



**BEYOND
PARTICIPATION?**

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1. Summary

Summary Contents

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Micro and Meso Findings

Introduction

This digest is a summary of our key evaluation findings that emerged from 4 years of research into [BE PART](#), a project co-funded by the [Creative Europe Programme of the European Union](#) which ran from 2019-2023. Our aim is for this report to be read by anyone involved in the messy processes of working together, as artists, producers, participants, mediators, and facilitators. This part of the report is translated into the 7 languages represented across the network. A more detailed account of the evaluation and findings can be found in English after this synopsis.

[BE PART](#) aimed to critically explore the politics and practices of participation in the arts field, from collaborative art-making and sharing to decentralised governance models involving local citizens, artists and policy makers. Over the 4 years partner organisations developed a series of Fieldworks involving artist residencies and commissions. The network met annually for [Assemblies](#), which offered those involved in the network the chance to come together and explore ideas and processes relating to participatory working practices. There was also the Critical Network. For this, three artists were contracted to provide a reflective space to follow and accompany the project

activities and contribute to the analysis of processes and emerging critical discourse. They collectively produced a series of three [Protocols](#) for (re)distributing power throughout the performance art ecosystem.

We are London-based researchers employed as independent evaluators for [BE PART](#). Our approach to evaluating [BE PART](#) was underpinned by three main factors: an interest in creative, convivial, practice-based and participatory methods of research; a desire to embed methods of critical reflection into the partners' working practices; and the necessity of conducting research remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions and budgetary constraints. Three methods were developed that could be carried out by people involved in the network themselves. These were: [Cards on the Table](#) (COTT), Blind Dates and Fieldnote Diaries (you can find more detail in the full report).

Due to the complexity and amount of experiences across the network we used the framework of 3 levels of interaction to understand [BE PART](#): a micro, Fieldwork/project level; a meso, partner organisational level; and a macro, [BE PART](#) network level. Through [COTT](#), Blind Dates and the Fieldnote

Diaries we wanted to crack open spaces for people to share their experiences from their own perspectives. This was a way to acknowledge how roles and responsibilities varied, and that power was not fixed in these roles but circulated between them.

We listened back to recordings of the [COTT](#) games and Blind Dates and read the diaries and identified themes coming up in this data. We then visualised this data for each organisation (see below). The full report is structured through the major themes that occurred across the network. The digest includes a summarised version of our findings in two sections. The first cluster of findings relates to key learnings regarding the micro (Fieldwork/project) and meso (organisational) levels. The second cluster of findings refers to macro reflections on the [BE PART](#) process itself.

The network spans a spectrum of approaches to participation and co-creation. As a network we have learnt a huge amount from each other about processes of working together. This document aims to make the learning public.

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Micro and Meso Findings

Beginnings/Preparation

1. The dominant model in [BE PART](#) has been to invite artists to make work in relation to a place, with a group of people. They have then made connections with people in different ways: through open calls; linking up with pre-existing groups; and instigating one-to-one encounters or creating spaces for others to enter and use. In most cases, a preliminary process of getting to know each other, through making, dancing, or just **being together** was important. These phases took **time** but were essential for building **trust**.

2. Some of the [BE PART](#) Fieldworks acted as bridges between the partners and the communities that live and work around them, allowing the partners to develop or rebuild relationships with groups they want to continue working with in the future. A question has emerged through [BE PART](#) as to the extent to which, due to limited resources and diverse priorities, organisations are able to maintain these relationships of trust that are built up over time by freelance artists and **mediators**. For some arts organisations, community groups or participants, the desire to work together is mutual. However, in some cases the **power dynamic** between arts organisations and community groups made collaboration more difficult.

3. To avoid tokenistic and/or exploitative forms of participation, many asked if the stage at which people engaged in a process, and the level of experience they brought, had a bearing on the extent to which that process should be considered 'co-created' or not. The dynamics of who shaped, or contributed to the direction of the project was a live topic.

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Micro and Meso Findings

Beginnings/Preparation

4. Many of the people involved in the Fieldworks appreciated the **informal, open-ended** nature of the process, whilst acknowledging the amount of work it involves to create that sense of the unknown. This openness to see what happens also required artists to step back from the centre and to **hold that space for others**.

