Social Inclusion
Open Access Journal | ISSN: 2183-2803
Volume 9, Issue 4 (2021)

Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere

Editor
Karin Hannes

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion, 2021, Volume 9, Issue 4
Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere

Published by Cogitatio Press
Rua Fialho de Almeida 14, 2º Esq.,
1070-129 Lisbon
Portugal

Academic Editor
Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium)

Available online at: www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion

Table of Contents

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 103–105
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.5086

Editorial

What Art and Design Do for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere

Karin Hannes

Faculty of Social Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium; E-Mail: karin.hannes@kuleuven.be

Submitted: 11 November 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
Art and design can meaningfully contribute to social change. It can shift debates, change perspectives, raise awareness, and act upon visible and invisible mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of different agents occupying the public sphere. In this thematic issue we invited authors to relate to this claim as they preferred: by bringing evidence to support it, refute it, or simply to discuss the potential benefits and harms of artistically inspired and design related interventions in citizens living environment. We challenged authors to rethink agency and engage theoretically or empirically with how art and design installations act upon us, citizens, and vice-versa. The result is a compilation of different storylines, coming from different geographical parts of the world and written from a variety of cultural perspectives. What binds these contributions is a true commitment to open up a space for those experiencing challenging life circumstances to access, occupy, or transform the public sphere. Our collective engagement with concepts such as power, prejudice, harassment or discrimination was not focused on erasing differences. Instead, we engaged with the idea that certain differences should matter less than they currently do in creating a safe and accessible public space for all.

Keywords
art; design; inclusion; public sphere

Issue
This editorial is a part of the issue “Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere” edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

What makes the public sphere so powerful is its capacity to tune into how people with differing gender, cognitive, physical, developmental, cultural, or religious experiences and expressions navigate and use space, how they tend to negotiate their place in the public sphere. Central to this thematic issue is the question of how public spaces can best be shaped to secure a positive impact on citizen’s sense of belonging and their right to act upon the public sphere. In line with Cartiere and Zebracki’s (2015) exploration of the everyday practice of public art, our aim was to create a platform for art and design practitioners interested in the link between aesthetically inspired material dimensions of the public sphere and the meaning of site-specificness in facilitating inclusion or exclusion mechanisms.

We present several scholarly contributions that offer theoretical reflections, operational strategies, or worked examples on how to (re)design and artistically appropriate public spaces for citizens, more particularly those whose voice tends to be overlooked by policy makers. Art- and design-related interventions can facilitate or hinder access to a particular area on a physical, psychological, social-cultural, or economic level (Langdon et al., 2018). We collected several studies that illustrate how meaning is created through art and design, both from a supportive and a more critical point of view. Our reflection was not limited to the actual methodology of applying an artistically-inspired or design-related intervention in practice, nor was it explicitly focused on how design and art can influence human behavior. Most authors presented a critical perspective on how power inequalities are introduced by differences in gender, race, ability, geographical location, or challenging life circumstances.

Three research teams present worked examples that connect the aesthetic goals of design related and artistically inspired interventions in the public sphere to a social-cultural or public health policy agenda. Muñoz-Bellerín and Cordero-Ramos (2021) engaged with collective theatre creation to support homeless individuals in the city of Seville, Spain. They pay particular

attention to how these citizens' human rights can be asserted in relation to accessibility issues in the public sphere. Segers et al. (2021) involved an intergenerational group of local citizens into a collective-embodied interaction exercise to recreate a sense of belonging to their neighborhood Heist-Goor in Flanders, Belgium—the neighborhood lost most of its significant social-cultural spaces under a strong rationalization and centralization of public services. Using design anthropology, Campagnaro et al. (2021) transform the venues where caring services take place, hereby improving the quality of user's lives and the quality of the services themselves.

These authors created opportunities for local citizens to express themselves artistically in their own neighborhoods and strengthen their identity as fully fledged citizens with a voice capable of entering a public dialogue with significant others. It is this focus on different modes of collaboration with a variety of publics that forms a dominant trend in art/research practice in the public sphere. The outcome of an inclusive art and design participatory research process is therefore always related to the use of a particular participatory approach rather than the manufacture of a final product. The benefit of socially-engaged artistic practice lies in its uniqueness of the exchange between participants and the mutual benefits for all participants (Bourne, 2003). This is what we argued in a previously written editorial:

> Most social art is guided by a critical perspective on power inequalities and their effects within the spheres of for instance gender, ethnic majorities-minorities relationships, the economy, or the daily lifeworld as impacted by environmental changes. Together with raising awareness concerning social justice and equality, direct individual empowerment and collective emancipation are often explicit goals of social art. Artists involved in the corresponding practices tend to use art as a vehicle to engage with the texture of social life, eventually disrupting the seemingly natural flow of the social in order to stimulate reflection and invite action for change (Hannes & Laermans, 2020, p. 3)

Several authors in this thematic issue provide in-depth reflections on how an artistic presence or design-related material occupation of public space affects spatialized dimensions of discrimination and social injustice. In Begum et al. (2021) the public sphere is conceptualized as a principal site of contestation and negotiation for citizens. Their article focuses on the differentiated access of women to public space. From an analytical perspective, the authors apply an intersectionality lens to study the role of gender in design and appropriation of design in the specific location of Shahbag ("garden of the king") in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Alizadeh et al. (2021) illustrate how the disruptive and provocative character of an artistic intervention can create opportunities for public dialogue. Using street art as a medium for communication, the team aimed at transforming a patriarchal space into a place of gendered resistance against domestic violence, which resulted in strong negative response pattern over social media and vandalism against the art piece. This proves the influence of art to generate debate, as well as the need for more efforts from feminist activist to occupy space and change cultural mindsets in relation to the equal rights movement. These studies confirm the previous finding of Sharp et al. (2005): The processes through which artworks are installed in the public sphere are critical to a successful development of inclusive policies.

This said, art and design interventions do play an important role in the process of "socialization" of society itself (Chęć-Małyszek, 2018). They enable us to read other people's needs and desires to express themselves in the public sphere. Art provokes meaning and design often solves problems. However, both forms can promote a different order of democratic transition. This is one of the reasons why several scholars represented in this thematic issue reflected on a more theoretical level. Their aspiration was to tackle the complexity of shifting relationships between different of citizens or groups of citizens in relation to non-human agents through art and design. Sadikoglu's (2021) study investigates the potential of public art festivals to encourage dialogue and multicultural tolerance between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Aerne (2021) analyzes how two different art works are included in the public sphere as non-human subjects. From there a typology is developed that categorizes art works based on their political potential and contribution to an inclusive public sphere. López-Yánez and Saavedra Calderón (2021) present a political reading of soundscapes to investigate how such interventions facilitate the co-construction of public spaces through the development of counter-narratives of power and resistance, mainly from the perspective of Afrodescendant people in Ecuador.

In most cases, the impact of art and design interventions was studied in relation to space-making practices as inspired by a strong sense of collectivity, relationality, and mutual interdependence of a multiplicity of different agents in the public sphere, including non-human species. While authors may differ in what they consider a measure of success on the level of achieving a more just and more inclusive society, they mostly represent the voice of those resisting oppressive political structures and narratives. Art and design interventions subjectivize through objects. They are powerful symbols of solidarity between, citizens, artists, and scholars willing to negotiate a different social, cultural, economical, practical, or political reality. Several authors took note of the discomfort of social, linguistic, or other forms of exclusion, paying specific attention to the articulation of narratives from citizens that feel out of place (Sidorenko & Marusinska, 2017). The contributions featured in this thematic issue demonstrate that going "public" with art and design embodies the notion of plurality and difference. It is through the use of art and design that

we are able to expose differential experiences that public places, spaces, or spheres may introduce.

They invite us into shifting our mindset from personal interests and how to best secure our own spot in the public sphere to a focus on the collective good of an inclusive society: That is, the right for all to access, occupy, or transform the public sphere without being subjected to people's prejudices, harassment, or acts of discrimination. A basic rule of thumb: Explore, temporarily occupy, and discover, but do not claim more space than necessary. More importantly, do not deny others the right to respectfully claim their own.

Acknowledgments

I am thankful to Amarante Swift, a virtual scholarly identity that writes in its own name and represents many of the students, staff, visiting scholars, creatives, and international colleagues I was privileged to work and share ideas with.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Aerne, A. (2021). Palm tree whispers and mountain escapes: How contemporary artworks contribute to an inclusive public sphere. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 180–190.

Alizadeh, H., Kohlbacher, J., Mohammed-Amin, R. K., & Latif Raouf, T. (2021). Gender inequalities and the effects of feminine artworks on public spaces: A dialogue. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 158–167.

Begum, S., Hossain, J., & Stevens, J. (2021). Gender and public space: Mapping palimpsests of art, design, and agency in Shahbag, Dhaka. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 143–157.

Bourne, S. (2003). Analysis of the role of the artist, designer and architect as facilitator of inclusive social processes. *Public Art & Urban Design Interdisciplinary and Social Perspectives*, *2003*(4). https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/waterfront/article/view/18805

Campagnaro, C., Di Prima, N., & Ceraolo, S. (2021). Co-design and the collective creativity processes in care systems and places. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 130–142.

Cartiere, C., & Zebracki, M. (Eds.). (2015). *The everyday practice of public art: Art, space, and social inclusion*. Routledge.

Chęć-Małyszek, A. (2018). Art in public space as a tool of social inclusion. *Teka Komisji Architektury, Urbanistyki i Studiów Krajobrazowych*, *14*(3), 50–60.

Hannes, K., & Laermans, R. (2020). Encountering artistic research practices: Analyzing their critical social potentialities. *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, *5*(1). https://doi.org/10.18432/ari29533

Langdon, P., Lazar, J., Heylighen, A., & Dong, H. (Eds.). (2018). *Breaking down barriers: Usability, accessibility and inclusive design*. Springer.

López-Yánez, M. G., & Saavedra Calderón, M. P. (2021). Decolonial possibilities of re-introducing the devil in the public space of Afro-Ecuadorian territories. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 191–202.

Muñoz-Bellerín, M., & Cordero-Ramos, N. (2021). Citizen art and human rights: Collective theatre creation as a way of combatting exclusion. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 106–115.

Sadikoglu, R. (2021). Festivals for inclusion? Examining the politics of cultural events in Northern Cyprus. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 168–179.

Segers, R., Hannes, K., Heylighen, A., & Van den Broeck, P. (2021). Exploring embodied place attachment through co-creative art trajectories: The case of Mount Murals. *Social Inclusion*, *9*(4), 116–129.

Sharp, J., Pollock, V., & Paddison, R. (2005). Just art for a just city: Public art and social inclusion in urban regeneration. *Urban Studies*, *42*(5/6), 1001–1023.

Sidorenko, E., & Marusinska, K. (2017). Cultural intervention in the public sphere through HUG: Articulating social exclusion. In K. Kasia & M. Kochanowska (Eds.), *Aktywnosc/Activity* (pp. 201–208). Faculty of Design Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/20210/7/20210%20SIDORENKO_Cultural_Intervention_in_the_Public_Sphere_2017.pdf

About the Author

Karin Hannes (PhD) specializes in the development of innovative research methods to respond to emerging social challenges, with a focus on multisensory, arts- and place-based research designs and evidence synthesis as a meta-review technique. Her transdisciplinary research team SoMeTHin'K is active in the area of urban development, citizen science, art/design and technology, social and behavioral sciences, public health, and the global sustainable development context. The group develops methodological and theoretical frameworks as a basis for understanding how complex phenomena should be approached from an inclusive perspective. Karin's analytical approach is multimodal, combining numerical and textual data with sensory data. She contributes extensively to theoretical discussions on quality assessment of disruptive types of scholarly output and the role of artistic research practices in an evidence-based discourse. Prof. Hannes chairs the European Network of Qualitative Inquiry, co-convenes the Arts-Based Research Global Initiative and is involved in the Qualitative Evidence Synthesis Methods group of the Campbell Collaboration.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 106–115
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4372

Article

Citizen Art and Human Rights: Collective Theatre Creation as a Way of Combatting Exclusion

Manuel Muñoz-Bellerín * and Nuria Cordero-Ramos

Department of Social Work and Social Services, Pablo de Olavide University, Spain; E-Mails: mfmunbel@upo.es (M.M.-B), ncorram@upo.es (N.C.-R)

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 15 April 2021 | Accepted: 22 July 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
In this article, through the lens of critical theory and collective theatre creation, we will look at how a group of homeless individuals in the city of Seville (Spain) has been able to assert their human rights using art. Through the words of the actors themselves, we will reveal the obstacles they face in accessing the city's public sphere, and their deconstruction. By creating and producing plays, as well as interacting with the audience, the participants became not just actors, but citizens with rights. Collective theatre creation, as adapted by the authors within the context of their research in the field of social work, provides insights into how art has the power to become a strategy for helping those living on the fringes of mainstream society reclaim their place in it politically and culturally. This research has been made possible thanks to the commitment of the members of Teatro de la Inclusión, a theatre group and socio-artistic project that ran for twelve years and allowed homeless individuals, tired of being passive subjects, dependent on external assistance and subject to endless bureaucracy, to become amateur actors. In doing so, they created for themselves dignified forums in which to express themselves within their city and put their communicative and artistic skills into practice.

Keywords
collective theatre creation; homelessness; homeless persons; human rights; inclusion theatre

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere" edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

This article looks at the appropriation of public spaces in the city of Seville by a group of homeless individuals, a process made possible by the use of theatrical productions created using the collective theatre creation method. These plays gave participants the opportunity to move from spaces assigned to them by society (homeless shelters, soup kitchens, day centres, etc.) to public spaces they tend to be excluded from, such as theatres, universities, and cultural centres.

We will begin by outlining the concepts on which this article is based, namely critical theory of human rights and collective theatre creation. We will then present Teatro de la Inclusión, an amateur theatre group which ran from 2007 to 2019 in Seville (Spain). The group allowed its homeless members to use art as a way of expressing their feelings of helplessness and exclusion, providing them with a tool with which to assert their rights, and thus grow and empower themselves. This was a forum where their stories took centre stage. Through the development of their artistic capacities, the members of the group were able to form a collective voice in order to assert their right and dignity.

Lastly, we will provide an overview of the plays written and performed over the twelve years during which the project ran. These not only allowed actors to assert their rights, but were also an opportunity for the audience to find out about their plight. This use of collective theatre creation clearly showed just how effective it can

be as a tool for fostering democratisation and bringing people together in the name of social transformation.

2. Human Rights as Cultural Products: The Theatre as a Space for Recognition

Throughout this article, when we use the term "human rights," we do so within the critical perspective formulated by de Sousa Santos and Sena Martins (2021), who consider them to be spaces where struggles for human dignity take place. Herrera Flores (2008, p. 13) echoes this when he talks about a "new perspective of rights as institutional and social processes which enable the emergence and consolidation of spaces for struggles of human dignity.''

The descriptions of human rights given by various authors (Gallardo, 2006; Ignatieff, 2017; Sikkink, 2017) may be seen as the restoration of identities which have been damaged by hegemonic practices. Based on this approach, human rights may be associated with the self-determination of individuals, communities and groups within society, which for Ignatieff (2017, p. 11) is "the right to determine their own destiny as political agents." Here, culture as a space for methodological action plays a central role. For Gramsci, cultural action is the "coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations" (as cited in Crehan, 2002, p. 74). Theatre is a meaningful cultural practice within processes of resistance, as it brings out the capacities and potential of each individual (Muñoz-Bellerín & Cordero-Ramos, 2020). The concept of the imaginary, as put forth by authors such as Castoriadis (1987), serves to demonstrate the potential of the theatre as a tool through which to give oppressed individuals a chance to express their worlds and assert their rights. In strategies such as the one presented in this article, the radical imaginary is harnessed in spaces for dialogue and participation, where oppressed individuals, in our case homeless persons, are able to discuss the causes and consequences of their spoiled identities and thus the stigma they suffer on a daily basis (Goffman, 1990).

Indeed, theatre has long since been regarded as a strategy of resistance (Barba & Savarese, 2019). Other theoretical and practical strategies have also been created by theatre practitioners, such as Brecht, who argued for "scientific drama," a tool through which to analyse and identify the structures of domination present in the capitalist system (Brecht, 2019, p. 172). For Brecht, it was important that theatre brought to light social conditions based on subordination, a reflection of his belief that "reality must be transformed through art for it to be acknowledged and treated like something that can be changed" (Brecht, 2004, p. 31).

These ideas are both based on the use of theatre as a tool for critically questioning social conditions which result in domination and oppression. The creative dimension of theatre allows for analysis, debate and, above all, new ways of interacting with one another and coexisting, based on equality, diversity and fairness. By viewing theatre as a cultural product which allows us to do and undo worlds (Herrera Flores, 2005), it becomes a participatory tool of action and reaction for transforming realities involving exclusion.

We chose to use collective theatre creation for our work with Teatro de la Inclusión for the latter's great emancipatory potential: The group enabled its participants to assert their human rights in public spaces as they told their stories. The first documented use of collective theatre creation was developed by Joan Littlewood in England in the 1940s and 50s (Holdsworth, 2017). It later appeared in the rest of Europe and Latin America in the 1960s and 70s, where great advances were made in terms of methodology and artistic output. In Latin America, it was adopted by independent theatre groups as a means of affirming their identify in the face of colonial dominance based on hegemonic cultural practices. In fact, the work on which this article is based on has been influenced to a large degree by a number of Colombian playwrights and stage directors responsible for standardising this methodology, something that has made collective, open, and spontaneous, yet structured, theatrical productions possible. In the words of Cardona Garzón (2009, p. 108), this is a scientific methodology which is "preceded and accompanied by research at various levels, including historical, sociological and political, as well as scientific research surrounding the artistic work itself." Another noteworthy proponent of collective theatre creation, Santiago García Pinzón, who was the director of the theatre group La Candelaria for half a century, prefers to talk about a flexible and experimental, yet standardised, work process (García Pinzón, 2002).

The theatrical productions created by Teatro de la Inclusión were the result of a form of social and educational intervention which adhered to criteria taken from the humanistic social sciences and established theatre practices. The main aim was to give those who had been silenced a forum where they were able to take centre stage and reclaim their voice by asserting themselves in the city's public sphere, from which they are commonly excluded. Our work with this amateur theatre group led to us undertake participatory action research, as well as become involved in artivism with its members (Duncombe, 2016), whose circumstances varied significantly, with some living in homeless shelters, others on the street, and others in sheltered housing. By basing the productions on the real-life experiences and challenges of the participants, the probability of them getting fully involved in the process was maximised. The aim was not to create plays which were disconnected from their reality and needs but instead to construct a narrative discourse through theatre where they were the facilitators, authors and actors. Nevertheless, given the critical process involved in participatory action research, we feel it

necessary to outline some issues which arose with the participants. In spite of everything achieved, in certain sessions, the relationship between the facilitators and the participants was clearly very one-way and unequal in nature, as opposed to democratic. This was seen in the decisions the facilitators had to make unilaterally on occasions, due mainly to the passiveness in response to (and inability to resolve) the various conflicts that arose. In this regard, and despite the fact that the homeless participants took centre stage throughout the process, the facilitators were still seen as being the "experts."

3. Teatro de la Inclusión: Creative Narratives as a Form of Resistance and Collective Creation

In this section, we will present some of our experiences with the homeless members of the amateur theatre group Teatro de la Inclusión. The project began in November 2007 with a workshop on social skills for those living at Seville's Municipal Homeless Shelter. The event was attended by nine homeless individuals (seven men and two women) and one of the authors of this article in their role as facilitator (Kaner, 2007). One of the methodological cornerstones of the workshop was the use of techniques taken from theatre pedagogy, which was used as a means through which to help the participants effectively manage their relationships with each other and resolve day-to-day conflicts at the shelter. Initially funded by Senda PDPSH, an NGO which works with homeless individuals, the group subsequently became an independent association and began to meet and perform at various locations throughout the city of Seville, including homeless shelters, parks, squares and state schools (Cordero-Ramos & Muñoz-Bellerín, 2017). Although the group received help from theatres, universities, and other public and private institutions in the form of financial assistance, equipment, and venues for performances, one of the main features of the initiative was its independence from any organisation.

From 2007 to 2019, sixty-three homeless individuals (fifty-one men and twelve women) participated in Teatro de la Inclusión. The majority were Spanish citizens, although a few were immigrants or refugees from sub-Saharan Africa (three individuals), Eastern Europe (two individuals), and Latin America (three individuals). Of these, nine participated in the project from start to finish (February 2012). Unfortunately, the social and economic instability of homeless individuals, in addition to constant health problems and the fact that they are constantly moving around, meant the members of the group frequently changed. The nine permanent members took on increasingly important roles in the project, becoming facilitators and guiding other participants. One of the group's main aims as part of the participatory process was to maximise each other's creative capacity, as seen by the fact that they took on several, simultaneous roles, such as producer, facilitator, and actor. The project was fundamentally a forum for creating and producing theatrical productions, as well as for expression, reflection, training and social action. In response to the anomie, passiveness, pessimism and hopelessness often seen amongst homeless individuals (Patterson & Holden, 2012; Vance, 1995), the activities organised with the group initially focused on simple body and acting techniques (Grotowski, 1969), until they became capable of creating theatrical productions based on a model of collective creation, underpinned by an artistic and educational focus.

The dynamic we followed may broadly be divided into the following stages: a workshop to get to know one another; artistic training and preparation; deciding together upon the issues, themes and subthemes to be dealt with; creating micro-stories based on personal experience; theoretical research involving critical analysis in various areas, such as socio-political creation, theatre, and the social sciences; artistic exploration through improvisation; staging and performance. In our case, collective theatre creation involved a process of reflection, communication, and production based on the creative capacities of the participants. During this process, the facilitators guided the debate and made sure everyone had the chance to speak, with the aim of deciding together upon the main topics to be explored, issues relating to aesthetics, and the acting technique(s) to be used. They also recorded what was discussed in the group debates and presented this to the participants to help them in the creative process. By experimenting with various practical acting techniques, they were able to create plays which dealt with their concerns and difficulties, as well as put forward possible solutions. Amongst those most used were image theatre (Boal, 1979), the "magic if" (Stanislavsky, 2016), and improvisation (Johnstone, 1981). Image theatre is based on the conflicts of everyday life and involves constructing three types of images. These are a "real image," how things are, an "ideal image," how things could or should be, and a "transitional image," ideas for helping the group move from the real to the ideal. The "magic if" is a technique that involves the actor putting themselves in the character's shoes, i.e., imagining themselves in a set of fictional circumstances and envisaging the consequences of finding themselves in that situation. Finally, improvision consists of the actor creating meaning using their body and involves a series of images and movements that represent their reality, dreams, needs, and desires.

Our work with Teatro de la Inclusión began by ensuring participants trusted each other and getting them familiar with the drama techniques we would be using. Discussion groups (Ibañez, 2003) were created in which the themes for the collective creations were chosen based on narratives (Bruner, 1990) involving the previously silenced personal experiences of the participants. This group work resulted in the gradual emergence of new identities through the appropriation of discourse (Foucault, 2002) as a means of individual and group recognition. With the aim of facilitating

this appropriation and encouraging the group to create collective narratives, various approaches were used, such as reminiscence, where group members "share and communicate memories with a view to understanding each other or a shared situation" (Bornat, 2001, p. 223). Through theatre, they were able to express and face their "painful past" (I., female, 55 years old), as well as voice "what it feels like to be misunderstood" (M., female, 53 years old). The narratives were underpinned by an autobiographical approach, which allowed the actors to put their capabilities to use (Nussbaum, 2011) in order to creatively express events in their lives that they considered important.

Furthermore, improvisation allowed the participants to redefine their identity through creative techniques such as image theatre and social "gestus" (Brecht, 2019). Using their bodies, they expressed the oppression (Young, 1990) they experienced at the hands of society and its institutions. During the process, E. M. (male, 48 years old) expressed an opinion common amongst participants when he said: "My life has had so many ups and downs, and has been so unstable. I either had it all or nothing, to the point where I've had to sleep rough, exposed to the elements, and in a really bad way." During a performance, this individual took the audience on a journey during which images of happy memories and then painful ones which led to be him being homeless were acted out. F. J. (male, 40 years old) recalled how a lack of opportunities had prevented him from escaping the vicious cycle of exclusion in which he found himself trapped. The title given by this individual to his story was "The Theory of the Hamster Wheel." When sharing his story, he talked about his aimless day-to-day life in Seville: "I feel like a hamster in a cage. I go from one centre to another, but never manage to escape. The way things are set up, you always find yourself back to square one." The hamster wheel was a metaphor for the alienation he felt when visiting the same places day in, day out, as part of a designated route designed specifically for the city's homeless population. These are places designed to cover the most basic of needs, as reflected in the experience of A. (male, 49 years old): "I spend all day thinking about where I'm going to sleep, and when I can't find anywhere, all that's left is the homeless shelter." By being trapped in such a routine, they are often unable to imagine a brighter future. This is reflected in the experience of C. (male, 53 years old): "All I ask is that they stop judging us based on our past. We want opportunities.''

For individuals such as F. (female, 34 years old), being a citizen with rights means "having a space which is ours and ours alone, and being able to say no, something which is difficult when you're homeless because people have already labelled you."

Whilst telling these stories, the actors used their bodies to convey their feelings of helplessness within what Castel calls the "zone of exclusion" (Castel, 2017, p. 391), a space from which it is very difficult to escape. J. V. (male, 59 years old), who had been homeless for a number of years, sleeping in homeless shelters and on the street, explained how "poverty is what it always has been. Ever since I became homeless, absolutely nothing has changed." This was a perspective shared by another participant, J. L. (male, 49 years old), who remarked: "You always meet the same people on the shelters. The people, the routine, they never change." These experiences led one member to ask the rest of the group "where are we now in our lives and where do we want to go?" (M. L., female, 39 years old), a question which was met by bodily expressions which clearly reflected their lack of self-esteem, as well as remarks such as that of L. (female, 33 years old): "I'm a nobody."

During the creation process, combatant, dissident voices began to emerge, such as that of L. (female, 33 years old), who affirmed: "We have our dignity and shouldn't care about how people see us." Likewise, M. (female, 52 years old) displayed her creative skills by writing the following poem, clearly showing her capacity for agency:

> Big, old wooden mirror, ever-present, looking over me, so indiscreet and cruel. Daunting, constantly observing and always watchful. In spite of my best attempts to avoid you, curiosity has on occasions led me to take a look at myself in you. I would hesitantly approach you, overcome with fear and shame. The reflection staring back at me was in theory me, but a voice in my head would say, "that can't be you!" I was unable to recognise my eyes, skin, smile. I was unable to recognise so much sadness, loneliness, weariness. I was unable to recognise so much emptiness. Then, gradually, each time I looked at myself in you, I could see myself beginning to win the battle against your loyal friends: violence, unemployment, discrimination and loneliness. The only thing that kept me going during those dark days was my resistance and absolute refusal to accept my reflection in you. For years, you won battle after battle, but in the end, I won the war. Now I am fearless when I look at life, you, myself.

This homeless woman used the metaphor of the mirror to express her sense of pain and sadness through comparison and distancing. The author delivered the poem in the form of a monologue at various collective creation performances given by Teatro de la Inclusión in theatres across Seville.

4. Creating New Public Spaces for Homeless Individuals and Society to Interact

Over the twelve years that the Teatro de la Inclusión theatre group ran, six plays were produced. These were performed in public spaces in Seville, as well as other cities in Andalusia. Places such as squares, parks, community centres, theatre festivals, universities, homeless shelters, and correctional facilities hosted the events, which

served as social, political, and cultural platforms through which to establish dialogue between the homeless actors and the audience, members of mainstream society in Seville. Some of the productions were also uploaded to the internet, such as through YouTube (Imolini, 2009), Facebook, and a blog created by some of the members of the group where information about the plays was published and the audience was able to provide feedback (artivismosocialteatrodelainclusion.blogspot.com).

In 2007, during the first collective creation, *Tristeza de Mundo* (*What a Sad World*), the group began to explore how they could use their bodies to assert themselves on stage. As part of this learning process, one of the actresses (F., female, 29 years old), reached the following conclusion: "My body allows me to express things from my world where words are not enough." Indeed, this is a world with no formal representation within society, a world where "we don't have a voice or a say in anything" (C., male, 53 years old). In this play, rejection and discrimination were manifested in the verbal and non-verbal language of the actors. The three acts focused on the plight of a group of men and women, wandering around alone in search of a place to inhabit physically and emotionally. In one of the scenes (see Figure 1), the characters expressed their despair at being excluded from mainstream society and not having a family. The actors began each performance by reciting the following statement about how theatre represented a political act for them:

> As members of the Teatro de la Inclusión theatre group, we wish to exercise our right to participate in society. We also want to exercise the inalienable right of every individual and group to create culture. For us, culture is a tool which allows us to express our identity, an identity that is our own. We want to be able to freely express ourselves, feel like real citizens once again, and be the masters of our own destiny.

In 2009, the group decided to create a second play, *El Drama es Nuestro* (*The Drama is Ours*), with the aim of creating a space and time for themselves within a society that forgets they exist. As part of this theatrical production, the members of the group explored the power of verbal and non-verbal language as tools for reclaiming such a space and time. This involved using memories and dreams in order to imagine the way things could be. For example, one participant talked about a world where "the misfortune of homelessness no longer exists, and everyone is afforded dignity" (J., male, 49 years old). The feeling of being forgotten, a central theme in this play, was manifested through the collective memory of the group. This is a memory which would most likely have remained hidden inside each actor if it had not been for their participation in the play, and can be seen in the following dialogue, which takes place between two characters, a clown and a homeless gipsy:

> Homeless gipsy: This is the story of my brothers and sisters. They have never had anything, except the chance to tell their story in this play. We are colourful people and love to sing, but we also suffer. We are mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters who society has forgotten.
>
> Clown (stood in the shadow of a lantern): Oh! So many souls without light, so many dreams denied. Oh! So many stories forgotten, of invisible men and women.

The following play, *Naturaleza Humana* (*Human Nature*; see Figure 2), was an exploration of the everyday effects of homelessness. For one of the actresses (M., women, 53 years old), this theatrical production was a faithful depiction of the constant anxiety and "anguish caused by living rough, day in, day out." It focused on the lives of the homeless characters and took place at a crossroads leading nowhere. On cold winter nights, when the rest of society was sleeping, they would meet up to share their secrets with one another. Throughout the play, the longing of the characters for things to be different and for there to be more opportunities was clear. Their shame

Figure 1. A scene from *Tristeza de Mundo* in 2008.

Figure 2. A poster announcing the premiere of *Naturaleza Humana* at the International Festival of Research Theatre in 2010.

was also painfully visible, as well as their dismay at a society that simply turns a blind eye to their misfortune. During the collective creation process for this play, one of the most heated topics which arose within the group was the assertion of their human rights. For one of the actors (A. J., male, 36 years old), being homeless or jobless was a result of such rights being denied, hence "the important role played by theatre in helping raise awareness on inequality and allowing us to demand we be heard." In one of the scenes, a character, weary and despondent due to intense stigmatisation, and about to fall into the abyss, is helped by another character, who says "don't worry, I'm here for you." The entire play was a symbolic act of oppression and liberation, a dynamic caused in the first place by the institutions which "strip us of our dignity" (C., female, 44 years old). Despite this, in the final act, the characters, in search of their space and time within the story, managed to liberate themselves by fighting back. Individuals who were once trapped in the shadows of the institutions which controlled them expelled the despair which had been building up inside them and began to fly. For J. L (male, 41 years old), this was a metaphorical way of saying "look at me, I'm not invisible. I'm also a person with rights."

The next two collective creations focused on the convergence of fiction and reality. Although the group continued to explore their creative capacities through their experiences, now the focus was on reminiscence involving specific parts of their life stories, which were intertwined with stories invented by the actors. The first of these, *Se Comparte Mundo* (*Shared Lives*; see Figure 3), premiered in January 2012 at an alternative cultural centre run by an association. The second one, *La Espera* (*The Wait*; see Figure 4), premiered at a public theatre in November 2013. In both productions, drama became a way of expressing a collective memory of a group of individuals living on the fringes of society both literally and figuratively, whose needs and rights are not generally included in political debate. For one of the participants (E., female, 33 years old), these plays represented "a space where we play in freedom, dream of other worlds, and shine a light on the experiences of so

Figure 3. A scene from *Se Comparte Mundo* in 2012.

Figure 4. A poster announcing the premiere of *La Espera* at a theatre in Seville.

many individuals who are not represented by any parliament or government body."

The last collective creation by Teatro de la Inclusión was *Breves Relatos de Vergüenza y Olvido* (*Short Stories of Shame and Neglect*; see Figure 5), which was performed at theatres from the end of 2016 until February 2019. In the words of F. (male, 39 years old):

> The play tells the stories of anonymous homeless individuals in Seville. In each act, the audience sees how we are misunderstood, suffer, experience violence and see our human rights violated, as well as how we are able to reclaim our dignity and fight back.

For this production, the actors went in search of other homeless individuals to hear their stories, which were told throughout the play. In one scene, channelling the words of one of these homeless individuals, a character exclaimed: "There's an urban legend which says that everyone has the right to a job and a roof over their head. But that's all it is, an urban legend." Once again, the issue of rights was raised, but on this occasion to directly criticise social policies which, through charity and welfare, oppress those they are designed to help, individuals who in practice do not have the same opportunities to create a decent life for themselves as those living within mainstream society. In the face of this neglect from successive governments, the characters displayed their resistance by dancing with members of the audience. Ultimately, this play took the audience on a journey which began with the organised chaos created by institutions which had failed to create a fair society and ended with an act of liberation involving an interaction where the homeless actors were on an equal footing with mainstream society.

As part of all the performances, debates were held between the actors and audience (Figure 6) on the themes highlighted during the plays, as well as aspects

Figure 5. Two scenes from *Breves Relatos de Vergüenza y Olvido*.

relating to aesthetics, methodology, production, etc. By way of these spaces for dialogue and critical discussion, as well as the plays themselves, the audience was able to learn more about the reality of homeless individuals. For a short space of time, art enabled a dynamic based on participatory democracy using two techniques. On the one hand, through creativity, a group of individuals excluded from mainstream society was able to create something collectively, and thus find their voice and take action (Ricœur, 2005), and on the other hand, through dialogical consensus (Habermas, 2012), different groups within society were able to meet and hear each other's perspectives on homelessness. A particularly salient example of this journey of discovery occurred following a performance of *Naturaleza Humana*, when a member of the audience noted: "There are lots of people who should watch your play because they have no idea what people like you go through." A similar sentiment was expressed following another play, when a member of the audience remarked: "Nobody deserves to live in such inhumane conditions, without the chance to better their life, something which is so important." Furthermore, during a discussion at the end of a performance of *Breves Relatos de Vergüenza y Olvido*, a homeless member of the audience reached the following conclusion: "Now I realise just how important it is that we have a voice with which to fight back. We must start by getting back our life and dignity."

Examples such as these clearly show how collective theatre creations can allow those living on the fringes of the social and political spheres to assert their rights. Teatro de la Inclusión may serve as a model for collective creation and artivism with homeless individuals, a means of denouncing the exclusion suffered by this group within society, and fostering social inclusion by allowing them to appropriate cultural spaces where they are able to become political agents.

In February 2019, the University of Granada organised a seminar on Teatro de la Inclusión. The event ended with the final performance of the group and marked the end of the initiative, which had run for twelve years. The decision to end the project had been taken the previous year for two main reasons. Firstly, the socio-economic crisis the majority of the participants were living through, meaning certain members were not able to attend the sessions as normal, something which led

Figure 6. A debate between the actors and audience following a performance by Teatro de la Inclusión.

to significant issues with group cohesiveness. Secondly, after such a long period involving an intense creative process, members had become tired and, at times, uninterested in the initiative. However, the group does occasionally meet thanks to two participants (a man and a woman), who, from time to time and at certain cultural events, put on adaptations of the six plays created by the group. Thanks to their participation in Teatro de la Inclusión and the subsequent organisation of said events, these two individuals have acquired leadership skills and, as amateur actors, continue to fully participate in Seville's cultural life. Perhaps this will lead to the project being relaunched in the future. Moreover, each year, a considerable number of the participants meet to talk about their time in this cultural, participatory action project as artists and facilitators. At these reunions, the possible return of Teatro de la Inclusión has been talked about on several occasions.

5. Conclusion

The work carried out over the twelve years during which Teatro de la Inclusión ran shows how art, and specifically theatre, can be used as an effective tool for giving those living on the fringes of society a voice, as well as tools with which to improve their lives.

Throughout the creative process, the participants were able to take centre stage and tell their story. They were able to make their concerns, frustrations and plight known to the audience, as well as share it with individuals experiencing similar situations. As one of the founders of Teatro de la Inclusión stated, "theatre gives us a voice and allows us to tell things which often go untold" (M., male, 53 years old). This allowed them to assert their individual and group (shared) identity and experiences, as well as reconstruct their identity as fully fledged citizens with a voice. The process prior to the performances also them gave a chance to work as part of a group, where respect, dignity, and understanding dominated, a far cry from the world in which the participants were immersed in their day-to-day lives, this being a learning experience in itself. Furthermore, by appropriating public spaces in the city for the performances, they were able to reclaim the city as theirs. Seville was no longer a city where they felt like outsiders.

The debates held between the actors and the audience opened up a space for meaningful dialogue. These conversations were a chance for both parties to learn from each other, and particularly helped members of the audience learn about the plight of homeless individuals in their city. They also put the participants on an equal footing with mainstream society. This further helped them move from a position of exclusion to one of inclusion. A form of participatory democracy, they were a chance to discuss, analyse and put forward ideas for creating a city (and world) that works for everyone.

Teatro de la Inclusión revealed just how effective art as a technique for creative intervention, and theatre as a public forum for combatting exclusion, can be in terms of transforming and empowering individuals. Throughout the performances, the silence resulting from being excluded from mainstream society disappeared as bodily expressions, words, images and actions took their place. Thanks to the commitment of the participants and the social and artistic expertise of the facilitators, the project made a real impact. As such, of the sixty-three individuals to participate in Teatro de la Inclusión, eleven (seven men and four women) have been able to get off the streets and find employment. We hope stories like this will serve as motivation for others to organise similar initiatives and help make the world a more inclusive and just place for everyone.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank all the women and men who participated in Teatro de la Inclusión. They showed just how powerful art can be in terms of creating spaces based on participatory democracy.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Barba, E., & Savarese, N. (2019). *The five continents of theatre: Facts and legends about the material culture of the actor*. Koninklijke Brill NV.

Boal, A. (1979). *Theatre of the oppressed*. Pluto Press.

Bornat, J. (2001). Reminiscence and oral history: Parallel universes or shared endeavour? *Ageing & Society*, *21*(2), 219–241.

Brecht, B. (2004). *Escritos sobre el teatro* [Writings on the theatre]. Alba Editorial.

Brecht, B. (2019). *Brecht on theatre*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Harvard University Press.

Cardona Garzón, M. (2009). El método de creación colectiva en la propuesta didáctica del maestro Enrique Buenaventura: Anotaciones históricas sobre su desarrollo [The method of collective creation in the educational approach of Enrique Buenaventura: Historical remarks on its development]. *Revista Historia de la Educación Colombiana*, *12*(12), 105–122.

Castel, R. (2017). *From manual workers to wage laborers: Transformation of the social question*. Routledge.

Castoriadis, C. (1987). *The imaginary institution of society*. MIT Press.

Cordero-Ramos, N., & Muñoz-Bellerín, M. (2017). Social work and applied theatre: Creative experiences with a group of homeless people in the city of Seville. *European Journal of Social Work*, *22*(3), 485–498.

Crehan, K. A. F. (2002). *Gramsci, culture and anthropology*. University of California Press.

de Sousa Santos, B., & Sena Martins, B. (2021). *The pluriverse of human rights: The diversity of struggles for dignity*. Routledge.

Duncombe, S. (2016). Does it work? The æffect of activist art. *Social Research*: *An International Quarterly*, *83*(1), 115–134.

Foucault, M. (2002). *The archaeology of knowledge*. Routledge.

Gallardo, H. (2006). *Derechos humanos como movimiento social* [Human rights as a social movement]. Ediciones desde abajo.

García Pinzón, S. (2002). *Teoría y práctica del teatro* [Theory and practice of theatre] (Vol. 2). Teatro La Candelaria.

Goffman, E. (1990). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Penguin.

Grotowski, J. (1969). *Towards a poor theatre*. Methuen.

Habermas, J. (2012). *The theory of communicative action. Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason* (Vol. 2). Beacon Press.

Herrera Flores, J. (2005). *El proceso cultural: Materiales para la creatividad humana* [The cultural process: A tool for human creativity]. Aconcagua Libros.

Herrera Flores, J. (2008). *La reinvención de los derechos humanos* [The reinvention of human rights]. Librería Atrapasueños.

Holdsworth, N. (2017). *Joan Littlewood*. Routledge.

Ibañez, J. (2003). *Más alla de la sociología: El grupo de discusión : Teoría y crítica* [Beyond sociology: Discussion groups: Theory and critique] (5th ed.). Siglo XXI Editores.

Ignatieff, M. (2017). *The ordinary virtues: Moral order in a divided world*. Harvard University Press.

Imolini. (2009, October 3). *Teatro de la inclusión* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOn-jHQ3XB0

Johnstone, K. (1981). *Impro: Improvisation and the theatre*. Eyre Methuen.

Kaner, S. (2007). *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Muñoz-Bellerín, M., & Cordero-Ramos, N. (2020). The role of applied theatre in social work: Creative interventions with homeless individuals. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *50*(5), 1611–1629.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Patterson, A. A., & Holden, R. R. (2012). Psychache and suicide ideation among men who are homeless: A test of Shneidman's model. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *42*(2), 147–156.

Ricœur, P. (2005). *The course of recognition*. Harvard University Press.

Sikkink, K. (2017). *Evidence for hope: Making human rights work in the 21st century*. Princeton University Press.

Stanislavsky, K. (2016). *An actor's work*. Routledge.

Vance, D. (1995). A portrait of older homeless men: Identifying hopelessness and adaptation. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *4*(1), 57–71.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton University Press.

About the Authors

Manuel Muñoz-Bellerín (PhD social sciences) is a lecturer at Pablo de Olavide University, Seville (Spain), where he teaches social work at the undergraduate degree level and social invention at the master's degree level. He has published widely on collective theatre creation as a method of social intervention and applied theatre in the social sciences, and regularly organises and participates in events on the subject in Spain and Latin America. He also runs and acts as a facilitator on socio-artistic projects based on performing arts and social transformation aimed at various groups and professionals.

Nuria Cordero-Ramos (PhD human rights and development, MA anthropology, and BA social work) is a lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Social Services at Pablo de Olavide University, Seville (Spain). She is a member of GISAP (Group for Social and Participatory Action) and LIESS (the Ibero-American Laboratory for the Social and Historical Study of Sexuality). Her work is largely based on applied research, which she undertakes using creative tools. She is the author of numerous articles and chapters in books on the use of such tools in the social sciences.

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 116–129
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4403

Article

Exploring Embodied Place Attachment Through Co-Creative Art Trajectories: The Case of Mount Murals

Ruth Segers [1,*], Karin Hannes [2], Ann Heylighen [1] and Pieter Van den Broeck [1]

[1] Department of Architecture, KU Leuven, Belgium; E-Mails: ruth.segers@kuleuven.be (R.S.), ann.heylighen@kuleuven.be (A.H.), pieter.vandenbroeck@kuleuven.be (P.V.D.B.)
[2] Faculty of Social Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium; E-Mail: karin.hannes@kuleuven.be

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 25 April 2021 | Accepted: 17 August 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
The built and living environment in the Flemish region in Belgium is evolving noticeably. It is densifying at an ever-faster pace and, along the way, becoming increasingly unfamiliar to its inhabitants. Many people face profound difficulties in autonomously and positively dealing with such drastic changes, causing their feeling of home to waver. Triggered by these challenges and supported by the local authority of a Flemish town, the experimental and co-creative art project Mount Murals set out to stimulate new embodied interactions between and among local residents of various ages and backgrounds and with their built environment. These include remembering place-related sentiments, being aware of body language that plays between participants while co-creating and sensing an invigorating stimulus when seeing results. Awakening intrinsic appreciation in people for their own environment and associated social relationships stimulates an inclusive dealing with estranged relationships in space. Referring to the relational neuroscience principles attachment, co-creating and co-regulating as a modus of relational resonating, we explore how and under which conditions Mount Murals' co-creative art trajectory supports an evolving embodied place attachment, an essential element of the sense of belonging, in participants. By embedding assets inherent to art creation in action research and starting with meaningful everyday objects, Mount Murals carries forward an art expression that considers the co-creation process and its co-creative products as equally important.

Keywords
co-creative art; co-regulating; embodied place attachment; relational resonating; sense of belonging

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere" edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

Over the last 25 years, Flanders (Belgium) faced not only the consequences of rapidly growing globalisation, digitalisation and super diversity, but also a steep rise in the densification of its built and living environment and failed attempts to slow down soil sealing (the "concrete stop"). The ever-faster pace of change has triggered, among others, debates on identity loss, exclusion of large population groups, and difficulties of social integration. Consequently, many people struggle with alienation, wavering feelings of home and social connection, feelings of losing their identity, and difficulties in expressing their sense of belonging to the territory. In short, the living environment becomes increasingly unfamiliar to those living (in) it. Several authors relate challenged feelings of belonging partially to problems of depression, and mental health in general (Hunter et al., 2017; McLaren & Challis, 2009). Research by Hunter et al. (2017) shows that greater feelings of belonging are associated with less frequent symptoms of depression, and this both in racially mixed and racially non-mixed

neighbourhoods. Also, Fitzgerald (2018) interlinks place, change, status, and the rise of radical politics throughout Europe. Similarly, losing sense of belonging might help explain the success of populist, nationalist, and separatist political parties in Flanders.

Triggered by these challenges, aiming to restore feelings of attachment to place and to stimulate the inclusion of parts of the population, the municipality of Heist-op-den-Berg and the first author of this article joined forces to implement a co-creative art trajectory, *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor*, including several artistic workshops in "church village" Heist-Goor. The one-year trajectory led to the collective implementation of a work of art in a characteristic public space of this church village which counts 1500 post boxes. Heist-op-den-Berg had seen a growing tension between the core municipality and its sub-municipalities, originating, among others, in the 1976 merger that reduced the number of Flemish municipalities from 2359 to 308 today. Over time the accompanied rationalisation and centralisation of public services has led former autonomous municipalities and church villages like Heist-Goor (that never was an independent municipality; see Figure 1), to become so called "sleeping villages," where people hardly connect with public place. This trend is reflected in the decline of the local economy, an ageing population, a withdrawal of public services like public transport, public library and art school facilities, and a drastic reduction of locally organised activities. These functionalities also refer to particular places or buildings. Because inhabitants of sub-municipalities, church villages, and hamlets are gradually excluded from nearby functionalities and what is on offer for them, a tension exists between them and inhabitants of the core municipality (in this case Heist-op-den-Berg; see Figure 1).

