessons and models for those good practices that are called upon.

Therefore, we can conclude that there are already certain practices that need to be looked at closely, such as certain festival in the Ulloa region of Lugo supported both by the local people and the administration, which renews the traditional pilgrimages and reinforces the inclusion of LGBTBIQ+ groups; or the one that has been held in the Osense Pyrenees for almost twenty years and has the privilege of being the only ethnographic documentary festival in the country. We can also take a close look at those who began with their love and defence of bees until, inevitably, their gaze became holistic and began to think about the environment in which they and those bees live; appreciate those who are committed to the socialisation of heritage, to showing us other ways of understanding what we walk on; or stay with those who remind us that the most important thing is to plant, giving us a slap in the face because it reminds us that sometimes we forget the essential...

Fortunately, as we have read, there are projects, spaces, processes, people, neighbours, who are constantly committed to all this and more. The rural areas of the country are full of people who will stay with us for a long time and who, above all, will help us to grow.

It is clear that we must avoid romanticising the rural, and also that we must stop talking about the rural and start talking about the rurals, start thinking of them as spaces of resistance, as spaces of creation for the survival of the species, as radical spaces.

This route takes us to stop talking about the romantic idea, about the bucolic of village life; but it cannot (and should not) prevent us from talking about the idea of love, love for the project, love for the territory, love for the people who inhabit it, love for the neighbourhood. Because love is not what you eat, as is well known, but it does feed the soul and, while the soul is being fed, we juggle in order to survive, to generate that economy of survival, survival through culture. This is our (sad and loving) reality.

In the meantime, we continue to walk through an uncertain present towards an even more uncertain future, from which we have to continue to grow, having no other option but to grow as a network. And that, this growing in a network, is what this project has tried to do; a project that seeks to continue to make visible all those people who are behind projects that aim to make visible the wealth of popular knowledge that surrounds us in our daily lives, to recover from a contemporary perspective the values, knowledge and qualities imprinted in these common heritage for their transformative potential to continue composing presents and futures (possible, divergent, emancipatory futures).

V. THANKFUL (AND MOVED).

It only remains to thank and embrace all the friends who have made this project possible; to Sabah Walid Sbeinati, from *Underground Archaeology*, for stressing that the nourishment of culture in the villages is based on community processes and not on tourism linked to entertainment; to María Montesino of *La Ortiga* for reminding us that if mediation does not start from spaces of conflict, it makes no sense; to Lucía Camón, of *Pueblos en Arte*, for defending that the figure of the artist is contagious and promotes an exciting coexistence in our villages; to Irene Zireja and Fidel Darias, of *La Madre Monte*, for urging us to verify the environmental sustainability of our practices; to Jorge Gallardo and Pol Parrhesia, from *BeeTime*, for advising us and encouraging us to take care what is scattered and to give it all for love; to Lorena Lozano, from *Econodos*, for helping us to understand that these initiatives have the same or maybe even greater relevance than those artistic practices linked to the urban; to the *Campo Adentro* team for their knowledge based on the agropolitan dialogue; and to Alejandro Piccione, for his constant care towards each space that has been investigated and for acting as research coordinator and working together with the whole team that this small project has brought together.

We would like to thank all of them above all for their contributions, for the way in which they have infused them with affection and dedication.

We would also like to thank Virginia López, from *PACA_Proyectos Artísticos Casa Antonino*, for giving shape to this publication that we now hold in our hands; Hadriana Casla for the process of creating the collaborative documentary *Red Difusa*, which will accompany this small compilation of words on its journey; David G. Ferreiro, from *Imago Bubo*, for all his work in coordinating and managing all the parts of this project and for his intuition in affectionally bringing together all the members of the group; to Coco Moya for being the original ideologist who gave rise to *Culturarios*; and to Olga Ramalle for having the right words and translating all these ideas into English, so that the message can continue to grow.

We can not forget our colleagues at the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation, who have given us their financial support (and much more) to make this publication a reality and who have walked with us in this process. Thanks to the whole team who, call after call, show us that they have a wonderful

eye when it comes to selecting projects (not for this one we have developed, but for all the others that keep appearing). Culture continues to grow.

Finally, we would like to thank all the projects, associations, spaces and public administrations that have agreed to talk to us to help us build a collective imaginary of rural people, who have opened the doors of their homes for us to go into the kitchen and share the food of the mind, the culture that permeates us, the realities and difficulties that cross our path. Many elements that have allowed us to cook rural realities as ingredients for this recipe book.

We can say that what we have in our hands, this publication, is just a small piece of what *El Cubo Verde* is, just a small piece of what the spaces of resistance of rural people are, just one more ingredient of all the places of knowledge and recognition, of love for the territory and of a journey in which we stumble many times over many stones, but we grow as a network, allowing us to laugh together at having almost fallen down.

We continue to move forward.



This publication was completed on the day
December 15, 2021, and awaiting a celebration party
with all the people who have made it possible,
when the cider barrels were closed to let them
ferment until the next *espicha*.

Cenero, winter 2021-2022
Cheers and Good Health!

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community, disruptive, paradigm, participatory, empower, processes, decolonize, projects, listening, sovereignty, agropolitan, ruralities, imaginaries, transversality, intergenerational, transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, multitasking! collaborative, tools, methodologies, replicate, prototype, yes yes, a lot of prototyping!, call, deadline, collective, rhizomatic, horizontal, new, traditional, green, blue, device, relational, identity, precariousness, copy, paste, monoculture cultural. If the chair is uncomfortable, don't spin around anymore, don't cheat, get off the chair, don't do another one. The field is not to blame for the job insecurity of culture. "Dad, when do we eat?" when we win the open-call.

| editor's temptation,



EL CUBO VERDE
RED DE
ESPACIOS DE ARTE
EN EL CAMPO

Carasso
Daniel & Nina
Fundación afiliada a la Fondation de France