5. It was acknowledged that processes of holding take a lot of skill, energy and administration, and that those **'holding space for the unknown'** also needed to be held. The labour it takes to organise and support people who are not used to 'industry-specific dynamics' was felt across different Fieldworks. In some cases, partners, artists and the people they worked with were forced to acknowledge their own limitations, and to be honest about the time and resources they could give to a project.

6. Concerns were raised about the problematic assumption that participation in art projects is **inherently good** for people. Invitations to participate that are underpinned by a certain group's perceived need to participate in art are problematic. There was an unease with labelling people and a move in some of the Fieldworks towards ensuring diversity of experiences based on **intersectional identities**. This raises a broader question as to how to tackle intersectional experience at a more systemic level. Policy, funding applications and reporting often pigeonholes groups of people through singular identities and tends to focus on counting the number of people involved, rather than the experiences they have had.

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Micro and Meso Findings

Process vs Product / Continuation vs Disruption / Flow / Working Relationships / Trust / Care / Identities/ Roles

1. For most of the Fieldworks there was a deadline to present a performance, or some kind of outcome. The open-ended, process-based way of working with others meant that **production timeframes** were at times too short. The expectation to produce finished, polished results added another element of stress to the collaboration process. There was also a strong desire to **showcase** under-represented work, in part because the work would not necessarily be programmed.

2. One of the key questions raised through the BE PART Fieldworks was **what happens when artists leave?** Many of the organisations recognised the importance of the role of mediator to maintain connections developed during Fieldworks. This raises the question of whether the organisation and the participants want to stay in touch – and if they do, why is this? And do they have the time to do so? Indeed, some relationships need to end, and this can be difficult if friendships have formed. Because of the centrality of trust in any attempt at co-creation, the building, nurturing and maintaining of relationships seems key to a different way of programming which puts local ties, or at least an openness to the desires and capacities to keep working together, at its heart. People spoke of the time and resources it takes to build relations and **long-term working relationships**; who are the relationships of trust built between, and how are they maintained?

3. For many people, **communication was key to the process of trust-building** – more specifically, listening and feeling listened to, was said to be vital for building trust. Ideally, organisations, artists and participants would always be listening attentively to each other when they interacted, but this was not always possible or apparent.

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Micro and Meso Findings

Process vs Product / Continuation vs Disruption / Flow / Working Relationships / Trust / Care / Identities/Roles

4. Many of the producers, cultural workers and artists spoke of the significance of **mediators** as professional listeners. The artist may embody this role, but sometimes external expertise is needed. Whether artists understand and practice mediation as part of their practice or not, the need for an intermediary who was able to make, maintain and support connections between organisations, artists and various publics was a key learning across the [BE PART](#) network. There were often many different voices and agendas involved in Fieldworks. **Managing different expectations** could be **difficult and time-consuming work**. This mediating role was often taken on by producers, other artists or partners, rather than it being a designated person. Sometimes a game of [COTT](#) provided a space for mediation.

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5. Some of the organisations tried to move away from commissioning artists to do one-off projects, as fieldworks flowed into one another. This was addressed at an organisational level by **extending Fieldworks** rather than perpetuating a cycle of commissioning new projects, with new artists and new publics. There was, however, a recourse to framing bodies of work as projects due to **budget lines and deadlines** to present work publicly. Without the necessary resources needed for relationship building, these ways of working rely on **unsustainable unpaid or underpaid labour**. Despite desires to focus on the blurring of boundaries between roles and identities, this project-based logic was seen as 'the biggest problem' as it makes it hard to have continuity and accountability on a project.

6. Infrastructural change was seen as needed for relationships to be at the core of an organisation's practice. This involves a shift from commissioning artists to **redistributing funds and sharing resources with those who have existing connections to a place or community**. This is not to say one-off experiences are not of value, but they are connected to a mycelium of intra-relational networks that have taken root in a place, of which the artists and partner organisations are a part.

Micro and Meso Findings

Strategies and Tactics / Governance / Hierarchies

1. In terms of overall strategies at a meso level, there was some discussion about who sets the agenda for ways of working. Some organisations were thinking about their role as community organisations, while also recognising their arts focus. Some partners were grappling with their artistic mission to programme new work and **desire to listen and respond to local needs**.

2. There was a paradox at the heart of some of the Fieldworks: they were initiated and held by artists and/or organisations, and yet they were also intended to be spaces for others to join and take ownership over. These projects and organisations were never going to be wholly community-led, rather they represented (mainly!) friendly tussles between egos and agendas, with different people taking the lead at different times. This was as much about the artists and arts organisations feeling vulnerable in this process as it was about others **expressing their agency** by leading, questioning, or even leaving, the process.