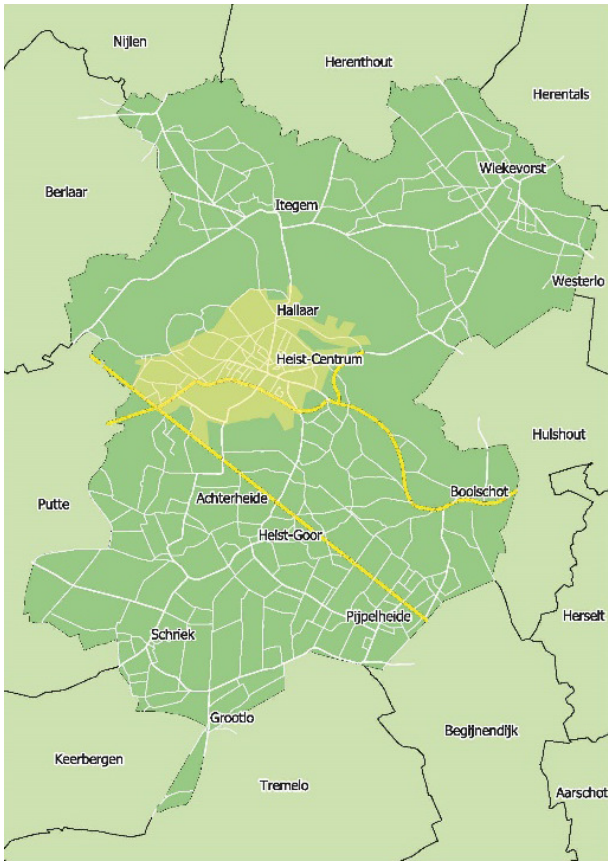


Figure 1. Merger municipality Heist-op-den-Berg (dark green) with its core municipality Heist-Centrum (yellow) and sub-municipalities and church villages, including Heist-Goor. Image developed by the Municipality of Heist-op-den-Berg.

Finding one's place in this world is a crucial aspiration, regardless of background, age, gender or other characteristics. For most people it somehow is an intriguing life time "occupation." The word "place" itself carries both a spatial and a political meaning (Hayden, 1995, p. 15): It carries the resonance of a location or the homestead, but also refers to a position in social hierarchy or one's life purpose; hence the proverbs "knowing one's place" or "feeling out of place." In this article we argue that "place," as a location, literally "holds" the intricate relationship between the social and the world including the material and biological we live in. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between a particular place and people's universal need to connect with each other (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The question then is: How can we understand this relationship and, more importantly, how can we animate or revitalise it?

To address this question, we approach Mount Murals' co-creative art trajectory *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor*. Mount Murals is a project that generates and implements embodied art trajectories. It is initiated by the first author of this article, a researcher, painter and emotionally attached inhabitant of Heist-op-den-Berg. In this project, she was guided by the other authors and worked together with professional (research) artists to explore to what extent, how, and under which conditions this collective art expression supports an evolving embodied place attachment among participants. After the introduction, Section 2 of this article mobilises a relational socio-spatial theory to unpack sense of belonging as an embodied process of (place) attachment. It then links this theory with the revitalising characteristics of three relational resonating principles: attachment, co-creating, and co-regulating. These principles, among others, have been investigated in art therapy research to revitalise interpersonal attachment and resilience (Hass-Cohen & Clyde Findlay, 2015).

The first author acknowledged the relational resonance principles at work in the actions that are embedded in the Idiosyncratic Machine (IM) workshop, designed by artistic researcher Kristof Van Gestel (KASK & Conservatorium, School of Arts HOGENT, and HOWEST), and connected them with place in the pilot art trajectory *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor*. Section 3 describes this trajectory and specifies how it applies action research to evaluate those actions that revitalise inhabitants' feelings of home and inclusion. The action

research methodology is further enriched with a phenomenological approach of the first person which elaborates on two assets of art creation.

Section 4 examines the findings of inhabitants' evolving place attachment. Participants' feelings regarding initial place attachment have been documented through object elicitation and written down on cards by them. Photographs of actual actions that refer to relational resonating have been taken and related feelings have been documented through (recorded) semi-open interviews, participative observation of oral explications during the first workshop series, and written explication in emails and comments in social media after the workshops. The feelings have been orally discussed again, during the final workshop and the inauguration of the work of art in public place, seven to nine months after the first workshops.

The conclusion (Section 5) highlights the elements that relate to an evolved feeling of place attachment in participants of the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* trajectory, especially to actions and experiences of participants in the three IM workshops.

2. Linking the Embodied Processes of Place Attachment and Emotional Attachment

Research on attachment to place has been quite multivocal, with ubiquitous notions and manifold interpretations, often holding non-corresponding definitions. Further research would benefit from more attention to notions like sense of community, community attachment, inclusive space, place dependence, including the notions of place identity, place attachment, sense of belonging, and sense of place, which are considered in this section. In general, two elements come to the fore in definitions of attachment to place: (a) a person's experience of being included, valued, needed, accepted as a human being, and (b) a person's perception that their characteristics resonate with the environment. Hagerty et al. (1992, p. 173) combine these elements in their definition of sense of belonging, "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment." Seen as such, sense of belonging links two distinctive concepts: place identity and place attachment. Place identity is the process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place, which then becomes a component of their personal identity (Proshansky et al., 1983; Stedman, 2002). Although this definition assigns significance to a place for developing the self and personal identity, it does limit the concept's scope to those dimensions of the self that develop in relation to a place's physical and material aspects. The second concept, place attachment, refers to an affective and secure link with a place. The place can be any place, regardless of size or physical character, which becomes a centre of meaning. The main characteristic of place attachment would be the tendency of the individual to maintain closeness to the "object" (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2002). This approximation misses the elements of process and identity.

Sense of belonging strongly resonates with having a *sense of place*. Harrison and Dourish (1996) define sense of place as a common sense of appropriate behaviour in a context where action can be taken and interpreted. According to them the knowledge to act properly in a place is acquired through active and committed participation in that place. Hence, geographer and place research pioneer Tuan (1975, p. 164) writes: "It takes time to know a place, the passage of time itself does not guarantee a sense of place. If experience takes time, the passage of time itself does not ensure experience." It is through experiencing that "spaces" can become meaningful "places." Sense of place is what makes a space specific. The specificity relates not only to the environment's physical characteristics, but also to affections, meanings (counting memories and associations) and the activities offered by the place, including social interactions associated with it (Zeisel, 2006). Members of any other culture, such as newcomers to a neighbourhood, learn through socialisation the local culture and the role they can play in it. Learning takes time and commitment. Therefore, establishing a relationship with a place can be considered as a lifelong and changing process.

However, in general, and for what matters in our study, we see a clear difference between the human evaluation "I feel at home, in this place" and "I live in this place." Both evaluations can but do not necessarily coincide. It is not because person A is attached to a particular place that it is a part of their actual life or place identity. They could have a feeling to belong to a place, but not the ability or wish to live there (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2002). Vice versa person B can live in a particular place without ever developing a feeling of being at home. Hence place attachment and place identity must be evaluated differently. Moreover, place attachment can become de-duplicated (Segers, 2018). In the context of migration, and after a period of time, some people find themselves in a situation where they feel at home in more than one place but are not fully at home in either of the concerned places. In this context we can speak of a relative feeling of being excluded. Very often this exclusion refers to places one is attached to, the place one is located in, *and* the other place(s). *Place identity* refers to one particular place in a specific time period. Both evaluations, place attachment and place identity, can change over time, the former through a personal and processual transformation in one place, in the latter change coincides with relocation or refurbishment.

Place attachment is believed to be given rise to by numerous variables, including mobility, length of residence, repeated contact or experience, shared meaning and "feeling included" (Hay, 1998). Tuan (1975) underlined the importance of the passive character of experiencing the environment. Very often experience is

something invisible, hidden from the public eye and even from the experiencer themselves. It is not uncommon that small pleasures or irritations of day-to-day living are felt very deeply, but difficult to articulate, or fail to be acknowledged. "Think about the barely registered but omnipresent ambience of sound and smell, the feel of air, soft soil, and hard ground, the happy accidents and occasional blows of fate" (Tuan, 1975, p. 161).

According to recent developments in neuroscience, for which May-Britt Moser, Edvard I Moser, and John O'Keefe received the 2014 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine, place and grid cells in our brain record our experiences of places as memories. The memories stored in those cells constantly inform our experiences of those places (Moser et al., 2015). This inner positioning system, which enables us to navigate, is fundamental to our existence. It gives us a sense of place, a perception of position in the environment. During navigation, it is interlinked with a sense of distance, based on motion and knowledge of previous positions. Based on those findings, Relph (2015) claims that without a sense of place, however acquired and stored in memory, there can be no sense of belonging. So contrary to popular belief, the proverb "home is where the heart is" must be understood as an embodied connection with a particular place, not a "merely" sentimental or socially induced one. What is more, it is the effective embedding of the experience of place in the body, over a period of time, that leads to attachment. As such we follow Twigger-Ross and Uzzel's (1996) idea that *all* aspects of identity have, to some extent, place-related implications, rather than a separate part of identity being concerned with place (Stedman, 2002). We similarly adhere to Marsh et al.'s (2009) suggestion to:

> Move closer to a more radical, yet holistic understanding of the body's participation in the creating of meaning, *where [physical] environments provide an additional embedded context for meaningfulness*. Where it is worthwhile to *develop more of an interest in studying 'doing'* and thus stripping away the notion that it is merely the cognitive system that imposes meaning and value on things in this world. (Marsh et al.'s, 2009, p. 1221, emphasis added by the author)

Consequently, we endorse the claim that the built environment is not "merely an arena in which social life unfolds, but rather a medium through which social relations are produced and reproduced" (Gregory & Urry, 1985, p. 3). Moreover, it is capable of "signifying a difference between those that belong—literally and figuratively—and those that not-belong" (Pérez Liebergesell et al., 2021, p. 4). Accordingly, we argue that the built environment is a perfect starting ground and "ally" for promoting (place) identity and place attachment and thus a sense of belonging.

For this purpose, we use insights from relational neuroscience, which have been applied in art therapy to promote interpersonal attachment (Hass-Cohen & Clyde Findlay, 2015). Psychologists Hass-Cohen and Findlay (2015) highlight the activation and processing of relational schemas and other memories in our brain in the context of healthy (interpersonal) attachment and resilience. In very creative and practical ways, they show how performing certain actions when making artwork influences our brain's learning process. Because our brain tends to be rather plastic and adaptable, both negative and positive experiences can change its functioning and structure (Badenoch, 2008).

Our study revolves around the notion of attachment and therefore highlights *relational resonating*, one of six CREATE principles from Hass-Cohen and Findlay's (2015) art therapy relational neuroscience (ATR-N) approach. The remaining principles are creative embodiment, expressive communicating, adaptive responding, transformational integrating and empathising, and compassion. All six principles come with guidelines that have been developed to support the bonding processes between, e.g., parents and children. In this article we zoom in on relational resonating, an overarching notion that refers to the special relationship we enter whenever we interact with another being. It occurs when you feel smoothly but stably attuned to yourself *and* to another person. This particular relationship can enhance positive experiences and help to let go of negative ones. The attunement can be animated through, e.g., co-creation, co-consciousness, co-regulation. Sharing with others, being heard and feeling that your own experience is felt empathically by another person reinforces emotional regulation. That is, these experiences have the inherent ability to fine-tune our emotions, update our autobiographical memory, and contribute to acquiring attachment.

Central to the creative principle of relational resonating is the notion of emotional attachment. Emotional attachment styles depend on experience and thus can change during a person's life (Siegel, 2012). A person's attachment style and history influences their ability to access and share autobiographical memories. Those with a secure relational history may use positive past memories for comfort, while those with less secure models or chronic trauma histories may have more difficulty recalling cohesive past stories (Hass-Cohen & Findlay, 2015).

Two ATR-N skills linked to attachment are co-creating and co-regulating. *Co-creating*, both side by side and together, and responding to responses within and outside creative workshop settings, allows for the attachment relationship to develop. The attunement through co-creation provides the opportunity to experience and develop emotional attachment. *Co-regulating* refers to our ability to calm our self. This is basically an interpersonal, non-verbal, right-brain to right-brain communication, and lies at the heart of relational resonance. The ability to self-regulate and self-soothe is central to successful interpersonal interaction. Without co-regulatory experiences, cognitive and emotional

brain capacities can diminish. This is because a tuned attachment relationship removes some of the burden that independent emotional and behavioural control places on the prefrontal cortex function (Hughes et al., 2012). Co-regulation involves a dynamic, mutual and iterative process that supports systematic recovery and personal development and change (Tronick & Beeghly, 2011). Well-understood body communication calms those involved in communicating. An example from classical experimental psychology is that rocking together in rocking chairs, unintentionally attuned to each other's rhythm, can be hugely reassuring (Richardson et al., 2007). Our study explores the "interpersonal" character of place attachment. The "other" is an element of the environment, be it a pen, a cat, a street crossing or nature, it is about interacting with the "outside world," and the embedding of this "interpersonal" attachment in the wider setting of place.

3. Mount Murals' Phenomenological Artistic Action Research Trajectory

3.1. The Colour and Shape Heist-Goor *Art Trajectory*

The first author organised over a one-year period an iterative process of three artistic workshop series at various well-known locations in the village: the dining space of the local bakery, the rehearsing space of the local brass band, the refectory of the local primary school and the actual location of the physical art work intervention, in front of the village church. In each series one particular workshop was organised at least twice and was guided by a professional artist, who uses their own methods to create art together.

In the first two workshop series, the first author collaborated with artistic researcher Kristof Van Gestel and public silk screen printing workshop Gezeever. Kristof's work of art *Idiosyncratic Machine* was organised three times in the first workshop series. The first author enriched the IM workshop process with emotional links to local (persons') places as embedded in the objects that started off the creative process. All IM workshop participants were invited to bring along an object that symbolises their connection with the place and "holds" a memory of a local person, event or place. Thirty-seven individuals brought along an object and were asked to write on a card the attached memory and corresponding emotion. Figure 2 shows a compilation of the objects with related memories reflecting place attachment. Participants were then invited to outline their objects on paper (see graphic behind the text in Figure 2). The in-between spaces were then filled with shading in colours; new shapes were outlined on chalk paper and cut out; cut outs were transferred to coloured paper and cut out again (see Figure 3). In this way the data collecting technique of object elicitation, which facilitates discussing sensitive issues like personal feelings, was interwoven with the art trajectory.

Figure 2. A compilation of object-related memories, showing participants' attachment to Heist-Goor. Source: Ruth Segers.

Figure 3. The IM workshop reworks objects into a "landscape of shapes." Source: Frédérique Rennuit.

While the workshops were open to everybody with a certain affinity with the church village, inclusivity in this trajectory relates predominantly to age, social background and gender characteristics. Also, one needed to be able to manipulate a felt pen and scissors. For these reasons the embodied experiences in the workshops (see Section 4) make taking part especially stimulating for deepening intergenerational and cross-background interaction and bonding. Bossuyt (2019, p. 200) describes IM as an art event in which participation is just as important as the result and in fact essential to it. He sees it as "a drawing and cutting machine that generates shapes in accordance with a series of instructions laid down by the artist." Van Cauteren (2019, p. 36) names it "a matrix, at the core of its operation lies experiencing and process. The art work becomes secondary, encounter and connection the core."

In the last workshop series, participants implemented a tailor-made design of IM shapes for three locations in between primary school and church: two walls of the electricity supply house in the school's front yard, the side façade of the café next to the school, and the space along the pedestrian crossing between school and church (see Figures 4 and 5). Each workshop provided a joint result, whereby each participant recognised their own contribution.

In total, 27 boys and girls and 43 men and women, from age five to 81, have participated in one or more workshops of the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* art trajectory. The church village is not very diverse in the sense of ethnicities involved, however in the participants we see very diverse ages and socio-economic backgrounds, including farmers, employees, university students, pensioners (of which several teachers), a café owner, housewives, schoolchildren; among those, three artists and two pensioned art teachers were involved. The other participants had no experience with art making. However, all of them had an affinity with the church village. Their affinity was inquired in the enrolment form through statements like "I was born in the village," "I work for or in the village," "I live in the village," "My child goes to school in the village," etc. The answers revealed that people living in the village, but not born there, consider themselves as co-belonging to the village where they were born, whether they had been living in Heist-Goor for 20 or 50 years. Similarly, people who had left the village 50 years ago, but were born there, still consider themselves as a member of the community.

In general, the full art trajectory brought discussion, ownership and liveliness to the place in between the local church and primary school. As one local, who did not participate, commented on Facebook: "Thank you, dear lady, for beautifying our village" (Segers, 2020). A local's Facebook post about the painting along the pedestrian crossing, received 84 reactions discussing benefits of and objections to this particular implementation (Heist-op-den-Berg vroeger en nu, 2020). Moreover, the project brought people together who would never have met each other: A young mother who was looking for help in educating her new puppy dog met a pensioned widower who loved to share his talents as a dog trainer. The project also brought redirection in people's lives: A 20-year-old carpenter, after participating in the silk screen printing workshop, quit his job as a roofer, bought a silk screen printing frame and started the new academic year doing graphic design. Also, all passers-by and members of this local community encounter the result of the art work in public space on a regular basis.

Figure 4. Implementation and results of the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* artistic trajectory in a characteristic public space of Heist-Goor. Source: Ruth Segers.

3.2. Phenomenological Artistic Action Research

The *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* trajectory ran in cross-pollination with the province-of-Antwerp-led participation project Resilient Villages Heist-Goor, implemented by the municipality of Heist-op-den-Berg. The first author attended to this participation project, which guided her in the choice of the location of the artefact for public space: The environment of the primary school and the church is a place with a distinct character that needed some upgrading. In meeting this place-based need, the trajectory met the first out of four characteristics of action research (Bradbury Huang, 2010). A second characteristic is met in promoting co-production that was developed on the basis of an iterative process and adopted in all involved steps. The trajectory takes

Figure 5. The electricity supply house is the accomplishment of 35 participants working together. Each shape is cut by someone, each colour is printed by someone else, and the actual painting on the wall is done by 12 other participants. Source: Ruth Segers.

into account context and content by giving every participant an equal partnership in producing outcomes as well as in research. Action research seeks inclusive collaboration, which can be defined as an exchange where all participants benefit from the encounter (Sennet, 2012). The trajectory met a third characteristic by inviting participants to talk about their emotions in relation to the actions and ambiance in the first workshop and about the progressing emotions they witnessed with regard to objects and shapes created in the project workshops (see Section 4). In doing so, the project included reflexivity. Those involved were asked to adopt and make explicit a personal, committed, and critical attitude. Finally, the artistic trajectory supports the flourishing of community or wider ecology as the action research must have meaning and relevance beyond the immediate context the research takes place in (Bradbury Huang, 2010; Moulaert et al., 2016). Figure 6 shows a schematic overview of these four characteristics as applied in the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* trajectory.

Besides grasping social arrangements—like characteristics of artistic collaboration—action research also seeks to bring about desired change as a path to generate knowledge and offer stakeholders the opportunity for actively contributing to their own emancipation. The latter arises from the satisfaction of alienated human needs and through place-related, and thus place-specific, transformative power found in social relationships (Moulaert, 2009; Moulaert & Mehmood, 2011). Dietvorst (2004) emphasises complementary dimensions of creativity and art within neighbourhood and community development. Here, artistic expressions and communication are inseparable twins. Art can actively be used as a means of communication, as a ground for rediscovering or animating a social identity, as a reconstruction of social relationships, a redevelopment of (public) space through social mobilisation in collaboration with neighbourhood communities. This particular action research uses an artistic approach which focuses on assets inherent to collective-live-presence-art production. Physically attending and doing together are essential elements in our study. The body is seen as the socio-spatial site par excellence through which we all intimately connect with our world.

To further explore place attachment as an embodied socio-spatial process, our study also includes a phenomenological investigation of the first person, wherein the first author uses her (emotional) experiences in making art as a basis or starting point for investigating specific assets of co-creative art. This method aims to involve the worlds of other people (Seamon, 2000, pp. 163–164) and create meaning in their concrete lives and experiences. Understanding phenomena—those things or experiences as human beings experience them—as well as using the phenomenological method, requires both an emotional effort and rational thinking (Bradley, 2007; Hogarth, 2010). This position is supported by findings in neuroscientific research that emotions and cognitions cannot be isolated from each other (Damasio, 2005; Phelps & LeDoux, 2005). One highlighted asset of making art is the necessity of making many critical decisions, one after the other. Making choices always eliminates possibilities, which can create some inner tension. The asset reveals itself when one is able to release choice-related tension and trust that all options of a process are valuable options. Linked to the previous asset, in making art, it is impossible to say from the start what exactly the result will look like. This asset manifests when one can let go of goal-oriented creating and is able to appreciate the beauty of and in the alternative or unexpected result.

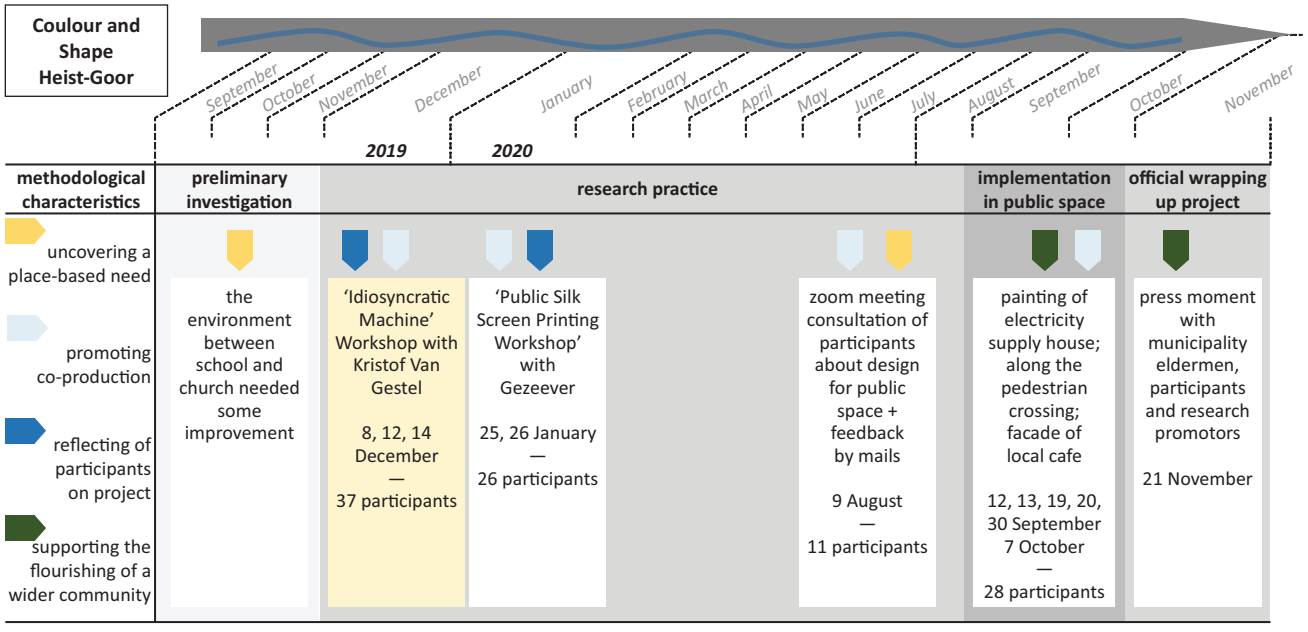


Figure 6. Artistic action research scheme for *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor*. Source: Ruth Segers.

4. Mount Murals' Embodied Artistic Experiences

Central in our study is not the art product, but the creative process of doing together as a form of conversation and experiencing for oneself. Mount Murals thus affords embodied artistic experiences or everyday actions and experiences that people usually do not consciously recognise when they collaborate but are essential to feelings of commitment and ease. An example are the fine social mechanisms that work between members of a music group or orchestra when they make music together. Musicians automatically tune in to each other's actions, respond to them, and gain new sensory experiences. This section further evaluates the (inter)actions in the IM workshops of the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* art trajectory, which open up such "playing together" to participants. First, the three relational resonating principles are evaluated, followed by a discussion of the two highlighted assets of creating art.

4.1. Relational Resonating and the Idiosyncratic Machine Workshop

Participants in the IM workshop started the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* trajectory with outlining the object that triggered an emotional attachment to local place. In this process, the objects' actual shape disappears and is reworked into many random shapes. During this reworking process some—especially young—people developed clear attachment to particular shapes of their own making. During the official opening of the work in public space, nine to eleven months after the workshops, some silk screen prints were on display. Out of the blue a young girl asked for "her" shape. She leafed through the pile of silk screen prints searching for her "yellow kitten." She found the shape and showed people around. She had developed an attachment to a particular yellow shape and recognised it as her "yellow kitten." Three other girls were happy to see that "their shapes" were featured in public space. A participating family of seven was particularly happy to be able to paint "their" outlined objects on the pedestrian crossing. Although the adults too remembered "their" shapes, some of them clearly showed more attachment to the initial, recognisable object shapes, by putting more importance on having those displayed in public space.

Some workshop participants offer insight into how they experienced co-creating in the IM workshop. In general participants have positive sentiments regarding working (very) closely together with people they have never met or know in or from totally different environments:

> I thought it was a fun workshop. The object that each brought along was very different and for each of a special value. The togetherness that arose and the spontaneous collaboration made it a nice whole. You notice that one is working with the right colours and the other spontaneously does something. One is very artistic and everyone sees something different. It all turned out to be one whole. In any case, it was very nice to do. (Email, adult woman 1, participant in IM workshop 2)

> The people work together very quietly, it was not disturbing that someone came close to me to outline, it was easy to bear, yet I don't know any of the other people. (Recorded interview, mother with young daughter, participant in IM workshop 1)

> Feeling together was nice. In laying the shapes I got the feeling [of] "ah I just fit in here, in the whole. I am part of the puzzle." (Recorded interview, adult woman 2, participants of IM workshop 1)

The following two fragments show how the relation with oneself, if juxtaposed to others, can also create tension and depends to a certain extent on the ability to self-regulate and self-soothe. During the IM process, Kristof stresses that participants are free to follow their own rhythm, also, nowhere in the workshop is mentioned what would be criteria of "nice work":

> I felt peaceful in the head when you had to draw the figures, especially the outlining of the shapes, both on paper and chalk paper. (Recorded interview, grandmother with granddaughter, Participants of IM workshop 1)

> I felt under pressure, as if I could not fetch up with the speed (of cutting) of others. I want to deliver nice work. (Email, adult woman 4, participant of IM workshop 3)

During the IM process, new embodied interactions in participants *and* between participants and their living environment are simultaneously stimulated:

> In a time span of an hour and a half my mindset evolved considerably, from "what am I cutting here while my desk is bulging with work" to "now I'm colouring with dots, damned, what did I do to myself?" to "maybe I can do something with this?" The further the evening progressed, the more I saw the point and meaning of what initially seemed useless to me. The head of an accountant will never be artistic, but I really liked the entertaining aspect of the workshop. I compare it a bit with football, you combine and you play together, and sooner or later you can cheer when that goal is scored. (Email, café owner and accountant, adult man, participant in IM workshop 2)

> Thank you for the great experiences last night. I thought it was a fun and educational evening. You can hardly believe that you can achieve this result

Figure 7. Peaceful alignment through co-creation (picture above) and co-regulation (picture below). Picture below shows a girl being supported by her grandmother in outlining a shape on chalk paper, from IM workshop 1. Both offer opportunities to experience and develop emotional attachment. Source: Ruth Segers.

> in such a short period of time. In this way you also learn that people, who you do not expect here, enjoy the evening (it was also a nice and pleasant group). I went home with a satisfied feeling and I thought back a few times today about what we all did and in what order we arrived at the end result. Even now I still have a good feeling when I think of it, I'm glad I came. The interaction with those present made me feel good. So I look forward to a follow-up and I would like to be invited. (Email, adult woman 3, participant in IM workshop 2)

4.2. Assets of Art Creation

The IM offers a very accessible way of being creative while connecting with people of various generations and backgrounds. It does so by focusing on actions, situations and experiences that are inherent to making art (because it actually *is* making art), but without the need for artistic (or any other) education. These situations incorporate beneficial assets of creating art that are valued as essential life skills.

As mentioned in Section 3, in the IM, participants are confronted with (the art of?) decision making in simple, yet obvious ways. Working fast or slowly? How big may these shapes be? Moreover, because it is a collective work, every participant is at the same time involved with creating (what shape, colour, shading do I prefer?) *and* relating (what colour, shape, shading is the other choosing and how do I react?). Every participant has to find a personal, often intuitive, answer to those questions. When one chooses a particular felt pen, with a particular colour and thickness, for example, this colour and thickness carries an implicitly felt personal and emotional value. However, this choice is co-influenced by the context of the art work in progress. One chooses not only a colour of preference, but simultaneously a colour that matches (or not) the colours chosen by other participants.

Linked to the previous asset, in making art, it is impossible to say from the start what exactly the result will look like. During the IM workshops, Kristof reveals the creative instructions bit by bit, so it is impossible to think or act by predisposition. In the *Colour and Shape*

Heist-Goor trajectory the IM process was repeated three times. In a way the final product of each workshop undeniably bears the signature of its designer, Kristof. However, a closer look reveals that each result does have its own identity: from chaotic to structured, from spontaneous to highly contrived, from unambiguous to complex. Also, while cutting shapes, Kristof points out that there is always the "other side," the negative of the shape. In some cases, this alternative looks more appealing than the expected outcome. As a result, there is always self-reflection involved, consideration of what already exists and there is never one way to go.

The "landscapes of shapes" resulting from the IM workshops display alternative outcomes of co-creation and co-regulating. Because each landscape results from unspoken agreement, or a group negotiation, we also see that co-regulating and co-creating is a unique given with unique effects. Figure 8 presents the outcomes of workshop 1, a cooperation of 19 persons with a majority of children, and that of workshop 2, a cooperation of eight adults, including one artist. Moreover, negotiation between participants includes choice making and brings in different preferences (like assorted colours or not) and capacities (like fine motor skills) of participants. Finally, the fact that participants recognise their particular contributions, which have changed from place-related object to shape, makes space for refocused or evolved place attachment. Especially since the shapes have been painted in a characteristic local public space.

5. Conclusions

This article analysed to what extent, how and under which conditions Mount Murals' collective art trajectory *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* supports an evolving place attachment among its participants. This artistic action research has been co-inspired by the challenges local Flemish authorities face in sustainably addressing the changes of everyday life in villages and towns. How to address wavering feelings of sense of belonging among inhabitants of Heist-op-den-Berg?

This article combined socio-spatial theory based on, among others, experiences of participation in community building in spatial planning, recent insights from relational neuroscience as applied in artistic therapy and knowledge about assets of art creation. From socio-spatial theory it deployed the concept of sense of belonging and more in particular place attachment, which refers to feelings of comfort, security, and inclusion or being part of this environment. It argued that place attachment should be regarded as an infinite ongoing process of re-connecting with place or the effective outside world we live in. It is exactly this outside world, like geography, nature, material objects, which provides a perfect medium for renegotiating and rejuvenating social relations.

Because place attachment is a dynamic process it can be invigorated and given direction. Our study linked place attachment with relational resonating, an overarching notion that refers to the smooth and stable relationship we enter whenever we feel attuned in interaction with another being. The benefit of experiencing this particular relationship and the inherent ability to be able to fine-tune our emotions is that it updates our autobiographical memory and contributes to acquiring attachment. The attunement can be animated through, e.g., co-creation, co-regulation, which are co-resonating principles. These principles naturally occur during the process of physically creating in a collective way.

In the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* art trajectory, the first author enriched the principles of relational resonating by uploading them with place-related sentiments and studied them at work in actions or embodied experiences during three IM workshops. To mobilise insights, the co-creative art trajectory was developed as an action research in which the result *and* the process of making can be seen as art. During these workshops, we assessed two assets of art creation at work: the need to

Figure 8. Two IM landscapes: The *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* workshops 1 and 2, series 1 outcomes. Source: Ruth Segers.

continuously take critical decisions and the impossibility to know the final result of a creative process in advance. The assets basically reflect essential life skills.

Mount Murals' co-creative art trajectory *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* started in August 2019 and finished in November 2020. Investigating the participants' evolving place attachment over the time showed that they are willingly showing their emotions of attachment to persons and places when symbolised by objects. The art trajectory further revealed that the connection to place is deepened by interpersonal interaction through artistic co-creation, via an attachment process of making co-created shapes. This happens both in children and adults but was more pronounced in children. Participating in the art trajectory simultaneously opened up possibilities for creating or deepening interpersonal, and especially intergenerational, connection.

The municipality of Heist-op-den-Berg put forward its church village Heist-Goor because its inhabitants in particular display an outspoken disinterest in commitment to organising or reviving local community life. The *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* trajectory did succeed in reviving or awakening feelings of attachment to place and stimulate the inclusion of parts of the population. In this small community, having 70 participants in a new artistic venture is an accomplishment. In this case, an important part of the impetus of taking part was the prospect of (grand)parents to share in a creative way their sense of belonging with their offspring, and in doing so improve a characteristic place in the village which simultaneously signifies their shared belonging.

In a way sense of belonging is a unique and vital mental health concept that relates to social inclusion, for it refers to our deepest need of security through attachment, to a place that entails the relationship we call "home." Attachment demands involvement. Concurrently, our study has its limits regarding inclusivity. Maybe most of all because it attracts people who have a soft spot for the particular creativity this project afforded.

Our study discussed place-related relationships. It looked at actions and experiences that enhance social connection through place, without relapsing in the rhetoric of identity. Connecting with place not only demands time; place also and inevitably evolves over time: If only because the earth not only rotates around its axis, but also moves through the universe. This reassuring insight supports and offers an opening and a need to stimulate evolving place attachment, for "without exception home is considered to be the place of greatest personal significance in one's life," in fact it is "the central reference point of human existence" (Relph, 1976, p. 20).

Acknowledgments

This research was financially supported by the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (VLAIO). Thank you to Tessy Gorris of the Heist-op-den-Berg Planning Office who was a supporting guide through the full process of the *Colour and Shape Heist-Goor* art trajectory. Thank you to artists Kristof van Gestel and Hilde Overbergh for their invaluable creative contributions to the pilot trajectory.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Badenoch, B. (2008). *Being a brain-wise therapist: A practical guide to interpersonal neurobiology*. Norton.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, 497–529.

Bossuyt, T. (2019). Collective exercises in free thought and action. In K. Van Gestel (Ed.), *Idiosyncratic machine* (pp. 198–215). APE.

Bradbury Huang, H. (2010). What is good action research? Why the resurgent interest? *Action Research*, *8*, 93–109.

Bradley, T. B. (2007). The psychophysiology of intuition: A quantum-holographic theory of nonlocal communication. *World Futures*, *63*, 61–97.

Damasio, A. (2005). *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. Penguin.

Dietvorst, E. (2004). The return of the swallows. From urban hardship to identity retrieval—The making of a movie as a social integration project in Brussels South. *City, Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*, *8*(2), 279–288.

Fitzgerald, J. (2018). *Close to home, local ties and voting radical right in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Gregory, D., & Urry, J. (1985). *Social relations and spatial structures*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hagerty, B. M., Lynch-Sauer, J., Patusky, K., Bouwsema, M., & Collier, P. (1992). Sense of belonging: A vital mental health concept. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, *6*(3), 172–177.

Harrison, S., & Dourish, P. (1996). Re-place-ing space: The roles of place and space in collaborative systems. In *Proceedings of the 1996 ACM conference on computer supported work* (pp. 67–76). https://doi.org/10.1145/240080.240193

Hass-Cohen, N., & Findlay, J. C. (2015). *Art therapy and the neuroscience of relationships, creativity, and resiliency. Skills and practices*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Hay, R. (1998). Sense of place in developmental context. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *18*, 5–29.

Hayden, D. (1995). *The power of place: Urban landscapes as public history*. MIT Press.

Heist-op-den-Berg vroeger en nu. (2020, September 23). *21 kinderen en 41 gewone mensen van het Goor werkten mee aan dit artistieke traject van Mount*

Murals [21 children and 41 ordinary people of Goor participated in this artistic trajectory of Mount Murals; Facebook status update]. https://www.facebook.com/HeistOpDenBergVroegerEnNu/photos/a.582787325078631/3645824675441532

Hidalgo, M. C., & Hernandez, B. (2002). Attachment to the physical dimension of places. *Psychological Reports*, *91*, 1177–1182.

Hogarth, R. M. (2010). Intuition: A challenge for psychological research on decision making. *Psychological Inquiry*, *21*(4), 338–353.

Hughes, A. E., Crowell, S. E., Uyeji, L., & Coan, J. A. (2012). An emotion dysregulation and social baseline theory. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *40*(1), 21–33.

Hunter, C. D., Case, A. D., Joseph, N., Mekawi, Y., & Bokhari, E. (2017). The roles of shared racial fate and a sense of belonging with African Americans in Black immigrants' race-related stress and depression. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *43*(2), 135–158.

Marsh, K. L., Johnston, L., Richardson, M. J., & Schmidt, R. C. (2009). Toward a radically embodied, embedded social psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *39*, 1217–1225.

McLaren, S., & Challis, C. (2009). Resilience among men farmers: The protective roles of social support and sense of belonging in the depression-suicidal ideation relation. *Death Studies*, *33*(3), 262–276.

Moser, M.-B., Rowland, D. C., & Moser, E. I. (2015). Place cells, grid cells, and memory. *Cold Spring Harbor Perspectives in Biology*, *7*. https://cshperspectives.cshlp.org/content/7/2/a021808

Moulaert, F. (2009). Social innovation: Institutionally embedded, territorially (re)produced. In D. MacCallum, F. Moulaert, J. Hillier, & S. Vicari Haddock (Eds.), *Social innovation and territorial development* (pp. 11–24). Ashgate.

Moulaert, F., & Mehmood, A. (2011). Spaces of social innovation. In A. Pike, A. Rodriguez-Pose, & J. Tomaney (Eds.), *Handbook of local and regional development* (pp. 212–225). Routledge.

Moulaert, F., Segers, R., Van den Broeck, P., Van Dyck, B., Miciukiewicz, K., Schreurs, J. & Servillo, L. (2016). SPINDUS methodological synthesis. A meta-framework for not getting lost in space. In R. Segers, P. Van den Broeck, A. Z. Khan, F. Moulaert, J. Schreurs, B. De Meulder, K. Miciukiewicz, G. Vigar, & A. Madanipour (Eds.), *The SPINDUS handbook for spatial quality. A relational approach* (pp. 266–302). ASP.

Pérez Liebergesell, N., Vermeersch, P.-W., & Heylighen, A. (2021). The hidden unwelcome: How buildings speak and act. *Journal of Interior Design.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1111/joid.12203

Phelps, E. A., & LeDoux, J. E. (2005). Contributions of the amygdala to emotion processing: From animal models to human behavior. *Neoron*, *48*, 175–187.

Proshansky, H., Fabian, A., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical world socialisation of the self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *3*, 57–83.

Relph, E. T. (1976). *Place and placelessness*. Pion.

Relph, E. T. (2015, October 20). *Place cells and sense of place in neuroscience*. Placeness. http://www.placeness.com/place-cells-and-sense-of-place-in-neuroscience

Richardson, M. J., Marsh, K. L., Isenhower, R. W., Goodman, J. R. L., & Schmidt, R. C. (2007). Rocking together: Dynamics of intentional and unintentional interpersonal coordination. *Human Movement Science*, *26*, 867–891.

Seamon, D. (2000). A way of seeing people and place: Phenomenology in environment-behaviour research. In S. Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto, & H. Minami (Eds.), *Theoretical perspectives in environment-behaviour research. Underlying assumptions, research problems and methodologies* (pp. 157–178). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Segers, R. (2018). First-generation Turkish women in the 2060 neighbourhood of Antwerp. *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, *21*(4), 325–340.

Segers, R. (2020, September 20). *Lieve dame dankuwel voor het mooi maken van ons dorp* [Dear lady thank you for beautifying our village; Facebook status update] https://www.facebook.com/ruth.august.5851

Sennet, R. (2012). *Together: The rituals, pleasures and politics of cooperation*. Penguin Group.

Siegel, D. J. (2012). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are* (2nd ed.). Guilford.

Stedman, R. C. (2002). Towards a social psychology of place: Predicting behavior from place-based cognitions, attitudes, and identity. *Environment and Behavior*, *34*(5), 561–581.

Tronick, E., & Beeghly, M. (2011). Infants' meaning making and the development of mental health problems. *American Psychologists*, *66*(2), 107–119.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1975). Place: An experiential perspective. *Geographical Review*, *65*(2), 151–165.

Twigger-Ross, C., & Uzzel, D. L. (1996). Place and identity processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *16*, 205–220.

Van Cauteren, P. (2019). Letter to Kristof Van Gestel. In K. Van Gestel (Ed.), *Idiosyncratic machine* (pp. 34–39). APE.

Zeisel, J. (2006). A sense of place. *New Scientist*, *189*(2541), 50–55.

About the Authors

Ruth Segers is a political scientist with a creative mind, an eye for detail, and a broad field of interest. She has been a research member of the Planning & Development Research Unit of the Department of Architecture (KU Leuven) since 2007, the place where she developed a soft spot for topics that involve the relationship between (public) space and interpersonal interaction. Hence her PhD on this subject (2018). In 2019 she obtained a VLAIO Innovation Mandate for her Mount Murals project.

Karin Hannes is associate professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, KU Leuven, and coordinates the research group SoMeTHin'K (Social, Methodological and Theoretical Innovation/Kreative). Her main research interest is in developing, applying, and refining approaches to qualitative research. She is most known for her academic contributions in the area of qualitative evidence synthesis. On a primary research level, she has been focusing on the use and further development of arts-based, multisensory, and place-based research methods in the context of public health, social welfare practices, urban development, and the arts and design sector.

Ann Heylighen is a design researcher with a background in architectural engineering. As a professor of design studies at KU Leuven, she co-chairs the Research[x]Design group at the interface of design research and social sciences/humanities. Her work explores how human diversity may expand prevailing ways of understanding and designing space. Ann studied at KU Leuven and ETH Zürich and conducted research at Harvard and UC Berkeley. She is a fellow of the Design Research Society and associate editor of *Design Studies*.

Pieter Van den Broeck is professor of spatial planning and sustainable development in the Department of Architecture at KU Leuven, where he leads the research unit Planning & Development (P&D). Pieter has over 20 years of experience in the field of spatial development analysis and planning, in both research and practice. From a critical institutionalist perspective and a methodological interest in transdisciplinary action research, he engages in research on planning instruments, social innovation, and territorial development, governance of socio-ecological systems, and land policies and commons.

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 130–142
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4503

Article

Co-Design and the Collective Creativity Processes in Care Systems and Places

Cristian Campagnaro *, Nicolò Di Prima and Sara Ceraolo

Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino, Italy; E-Mails: cristian.campagnaro@polito.it (C.C.), nicolo.diprima@polito.it (N.D.P.), sara.ceraolo@gmail.com (S.C.)

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 10 May 2021 | Accepted: 13 September 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
This article examines the topic of participatory design processes (co-design, co-creativity, co-creation, and co-production) as tools to promote models of inclusion that benefit people experiencing marginality, and as means to solicit the public dimension of the spaces in which they live and where they have access to their health and welfare services. The topic is addressed through four case studies drawn from the experience of participatory action research aiming at social inclusion and cohesion through an approach based on design anthropology. Following Jones and VanPatter's (2009) four design domains (DD), the projects discussed in this article are the following: participatory design of devices for people with multiple sclerosis (DD 1.0); participatory renovation of shelters for homeless people (DD 2.0); design and craft led lab aiming at social inclusion (DD 3.0); and innovation of public services for a city homeless population (DD 4.0). All these projects are driven by stakeholders' demands for a transformation that improves the quality of users' lives, the quality of caring services, and that they modify, temporarily or permanently, the venues where they take place. In order to support and facilitate this "desire for change," the projects are based on wide participation and collaboration between many different stakeholders in every phase of their design processes. Methods, tools, and results will be analysed from the points of view of both users (beneficiaries and social operators/caregivers) and designers. Furthermore, the interaction between spaces, co-design processes, and attendees will be investigated to determine how they contribute to turning those venues into citizenship environments, permeated with greater care and attention.

Keywords
beauty; caring spaces; co-creation; co-design; participation; vulnerability

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere" edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

As a research group of designers, anthropologists, and sociologists, we have been experimenting with participatory projects and inclusive social models since 2009, addressing, among others, issues such as housing, access to food, health, and independent living, citizen participation, and social cohesion (Campagnaro, 2021b; Campagnaro & Ceraolo, 2020; Campagnaro & Di Prima, 2018a; Campagnaro et al., 2021; Campagnaro, Porcellana, et al., 2018; Passaro et al., 2021; Porcellana & Campagnaro, 2018, 2019a). These issues often remain unsolved for some categories of citizens that are in a condition of fragility and have to do with the dignity and enforceability of fundamental individual rights. If neglected, these issues end up fostering forms of marginality, significantly affecting the functioning of such individuals within society (Magni, 2006, pp. 18–21), their abilities, as well as their very freedom to act (Magni, 2006, pp. 49–54; Sen, 2008).

Our action research led according to both a participatory (McIntyre, 2008) and a design anthropology approach (Gunn & Donovan, 2012; Porcellana & Campagnaro, 2019b; Porcellana et al., 2017, 2020), has a transformative attitude and it places the individuals at the centre of the project. It also enhances their abilities and skills within a network of further resources and competences of which they can take advantage. For the benefit of these human resources, and starting from them, processes of creativity, self-promotion, and citizenship are activated in people's environments to combat the conditions of social exclusion and the further issues connected with it. This article aims to debate these participatory design processes, for how they exploit collective creativity, co-creation, and co-production to promote models of inclusion to cater for the needs of people in marginality (Nota & Soresi, 2017; The Care Collective, 2020) and to strengthen the public dimension of the spaces where these processes take place. We will investigate them via four case studies drawn from the experience of our action research, which we have carried out in several Italian cities: We design together with people in marginality, front line workers, caregivers, service managers, and will focus both on methodological analysis and on the transformations implemented.

The cases discussed here involved citizens with disabilities, immigrants, and experiencing homelessness, through design processes, carried out right in the venues they live and where they access health and welfare services. Those citizens are often regarded as fragile persons since they manifest urgent and highly impacting needs that require specific answers that are usually provided by multiple services. They are regarded as "marginal" citizens because they do not correspond to the "average citizen" due to the different way they participate in collective life—both of Arnstein's (2019) non-participation and tokenism degrees of participation—and due to the greater difficulty they have in exercising their rights. As already stated, the beneficiaries' needs, which are addressed through our projects (for housing, food security, physical and psychological wellbeing, poverty, job, training, social relationships, independent living) are multidimensional (Brandolini et al., 2009) and interlinked.