3. Some of the Fieldworks considered participants as co-workers who needed support as they had different levels of experience. This reflected the **centrality of care**, meaning arts organisations need to be physically and mentally present to facilitate safe spaces for less experienced cultural workers to ask questions and to develop ways of communicating with each other. This raised questions as to what extent organisations have the **capacity** to build in training and development for people to become co-creators or co-workers.

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Micro and Meso Findings

Strategies and Tactics / Governance / Hierarchies

4. Some of the conversations we listened to touched on the specific role of administration – which is often an invisible and undervalued aspect of work. For some, administration of timelines and budgets held the co-creative process back, whereas for others it was important to see administration as creative and radical. Some Fieldworks and organisations shared knowledge of the administrative conditions and procedures involved with artists and participants. This was also considered an important aspect of the **training** of co-creators. Strategies of **sharing the back end** of participatory projects needed to be timely and supportive, acknowledging that not everyone is willing or able to engage at this level. Also, not everyone is interested in the ‘guts’ of administrative labour.

6. For many of the partners, co-creation was focused more at a project level due to the **difficulties of effecting change at an organisational level**. While there was some talk of developing less hierarchical structures, these conversations were also caveated with reality checks about how difficult this is to do in practice. This led to conversations about the level of transparency that is desired or required – how much of the work is participatory or co-created also relates to who makes decisions in a process. What are they making decisions about, and what does this process look and feel like? Changes can often be seen on more interpersonal and micro levels rather than wholesale shifts in constitution or governance structures.

5. A strategy of the BE PART project was for organisations to look into their governance structures to see how ideas of participation and co-creation could shift to the inner workings of the organisations. While some of the organisations experimented by inviting artists in to act as consultants or perform **institutional critiques**, structural changes were more difficult to implement, and therefore only a few changes were made.

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Macro Findings

Expectations and Agendas

1. Some partners were not clear on the [BE PART](#) project aims from the start. This was mainly due to changes in personnel over the 4 years. The time when a partner joined the network therefore affected their feeling of involvement. The lack of touring Fieldworks was also a disappointment to some as they understood this to be a core aim of [BE PART](#). But the difficulty of touring co-created, context-specific projects was also raised, with COVID-19 restrictions playing a major part.

2. While there was not the level of cross-partner exchange as many hoped for, [BE PART](#) has allowed some people the time, space and money to question how they organise projects and shifted many partners' thinking towards longer-term working practices. For all partners, [BE PART](#) offered extra resources that allowed them to work in ways they would not normally be able to. BE PART resources allowed experimentation and, for some partners, the ability to push boundaries of what might normally be affordable within standard budgets.

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Macro Findings

Time/Money

1. The practice of paying participants and co-creators varied across the network and there was no agreement on best practice. Given the emphasis on working with marginalised communities, some organisations faced legal difficulties in paying participants (e.g. if they were children and/or undocumented migrants). While some partners found ways around this, the inability to pay people points to a wider systemic barrier to inclusion. It was also acknowledged that payments and transparency over budgets is not always the answer to power-sharing. Understanding varying levels of commitment and how these may change throughout a process of working together underpinned the **dynamics** of many Fieldworks.

2. The economic disparity across the different socio-economic contexts that the network holds was not addressed enough.

3. For all the benefits that [BE PART](#) time and money afforded partners, many still felt that there was a greater need for transparency over money across the network. The lack of clarity at times fed into a feeling of disparity, with economic and geographic differences preventing a feeling of equity. The prospect of a move towards open and accessible pay and accounting was seen by many partners as positive. There were suggestions of developing a fair pay model across the network but this was not actioned.

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Macro Findings

Coming Together

1. **BE PART** has allowed some people the time/space/money to question how they organise projects. The Assemblies disrupted habits and formulas and made people feel connected to the network. Extending Assembly invitations to co-creators and other participants was seen as a major positive. However, the expectations surrounding invitations were not always clear.

2. The informal aspects of Assemblies were important. The opportunity to spend time not working was key to forming a strong network where people felt they could access and share knowledge together.

3. Participation in the network and especially Assemblies was at times demanding due to language difficulties, lack of confidence (some were new to the network), or difficulties for co-creators to travel. To improve participation, all partners should have the chance to host assemblies. Also, moments for smaller working groups at assemblies and other network meetings would be preferable, for example for those who are not as confident speaking English.

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Macro Findings

Critical Network and Protocol

*The Critical Network and **Protocol** did not fit into our methods in the way other aspects of [BE PART](#) did. Partners rarely discussed the Critical Network's practices. Therefore relatively little data was gathered. For this reason, we only give a passing comment on the Critical Network and the Protocol.*

At its best, the Critical Network encouraged difficult and honest conversations, shifting the emphasis and task of criticality back onto the network itself. Their main output became a set of [Protocols](#) for partners to use when working in participatory and co-productive ways. However, the large and ambiguous task of authoring such a document for such a broad and disparate network proved difficult, and ultimately it was felt that this was not satisfactorily achieved.

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Macro Findings

Recommendations

Our recommendations fall into three sections, followed by a brief summary of key findings and suggestions for future work. These recommendations are for the [BE PART](#) network and all those who are intending to continue working in co-creative and participatory ways.

Infrastructure

It is important that arts organisations, artists and partners understand who maintains relationships and what relationships are valued most. The role of mediation is key to un-

derstanding this, as is greater transparency about resources. In order to know who holds spaces and cares for the carers, we recommend the following actions:

- Audit the resources and map the skills, knowledge and financial capacities across the organisations and the network;
- Clarify the values, roles, budgets and processes internal to partner organisations and across the network as a whole;
- Rethink governance and decision-making powers internally and across the network. This could include youth boards or creating paths for participants to sit on boards.

Creating connections

- Rethink the Assembly model to have more in-person meetings with less formal and packed schedules;
- Develop a shared policy for paying participants equitably that could be used to influence legislative frameworks (e.g. [see this use of blockchain](#));
- Move away from project-based logic. Build on existing relationships and work over a longer timescale;
- Offer plenty of opportunities for training and paid work – the Fieldnote Dia-

rists could be an avenue to pursue in this respect, but it would need to be given a more embedded role with a longer lifespan.

Partners could try to work together more closely, meet more often and develop more opportunities for co-creators and participants. The strength of cross-network social bonds at the end of the 4 years should be built upon and placed at the centre of future working practices.

Evaluations

Unsurprisingly, we see evaluation as a key strain of future shared practice that should be emphasised at the start of any process and given more space throughout a project. Collective, shared learning is an amazing possibility offered by [BE PART](#), but one that needs to be properly resourced to facilitate reflexive spaces at a partner and network level. Our specific suggestions are as follows:

- Embed evaluation from the start and be clear about what everyone wants and values in working collectively. Potentially nominate individuals or working groups who are responsible for individual partner evaluation and reflection;
- Research individually and as a network

so that learning can happen at local and network levels;

- Hold regular physical meetings for collective reflection. This could be through forming smaller, subnetwork working groups.

Learning in public

All of the above should be done as openly as possible. A move to make the work of the network more public will require that partners translate the “artistic concepts” they use into more graspable, usable language. Some partners are likely to need to change the language used on their websites, so that a greater range of audiences can engage with the content. Public communications should be seen as a space for collective learning and sharing, rather than a centralised task.. This shift in perception would be a step towards organisations becoming spaces that can be useful for the various communities that surround them.

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2. Introduction

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Introduction

The context

We hope this *Beyond Participation?* report will be of interest to anyone involved in the messy processes of working together, as artists, producers, participants, mediators, and facilitators. This publication introduces our approach and presents what we have learnt from our evaluation/research with [BE PART](#), a 4-year project co-funded by the [Creative Europe Programme of the European Union](#) which ran from 2019-2023. [BE PART](#) aimed to critically explore the politics and practices of participation in the arts field, from collaborative art-making and sharing to decentralised governance models involving local citizens, artists and policy makers.

The network of 10 partner organisations also aimed to collectively foster new approaches and structures for the co-creation and mobility of art through collaborations with publics, artists, researchers and organisations. Over the 4 years partner organisations developed a series of 'Fieldworks' involving artist residencies and commissions. The network also met annually, when COVID-19 allowed, for 'Assemblies', which offered those involved in the network the chance to come together and explore ideas and processes relating to participatory working practices. There was also the Critical Network. For this, three artists were engaged to provide a reflective space to follow and accompany the project activities and contribute to the analysis of processes and emerging critical discourse. They collectively produced a series of three [Protocols](#) for (re)distributing power throughout the performance art ecosystem.