In our experience, the services often appeared too weakly structured to meet this multidimensionality of social exclusion, rooted in material, personal, and social discomfort. To our eyes, services seem like they have to be ever-changing entities that need to be constantly transformed to provide the better answer to meet ever-changing and complex social needs.

The projects under discussion here are driven by stakeholders' demands for a transformation, whether or not of a tangible kind, that improves the quality of users' lives, the quality of caring services, as well as their environments. The expected changes arise from differentiated levels of a participatory design intervention which aim to develop devices for those with reduced mobility, redesign housing spaces and housing-related spaces, strengthen community-led inclusion processes, and promote innovation of city services for homeless people toward personal wellbeing and enhancement of the individual's life.

We propose two driving hypotheses. The first one is that designing with and for fragile people means taking care of the whole society by beginning with the poorest; it also means strengthening support and protection networks for every citizen to reduce disparities and disadvantages, as well as fostering relationships, shared values, and feelings of belonging. The second hypothesis is that the very openness of places, which is key in the processes of public care, also depends on the encounters and the links that are created by collaborative and collective creativity. They turn out improved by these design processes, more welcoming, and cognitively and ergonomically accessible.

2. Method and Tools

The disciplinary context of our action research refers to the experience of the so-called design for social innovation (Manzini, 2015) and social impact design (Smithsonian Institute, 2013). These locutions describe two dimensions of the act of designing for people: The first one relates to the nature of the needs to which design is called to respond; the second refers to the transformations needed to satisfy those social needs. They link to several definitions (e.g., design for good, socially responsible design, design for social change, public interest design, etc) each of which contributes to highlighting the methodological richness and complexity of the operational field of social impact design. All of them synthesise the themes of commitment to individual and social fragility, the centrality of the human dimension and its capacities, and remain attentive to the dignity of all individuals. Besides, they all renew the fundamentals with which Dreyfuss (1955), Papanek (1971), and Schumacher (1973), about 50 years ago, outlined as the mandates of socially responsible design.

Consistently with this premise, the fundamental principles of our interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach to complex social systems are the following:

1. We aim to investigate the context as a complex system of people, sequences of actions, flows of information, organisational roles, and individuals' moods and behaviours. We are persuaded that "no genuine transformation in ways of thinking and feeling is possible that is not grounded in close and attentive observation" (Ingold, 2013, p. 4); thus, the interactions among beneficiaries and among stakeholders as well as how they use and perceive spaces, tools, and objects are object of our field study. To do so, we apply qualitative analysis tools from both anthropological and co-design research, such as focus-groups,

in-depth interviews, video tours, participant observations (Ingold, 2013, pp. 4–6), system mapping, and boundary objects (Carlile, 2002; Star, 2010). Also, the design project (by means of tangible and low-resolution prototyping processes; see Brause, 2014; Hillgren et al., 2011; Meroni et al., 2018) is a tool we use to understand the system in all its complexity, including the barriers to the pursued change.

2. To co-design processes, rules, tools, and artifacts, all the actors are involved as expert users; all of them have a voice and bring their daily experiences, by participating as "diffuse designers" (Manzini, 2015). According to a model of participatory action research, we—researchers, designers, participants, and beneficiaries—share decision-making processes, we design the vision of change together, and together produce the knowledge on which we agree.
3. We encourage co-production. All the stakeholders are invited to make their time, resources, and their networks available to sustain and foster the design initiatives based on a vision of co-ownership and shared responsibility.
4. We conduct co-creation processes. During the most tangible and practical stages of the project, we enable all attendees to take part in building the artifacts, to concretely contribute to tangible transformations, and to learn from one another.

As a result, the co-design processes produce solutions nourished by the participation of the stakeholders and open for collaborative improvement and negotiation. These design solutions can be conceived as products, both tangible and intangible, and as prototypes. They are products, as they represent the final stage of the creative process that finds its formal expression in them; meanwhile, they are prototypes, as they are not pre-determined by a top-down approach, being constantly re-discussed and improved by the stakeholders in an iterative process.

The workshop is the most practical and participatory instrument we adopt to materially gather people and enable them to shape products and services dealing with the change they pursue. Our workshops entail on-site interventions working from within the context; they are extraordinary because of the time they take away from everyday life and the role inversions they promote through, and during, the creative and collaborative actions. Each workshop also stimulates synergies among the actors via the informal and dialogic environment it generates (Sennet, 2012), where solutions are discussed and performed by and with all participants; here, as Bourriaud stated (2010, pp. 13–24), the group recognise itself in them and consequently the solutions benefit from more care and attention. In this sense, all the outputs that the design process generates can also be seen as "relational goods" (Bruni, 2008), because of the relations produced by the processes and because of the stories generated by them.

We also pay close attention to the practical work. We encourage the use of simple techniques and tools that anybody can handle so we can give as many people as possible the opportunity to participate in co-creation processes. In this way, the workshop also offers the opportunity to invite as many citizens "from outside" as possible. From our perspective, practical activities are essential to involve the actors. The type of action that the process implies can vary, but it should always imply some sort of material activation and tangible engagement of the participants. The highest level of this happens during the processes of co-creation, when "do-it-yourself'' activities—or, even more appropriate, "do-it-ourselves"—enable the users' participation in the social design process (Lee, 2008) and the "real design participation" happens just because users have some sort of full creative autonomy in the process (Banham, 1972).

3. From the "Field" of Our Action Research

3.1. Design for Each(One): Co-Designing Personalised Devices for People With Multiple Sclerosis

How to open the plastic film of a gelled water cup independently; how to play foosball sitting in a wheelchair, even with only one moveable hand; how to hold playing cards and how to sign with very weak hands. These are some of the everyday needs of persons with multiple sclerosis (MS) with whom we have designed. These are the design demands we addressed during the co-design workshops planned in the framework of the project Design for Each(One).

Design for Each(One) involves service users, caregivers, designers, young citizens who attend the bachelor's degree in design and communication and researchers; it promotes collaboration between our university, the Italian Association for Multiple Sclerosis (AISM) and the social cooperative Animazione Valdocco, which manages the AISM's day care service. All the above "co-designers" investigate gestures which users with MS had become unable to do and, together, we prototype small devices to facilitate those acts. During a one-week workshop of participant observation and of low-resolution prototyping (Brause, 2014; Hillgren et al., 2011; Meroni et al., 2018), through a continuous collaborative process, by using minimal material resources and very simple technologies, the aids are developed and made usable by the persons with MS.

Then, with the same method, the prototyped aids are implemented and tested (through everyday use) for a long time (6–12 months) until they are ready to be released as final products: ANTONINO allows Antonio to autonomously open the jar of gelled water with which he hydrates, no less than eight times a day. The shell of the product and its shape allow different handling modes and the toothed ring cuts the packaging film,

allowing Antonio to remove it with a spoon (Figure 1). IT IS UP TO ME is made of cardboard; it is produced via a simple and economic paper-making process and allows users with MS to play cards autonomously even if they cannot hold them in their weak hands. FOLLOW THE LIGHT! is a laser light pointer hung on glasses to highlight letters on a ETRAN communication panel, anchored to the wheelchair; it allows Didi to share words and thoughts with less experienced ETRAN readers. Maura was again able to write her name thanks to her new aid named SIGN HERE! This wooden product was literally built around her hand and with her design contribution. Precious gestures which had been stolen by MS were regained and finally, after years, Maura was able to sign a paper.

These and other important products are key to the independent living of a person with MS and they would never have been developed according to an ordinary market-driven design approach. In fact, the needs of an individual with MS are extremely personal and specific (everyone features a progression of the disease and their own personal symptoms) and they alter continuously and swiftly. For this reason, from the mass production market's point of view, those needs are not "commercially appealing" and they would not justify economic commitment in addressing them, even if they could facilitate the daily life of users with MS.

Regarding the participation, users with MS, involved as experts, have proved able to contribute to the design with capacity and enthusiasm and to bring their "reflective voice." Furthermore, they proved to benefit from active participation in those design processes. The strong reciprocity between all the participants on concrete actions allows them to give and exchange his/her best with one another, and creates opportunities for "functioning" (Sen, 2008) and rules different from those imposed by the disease. Indeed, the workshop offers the persons with MS the opportunity to work around their needs in the framework of a collaborative process and for themselves to be agents of the response to their needs. From the point of view of the caregivers, as they stated during the series of in-depth interviews made over the years of collaboration, participatory processes structured around users' needs make it possible to look at everyday gestures and have a finer understanding of the person, providing an alternative and deeper understanding. Furthermore, co-design enables caregivers to cede to the users more control over their lives, toward possibilities of individual empowerment and self-determination.

Regarding the issue of the public dimension of places, in the Design For Each (one) project, we can observe how the day centre (which provides daily care and assistance [relational and health] and recreational and occupational activities for people with MS) opens up to the city and to the citizens, due to its design being shared among the several participants: It achieved a public status, which was not foreseen although it was sought out and desired by operators and organisations. In the day centre, the people with MS feel protected, at home, and able to open up to participation and interaction, more so than any other space. There, the extraordinary time of the designers meets the ordinary time of users' daily lives and those who take care of them, in the positive and non-paternalistic form of collective creativity.

3.2. Cantiere Mambretti: Co-Designing Shelters for Immigrants and Homeless People in Milan

The project Cantiere Mambretti (Mambretti site) deals with the participatory refurbishment of shelters for

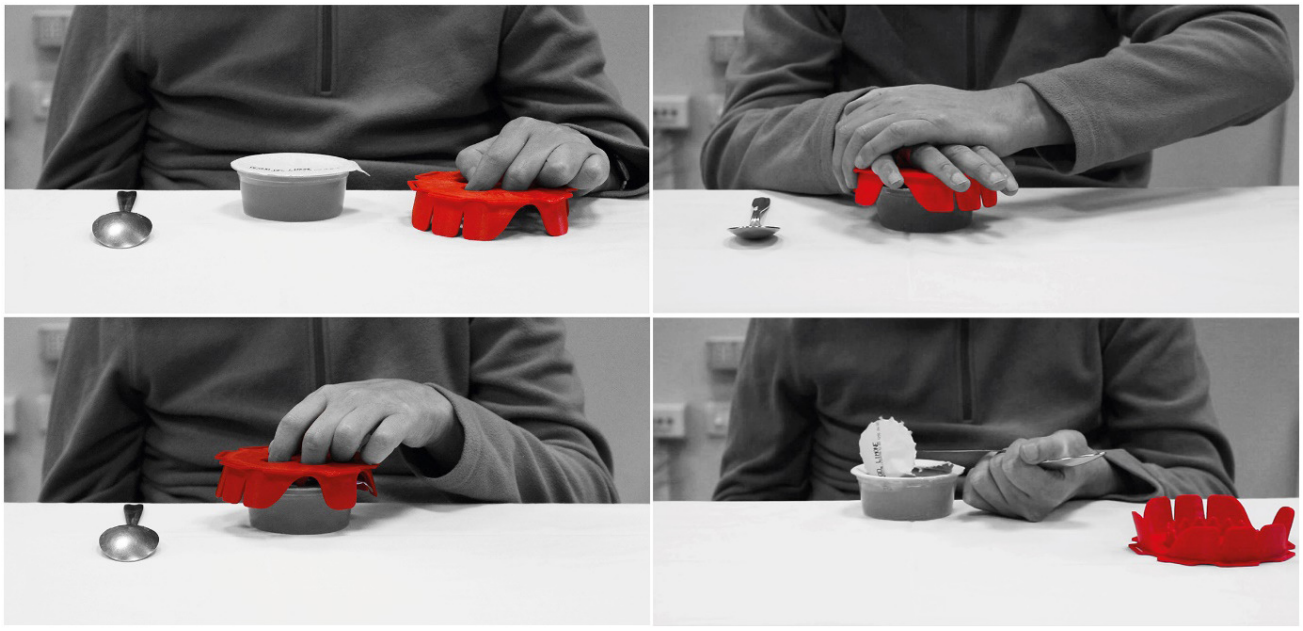


Figure 1. ANTONINO: Gestures of user who handles the co-designed device to open the plastic film of a gelled water cup.

immigrants and homeless people, managed in Milan by Fondazione Progetto Arca. It is rooted in a wide theoretical reflection on such buildings and their improvement as environments for recovery. The aim of the project is to deal with the participatory design of low barriers and transitional shelters according to their users' psycho-emotional and social needs and to guarantee better wellbeing and inclusion (Campagnaro & Di Prima, 2018a, 2018b). The project benefits from the practical and reflective contributions of the shelters' inhabitants and the workers from the organisation that manages the housing services. They are all involved in the role of expert users, and they cooperate with designers from the Politecnico di Torino and with citizens that attend the projects thanks to a strong social commitment.

Shelters are often hosted in buildings constructed for other specific purposes (schools, offices, factories) that, once their original function ceases, are dedicated to temporary housing purposes. Even though they are transitional and temporary solutions, they end up hosting people for a long time. These buildings are often in a state of almost complete abandonment and manifest rather serious structural problems. They also lack space for socialising and privacy, and they are equipped with low quality and second-hand furniture. Despite this, they house people who are experiencing homelessness, exclusion, poverty, and who need care and assistance. Furthermore, the spaces of the dormitories contribute to exclusion, marginality, and a sense of temporariness not only due to their physical characteristics but also because of rules, curfews, and access procedures (Campagnaro & Di Prima, 2018b). In contrast, the design action peruses wellbeing and accessibility, and fosters a "co-created beauty" to reshape their spaces and the whole housing service delivered there, toward dignity and recognition (Campagnaro & Giordano, 2017; Campagnaro & Porcellana, 2016; Cockersell, 2014, p. 71; fio.PSD, 2016).

The co-design process starts with a collective exploratory tour of the venue and is driven by a cycle of focus groups and design sessions with hosts and social and care operators in order to, first, understand the critical issues to be faced, and then to agree on solutions to be developed. Then, the group takes part in the making practices, i.e., furniture building, wall painting, setting up of wayfinding and signage systems (Figure 2). Cantiere Mambretti generates a sort of temporary "creative revolution" within the shelters in which all participants can have a voice and bring their help and competences (Campagnaro, Di Prima, & Ceraolo, 2018). The vibrant atmosphere of the workshop affects the reception service's routines, reverses roles, and creates a positive impact by giving value to participants' skills and aspirations. The effects of this designing together depend on the participants. As regards the experience of immigrants and the homeless, the participation generates their feeling of being active users and recognised

Figure 2. Cartoons corner: A co-designed and co-produced lounge for project Cantiere Mambretti (copyright Daniele Lazzaretto, Lilithphoto). Source: Campagnaro and Di Prima (2018a, p. 15).

as citizens. On the other hand, the operators have the chance to critically reconsider the way the housing and support service is provided and to figure out how the spaces could contribute to its improvement.

In the case of Cantiere Mambretti, we witnessed an evolution in the organisation's rationale regarding shelters: From "pathogenic and multipliers of suffering" (quoting sociologist Ota De Leonardis, as cited in Camarlinghi, 2020, p. 13) and surroundings that disregard people's need for social and personal recovery, they are now acknowledged as "apparatuses" (Agamben, 2006) useful in relationship building, inclusion, and care. However, although the participatory approach—and the change it fosters in housing services—has been acknowledged and understood by the organisation, it has not been fully adopted as a praxis. In fact, even though there is an ideal consensus on the values promoted by the co-design processes, these have not been transferred to the organisation's decision-making processes regarding other care spaces (decoration, refurbishment, organisation of functions, or rules). Indeed, they are still directed by technicians who are not part of, and experienced with, care processes and who do not give sufficient consideration to users' and frontline workers' experiences and points of view. As researchers, we assume that our participation is still crucial at this stage of collaboration with the organisation; this latter seems as yet unable to manage the co-design process by itself and to apply the participatory approach to all the service's design process, from architecture to living functions, from furniture to rules. Thus, today's challenge of Cantiere Mambretti is to continue to experiment with this new design process, again and again. The aims of the project are to keep alive the idea that shelters are spaces of citizenship and to figure out whether the concrete adoption of this participatory model by the organisation is possible or, on the contrary, if our role is key and cannot be ceded to third parties.

The preliminary hypothesis that we have developed is that participatory projects are much more complex than the organisation's ordinary management capacity and cannot easily be cut off from the coordination of us professionals/researchers. In fact, any project, if it is truly participatory, requires a flexibility and variability of methods, instruments, and results that cannot be foreseen in advance, at least not as far as the organisation would like. In addition, the participatory process requires long periods of time, critical sensitivity, attention, and skills that must be continually experimented, trained, and nourished by research and study; all this seems to us to belong more to the posture of participatory action research than to that of work performance.

3.3. Costruire Bellezza: Design Anthropology-Led Lab Based in Turin, Aiming at Social Inclusion

The project Costruire Bellezza ("crafting beauty") was born in 2014, in the framework of a collaboration with the city of Turin. It is a participatory lab that, via creative actions, includes people who are experiencing homelessness, social service assistants, social workers, students, researchers, and creative professionals (Campagnaro, 2021b; Campagnaro et al., 2021; Porcellana, 2019; Stefani, 2016). The project benefits from the design alliance between public services for homeless people, the social cooperative Animazione Valdocco that manages these services, and our university. The lab is based on cycles of workshops carried out every Thursday and Tuesday in a public shelter. Thanks to the lab, every citizen can enter the shelter, which had previously been closed to the city, join the creative group, and participate in workshops (Figure 3). Participants' co-design and co-create artefacts for themselves and for the neighbourhood's communities such as chairs, tables, lamps, outdoor furniture, toys for children, clothes and accessories, wall paintings, and so on.

The collaboration between the participants facilitates the self-empowerment of those experiencing homelessness (Appadurai, 2004) and fosters relational skills of the university students and citizens taking part in the lab (Margolin & Margolin, 2002). The core value of Costruire Bellezza is reciprocity, which plays its role on two levels: on the level of the creative experience, where the participants share competences, skills, and help one another in order to co-design and co-create products; on the level of the place, where the creative potential of the heterogeneous group generates a learning environment based on doing things together. As far as the social services are concerned, the lab regenerates the shelter as a venue where contact between social workers, social service assistants, and homeless people is facilitated by an atmosphere of beauty, informality, and social justice (Fraser, 1998, 2005). This contrasts with the highly institutionalised offices of social workers, which is where the periodic meetings and monitoring of the progress of the homeless' social recovery project are carried out.

Furthermore, the experience of nine months of each participant in Costruire Bellezza was monitored by the facilitators—both designers and social service assistants—with a focus on interpersonal relationships, the exercise of abilities, and personal wellbeing. According to these three issues, the participants were also asked about their nine months of experience in the project. These parameters of investigation helped to redesign the Costruire Bellezza design initiatives. Moreover, they described each person's feelings in their path toward finding stable accommodation, and they helped case managers to better plan and, in progress, adapt the individual's recovery project.

The investigation is still running through participant observation, focus groups with facilitators, and semi-structured interviews with participants. Results obtained to date suggest that engagement in the creative workshops improves people's personal, cognitive, and social abilities, including self-care in daily routines and life, openness to change, trust in the others and the pairs, capacity to plan, willingness to experiments

Figure 3. Sewing workshop: Citizens, both experiencing homelessness and otherwise, are sewing together during a "Costruire Bellezza" workshop.

with newness, and new nodes of network releasing from the isolation of homelessness (Campagnaro & Ceraolo, 2020; Petrova & Campagnaro, 2017; Porcellana & Campagnaro, 2019a).

3.4. PON 18–21: Innovating Services to Innovate Systems for Homeless People

In 2018, our research group signed an agreement with the Turin municipal administration to promote a process of reorientation of care practices and services for the city homeless community. The aim was to reinforce the care system and foster voice, participation, ease, dignity, and wellbeing for both users and care/frontline workers, as well as social workers. This project is the most complex experience of participatory design that the research group has faced in ten years of work and collaboration with the city of Turin (Campagnaro, 2019). In fact, it involves accompanying an entire system of public, private, and third sector actors—with more than 50 operators from the numerous bodies involved in addressing homelessness in Turin being involved in the participatory service design activities. The project encouraged this set of actors to rethink, in a collective and mutually beneficial way, the organisation of the city system, and the service provision in terms of prevention, inclusion, and recognition.

In the first phase, through various anthropology and co-design tools, a critical and reflective participatory analysis of the service system was carried out during several collective design actions—from mapping the resources to problem framing. These processes used maps, graphs, and qualitative descriptions to re-examine every dimension of the city services system and to highlight areas for incremental and radical improvement: a wider social mission of the service, a more systemic implementation of the city services, new inclusive strategies for care and assistance, new infrastructures for day-to-day actions. In a subsequent phase, a shared vision of change was developed through envisioning, scenario design, and role-playing techniques. Furthermore, we investigated worldwide exemplary case studies that foster collective creative thinking. In general, all actors agreed that the transformation should be more focused on people as bearers of rights and resources. More precisely, the heterogeneous group of diffuse service designers (Manzini, 2015) agreed on five guidelines concerning: methods of support and "taking charge" of individuals by the social services; multiple and more heterogeneous (than today's solutions) housing resources; pathways to social inclusion based on the principle of citizenship and active participation; access to material assets with more attention to the needs of the individuals and avoidance of standardisation; and an approach

to face homelessness based on primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention (Gaetz & Dej, 2017).

We gathered—again through on field observation and focus groups—a collective demand for change that involves all the levels of the staircase model (Gaboardi et al., 2019), from the street to the regained home. There is a clear consensus on services that focus more on the capabilities of the individuals experiencing homelessness and those characterised by greater flexibility on entry, during the use, and on egress. However, in redesigning the system and the way it should work, considerable difficulties have also been observed in conceiving radical and systemic transformations that go beyond a progressive and an overly cautious improvement of day-to-day work.

From the point of view of public spaces, this participatory system and service design action offer a vision of a city and its places of care that must become an instrument and "the milieu of the services" (Camarlinghi, 2020, p. 13) and of the works on fragility: Only open places, accessible services, and inclusive policies can foster the exercise of the right to the city as "the right to freedom, individualisation in socialisation, habitat and housing. The right to the work (to participating activity) and the right to enjoyment quite different from the right to property" (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 130). A vision that belies and overturns a present in which, in our experience from a bottom-up perspective, the city more often appears to be the arena of processes of separation and competition between citizens which leaves the most fragile behind. At its worst, the city degenerates into a device of control and containment on the strength of paternalistic cultural models and power relationships (Campagnaro, 2021a).

4. Designerly Ways of Facing Complexity

The case studies we have discussed so far deal with the application of the co-design method to develop tangible and intangible artefacts together with the users: an aid, a place, a new social service, a process of systemic innovation. Jones and VanPatter's (2009) theory of design domains (DD) highlights the different degrees of complexity of each project. Nevertheless, despite this difference, they all sought to transform "their systems" through specific and participated interventions in which the places where we design are crucial. From the perspective of our action research, these projects and interventions also worked as a "can opener" (Collier & Collier, 1986), allowing us to enter the systems, explore them, and investigate the complexity of the social relationships and bonds the co-design process ignited.

In the project Design for Each(One), the focus is on the product (DD 1.0). The impact is certainly connected to how good the aids are in coping with the personal needs of each individual user. But the participatory processes of design also proved able to empower the organisation system, strengthen the educational and relational work, and open up and "fill" the care centre with creativity and a stronger sense of active citizenship which, according to Meer and Sever (2004, p. 11):

> In addition to being about a status that confers rights and obligations, citizenship is also a practice whereby people are able to participate in shaping their societies. It implies not only rights and responsibilities, but also interaction and influence within the community.

In Cantiere Mambretti, the participatory renovation of the shelter suggests that undertaking a design process, that stems advantage of the redesign of places through furniture and wayfinding tools (DD 1.0), provides an opportunity to address the more complex scales of service design (DD 2.0) and organisational innovation (DD 3.0). According to our perspective, the fact that we adopted the co-design model as a new way to do things solicited the improvement of the whole housing service; in fact, the co-design practice promoted not only worthwhile physical changes but also innovation in the strategy that led the service, toward a more user- and operator-sensitive and attentive care perspective.

Regarding the case of Costruire Bellezza, we are in the framework of the high complexity of organisational transformation (DD 3.0). It entered a place of exclusion through acts of collective creativity, which it opened and nourished via citizens' participation, thanks to meaningful encounters. It innovated how people engage in dialogue with other citizens and social and health care services. Furthermore, it implemented a shift from an institutionalised approach, according to which people experiencing poverty are responsible for their situation, to a community-based model, where they are citizens with rights and capacities. It began as an experiment (Binder & Redström, 2006) in 2014, and today it continues as one of the public services for the Turin homeless population. Nevertheless, from the point of view of social cohesion, Costruire Bellezza is an example of how place-based co-design processes can solicit the innovation of services and policy models (DD 4.0).

PON 18–21, dealing with the innovation of systems and policies (DD 4.0) in support of the homeless population in Turin, shows how interconnected and interdependent the four design domains are. It is an innovation that must be pursued through the simultaneous implementation of new tools, new processes, new places, as well as a new vision of our society (DDs 1.0, 2.0, 3.0). Both the public and the private sectors should use them to support people in poverty toward a new "public happiness" (Ravazzini & Saraceno, 2012). Quoting Tronto (2013), we can regard PON 18–21 as a collective—final users included—attempt to promote a democracy of care that includes the recognition of homeless people needs (caring about), the assumption of responsibility for meeting those needs (caring for), the care provided for those in need (caregiving), and finally the responses of beneficiaries towards the care received (care-receiving).

5. Conclusion

An attribute of all the processes that we have presented previously is that they have two dimensions of meaning. The first deals with the transformations that they implement in response to specific problems, while the second deals with how these transformations are functional to an attentive process of reading and decoding reality. These are two mutually useful dimensions of design that are intertwined in time and are the core of our design anthropology method (Campagnaro et al., 2021; Gunn, & Donovan, 2012; Porcellana & Campagnaro, 2019b; Porcellana et al., 2017). While it is true that projects are the result of careful, intensive, and non-judgmental listening and observation, it is equally true that further knowledge of the individuals, as well as the system, its limits, and its resources, can be deduced through an equally attentive and participant observation (Ingold, 2013) of the process of development and implementation of design ideas. In addition, we can state that experiencing co-design entails a plurality of collective processes such as knowing, learning, teaching, sharing, and creating (Cross, 1982; Manzini, 2015; Verganti, 2009). It can also promote values that designers and individuals from non-creative occupations can share, and it increases the individuals' motivation to collaborate and pursue common interests and benefits.

In order to enable citizens and the system to participate in the innovation process, every stakeholder needs to be aware of the resources that they can provide to the system. The resources are different, depending on each individual and their network. Resources consist of abilities, such as knowledge, experiences, technical skills, and aspirations, as well as opinions, preferences, and desires. These resources and individuals' capacity to aspire can be increased through practise, exploration, conjecture, and rejection, and also by the opportunity to exercise one's voice, to debate, challenge, investigate, and participate critically (Appadurai, 2004, p. 67). Collective and participatory situations offer the strongest chance of facilitating the creation of new relationships and connections between actors, with the aim of sharing their own resources.

Furthermore, thanks to participatory processes, the aspirations of the system are raised, which could be the beginning of a process of change that might also impact the regulatory and policy context in which the action takes place, enabling innovation to be embedded on any level: individual, social, societal, and transcendental (Klamer, 2017). Since this process is difficult because it entails comprehending a high level of complexity, working together on a specific and concrete product can be enabling. These co-designs and collective creativity, focused on tangible outputs, are effective in developing an understanding of the problems that everyone shares and sets of possible solutions which everyone agrees on. In fact, the intuitions and proposals from both researchers and groups can be seized as opportunities only if the system recognises them as such. Nevertheless, new visions of the services also depend on a move away from the usual roles and relationships—the operators that assist or help people in need—toward a system as an organic entity where everyone is a beneficiary of other's resources. As already stated, this is a shift strongly rooted in new roles and the extraordinary work that the participatory process and co-creation workshops entail.

Regarding the issue of spaces, the design initiatives brought the creative process among the very people's environments: into day centres, into housing shelters, and into the city-wide services. We preferred informal design conditions, something like Oldenburg's (1989) "third place", in order to facilitate the communities of practice to meet (Wenger, 1998) and to foster the audience engagement and knowledge exchange. It was a matter of working in "imperfect places" from the perspective of a space for academic design; this choice had the merit of not inhibiting the beneficiaries and allowed the research team and the designers to collaborate with and observe them in their everyday situations, behaviours, and relationships. This expands the idea of the places of innovation towards forms of hospitality and greater openness to the whole city. The comparison between different life stories and cultural repertoires, the combination of which is one of the keys to a collective creative process, transformed all these ordinary work and care spaces into learning environments (Sichula et al., 2016) and powerful activated devices for change (Cautela & Zurlo, 2006, p. 56).

These places are meant as public because they are dedicated to the citizens; but, in our case, since they are places for people in conditions of fragility and marginality, we experienced them as Foucault's "crisis" or "deviation" heterotrophies (Foucault, 2011, pp. 24–32; Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Here, the aim is to provide protection and privacy that is owed to persons experiencing fragility, and so they are closed to all other citizens; one cannot enter unless they recognise themselves as needing protection and care. However, in our experience, in being so protective, they subtract people from the relationship with the other citizens, from reciprocal discovery, and tend to expose people to stereotypes, clichés, and judging gazes.

On the contrary, our projects and the experiences they promote, stimulate, and produce sociality and enable the exercise of "civility" (Bauman, 2001) and respect for the other, directly within the places where people experience their everyday lives. In this exercise of openness, our actions solicit the public dimension of the spaces in which the designing takes place (Robbins, 2008), where people interact (Arendt, 1958), where they think about collective interest and enhance individual cultures in the encounter (Innerarity, 2006). At the same time, in our experience, these spaces, even the very city, play different roles: They are the object of the projects, opening up and transforming definitively or momentarily; they are the apparatuses (Agamben, 2006)

of co-design and active citizenship processes (Meer & Sever, 2004, p. 11); they significantly affect the processes and foster, or on the contrary deny, the creative relationships between the participants and between the design systems' stakeholders.

So, it happens that these places are no longer the same after crossing the co-design process because those extraordinary events contributed to favourably expanding the perception of them towards new possibilities and new uses. In the perception of every citizen, now, they also can be seen as laboratories of co-design and co-creation, as open today as they were closed and reserved only for service users in the past. The sounds change, a frenetic hubbub and a dense and collaborative dialogue replace the silences and noises of routine. The movements, the use of timetables, and the very perception that people have of their own place give way to the extraordinary vitality of a heterogeneous community that plans, experiments, fails, and succeeds together. Today, these are places that anyone can enter or where people can meet other citizens and cooperate with them. They became sites of innovation, creativity, learning, and knowledge transmission. This fosters cohesion and inclusiveness and generates the opportunity for all those involved to flourish, and likewise, the same can happen to the locations where these communities exist.

In conclusion, regarding us designers, these experiences lead us to believe that our participant role is pivotal in the participatory processes, maybe inalienable, and must be maintained. Indeed, as stated by Manzini (2015, p. 204), expert design "day by day and issue by issue… sustains social actors in the constant co-designing process in which we find ourselves… works as a cultural operator, collaborating in the creation of the shared images and stories that underlie a new idea of wellbeing." Accordingly, we must solicit and facilitate transformative and critical thinking, innovation, and experimentation, by designing with citizens, both users and staff. That is why we need places that are open and accessible to everyone, which make it possible to co-design by mediating between the extraordinary of the design initiatives and the ordinary of life and work. In our opinion, and according to our research findings, only there, among people, within people's environment, can we keep being those "agents of change who apply their skills to creatively and playfully diagnose problems, question the status quo, and propose new directions for change" (Minder & Lassen, 2008, p. 174).

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the Municipality of Turin, to Fondazione Progetto Arca, and to cooperative Animazione Valdocco for supporting the projects. Thanks to all the people with whom we have designed together. We shared much of the research path on homelessness with our friend, ally, and teacher, the anthropologist Valentina Porcellana. The PON 18–21 research was carried out in collaboration with Prof. Antonella Meo, Silvia Stefani, Daniela Leonardi, Vittoria Bosso, Emilia D'orazio, and Giorgia Curtabbi.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Agamben, G. (2006). *Che cos'è un dispositivo?* [What is an apparatus?]. Nottetempo.

Appadurai, A. (2004). The capacity to aspire: Culture and the terms of recognition. In V. Rao & M. Walton (Eds.), *Culture and public action* (pp. 59–85). Stanford University Press.

Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press.

Arnstein, S. R. (2019). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 85(1), 24–34.

Banham, R. (1972). Alternative networks for the alternative culture? In *Design participation: Proceedings of the design research society's conference* (pp. 15–18). Design Research Society.

Bauman, Z. (2001). *The individualized society*. Polity Press.

Binder, T., & Redström, J. (2006). *Exemplary design research* [Paper presentation]. DRS Wonderground Conference, Lisbon, Portugal.

Bourriaud, N. (2010). La forma relazionale [The relational form]. In N. Bourriaud (Ed.). *Estetica relazionale* [Relational aesthetics] (pp. 11–24). Postmedia Srl.

Brandolini, A., Saraceno, C., & Schizzerotto, A. (2009). *Dimensioni della disuguaglianza in Italia: Povertà, salute e abitazione* [Dimensions of inequality in Italy: Poverty, health and housing]. Il Mulino.

Brause, C. (2014). *Prototyping practice.* Illinois Institute of Technology College of Architecture. http://works.bepress.com/caryn_brause/3

Bruni, L. (2008). Back to Aristotle? Happines, eudaimonia and relational goods. In L. Bruni, F. Comim, & M. Pugno (Eds.), *Capabilities and happiness* (pp. 114–129). Oxford University Press.

Camarlinghi, R. (2020). Se i diritti sono come l'aria e l'acqua [If rights are like air and water]. *Animazione Sociale*, *5*(337), 6–16.

Campagnaro, C. (2019). Homelessness: Esperienze di co-design e case di housing first [Homelessness: Co-design experiences and housing first homes]. *Atti e Rassegna Tecnica*, *83*, 82–88.

Campagnaro, C. (2021a). Città coese e inclusive [Cohesive and inclusive cities]. In E. Formia, V. Gianfrate, & E. Vai (Eds.), *Design e mutazioni. Processi per la trasformazione continua della città* [Design and mutations. Processes for the continuous transformation of the city] (pp. 233–247). Bononia University Press.

Campagnaro, C. (2021b). Crafting beauty together. In

S. Gonçalves & S. Majhanovich (Eds.), *Art in diverse social settings* (pp. 185–196). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Campagnaro, C., & Ceraolo, S. (2020). D tutt*. Esperienze di empowerment femminile in Costruire Bellezza [D tutt*. Female empowerment experiences in Crafting Beauty]. In G. Di Bucchianico, R. Fagnoni, L. Pietroni, D. Piscitelli, & R. Riccini (Eds.), *100 anni dal Bauhaus. Le prospettive della ricerca in Design* [100 years since the Bauhaus. The perspectives of research in design] (pp. 59–65). Società Italiana di Design.

Campagnaro, C., & Di Prima, N. (Eds.). (2018a). *Disegnare ambienti che accolgono* [Designing places that welcome]. VITA Società Editoriale.

Campagnaro, C., & Di Prima, N. (2018b). Empowering actions. The participatory renovation of a shelter. *Interventions/Adaptive Reuse*, *9*, 68–75.

Campagnaro, C., Di Prima, N., & Ceraolo, S. (2018). Insieme. Collaborazioni Inclusive [Together. Inclusive collaborations]. In C. Campagnaro & N. Di Prima (Eds.), *Disegnare ambienti che accolgono* [Designing places that welcome] (pp. 24–25). VITA Società Editoriale.

Campagnaro, C., Di Prima, N., Porcellana, V., & Stefani, S. (2021). La palestra delle cose [Triggering things]. *DIID: Disegno industriale industrial design*, *70*, 88–95.

Campagnaro, C., & Giordano, R. (2017). Home for homeless: Linee guida per la progettazione dei centri di accoglienza notturna [Homes for homeless: Design guidelines for night shelters]. *Techne*, *14*, 179–187.

Campagnaro, C., & Porcellana, V. (2016). Beauty, participation and inclusion: designing with homeless people. In S. Gonçalves & S. Majhanovich (Eds.), *Art and Intercultural Dialogue* (pp. 217–231). Sense Publishers.

Campagnaro, C., Porcellana, V., Stefanizzi, A., & Ceraolo, S. (2018). Oggetti, spazi, persone: Osservare e valutare le sperimentazioni con un approccio di design anthropology [Objects, spaces, people: Observing and evaluating the experiments with a design anthropology approach]. In P. Molinari & A. Zenarolla (Eds.), *Prima la casa. La sperimentazione Housing First in Italia* (pp. 178–194). FrancoAngeli.

Carlile, P. (2002). A pragmatic view of knowledge and boundaries: Boundary objects in new product development. *Organization Science*, *13*(4), 442–445.

Cautela, C., & Zurlo, F. (2006). *Relazioni produttive. Design e strategia nell'impresa contemporanea* [Productive relationships. Design and strategy in contemporary business]. Aracne.

Cockersell, P. (2014). St Mungo's e il progetto Safya [St Mungo's and the Safya project]. In M. Castaldo, A. Filoni, & I. Punzi (Eds.), *Safya. Un approccio transdisciplinare alla salute degli homeless in Europa* [Safya. A transdisciplinary approach to the health of the homeless in Europe] (pp. 67–87). FrancoAngeli.

Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. University of New Mexico Press.

Cross, N. (1982). Designerly ways of knowing. *Design Studies*, *3*(4), 221–227.

Dreyfuss, H. (1955). *Designing for people*. Simon and Schuster.

fio.PSD. (2016). *Linee di indirizzo per il contrasto alla grave emarginazione adulta in Italia* [Guidelines for combating serious adult marginalization in Italy]. http://www.fiopsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/linee_indirizzo.pdf

Foucault, M. (2011). *Spazi altri* [Other spaces]. Mimesis.

Foucault, M., & Miskowiec, J. (1986). Of other spaces. *Diacritics*, *16*(1), 22–27.

Fraser, N. (1998). *Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, participation* (WZB Discussion Paper, No. FS I 98-108). WZB Berlin Social Science Center. http://hdl.handle.net/10419/44061

Fraser, N. (2005). Reframing justice in a globalizing world. *New Left Review*, *36*, 1–19.

Gaboardi, M., Lenzi, M., Disperati, F., Santinello, M., Vieno, A., Tinland, A., Vargas-Moniz, M. J., Spinnewijn, F., O'Shaughnessy, B. R., Wolf, J. R., Bokszczanin, A., Bernad, R., Beijer, U., Ornelas, J., Shinn, M., & HOME-EU Consortium Study Group. (2019). Goals and principles of providers working with people experiencing homelessness: A comparison between Housing First and traditional staircase services in eight European countries. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *16*(9). https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/9/1590/htm

Gaetz, S., & Dej, E. (2017). *A new direction: A framework for homelessness prevention.* Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

Gunn, W., & Donovan, J. (2012). Design and anthropology: An introduction. In J. Donovan & W. Gunn (Eds), *Design and anthropology* (pp. 1–16). Ashgate.

Hillgren, P., Seravalli, A., & Emilson, A. (2011). Prototyping and infrastructuring in design for social innovation. *CoDesign*, *7*(3/4), 169–183.

Ingold, T. (2013). *Making, Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. Routledge.

Innerarity, D. (2006). *El nuevo espacio público* [The new public space]. Espasa

Jones, P. H., & VanPatter, G. K. (2009).Understanding Design 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0: The rise of visual sensemaking [Special Issue]. *NextD Journal*, *3*. https://issuu.com/nextd/docs/understandingdesign1_2_3_4

Klamer, A. (2017). *Doing the right things: A value-based economy*. Ubiquity Press.

Lee, Y. (2008). Design participation tactics: eChallenges and new roles for designers in the co-design process. *CoDesign*, *4*(1), 31–50.

Lefebvre, H. (2014). *Il diritto alla città* [The right to the city]. Ombre Corte.

Magni, S. F. (2006). *Etica delle capacità. La filosofia pratica di Sen e Nussbaum* [Ethics of capabilities.

The practical philosophy of Sen and Nussbaum]. Il Mulino.

Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation*. MIT Press.

Margolin, V., & Margolin, S. (2002). A "social model" of design: Issues of practice and research. *Design Issues*, *18*(4), 22–30.

McIntyre, A. (2008). *Participatory action research*. SAGE.

Meer, S., & Sever, C. (2004). *Gender and citizenship: Overview report.* University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies. http://www.jdhr.org/publications/reports/GENDER%20and%20CITIZENSHIP%20Overview%20Report.pdf

Meroni, A., Selloni, D., & Rossi, M. (2018). *MASSIVE CODESIGN: A proposal for a collaborative design framework*. FrancoAngeli.

Minder, B., & Lassen, A. H. (2008). The designer as jester: Design practice in innovation contexts through the lens of the Jester Model. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, *4*(2). https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S2405872618300029?token=EBC2EFA7FD076832A42A5C4D392700B2F733528556802CC54B17A712FC2B0A9C1157A98B13D9BC94B2795F8C3A382B12&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20210831220536

Nota, L., & Soresi, S. (Eds.). (2017). *For a manifesto in favour of inclusion. Concerns, ideas, intentions, and passwords for inclusion*. https://www.unipd.it/sites/unipd.it/files/2019/Manifesto_hogrefe.pdf

Oldenburg, R. (1989). Celebrating the third place: Inspiring stories about the great good places at the heart of our communities. Marlowe & Company.

Papanek, V. (1971). *Design for the real world: Human ecology and social change*. Pantheon Books.

Passaro, R., Campagnaro, C., & Curtabbi, G. (2021). Design against food poverty. *Revista Latinoamericana De Food Design*, *1*(2), 426–451.

Petrova, L., & Campagnaro, C. (2017). Design for social change: On new practices and organization models that foster knowledge transfers from design sector elsewhere. In *Proceedings of relating systems thinking and design (RSD6) 2017 symposium*. Systemic Design Research Network. https://iris.polito.it/retrieve/handle/11583/2705354/194197/2017_SystemDesign_working_paper_Campagnaro_Petrova.pdf

Porcellana, V., Campagnaro, C., & Di Prima, N. (2020). Weaving: Methods and tools against homelessness between anthropology and design. *Antropologia*, *7*, 63–82.

Porcellana, V. (2019). *Costruire Bellezza: Antropologia di un progetto partecipativo* [Costruire Bellezza: Anthropology of a participatory project]. Meltemi.

Porcellana, V., & Campagnaro, C. (2018). Dalla strada alla casa. Oggetti e spazi domestici nei percorsi di inserimento abitativo di persone senza dimora [From the street to the house. Domestic objects and spaces in the home integration paths of homeless people]. *Lares*, *79*, 265–283.

Porcellana, V., & Campagnaro, C. (2019a). Antropologia trasformativa e design di sistema alla prova delle povertà urbane più estreme [Transformative anthropology and system design to the test of the most extreme urban poverty]. In T. Ciampolini (Ed.), *Comunità che innovano. Prospettive ed esperienze per territori inclusivi* [Communities that innovate. Perspectives and experiences for inclusive territories] (pp. 193–205). FrancoAngeli.

Porcellana, V., & Campagnaro, C. (2019b). Progettare insieme [Designing together]. *Antropologia Pubblica*, *5*, 91–110.

Porcellana, V., Campagnaro, C., & Di Prima, N. (2017). Quando l'antropologia incontra il design. Riflessioni a margine di una ricerca-azione a contrasto dell' homelessness [When anthropology meets design. Reflections on the sidelines of an action-research in contrast to homelessness]. *Illuminazioni*, *42*, 229–251.

Ravazzini, M., & Saraceno, B. (Eds.). *Le sfide della felicità urbana* [The challenges of urban happiness]. Il Saggiatore.

Robbins, E. (2008). Rethinking public space: A new lexicon for design. *Urbani Izziv*, *19*(2), 140–146.

Schumacher, E. F. (1973). *Small is beautiful.* Harper & Row.

Sen, A. (2008). The economics of happiness and capability. In L. Bruni, F. Comim, & M. Pugno, (Eds.), *Capabilities and happiness* (pp. 16–27). Oxford University Press.

Sennet, R. (2012). *Together: The rituals, pleasures, and politics of cooperation*. Yale University Press.

Sichula, N. C., Wanga, W. C., & Phyllis, I. S. (2016). The adult learning environment. *Journal of Adult Education*, *2*(2), 14–21.

Smithsonian Institute. (2013). *Design and social impact: A cross-sectoral agenda for design education, research and practice*. The Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt and National Design Museum. http://www.cooperhewitt.org/publications/design-and-social-impact

Star, S. (2010). This is not a boundary object: Reflections on the origin of a concept. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, *35*(5), 601–617.

Stefani, S. (2016). Antropologia in azione. Etnografia di un laboratorio partecipativo [Anthropology in action. Ethnography of a participatory laboratory]. In V. Porcellana & S. Stefani (Eds.), *Processi partecipativi e etnografia collaborativa nelle Alpi e altrove* [Participatory processes and collaborative ethnography in the Alps and elsewhere] (pp. 169–194). Edizioni dell'Orso.

The Care Collective. (2020). *The care manifesto. The politics of interdependence*. Verso Books.

Tronto, J. C. (2013). *Caring democracy: Markets, equality, and justice*. New York University Press.

Verganti, R. (2009). *Design-driven innovation. Changing*

the rules of competition by radically innovating what things mean. Harvard Business Press.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge University Press.

About the Authors

Cristian Campagnaro (PhD) is architect and an associate professor at the Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino. There, he teaches scenario design, design for social impact, and design for interior architecture. He taught industrialisation design for social inclusion at ECAM university in Lyon. ADI DESIGN INDEX selected in the field of social design, thanks to designs on homelessness, motor disability, circular economy, and food poverty, he focuses his research both on design for sustainability and design for social inclusion.

Nicolò Di Prima, designer and anthropologist, is a lecturer and PhD candidate in design at the Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino. His research focuses on the relationship between cultural anthropology and design to enhance socio-cultural sensibility, and critical approach in participatory design practice and design research.