This publication highlights our key findings that emerged from the 4 years of research. It is the result of embedded, participatory research that has been happening across the network since summer 2020. This publication is also an accompaniment to the 'technical report' for the funders. As a network we have learnt a huge amount from each other

about processes of working together. This document aims to make that learning public.

This document was written by Sophie Hope and Henry Mulhall, London-based independent evaluators and researchers on the [BE PART](#) project. We were commissioned in 2020 when the funding was secured, partners were in place and Fieldworks were underway. At that time most of the countries in the network were in the first of their COVID-19 lockdowns. The total fee for the evaluation was €16,300. There was an additional budget for the following: travel and accommodation to attend the Assemblies; translation; proof-reading; and design and print costs. We were contracted by [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#), one of the partners, who also provided us with administrative support by arranging payments and subcontracts.

The partners across the [BE PART](#) network reflected different scales of organisation from full-time equivalent staff ranging from 6 people to 95. Eight of the ten organisations deliver annual performing arts festivals whilst all supported projects/fieldworks throughout the year. Sometimes responsibility for [BE PART](#) and co-creation/participation programmes was spread across an organ-

isation; and sometimes it was the specific remit of community or education staff in the organisation. Some had teams for marketing or mediation, for others this was added to existing workloads. Two of the organisations ([URB Festival](#) and [Homo Novus](#)) are the festival arms of larger cultural organisations. Most of the organisations worked across artforms, including dancing, sewing, walking, sound, painting and public interventions. The network spans a spectrum of approaches to participation and co-creation.

[BE PART](#) was a programme of work that focused on developing relationships with others. It was therefore hit hard by COVID-19 lockdowns. Artists' plans had to change and adapt and organisations had to rethink their roles and purpose. The experiences we have heard cannot be divorced from this difficult context and in some ways trace the struggles of working through this period. Despite the difficulties, tensions and stresses inherent in participatory practices, the desire to come together in person, to talk, walk, dance, listen, and reflect shines through these [BE PART](#) years.

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Introduction

Our approach / methodology

Our approach to evaluating [BE PART](#) was underpinned by three main factors: an interest in creative, convivial, practice-based and participatory methods of research; a desire to embed methods of critical reflection into people's working practices; and the necessity of conducting research remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions and budgetary constraints. In May 2020, in order to get to know the partners, we hosted an online game show in collaboration with artist [Rebecca Davies](#). We also met with the partners in order to better understand their evaluation needs. Through this process we developed an evaluation 'kit' for each of the partners. This kit included three methods that could be carried out by people involved in the network themselves. These were: [Cards on the Table \(COTT\)](#), a game that helped structure and mediate meetings between people working on Fieldworks together; [Blind Dates](#), where two people who were involved with the [BE PART](#) network, but did not know each other, met online and responded to a menu of questions. For the third method, [Fieldnote Diaries](#), we recruited diarists in each location who attended Fieldworks as participant observers and documented and reflected on their experiences. In addition to these methods, we were able to visit Assemblies in Ljubljana, Ghent and Riga and Fieldworks in Lumsden and Cork.

Due to the complexity and amount of experiences across the network we used the framework of 3 levels of interaction to understand [BE PART](#): a micro, Fieldwork/project level; a meso, partner organisational level; and a macro, [BE PART](#) network level. We have also come to understand these three levels of participation as interrelated and co-dependent. We developed methods that aimed to generate a greater understanding of the relationships between people, places, events and materials across and between the micro, meso and macro contexts of participation. Hundreds of people have been involved to a greater or lesser extent across these levels of [BE PART](#). Through [COTT](#), [Blind Dates](#) and the [Fieldnote Diaries](#) we wanted to crack open spaces for people to share their experiences from their own perspectives. This was a way to acknowledge how roles and responsibilities varied, and that power was not fixed in these roles but circulated between them.

The methods were designed to be useful for the organisations beyond the realm of our research and [BE PART](#). They were tools for those involved to carry out self-evaluation and reflection-on-action as projects unfolded, as much as they were for data collection to aid later interpretations and analyses. One of the

shared characteristics of participatory, socially engaged art practices and research, is the significance of being present and actively participating. Informal and instinctual forms of behaviour are characteristic of the moments we tried to capture. We tried to engage with and generate accounts of experience that acknowledged their embeddedness whilst also being translatable outside that direct experience.

We gathered over 14 hours of card games audio, 12 hours of blind dates, 10 interviews with partner organisations and 8 sets of diary entries. We listened back to and read this material, drawing out anything that seemed relevant. We then identified themes and started visualising the connections per organisation using [Graph Commons](#). These graphs enabled us to see the key themes coming up for each organisation (represented by larger nodes), and the strength of the connections between the themes (for example, when a quote mentioned both 'money' and 'hierarchies' the line between these themes was thicker). [Studio Hyte](#) then helped us to visualise the data so that we could feedback to the organisations and into this report. As you will see, this report is structured according to the major themes that occurred across the network.

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Introduction

Structure of the report

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Following this introduction we highlight 5 Fieldworks to give a flavour of the different types of projects the network has facilitated. These are not fully representative but demonstrate the wide variety of Fieldworks that have taken place. They illustrate some of the benefits and difficulties when working in participatory or co-creative ways, and start to draw out the themes used across the report. Hyperlinks will take you to descriptions and images of other Fieldworks mentioned in the report. We then move on to the analysis section of the report which is divided into 3 parts: the first provides a series of diagrams relating to each of the BE PART Partners; the second part details the key themes and points that have emerged across the micro (Fieldwork) and meso (organisational) levels of the research; and the third part focuses on the macro level learning in terms of the [BE PART](#) network more broadly. We briefly discuss the Critical Network and Protocol before outlining some reflections we have had about our approach to the evaluation process. Finally, we close the report with a set of recommendations that we think will be valuable for the [BE PART](#) network to take forward. We also hope these will be of interest to anyone working in participatory or co-creative ways.

In the following part of the report there are two sets of diagrams relating to each partner. They represent the key themes that have emerged in the data relating to that organisation and some examples of quotes to illustrate these points. It is important to note that these are not definitive representations of the organisations, rather they offer a particular perspective depending on the material we gathered. Significantly, the material may come from voices that do not usually represent the organisation, and so themes and issues that emerge for one organisation might be different from others. At a glance, these diagrams offer a summary of the Fieldworks that each partner has developed. They give a sense of topics that have come up in conversations about how people have worked. Imagine the ‘blobs’ as moveable shapes that can shift and morph depending on the group speaking, as well as the content of the conversation.



3. Five Fieldworks

Five Fieldworks Contents

3. Five Fieldworks

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[Rope](#) is a ‘mobile installation’ or ‘social sculpture’ – a giant blue rope that is carried around public spaces, devised by artist [Ief Spincemaille](#). The [Festival de Marseille](#) collaborated with a number of school and community groups to participate in workshops which contributed to the creation of public mobile installations across the city in 2022. These included workshops in a climbing gym with [La Cloche Sud](#), an organisation which engages citizens, homeless or not, to act against homelessness through the creation of social ties, changing the way life on the street is perceived. They also worked with the [Airbel Social Center](#) who hosted a walk-about with children as part of an event on surrealism.

Monthly workshops allowed volunteers working on the project to spend time together. This meant the group gained confidence and trust in the process, and began to take ownership of the direction they wanted to take the work. This preparatory work with the participants was crucial to the process. A coordinator at [La Cloche Sud](#) recalled how

“at the beginning there were rules. Some volunteers thought it was really funny and wanted to grab it, tie knots with it... I think

we encouraged everyone to do what they wanted. It was more about motivating them to come up with their own ideas, rather than telling them that this or that was not appropriate...it was a little tricky, we had to both give them leads while at the same time not give them the answers. It was important that they had their own words and their own idea of what the rope was...”

[Rope](#) demonstrated the connection between having both rules for engagement but also an openness to collaborating in new ways. A facilitator of [Rope](#) noticed how the children were “super motivated. At first, they want to jump on it or play with it as if it were a game, or a stuffed toy or something.” The facilitator had to impose some restrictions, and although he did not like to regulate participants’ play, he found that “in fact people understand very quickly what they can’t do while being super creative in other ways.” The rules of engagement here set the conditions to hold spaces for the unknown to play out, depending on who is in that space at that time.