Sara Ceraolo is a designer and sociologist. Since 2015 she has been carrying out research and teaching activities at the Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino. Her work focuses on co-design, participatory processes, social inclusion, housing, community engagement, and socially responsible design processes addressing food waste.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 143–157
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4368

Article

Gender and Public Space: Mapping Palimpsests of Art, Design, and Agency in Shahbag, Dhaka

Salma Begum [1,*], Jinat Hossain [2] and Jeroen Stevens [1]

[1] Department of Architecture, KU Leuven, Belgium; E-Mails: salma.begum@kuleuven.be (S.B.), jeroen.stevens@kuleuven.be (J.S.)
[2] Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium; E-Mail: jinat.hossain@kuleuven.be

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 14 April 2021 | Accepted: 22 July 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
Public space is an essential social infrastructure for the continuous negotiation of city life and democracy because it offers (ideally) an interactive platform for people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds and the forms of public life they cherish. This contribution inquires how public space's design and materiality play a fundamental role in popular struggles for social justice. By focusing on the differentiated access of women to public space, the role of gender in its design, and appropriation through a feminist intersectionality lens, this article aims to understand better the complex interplay between urban space and its non-human material agency vis-à-vis citizen mobilizations, movements, and socially engaged art interventions. Drawing from extensive participant observation and spatial analysis, the exemplary public space of Shahbag Chattwar (a public square/plaza) will shed light on the "gendered spatiality" of pivotal popular mobilizations and reclamations from the historical momentum of the 1952 language movement, over the 2013 contemporary Shahbag protests, and to the 2020 anti-metro rail protests at the Dhaka University campus. Analyzing urban space as a "palimpsest," this research reflects on both historic and ongoing scenarios of popular protests as they repeatedly occupy public space and leave spatial traces through spatial design and art. In sum, the article seeks to gain insight into public space as a principal site of contestation and negotiation of juxtaposed layers of gendered dynamics, civil rights, secularism, and fundamentalism.

Keywords
art and architecture; gender; palimpsest; public space; Shahbag

Issue
This article is a part of the issue "Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere" edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

Cities, and public space in particular, are palimpsests of history (Corboz, 1983). As urbanization unwinds, each layer of historical sedimentation deposits spatial "inscriptions" in the territory, intricately intertwining with everyday engagements and public concerns of epochs. The continuous production and reproduction of public space are in such light closely bound up with evolving social paradigms and patterns of everyday life. The metaphor of the palimpsest is thus helpful to unravel how cities are constantly transforming and complexifying environments. In that process of relentless change, urban development removes, re-inscribes, and superimposes "new" spatial adaptations on top and amidst of existing configurations. Not each layer remains therein permanently visible. But the gradual accumulation of intermingled traces intricately links places to multiple memories and identities, which eventually appear as complex cultural landscapes. Rendering public space as such a palimpsest, by analogy, emphasizes historical precedents, architectural influences, culturally practiced

traditions, subsequential political ecologies, political contestations, as well as changing gender roles. Each city has its own distinct reality and complex array of agents involved in its conception and development. Dhaka city's 400-year history is not different, and different political cycles have produced a rich public domain imbued with diversified cultural and social uses and meanings.

Public space can thus not only be understood as open, accessible space, "free" for the diverse urban public to use, but also a political trope where societal conflict and contestation play out. As it supposedly does not belong to any group or individual, it pertains to "the public" in all its diversity and corresponding disagreement. These spaces thus inevitably articulate the contestation and disputes that riddle "the public" and the city at large. Therefore, public space is not only the emblematic stage but also the perpetually contested outcome of "ordinary" everyday practices, and "extraordinary" protests, riots, or revolts that seek to shift the status quo. Not least in Bangladesh, gender plays a crucial role in shaping such everyday practices. These "gendered activities" in public space are fluid, and constantly transforming over time. They are not only shaped and reshaped through everyday habits and customs, but also administered by state legislations and changing cultural and social norms at different scales (Kern, 2020). Such fluidity adds complexity to the understanding of the city and its public space as a palimpsestic result of citizen involvements, interactions, changing actions, and engagements with space (Beebeejaun, 2017; Bondi, 1998).

Women's presence in public space is crisscrossing two contrasting scenarios in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where modernity and traditional religious norms walk side by side (White, 2012). State authority is contested, especially given the recent blend of secularism and religion in the constitution (Salehin, 2018). Against this religious-political structure, broader national and global feminist agendas are essential to understand the constant transformation and negotiation of "gendered space" in Dhaka, where public space is traditionally masculine. Women's presence and involvement in Dhaka's public space are conventionally limited. However, three significant events triggered women's appearance in public space: (a) the high number of female enrolments in primary and secondary schools, (b) significant female participation in the ready-made garment industry, and (c) the increasing number of women involved in public, private, and local government services through gender quotas (Nazneen, 2017; Panday, 2008). All these resulted from several national policy initiatives and the global feminist movement.

The constitution of Bangladesh ensures non-discrimination under various articles, such as Article 27, which designates all citizens with equal protection as a fundamental right, and Articles 28 and 29, which disallow discrimination on the grounds of religion, sex, race, caste, and the like (Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972). Beyond the state's commitment, global feminist agendas and conventions were very influential. As a state, Bangladesh has committed to the world community by signing and ratifying many international mandates, treaties and conventions that avowedly guarantee gender-equal provision for all, irrespective of sex or religious regulations, such as Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, despite these regulatory initiatives, women's presence in public space continued to be challenged by conservative political, religious, and societal norms, adding tensions and contestation to public space use, form, and meaning. Against this backdrop, the following historical analysis will investigate the spatial evolution and episodic sequence of events on Shahbag (Figure 1), Dhaka, as a political arena. The Shahbag area lies between the new Dhaka in the north and the old Dhaka in the south, where Shahbag Chattwar is a vibrant cultural corridor (Figures 1 and 2) brimmed with diverse everyday practices, Bengali festivals, and protests. The place witnessed a rigorous urban makeover, however, without diminishing its lively spirit. At present, it is not only a prime hub for institutions, architectural edifices, cultural agglomerations, and a prime public transport hub but also a foremost political hotbed in the city's public realm.

A feminist intersectionality lens is helpful to understand the gender-differentiated access to public space in Dhaka. Crenshaw (1989) presented the term "intersectionality" to investigate the intertwining systems of subjugation and metamorphosis in specific contexts, elaborating lived and embodied experiences (Collins, 1990; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality draws attention to the intersections and their impact on different axes of identity (e.g., gender, sexuality, class, caste, race, age, education, status, ownership, and rights) that is unexplainable with single-identity analysis (Crenshaw, 1991; Nightingale, 2011). Although black and postcolonial feminist scholars conceptualized it, intersectionality is relevant for many societies worldwide (Sultana, 2020; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In the context of Dhaka, Sultana (2020) highlighted gender, class, and migration as particularly pressing axes of social difference and oppression. This case of Shahbag will further illustrate how the socio-historical construction and lived experience of urban lives, mobility and movements are influenced by the complex network of intersectional socio-spatial and gender differences. This way, the case study will also contribute to the analysis of feminist geographers who stress how the experiences, lives and events of urbanization, and urban spaces are significantly influenced by gender (Chant & McIlwaine, 2016; Doshi, 2017; Peake, 2016). In this line, the role of "gendered space" will be examined to understand the complex interplay of gender and identity in mobilization, movements, and protests that seek to shape and re-shape public space.

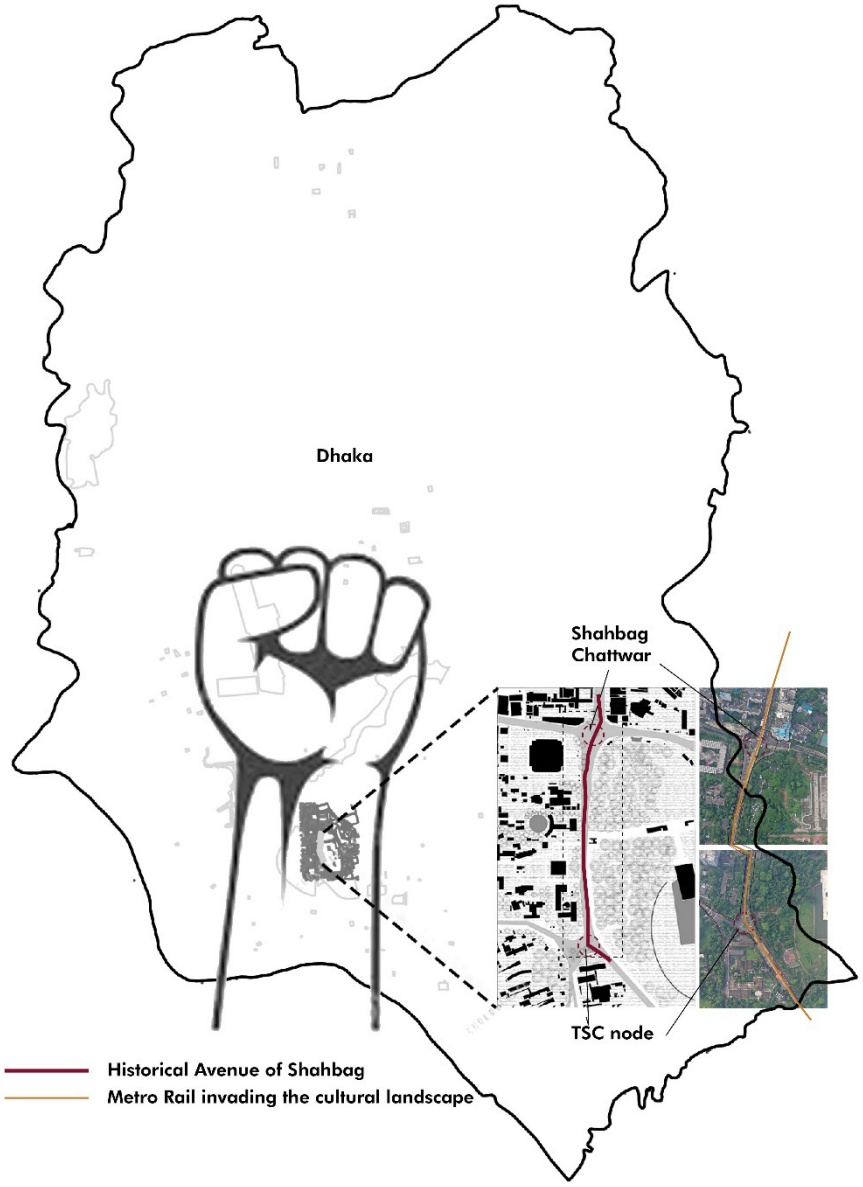


Figure 1. Shahbag area and historic avenue as palimpsest in the context of Dhaka. Figure developed by author Salma Begum.

2. Material and Methods

This study is based on an extensive literature survey, participant observation, and field experience followed by cartography. Secondary literature survey included scientific and popular pieces of literature (local press, history books, archival data, other reports, etc.). The first author, as an architect, gained everyday experiences through designing various architectural projects, participating in, and organizing various events between 2004 and 2018 around the Dhaka University precinct. The second author has gained on-site life experiences during her study at Dhaka University between 2005 and 2011, including active participation in different social and cultural movements during that time and beyond. For example, she actively participated in the Shahbag movement in 2013. Maps of the selected periods have been collected from primary and secondary sources and were analyzed as a series of collected events. The cartographic explorations are part of the ongoing PhD research of the first author.

For this research, five maps of Ramna corresponding to specific urbanization periods (map of 1859, map of 1905, map of 1952, map of 1975, and Dhaka GIS map of 2015) are deployed to illustrate the changing spatial and political ecology of the Shahbag area. The objective is to understand the transformative process of the landscape of the present-day public space Shahbag Chattwar. The study investigates the metamorphosis of Shahbag as it was shaped by specific design intentions, art interventions and gender dynamics. The analysis illustrates a series of cartographic drawings that juxtapose multiple

sources of information and typographies—referencing a historical route of Shahbag as a palimpsest of protest, processions, and festivals through the choreography of a landscape that unfolds multiple events and agents, such as an avenue intended for cars which became occupied by people, or green spaces meant for pleasure which amplified riots and revolts.

3. Shahbag as Palimpsest

Historically, Dhaka's urban anatomy changed hand in hand with multiple political regimes. Due to its geographical location, it has attracted many and miscellaneous settlers (Begum, 2020). As human presence increased, different power regimes imprinted lasting traces in the city's spatial form, and its public space in particular. The city played its role as capital of Bengal from 1610 to 1757, under the Mughals. It was during this era that the present-day Shahbag Chattwar was developed as a pleasure garden outside the city core and became known as Bagh-e-Badshahi or Shahbag ("garden of the king"; Begum, 2018).

The landscape of Shahbag has been re-structured and re-formed through overlapping episodes of events, including both planned interventions and more spontaneous appropriations of space. The meanings attributed to this place changed accordingly, and altered several times in terms of experience, embodied memories, public appreciation, and political connotation. As the physical materiality of Shahbag changed over time from a garden to an urban platform, it can be recognized as a palimpsest of history, in which architectural and semiotic traces were left by multiple manifestations, political agendas, war, and events that subsequently and simultaneously occupied the site across different timeframes. The palimpsest metaphor (Figure 2) alludes to the links between these different timeframes, and the resulting multitude of modifications, overlapping events, and levels of interconnectedness, revealing the current urban landscape as a juxtaposition of different episodes. The metaphor also allows recognizing how the historical avenue of Shahbag relates to popular protests and struggles for social inclusion.

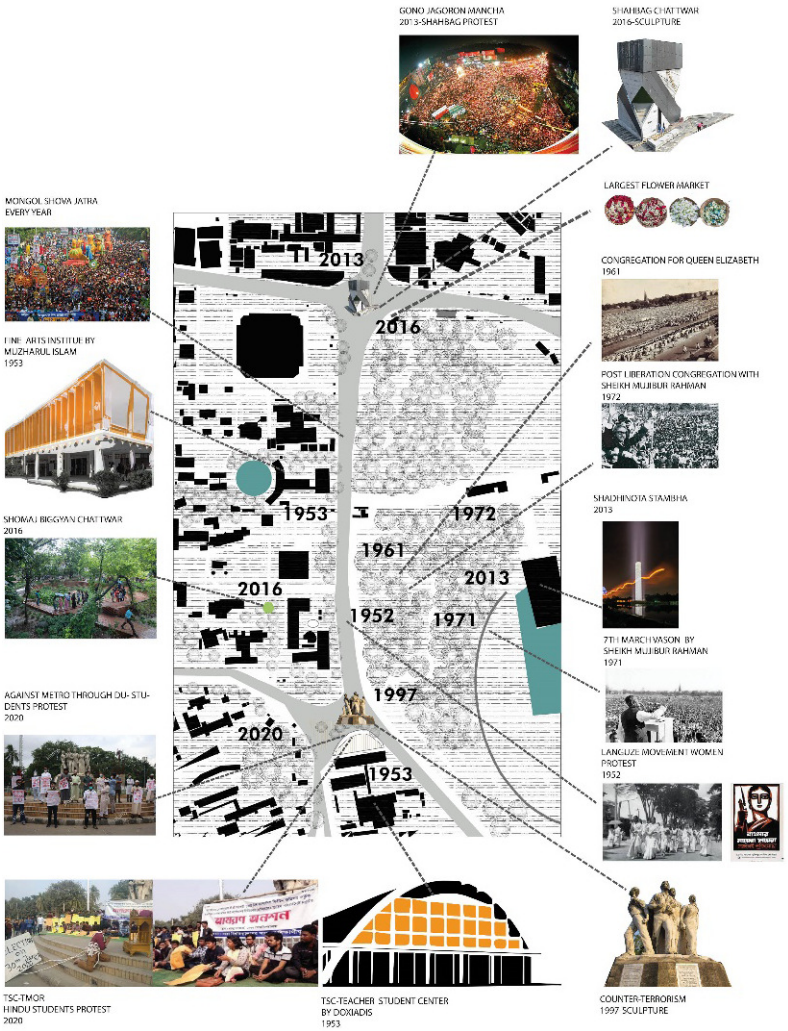


Figure 2. Evolution of Shahbag Chattwar as a ground of events and protest. Figure developed by author Salma Begum.

3.1. Shahbag as Bagh-e Badshahi Through a Mughal Lens

Dhaka's political history can be traced back to 1200 and the pre-Mughal era. Afterwards, the city served as the country's capital from 1610 to 1757 under the Mughals. During the Mughal period, Shahbag was structured by a constellation of green and vacant open spaces (Figure 3). The constellation of green spaces consists of present-day Shahbag, Ramna park, and Suhrawardi Udyan flanked by Segun forest on the northeast side. The area marked the last limit of the city with the Ramna gate. The mixed-use urban core was south of Ramna, connected by three main muddy roads confined between the Buriganga River and the Dulai Khal Canal. The past Shahbag area shows a strong presence of water bodies, with ponds as a distinct component in the territory. Landscape elements in fact structured most of the Shahbag area and remained the most significant spatial feature characterizing the Mughal period. While most of the area was considered part of the landscape, the interior of a house and women's presence in public space was largely influenced by Islamic practice. Women usually maintained a private life inside the house. In contrast to men, the "inclusion" of women in public space during this political period was rather restricted under colonial subjugation. This period alludes to the first episode of Shahbag palimpsest, marked by landscape elements and controlled by religious norms in view of gender dynamics in public space.

3.2. Shahbag as Ramna Racecourse as a Colonial Outcome 1905–1975

3.2.1. Colonial Imprints on the Cultural Landscape 1905–1952

Dhaka later emerged as the capital of Bengal, East Pakistan, and Bangladesh throughout its history. Still, it left strong development imprints in two specific episodes during the colonial era in 1905 and the east-Pakistan era in 1947. As the capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1905, it started to flourish. Its designation as the capital of East Pakistan in 1947 marked a pivotal historical shift. Soon after the East India Company took over, Dhaka began to transform drastically. The significant changes observed in the Shahbag area included the mutation of the garden to the British's racecourse in 1825, new villas by the Nawabs in 1840, and the implementation

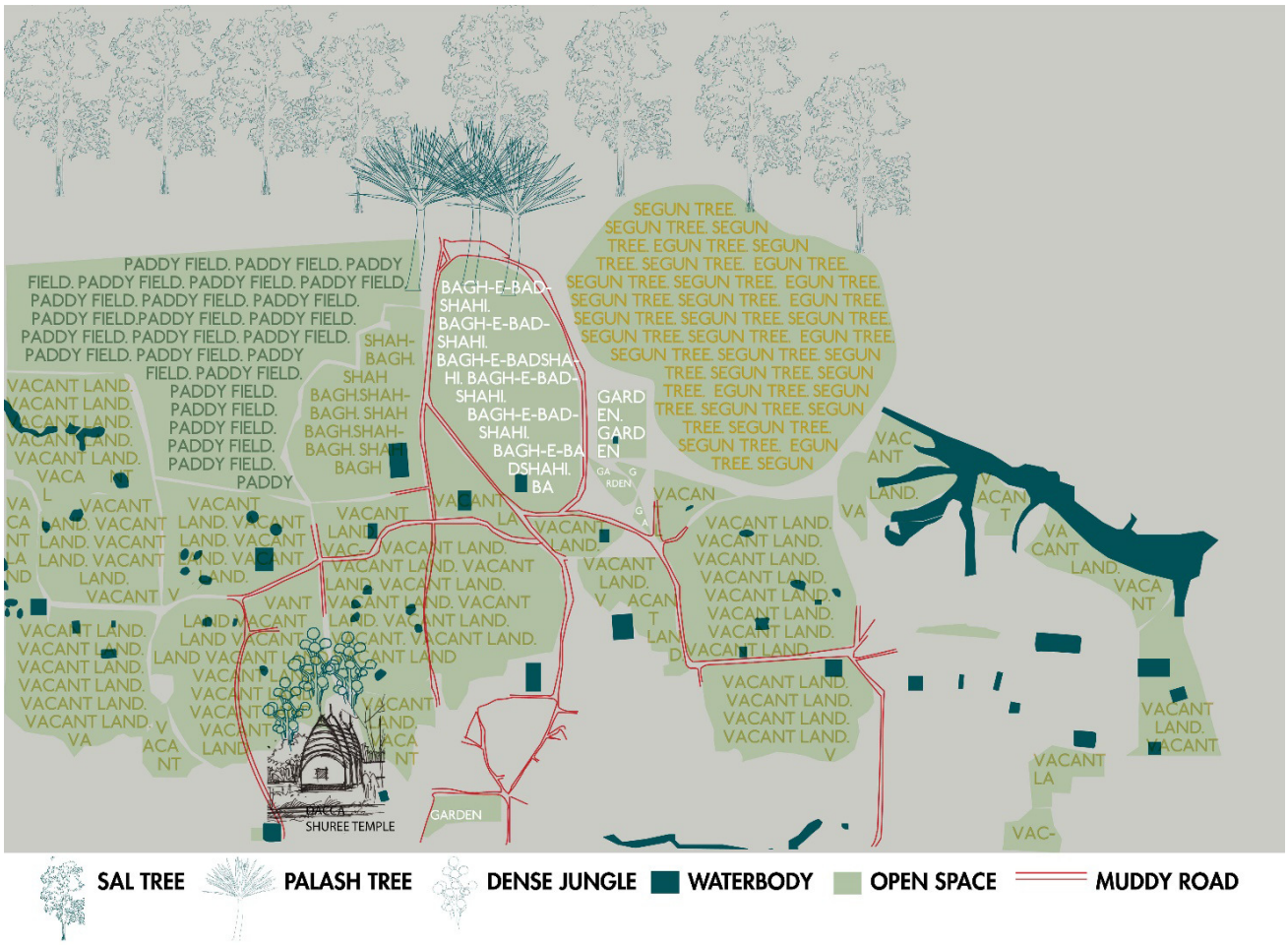


Figure 3. Bagh-e-Badshahi, the pleasure garden outside the historic city core during the Mughal period. Figure developed by author Salma Begum.

of a muddy road for elephant movement that later influenced the development of Shahbag Chattwar, a new civil station, and the introduction of a railway. The civil station, consisting of the Old High Court buildings, Secretariat, and Town Hall (Dhaka Hall), formed the city's core and significantly changed the urban morphology. Later, the civil station transformed into an educational institution, and in 1921 the area became Dhaka University. The emergence of Dhaka University in 1921 played a substantial role in women's presence in the area. The first female student at Dhaka University was Lilabati Nag, a pioneer who formally joined the university in 1923. She was a female activist and organizer with academic excellence who established an all-women club named Dipali committed to women emancipation (Siddiqua, 2017). Muslim women joined the university later than Hindus. Begum Faziltunnesa was the first Muslim female student at Dhaka University and graduated in 1928 (Siddiqua, 2017). Eventually, Shahbag's educational role in the city appeared to create a secular ground for students also.

The Bagh-e-Badshahi attained a new form of public space and was renamed as Ramna racecourse. It brought a significant change in gender-biased appropriation. The colonial period saw women's formal presence in public space as a violation of religious idioms (Figure 4). Women were deprived of permission to public life and pursue economic occupations during the Mughal period (Lal, 2003). This period also saw public discourse around women's rights and roles in the Bengali-Muslim society primarily shaped by male perspectives, including a minority of urban educated middle-class and upper-class women (Lal, 2003; Nazneen, 2017). The colonial episode of Shahbag thus experienced multiple sequences of significant changes in physicality, morphology, and women's rights to public space as a palimpsestic layer of urban history.

3.2.2. Colonial Civil Station as a Line of Protest During the Liberation War (1952–1965)

In the post-colonial period after 1947, with the initiation of another political era, Dhaka was re-structured according to modern planning and development idioms (Begum, 2018). In parallel, Ramna was continuously modified and re-constituted by public appropriations. By the

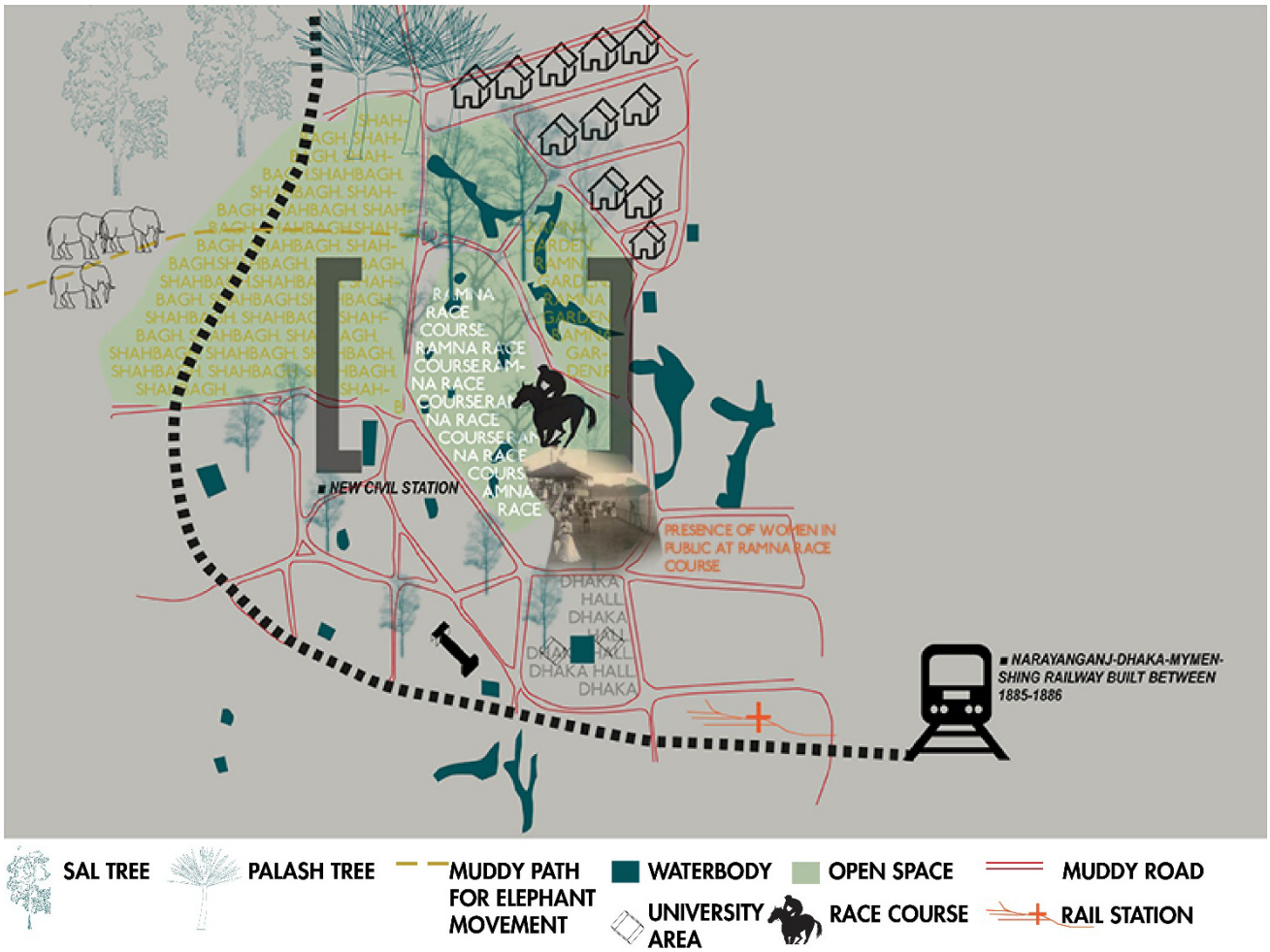


Figure 4. Shahbag as a network of gardens known as Ramna with the new colonial railway, civil station, and racecourse begin to see the presence of women in public. Figure developed by author Salma Begum.

1950's, it was divided into two areas: the Ramna Park and the racecourse. In 1951, the East Pakistan Government captured the Shahbag garden from the Nawabs and part of it was given to Dhaka University. In the development process, the Segun forest in Segunbagicha area was cleared, and urbanization took over. This period set off Bengali modernism that appeared through the design of the Fine Arts Institute. The Fine Art Institute, commonly known as Charukola, (Figures 5 and 6), is a pioneering modernist icon in Dhaka, Bangladesh, designed by architect Muzharul Islam who left his legacy in Bangladesh's architectural practice. He was a genuine modernist and greatly influenced by two of his teachers, Ross and Hayden, who taught him to be both a Bengali and a cosmopolitan man. Besides being an architect, Muzharul was an activist and politician. His idea for the Fine Art Institute was to make a place for all, irrespective of gender, age, class, etc. He struggled to establish Bengali modernism free from superficial regionalism. Its climate-responsive design harmoniously blends natural logic with modern architecture. This project played a remarkable role in Dhaka's advancement of social inclusion since the 1950s. At present, this project is part of the everyday modernity of Dhaka people, hosting diversified cultural, educational events throughout the year.

While emerging, the university project followed the area's essence without denying nature, keeping all the trees as they were. A pavilion on pilotis (Figure 6) invites people to the famous campus, which has evolved from the Mughal Pavilion but with a modernist strain. The use of locally produced brickwork attributed it with a regional character and emphasized the experience of natural light, shadow, and wind. Furthermore, its architecture showed a strong devotion to history, place, topography, materiality, local construction methods, and socio-economic context without falling into vernacular provincialism. If anything, Islam's design reflects a modernism tailor-fit to Dhaka rather than attempting to be global or universal. Another masterpiece from the same architect, the public library (Figure 5), presently known as Dhaka University library, was constructed in the same area and started facilitating multiple events. Thus, the university area, and the Ayub Khan Avenue (present-day Shahbag Road) in particular, was promoted as an axis of movement with the construction of the Teacher-Student Centre in 1961 by Doxiadis. The Ayub

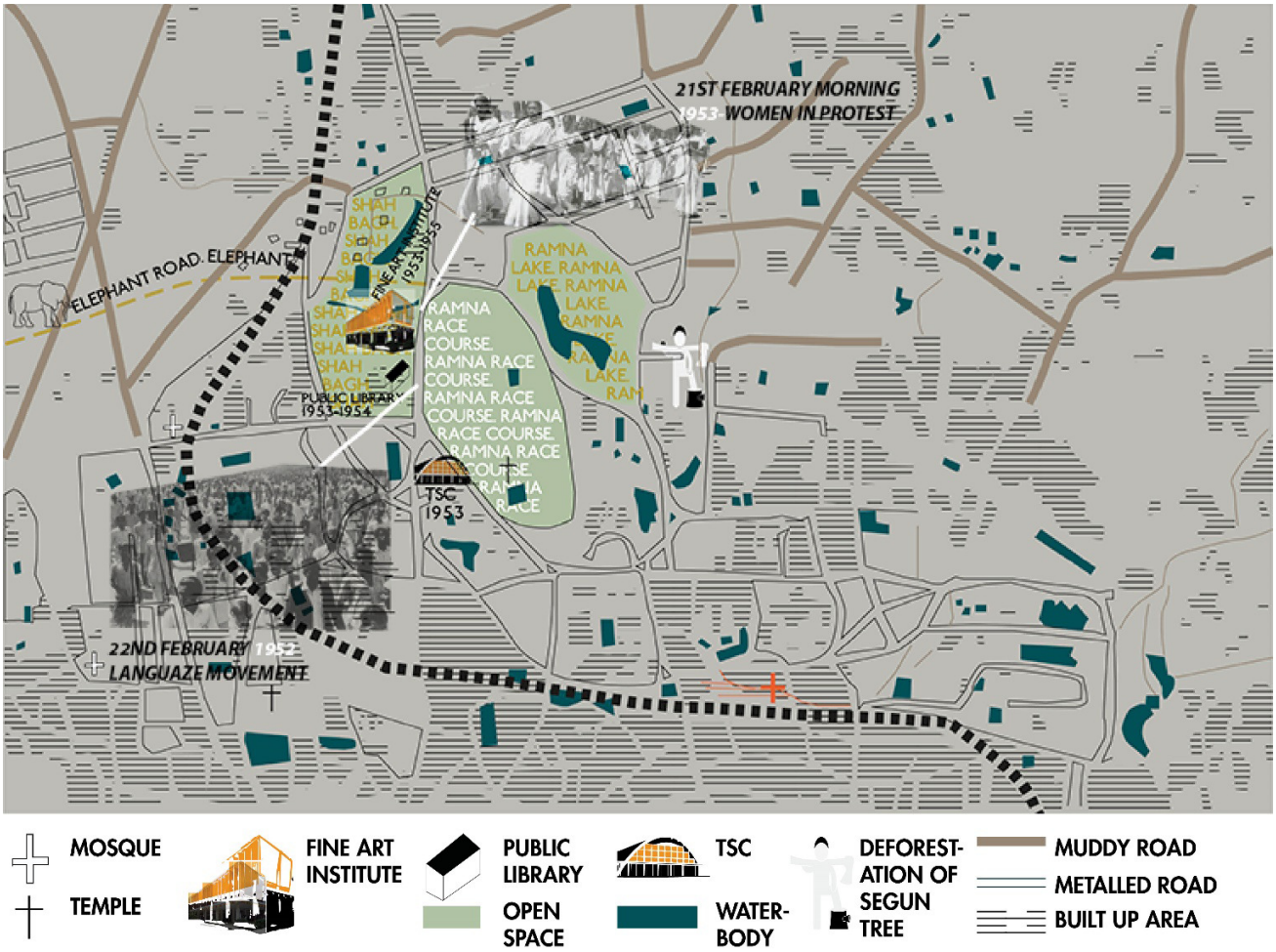


Figure 5. Bengali modernist architecture made the avenue a strong ground for protest. Figure developed by author Salma Begum.

Khan Avenue responded to different modernist conceptions that started with the 1952's language movement.

Due to the riots and disputes against the Pakistani political regime to attain Bangla as one of Pakistan's state languages, 1952 was a historic milestone. This period was also significant for the feminist history of Bangladesh due to the women's presence in the language movement (Figure 5) at Dhaka University premises. When the West Pakistani government-imposed Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan, the protesters flouted section 144 by assembling at the Amtala site in Dhaka University campus and joined the movement on the right to speak their mother tongue. Thus, Dhaka University premises were chosen as a protest ground to demand equal status for their native language—Bangla. The female students went out in the morning of 21 February 1952 to gather girls' participants from different schools in Dhaka and proceed to the procession from Amtala (Babul, 2014; "The forgotten women veterans," 2007). Among the protesters, twelve females stood out due to their rebellious activities—Halima Khatun, Dr. Sufia Khatun, Rawshan Ara Bachchu, Sufia Ibrahim, Fazilatunnessa, Rani Bhattachariya, Pratibha Mutsuddi, Sofia Khan, Zulekha, Nuri, Sara Taifur, Sufia Ahmed, and Safia Khatun (Babul, 2014). These women first came out to the streets during curfew, broke Section 144, evaded the police barricades, and gathered at the Amtala site in Dhaka University campus to join the movement (Babul, 2014).

Figure 6. Fine Art Institute symbolizing modernism in Bengal. Photograph taken by author Salma Begum, 2019.

Incidents of harassment were reported, and multiple women were arrested. When police opened fire on protesters, several students and participants were killed, injured, and thousands were arrested. A small monument called Shahid Minar was erected as a memorial immediately afterwards at the premises (Habib, 2010). The involvement of women can be testified by Rawshan Ara Bachchu's interview published as a news article, where she spoke about the participation of women in the language movement:

> In the then conservative society, it was not at all easy for women to directly participate in such a movement. The university's female students had to pay Rs 10 as a fine for talking to any male student without the proctor's permission. The number of girl students in Dhaka University was 40 to 50—of them, 25 to 30 remained in the hall. About four of us secretly joined student meetings after class or during recess. ("The forgotten women veterans," 2007, para. 3)

The movement gained momentum, and after long struggles, Bangla was given equal status as Urdu (Uddin, 2006). Soon after independence, in 1973, the monument was rebuilt by the state's Public Works Department, which led to the emergence of the Shahid Minar Plaza and its institutional surroundings as "pre-eminent symbolic space of Dhaka to organize demonstrations, broach condemnation and denounce cultural assertion" (Habib, 2010, p. 12). This way, a prominent testament to popular protest was engrained in the site's materiality, as a minor reference to a significant layer of gender-based contestation and revolt.

3.2.3. An Avenue of Contestation in Pre- and Post-Liberation Time (1965–1975)

Over time, urbanization started to take over, domesticating the landscape of Shahbag. Figure 7 depicts the Shahbag area as a palimpsest of urbanization, political riots, cultural events, and women's role in the independence war. After the 1960s, urbanization reached its apogee. Profound changes were evident both in the infrastructure and morphology of green space. The muddy roads from 1952 eventually turned into concrete roads (Figure 7). The connection for the elephants between Shahbag and Pilkhana transformed into a vehicular road that intersected the road where Ramna racecourse was located, creating a central node in the city. This node can be defined as the beginning of the Shahbag Chattwar (ground of protest). As railway tracks shifted eastward in the mid-60s, the old rail tracks were converted into a wide avenue that became the principal axis between the old and new Dhaka. From 1961 onwards, the place started to host diverse events (Figure 7), such as congregations, festivities, marches, etc.

Bengali culture holds a special place for celebration, evident in different festivities. The first day of the Bengali

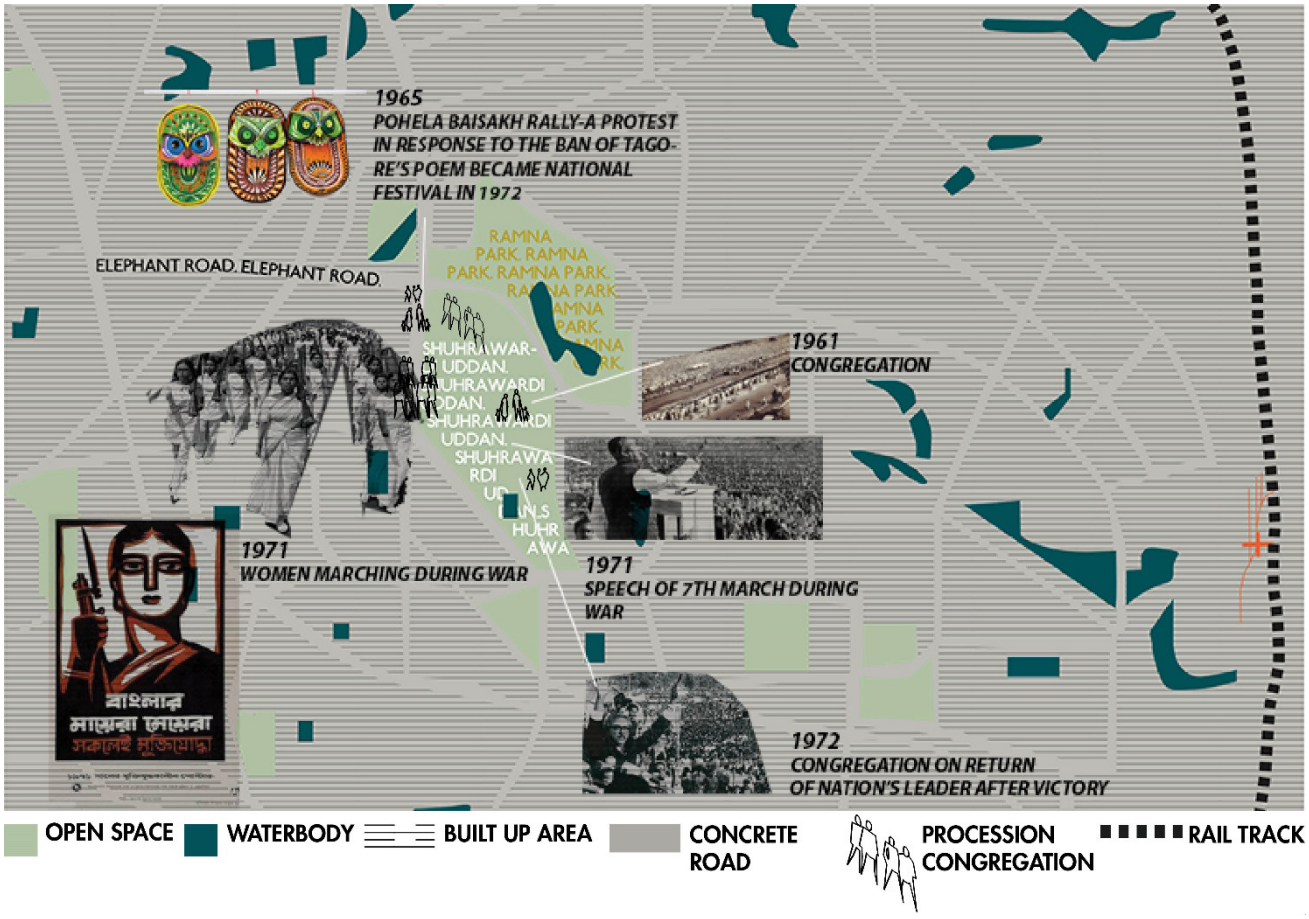


Figure 7. Pre- and post-liberation Shahbag urbanization takes over the landscape in 1975. Figure developed by author Salma Begum.

new year (Pohela Baisakh) begins its celebration with a rally titled "Mongol Sova Jatra" on the street of Shahbag. The day has a symbolic meaning to Bengali people and holds ample significance in view of national identity (Samayeen & Imon, 2016). This specific event from 1965 is a place-bound festival rooted in its cultural landscape. The Pohela Baisakh emerged as a response to Bengali culture's suppression (Habib, 2010). The protest became a national festival in 1972. From 2016, it became recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Additionally, Shahbag street appeared to be a ground of objection during the liberation war in 1971, when women were seen taking part in the marching. Moreover, the Ramna racecourse became a prime site for political movements—primarily known for the Nation's Father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic speech on 7 March 1971. It was a call to nationwide people to fight for the language where the oath for independence was declared in front of a large swath of Bengali (Habib, 2010). Both Bengali men and women of diverse classes, caste, religion, and ethnic backgrounds responded to the call of Sheikh Mujib.

Nonetheless, one of the most significant shortcomings in the perception of the fight for independence is the consistent failure to recognize the role of women in the Liberation War. In fact, women's role was largely ignored, denied, and misconstrued in Dhaka's mainstream history (Babul, 2014; Saikia, 2011). So-called war heroes should have included those women who supported the valiant freedom fighters with food, shelter, funds, as well as nursed the wounded and hid weapons risking their own lives. Acknowledgement should have also been made to those who had willingly sent their sons to war, who have lost their loved ones and, even worse, been subjected to sexual abuse and survived to bear the scar. The poster in 1971 with the writing *Banglar mayera, meyera, sokolei muktijoddha* ("mothers and daughters, all of them are freedom fighters of Bangladesh") testified of this significant women engagement in the war (the poster can be found at Dhaka Museum; see Habib et al., 2014, p. 75)

Ramna was appropriated again on 16 December 1971 by the Pakistan Military Forces to surrender. This multifaceted Ramna green space was renamed Shuhrawardin Uddan after independence in 1971. This place also witnessed the mass-gathering for the return of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib after independence.

3.3. A Chattwar of Rights to Public Space From 1997 Onwards

The Shahbag area re-surfaced as a ground of contestation organically in many different names under different

political powers: from Mughal pleasure garden to civil station, racecourse maidan to Shuhrawardi Uddan, from Ayub Khan Avenue in 1952 to present Shahbag Chattwar. In the post-independence period, the Ramna racecourse was divided into two segments: the Shishu park area and Shuhrawardi Uddan area.

In 1990, Shahbag Chattwar and the south of Shuhrawardi Uddan occupying the Dhaka University area, arts building, Teacher-Student Centre, and Fular Road witnessed the democratic movement in 1990. The 1990s movement, on the one hand, worked for the restoration of democracy; on the other, it energized the feminist and women movement in Bangladesh towards a democratic transition (Nazneen, 2013). Women and feminist activists claimed their platform to negotiate with different stakeholders, including the state, to protect gender rights in Bangladesh (Nazneen, 2013, 2017; Nazneen & Sultan, 2014). Besides, the area concentrated many other resistance movements, such as the movement against the Caretaker Government (known as 1/11) of 2007–2009, the Shahbag movement of 2013, the Road Safety Protest of 2018, and the anti-rape movement of 2020.

The corresponding architectural developments and art installations on the site highly shaped the morphogenesis of the Shahbag area. The Raju Bhashkorjo (Figures 8 and 9) is one of the most influential sculptures that symbolized the anti-terror movement from 1992. It was built in the memory of Moin Hossain Raju, an activist of the Bangladesh Chatra Union. The sculpture sits at the exact location where he was gunned down on 13 March 1992 while protesting student terrorism at Dhaka University campus. Since then, this point has acted as a highly symbolic ground for student protests. Moreover, Raju Bhashkorjo (Figures 8 and 9) and the sculpture in Shahbag Chattwar form an axis (Figure 9) that holds multicultural functionality during protest rallies.

Every year in February, the national book fair Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela ("immortal book fair of the twenty-first") occupies the whole avenue. This book fair is dedicated to the martyrs who died on 21 February 1952 during the language movement. Festivities in the name of the cultural rally, the first day of Spring of Bengali month Falgun (the Pohela Falgun), the book fair, and the Dhaka Literary Festival happen to be choreographed in different forms with different colors in the Shahbag area. One of the critical movements that made it iconic was the Shahbag movement of 2013. This movement, also known as Gonojagoron Moncho, started on 5 February 2013 to protest against a verdict on war criminals. It was the largest mass demonstration since 1990.

The Shahbag movement started against Jamaat-i-Islam leader Abdul Quader Molla's verdict by the International Crimes Tribunal, who was sentenced to life

Figure 8. Raju Bhaskarjo, the epitome of protest and testimony of the recent metro rail intervention. Photograph by Huda, 2021.

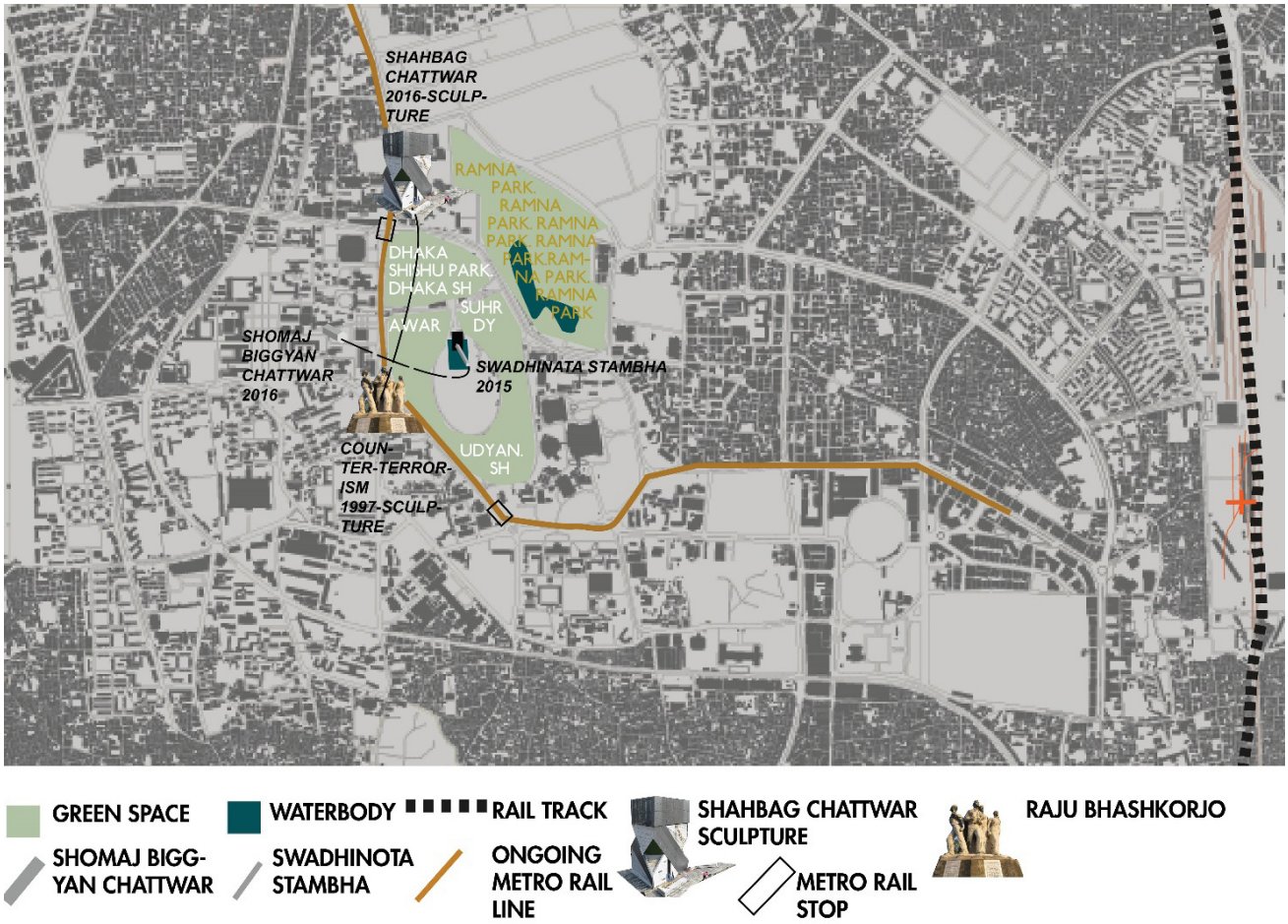


Figure 9. Present-day map showing recent design intervention and infrastructure in Shahbag area, Shahbag protest movements, and art sculptures. Figure developed by author Salma Begum.

in prison for his crime against humanity. Following the ruling, a group of online activists and bloggers started the protest at Shahbag and demanded the death sentence of Quader Molla. This youth-led movement also encouraged the people of Bangladesh to believe in the spirit of the Liberation War. Such a movement also spread the feeling that they were fighting another war against the same enemies/war criminals who killed three million people and dishonored about half a million Bangladeshi women during the liberation war in 1971. However, the Shahbag movement was challenged by Islamist political parties, such as Jamati-Islami and Hefazot-e-Islam. There were attempts to brand the Shahbag movement as an "anti-Islamic" gathering initiated by atheist bloggers. On 5 May 2013, thousands of activists of Hefazat-e-Islam gathered in Dhaka and demanded 13 points, including the death penalty of the atheist bloggers, and a ban on the mixing of men and women in public space. Despite the challenges by Islamist fundamentalists, the Shahbag movement embodied a new dimension in Dhaka's history by female activists' participation. Lucky Akter's (one of the female front-line faces in Shahbag) slogans encouraged all the participants to join the movement at Shahbag.

Nonetheless, many female protestants were threatened to be raped and repeatedly harassed, and fear and tension riddled the protests. Despite these challenges, Shahbag became a protected arena for the female protestors, in part, safeguarded by supportive male co-protestants. This remarkable mobilization also furthered women's involvement in other form of activisms and protests, such as the Road Safety Protest in 2018 and anti-rape movement in 2020.

Women's presence and involvement in the Shahbag movement faced two significant challenges: criticism of women's "westernized" agenda and tackling the Islamic fundamentalist political party. Criticism of women protester's "westernized" agenda in Bangladesh is often regarded as a threat to Bangladesh's cultural and religious norms (Nazneen & Sultan, 2014). Such criticism was triggered during the Shahbag movement for women wearing western attire without *purdah* (veil). However, the critics overlooked the presence of a significant number of women with Hijab (following *purdah*) and Shari (traditional Bengali woman's attire). This gendered notion reintroduced women with two different clusters—women with "modest" attire as ideal and women with "western" attire as the opposite, adding an intersectional

layer of identity that complexifies gender-divisions in the formation and contestation of identities in public space.

The second challenge was the proposition by Hefazat-e-Islami (a rising Islamic party consisting of Islamic school students). The proposal demanded to ban the mixing of men and women in public space. In response to these criticisms, secular protestants presented women protestants as "asexual" (as sister and mother figures), devoid of any further identity. In line with that, women's presence in the protest was justified either as "virtue" (evidenced by the Shahbag movement) or as a victim (evidenced by the anti-rape movement). This trend also continues in the representation of women in art, design and sculpture in the Dhaka University campus and its surroundings. In these forms of arts, design and sculpture, women's images could usually not transcend more traditional gender roles.

After the Shahbag movement, in 2016, the Shuhrawardi Uddan saw a new architectural endeavor (Figure 8), the Shadhinata Stambaha ("freedom monument"), in commemoration of 7 March historic speech by Seikh Mujibur Rahman. The museum plaza and glass tower are the new ground for the celebration of Independence Day, and in 2021, the book fair was organized in this precinct of Shuhrawardi uddan. Another small scale Chattwar was built in the same year opposite to the museum across the Shahbag Road behind the central library, next to the historic Madhur Canteen. The area remained unattended for years, and from 2016 onwards, it acts as a small hub for student gatherings. The city people currently appropriate the Shomaj Biggyan Chattwar (social science plaza) along with the Dhaka University students. The Shahbag area is now a constellation of public spaces which has historical and symbolic importance. The contestation is an everyday reality for the Shahbag area, and protests continue to add to its symbolic and political importance. Recent protests from 2020 testify to the nature of the movements in Raju Bhashkorjo. Dhaka University Hindu students protested and went on a hunger strike in response to Dhaka Mayoral poll on Saraswati PujaDay. Students also opposed the mass rapid transit line-6 (MRT Line-6) planned through the Dhaka University campus during the Covid-19 outbreak. The protest against MRT Line-6 (Figure 10) passing through the Shahbag area culminated with the submission of a memorandum to the vice-chancellor of Dhaka University demanding the relocation of the rail track. This protest was significant because the implementation of MRT Line-6 will not only destroy the educational environment of Dhaka University in the Shahbag area, but also the cultural landscape, which is part of significant events such as the Pohela Baisakh celebration and the Pohela Falgun, as well as Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela, the biggest book fair of the country. The aftermath of the changing ecology is already visible from the ongoing construction scene.

Figure 10. Infrastructure destroying the Shahbag cultural corridor and plaza. Figure developed by author Salma Begum based on photographs by Huda in 2021.

Like the Agora, the Shahbag provided the space to claim political rights to the city, people, and place. Art and design in the Shahbag area promoted and celebrated the arena as a ground of protest and contestation and imbued it with a distinct place-bound identity. The non-human, or material agency of the particular place, its historical location in the city, and the multiple architectural and sculptural objects that compose its physical form played a crucial role in this process, and inherently interacted with vast popular mobilizations. However, recent infrastructural interventions against which the students recently protested are transforming the character of the place and poses a threat to the cultural landscape of Shahbag. With this metro rail project passing through the Shahbag corridor, which has already started to change the physicality of the place, the pandemic of 2021 is most notably about to add a brutal scar to the palimpsestic history of the site.

4. Conclusion

Feminists have been claiming women's rights to the city since the last few decades by identifying material barriers that women disproportionately encounter. Feminist and city debates evolve on how the city represents and nurtures the unequal and gendered ways of maintaining society across gender, race, sexuality, class, and ability (Kern, 2020). In line with that, the Shahbag case study demonstrates the particular role of women's involvement in different movements and protests and how their presence in public space has been challenged, negotiated and renegotiated, shaped and re-shaped across the years within Islamist and secular political space.

Bangladesh's secular-minded society appreciated women's protests in different movements starting from the 1952 language movement, the liberation war in 1971, the 90s democratic movement, and finally, the Shahbag movement in 2013. But women's participation in these movements yielded threats and harassment. As a result, there was a constant fear and tension among them. Such fear consists of three types: (a) the danger of being raped, (b) the threat of harassment by the opposition, and (c) the loss of their "honor" by being assaulted. Reports of sexual assaults during the Pohela Boishakh celebration in 2015 and sexual harassment in the New Year celebration night in 2013 strengthened the fear. Tension also arose from a bomb blast at Ramna Batamul during the Pohela Boishak celebration of 2001, equally valid for both women and other secular-minded people. Over the last few decades, these events created social opposition among people, such as men vs. women, *rajakar* (*traitor*) vs. patriots, traditional vs. western, Islamic vs. non-Islamic, secularism vs. fundamentalism, etc.

A notorious dimension of gender and public space discussions in Bangladesh denoted that women came out in public space when the state or community needed them to do that, but under the supervision and protection of males. Men have historically dominated public space. However, women were "needed" when the state required them as key economic enablers. Today, Bangladesh is the second-largest textile-producing country globally, employing millions of people, of which a large percentage are women. Like the economy, in different movements and protests, women-only came to the foreground when men needed women to strengthen their power.

Nonetheless, public space so far did not ensure women's safety and failed to offer an inclusive and fearless space. Men still needed to protect women's safety during the movements. In a sense, therefore, men's role as guardians, leaders, dominant influencers, guides, and protectors has not changed much. Women's voices often remain unheard due to men's authoritarian dominance. The construction of hegemonic masculinity was the reason behind women's subordinate position. This type of construction of masculinity influences men to conduct violence against women to show their power and superior authority.

Although many feminists seem optimistic about female protesters' roles during Shahbag and anti-rape movements, the fear of violence still exists. The safety, security, and inclusion of women in public space become the primary concern, whereas the "rights" of women are still undefined and often remain gendered. The gender dynamics are closely bound up with the changing materiality of Dhaka's public space. This article unraveled some of these diversified events that drastically changed the public space landscape as an ever rewritten and partly erased palimpsest. In such light, the cultural landscape of Shahbag can be seen as a palimpsestic juxtaposition of ecological, social, political, and gendered cultural layers. At present, Shahbag continues to be Dhaka's prime site for political riots and cultural events. Each of the events has contributed to the specific and contested character of this contemporary site. Architectural and urban design and art, as much as popular forms of protest and resistance, thus forged a remarkably "gendered" space that continues to play a crucial role in the city's further development of inclusion and social rights.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Prof. Bruno De Meulder for his invaluable feedback throughout the PhD process. Furthermore, we express our sincere admiration to the reviewers and editors for their valuable comments. Moreover, we would like to offer our gratitude to both the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the Prime Minister Fellowship and the Interfaculty Council for Development Co-Operation (IRO) at KU Leuven for sponsoring our PhD researches. Finally, we would like to thank Mr. Huda for his support with the photographs.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Babul, P. (2014, December 2). Women's role in '52, '71. *The Daily Star*. https://www.thedailystar.net/womens-role-in-52-71-shahbagh-53033

Beebeejaun, Y. (2017). Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *39*(3), 323–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2016.1255526

Begum, S. (2018). Changing scenarios of public open space in a British colonial city. *Nakhara Journal of Environmental Design and Planning*, *14*, 39–56. https://ph01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/nakhara/article/view/104338

Begum, S. (2020). Reclaiming public open space within the shifting landscape of Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Civil Engineering and Architecture*, *8*(6), 1178–1193. https://doi.org/10.13189/cea.2020.080603

Bondi, L. (1998). Gender, class, and urban space: Public and private space in contemporary urban landscapes. *Urban Geography*, *19*(2), 160–185. https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.19.2.160

Chant, S., & McIlwaine, C. (2016). *Cities, slums and gender in the global south: Towards a feminised urban future*. Routledge.

Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. Polity Press.

Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5684.html

Corboz, A. (1983). The land as palimpsest. *SAGE Journals*, *31*(121), 12–34. https://doi-org.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/10.1177/039219218303112102

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1989*(1), 139–167. https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/1229039

Doshi, S. (2017). Embodied urban political ecology: Five propositions. *Area*, *49*(1), 125–128. https://doi.org/doi:10.1111/area.12293

Habib, K. (2010). The post colonial public spaces and its cultural diversity: The case of national-cultural representative public spaces of Dhaka. In *Assessing and exploring the state of urban knowledge* (pp. 89–109). N-AERUS.

Habib, K., Heynen, H., & De Meulder, B. (2014). (Un)Covering the face of Dhaka: Gender politics and public space in the post-colonial city. *Environment, Space, Place*, *6*(2), 69–98. https://doi.org/10.5840/esplace20146212

Kern, L. (2020). *Feminist city: Claiming space in a man-made world*. Verso.

Lal, R. (2003). Rethinking Mughal India: Challenge of a princess' memoir. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *38*(1), 53–65. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4413046

Nazneen, S. (2013). Men aboard? movement for a uniform family code in Bangladesh. In M. Al-Sharmani (Ed.), *Feminist activism, women's rights and legal reform* (pp. 101–124). Zed Books.

Nazneen, S. (2017). Negotiating gender equity in a clientelist state: The role of informal networks. In G. Waylen (Ed.), *Gender and informal institutions* (pp. 161–181). Rowan & Littlefield.

Nazneen, S., & Sultan, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Voicing demands: Feminist activism in transitional contexts*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Nightingale, A. J. (2011). Bounding difference: Intersectionality and the material production of gender, caste, class and environment in Nepal. *Geoforum*, *42*, 153–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.03.004

Panday, P. K. (2008). Representation without participation: Quotas for women in Bangladesh. *International Political Science Review*, *29*(4), 489–512. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512108095724

Peake, L. (2016). The twenty-first-century quest for feminism and the global urban. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *40*(1), 219–227. https://doi.org/doi:10.1111/1468-2427.12276

Saikia, Y. (2011). *Women, war, and the making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971*. Duke University Press.

Salehin, M. M. (2018). *Islamic NGOs in Bangladesh development, piety and neoliberal governmentality*. Routledge.

Samayeen, N., & Imon, S. S. (2016). The cultural landscape of the Pohela Boisakh festival and the making of a social identity in Bangladesh. In K. Silva & A. Sinha (Eds.), *Cultural landscapes of South Asia* (pp. 159–170). Routledge.

Siddiqua, F. Z. (2017, January 27). Blast from the past. *The Daily Star*. https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/blast-the-past-1351450

Sultana, F. (2020). Embodied intersectionalities of urban citizenship: Water, infrastructure, and gender in the global south. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *110*(5), 1407–1424. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2020.1715193

The forgotten women veterans of the language movement. (2007, February 24). *Bdnews24*. https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2007/02/24/the-forgotten-women-veterans-of-the-language-movement

Uddin, S. M. (2006). *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, ethnicity, and language in an Islamic nation*. University of North Carolina Press.

White, S. C. (2012). Beyond the paradox: Religion, family and modernity in contemporary Bangladesh. *Mod-*

ern Asian Studies, *46*(5), 1429–1458. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X12000133

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and feminist politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *13*(3), 193–209. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065752

About the Authors

Salma Begum is an independently practicing Bangladeshi architect and faculty member at Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Currently, she is pursuing her PhD as part of the OSA Research Group at KU Leuven, Belgium, funded by the Prime Minister Fellowship of the Bangladesh Government. Her current research aims to develop an instrumental basis for public open space development related to water impacts through cartographic exploration for Dhaka. She frequently contributes to international architectural publications. Based on her PhD research, one of her international conference papers got awarded the Best Paper Award in 2020.

Jinat Hossain is a PhD scholar in the Division of Geography and Tourism, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at KU Leuven, Belgium. Her PhD work is on climate change, gender, and social innovation, and her interest covers multi-disciplinary issues connected to gender and feminist theories. Some of the themes she is working on are gendered space, land rights, migration, religion, the gendered body, sexuality, and masculinity. She is also an assistant professor at Noakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh.

Jeroen Stevens is an architect and urbanist, currently engaged as a post-doctoral researcher in the OSA Research Group at KU Leuven and as Fulbright & BAEF visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York. His research sounds out the particular agency of urban movements as they struggle for more socially just cities. Drawing from immersive engagement in complex metropolitan environments, his work dwells on the nexus of urbanism and urban anthropology.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 158–167
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4374

Article

Gender Inequalities and the Effects of Feminine Artworks on Public Spaces: A Dialogue

Hooshmand Alizadeh [1,2,*], Josef Kohlbacher [1], Rozhen Kamal Mohammed-Amin [3] and Tabin Latif Raouf [3]

[1] Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria;
E-Mails: hooshmand.alizadeh@oeaw.ac.at (H.A.), josef.kohlbacher@oeaw.ac.at (J.K.)
[2] Kurdistan Studies Institute, University of Kurdistan, Iran
[3] Digital Cultural Heritage Research Center, Sulaimani Polytechnic University, Iraq;
E-Mails: rozhen.mohammed@spu.edu.iq (R.K.M.-A.), tabin.latif.r@spu.edu.iq (T.L.R.)

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 15 April 2021 | Accepted: 22 July 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
Feminist street art aims to transform patriarchal spaces into places of gendered resistance by asserting a feminist presence in the city. Considering this, as well as women's social life, their struggle against lingering forces of patriarchy, and relating features of inequality (domestic violence), there was a feminist installation artwork by the young Kurdish artist Tara Abdulla that shook the city of Sulaimani in Iraqi Kurdistan on 26 October 2020. She had prepared a 4,800-meter-long washing line covered with the clothes of 99,678 Kurdish women who were survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. They installed it along the busiest street of the city (Salim Street). She used this piece of feminine to express her reaction to the Kurdish society regarding, the abuse that goes on silently, behind closed doors. She also aimed towards normalizing women's bodies. After the installation, she received many controversial reactions. As her artwork was a pioneering project in line with feminist issues in Kurdistan which preoccupied the city for quite a while, the aim of this article is to investigate the diverse effects of her work on the current dialogue regarding gender inequality in the Kurdish society. To do this, we used the research method of content analysis on big data (Facebook comments) to investigate the public reactions of a larger number of locals. The *Feminine* effectively exposed some of the deep-rooted cultural, religious, and social barriers in addressing gender inequalities and silent sexual violence issues in the modern Kurdish patriarchal society.

Keywords
Facebook reactions; feminist street art; gender inequalities dialogue; Kurdish women; public space; Sulaimani

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere" edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

Feminist street art aims to transform patriarchal spaces into places of gendered resistance by asserting a feminist presence in the city, through different artworks in which femininity is explored and patriarchalism is subverted (Ryan, 2016). Considering this, as well as women's social life, their struggle against lingering forces of patriarchy, and relating features of inequality (Mojab, 2005), particularly domestic violence, there was a feminist installation artwork by the young Kurdish artist Tara Abdulla that shook the city of Sulaimani, in Iraqi Kurdistan on 26 October 2020. With the help of the Civil Development Organization, she had prepared a 4,800-meter-long washing line covered with the clothes of 99,678 Kurdish women who were survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. They installed them along the busiest street of the city starting from Nali Park near the city center through Salim Street to the Courthouse by hanging them between electricity poles (see Figure 1). The installation

Figure 1. Feminist installation artwork and location along the course of Salim Street. Source: Photos taken from Abdulla (2020); map prepared by the authors.

aimed at visualizing, exposing, and sparking public discussions around the pervasiveness of unspoken and silenced violence against local women. It also aimed at normalizing and disassociating women's bodies from shame by exposing the public to private and intimate pieces of clothing from local anonymous sexual violence survivors. She chose public space to bring the issue out of the private domain and show the people what was happening there.

After the installation, she received many controversial reactions and in a press conference she responded to the challenging questions. In an aftermath press conference, Tara attributed the urgent removal of her contemporary artwork to "the safety and security of the city" (Abdulrahman, 2020, p. 10), while announcing her plan to use the remaining pieces of the personal clothes in her next "shocking project" (BMC TV, 2020b). As her artwork was a pioneering project in line with feminist issues in Kurdistan, and since Sulaimani is a relatively progressive and cultural city with an outspoken public and the reputation of being a center for "revolutions" across the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the rest of Iraq, the removal of the artwork raised two key questions: How do socially conservative, religious, and patriarchal societies such as the Kurdish society react to publicizing and exposing sensitive topics involving sexual violence and deprivatizing women's bodies? How do public space and controversial artistic interventions contribute to widening and deepening debates on intolerance for sexual and gender-based violence? Therefore, the main aim of this article is to investigate the diverse effects of "the feminine" on the current dialogue regarding gender inequality in Kurdish society.

2. State of the Research in Theoretical Discourse

In the words of Foucault (1980, p. 149), "a whole history remains to be written about spaces—which would at the same time be the history of powers." This idea of (in)visible presence under the eye of power can be ascribed to the work of Henri Lefebvre, who argues that spatial patterns are not absolute, but are influenced by the social and economic systems of the institutions and individuals who exercise political power (Doan, 2010). This implies that the social systems effectively gendered spaces in favor of men and against women, even by carrying the names of men onto public spaces: streets, squares, and various institutions

The street's main "sociocultural function is to facilitate creative self-expression" (Riggle, 2016, p. 1) "that might not otherwise be experienced by [people] in the community" (Bacharach, 2018, p. 40). The opportunity to present a work in public space is to exhibit it visibly or to open up to experience something that has been undetectable or unseen before. This is in line with the words of Carmen Foncerrada in 1921, who differentiates the destiny of an artwork from a that of a museum: "Museums seem like cemeteries of illustrious men" (as cited in Rojek, 2020, p. 77). Works of art should be in contact with the daily life of people. In the words of Bacharach, the street environment provides an important contextualizing base for the performance of art, which could not be achieved within the institutions, to communicate the issues of "those who are engaging in marginalization" (Bacharach, 2018, p. 40). Art has always been part of our collective commons, the means by which the fruits of imagination are ploughed back into shared experience. Unlike institutions, it can communicate more immediately, and "over a longer period of time, and more easily to a wider group of people—it's a way of getting one's voice out to those who need to hear it to change those institutional structures" (Bacharach, 2018, p. 40). This means that art also possesses an extraordinary power "to even fight against the stigma associated with sexual violence" (Di Lellio et al., 2019, p. 1546). This is clearer in the words of Louise Bourgeois and colleagues:

> I'm afraid of power: It makes me nervous. In real life, I identify with the victim, that is why I went into art. In my art, I am the murderer….The process is to go from passive to active. As an artist I am a powerful person. (Bourgeois et al., 1998, p. 227)

Considering the social movements of feminism, which started their campaigns for visibility in public spaces applying both artistic practices and political strategies in the 1960s, the street became a discursive space in which identities, messages, socio-political concepts are presented and commented on. In this regard, feminist street art can act as a powerful platform for reaching the public and forming a public resistance against the patriarchal expectations and against the erasure of women in public space (Rojek, 2020). More importantly, such street art can be interpreted as an alternative way of doing politics or practicing resistance through the creative freedom of artists, in that "it provides a space and opportunity to contextualize and question dominant cultural codes and conventions" (Ryan, 2016, p. 8). In this regard, feminist street art aims to transform patriarchal spaces into places of gendered resistance by asserting a feminist presence in the city, in which femininity is explored and patriarchalism is subverted (O'Brien, 2016).

The process of normalization of women's issues is not an easy task, as "street artists often aim for risk, danger, and audacity gained from illegality in the materiality and meaning of artworks" (Chackal, 2016, p. 360) as best exemplified in a series of street artworks by Tatyana Fazlalizadeh in New York. She highlighted her artworks under the title *Stop Telling Women to Smile* by depicting non-smiling portraits of women above certain slogans, such as "Women: Not Here for Your Entertainment" or "My Name Is Not Baby": "These works provide an opportunity for the women who were silenced by the harassment to regain their voice" (Bacharach, 2018, p. 36). Similar to this, one can mention MissMe's Vandals works in Montréal, which, through the artistic placement of

wheat-pasted characters, try to transform inherently patriarchal built space to generate dialogue around the issues that affect women, such as safety within urban centers, violence against women, racism, and colonization (Harris, 2019). In another example, we can add the feminist street artwork of the Mexican artist Mónica Barajas. She has used different artworks in the forms of mural paintings in the street environment to express the voices of powerless people for justice and equality. For her, the street environment is a democratic, open, and free of charge public sphere in which the walls can be transformed into a storybook "to be read as an article or a report we were never supposed to hear of" (Perez-Rodriguez et al., 2018, p. 90).

For the issue of women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, we can highlight two recent projects in different urban contexts. The first one is the feminine artwork of Alketa Xhafa-Mripa in Kosovo, whose installation artwork in 2015 was titled *Thinking of You* and dealt with the hidden and private issues of women survivors of sexual violence in Kosovo's period of conflict during 1998–1999 (Di Lellio et al., 2019). She gathered thousands of skirts and dresses of those women to hang on washing lines across the main football stadium in Pristina. Based on her description, it was an installation art "to bring [women's] issues into the man's world, to a public place," to break the silence of survivors and "to end the culture of isolation and shame that enfolded survivors" (Hardi, 2020). For her, "that's what makes art work worthwhile: having access to masses, making a work under the skyline that is accessible to everyone, not only to a few" (Mripa, 2015). The second example refers to the artwork of Turkish artist Vahit Tuna, who covered the two towering blank façades of a building overlooking a busy Istanbul street, with 440 pairs of high heels. The main aim of this installation was "to symbolize the number of women murdered in domestic or sexual violence in Turkey in 2018" (Hudson, 2019). This installation was presented in the public realm because the artist wanted passersby to see the work as an alarming visual message that influenced their emotions and made them think about violence against women. In this case, shoes were chosen instead of clothing due to a Turkish tradition where shoes of someone who passed away are left outside of her/his house to prevent any further dying (Hardi, 2020). The ultimate aim of the creation of such emotional public awareness in both projects is to affect the public and change "the members of that public from sympathetic into committed spectators" to justice (Di Lellio et al., 2019, p. 1554).

3. The *Feminine* Installation

The Feminine was a short-lived public art project installed in a prominent public space in Sulaimani. Unlike much smaller and private Kurdish artworks, this large and public washing line-like installation deliberately placed the "private" clothing pieces of the survivors, such as bras and underwear, on top of the other less private and intimate pieces of the displayed clothes. This was meant to be and was perceived as a bold and controversial statement in a traditional and patriarchal society that too often associates women's bodies with sex, shame, and honor. The young Kurdish female artist had crowdsourced the clothing pieces from the survivors by knocking on the doors of thousands of welcoming and unwelcoming residents of Sulaimani, Halabja, and Chamchamal over three months of research and preparation (Abdulrahman, 2020).

Choosing a public space for spatializing a potentially dividing art installation was a key component in the design and execution of *The Feminine*. Unlike indoor galleries and exhibition spaces, public space helps with exposing her non-traditional art to "regular" people and the whole community and not only to a handful of appreciative elites or artists (Abdulla, 2020). Tara believed that Salim Street, with its massive users from different backgrounds, would help the "revolution" she wanted to start, disrupting the status quo and the normalization of silent sexual violence. Being critical of the role of local women's rights organizations and their contribution, Tara wanted to undertake an artistic and public exposure-based approach to her women's rights advocacy. During the project opening press conference, Tara recalled how some of the women victims were considering her a "superman" for being willing to expose an ignored pain (BMC TV, 2020a). Through an analogy, she described her shocking and "dream" installation as a small step towards addressing a severe societal pain related to women that could not have been realized without the support and sponsorship of the Civil Development Organization.

The artist correctly predicted the outcome of her so-called "shocking installation." In just one day, the installation made it into the headlines, talks, social media posts, and comments of many local (and some international) media outlets, organizations, writers, artists, advocates, academics, politicians, and the general public of Sulaimani and other cities across the KRG. Hours after its unveiling, this public installation experienced violence and vandalism by some unknown youths who set some parts of the washing-line-like installation on fire. Although the installation was planned for two days of public display, Tara eventually removed her work before its scheduled time. While Tara denies anyone's role in her decision to remove the remaining parts of the installation, rumors from locals and opposition shadow media suggest that the removal followed the request of an influential female politician from a ruling political party in the city. In any event, the decision was an attempt to contain the vandalism and reactions of mass disapproval from an outraged and skeptical public that has grown impatient with the many political and economic turmoil the region has been experiencing.

4. Women in Sulaimani City

Sulaimani city is a relatively mountainous city in the northeast of Iraq and southeast of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Despite ongoing archaeological findings from thousands of years ago, the founding of Sulaimani as a city dates back to 1784 by Prince Ibrahim (locally called Ibrahim Pasha Baban) from the Baban Emirate. As the capital of Sulaimani province and the second largest Kurdish city in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Sulaimani population was estimated at 847,447 inhabitants in 2019. Locally, the city is known and prides itself for its cultural diversity, openness, vocal, divided, and opinionated public. It has been officially designated Iraqi Kurdistan's cultural capital in 2012 and a UNESCO creative city of literature in 2019. Labelled "the Difficult City" by Saddam Hussein regime's military and security officials, the city has been the stage of many demonstrations, prosecutions, and local history-changing events. Political oppositions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are primarily based in Sulaimani.

As a Kurdish city, it has a largely socially conservative public. Still, less socially conservative, and sometimes even locally provocative, businesses, activities, and events are more occurring and tolerated in comparison to other cities within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the rest of country. Historically, Kurdish women, specifically Sulaimani women, have enjoyed higher freedom in comparison to the neighboring cultures (Alizadeh, 2007, 2012; Hassan, 2013). The city celebrates some of its historically influential women, including women dying in political demonstrations, through their status in some key areas of the city (Joly & Bakawan, 2016). Locally, Sulaimani women are known for their liberal (or less conservative) appearance, talks, and behaviors. Still, the city often finds itself divided between its socially and religiously conservative and secular or non-religious dwellers.

5. Methodology

To investigate the research questions and understand the public reactions towards *The Feminine*, we undertook a content analysis of the public reactions to the related news and posts of a total of 10 popular and less popular media outlets in the KRG on Facebook, totaling 1530 unrestricted public comments (text and images). We chose Facebook from among other social media platforms because of its vast popularity and wide use across KRG. Facebook is becoming a "virtual public space" for daily public exchanges, dialogues, debates, and reactions on various affairs among locals from different genders, age groups, education levels, and ethnicities in Iraq. Facebook's speed in spreading news and its ubiquitousness has made it a powerful medium for informing or misinforming Iraq's largely young public opinion, as well as exposing, influencing, or judging social, cultural, economic, and even political affairs. In the context of Iraq, Facebook has become a "court of public opinion" that is used or misused by individuals, political parties, and other groups. Ruling and opposition political parties in the KRG fund hundreds of shadow media to spread propaganda, fake news, attack each other, and influence public opinion. It is therefore no coincidence that Facebook users were restricted or blocked during past mass demonstrations or the ISIS invasion (Ali, 2018; Saliba, 2019).

We used the content analysis research method on big data to investigate the public reactions of a larger number of locals with a more diverse profile and location. Content analysis refers to "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). It analyses data "within a specific context in view of the meanings someone—a group or a culture—attributes to them" (Krippendorff, 1989, p. 403). Also, our past research experience shows that in the context of highly socialized, politicized, and indirect cultures, such as the KRG, people tend to be less direct and genuine in expressing their actual beliefs, thoughts, and feelings on such sensitive and controversial topics in face-to-face interviews. Additionally, we believe that an anonymized online or paper-based questionnaire or survey could not have reached or collected reactions from such a diverse and large number of locals the same way Facebook posts did in more natural and self-expressive ways. Despite the recognized challenges related to the use of big data from Facebook or other social media platforms, we believe the benefits of our selected method to this type of research investigation in Iraq's context outweigh its risks.

Our data collection process started with identifying the Facebook pages of a total of 10 media outlets with different levels of local popularity, numbers of followers, and focus areas. We reviewed and quantified the number and content of the related video and text news items dealing with the installation and removal of the artwork. We then extensively reviewed, categorized, and quantified a total of 1530 unrestricted public comments from Facebook. As part of the review, we identified the number, types, and motives of the public textual and image reactions to the news. While the self-reporting nature of social media profiles creates limitations for fully verifying the demographic data (gender and location) of commentators, we took some data quality assurance measures to mitigate this limitation. Before assigning the gender and location of the commentators, we checked each commentator's publicly available information and photos thoroughly, to correlate their profile name, self-reported or unreported gender and location, and the number of self-identifying photos.

6. Reactions to *The Feminine* Artwork

Of the 1530 Facebook comments we analyzed, an overwhelming majority of 91.6% of the comments were negative, severely criticizing *The Feminine* from unknown locations (44.6%), Sulaimani (27.8%), Erbil (10.2%), and

other cities inside and outside Iraq. Of those, about 72% were self-identified as male, 26% were self-identified as female, and the gender of the remaining 2% was unknown. Such groupthink in Facebook reactions does not often take place in the public reaction of Sulaimani inhabitants, famous for its divided public opinion in many political, religious, economic, and social matters. Among the negative reactions, we identified six main types of motives or sources of provocation:

1. Publicizing private pieces of women's clothing in a busy public space.
2. Localizing the "sensitive" and "shameful" topic of sexual violence and exposing its massive scale.
3. Public shaming or fear of being judged by residents of neighboring cities (internal politics) from the association of sexual violence with Sulaimani.
4. The artist's gender, and her appearance associations.
5. Installing unusual objects in an unexpected public space.
6. Limited local exposure to and interaction with controversial public art installations.

Overall, the negative comments fall into one or more of the following five categories: (1) personally attacking and insulting the artist and her character and idea, (2) interpreting the artist's work as an insult to Kurdish or Sulaimani women, (3) considering the artwork a disgraceful act for local culture, the city, or the Islamic religion, (4) blaming local women's rights organizations, local authorities, political parties, or media, and (5) complaining about the negative visual effect of the temporary art installation on the street and city scenery. The majority (65.3%) of the content of the negative reactions was emotional, extremely offensive, and used sarcastic and coarse language in Facebook's virtual public space to personally attack and degrade the artist in her appearance, ideas, and even manners. Male commenters composed the vast majority of this group. Some of the commenters in this group extended their offences and personal attacks to the artist's family and project team. Others went as far as encouraging or praising vandalism against the installation.

Another group of opposers (9%) considered the installation to be an insult and disgrace for Sulaimani women since the installation revealed their private pieces of clothing or "falsely suggested" that Sulaimani women were sexually violated. Some of these deniers questioned the authenticity of the clothes collection process by suggesting that the clothes belonged to people who had donated them supporting refugees and displaced people, or that the clothes belonged to non-local women. Although lingerie stores in the busy city center of Sulaimani tend to display women's underwear in their exhibition windows or on storefront outdoor tables, the display of anonymized and "private" pieces of clothing in the public space, especially as they were alluding to the sensitive topic of sexual violence, generated strong public reactions and outcry. Despite some Kurdish women's influential role in their communities throughout Kurdish history (Bruinessen, 2001; Galletti, 2001; Mojab, 2005) and ongoing progress in local women's participation in social, government, and political affairs (Begikhani et al., 2018), traditional and socially conservative expectations directed at women largely manifest in public reactions to initiatives that reach beyond the traditional boundaries. Additionally, in the local context, hanging women's underwear in busy public spaces has a significant negative connotation. Historically, Kurdish clans or villages hung the underwear of the women of a defeated clan or village on top of the captured houses or villages to humiliate and publicly shame their male enemies. The trace of this practice can still be heard in the threats and insults of some locals in modern times. One of the opposers of *The Feminine* explicitly compared the installation with that historic woman degrading practice.

While we believe that the socially and (to some extent) religiously largely conservative Kurdish culture played a major role in the groupthink phenomenon we observed in the public reaction, a small percentage explicitly identified the temporary art installation as a disgrace and offense to local culture (0.3%), the city (2.5%), and the religion of Islam (1.8%). The content of many of the comments made it clear that the provocation had to do with the message as well as the delivery style of the message, when it publicized personal, "private" pieces of clothing and exposed the large scale of local silent abuses and sexual violence.

Although no women's rights groups or organizations were directly or indirectly involved in the project development, some of the critics (4.4%) blamed local women's rights groups, advocates, and organizations for inspiring and encouraging such "shameless" projects that would allegedly encourage other young women to stray away from their local culture and values as Tara was said to have done. These comments were made despite Tara's explicit and vocal criticism of women's rights organizations for the slow and inefficient fulfilling of their roles and their outdated approach towards exposing local women's pains and advancing their rights. Accusing these groups and organizations of conducting liberal and untraditional individual or collective female initiatives is quite common in the content of the KRG. In 2008, when the KRG parliament amended the Iraqi Personal Status Law to restrict polygyny in the region, many conservative and religious organizations and locals considered this a secular move against Islamic law. Many of these persons and institutions blamed and pointed fingers at women's rights organizations for "opening the eyes" of women, encouraging them to divorce and rebel against their religion, culture, and family. In his comment on one of *The Feminine* news posts, an opposer posted an unrelated photo of the female members of the High Council of Women's Affairs in the KRG with an overlay text stating: "Of the 12 women members of this council, nine of

them are divorced. Who is responsible for this?" While no women's rights organization was specifically involved in the project, many other textual and image comments blamed these organizations. One of the most repeated comments was an image of a controversial mullah with a statement from him on *The Feminine*: "Women run to the NGOs to help them solve their problems, and they made them take off their underwear to hang them on the poles of the city!" The same controversial mullah had previously publicly described local women as "dinosaurs" on his self-funded TV channel.

A total of 1.3% of the commentators accused the local authorities and political parties of failing to have prevented the action or of failing to prosecute the artist. Local public opinion and media supporting the opposing parties have always considered local authorities' interference with political, administrative, or economically motivated demonstrations as directed against the KRG or as ruling a restriction of freedom of expression. Yet in the case of *The Feminine*, enough commentators were calling out against the authorities' inaction to prevent or stop the artist and her "provocative" and "shameful'' installation.

A small percentage (0.2%) complained about the promotional role of local media for the wide coverage of this controversial artwork that "degraded" Sulaimani women and the city. Some opposers in this group accused local media of hypocrisy and double standards in giving over-exposure to non-religious and out-of-norm activities such as this, while overlooking or ignoring coverage of religious activities. One opposer went into specifics when he compared how local media extensively covered the Feminine, while they offered little to no media coverage to an activity in which a group of Muslim women in Sulaimani prayed in Bardarki Sarai (the most famous public square in Sulaimani). Through a text overlay on an image of the praying women, the same opposer tried to show an alternative picture relating to the actions of other Sulaimani women. The content of this image and many of the comments it triggered provided a window into the mind of some of *The Feminine* opposers and their strong denial of the scale of sexual violence in their province. Some of the comments questioned the installation of such a "disgraceful" artwork in Sulaimani because the pieces of clothing came from other cities and towns adjacent to Sulaimani as well. These opposers considered the decision to install the artwork in Sulaimani as an attempt to distort the image and reputation of this "cultural capital." Some opposers used the installation location as a point of attack against the city and its more liberal attitudes. A sarcastic commenter explicitly insulted and shamed the city and its female population stating that "*The Feminine* makes it seem as if no Sulaimani woman was left unmolested."

The artist repeatedly pointed to the fact that her project aims at opening the dialogue and raising awareness about the widespread presence of silent sexual violence in all its recognized and unrecognized forms—everywhere, including the KRG. Still, the localization of the artwork's materials appeared to have intensified the negative reactions towards installation, especially from the residents of Sulaimani.

About 4% of the commenters justified their dissatisfaction from an aesthetic point of view and the installation's unpleasant negative scenery in the "cultural city." A much smaller percentage (0.6%) explicitly denounced having such art installation in a public space, while 2.1% used emojis or images to express their dissatisfaction with *The Feminine*. A total of 8.5% of the negative comments combined two or three of the above negative reaction types.

A disproportionately lower percentage of the commenters were neutral (4.9%) or were supporters of the art installation (3.5%). Half of the few supporters supported the artist or the artwork. Many of the supporters praised the artist's bravery and fearlessness in exposing unspoken or unacknowledged abuses against women in patriarchal societies. After all, in Kurdish culture sex, sexual violence, and exposure or reference to women's private body parts are taboo. Too often, especially in more conservative areas and families, innocent women or victims of sexual violence are "honor killed" and buried in unmarked graves (Bindel, 2021). Therefore, sparking dialogues around these topics on such a scale and with such visibility is a bold and daring act by anyone, let alone a local female artist. Some of the commentators in this group complained about the mass offenses the artist and her artwork have been exposed to, considering the negative reactions as another form of deeply rooted gender inequality and bias against women. Some of installation's supporters considered the burning of parts of the installation by unknown youths as an attempt to cover up their sexual violence against women or silence their victims or anyone who would try to expose them.

Only two of the 1530 comments supported the installation from the point of view of tolerance to diversity. Except for a few women's rights and gender equality advocates, debate around *The Feminine* in media channels and these specific Facebook posts lacked the voice and comments of many influential women's rights organizations and advocates in Sulaimani and across the region. While the short duration of the installation may have limited the engagement of these organizations and individuals in the public debate, it also questions their role in local sexual violence debates and their support for other women's initiatives outside their own organizations and networks. Most of the support for the project appeared to have been expressed in different ways.

A survey on Facebook and discussions with the artist revealed that individual academics, women's rights advocates, writers, and journalists from Sulaimani have expressed their strong support for Tara and her work through supportive posts on their social media accounts, phone calls, and messages. However, these quiet supporters stayed outside the larger-scale, heated debates and reactions in the news coverage of popular and less

popular media outlets. Strong negative reactions of the loud opposers and potential fear of personal attacks in social media may have contributed to the silence of many of *The Feminine* supporters as it appeared from our discussions with local men and women displaying points of view that are less socially conservative.

While 1530 comments cannot represent the views and opinion of Sulaimani, it does display a pattern of public reaction and a tone of dialogue related to a sensitive topic involving women and sexual violence. Although *The Feminine* was ultimately removed before its scheduled end date with almost no objection from key women's rights organizations, it succeeded in engaging the public on a massive scale.

In this regard, feminist street art can act as a powerful platform for reaching the public and forming a public resistance against the patriarchal expectations and against the erasure of women in public space (Rojek, 2020). More importantly, such street art can be interpreted as an alternative way of doing politics or practicing resistance through the creative freedom of artists, in that "it provides a space and opportunity to contextualize and question dominant cultural codes and conventions" (Ryan, 2016, p. 8).

7. Conclusion

As we reflected on the reaction of people since the controversial art installation by Tara, it first reaffirms the points that have been discussed in the theoretical discourse concerning the role of feminist street art installations in public space as a form of public resistance against the patriarchal expectations and the erasure of women in public space. Then, it highlighted some major challenges concerning human rights in general and women's rights advocacy in particular in Kurdish society. The Feminine revealed the motives and reaction types of local loud opposition to those who reveal and remind of sexual violence, and to dialogue initiators addressing the deprivatization of female bodies in the public domain. It also highlighted the blindspots and dualism of the Sulaimani public that usually accepts and tolerates different forms of diversity in their city, which they proudly call a cultural and diverse city across the KRG and in Iraq. The public art installation effectively exposed some of the deep-rooted cultural, religious, and social barriers in addressing gender inequalities and silent sexual violence issues in the modern Kurdish patriarchal society. It demonstrated how the combination of art and public space can force public reactions and dialogues on the unspoken, controversial, and taboo topics of sexual violence and the deprivatization of women's bodies. In addition, the vandalism against the public artwork and its urgent removal proved the influence of such artistic interventions in generating wide and strong public debates and dialogues. Furthermore, because it brought into the public sphere the issue of Kurdish women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and their pain by communicating their emotions, it expanded the public sphere of knowledge and sounded an alarm signal, calling on activist women for more ongoing campaigns. Finally, the above review shows that, despite good progress in political participation (Al-Tamimi, 2018), Kurdish women in the KRG still require more efforts to be made towards the creation of an independent and unified women's movement, aimed at changing cultural mindsets in order to achieve equal rights to those enjoyed by men.

Acknowledgments

This article is a part of a research project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 836194.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Abdulla, T. (2020). *Shocking installation: pp. A feminine artwork in the busiest street of the Kurdish city of Sulaimani*. Civil Development Organization.

Abdulrahman, S. (2020, November 18). A woman's art project in Sulaymaniyah arouses controversy. *Medya News*. https://medyanews.net/a-womens-art-project-in-sulaymaniyah-arouses-controversy

Ali, S. (2018, July 15). Kurdistan indefinitely blocks social media networks at Baghdad's request: Ministry. *Kurdistan24*. https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/16599-Kurdistan-indefinitely-blocks-social-media-networks-at-Baghdad%E2%80%99s-request:-Ministry

Alizadeh, H. (2007). Changes conceptions of women's public space in the Kurdish city. *Cities*, *24*(6), 410–421.

Alizadeh, H. (2012). The concept of privacy and space in Kurdish cities. In T. Edensor & M. Jayne (Eds.), *Urban theory beyond the West: A world of cities* (pp. 149–168). Routledge.

Al-Tamimi, H. (2018). Effects of Iraq's parliamentary gender quota on women's political mobilization and legitimacy post-2003. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, *11*(4), 41–62.

Bacharach, S. (2018). Finding your voice in the streets: Street art and epistemic injustice. *The Monist*, *101*(1), 31–43.

Banerjee, T., & Loukaitou-Sideris, A. (2011). *Companion to urban design*. Routledge.

Begikhani, N., Hamelink, W., & Weiss, N. (2018). Theorising women and war in Kurdistan: A feminist and critical perspective. *Kurdish Studies*, *6*(1), 5–30.

Bindel, J. (2021, March 8). 'As if she had never existed': The graveyards for murdered women. *Aljazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/3/8/

as-if-she-had-never-existed-the-graveyards-for-murdered-women

BMC TV. (2020a, October 26). *The opening of The Feminine project by artist Tara Abdulla* [Online broadcast]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/957463584360619/videos/287720322307803

BMC TV. (2020b, October 27). *Reasons behind the removal of The Feminine tableau*. https://bmctv.krd/Detail.aspx?jimare=22060&fbclid=IwAR0_XLi1nDdckGNfZ_L-BHdez52rLM5aiKrO2C-lHdo8aBREwNvd2_f9EY8

Bourgeois, L., Bernadac, M.-L., & Obrist, H. U. (1998). *Louise Bourgeois: Destruction of the father, reconstruction of the father: Writings and interviews, 1923–1997*. Violette.

Bruinessen, M. v. (2001). From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as political leaders in Kurdish history. In S. Mojab (Ed.), *Women of a non-state nation: The Kurds* (pp. 95–112). Mazda Publishers.

Chackal, T. (2016). Of materiality and meaning: The illegality condition in Street art. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *74*(4), 359–370.

Di Lellio, A., Rushiti, F., & Tahiraj, K. (2019). "Thinking of you" in Kosovo: Art activism against the stigma of sexual violence. *Violence Against Women*, *25*(13), 1543–1557.

Doan, P. L. (2010). The tyranny of gendered spaces—Reflections from beyond the gender dichotomy. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *17*(5), 635–654.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. Pantheon Books.

Galletti, M. (2001). Western images of women's role in Kurdish society. In S. Mojab (Ed.), *Women of a non-state nation: The Kurds* (pp. 209–226). Mazda Publishers.

Hardi, C. (2020). *Feminine: The feminist installation that shook Sulaimani*. AUIS.