[Rope](#) also illustrated the relationship between an artist’s intentions and how a process can be opened up to others to take

it in other directions. This involved the artist ‘letting go’ and other people using [Rope](#) in ways he was not expecting. For the artist, this was a process of retaining some artistic control without demotivating people.

During the process a group of children working with [Rope](#) became the mediators, telling its story, they started to tell other people about [Rope](#), thought of things to do with [Rope](#), got their parents interested, and passed on the rules of how to use it to other people. One of the participants explained how the [Rope](#) travels and creates a bond with all the people around it. He gave an opening speech and wrote a text about the piece. Through their engagement with carrying and playing with the [Rope](#), people started to share responsibility for protecting it. One of the Festival organisers stated how “It’s pretty nice that this role is taken on by people other than us.”

Whilst the workshops generated a sense of ownership over [Rope](#), for some participants, others were more resistant to them. For one of the facilitators, it was more interesting to work with “people who are not open to the object because it’s a huge challenge to get the connection. It’s more difficult but

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Five Fieldworks

Focus: [Rope](#)

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it's more worthwhile when the connection happens." One of the facilitators stated, "it's more stimulating to see people who are reluctant at first, but as you explain the process and your way of thinking, it opens their minds and creates a tolerance for the fact that there are things that we don't necessarily understand. It's also about being open to understanding all that. I think it's pretty funny... it's more stimulating to work with the 'antis'."

[Rope](#) highlighted the significance of the *process* (rather than the end result) in terms of generating trust, confidence and ownership. With a shared understanding of the parameters, those involved could trust the process. For Geraud, "If we do not focus on the results but on the process, we could have a different result, we may not even have a result, but that's really interesting." Also, for Ief, the artist: "It can be a trap to think too much in terms of the result, because if you think about a goal, in the end you forget all the energy, all the people and everything that can happen at that moment."

Five Fieldworks

Focus: [To Be What We Are](#)

Young Traveller artists living in the Knocknaheeny and Farranree areas of Cork worked with Eszter Némethi and filmmaker Claire Murphy within the context of [Cork Midsummer Festival](#). Locally known as the ‘Groups’ the young people have been active as an after-school art club for the past 15 years. Groups had been run by Deirdre O’Regan and more recently Maeve McCarthy (Springboard Family Services) and Noreen O’Regan ([Cork City Partnership](#)) in collaboration with the artists, Helen O’Reilly, Ann Stokes, Maeve McCarthy, and Susan Holland ([Cork Midsummer Festival](#)). Eszter developed a play-based

methodology that allowed her to work with the children. For a year, they explored art and constructed a space to play together in the community centre. For the festival in 2023, the group created an installation to document this creative laboratory exploring artistic play.

For Deirdre, the project was “a journey to see how we can support the development of children without prescribing it.” For Susan it was all about the kids’ journey and asking if the kids seem “a little bit more confident in themselves? Are they able to speak up a little bit more? Are they going on a creative journey themselves in some way?”

Eszter, Claire and the Young Traveller artists were working in an open-ended way, with no clear expectations or outcomes. Eszter described this as “allowing something to go the wrong way...allowing things to happen on their own.” Eszter’s ‘playground building practice’ involved creating structures where people can do whatever they want while remaining present to see what happens. Susan echoes these desires: “I think we were all on the same page, we wanted to allow the children to explore things for themselves and see where they go.”

Amy Begly (Fieldnote Diarist) noted that for the children it was a different experience “as they were now able to release through messy play and artwork... they [were] all in it together and trying out new stuff... It’s great to get away from structure in their lives.” She described a situation where the children had the choice to do whatever they wanted through a supportive space where they could create and move “one step at a time.” Amy also noted that “because they are all related there is some permission-seeking and validation from each other.”

Eszter found that even after 5 or 6 sessions, the children were more comfortable making decisions. This way of working involved “allowing the space to just be”; while this seemed like it should be easy, it was in fact “extremely difficult to hold.” There are many different adults working with the Traveller children such as parents and community services. This means that there are a lot of people with expectations about how to support the young people and what they need. Eszter found that negotiating with the adult entourage surrounding the children and community centre was at times more difficult than negotiating with the kids. A lot of time and energy was spent preparing

and arranging the space, as well as getting the children to and from the sessions. For Deirdre, the pressure to support the children to have enjoyable experiences was coupled with the effort to just get them to the sessions. The sessions explored the tensions between holding a space for child-led decision-making and the need to create safe, supportive environments for them. Susan reflected that “we’ve learned already that being completely open is probably too much for the participants to handle.”