Harris, C. (2019). "For rage": Rape survival, women's anger, and sisterhood in Chaucer's Legend of Philomela. *The Chaucer Review*, *54*(3), 253–269.

Hassan, S. S. (2013). *Women and literature: A feminist reading of Kurdish women's poetry* [Doctoral thesis, University of Exeter]. ORE Exeter. https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10871/13903/HassanS.pdf?sequence=1

Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Addison-Wesley.

Hudson, A. (2019). *Artist displays 440 pairs of high heels for women murdered in Turkey in 2018.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-womensrights-shoes-idUSKBN1W923G

Joly, D., & Bakawan, A. (2016). Women in Kurdistan-Iraq: Issues, obstacles and enablers. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, *20*(7), 956–977.

Krippendorff, K. (1989). Content analysis. In E. Barnouw, G. Gerbner, W. Schramm, T. L. Worth, & L. Gross (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of communication* (Vol. 1, pp. 403–407). Oxford University Press.

Lemer, G. (1993). *The creation of feminist consciousness: From the middle ages to eighteen-seventy* (Vol. 2). Oxford University Press.

Mehta, V. (2009). Look closely and you will see, listen carefully and you will hear: Urban design and social interaction on streets. *Journal of Urban Design*, *14*(1), 29–64.

Mojab, S. (2005). Kurdish women. In S. J. A. A. Nağmābādī (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of women and Islamic cultures: Family, law and politics* (Vol. 2, pp. 358–366). Brill.

Mripa, A. X. (2015). *Thinking of you*. Alketa Xhafa Mripa. https://www.alketaxhafamripa.com/thinking-of-you

O'Brien, L. J. (2016). *"Artful Vandals": Urban interventions, street art and spatial feminisms* [Master thesis, Concordia University]. Spectrum Research Repository. https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/981775

Perez-Rodriguez, J. L., Robador, M. D., Albardonedo, A., & Duran, A. (2018). Gildings from Andalusia: Materials used in different types of artworks along centuries. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, *31*, 112–121.

Preston, V., & Ustundag, E. (2005). Feminist geographies of the" city": Multiple voices, multiple meanings. In L. Nelson & J. Seager (Eds.), *A companion to feminist geography* (pp. 211–227). Blackwell.

Reus, T. G., & Usandizaga, A. (2008). *Inside out: Women negotiating, subverting, appropriating public and private space* (Vol. 4). Rodopi.

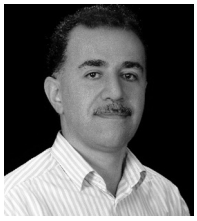
Riggle, N. (2016). Using the street for art: A reply to Baldini. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *74*(2), 191–195.

Rojek, K. (2020). The feminist street art from the western part of Mexico. *Quart*, *58*(4), 76–91.

Ryan, H. E. (2016). *Political street art: Communication, culture and resistance in Latin America*. Taylor & Francis.

Saliba, E. (2019, October 26). Protests in Iraq find an outlet to the world: Snapchat. *Euronews*. https://www.euronews.com/2019/10/26/protests-iraq-find-outlet-world-snapchat-n1072266

About the Authors



Hooshmand Alizadeh (PhD urban design) is senior postdoc researcher at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and associate professor at the Kurdistan Studies Institute, University of Kurdistan. He has more than fifteen years' teaching and research experience in urban studies, particularly dealing with different aspects of urbanism in general and public space in particular. His most important scholarly achievement is the development of the concept of Kurdish city in general and women's spatiality in specific.

Josef Kohlbacher (PhD, DSocSci) is deputy director of the Institute for Urban and Regional Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna, Austria. For 30 years, his research focus has been on immigration and integration in the urban housing and labor markets, social coexistence in urban space, and migrant entrepreneurship. Since 2015, projects related to the Afghan diaspora communities in Austria have become another important component of his research.

Rozhen Kamal Mohammed-Amin is an architect and academic. She is director of the Digital Cultural Heritage Research Centre at Sulaimani Polytechnic University where she also teaches, in the City Planning Department. She is co-director of the Nahrein Network and an honorary research fellow at University College London. She also serves as the secretary of RASHID International. Rozhen has professional and scholarly activities in 20 countries and is a recipient of numerous national and international appreciations, scholarships, awards, and fellowships.

Tabin Latif Raouf is an urban planner. She works at the Sulaimani Polytechnic University as head of the design team and is a research assistant in the Digital Cultural Heritage (DCH) Research Center/ Nahrein Network, a UK government-funded collaborative network between University College London, University of Oxford, Sulaimani Polytechnic University, and the University of Al-Qadisiyah. She has contributed to the organization of many of DCH's national and international activities and events. She is also a teaching assistant at the Sulaimani Polytechnic University City Planning Department.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 168–179
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4365

Article

Festivals for Inclusion? Examining the Politics of Cultural Events in Northern Cyprus

Rahme Sadikoglu

Sociology Department, Goldsmiths College, UK; E-Mail: rsadi033@alumni.gold.ac.uk

Submitted: 14 April 2021 | Accepted: 16 August 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
In Northern Cyprus, cultural festivals are increasingly popular. The routinely celebrated festivals transform small villages into colourful celebrations with lots of activities and great culinary experiences, offering opportunities for social contact between members of different generations. People meet in the streets, where traditional food and handicrafts are on display and traditional folk dance performances usually take place. Cultural events provide an important space in which older generations often nostalgically remember the past with others of their generation and share their memories with the young people. Bi-communal interactions between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in these public spaces also help leave behind and bury the violence of the past, nationalistic dogma, and intolerance. Drawing on ideas from postcolonial theory, cultural studies, sociology, and scholarship on public art, this article develops a post-postcolonial approach to explore the politics and value of Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals and the ways in which Turkish Cypriots are bridging differences with Greek Cypriots. Through observations, conversations, and interviews conducted with Turkish Cypriots from June 2014 to October 2017, the article also discusses the ways in which public art encourages dialogue and multicultural tolerance in Cyprus. The article argues that the rise of interest in Turkish Cypriot folk arts and multicultural tolerance, as propagated by Turkish Cypriots, should be understood in more complex terms than simply that of positive inclusion, as an ambivalence closely connected to the East/West division. Accordingly, the article illustrates that the coexistence of inclusion and exclusion are at the heart of Turkish Cypriot society.

Keywords
Cypriotness; cultural festivals; identity politics; inclusion; Northern Cyprus; Orientalism; post-postcolonialism; public art

Issue
This article is part of the issue “Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere” edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

The geographical position of Cyprus, which stands at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, has long been politically important. Due to its strategic value, the island has attracted many of the world’s great civilisations starting from the 8th millennium BC. More recently, Cyprus was part of the British Empire from 1878 to 1960. During the colonial era, inhabitants of Cyprus identified themselves as belonging to Greece and Turkey, because of their belief that their ancestors had originated from those countries. As Loizides (2007, p. 174) writes, Greek Cypriots “saw their destinies as linked to the ancient Hellenic past of Cyprus and their future to its revival through unification with Greece.” Similarly, Kizilyurek (2002, p. 75) argues that the rise of an independent Greek state after the 1821 Greek War of Independence was a turning point in Cyprus’s history, and that it led to the emergence of ethnonationalist consciousness among the Orthodox Christians of Cyprus. The development of nationalism among Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, was partly fostered by “fears of marginalization” (Loizides, 2007, p. 174) and Turkish Cypriots’ anxiety at the prospect of becoming a minority in a state incorporated into Greece. The move towards nationalism was also encouraged by the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, and by the Kemalist movement in Turkey (Nevzat, 2005).

British colonial policies and practices also made significant contributions to the growth of Turkish and Greek nationalisms in Cyprus. The impact of the colonial influence was such that the Cyprus that emerged after the first effects of colonialism were felt was markedly different from precolonial Cyprus. Instead of being referred to as the Muslims (Nevzat, 2005) and Orthodox Christians of Cyprus, the people of Cyprus began to be identified as the Turks and Greeks of the island. Furthermore, each community was determined to fight for its own distinct nationalist goals. Despite the foundation of the new Republic of Cyprus, intercommunal conflict began in 1963. The communities who were psychologically divided under the new federation would soon become physically and demographically divided too.

The island became separated in two following the Turkish invasion of the island (a response to the Greek coup that took place in 1974). The United Nations buffer zone, known as the Green Line, was established in 1974, dividing Cyprus and separating the two communities. Greek Cypriots now reside in Southern Cyprus, in the legally recognised Republic of Cyprus; Turkish Cypriots reside in the north, in an unrecognised, self-declared state called the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). There have been many diplomatic attempts by both domestic and international parties to improve peace and harmony in Cyprus since the onset of the issue. For the past 47 years, numerous negotiations and peace talks have started, stopped, been fast-tracked, and revisited. Nevertheless, nearly five decades after the division of the island, it is still imperative to find a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus conflict.

Studies of nationalism and identity in Northern Cyprus have focused on adaptations of ethnic nationalism under British rule (Kizilyurek, 1999, 2002; Loizides, 2007; Pollis, 1996, 1998) and "identity fluctuations" in the Turkish Cypriot community after the division of the island in 1974 (Lacher & Kaymak, 2005; Navaro-Yashin, 2006; Vural & Rustemli, 2006). These studies have demonstrated that since the division of Cyprus, ethnic nationalism (Turkishness) in the Turkish Cypriot community has been in decline, and a civic notion of identity (Cypriotness) has gained ascendancy. Scholars have analysed the resurgence of Cypriotness in Turkish Cypriot society and its relationship with the recent political, socio-economic, and cultural shifts in Northern Cyprus (Hatay & Bryant, 2008; Kizilyurek, 2018; Navaro-Yashin, 2006). What is lacking in such discussions is a consideration of the ways in which cultural practices, such as the repeated cultural festivals, serve to represent and reinforce the cultural and political underpinnings of Turkish Cypriot identity. As Hall (2007, p. 152) argues, in order to understand "how difference operates inside people's heads, you have to go to art, you have to go to culture—to where people imagine, where they fantasise, where they symbolise."

Following Hall's argument, this article attends to Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals to add a valuable contribution to areas of the debate that have been largely unexplored, such as the production of cultural distinctions and similarities through cultural practices. To expound further, drawing on ideas from postcolonial theory, sociology, cultural studies, and scholarship on public art, this research contributes to areas of the debate by developing a post-postcolonial analytic as a mode of exploring the value and politics of Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals and the notion of Cypriotness. It becomes evident that this original approach/concept opens room to further understand the fragmentation and paradoxes of post-postcolonial narratives produced by Turkish Cypriots and the multitude of political and cultural factors that lay the foundation for the formation of contemporary Turkish Cypriot identity.

Without a doubt, this article also draws from the scholarship on public art. Indeed, this research characterises Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals and practices—such as the display of traditional *buhurdanlik*, *sestas*, words, and even folk dance performances—as a form of public art. Accordingly, it pays attention to post-postcolonial narratives and dialogues that surround public art, and discusses how public art is received within the post-postcolonial public sphere. This discussion testifies to the value of Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals, revealing how public art can generate dialogue and encourage multicultural tolerance among the communities of Cyprus.

1.1. Defining Post-Postcolonialism and Post-Postcolonial Discourse

Since the partition of the island in 1974, Turkish Cypriots have been living in an unrecognised state. They have the last divided capital city in the world (Nicosia), and they lack the capacity to participate autonomously in European Union arrangements for Cyprus. This has caused physical, social, and psychological problems for Turkish Cypriots, who have been secluded from the world (Sadikoglu, 2019). Additionally, the cultural and economic embargoes imposed on the Turkish Cypriot community since the declaration of the TRNC in 1982 have created a relentless and restrictive dependence on Turkey, both politically and economically. Indeed, Aydın (2006, p. 226) suggests that the TRNC would not survive even a day without Turkey's heavy tutelage.

Moreover, the post-war period and the division of the island brought about cultural, economic, political, and social transformations in Northern Cyprus. Since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in 2004, it has followed a strategy of progress for Northern Cyprus that encompasses the construction of four-lane highways, religious learning establishments, beachfront hotels and mosques, and recently an undersea pipeline from Anatolia. The increasing Turkish population, on the other hand, added a new aspect to the population ratios, changing the demographic challenge on the island. These political, social, economic, and cultural circumstances have given rise to the discourse in Turkish

Cypriot community that the Turkish Cypriot population is "shrinking" (see Hatay, 2007) and that Turkish Cypriots are losing their Cypriotness as Northern Cyprus is becoming like Turkey. The present study, however, is not concerned only with the economic, political, and social relationships with Turkey that have existed in Northern Cyprus since 1974. It also looks at another interesting epoch, which I will refer to as post-postcolonialism.

Post-postcolonialism is about the conjuncture of the residues of British colonialism in Northern Cyprus and the consequences of the complex relations with Turkey. As Hall and Massey (2010, p. 57) note, a conjuncture "is a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape." A conjuncture, Hall and Massey (2010, p. 57) suggest, "is not defined by time or by simple things like a change of regime"; rather, it is an intricate historical point where forces meet and lead to drastic change. Following on from this, I argue that Cypriotness, or the value and politics of Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals, can be fully explained neither with reference to the recent social, political, cultural, and economic transformations in Northern Cyprus, nor in relation to British colonialism. Each without the other would provide only a partial elucidation of the notion of Cypriotness and its manifestations. Thus, a conjunctural perspective informs my approach to analysing the notion of Cypriotness and Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals.

1.2. Orientalism and Post-Postcolonial Discourse

My analysis of the relationship between the notion of Cypriotness and Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals is based on what I call post-postcolonial discourse or the discourse of Cypriotness—these terms will be used interchangeably. It is this discourse that surrounds Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals. Post-postcolonial discourse is produced by indigenous Turkish Cypriots, and it is underpinned by a highly critical approach towards the nationalistic discourse that considers the relationship between the TRNC and Turkey to be one of "flesh and fingernail" (Bryant & Yakinthou, 2012, p. 16). It is produced against two distinct constitutive "Others," namely mainland Turks and Greek Cypriots, where mainland Turks are constantly judged for their "Oriental" behaviour (Said, 1978/2006) and Greek Cypriots are praised for their "Europeanness." However, as Mbembe (2008, para. 12) states, postcolonial thinking is about "the recognition of the Other as fundamentally human," which for him is "all too often forgotten." In line with this notion, this article explores and challenges the fairness, unfairness, falsity or validity of claims constructed by post-postcolonial discourse. It is for this purpose that I engage with Said's (1978/2006) notion of Orientalism.

I am aware that Said developed his analysis from literary texts. Therefore, his ideas may not translate into the living of complicated axes of difference in contemporary contexts. The case of Cyprus thus offers an interesting example from which to further develop postcolonial analysis. In this study, I develop two central arguments that Said first provided in *Orientalism* (1978/2006). First, I engage with Said's argument that Orientalism is a way or style of thought that pivoted on contrasting the Orient (the East) with the Occident (the West, or Europe). I engage with the idea that Orientalism generates a view of the Orient that is also a moral structure within which the Orient is criticised, even punished, for not conforming to the strictures of the European community, thus Orientalising the Orient (Said, 1978/2006, p. 67). However, I apply this line of thinking to the specific context of Northern Cyprus in order to discuss a different kind of Eurocentric discourse—I focus on a discourse that is post-postcolonial and belongs to Orientalism.

Second, following on from Said (1978/2006), I will suggest that the portrayal of mainland Turks as Eastern and Oriental by my research participants is a representation which allows mainland Turks to be spoken of from a position of "power," not "truth" (Said, 1978/2006, p. 21). It is a position of power because indigenous Turkish Cypriots consider themselves superior to the Eastern Other by virtue of their assumed proximity to Western culture. Yet, I will argue that post-postcolonial discourse, which observes the Orient from "above" (see Said, 1978/2006, pp. 333–334), is produced from a position not only of *power*, but also of *powerlessness*—because when the other Other (Greek Cypriots) enter the picture, Turkish Cypriots' feeling of superiority and power is challenged. Thus, taking Said's Orientalism as a starting point, this research develops postcolonial analysis by illustrating that Orientalist discourse in contemporary Turkish Cypriot society observes and constructs its subjects from a position of in-betweenness: a position of simultaneous power and powerlessness.

2. Methodology

In empirical terms, the main data of this ethnographic research were generated through participant observation (over 40 months, from June 2014 to October 2017), semi-structured interviews, and informal/conversational interviews.

2.1. Participant Observation

Observation locations were at cultural festivals in two different locations: Mehmetcik and Buyukkonuk. I conducted four hours of participant observation at the Eco Day Festival in Buyukkonuk (a village in the Famagusta district) in October 2016, and 40 hours of participant observation at the Grape Festival in Mehmetcik (another village in the Famagusta district) in August 2016.

I started the fieldwork with descriptive observations of the field sites. I subsequently followed up these descriptive tours with more focused and selective observations. My overarching aim was to gain a

sense of the following: (a) activities and practices carried out in their social settings; (b) various forms of expressive culture, such as music, dance, song and art; and (c) more specifically, social interactions and conversations between Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, and among Turkish Cypriots themselves. Participant observation enabled me to observe interactions among the communities of Cyprus (Turkish Cypriots, mainland Turks, and Greek Cypriots) and to grasp how they communicated with each other. Additionally, participant observation allowed me to examine subjects' everyday lives and cultural practices from their point of view, as well as to observe situations that subjects might otherwise have been unwilling to share. The importance of these interactions is underscored by how they enabled me to contextualise the engendering/formulation of cultural distinctions and cultural similarities between Turkish Cypriots, mainland Turks, and Greek Cypriots.

2.2. Semi-structured and Informal Interviews

Besides observing the field sites, I conducted semi-structured and informal interviews (conversations) with indigenous Turkish Cypriots during my fieldwork. Semi-structured interviews and informal interviews with the participants helped me to complement my observations and to understand the complexity and ambivalence of their narratives, as well as the tensions and negotiations among Turkish Cypriots, mainland Turks, and Greek Cypriots. Informal interviews constituted one of the most significant and valuable of my data sources. For the most part, informal interviews took place in Northern Cyprus between June 2014 and October 2017. Although the informal interviews were unstructured, they helped me to identify participant-centred concerns and experiences that informed the semi-structured interview questions.

I conducted a total of 27 semi-structured interviews in different cities in Northern Cyprus with men and women with a mix of ages. As I discuss in the next section, the vast majority of my participants were post-war generation Turkish Cypriots. The participants selected during the fieldwork were recruited using a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques (see Bryman, 2016, pp. 187–188). One of the epistemological advantages of using semi-structured interviews was that they provided me with a rich plethora of information through the use of open-ended questions. This open-ended approach also enabled my interviewees to talk freely about the issue, and in turn, offered an "insider view of the social world" (Bazeley, 2013, p. 27) and provided "compelling descriptions of the qualitative world" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 48).

The research involved "sensitive topics" (see Lee, 1993). Therefore, it was imperative that I carefully consider the wording of interview questions, the selection of participants, and the ethical framing of the research regarding communicating the confidentiality and anonymity of the data.

2.3. Representativeness of the Participants

It is important to note that I was drawn to this project by my own personal struggles in negotiating my identity as a young-generation Turkish Cypriot, and by the struggles of other young Turkish Cypriots that came to my attention during my observations in Cyprus and London. Therefore, my research focuses on a particular generational experience. In this study, I explore the views and experiences of a specific generation of Turkish Cypriots with certain socio-political and ethnic characteristics. Most of my participants are post-war generation Turkish Cypriots who have no direct experience of pre-1974 Cyprus. Consequently, this might mean that their political views are likely to be at odds with those of the older generation who experienced the war and intercommunal violence (although that is not within the scope of this article). The majority of the participants' political affiliations are aligned with left-wing parties such as Akinci and are opposed to the policies of ethnonational parties (such as UBP and DP). Like me, all of them had completed their primary and secondary school education in Cyprus. The majority had studied in universities in Cyprus, while some had studied in universities in the UK like me, or in universities in Turkey.

Lastly, all my participants are indigenous or native to Cyprus. Accordingly, in this article, I use the term "Turkish Cypriots" to refer to my research participants who are post-war generation Turkish Cypriots and whose ancestors settled in Cyprus after 1571. The term "mainland Turks," on the other hand, refers to all Turks who migrated to Northern Cyprus in the last few years. I found that my participants tend to be more critical of this group of people. My term "mainland Turks," in this sense, does not include children of mixed marriages, children of mainland Turks that were born and raised in Cyprus, and Turkish people from Turkey that settled in Northern Cyprus between the 1970s and 90s and became dual citizens.

3. Cultural Festivals in Northern Cyprus

In recent years there has been a surge of interest in Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals, with indigenous Turkish Cypriots exploring their intangible cultural heritage of food, songs, dances, stories, language, and cultural practices. Buyukkonuk Eco Day Festival and Mehmetcik Grape Festival, for instance, are among the most popular of these events. Buyukkonuk Eco Day Festival promotes traditional Cypriot customs, dishes, and specialties twice a year in May and October. Mehmetcik Grape Festival, on the other hand, promotes viticulture by bringing the cultural importance of the grapes and vineyards of the Karpas Peninsula to the fore every year in August. Each cultural event, in this sense, focuses on

a particular aspect or region of the island, promoting and preserving the unique history and culture of Cyprus, raising awareness of local traditions, and boosting local economy. My research, however, reveals that Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals have at least one other significance: They reflect a struggle between two opposing discourses—official or nationalistic discourse and the discourse of Cypriotness or post-postcolonial discourse—within the geopolitical formation of Northern Cyprus.

Many theorists in the studies of public art argue that a work of art is public when its reception takes place within the public sphere (Baldini, 2014; Knight, 2008; Zuidervaart, 2011). In Habermas' view (1989), the public sphere is a discursive space formed by members of the public who are interested in carrying out discussions related to the public interest. As Baldini (2014, pp. 18–19) writes, the public sphere "is not influenced by public authority"; its debates are "a form of political action [that] aim at shaping decisions of public authority on particular issues." Accordingly, I follow this dominant trend in the studies of public art and argue that Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals function as social spaces, or as a public sphere, where members of the public discuss political, social, cultural and economic issues related to their needs and interests. These discussions generally reflect a resistance against official discourse. In this regard, I characterise Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals as a form of public art.

After the division of the island in 1974, official or nationalist discourse constructed a hegemonic form of thinking by promoting an idea of sameness and solidarity between Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks, and an idea of separation between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots (see Papadakis, 2008). Cypriotness or Cypriotism, on the other hand, has emerged as a cultural resistance to official (nationalist) discourse. Cypriotness is a new discourse and a new hegemonic and cultural movement or formation that is founded on an idea of oneness and shared culture between the Greek Cypriots and indigenous Turkish Cypriots. This new movement also revolves around the idea of difference between mainland Turks and indigenous Turkish Cypriots. As my findings below suggest, the notion of a resurgent Cypriotness is not defined as merely aspiring to overcome the hegemony and authority of ethnonationalist knowledge production—such as the nationalist themes and essentialist identities produced by the state—but rather aims to transform values, structures, and social relations in such a way that reconciliation can be achieved with those (Greek Cypriots) who have been considered Other.

My empirical data elucidates that Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals are interlinked with the discourse of Cypriotness. They are, in Foucault's terms, part of the same "discursive formation" (Hall, 1997, p. 44), meaning that they support a common strategy. Accordingly, I found that Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals have at least two other functions: (a) to remake and produce cultural distinctions between the Self (Turkish Cypriots) and mainland Turks and (b) to close the gap between the Self and Greek Cypriots. These events, in this sense, engender dynamics of inclusion, exclusion and resistance as means of overcoming the difficulties associated with the sense of in-betweenness—a collective positioning—to which post-postcolonial condition gave birth.

3.1. Collective Positioning

A significant impact of British colonialism in Cyprus was that it gave rise to split subjects, leaving Turkish Cypriots with a hybrid culture. Many elements are involved in the hybrid culture of Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriot culture is influenced by the English civilisation of the British colonial era and Kemalist reforms (Nevzat, 2005) and also coalesces these elements with local traditions that are shared with Greek Cypriots. Whether through the adaptation of Kemalism (see Hatay, 2009) or of the colonisers' cultural habits, attitudes, and values, the colonial period in Cyprus gave rise to "something different, something new and unrecognisable" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211), turning the Muslim Turks of the island into what are today seen as liberal Turkish Cypriots (Smith, 2018). What it means to be a Turkish Cypriot in Cyprus today thus lies at a complex intersection of Eastern and Western cultures.

Turkish Cypriot identity, like all identities, is "fragmented and fractured" (Hall, 1996, p. 4), but it specifically incorporates at least two cultural "presences" (Hall, 1990, p. 230): the presence of Turkishness and the presence of Cypriotness. The presence of Cypriotness signifies power, inclusion, and exclusion. It "provides a sense of rightful temerity to the advance of modernity by virtue of its historical affiliation with British civilisation" (Beyazoglu, 2017, p. 216). The sense of Cypriotness, in this regard, leveraged greater power to criticise, judge or exclude mainland Turks who are considered to be inferior and different. The presence of Turkishness, on the other hand, can also imbue Turkish Cypriots with a subjective sense of inferiority and backwardness due to their encounters with Greek Cypriots (see below). Accordingly, my findings suggest that rather than producing an equal hybridisation of cultures, my participants develop counter-hegemonic strategies that rely on essentialised notions of Cypriotness supposedly shared by indigenous Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. Interestingly, during British colonialism, Turkish Cypriots' approach to mainland Turks or Greek Cypriots was not marked by a belief in the binary of "superior Cypriotness" versus "inferior Turkishness." That is to say, Turkish Cypriots did not bring with them any ready-made ideas of "Turkish inferiority," "Cypriot superiority" or an exalted Cypriotness shared by both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. I therefore argue that there is one event that we need to pay close attention to here: the opening of the Green Line on 23 April 2003.

The opening of the Green Line made significant changes to Cypriots' lives—both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. People from both communities flocked

to the other side to see their abandoned homes, visit family graves and meet friends they had not seen since the division of 1974. This was the first time that young Cypriots came together with the Other community. After their first crossings, Turkish Cypriots encountered boutiques selling global brands and shops providing electronics and alternative consumer products that they could not find in the North (Hatay, 2009). Significantly, in the historic moment of crossing the border and meeting Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots were confronted with the reality that standards of living and material resources on the Greek side of Cyprus were seemingly superior in comparison to Northern Cyprus. In the same moment, they seemingly were hit hard by the reality that they were not as European or Western as they thought.

Accordingly, my findings suggest that although indigenous Turkish Cypriots tend to position themselves as superior to the mainland Turks through their association with a sense of Cypriotness, their encounters with Greek Cypriots call this sense of superiority into question. The moment Greek Cypriots enter into the equation, this sense of superiority is challenged. The feeling of superiority is replaced by collective feelings of distress, inadequacy and powerlessness every time an indigenous Turkish Cypriot, for instance, crosses the border and realises that the island's other half (the Greek Cypriot side) appears more progressive, more European and more modern than the Northern side. These feelings are also reinforced by the cultural racism that they encounter in everyday life when a Greek Cypriot person reduces Turkish Cypriots to their Turkishness, as backward and lacking (see Sadikoglu, 2019). This is where a new binary opposition—between superior Greek Cypriots and inferior indigenous Turkish Cypriots—arises, and the complexity of identity in Northern Cyprus goes beyond the binary opposition of superior Turkish Cypriots and inferior mainland Turks. Relatedly, my research reveals that it is from this post-postcolonial space or position in between two binary oppositions that there emerges a new identity, which I refer to as "not so Eastern, not so European: something in-between."

Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals—as well as the discourse of Cypriotness that surrounds these events—are closely related to this imaginary in-between position. Turkish Cypriots decipher their lived reality through this position, which is passed down from generation to generation. It is from this stance that they determine the parameters between "us" and "them"; and the subsequent illusionary position from which mainland Turks and Greek Cypriots are seen. More specifically, it is this imaginary stance that produces mainland Turks as deficient, backward, and a threat to Turkish Cypriots' culture, and Greek Cypriots as more Western, European, and modern. In this sense, as the examples below illuminate, this position underpins the "interconnection between 'happy' and 'hard' forms of coexistence" (Wise & Velayutham, 2014, p. 406), or between conviviality and various forms of cultural racism in Northern Cyprus.

3.2. Exploring Practices and Instances of Inclusion

Bi-annually, in May and October, Buyukkonuk village turns into a bustling marketplace. Villagers keep themselves busy by preparing the homemade products in which they take such pride and sell and share them at Buyukkonuk Eco Day Festival. Many traditional foodstuffs, such as Cypriot *hellim* cheese, *zeytinli*, and *hellimli* (olive and *hellim* bread), *lokma* and *harnup pekmez* (carob molasses), are on display, along with traditional handicrafts and folk dancing. The festival lasts from dawn to dusk, and the small village becomes a vibrant centre for celebration. I attended the festival in October 2016 for the purposes of this research. At the entrance to the festival area, I see a huge traditional *buhurdanlik* (Figure 1). The *buhurdanlik* occupies an important place in Cypriot culture. Both Turkish and Greek Cypriots use it: They burn olive branches in it, and then turn the branches three times above their heads. According to tradition, the smoke will safeguard the home and family from evil spirits.

Figure 1. *Buhurdanlik*. Photograph by the author.

There is a stall where *sestas* are on display (see Figure 2). *Sestas* are everyday traditional objects which Greek and Turkish Cypriots serve and eat food from. Thus, like the *buhurdanlik*, *sestas* embody the cultural artefacts and practices that Greek and Turkish Cypriots share. While *sestas* were used more commonly in the past, today they are also used locally for decoration purposes.

There is also a display of words on a house wall (see Figure 3). Language is a marker of cultural hybridisation in Turkish Cypriot society. The words displayed on the

Figure 2. Traditional *sestas*. Photograph by the author.

wall, which include *piron* (fork), *potin* (shoes), *iskemle* (chair), *gabira* (toasted bread), *ispaho* (yarn), *belesbit* (bicycle), *lagani* (waterway), and *bavuri* (tin water bottle) are in the Turkish Cypriot dialect; they are not used in standard Turkish. Thus, they serve to represent a symbolic distinction from mainland Turks. Some of these words also represent the linguistic similarities between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot dialects. According to Hadjipieris and Kabatas (2017), *piron*, *gabira*, and *bavuri* are among the 3,500 common words used by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Kabatas (as cited in "Bilingual dictionary reflects Cypriots' common words," 2016) states that, "while the mother languages, modern Greek and Turkish, move in parallel and they do not meet, the local dialects, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot, intercept each other and this is attributed to the elements comprising their common cultural tradition."

A large number of words shared between the two dialects are no longer used by Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Nevertheless, these words—like the smell and taste of foodstuffs—are laden with "broader cultural associations" (Rhys-Taylor, 2013, p. 237), and the meanings people attach to them are active in making and remaking cultural similarities and distinctions. The words displayed on the wall at the festival signify and highlight that Greek and Turkish Cypriots shared similar ways of life when they lived together. They may even evoke memories. Each separate word is a representation of memories, a common story, a common place, and a joint experience. Each word is also a marker of difference between mainland Turks and Turkish Cypriots. As Bourdieu (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 6) would argue, practices such as the display of the *buhurdanlik*, the *sestas*, and the words "embody interests" and function to enhance cultural

Figure 3. Words used by Turkish Cypriots in Turkish Cypriot dialect, displayed on a wall. Photograph by the author.

similarities and distinctions. Each practice or symbolic work serves to form an identity (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 56) by erecting symbolic boundaries between people who occupy different locations in the cultural structure.

Relatedly, although the *buhurdanlik*, the *sestas*, and the words on display seem to be just traditional objects in a public space, I suggest that these objects can be classified as public artworks as they are "received within the public sphere" (Baldini, 2014, p. 19). By engaging these objects, Turkish Cypriots do not simply attend to the artistic or aesthetic features of these artworks. Instead, they are encouraged to respond to the presentation of these public artworks by discussing current political, cultural, and socio-economic issues in Cyprus. These dialogues take place within the boundaries of a specific type of public sphere and are based on a specific type of discourse, which I have called post-postcolonial. In this regard, as many theorists would suggest, public art encourages dialogue (Finkelpearl, 2013; Kester, 2011; Lacy, 1995), and this is the case in Northern Cyprus. Indeed, my findings reveal that Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals encourage dialogue between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, and among Turkish Cypriots themselves that are aiming at challenging the nationalist discourse.

An instance of how Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals, as a form of public art, encourage maximally inclusive dialogue, tolerance, and coexistence can be found in the following example. Towards the end of the festival, I come across a bi-communal dance show performed by folk dancers from both communities in the main festival area. A member of this bi-communal folk dance association states that the folk dance performance aims to unite Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to embrace their common culture and bring lasting peace to the island. After the performance, I see a Turkish Cypriot family (father, mother, daughter, and son) standing next to me. The children are post-war-generation Turkish Cypriots who were born after the division of the island; by bringing them to cultural festivals, the father and mother (both from the war generation) can weave their memories into direct conversations with their children, in an effort to transpose the cultural history of Cyprus and of life before the island was divided. The father is telling his children about the communities' peaceful coexistence before the division of the island. He articulates that if wider factors and forces did not "brainwash" people, then the two communities would live in peace. The father and mother also talk about how similar the Self (Turkish Cypriots) is to the Greek Cypriot Other or vice versa. This is a significant contrast to the killing and maiming described in history books (see Vural & Özuyanık, 2008) and family stories about traumatic events (see Sadikoglu, 2019), with a new shift to the "warm" and "loving" nature of both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots.

As my data suggest, these narratives are also common in everyday life. Indeed, I found that the vast majority of my participants attributed Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot hatred to structural factors and state agencies. This seems to suggest that much of the hatred has been subsumed, worked through or repressed. Moreover, the vast majority of my participants often claimed a common Cypriot identity "that recognises the many points of similarity" (Hall, 1990, p. 225) on the one hand and masks differences on the other. The participants did not wish to discuss the cultural differences that exist between the two communities at all, or they relegated differences to the realm of language and religion. It is inevitable that cultural festivals encourage the communities of Cyprus to confront their differences through social interactions and develop more tolerant behaviours. Yet, the reasons behind the transition from an exclusionary past to an inclusionary present are also significant and need to be addressed here.

My research elucidates that the inclusion of Greek Cypriots is closely related to specific interests regarding cultural supremacy and the socially constructed positions that Turkish Cypriots adopt in relation to Greek Cypriots. As I discussed earlier, after the opening of the Green Line in 2003, there emerged different cultural categories/hierarchies into which people are divided. At the top of the cultural hierarchy are the Greek Cypriots, who assumedly (unlike Turkish Cypriots) are able to preserve their cultural values—their Cypriotness—which are associated with Westernness/Europeanness. At the bottom of the cultural hierarchy are mainland Turks, who arrived on Northern Cyprus in the last few years. This group, by Western "standards," is considered to be backward and inferior to both indigenous Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots due to the idea that this group of people is always in low-skilled occupations such as manual labour. In turn, they are demonised and excluded by the vast majority of my participants because of their positioning as Oriental and inappropriate subjects who pose a threat to "superior" Cypriot culture. Finally, I found that my participants are situated in between these two groups.

Although my participants consider themselves more European/Western than mainland Turks, the materiality of how they see their physical environment in different parts of the island are sources of distress and can trigger feelings of inadequacy/inferiority when they position themselves in relation to Greek Cypriots. In attempting to deal with this sense of insecurity, my participants dwell on cultural similarities between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriotness. This is a strategy they use to close the gap between themselves and the superior Other (i.e., Greek Cypriots) so that they can maintain their sense of Cypriotness, which is associated with being European and Western. My findings suggest that the instances of inclusion thus reflect my participants' struggle for cultural equality, which can be achieved through particular fabrications of Cypriotness.

Another important point that needs to be noted here is that what the participants believe to be the Greek Cypriots' image in relation to the Self, or vice versa, is socially constructed: Not only is it imaginary, but it is also

based on a Eurocentric worldview of Orientalism that allows the West to be spoken of from a position of powerlessness, "not truth" Said (1978/2006, p. 21). The stereotypes produced by the discourse of Cypriotness, in this sense, reflect a desire to attain power and superiority or, as Bhabha (1983, p. 27) writes, "an originality which is… threatened by the differences of race, colour and culture." Accordingly, in the following section, I discuss that although the vast majority of my participants are observing mainland Turks from "above" (Said, 1978/2006, pp. 333–334) and from a position of power, in reality their imagining of mainland Turks as inferior and backward has to do with the sense of inferiority/powerlessness that they feel in relation to Greek Cypriots. This is the discourse that I have dubbed post-postcolonial that surrounds cultural festivals in contemporary Turkish Cypriot society.

3.3. Exploring Instances of Post-Postcolonial Exclusion

As with most cultural events in Northern Cyprus, Mehmetcik Grape Festival functions as a public space that is conductive to convivial encounters and cultural exchanges between the communities of Cyprus, transnational audiences (such as foreign tourists), and migrant communities (such as mainland Turks). As I have already mentioned, a popular view in public art scholarship says that public art encourages dialogue and tolerance. This can mean that dialogues and cross-cutting interactions embedded in the appreciation of public artworks have the power to stimulate increased consideration of different viewpoints and counterbalance tensions between communities. My empirical data, for instance, suggest that although there are instances of discrimination whereby people from the Greek Cypriot community discriminate against Turkish Cypriots (or conversely whereby people from the Turkish Cypriot community discriminate against Greek Cypriots), Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals and bi-communal practices encourage positive valuation of the Other. In a similar way, these cultural events also lead to the formation of convivial relationships between Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks. It is, however, important to acknowledge that the positive social outcomes of these events can sometimes be overridden by the Eurocentric assumptions that underpin the discourse of Cypriotness.

As part of my field research, I attended Mehmetcik Grape Festival in August 2016. In the main festival area was a food stall where a middle-aged woman made and sold *gozleme* (see Figure 4). The woman wore a headscarf, which for Turkish Cypriots signalled that she was from the mainland. Every day, I visited the festival, bought some food, and sat at one of the tables near the *gozleme* stall. This was where I witnessed interesting conversations about this Turkish woman from the mainland who was selling Turkish *gozleme* at a Turkish Cypriot cultural festival. For example, I heard comments from Turkish Cypriots about the Turkish woman at the *gozleme* stall and her mainland Turk customers such as "it's full of Turkish everywhere," "seventy percent of the visitors who come to the festival are mainland Turks, you see fewer Cypriots," or "they go for the cheap [*gozleme*], we go for the expensive [*kebab*]." Such comments encapsulate that a cultural exchange between a (migrant or settler) Turkish woman and indigenous people provides markers through which migrant or settler groups' "cultural differences are identified" by local people, "often with negative consequences" (Rhys-Taylor, 2013, p. 394).

Figure 4. Turkish woman making *gozleme*. Photograph by the author.

Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks have lived together in Northern Cyprus since 1974, sharing the island and myriad aspects of culture in their everyday lives. However, the distance between these two communities has gradually grown (Kizilyurek, 2018, p. 62). Indeed, in the interviews I conducted with my participants too, I observed a great deal of criticism aimed at mainland Turks, who arrived on Northern Cyprus in the last few years, in relation to their religion, gender roles, mentality, language, and everyday appearance. There was a tendency among the participants to undervalue and despise this group of people as inferior to the Self. In contrast, I found that Turkish Cypriots are more welcoming to mainland Turks who had settled on the island in the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. This group of people is considered to be relatively modern and well educated compared with mainland Turks who began to arrive on the island from the late 1990s onwards. Nevertheless, what my participants seemingly failed to recognise is that, as Said (1998/2005) once said, "we live in a very complex and mixed world in which you

can't separate cultures and civilisations from each other." Indeed, "no one today is purely one thing" (Said, 1993, p. 336). The recognition that there is no pure Cypriotness that separates Turkish Cypriots from mainland Turks was nowhere to be found in the interviews I conducted with Turkish Cypriots.

I found that the designation of mainland Turks as inferior by my participants resonates with Said's (1978/2006) work on the ideology of Orientalism. In both instances, the Orient is juxtaposed with the Occident, forming a conceptual binary. What makes post-postcolonial discourse different and so original is that it is produced from a site of in-betweenness: a position of power and powerlessness. As I have discussed above, the opening of the Green Line exposed Turkish Cypriot people to the Westernisation that has come to define the Greek side. This exposure has led to a collective inferiority complex amongst Turkish Cypriot people, insomuch that they consider the Greek side to be more economically advanced. Accordingly, it is through the positioning of Self in relation to two constitutive Others (mainland Turks and Greek Cypriots) that Turkish Cypriots discover themselves to be "not so European, not so Western": not equal to the Greek Cypriot Other, but not equal to the mainland Turk Other either. The participants' exclusion and ostracization of mainland Turks—their insistence on difference (Cypriotness) and their disregard of similarities shared by Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks (Turkishness)—should thus be understood as a discursive strategy that they build on the way to asserting their cultural supremacy.

My findings concur with other studies (Hatay, 2009) insomuch that there was a tendency among my participants to blame the difference between the north and the south part of the island on the immigrants (mainland Turks) who, for them, "had made the north into 'the East'" (Hatay, 2009, p. 158). However, based on my data, I argue that the driving force behind the feeling of inferiority that emerged after the opening of the Green Line is not necessarily that the changes brought by mainland Turks to Northern Cyprus are considered to be decivilising. Rather, underlying this narrative of inferiority is also the difference of Turkishness, which is always already a part of Turkish Cypriot identity, positioning Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as "both the same and different" (Hall, 1990, p. 227). Within this complex positioning, the discourse that Northern Cyprus is *becoming* like Turkey, or that Turkish Cypriots are losing their Cypriotness, reflects the participants' struggle to come to terms with the ambivalence of their identity (a struggle that I refer to as "not so Eastern, not so European") and the multiplicity of feelings that come with it. I am not arguing here against the idea that identities are constantly in process and are "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'" (Hall, 1990, p. 225). However, what I propose is that as much as the participants' anxieties about assimilation into Turkish culture reflect a resistance to this sense of *becoming* tied to the present, lived experience is also a matter of *being* that is connected to the colonial past and the after-effects of British colonialism. This is the trauma of post-postcoloniality.

4. Conclusion

Given the paucity of existing academic research, this study has developed a post-postcolonial approach to explore Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals and their relationship to wider shifts of cultural identification (i.e., with Cypriotness), with a specific focus on the post-war generation. In doing so, my work has sought to contribute to the current debates on identity politics in Northern Cyprus, as well as contributing to discussions in postcolonial studies. Drawing attention to the value of Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals, this research has also revealed how Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals, as a form of public art, can encourage multicultural tolerance in Cyprus. It became apparent that the cultural exchanges that take place at cultural festivals could prove valuable in promoting long-term inclusion and coexistence in Cyprus, where people of different backgrounds (religion, language, culture, ethnicity) live side by side. However, as my findings also suggest, the deeply ingrained political, socio-economic, and cultural residues of colonial legacies still play a salient and significant role in the ways in which differences are repositioned, and inclusions and exclusions are generated in Turkish Cypriot society. Indeed, xenophobia and racism "are among the modalities in which we can see colonialism at work" (Santos, 2016, p. 18) in Northern Cyprus.

My research has elucidated that the increasing interest in Turkish Cypriot cultural festivals is intimately tied to the issue of the East/West division, and to the way in which Turkish Cypriots position themselves in relation to Greek Cypriots and mainland Turks. More significantly, this interest reflects Turkish Cypriots' desired integration with Western society. As the examples have shown, Turkish Cypriot folk arts and cultural practices are interlinked with a new cultural movement and a new discourse of Cypriotness—which can be seen as an "alternative formation of the global" (Bhambra & Santos, 2017, p. 3)—that is opposed to official discourse. Cultural festivals thus have at least two functions: (a) to construct and remake cultural distinctions between the Self (Turkish Cypriots) and mainland Turks and (b) to bridge difference between the Self and Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots seek to close the gap between the Self and the imaginary *Western* Other (Greek Cypriots) and to distance themselves from the imaginary *Eastern* Other (mainland Turks), as a way of maintaining their sense of power (Cypriotness). The discourse of Cypriotness, as well as Turkish Cypriot folk arts, therefore, is characterised by one culture seeking to obfuscate its own vernacular hybridities and mixing, and to position itself as superior or at times *equal* to other cultural formations. Accordingly, the patterns and practices of inclusion and exclusion should be seen

as the essentialisation of a version of the rational subject that is caught between a sense of Turkishness (which for Turkish Cypriots represents Easternness/non-Europeanness) and a sense of Cypriotness (which represents Europeanness/Westernness).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone who took part in this project. I would also like to add a special thanks to the anonymous reviewers of this article for their constructive comments and suggestions.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Aydın, E. (2006). *Milliyetçilik (Türkiye'nin Çıkmazı)* [Nationalism (Turkey's impasse)]. Kırmızı Yayınları.

Baldini, A. (2014). *Public art: A critical approach* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Temple University.

Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies*, SAGE.

Beyazoglu, I. (2017). Nostalgia, myth, nationalism: The postcolonial nostalgia for "British" Cyprus. *Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala*, *58*, 209–220.

Bhabha, H. (1983). The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism. *Screen*, *24*(6), 18–36.

Bhambra, G., & Santos, B. (2017). Introduction: Global challenges for sociology. *Sociology*, *51*(1), 3–10.

Bilingual dictionary reflects Cypriots' common words and memories, authors say. (2016, July 3). *Cyprus News Agency*. https://cyprus-mail.com/2016/07/03/bilingual-dictionary-reflects-cypriots-common-words-memories-authors-say

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.

Bryant, R., & Yakinthou, C. (2012). Cypriot perceptions of Turkey. *Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation*. TESEV.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*.

Finkelpearl, T. (2013). *What we made: Conversations on art and social cooperation*. Duke University Press.

Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. MIT Press.

Hadjipieris, I., & Kabatas, O. (2017). *Kibris Turk ve Rum Diyalektlerinin Ortak Sozlugu* [The joint dictionary of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot dialect]. Isik Kitabevi.

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs identity? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1–17). SAGE.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. SAGE.

Hall, S. (2007). Living with difference: Interview with Bill Schwarz. *Soundings*, *37*, 148–158.

Hall, S., & Massey, D. (2010). Interpreting the crisis. *Soundings*, *44*, 57–71.

Hatay, M. (2007). *Is the Turkish Cypriot population shrinking? An overview of the ethno-demography of Cyprus in the light of the preliminary results of the 2006 Turkish-Cypriot census*. PRIO Centre Reports.

Hatay, M. (2009). The problem of pigeons: Orientalism, xenophobia and a rhetoric of the 'local' in North Cyprus. *The Cyprus Review*, *20*(2), 145–171.

Hatay, M., & Bryant, R. (2008). The jasmine, scent of Nicosia: Of returns, revolutions, and the longing for forbidden pasts. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, *26*(2), 423–449.

Kester, G. (2011). *The one and the many: Contemporary collaborative art in a global context*. Duke University Press.

Kizilyurek, N. (1999). *Milliyetçilik Kıskacında Kıbrıs* [Cyprus in the grip of nationalism]. İletişim Yayınları.

Kizilyurek, N. (2002). *Milliyetcilik Kiskacinda Kibris* [Cyprus in the grip of nationalism]. Iletisim.

Kizilyurek, N. (2018). *Kayip Ozne: Aslinda Hepimiz Melankoligiz* [Missing subject: Actually, we are all melancholic]. Soylem Matbaa.

Knight, C. K. (2008). *Public art: Theory, practice and populism*. Blackwell.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. SAGE.

Lacher, H., & Kaymak, E. (2005). Transforming identities: Beyond the politics of non-settlement in North Cyprus. *Mediterranean Politics*, *10*(2), 147–166.

Lacy, S. (Ed.). (1995). *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art*. Bay Press.

Lee, R. M. (1993). *Doing research on sensitive topics*. SAGE.

Loizides, G. N. (2007). Ethnic nationalism and adaptation in Cyprus. *International Studies Perspectives*, *8*(2), 172–189.

Mbembe, A. (2008, January 9). What is postcolonial thinking? An interview with Achille Mbembe. *Eurozine Review*. https://www.eurozine.com/what-is-postcolonial-thinking

Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2006). De-ethnicizing the ethnography of Cyprus. In Y. Papadakis, N. Peristianis, & G. Welz (Eds.), *Divided Cyprus: Modernity, history, and an island in conflict* (pp. 84–99). Indiana University Press.

Nevzat, A. (2005). *Nationalism amongst the Turks of Cyprus: The first wave* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University of Oulu.

Papadakis, Y. (2008). *History education in divided Cyprus: A comparison of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks on the history of Cyprus*. PRIO Centre Reports.

Pollis, A. (1996). The social construction of ethnicity and nationality: The case of Cyprus. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, *2*, 67–90.

Pollis, A. (1998). The role of foreign powers in structuring ethnicity and ethnic conflict in Cyprus. In V. Calotychos (Ed.), *Cyprus and its people: Nation, identity and experience in an unimaginable community, 1955–1997* (pp. 85–102). Westview Press.

Rhys-Taylor, A. (2013). Disgust and distinction: The case of the jellied eel. *The Sociological Review*, *61*(2), 227–246.

Rutherford, J. (1990). The third space. Interview with Homi Bhabha. In H. G. Ders (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 207–221). Lawrence & Wishart.

Sadikoglu, R. (2019). *Cypriotness after postcolonialism* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Goldsmiths College.

Said, E. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. Vintage.

Said, E. (2005). *The myth of the 'clash of civilizations'* [Speech transcript]. Media Education Foundation. https://www.mediaed.org/transcripts/edward-said-the-myth-of-clash-civilizations-transcript.pdf (Original work published 1998)

Said, E. (2006). *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. Penguin Books. (Original work published 1978)

Santos, B. (2016). Epistemologies of the South and the future. *From the European South: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, *1*, 17–29.

Smith, H. (2018, January 6). "We're not Muslims enough" fear Turkish Cypriots as poll looms. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/06/were-not-muslim-enough-fear-turkish-cypriots-as-poll-looms

Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture and power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press.

Vural, Y., & Özuyanık, E. (2008). Redefining identity in the Turkish-Cypriot school history textbooks: A step towards a united federal Cyprus. *South European Society and Politics*, *13*(2), 133–154.

Vural, Y., & Rustemli, A. (2006). Identity fluctuations in the Turkish Cypriot community. *Mediterranean Politics*, *11*(3), 329–348.

Wise, A., & Velayutham, S. (2014). Conviviality in everyday multiculturalism: Some brief comparisons between Singapore and Sydney. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *17*(4), 406–430.

Zuidervaart, L. (2011). *Art in public: Politics, economics, and a democratic culture*. Cambridge University Press.

About the Author

Rahme Sadikoglu received her PhD in sociology from Goldsmiths College, University of London, in 2019. Her PhD focused on the complexities involved in the contemporary fabrication of Cypriotness in Northern Cyprus. She is currently an associate lecturer in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths College. Her research interests include the politics of Turkish Cypriot identity, with a specific emphasis on the post-war generation. This interest extends to examining how Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, and mainland Turks negotiate difference in Cyprus.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 180–190
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4180

Article

Palm Tree Whispers and Mountain Escapes: How Contemporary Artworks Contribute to an Inclusive Public Sphere

Annatina Aerne

IDHEAP, University of Lausanne, Switzerland; E-Mail: annatina.aerne@unil.ch

Submitted: 29 March 2021 | Accepted: 4 October 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
How do artworks contribute to a more inclusive public sphere? Artworks contribute to the inclusiveness of a public sphere in that they help us consider previous objects as acting subjects, and thus as entities deserving membership in the public sphere. In addition, artworks typically attract a public, thus generating the necessary recognition for additional subjects. We propose a typology that categorizes artworks' contribution to an inclusive public sphere. The typology is based on two axes: (a) artworks' explicitness in attributing the status of a subject to a previous object and (b) the number of people that get to see the artwork. In order to illustrate the applicability of the typology and in order to understand how the two dimensions relate to one another, we analyze how two artworks include the non-human as subjects into the public sphere: Eduardo Navarro's *Sound Mirror* (shown at the 2016 São Paulo Biennal) and Prabhakar Pachpute's *Mountain Escape* (exhibited in the 2016 Colombian Salón Nacional de Artistas). Comparing both artistic strategies we find that there may be a trade-off between the explicitness and the reach of a new subjectification.

Keywords
art; art world; contemporary art; distribution of the sensible; Eduardo Navarro; environmental art; global art market; Jacques Rancière; Latin American art; inclusiveness; Oliver Marchart; political art; Prabhakar Pachpute; public sphere

Issue
This article is a part of the issue "Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere" edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

Artworks' effects on individuals and communities are difficult to analyze because artworks' messages are ambiguous and their impact is hard to trace and measure. Sensory, or aesthetic impressions, are not unequivocal in their meaning. In contrast to cognitive statements, much is left to the interpretation of onlookers. As Edelman (1995, p. 7) holds:

> The political meanings of works of art, then, are never given, but always "taken" by political leaders and followers….All possibilities cannot be grasped, so we search for a model that resolves ambiguities and reduces possibilities to one or a few.

Yet, communities tend to converge on a certain understanding of what counts as beautiful, or artistic. Artworks undoubtedly shape how we perceive our world. Reconciling the ambiguity of sensory impressions with the convergence of their evaluation in communities has thus posed a puzzle, addressed in a rich theoretical literature.

A first, positivist approach has assumed that certain kinds of aesthetic impressions always invoke certain feelings, similar to natural laws. British philosopher Edmund Burke distinguished beauty and the sublime as the strongest impressions anything could have on individuals (Burke, 1757/1990). Whereas the sublime originates from impressions that seem boundless and, in a way, threatening, beauty is purely charming and attractive (Vandenabeele, 2003). In his analysis he tried to deduce

the regularities according to which visual impressions, sounds, tastes, smells, and experience of touch invoke such a sense of "beauty" or "sublime." More recent contributions making use of this distinction have analyzed political events, such as the 9/11 terrorist attack through the lens of the sublime (Roberts, 2014).

A second approach holds that the converging evaluation of sensory impressions in communities lies in the fact that we judge artworks in a community (Arendt, 1982; Kant, 1790/1920). When we judge a sensory impression, we take into account what our peers may think about it and adapt our evaluations (Arendt, 1982, pp. 54, 73; Beiner, 1982, p. 133). Through this collective evaluation of art, individuals determine together what deserves to be recognized as beautiful or relevant. Arendt even goes as far as to argue that we determine who gets to belong to our community through such collective judgment (Arendt, 1982, p. 72; Beiner, 1982, p. 113). Drawing on Arendt, Corcoran (2008) holds that visual recognition relates to political recognition, or put differently: What looks good, beautiful, and right relates to one another. Following Corcoran (2008, p. 78), "aesthetic judgment is recognitive: it distinguishes between seeing and not seeing, viewing but refusing to recognize as rightful or belonging." Similarly, Ferguson (1999) holds that aesthetic judgments are political because they involve the contestation between individuals and groups over ways the world is understood.

Despite this rich theoretical literature, it remains difficult to evaluate artworks' impact on individuals and communities (Coemans et al., 2015). The theories remain highly abstract and are difficult to apply to individual artworks. Our contribution aims at breaking down two more recent theoretical contributions, in an effort to provide a simple typology to evaluate artworks' political potential. Drawing on Rancière (1992, 1995/2003, 2004, 2009, 2014) and Marchart (2019), we argue that two issues are key in understanding how art has an impact on communities. First, an artwork's meaning needs to be understood by an individual; second, the artwork needs to reach more than just a few people. We propose a typology that categorizes artworks' political potential based on (a) how explicitly they relate a message to their viewers and (b) how many people get to see the artwork. This typology allows researchers to categorize artworks with respect to their political potential, such as their contribution to an inclusive public sphere.

In a second step, we conduct a comparative case study and analyze how two artworks contribute to a political change through their aesthetic proposition (George & Bennett, 2004, p. 75). We trace how exactly they achieve this influence by comparing them along the two axes developed in the typology: explicitness of their message and size of the audience they address. Our comparison focuses on two artworks dealing with the non-human. Most societies do not currently recognize non-humans as equals in their societies. Comparing artistic strategies that aim at instituting the non-human as a subject along the axes of the typology allows understanding what aspects of the artworks increase or decrease their impact on the public sphere.

The comparison also sheds light on how the two dimensions of our typology relate to one another—i.e., does a more explicit artwork more easily reach a wide audience? The comparison of the two artworks suggests that less explicit artworks more easily reach a wider audience. Hence, artworks that achieve international acclaim "hurt" less. This leads us to the insight that the potential of artworks to increase the inclusiveness of a public sphere is limited by a trade-off: They either explicitly propose (political and societal) change or reach a wide(r) audience.

We proceed in four steps: After developing the theoretical argument and the typology, we describe the artworks and their exhibition contexts. Next, we compare the selected works in two dimensions: how explicitly they create new subjects and how they form a public that accepts these subjects. The last section offers some concluding thoughts.

2. How Do Artworks Make the Public Sphere More Inclusive?

In the following, we theorize how artworks reach a political potential in general, and how they may contribute to an inclusive public sphere in particular. We first line out how artworks help us to recognize new subjects that were previously only accorded the status of objects, drawing on Rancière's concept of the sensible. Second, we argue that not all artworks are equally apt to make the public sphere more inclusive, drawing on Marchart's critique of Rancière. We develop a typology that allows categorizing artworks based on the two axes explicitness of the proposed subjectification and the size of the public that sees the artwork.

2.1. Creating Additional Subjects: How Artworks Make Public Sphere More Inclusive

The relation between art and the inclusiveness of a public sphere lies in artworks' capacity to institute additional subjects. The degree of inclusiveness of a public sphere depends on its capacity to recognize entities as subjects that previously did not enjoy this status (Benhabib, 1992; Eley, 1992; Fraser, 1990). Recognizing additional subjects, each demanding adequate treatment, makes a public sphere inclusive.

How do artworks contribute to institute new subjects, and accordingly, to an inclusive public sphere? Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible proves helpful in answering this question. By sensible, Rancière means an order that is both perceptible (physical) and reasonable (socially accepted). The social order and the physical order are thus related in Rancière's thinking, and it is not possible to change one without the other. The question of what looks "good, beautiful,

right" is not only a question of personal taste, but has normative implications that also shape political thinking (Corcoran, 2008). Rancière attributes to the distribution of the sensible similar functions as are usually ascribed to the public sphere. The distribution of the sensible—the socially accepted structure of physical space—delimits both the common and the private realms of society, and determines each individual's position in the public sphere (Rancière, 2004, p. 12). This distribution defines who has access to the common domain, how, and when (Rancière, 2004, p. 12). Rancière thus suggests that the structure of physical space also has normative implications. The distribution of physical things can as such be experienced and at the same time constitutes a normative order. This is because the range of our experiences also affects what we think of as just, or right: i.e., in a world where animals are treated as a resource, it is hard to think of animals having equal rights as human beings. The distribution of experiences therefore determines what is socially accepted and normatively valid. Rancière defines the distribution of the sensible as the form of physical things, and the ethical order as an aesthetic one.

In Rancière's distribution of the sensible, the marginalized gain access through manifestation of their physical presence as equal to those that already take a part in the distribution of the sensible. Those who are excluded from perception are also excluded from the societal order in a normative sense—they should not participate. They become included and visible/audible when they manage to create statements or actions in space that are understood as emanating from equal subjects. These actions do not match their excluded status and hence expose an inconsistency in the normative order (Rancière, 1995/2003, p. 45). Rancière cites the example of Jeanne Deroin, who ran for office in the French national legislative elections in 1849. As she did everything needed to be elected, Deroin's non-admission highlights the contradiction between the official rules (at the time, women were prohibited from running for office) and the fact that women are capable of performing all the necessary actions. Thus, subjects are capable of making statements that undeniably emanate from an equal (Rancière, 1995/2003, p. 45).

The interesting feature of Rancière's approach is that the process through which marginalized groups and individuals become regarded as equal political subjects does not rely on formal political processes, but instead on sensitive or aesthetic experiences. In contrast to other thinkers, Rancière understands politics as the processes by which the previously excluded claim access to society's relevant spheres by manifesting their equality with current participants in space. Political action, then, need not assume any specific form (e.g., demonstrating in the streets or voting). Rather, such action depends on the potential to confirm the equality of individuals previously not perceived as equal in relation to established groups (Rancière, 1995/2003, p. 44).

Artworks may constitute actions that create subjects, as they make visible and audible the previously unseen and unheard. They may as such state the equality of the excluded with those already present. Rancière's idea of a physical order having normative implications assigns to artworks a normative potential to the extent that they restructure space:

> Art is not, in the first instance, political because of the messages and sentiments it conveys concerning the state of the world. Neither is it political because of the manner in which it might choose to represent society's structures, or social groups, their conflicts or identities. It is political because of the very distance it takes with respect to these functions, because of the type of space and time that it institutes, and the manner in which it frames the time and peoples this space. (Rancière, 2009, p. 23)

Artworks relate to the inclusiveness of public sphere because they propose new subjects. This resonates much with literature that has analyzed how art is central to a democratic public sphere in disclosing "in fresh and insightful ways the felt quality and lived experience of concerns that merit public attention" (Zuidervaart, 2011, p. 126).

2.2. Making the Subjectification Explicit and Expanding Recognition Across Different Publics

The problem with Rancière is that, following his account, any artwork has an impact on the social order, because art changes the material setup of our surroundings (Marchart, 2019, p. 13; Norval, 2014). Does any change in the environment, and thus any artwork entail a corresponding change in the social order? According to Oliver Marchart, this is not the case. In his reading, art only has a political effect if it fulfils three conditions: It must agitate, propagate, and organize (Marchart, 2019, p. 37). Agitation refers to the act of creating subjects. According to Marchart, individuals are made into subjects via a hegemonic order (Marchart, 2019, p. 37). Disrupting this hegemonic order enables creating new subjects. In order to disrupt a hegemonic order, subjects need to be agitated, that is, brought into an active state. This agitation presupposes a political situation that cannot be constructed, yet must be encountered: It is a window of opportunity of sorts, in which people reflect on the current conditions and become open to new ideas (Marchart, 2019, p. 38). Following the successful agitation of individuals, the worldview advocated by an artwork needs to be propagated. Thus, a particular political position needs to be accepted by many people, rather than merely by a few agitated ones (Marchart, 2019, p. 37). Third, this political position needs to be instituted in order to be sustainable: Debates and practices need to be organized such that they are available over time and do not disappear with the artwork (Marchart, 2019, p. 37).

Marchart, in contrast to Rancière, limits art's contribution to more inclusiveness to certain forms of artistic expression that take an explicit political stance. His definition of political art implies that very few artworks seem to be political and that the artwork itself has little impact. Even the first condition—agitation—is not achieved primarily by artistic intervention, but instead depends on a political situation that must be encountered. The condition that artworks need to propagate or organize imposes a particular form on artworks, namely that they be in the form of a political manifestation, or rally, and then organize in some collective. Marchart's examples include the Guerilla Girls, Femen, Public Movement, Reverend Billy and Stop the Shopping Choir, Gran Fury and Group Material (Marchart, 2019, p. 34). These are all collectives of artists, and their artistic practice consists of performance and activism. Restricting political art to these particular forms, Marchart limits the range of artistic expressions that can be political. Thus, whereas Rancière claims that any art is political, Marchart's definition of political art means that hardly any art is political.

We suggest combining Rancière's and Marchart's accounts. First, we need to modify Rancière's distribution of the sensible: Any artwork, in making the previously invisible visible, and unheard audible, creates new subjects and *potentially* has an impact on the public sphere. Following Marchart, we would agree that further conditions need to be satisfied for an artwork to contribute to an inclusive public sphere. We would posit that we need to ask whether and how a material change and the proposed subjectification (a) is understood by the public addressed (i.e., is the subjectification explicit enough to be understood) and (b) how the message of an artwork circulates beyond the small segment of society that usually attends art events. In contrast to Marchart, formulating conditions relating to the type of artworks, we shift the focus on the reception process.

The first dimension refers to how explicit the artwork is. Artworks are aesthetic experiences, with multiple, ambiguous meanings. Their message is therefore open to interpretation and discussion, which makes them difficult to understand. However, certain artworks are more explicit than others, in that they explicitly name the circumstances or situations they relate to. We would argue that an artwork's contribution to expanding the public sphere depends on its message being understood by many, not only a few people. Such understanding is easier achieved if a message is relatively explicit. In a way, this condition relates to Marchart's point that artworks need to agitate (i.e., disrupt the existing normative order). In contrast to Marchart, we do not think that agitation depends on political circumstances, or a window of opportunity, but that any kind of artwork can make an explicit statement.

The second dimension refers to the size of the public reached. Not all artworks enjoy the same degree of publicity and not all artworks are circulated to the same extent. This condition relates to Marchart's point that an artwork needs to be propagated and instituted. However, in contrast to Marchart, we don't think that such a diffusion depends on the artworks' form (i.e., an artistic collective mobilizing and eventually building a permanent establishment). Rather, artworks usually reach some degree of institution, because they are exhibited in galleries and museums. The status of an artwork critically depends on the affirmation of an "art world" (Danto, 1964). The art world consists of a range of art institutions and art experts that need to approve of an artwork. Without the recognition by the art world, i.e., without being featured by an art critic, a curator, selected by an art committee, or being exhibited in a museum or a gallery, artworks remain artefacts. Thus, artworks, by being artworks, have already reached a larger part of society, compared to artefacts that are not considered art. Yet, artists and artworks differ in their status, depending on the organizations and networks they are circulated and exhibited in. Within the field of cultural production, how one relates to the others is central in gaining status (Aerne, 2020; Bourdieu, 1994; Bystryn, 1972; Currid, 2007; Danto, 1964). Artworks can thus be shown at one or multiple events, and address an international public, or a local one. Thus, while every artwork reaches some institutionalization, artworks differ with respect to the size of the audience they address.

These two dimensions capture how artworks contribute to an inclusive public sphere: An artwork with an explicit message and a wide audience is more likely to make the public sphere more inclusive than one with an implicit message catering to a small audience. Both conditions take up Marchart's criticism of Rancière's distribution of the sensible, namely, that not all artworks contribute to a change in the public sphere to the same extent. However, in contrast to Marchart, the capacity of an artwork to contribute to an inclusive public sphere is context-dependent: What an audience understands depends on time and place, just as whether and how the work circulates beyond a small segment of society.

Combining the two dimensions into a two-by-two matrix results in a typology (Table 1) that allows categorizing artworks' contribution to an inclusive public sphere.

3. Case Studies: Palm Tree Whispers and Mountain Escapes

This section presents two case studies on artworks instituting the non-human as subjects. The cases are selected based on the dependent variable (their impact on the public sphere) and serve two purposes (George & Bennett, 2004, p. 75). First, they trace how two artworks institute new subjects in the public sphere, based on the two axes theorized as relevant. They thus illustrate the applicability of the typology in structuring an analysis of artworks' impact on the public sphere. We choose artworks instituting the non-human as subjects, because we think that the recognition of the non-human as equal

Table 1. Artworks' potential to contribute to an inclusive public sphere.

	Large audience	Small audience
Explicit message	Large potential	Intermediate potential
Implicit message	Intermediate potential	Small potential

to human beings in public sphere is still controversial in most societies. Analyzing artworks instituting the non-human as subjects is thus informative in order to understand under what conditions artworks are successful in enlarging the public sphere.

Second, the case studies serve to analyze how the two dimensions of the typology relate to one another. Do more explicit artworks reach a wide audience more easily? The artworks differ with respect to the two dimensions theorized to be relevant for their political impact on the inclusiveness of the public sphere. *Sound Mirror* is less explicit than *Mountain Escape* in its message. And while the São Paulo Biennial addresses an international and a local audience, the Colombian Salón Nacional de Artistas is predominantly a domestic art event. Tracing the reception of these artworks also helps understanding if explicitness and size of the audience are related, and if so, how.

3.1. Palm Tree Whispers: *Sound Mirror* at the São Paulo Biennal

Exhibited at the 2016 São Paulo Biennial, Eduardo Navarro's installation *Sound Mirror* resembles a trumpet or trombone (see Figure 1). Navarro's installation connects a palm tree and the exhibition visitors through an instrument that transmits sound from the outside of the exhibition hall to the inside. Holding their ears to the tube, visitors realize that the tree's leaves make sounds. This arrangement allows them to discover that the tree is not an object, but a living being just like themselves.

Navarro (b. 1979, Buenos Aires) placed a funnel measuring about two meters near the top of a palm tree. The trumpet narrows into a tube that perforates one of the glass walls of the exhibition hall. It connects the first floor of renowned architect Oscar Niemeyer's exhibition hall of the São Paulo Biennial in Ibirapuera Park with a palm tree standing outside. It leans upward, making it easily accessible for a visitor sitting on a chair inside. The installation enabled exhibition visitors to hold an ear to the tube and listen to the tree leaves move. Presumably, the noise from the exhibition hall was also transmitted to the palm tree.

How we, as human beings, perceive our environment is central in Navarro's work. In his installations, viewers perceive the inanimate environment with their senses. His works encompass various techniques, from sculptures to participatory installations and performance. Broadly speaking, Navarro explores our sensory perception of the environment. Another example of his work, *Polenphonia* (2018), involved flute players improvising in a garden. During the performance, the players wore

Figure 1. *Sound Mirror*.

masks that would enhance their sense of smell, their music thus reflecting the smells of their surroundings. Eduardo Navarro is internationally recognized and his artworks are exhibited all over the world (Art Basel, 2019).

3.2. Mountain Escape in the Colombian Salón Nacional de Artistas

The second artwork, *Mountain Escape* (see Figure 2) was painted directly onto the wall of Pereira's Art Museum (Colombia) as a contribution to the 2016 Salón Nacional de Artistas. In the background, the painting features a green mountain, whose yellow holes indicate where it has been exploited. The mountain base is borne by grayish human figures who are carrying the mountain above their heads—thus helping the mountain to escape from its plight. Their heads disappear behind the mountain, leaving the figures faceless. The small figures bearing the mountain might be interpreted as carrying it away, in an allusion to mining—that is, exploiting—the substance of the mountain. The figures also look crushed under the weight of the landmass towering above them, alluding to the hard, manual labor down the mines. In a symbiotic relationship, the small figures support and erode the mountain at the same time.

In the foreground, on a kind of platform, two human figures in jujitsu gear can be seen fighting, sitting atop another. Their heads are replaced by mining tools, a square funnel and a pick, which makes them seem less human. The platform and the humanoids upon it are also gray. Some airplanes and clouds, also gray, can be seen moving over the mountain. Although in the foreground, the humanoids are not the first element of the painting to capture the viewer's attention. Instead, the mountain becomes the protagonist. Its vivid colors pale the shades of gray in which the human figures are painted. Moreover, the humanoids' facelessness relativizes their prominent position in the painting.

The environmental and social effects of coal-mining are a central theme in the artist's oeuvre. Prabhakar Pachpute (b. 1986) was born in Chandrapur (India), a city well-known for coal mining. Members of the artist's family worked down the local mines under highly precarious conditions. Mining and labor conditions are thus a frequent theme in Pachpute's work. He often draws in charcoal and directly onto walls. His works characteristically include surrealist elements—as exemplified by replacing human heads by mining tools (QAGOMA, 2018).

4. Comparison of Artistic Strategies: Subjects Beyond Exhibition Halls

In the following, we compare the two artworks along the two dimensions theorized to be important to contribute to an inclusive public sphere: how explicit the artworks are in their subjectification and how wide the audience is they address.

4.1. Explicitness

Eduardo Navarro's *Sound Mirror* and Prabhakar Pachpute's *Mountain Escape* both assign the environment a central role and the capacity to act: the mountain escapes, the palm tree whispers. Mountain and palm

Figure 2. *Escape de la Montaña*/*Mountain Escape* (2016). Acrylic, charcoal and pastel on wall, 6.5 × 12 m.

tree are thus subjects rather than objects. *Sound Mirror*, however, does so in a much more implicit manner than *Mountain Escape*.

In very general terms, the *Sound Mirror* connects visitors with the palm tree and bridges the building and its surrounding park. Thinking of the trumpet as prolonging the plant creates the association of crawling vines finding their way into an interior world. The listening device also recalls the saying that one should talk to plants so that they grow better. The instrument allows the CO_2 exhaled by humans and the O_2 produced by trees to circulate. The connection between tree and human is established not only through sound. Visitors inevitably follow the tube with their eyes and come to focus on the palm tree outside. If the building's glass wall is seen as a mirror, the visitor is reflected as a tree. Thus, visitor and tree can be interpreted as reflecting one another.

In addition, *Sound Mirror* emphasizes the commonalities between the palm tree and humans: Both are living beings, both breathe and emit sounds. In listening to the tree, visitors become aware of their commonality with all life, including plants. It thus addresses the widest possible public: All viewers are living human beings. Thus, *Sound Mirror* is relatively open in its aesthetic proposition and builds a public based on the commonality of all living creatures.

Navarro's installation also inverts the role of subject and object: visitors listen, the palm tree speaks. Plants are often perceived as objects. They decorate interiors and have occupied a subordinate role in paintings for centuries. In *Sound Mirror*, the plant becomes subject, producing a sound, and the human listens. Corresponding very much to Rancière's ideas, the installation changes the distribution of the sensible such that the tree becomes visible as a living creature, rather than as an inanimate object.

Visitors are thus invited to perceive the similarity between themselves and the palm tree through various mechanisms: a visual and auditive connection, a juxtaposition highlighting the similarities between onlooker and tree, as well as an inversion of roles. The artwork's message remains however relatively implicit—it is not clear, if it refers to this particular palm tree, palm trees in general (i.e., connected to the issue of palm oil), all trees or even all plants. This inversion was furthermore limited as visitors could still choose to listen (or not) to the palm tree. The palm tree, in contrast, had no choice about whether it wanted to be acoustically connected to the building.

The second artwork, Pachpute's *Mountain Escape* assigns agency to a landmass. The work presents the mountain in bright yellow and green, while faceless human beings appear in gray—the color of inanimate phenomena like stone and dust. Supported by the human feet beneath its base, the mountain seems to be walking. Viewers are invited to identify with the mountain rather than with their fellow human beings. In assigning agency to the mountain, *Mountain Escape*, establishes a similarity between visitors and a moving landmass.

In contrast to *Sound Mirror*, *Mountain Escape*, besides stressing the shared quality of the mountain with visitors, also makes a quite explicit statement. It criticizes mining practices and takes a firm stance against multinational companies and government in particular mining sites. The catalog entry reads as follows:

> Mining has led to the consumption of natural resources and, with it, to different forms of destruction. That is what has happened in the mountain in Marmato, Caldas, where big multinational companies, hoping to monopolize the extraction of resources, have displaced the local inhabitants who live by artisanal mining. In Latin America, cases like the abandoned gold mine in Sierra Pelada, in northern Brazil, are examples of the social and environmental devastation caused by large-scale mining.
>
> In Colombia, protests against the social injustices caused by such mining have been systematically repressed by the State and paramilitaries, as happened in the massacre in Segovia, Antioquia, in 1982, where political interests were linked to the economic ones of the multinational which controlled gold-mining there. In the case of gold in Marmato, Pachpute came across people still fighting for their rights and resisting the pressures of big companies and the government, an example of activism which strengthens a social body engaged in a collective struggle. (Ministerio de Cultura, 2018)

The catalog entry for *Mountain Escape* clarifies the significance of the figures fighting on the platform. At Caldas, a large mining site in Colombia, multinational corporations and the government have forcefully replaced the artisanal mining long done by indigenous communities. The battle of the humanoids in the painting may refer to the battle over resources between different actors. Both the mountain and the fighting humanoids (government and multinationals) are borne by much smaller human figures (presumably workers and indigenous miners).

The catalog thus explicitly refers to two groups of people: the government and multinational big companies on the one hand and people fighting for their rights and opposing these mining practices on the other hand. The artwork reinforces onlookers' identification with the mountain, rather than their fellow human beings, by creating a division between the mountain, onlookers, indigenous communities and activists on the one hand, and the forces threatening the mountain (multinationals and the state) on the other. Rhetorically, the hostile group is disguised as the state and multinational corporations—institutions whose human nature is only visible at second glance. Visually, the opposing group is depicted as faceless and grey. These adversaries are easy to oppose because they are not self-evidently human. Pachpute's

artistic project strengthens the bond between the environment, indigenous communities and the onlookers by alienating another group (the multinationals and government). The multinationals and the government, cast as enemies, thus contribute to strengthening ties between the mountain and exhibition visitors. Yet this strategy also alienates certain actors—people working in multinationals or government—who might feel estranged rather than convinced by this clear opposition. *Mountain Escape*, by making its subjectification more explicit, also limits the extent of its potential reach.

Pachpute's reference to indigenous communities when addressing an environmental concern deserves further attention. Environmental concerns have been central in indigenous art for a long time (Horton, 2017). Their political struggle to gain recognition has at times coincided with their fight for recognizing the non-human as equal: By highlighting the deterioration of the environment in capitalist societies, indigenous lifestyles gain validity (Horton, 2017, p. 51). In this light, *Mountain Escape* addressing environmental concerns in current mining practices as well as citing indigenous mining as a counterexample may also express opposition against a colonial history. In this sense, *Mountain Escape* not only criticizes environmental overuse, but also a lifestyle that has been imposed upon Latin American societies by its colonizers.

Comparing the two artworks, Eduardo Navarro's *Sound Mirror* and Prabhakar Pachpute's *Mountain Escape* differ in the the explicitness of a subjectification. The message of *Sound Mirror* is ambiguous: it is unclear whether the work refers to palm trees that are harvested for palm oil, or whether its subjectification is more general. In emphasizing the quality of being alive in all, *Sound Mirror*'s message remains relatively open. *Mountain Escape*, on the other hand, is clear as to what it subjectifies: It explicitly names the mining sites which it wants to include in the public sphere and names the actors (corporate and government) to which it stands opposed.

4.2. Exhibition Context

Both artworks were shown at major art events in Latin America, but the exhibitions differ with respect to the audience they address. *Sound Mirror* was shown at the São Paulo Biennial in 2016. From the onset, this event was conceived with an international audience in mind. The São Paulo Biennial is the second oldest of its kind. A curated, bi-annual exhibition, it was founded in 1951 (Whitelegg, 2013). According to its first artistic director, Lourival Gomes Machado, the idea driving the São Paulo Biennial was to bring Brazilian modern art in contact with the rest of the world, and to make São Paulo an international artistic center. As such, the São Paulo Biennial was the forerunner of a wave of biennials to emerge in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, with the aim of counterbalancing the cultural and economic influence of the Global North, be it the Iberian Peninsula or the United States (Gardner & Green, 2013, p. 448). Thus, from its very beginning, the São Paulo Biennial addressed an international audience.

In 2016, the 32nd version of the São Paulo Biennal was titled "Incerteza Viva" (living uncertainty). The introductory text referred to the show's location (in a park) and the union of nature and culture, as well as a connection between a local audience visiting the park, and the international public attending the biennial:

> Ever since the start of the work for the 32nd Bienal—INCERTEZA VIVA, the curatorial team has shown interest in strengthening the connection between the Bienal and the park and the people who frequent it….It is important to emphasize that the exhibit design for the 32nd Bienal was conceived with a garden as its inspiration—a garden in which visitors are invited to different types of experiences, at times with more physical participation and involvement, at others with more contemplation in contact with a large amount of brand new works of art and those commissioned for the exhibition. In addition, some artistic projects occupy areas outside the Bienal Pavilion, establishing a direct dialogue with the park's public.

Sound Mirror, apart from connecting exhibition visitors and an exhibit, connects Biennale and park visitors through the shared experience of the visual impression of the palm tree. The palm tree is accessible also from the park. Park visitors can experience the palm tree without attending the Biennale. The artwork thus also connects very different audiences—the international visitors attending the biennale and the locals strolling through the park.

The São Paulo Biennal could thus be characterized as a quite international exhibition context, reaching out to visitors coming from all over the world. Moreover, the 32nd biennial aimed at connecting different kinds of public—the local families visiting the park as well as international art lovers.

The second artwork, *Mountain Escape*, was exhibited at the Salón Nacional de Artistas. The event takes place every year, with the 2016 edition being held in the city of Pereira. Although featuring international artists, the Colombian Salón Nacional de Artistas still addresses a predominantly domestic audience. The exhibition was first held in 1930, but has been disrupted several times by violence (Carrasco, 2006, p. 69; Figueroa, 2006, p. 48; Gónzalez, 2006, p. 152; Rey-Márquez, 2006, pp. 13–14). It has always been a yearly national competition that invites artists to submit contributions for display. Originally founded to create a domestic art scene, the Salón Nacional de Artistas is still a curated exhibition today, but has lost some of its importance.

The history of the Salón Nacional de Artistas reflects the efforts to make this exhibition truly national, rather than merely confined to Bogotá, Colombia's capital, the

original venue. Throughout its history the Salón Nacional de Artistas catered and aimed at forming a national public. First held in Bogotá in 1930, the Salón Nacional de Artistas created a national audience for Colombia's artists (Rey-Márquez, 2006, p. 34). During the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, it began taking place across the country. In 1961, part of the *Salón* was also shown in Ibagué (Tolima) and at the Primer Festival de Arte in Cali; in 1962, the opening was televised (Carrasco, 2006, p. 79). In 1976, the Salón Nacional de Artistas was further decentralized and regional calls and exhibitions were organized (Aranda, 2006, p. 131). In a further effort to decentralize the national exhibition, it was organized in Medellín in 1987 and in Cartagena in 1989 (Gónzalez, 2006, pp. 158–159). In the 1990s, regional Salónes de Artistas were organized in different Colombian cities (Ministerio de Cultura, 2018).

The 2016 Salón Nacional de Artistas was titled *Aún*, which translates as "still" or "so far." The curators' introduction linked this temporal expression to the local coffee-growing region and to notions of territory:

> The title of this 44th edition of the National Salon is "AÚN," meaning "yet," "still" or "so far," which indicates a period of transition, an approach proposed by a curatorial team….It is a vision inspired by local conditions—the Paisaje Cultural Cafetero [cultural coffee landscape]—that seeks to broadly approach notions of territory and its redefinition by political, historical, economic, social, and cultural influences. (Ministerio de Cultura, 2016, p. 14)

In contrast to the São Paulo Biennal, the Salón Nacional de Artistas connected to notions of territory, in addition to environmental concerns. Referring to local conditions and land might appeal more to the local audience, rather than international visitors and perhaps also reflects the more local orientation of the Salón Nacional de Artistas in contrast to the more international orientation of the Biennal.

5. Discussion

Mountain Escape's relatively clear statement contrasts with *Sound Mirror*'s more ambiguous one. This observation becomes interesting given that its exhibition venue, the São Paulo Biennial, is more international than the Salón Nacional de Artistas. It is probably less congenial to confront international visitors from the Global North with the (wrong)doings of multinationals usually incorporated in those visitors' home countries. International visitors might feel alienated by Pachpute's work. The Salón Nacional de Artistas is frequented largely by a domestic audience. Thus, a work holding foreign multinationals and the government responsible for Colombia's abject working conditions and deteriorating environment might be more acceptable at this "local" exhibition than at the more international São Paulo event. In contrast, *Sound Mirror*'s more ambiguous message might be more palatable to international visitors, as it emphasizes the commonality of humans with nature, a message everybody more easily agrees with.

In a tentative interim conclusion, we would thus suggest that artworks reaching a wider audience have managed to create a consensus across wider audiences and institutions. It is plausible that less explicit artworks achieve this objective more straightforwardly. Hence, artworks that achieve international acclaim "hurt" less. The potential of artworks to increase the inclusiveness of a public sphere is limited by a trade-off: they either explicitly propose (political and societal) change or reach a wide(r) audience.

Table 2 summarizes this insight in a two-by-two matrix, with four quadrants. The comparison suggests that it is difficult to achieve a large audience and an explicit message (upper left quadrant). In contrast, it seems relatively easy to reach a small audience with an implicit message (lower right quadrant).

6. Conclusion

We developed a typology allowing us to assess how artworks contribute to a public sphere. Combining Rancière's distribution of the sensible with Marchart's critique, artworks' contribution to an inclusive public sphere was conceptualized along the two axes "explicitness of the proposed subjectification" and the "size of the public addressed." The article makes a rich literature that has aimed at conceptualizing artworks' impact on communities accessible for analyzing the political impact of artworks. The typology shifts the attention to the reception process (explicitness of an artwork's message and size of an audience). This makes it readily applicable for social sciences. In contrast to previous theories, it avoids relying on the specific characteristics of the artwork to conceptualize its social impact. Yet, it allows differentiating artworks' contribution to a public sphere.

We illustrated the applicability of this typology compare how two different artworks, *Mountain Escape* by Prabhakar Pachpute and *Sound Mirror* by Eduardo Navarro, contribute to an inclusive public sphere. Structuring the analysis of our comparison with the

Table 2. Artworks' to contribute to an inclusive public sphere.

	Large audience	Small audience
Explicit message	Difficult to achieve	More easily to achieve
Implicit message	More easily to achieve	Easy to achieve

typology we were able to understand what limited and endorsed the artworks' contribution to including the non-human as an acting subject to the public sphere. Comparing two different genres of artworks (a painting and an installation) showed that the typology can be applied to different kinds of artworks.

The comparison of the two artworks also showed that there might be a trade-off between the two dimensions: More explicit artworks may be more controversial and therefore more limited in their reach. Following our analysis, it is difficult for an artist to take an explicit stance, yet at the same time to attract a large audience. This insight also highlights the need for further research to understand what exhibition contexts permit for more explicit message, and to what extent the finding of this analysis is generalizable.

Moreover, further research is needed to understand the reasons behind such a dynamic. The current analysis suggests two potential mechanisms. First, explicit messages, rooted in a particular context may simply not be as interesting to a wider audience, and thus find it more difficult to gain a large audience. Second, explicit messages may not be as convenient for some of the visitors, especially at prestigious, international art events. Visitors of art events usually form part of an upper class (Bourdieu, 1984), whereas those seeking recognition in the public sphere are usually marginalized groups. While artworks have the potential to connect the two worlds, it may be a delicate line between voicing concerns explicitly and risk being excluded, and being more implicit, yet included in a show.

Acknowledgments

I thank two anonymous reviewers, as well as the editor, Karen Hannes, for their constructive feedback. I also thank Maria Anna Jäggi Aerne and Peter Aerne for their critical comments and unconditional support.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Aerne, A. (2020). Prestige in social dilemmas: A network analytic approach to cooperation among Bogotá's art organizations. *Social Networks*, *61*, 196–209.

Aranda, B. G. (2006). Espectador de un funeral 1970–1981 [Spectator of a funeral 1979–1981]. In Ministerio de Cultura (Eds.), *Marca registrada. Salón Nacional de Artistas: Tradición y vanguardia en el arte colombiano* [Registered brand. National Salon of Artists: Tradition and avant-garde in Colombian art] (pp. 121–152). Bogotá Ministerio de Cultura.

Arendt, H. (1982). Lectures on Kant's political philosophy. In R. Beiner (Ed.), *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy*. The Harvester Press.

Art Basel. (2019). *Art Basel cities week: 'Hopscotch (Rayuela)' catalog*. https://www.artbasel.com/cities/catalog/Eduardo-Navarro

Beiner, R. (1982). Interpretive essay. In R. Beiner (Ed.), *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy* (pp. 89–157). The Harvester Press.

Benhabib, S. (1992). Models of public space: Hannah Arendt, the liberal tradition, and Jürgen Habermas. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 73–99). MIT.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1994). The field of cultural production, or: The economic world reversed. In R. Johnson (Ed.), *The field of cultural production* (pp. 29–73). Columbia University Press.

Burke, E. (1990). *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*. Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1757)

Bystryn, M. (1972). Art galleries as gatekeepers: The case of the abstract expressionists. *American Journal of Sociology*, *77*, 639–659.

Carrasco, C. V. (2006). Voluntad de hacer pintura moderna 1957–1964 [Willingness to do modern painting 1957–1964]. In Ministerio de Cultura (Eds.), *Marca registrada. Salón Nacional de Artistas: Tradición y vanguardia en el arte colombiano* [Registered brand. National Salon of Artists: Tradition and avant-garde in Colombian art] (pp. 68–97). Bogotá Ministerio de Cultura.

Coemans, S., Wang, Q., Leysen, J., & Hannes, K. (2015). The use of arts-based methods in community-based research with vulnerable populations: Protocol for a scoping review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *71*, 33–39.

Corcoran, P. (2008). Political recognition and aesthetic judgement. *Theoria*, *55*(115), 64–90.

Currid, E. (2007). The economics of a good party: Social mechanics and the legitimization of art/culture. *Journal of Economics and Finance*, *31*(3), 386–394.

Danto, A. (1964). The artworld. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *61*(19), 571–584.

Edelman, M. (1995). *From art to politics. How artistic creations shape political conception*. University of Chicago Press.

Eley, G. (1992). Nations, publics and political culture: Placing Habermas in the nineteenth century. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere*. MIT.

Ferguson, K. (1999). *The politics of judgment: Aesthetics, identity and political theory*. Lexington Books.

Figueroa, C. L. (2006). Arte sin revolución [Art without revolution]. In Ministerio de Cultura (Eds.), *Marca registrada. Salón Nacional de Artistas: Tradición y vanguardia en el arte colombiano* [Registered brand. National Salon of Artists: Tradition and avant-garde in Colombian art] (pp. 38–68). Bogotá Ministerio de Cultura.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contri-

bution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Tex*, *1990*(25/26), 56–80.
Gardner, A., & Green, C. (2013). Biennials of the South on the edges of the global. *Third Text*, *27*(4), 442–455.
George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2004). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT.
Gónzalez, B. (2006). Se reanudan los Salones Nacionales: ensayo y error 1985–1989 [The national salons continue: Trial and error 1985–1989]. In Ministerio de Cultura (Eds.), *Marca registrada. Salón Nacional de Artistas: Tradición y vanguardia en el arte colombiano* [Registered brand. National Salon of Artists: Tradition and avant-garde in Colombian art] (pp. 152–176). Bogotá Ministerio de Cultura.
Horton, J. L. (2017). Indigenous artist against the anthropocene. *Art Journal*, *76*(2), 48–69.
Kant, I. (1920). *Kritik der Urteilskraft Leipzig* [Critique of judgment]. Felix Meiner. (Original work published 1790)
Marchart, O. (2019). Introductory chapter. In O. Marchart (Ed.), *Conflictual aesthetics* (pp. 9–51). Sternberg.
Ministerio de Cultura. (2016). *Aún—44 salón de artistas* [Still—44th salon of artists]. Panamericana.
Ministerio de Cultura. (2018). *Salón Nacional de Artistas*. http://www.mincultura.gov.co/areas/artes/artes-visuales/salon-nacional-de-artistas/Paginas/default.aspx
Norval, A. J. (2014). "Writing a name in the sky": Rancière, Cavell, and the possibility of egalitarian inscription. In N. Kompridis (Ed.), *The aesthetic turn in political thought* (pp. 189–227). Bloomsbury.
QAGOMA. (2018). *Prabhakar Pachpute*. https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/apt8/artists/prabhakar-pachpute
Rancière, J. (1992). Politics, identification, and subjectivization. *October*, *61*, 58–64. https://www.jstor.org/stable/778785?origin=crossref
Rancière, J. (2003). *Das Unvernehmen: Politik und Philosophie* [Disagreement: Politics and philosophy]. Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1995)
Rancière, J. (2004). *The politics of aesthetics*. Continuum.
Rancière, J. (2009). *Aesthetics and its discontents*. Polity Press.
Rancière, J. (2014). The aesthetic dimension. In N. Kompridis (Ed.), *The aesthetic turn in political thought* (pp. 260–281). Bloomsbury.
Rey-Márquez, J. R. (2006). Antecedentes del Salón Nacional de Artistas [Prehistory of the National Salon of Artists]. In Ministerio de Cultura (Eds.), *Marca registrada. Salón Nacional de Artistas: Tradición y vanguardia en el arte colombiano* [Registered brand. National Salon of Artists: Tradition and avant-garde in Colombian art] (pp. 5–28). Bogotá Ministerio de Cultura.
Roberts, J. (2014). Rethinking the sublime: Is there an aesthetics of terrorism? *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*, *10*(1). http://americanaejournal.hu/vol10no1/roberts
Vandenabeele, B. (2003). Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and the aesthetically sublime. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *37*(1), 90–106.
Whitelegg, I. (2013). The bienal internacional de São Paulo: A concise history, 1951–2014. *Perspective. Acutalité en histoire de l'art*, *2*, 380–386. https://doi.org/10.4000/perspective.3902
Zuidervaart, L. (2011). *Art in public. Politics, economics, and a democratic culture*. Cambridge University Press.

About the Author

Annatina Aerne earned her PhD in organization and culture from the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) in 2019. Her dissertation analyzes the art scene in Bogotá, Colombia. It was awarded the prize for the best Swiss dissertation on the Latin American region. She has published her research in *Social Networks* and *Poetics*. Previously, she earned dual degrees in economics and political science from the University of St. Gallen and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (Tufts University, Boston, US). Annatina Aerne continues her work as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Lausanne and serves in the University of St. Gallen's art committee.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2021, Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 191–202
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4369

Article

Decolonial Possibilities of Reintroducing the Devil in the Public Space of Afro-Ecuadorian Territories

María Gabriela López-Yánez [1,*] and María Paz Saavedra Calderón [2]

[1] School of Dance, Faculty of Arts, Central University of Ecuador, Ecuador; E-Mail: mglopezy@uce.edu.ec
[2] Kimia—Pedagogías Críticas, Ecuador; E-Mail: paz.saav.c@gmail.com

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 14 April 2021 | Accepted: 4 October 2021 | Published: 30 November 2021

Abstract
The article discusses the decolonial possibilities of the collective design of a sound artwork in reimagining the role of two Afro-Ecuadorian music and dance-based events in the Afro-Ecuadorian ancestral territories of North Esmeraldas and Chota-Mira. The two events, Bomba del Chota and Marimba Esmeraldeña, emerged in the context of slavery and colonialism as a response of Afro-Ecuadorians to the oppression and violence they endured. These two music and dance-based events sustain a counter-narrative of power and resistance for Afrodescendant peoples in Ecuador, weaving meaningful connections among them and other entities populating their territories, such as the "devil," whose cohabitation with Afro-Ecuadorians will be at the spotlight of our analysis. Based on the audio-recorded testimonies of these connections that strongly existed until the 1970s, and of a sonic composition that was created from them, we propose a collaborative design of a sound artwork in the public spaces of the jungle in Esmeraldas and the mountain in Chota-Mira. We discuss how a decolonial approach to the design of the artwork can serve as a dialogical space to engage inhabitants in their re-connection to the possibilities of resistance that their ancestors nurtured in their territories through the practice of the two music and dance-based events. Through a political reading of soundscapes, an argument is developed to show how sound constructs the public spaces that root people in their territories, connecting them with meaningful stories and practices that keep being forgotten due to the on-going consequences of slavery and colonialism. The article contributes to the discussion about political ecologies and the collective production of public spaces as a joyful response to exclusion and oppression.

Keywords
Afro-Ecuadorians; ancestral practices; Bomba; decoloniality; Marimba; representations of the devil; sound artwork; soundscapes

Issue
This article is a part of the issue "Art and Design for Social Inclusion in the Public Sphere" edited by Karin Hannes (KU Leuven, Belgium).

1. Introduction

In this article, we discuss the decolonial possibilities of the collective design of a dialogic sound artwork through reimagining the role of the Afro-Ecuadorian music and dance based-events Marimba Esmeraldeña and Bomba del Chota in shaping the public spaces in the two ancestral Afro-Ecuadorian territories of North Esmeraldas and Chota-Mira Valley. Afrodescendants' communities in Ecuador created these two events during the period of Atlantic slavery that lasted from the 16th to the 19th century. Since slavery and beyond, communities have conceived Marimba Esmeraldeña and Bomba del Chota not just as music and dance genres but also as intimate, joyful, and communal practices of momentary liberation from the oppressive systems of the slavery and post-slavery periods. One of the key features of these events, and the liberatory possibilities they open,

resides in the relationship they have maintained with "the devil," which will be the focus of this article. Elders from Afro-Ecuadorian communities portray the devil as an uninvited guest in their celebrations that involve Marimba and Bomba. This guest (a male figure) appears each time he sees the opportunity to charm the participants in these events through his singing and dancing, and to distract them while he flirts and even kidnaps female attendees. Most of the testimonies, however, also point out the fact that there has always been the possibility of noticing his presence and defeating him through chants and prayers, or by proving they are better singers and dancers than him. These actions make the devil disappear. In this article, we read the ability of Marimberos and Bomberos to defeat the devil as a way of opening spaces for the transgression of the colonial power represented by the Christian figure of the devil. Moreover, we suggest that such playful and defiant cohabitation with the devil enacts a different form of community-building that fosters collective empowerment in response to colonialism.

Despite the richness of the practices related to the two music and dance-based events, from the 1970s onward it has been less frequent to see younger generations engaging in them. Nowadays, they are almost completely forgotten among young Afro-Ecuadorians. This discontinuity means that the connection to creatures such as the devil are no longer part of people's interaction with their territories, thus no longer shaping the public space. Nonetheless, elders from most Afro-Ecuadorian communities recall this connection to the non-human world, via their relationship with the devil, through their embodied memories of music and dance. We will use audio recorded conversations with community elders about the devil, and a sonic composition made from them, as the central material for the collaborative design of a sound artwork aiming to re-engage people with these stories (see Figure 1).

By collectively designing the "reintroduction of the devil" into these territories, we want to explore the decolonial possibilities of inhabiting and shaping the public space. We discuss the decolonial potential of constructing a space with and for the communities to reconnect to these counter-narratives cultivated throughout generations in the practices of Marimba and Bomba. Through a political reading of soundscapes, an argument is developed to show how sound "constructs" the public space that roots people to their territories, connecting them with meaningful stories and practices that tend to be forgotten due to the consequences of slavery and colonialism.

The article starts with a contextualisation of the music and dance events in the two ancestral territories. It then focuses on the story and relevancy of the concept of the devil. Afterwards, the connection to the devil in the decolonial framework is discussed, and some important methodological aspects explained. The discussion opens to the practical and conceptual possibilities of our proposal. The article ends with concluding remarks on the possibilities of a decolonial conception of this sound artwork and how it can transform the public space.

1.1. Historical Context

According to the last population census, Afro-Ecuadorians represent 7.2% of the Ecuadorian population (INEC, 2010). From the period of Atlantic slavery, both enslaved and freed Africans, as well as their descendants, populated principally two areas in Ecuador: the Chota-Mira river basin (a valley in the northern Andean region) and the northern part of Esmeraldas province (the northwest coastal province, on the frontier with Colombia). Despite the current presence of Afro-Ecuadorians all over the national territory, this article refers specifically to the two ancestral territories Afro-Ecuadorians' ancestors first inhabited. The main reason for this selection is that the two music and dance-based events originated in these territories and most of their narratives and sounds are embedded in the ecologies of the two territories: Marimba Esmeraldeña in North Esmeraldas and Bomba del Chota in Chota-Mira Valley.

The two Afro-Ecuadorian ancestral territories are rural areas far away from major urban centres. The ancestral territory in Esmeraldas is mainly constituted by tropical forest, whereas the territory of Chota-Mira Valley is mainly dry forest. However, both these territories have been deteriorating over the years. In Esmeraldas, this deterioration has occurred due to the mining of transnational companies affecting water and soil; in Chota-Mira, it has been due to intensive agro-industrial production which has polluted the water and the soil, as well as the closeness of the villages to the highway. The two territories are thus shaped by the intermittent sounds and silences of mountains and rivers, but also of agro-industrial and mining machines, buses (in Chota-Mira), and motorboats (in North Esmeraldas). Although rivers, mountains, and other non-human entities inhabit these territories, the pollution caused by mining and agro-industrial activities has changed the relation of the people to them, making it, for instance, less safe for them to drink water, swim, or fish in the river. According to conversations held between Marimberos, Bomberos, and López-Yánez (2020), similar ecological reasons are affecting life and cohabitation in these territories, forcing the devil and other creatures out—if they haven't left already.

Figure 1. Creation process.

The story of the arrival of enslaved African people to Chota-Mira Valley starts at the beginning of the 17th century with the Jesuits, a Catholic order of priests, who introduced enslaved African people in vast numbers to the area. As for the arrival of enslaved Africans to North Esmeraldas, it is marked by the shipwrecks of boats carrying enslaved Africans that reached the Ecuadorian coast, the most famous one being that which happened in the mid-16th century (Cabello Balboa, 1583/1945, pp. 18–19). The group of enslaved people that have reached the coastal area of Ecuador, mainly through this last shipwreck, inhabited it as freed people. They remained free until the mid-18th century, when mines were established in Esmeraldas and, with that, the first enslaved Afrodescendant people were also introduced to the area.

Afro-Ecuadorians in their two ancestral territories remained enslaved until a long process of manumission and intense struggle occasioned the official abolition of slavery in Ecuador in 1852. However, even after the official emancipation of black people in Ecuador, many Afro-Ecuadorians' living conditions did not improve greatly. Afro-Ecuadorians have remained one of the most impoverished groups of people since the colonial period (CEPAL & UNFPA, 2020; Fundación Azúcar, 2017). Furthermore, due to the historical, social and geographical isolation of Chota-Mira and North Esmeraldas, almost all of its inhabitants have remained Afrodescendants, so they are still known as Afrodescendants' territories. Embedded in this colonial history of neglect and systemic racism, there is the common perception of people living outside these two territories that they are places of violence, laziness, backwardness, and unconquered nature (Rahier, 1998, p. 423, 2011, p. 68). This historical reality has impeded many Afro-Ecuadorians to have dignified living conditions and access to education (Figure 2). It is within this context that we need to understand the role of the devil and its connection to the two territories.

1.2. The Sound of Memories

According to the Afro-Ecuadorian thinker García Salazar's lifelong research, oral transmission is the primary source of sharing the lived knowledge, stories, experiences, and thoughts of peoples of African origin who settled in the Ecuadorian Chocoan jungle and Andean region almost 500 years ago (García Salazar, 2020; García Salazar & Walsh, 2017). Oral traditions refer to the semantic meaning of words and to the pauses, sighs, intonations, and specific rhythms while speaking. Thus, Marimberos and Bomberos reproduce their oral traditions through their intimate interpretations and understandings of Marimba and Bomba. Oral traditions are so significant for Afro-Ecuadorians that García Salazar affirmed that some Afro-Ecuadorians' knowledge is only meant to be heard, since this knowledge loses strength and even meaning when it is transferred into written words (García Salazar & Walsh, 2017). Importantly, the fact that knowledge has not been transmitted by Marimberos and Bomberos in written form until recently has been circumstantial

Figure 2. Artworks about the lack of access to a good quality education for most Afro-Ecuadorians. Author of all the sculptures: Alicia Villalba. Photographs taken by María Gabriela López-Yánez during an exhibition of the Afro-Choteño artist, which took place in the Afro-Choteño community of Juncal in 2012.

to slavery and not necessarily a product of choice. As explained by Quijano (1992, p. 13), enslaved people were forcefully kept illiterate and condemned to only communicate orally. The Afro-Esmeraldeño writer and activist Juan Montaño also affirms that orality was a necessity (and sometimes still is) for Afro-Ecuadorians because the oppressor took away all other means of documentation (J. Montaño, personal communication, 2018). Even in post-slavery periods, most of the elder Marimberos and Bomberos have never written down their memories before and some of them are illiterate (López-Yánez, 2020). One of the few exceptions is the book *Memoria Viva: Costumbres y tradiciones Esmeraldeñas* (Escobar Quiñónez et al., 1997) in which the collective memories of the renowned Marimbero Remberto Escobar were transcribed.

Regarding our relationship as researchers to Afro-Ecuadorians' and their oral memories, we follow what Bolivian sociologist Rivera Cusicanqui (1987, 2015, 2018) has named *relación de escucha* (a "listening relationship") and defines as a "collective exercise of disalienation" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2015, p. 286). With a collective exercise of disalienation, Rivera Cusicanqui refers to a long-term, sensitive, creative, honest, and open recognition and acknowledgement of the perspectives, needs, and objectives of both researchers and communities as the basis for producing specific research. Thus, a crucial part of our proposal has been to generate collaborative spaces to creatively work with Afro-Ecuadorians' memories and co-design the space where these sounds will be reincorporated into the territories. It is in these spaces that we aim to collectively design and decide which sounds and memories should be included and how.

2. The Devil in the African Diaspora

The fact that a Christian order of priests was the leading enslaving company in Ecuador is not surprising. Christian religion was the main tool Spanish colonizers used in the Americas to exploit the different groups of people they subjugated and abused. This forceful introduction to Christianity included the belief in the existence of the devil (Thornton, 1998, p. 239). For Spanish colonizers, the devil was a real presence that should always be evaded. Importantly, they related African people—themselves and their practices—to the devil (Borja Gómez, 1998, pp. 113, 119; Díaz-Díaz, 2005, p. 32). Colonizers used religion to turn people into devil-fearing Christians and eradicate what they understood as the devilish practices of African people. In turn, enslaved people developed symbolic mechanisms to adapt to the colonial system in which they were forced to live (Borja Gómez, 1998, p. 140). One of these mechanisms allowed them a re-interpretation and adaptation of Christianity influenced by their African creation myths. For instance, in African myths, the "ontological dualism" of Christianity that would strictly separate good from evil is absent and this allowed black people to develop their own notion of a devil. This notion is based on the African belief of nothing being considered entirely good or bad but more precisely complex and multifaceted with a variety of traits (Borja Gómez, 1998, p. 132). Thus, for enslaved West African people, the devil could range from a figure of mirth, or protective buffoon with a caring and gracious side, to a source of evil or a powerful trickster (Borja Gómez, 1998, pp. 138, 169; Cedeño Canga, 2015, p. 149; Taussig, 1980, p. 43). By appropriating the Christian notion of the devil and transforming it into a being with whom enslaved people could negotiate, play and whom they could even defeat, they were appropriating the enemy of their enemies as a mechanism of defence against the colonial order. That is, they were creating a new system where they temporarily transgressed the codes and meanings of the colonial social system where a new power relation was established (Borja Gómez, 1998, pp. 137–152). In this article, we focus on the relation of Marimba Esmeraldeña and Bomba del Chota to the non-human creature of the devil because it shows the ability of Afro-Ecuadorians to transform the official Christian narrative of the devil from an evil and invincible creature into a counter-narrative of a playful being with whom it is always possible to negotiate and whom it is even possible to defeat.

Our point of departure for collectively designing an artwork is the recorded testimonies of Marimberos and Bomberos regarding their relationship to the devil. Their testimonies were curated into a sonic composition; therefore, it is essential for the reader to listen to the composition before continuing reading (it is available here: https://vimeo.com/587009031). This sonic composition will be the main material to dialogically construct the space to re-incorporate these sounds and memories into the two territories. The dialogic process will happen in the form of creative workshops where people of all ages will be able to join in and listen to the sonic composition, while we walk in the jungle and the mountain and listen to the sounds surrounding and shaping the territories in the present moment. A discussion will be facilitated to question the significance of those sounds and stories, how they shape their territories, their relevance today, who should listen to the sounds and stories and why, etc. Also, Marimberos and Bomberos will be there to answer questions, tell stories and interact with the people. In the following section, we narrate some of these testimonies and discuss how they relate to our project of collectively re-shaping the public space to transgress the colonial order in Afro-Ecuadorian territories. That is, our aim is to collectively transform the space with the people inhabiting them into a space filled with specific values of liberation, justice, and freedom, rather than leaving it untouched. For this, we draw inspiration from critical thinking traditions in Latin America, such as participatory action research (Fals Borda, 1979), Freire's (2020) critical pedagogy, and decolonial research practices (Escobar, 2018; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, 2018).

3. The Devil in Marimba and Bomba

De Friedemann and Arocha (1986, p. 416) cite the lyrics:

Los que están bailando / To those who are dancing
Bailen con cuidado / dance carefully,
A debajo de casa / because under the house,
Está el diablo parado / the devil is standing

As it has been discussed, Marimba and Bomba were perceived by colonizers as some of the Afrodescendants' devilish practices. On the contrary, according to what the elders used to tell the Marimbera Doña Maura Manuela Medina, who is also the healer of the community of Telembí (Esmeraldas), the Marimba came from God (López-Yánez, 2020). As can be heard at the beginning of the composition, Doña Maura mentioned that she had heard that some people say that Marimba belonged to the devil, but that she does not agree, because the elders used to love Marimba, and they were good people. However, although Marimberos and Bomberos do not consider Marimba and Bomba to be devilish practices as in the Christian figure of evil, some of the events do have a connection to the devil. For instance, the Bombero Don Ezequiel Sevilla, from the community of San Juan de Lachas (Chota-Mira), affirmed that elders used to tell him that some Bomberos, through performing Bomba, could visit hell and thus also the devil, and that they used to say that hell was a beautiful place full of beautiful women. It is important to mention that, usually, Marimberos talk about the devil and Bomberos talk about the minstrel (*duende*). However, according to some Bomberos, and also to Agier (2002), the minstrel is a transformation of the devil that represents his strengths and weaknesses. Thus, here we refer to the devil or the minstrel as the devil (Figure 3).

According to some Marimberos and Bomberos, unlike sacred events like masses in the Catholic Church, where it is very difficult for the devil to get in, the devil can get in more easily into events of Marimba and Bomba. When the devil reveals himself in such events, he constitutes a central force that affects the whole event in specific ways. According to the Marimbero Remberto Escobar Quiñónez, the devil chooses to go to Marimba celebrations to win souls, since Marimba is considered by the devil a moment where the pleasures of the flesh are enjoyed and impure thoughts arise (Escobar Quiñónez et al., 1997, p. 77). As shared by the Marimbero known as Papá Roncón from the city of Borbón (Esmeraldas), sometimes, the devil also likes being close to beautiful female Marimberas and Bomberas to flirt with them, make them fall in love with him or kidnap them (López-Yánez, 2020).

In most of the testimonies that have been gathered, Marimberos and Bomberos recount that during an event they opened themselves to the possibility of overcoming fear and confronting the devil, and once they confronted him, he was actually a being that mocked and played with them. They understood this playful and mocking attitude of the devil towards Marimberos and Bomberos as a provocation. For instance, as can be heard in the composition, both the Bombero Don Teodoro Mendez from the community of Tumbatú (Chota-Mira) and the Marimbero Don Remberto Escobar Quiñónez from the city of Esmeraldas narrate how the devil would challenge them to prove who the best performer of Marimba and Bomba is (Figure 4). They had to accept his challenge to get rid of him, and it was especially difficult because the devil is considered by some to be the best Marimba and Bomba performer. Interestingly, for Marimberos and Bomberos, being a good performer is not limited to being able to sing or play the Marimba or Bomba with virtuosity but also to their creativity while doing so. Sometimes the devil wins, but most of the time Marimberos and Bomberos are the winners. If the devil wins, it means that the Marimberos or Bomberos either die or go mad. If Marimberos or Bomberos win, besides saving their life, they will increase their prestige since it would mean they are better performers than the devil.

Figure 3. Graphic representations of the devil and the minstrel in Marimba Esmeraldeña and Bomba del Chota. From left to right: A painting of the devil in the middle of a performance of Marimba, by Esmeraldeño Alberto Acosta (photograph taken by María Gabriela López-Yánez during an exhibition in Esmeraldas, Ecuador, in 2017); an illustration by the Ecuadorian Iván Guamán of the minstrel talking to a Bombero (Guamán, 2015, p. 48).

Figure 4. The Bombero David Lara and his encounter with the devil. Illustrations by Ecuadorian Marco Chamorro and the French Alice Bossut. From top to bottom: The devil playing the drum of Bomba in the middle of his battle with David Lara; David's and the devil's facial expressions in the moment David realises he did not walk towards the mountain with a man but with the devil (Chamorro & Bossut, 2016).

Regarding the physical characteristics of the devil, there is a diversity of traits that he can have. According to the Marimberos Doña Medina, Nacho Caicedo, and Remberto Escobar Quiñónez, whose testimonies are included in the composition, the devil has two horns and a tail, dresses in red, and holds a massive trident. The Bombera Doña María Rogelia Minda, from the community of Tumbatú, said that when she saw the devil, he had animal-like legs and big teeth (R. Minda, personal communication, 2018). However, according to Remberto Escobar Quiñónez, the devil has different looks. When the devil appears in a party, he dresses elegantly to hide his horns and his tail, but he always leaves the spurs on his boots visible (Escobar Quiñónez et al., 1997, p. 76). Similarly to Doña María Rogelia, the Marimbero Papá Roncón shared that once he was in a performance where the devil was floating, without touching the ground with his feet. The three Bomberas of the group "Las Tres Marías" from the community of Chalguayacu (Pimampiro, Imbabura) affirmed that, when they saw the devil, he had a wooden leg (personal communication, 2013). Each of these traits was important primarily as a way of recognising the devil in an event of Marimba or Bomba. Thus, realising that someone was flying, had a wooden leg, or was of an unusual height would alert Marimberos and Bomberos to his presence.

Once the presence of the devil is acknowledged, the duty of a Marimbero or Bombero is to get rid of him as soon as possible. Sometimes, they make him go by force. Other times, they have other strategies. One of them is praying out loud specific prayers or incantations. However, since prayers are acts of magic, Marimberos and Bomberos cannot reveal the whole prayer but only a part of them or just the name. One of the most famous prayers used by Marimberos and Bomberos is the *Credo al Revés* (literary meaning "the creed read backwards") or the *Padre Nuestro al revés* (*Our Father* read backwards). As stated in Moschetto's (1995, p. 194), research about Afro-Esmeraldeño traditions, the expression *Padre Nuestro al revés* always refers to a prayer that is directed against the devil. Another prayer mentioned by some Marimberos is called *Ave María Purísima* (*Hail Mary*). Some of them, such as the Marimberos Rosa Huila and Remberto Escobar Quiñonez, also mentioned the religious phrase or incantation *magnífica y en grandeza* that has its roots in the Christian prayer called *La Magnífica* (*The Magnificat*). A prayer mentioned a few times by some Marimberos and Bomberos, like the members of the Bomba group "Las Tres Marías" and Escobar Quiñónez, is a prayer called *El Tono de las Vacas* (*The Tone of the Cows*), which is explained in detail in Escobar Quiñónez et al. (1997, p. 79).

One of the most engaging testimonies that shows the Marimberos' playful fearlessness concerning the devil comes precisely from a famous marimba song of Patacoré, played with the rhythm of Bambuco, and beautifully interpreted by Papá Roncón. In this Bambuco song, which is a central part of the sonic composition, a few verses that are part of the Afro-Esmeraldeños collective memories are included, the most essential one being: "Here comes the devil, let him come, because if he comes angry, I will make him laugh." Also, de Carvalho-Neto (1964, p. 93) affirms that a researcher named Chavez Franco saw a performance of Marimba in 1927 and that one of the verses he could hear was: "Here he comes the devil, let him come, if he comes alone, it is better for me." Whitten (1965) also registered the following verse: "Come hear the marimba. It chases the devil. I am the devil. I am going on a trip. Do not dance with me, because I might decide to stay with you." Another strategy to win a competition with the devil was to play specific tunes on the guitar. According to the Bombero Don Seberino Méndez, from the community of Chalguayacu, there used to be two guitar tunes that Bomberos could play to get rid of the devil. These were called *Olmedo* and *Galindo*. These tunes have been analysed in detail by de la Cruz Santacruz (2012, p. 140).

As shown in the testimonies mentioned above, being able to defeat the devil is a source of pride for Marimberos and Bomberos. The Marimberos and Bomberos included in the composition expressed how pleased they felt when they defeated, or heard that someone else defeated, the devil. This sense of winning is directly related to overcoming their history of violence and dehumanization. As is beautifully expressed by García Salazar (n.d.) in the powerful testimony that ends the composition, the re-enactment of Afro-Ecuadorians' collective memories is what makes them "become once more what they were not before."

As we can see, there is a complex soundscape made of prayers, storytelling, chanting and music playing that Marimberos and Bomberos reproduce in connection to the devil. Moreover, this connection sustains a crucial space for playfully transgressing codes of colonialism and shapes the public space through a joyful and defiant experience of gathering together as a community. In other words, the existence of the devil within these territories maintains a particular connection to space and among people because through it, they creatively respond to an oppressive system that negates their existence. In the following sections we further discuss the decolonial possibilities of cohabitation that these soundscapes related to the devil can help support.

4. The Decolonial Possibilities of the Soundscape Related to the Devil

We frame our discussion within the notion of coloniality/decoloniality as a group of analytic and practical tools that allow us to propose potential mechanisms to re-focus on oral memories related to the devil as crucial elements of the process of resistance of Marimberos and Bomberos.

Coloniality (Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 1992), or the so-called "colonial horizon of long duration" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012), refers to the hierarchical structure of domination that began during the period of colonialism and persisted even when that historical period ended. For instance, within coloniality, the only knowledge that has been recognised as legitimate is that from the "Western" world (colonizers). On the other hand, knowledge from populations such as Afro-Ecuadorians (colonized) is reduced to mythical and non-rational, and thus, non-important experiences. A group of examples of this low-hierarchy knowledge within a colonial system is Afro-Ecuadorian collective memories. These memories, including their relation to non-human creatures, were located in a lower hierarchy as being pagan and witchcraft, and thus, slowly erased. In this way, coloniality in the Americas has shaped how knowledge is constructed and legitimised. The coloniality of knowledge refers to the establishment of a Eurocentric approach in which there is a bias in knowledge that favours the development of knowledge from European civilisations over non-European civilisations. Importantly for this article, through the coloniality of knowledge the intergenerational transmission of an important number of collective memories related to Marimba and Bomba has been violently interrupted. According to López-Yánez (2020), this interruption has been historically achieved through banning (in the case of Marimba) and controlling (in the case of Bomba) these events. More recently, and as a continuation of these first modes of interruption, the lack of sustainable spaces of circulation of knowledge around Marimba and Bomba and their exclusion from the official art curriculum has also occasioned their continual weakening.

In opposition to this colonial oppression of Afro-Ecuadorian music and dance-based events, this article proposes the decolonial approach of re-locating the collective memories that coloniality has been trying to erase, but which keep existing in elders' testimonies. Decoloniality is understood here as the undoing of the damage that colonial modernity has caused, by confronting it and delinking it from the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2011, p. xxvii). In this context, collective memories, particularly those related to the devil, represent a challenge by, or invitation from, past generations to re-signify and occupy their territories with joy and freedom. Using this lens of decoloniality, a collective design is proposed here consisting of the insertion of pieces of collective memories back into the territories where they existed and helped to shape them.

In this regard, a central part of our proposal is the understanding of sound not just as a mechanism to communicate information, but also as a way to shape worlds and give them specific meanings. Kanngieser, basing their work on language and sound theories, suggests that, through speaking and listening, a sense of belonging and a reconfiguration with each other and with the world arises (Kanngieser, 2011). In this article, we suggest that the disappearance of the sounds that used to call or at least commemorate the devil's presence in Marimba and Bomba events have transformed the public spaces of the jungle and the mountains. We understand public space as a collective form of inhabiting and creating meaningful relations that connect people to a place in specific, contested and negotiated ways. Through our proposal, we aim to carry these sounds back to those spaces as an active exercise of decolonizing them. Of essential interest to this article, collective memories have been gathered principally from previously recorded interviews and from López-Yánez's (2020) fieldwork conversations.

5. The Proposal of Collectively Designing a Sonic Artwork Related to Memories

The design of the artwork consists of two phases. First, the gathering of audio-recorded testimonies of elders around the devil in Marimba and Bomba taken from local archives and López-Yánez's long-term research, as well as the sonic composition based on this material.

Second, the exposure of this composition to people in Afro-Ecuadorian communities, for them to choose and negotiate how, when, and where to re-incorporate these sounds.

The first phase, i.e., the gathering and creative process of the composition has already been concluded. This composition was generated based on a diversity of testimonies and songs related to the devil that were shared with López-Yánez over the last ten years of meeting a wide range of Marimberos and Bomberos, aged 53 to 91 years old, who had witnessed or inherited specific memories, and thus, building a *relación de escucha* with them. This *relación de escucha* allowed López-Yánez to finally audio-record them in 2018 and led to the creation of the sonic composition. In the same year, jungle sounds from both territories were also recorded by López-Yánez. The testimonies, music, and jungle sounds were recorded using the built-in microphone of the high sound quality digital voice recorder Zoom H6 for the ambient sound, and with two unidirectional microphones connected to the Zoom H6, one Rodeo NTG2 and one Rodeo NTG3, for the voices and music. The usage of this cutting-edge technology for fieldwork audio recording ensured the high quality of the material so that it could be used in the sonic compositions and preserved for future uses. Once the audio-recorded material was obtained, the sonic composition was created. Although most of the sonic material that was used included words, none of the information provided by these recordings is limited to words alone and/or their meanings, but also to their affective potential to communicate in specific ways through unique characteristics of, for instance, the voices' timbre, cadence, resonance, densities, and even silences.

In the process of creating the composition, both the semantic and affective characteristics of the audio-recorded material were considered. In many portions of the compositions, the semantic discourse is dominant, meaning that the narrative content of the voices is emphasised. For instance, one can point to specific narrations and testimonies of the historical and social contexts of Marimba and Bomba. In some parts, the affective discourse prevails, for instance, laughter, sighs, yells, musicalities, and other non-semantic sounds; and in some others, both characteristics are equally important. Following Lane (2006), the techniques used in each sound, or group of sounds, changed depending on the on-going dialogue with a group of Marimberos and Bomberos, the aim of the composition, and the quality and content of the available audio-material. Since the composition is a mixture of historical reconstruction and creative approach, the techniques used were diverse to accommodate different purposes, such as deconstructing the sounds of words to strengthen affective sensations related to the sounds produced, associating sounds to reinforce the semantic meaning of a word by the addition of a related sound or massing voices to reinforce different voices rhythmically repeating either the same sound or word. Also, in some other parts of the sonic composition, moments of silence represent portions of the collective memories of Marimba and Bomba that either we do not know about, we know about but were not included in this work, or that have been continuously erased.

As for silence, we follow Browning (2003) to propose new ways of approaching the past in a non-linear way by including not just the words per se but their rhythm of rising and falling, and silences. Interestingly, she emphasises the fact that silences should not be filled but highlighted, since these could represent possible moments of ruptures within specific historical contexts (Browning, 2003, p. 166). García Salazar, who also validates the existence of silence within Afro-Ecuadorians' collective memories, shares Browning's notion. He affirms that while some silences can be as much related to secrecy as to acts of resistance, others are specific ways of relating to the spiritual world (García Salazar & Walsh, 2017, p. 19). Silence has a special meaning within Afro-Ecuadorians' collective memories; it is not just about keeping silent, but it is also about letting the brother, the sister, the mother, or the *compadre* (godfather of one's child or close friend) talk. Silence is also a way of sharing (García Salazar & Walsh, 2017, p. 132). Thus, secrets could be a whisper or a silence—an absence of sound. These secrets and silences that García Salazar mentions are an essential part of the sonic corpus of Afro-Ecuadorians' collective memories and thus, will be interspersed in the proposed artwork between sections of spoken word and music. Silence will also be present in specific parts of the public space where the sonic artwork will take place as sections on the walking path or as sudden interruptions of the sounds. This will be done in order to represent either those collective memories that are not remembered anymore or those ones that, according to elder Afro-Ecuadorians, should not be shared widely. Moreover, the silence of what is not heard any more in specific places, such as the stories of the devil, will be the opening theme of the process of collaborative design of the sonic artwork.

5.1. The Sound of Absence

What does it mean to actively listen to the absence of beings in a place they used to inhabit? In the design phase, we aim to start the dialogues with the communities with this question. And we will also ask, can we listen to that which is no longer here and turn our attention to what has been lost by carefully listening to the silence? Although we want to bring back sounds to places where they used to be, we also want to challenge people to engage with the spaces by investigating and imagining what they cannot longer hear. What sounds have their parents and grandparents told them about? Silence can be a rich point of political reflection in a place shaped by a history of extermination and extinction, of erasing and muting (Kanngieser & Beuret, 2017).

We propose that this is the way to start building a public space. More than gathering people in one place, we also want to enable them to engage with the deep, shared history that connects them to that place (Calderón & Huybrechts, 2020). And eventually, we want to encourage the construction of a place of freedom and liberation (Freire, 2020), such as the one opened by the Marimberos and Bomberos in their defiance of the devil. Again, we ask, by listening to the recorded memories, can we listen to the change that these places have suffered throughout time? We also want to question how they have been transformed by the colonial enterprise that disarms specific relations and keeps some creatures away. And to continue with that reflection, can sound intervene and make a difference in the connection among entities in an ecosystem? Can sound bring back entities that no longer inhabit those ecosystems?

Colonialism and capitalism affect, shape and change ecologies (Haraway, 1992; Kanngieser, 2020; Tsing, 2016). Esmeraldas is a territory deeply affected by pollution coming from plantations and mining, the rivers that are vital resources for the communities are very polluted, and it is the only Ecuadorian province whose inhabitants cannot access drinking water until now (López-Yánez, 2020). However, people also shape the land and respond to the currents of capitalism and colonialism. In the words of García Salazar and Walsh (2009, pp. 347–348): "The mother mountain and the mangroves are here because we are here, using these territories as spaces for life." To understand these spaces of life, it is important to note that the public space in the rural communities of the two ancestral territories is not circumscribed to a specific and delimited area. It is rather shaped by the paths people walk, and the times, the cautions and limits with which they move. A good way to understand this is through the presence and absence of a bird called Marimbero. According to López-Yánez's (2020) interview with the famous Afro-Ecuadorian Marimbero Don Nacho Caicedo, this bird used to sing for musicians, and they would imitate its sound. Through this imitation, they would learn how to play the traditional rhythms of Marimba. Nowadays, it is rare to find a Marimbero bird when one walks through the Esmeraldeño jungle. Has the Marimbero bird left the jungle—together with the devil—because they do not feel acknowledged (needed) anymore? Have both become extinct because of the rapid and uncontrollable environmental changes Esmeraldas has faced, which are unavoidably connected to the violence Afro-Ecuadorians have suffered with the silencing of their traditions?

Our proposal is to engage people in meaningful and critical reflections about the spaces they cohabit, and importantly, draw inspiration from their own history to creatively respond and transgress the colonial codes that shape and structure those spaces. There are examples of this kind of artistic intervention that have successfully engaged people in transforming oppressive codes. For instance, the artist Frances Negrón-Muntaner created the project Valor y Cambio in Puerto Rico, an interactive sound artwork that combines art and storytelling to work with a community currency that values community knowledge and skills instead of following colonial-capitalist-neoliberal economic values. The installation inspired communities around Puerto Rico and USA to create their own community currencies (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020).

5.2. What Could a Decolonial Public Space Look Like Today, Inspired by the Experiences of Resistance?

In this article, we propose a disruption of the public spaces of the two Afro-Ecuadorian ancestral territories by returning the disappearing memories of the devil back to where they used to be played and listened to, for people to engage with the sounds and their history. We consider the returning of these memories an essential process of decolonizing knowledge around Marimba and Bomba. In this attempt, sound plays a central role. We are referring not just to the stories, but to the actual sounds (Kanngieser, 2011). We propose to bring back these sounds, with much of their strength, with some form of sound artwork. We understand the sound artwork as an immersive experience in which pre-recorded sounds are located in public spaces where they used to belong to, and which can affect the spaces themselves, including the human and non-human entities that visit them. Importantly, the primary participants of this artwork are Afro-Ecuadorians themselves. Thus, it will be held in their public, although intimate, space. As for the process of choosing the sounds of the artwork, we aim to do so in constant dialogue with a group of Afro-Ecuadorians of different ages and backgrounds. Specifically, the process will be to have this dialogue while listening to the sounds along different paths people walk in the jungle and the mountain. The dialogue will be guided by the elders who can still recall the recorded memories. Along the paths there will be gathering points where people will have the chance to talk to the elders and ask them questions. We will also have some questions for people to engage with the sounds, the silences, and their history.

By constructing the dialogue in this way, we want to bring together different generations to listen to the sounds and silences that shape their territories, not only humans but also other entities, such as the devil. We want to instigate the occupation of the spaces by inviting people to attune to the sounds and silences of their history.

The two ancestral territories are not empty spaces; they are full of deep stories where different entities have roots together in a common land. The Afro-Ecuadorians' relationships to these entities through the music and dance reproduced in Bomba and Marimba have shaped these practices, opening possibilities of joy and freedom amidst a story of oppression and violence. Our proposal for the collaborative design of a sound artwork seeks to deepen the understanding of the two music and dance based-events of Marimba and Bomba as

practices that have shaped the common spaces that Afro-Ecuadorian people have inhabited. By doing so, we want to decolonise the idea that conceives these events as mere acts of folklore that happen on a stage, instead of living practices that interweave specific relations and shape the public space.

In this sense, we also understand that although we highly value this ancestral knowledge in specific ways, the creation of meaning is something that happens through the active engagement of people inhabiting the places. For us, it is crucial to break with the extractivist logic of extracting knowledge and taking it somewhere else to profit from it. The idea is to have that knowledge circulate within the communities (Calderón & Huybrechts, 2020; Negrón-Muntaner, 2020). We propose a particular form of engagement of people with the territories that is not neutral but rather seeks the transformation of colonial dynamics. Our intention is to change how we see the world around us by critically challenging how we cohabit that world.

6. Conclusion

As shown by the above-mentioned collective memories, the relationship between the devil and Marimberos and Bomberos represents a clear way of transforming colonial experiences into strategies to "play" with hegemonic power. However, the colonial dynamics of oppression, exploitation, extractivism, and pollution have resulted in the absence of the devil from their public spaces, where he belongs. We propose a reintroduction of the devil into the territories to see if this relationship with him can inspire the construction of common experiences of joy and freedom. We want to experiment with the potential of sound to construct a public space by inviting people to attune themselves to their territories and to the different entities that have inhabited it.

We are aware that the pain and sadness of living in a world driven by the colonial enterprise in the Afro-Ecuadorian territories has deep roots and cannot be overruled in its entirety by an artwork. However, our aim is to contribute to the re-occupation of the public space in joyful and creative ways as a way of doing politics of the commons where people create their own codes and meanings. Furthermore, we anticipate resistance from the younger generation to engaging with their traditions, but we believe that the dialogue is necessary and young people can better engage with their history if they can use, transform, and question it in meaningful ways, rather than them simply being expected to accept its value. We believe that a decolonial approach needs to engage with the past in creative ways to affirm and value our existence in the present.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Afro-Ecuadorian Marimberos and Bomberos who have resisted throughout centuries of structural and systemic racism by cherishing and circulating their memories around the devil in Marimba and Bomba to new generations. Especial thanks to those who allowed us to learn from them.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Agier, M. (2002). Identidad cultural, identidad ritual: Una comparación entre Brasil y Colombia [Cultural identity, ritual identity: A comparison between Brazil and Colombia]. In C. Mosquera, M. Pardo, & O. Hoffman (Eds.), *Afrodescendientes en las américas: Trayectorias sociales e identitarias. 150 años de la abolición de la esclavitud en Colombia* [Afrodescendants in the Americas: Social and identity trajectories. 150 years of abolition of slavery in Colombia] (pp. 292–312). Universidad Nacional de Colombia; ICANH; IRD; ILSA.

Borja Gómez, J. H. (1998). *Rostros y rastros del demonio en la Nueva Granada: Indios, negros, judíos, mujeres y otras huestes de Satanás* [Faces and traces of the devil in New Granada: Indians, Blacks, Jews, women and other hosts of Satan]. Editorial Ariel.

Browning, B. (2003). Choreographing postcoloniality: Reflections on the passing of Edward Said. *Dance Research Journal*, *36*, 164–169.

Cabello Balboa, M. (1945). Verdadera Descripción y relación larga de la Provincia y Tierra de las Esmeraldas [True description and long-term relationship of the province and land of the Esmeraldas]. In J. Jijón y Caamaño (Ed.), *Miguel Cabello Balboa* (pp. 18–19). Editorial Ecuatoriana. (Original work published 1583)

Calderón, P., & Huybrechts, L. (2020). *PD otherwise will be pluriversal (or it won't be)*. https://doi.org/10.1145/3385010.3385027

Cedeño Canga, J. J. (2015). *Entre las quimbambas del Chocó Biogeográfico: Ruralidad, Identidad y Medios de vida de las comunidades negras de los ríos Santiago y Cayapas* [Among the Quimbambas of biogeographic Chocó: Rurality, identity and livelihoods of the black communities of the Santiago and Cayapas rivers]. Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales; FLACSO Ecuador.

CEPAL, & UNFPA. (2020). *Afrodescendientes y la matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina: Retos para la inclusión* [Afrodescendants and the matrix of social inequality in Latin America: Challenges for inclusion]. Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe. http://otramerica.com/comunidades/afrodescendientes-en-bolivia/1181%5Cninternal-pdf://508/1181.html%5Cninternal-pdf://510/1181.html

Chamorro, M., & Bossut, A. (2016). *A ritmo endiablado de Bomba: Una historia contada por los negros del*

Valle del Chota [With the devilish rhythm of Bomba: A story told by the black people of Chota Valley]. Comoyoko Ediciones.

de Carvalho-Neto, P. (1964). *Diccionario del Folklore Ecuatoriano* [Dictionary of Ecuadorian folklore]. Editorial Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana.

de Friedemann, N. S., & Arocha, J. (1986). *De sol a sol: Génesis, transformación y presencia de los negros en Colombia* [From sunrise to sunset: Genesis, transformation and presence of blacks in Colombia]. Planeta Colombiana Editorial.

de la Cruz Santacruz, N. P. (2012). *Fortalecimiento del desarrollo del pueblo afro del Valle del Chota a partir de la compilación de mitos, creencias, tradiciones y sabidurías* [Strengthening the development of the African heritage people of the Chota Valley using the compilation of myths, beliefs, traditions and wisdom]. Universidad Politécnica Salesiana.

Díaz-Díaz, R. A. (2005). Entre demonios africanizados, cabildos y estéticas corpóreas: Aproximaciones a las culturas negra y mulata en el Nuevo Reino de Granada [Among Africanized demons, councils and corporeal aesthetics: Approaches to black and mixed-race cultures in the New Kingdom of Granada]. *Universitas Humanística*, *XXXII*(60), 29–37.

Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdepence, autonomy and the making of worlds*. Duke University Press.

Escobar Quiñónez, R., Valencia, L., & Grupo La Caonita. (1997). *Memoria Viva, Costumbres y tradiciones esmeraldeñas* [Living memory, customs and traditions of Esmeraldas]. Municipio del Distrito Metropolitano de Quito.

Fals Borda, O. (1979). Investigating reality in order to transform it: The Colombian experience. *Dialectical Anthropology*, *4*(1), 33–55.

Freire, P. (2020). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Fundación Azúcar. (2017). *Informe alternativo: Examen de los informes presentados por los Estados partes en virtud del artículo 9 de la Convención* [Alternative report: Examination of the reports submitted by the States who are parties under Article 9 of the Convention]. Fundación Azúcar.

García Salazar, J. (n.d.). *Conferencia negra* [Black conference]. Radio Antena Libre.

García Salazar, J. (2020). *Cimarronaje en el pacífico sur* [Marronage in the South of the Pacific]. Ediciones Abya-Yala.

García Salazar, J., & Walsh, C. (2009). Derechos, territorio ancestral y el pueblo afroesmeraldeño [Rights, ancestral territory and the Afro-Esmeraldeño people]. In *¿Estado constitucional de derechos? Informe sobre derechos humanos Ecuador 2009* [Constitutional state of rights? Ecuador human rights report 2009] (pp. 345–360). Universidad Andina Simón Bolivar; Abya Yala.

García Salazar, J., & Walsh, C. (2017). *Pensar sembrando/sembrar pensando con el Abuelo Zenón* [Thinking and planting/planting and thinking with Grandfather Zenón]. Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Guamán, I., & Reyes, K. (2015). *Cimarrón: Antología del Valle del Chota* [Maroon: Anthology of the Chota Valley]. Ministerio de Cultura del Ecuador.

Haraway, D. J. (1992). The promises of monsters: A regenerative politics for inappropriate/d others. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P. A. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural studies* (pp. 295–337). Routledge.

INEC. (2010). *Cartografía digital 2010* [Digital cartography 2010].

Kanngieser, A. (2011). A sonic geography of voice: Towards an affective politics. *Progress in Human Geography*, *36*(3), 336–353.

Kanngieser, A. (2020). Weaponizing Ecocide: Nauru, offshore incarceration, and environmental crisis. *The Contemporary Pacific*, *32*(2), 492–502.

Kanngieser, A., & Beuret, N. (2017). Refusing the world: Silence, commoning, and the Anthropocene. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *116*(2), 363–380.

Lane, C. (2006). Voices from the past: Compositional approaches to using recorded speech. *Organised Sound*, *11*(1), 3–11.

López-Yánez, M. G. (2020). *Sounds of collective memories: A decolonial counter-representation of Afro-Ecuadorian Marimba Esmeraldeña and Bomba del Chota*. Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princeton University Press.

Mignolo, W. (2011). The Global South and world dis/order. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, *67*(2), 165–188. https://doi.org/10.2307/41303282

Moschetto, P. (1995). *El diablo y el arco iris: Magia, sueños y tabúes en Esmeraldas* [The devil and the rainbow: Magic, dreams and taboos in Esmeraldas]. Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Negrón-Muntaner, F. (2020). Decolonial joy: Theorising from the art of Valor y Cambio. In T. Moura, M. Fernández, V. Page (Eds.), *Theorising cultures of equality* (pp. 171–194). Routledge.

Quijano, A. (1992). Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad [Coloniality and modernity/rationality]. *Perú Indígena*, *13*(29), 11–20.

Rahier, J. M. (1998). Blackness, the racial/spatial order, migrations, and Miss Ecuador 1995–96. *American Anthropologist*, *100*(2), 421–430.

Rahier, J. M. (2011). Hypersexual Black women in the Ecuadorian "common sense": An examination of visual and other representations. *Civilisations*, *60*(1), 59–79.

Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (1987). El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: De la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia [The epistemological and theoretical potential of oral history: From instrumental logic to the decolonization of history].

Temas Sociales, *11*, 49–64.
Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2012). Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A reflection on the practices and discourses of decolonization. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, *111*(1), 95–109.
Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2015). *Sociología de la imagen: Miradas ch'ixi de la historia andina* [Sociology of the image: Ch'ixi regards on Andean history]. Tinta Limón.
Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2018). *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible: Ensayos desde una presente crisis andina* [A Ch'ixi world is possible: Essays from a present Andean crisis]. Tinta Limón.
Taussig, M. T. (1980). Slave religion and the rise of the free peasantry. In M. T. Taussig (Ed.), *The devil and commodity fetishism in South America* (pp. 41–69). University of North Carolina Press.
Thornton, J. (1998). *Africa in Africans in the making of the Atlantic world 1400–1800*. Cambridge University Press.
Tsing, A. (2016). Earth stalked by man. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, *34*(1), 2–16. https://doi.org/10.3167/ca.2016.340102
Whitten, N. E. (1965). *Class, kinship and power in an ecuadorian town*. Stanford University Press.

About the Authors

María Gabriela López-Yánez is an Ecuadorian performing arts researcher and artist. She has worked extensively on staging and in academic research of Afro-Ecuadorian music and dances. Gabriela holds a PhD in performing arts from Goldsmiths, University of London (UK), and an MA in dance from the University of Malaya (Malaysia). She has presented her work in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Currently, she is a full-time lecturer at Central University of Ecuador and liaison officer for Ecuador and part of the Latin American outreach committee of the ICTM (International Council of Traditional Music).

María Paz Saavedra Calderón is a sociologist researching the intersecting politics of care, knowledge, and time. She has a PhD in interdisciplinary studies from the University of Warwick. Her research follows the reproduction of situated, embodied, and inter-generational knowledge in more than human worlds. Particularly, her work focuses on the politics of knowledge production in traditional practices of care and healing. She also works with community-based projects, developing pedagogical tools to generate communities of learning that weave together different local knowledges and practices.

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183-2803)

Social Inclusion is a peer-reviewed open access journal which provides academics and policy-makers with a forum to discuss and promote a more socially inclusive society.

The journal encourages researchers to publish their results on topics concerning social and cultural cohesiveness, marginalized social groups, social stratification, minority-majority interaction, cultural diversity, national identity, and core-periphery relations, while making significant contributions to the understanding and enhancement of social inclusion worldwide.

www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion

COGITATIO