Creating a child-led space was difficult, particularly in a community setting with its own regulations, conventions and restrictions. For example, it took six months to install curtains in the room they had been using. Eszter said that after they were installed “somehow, we had a bit more control of that space which is amazing in a community centre, you know, that we could drill into the wall is a huge, huge achievement.” These material changes were symbolic of the shifts and changes needed at an infrastructural level to gain permission to open up spaces for not knowing, and the effort it takes to create these small interventions.

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Five Fieldworks

Focus: [Guči Fabrika](#)

[Guči Fabrika](#) was started in 2021 in Riga by Cote Jaņa Zuņiga, a visual artist, performer and cultural manager. Following an open call for people who could sew, the group started making clothes, bags and other products using 'migrant bags'. These are the ubiquitous red, blue and white tartan 'bags for life' seen throughout Europe. During the [Homo Novus Festivals](#) in 2021, 2022 and 2023 (and also at [Santarcangelo Festival](#) in 2023), the group set up a collective workspace making items which visitors could barter for by offering other goods, such as food or drinks, in exchange. The group "decide for ourselves in what form we want to work, how much we want to do in a day and what kind of 'payment' we want to receive for our work." The structure of [Guči Fabrika](#) invites the participating visitors to think about the value of the products and the associated costs and working conditions of mass production.

[Guči Fabrika](#) is attempting to develop a horizontal, co-created and collective approach to art-making. Starting with the commissioned artist posting an open call, the group is developing into a collective. However, the process of collectivising the dynamics between artist and participants has at times been difficult. During a game of [COTT](#),

one participant said that they don't feel like an artist – "you (Cote) are the artist." Later on, the same speaker says "maybe in a few years I will feel like an artist." Another of the players says to Cote: "sometimes I have this feeling that you are like the boss of us." While the arrangement in the project is now that everyone is paid the same, invitations for new commissions still seem to go to Cote, rather than the collective as a whole. "Don't you think you are more in a leader position because this is your idea?" One of the group asks Cote. But Cote doesn't feel like the author of the project: "It's really frustrating that you cannot see that I also want to have a horizontal position."

Within the group, different people take on different roles at different times (e.g., working outside or at the sewing machines) but the group do not see this as a barrier to equitable working conditions. This is reflected in the Fieldnote Diarist Santa Remere's observations:

"I arrive after noon, while the seamstresses and the artist Cote Jana Zuniga are in the process of preparing materials, slowly ripping the stitches of the bags to make them into material for new items.

Everybody is doing everything, in a joint rhythm – someone arranges the piles of fabrics, someone preparing the small details, there are some more people from the festival who are also taking some small tasks."

For Programme Curator Bek Berger, [Guči Fabrika](#) has been an example of "a really clear mythology... that a community felt empowered to escalate..." It was an example of "true co-creation" and "one of the most successful projects" because people were comfortable with the rules "and then they could break them and escalate them." For Bek, [Guči Fabrika](#) is about everyone's needs and there is an "inherent care within the project." She could see this shift in ownership/involvement through the process – moving from "90% Cote, 10% seamstresses by the last 10 days, I think we got to 50/50 or 60/40..." [Guči Fabrika](#) has been running for over 2 years now and the aim is for Cote to step away so that the project can exist without her. Santa observed that during the festival:

"The seamstresses are not fulfilling every request – they negotiate and communicate about how they feel and if they want to do this, and ask for things they really need.

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Five Fieldworks

Focus: [Guči Fabrika](#)

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When I show up also on the last day of the workshop – I hear that someone has brought the wrong dog treats for Anta, and she didn't make the requested object for exchange, because she didn't want to work just for being polite. And the customer gets it. He says – I totally understand, and it is a valuable experience for me."

[Homo Novus Festival](#) have committed to supporting the project for three years of the festival, and the group are being invited to other festivals. [Guči Fabrika](#) is an example of a longer-term investment and way of working with an artist and group of participants. Due to the longer timeframe, distinct identities such as artist and participant have morphed into an art collective. The project itself highlights the way negotiation happens at all levels: between the members of the group; between the group and those entering the space to barter; and between the group and other cultural organisations. These relationships are not always easy, but the re-purposing of symbolic 'migrant bags' provides a space for these interactions.

Five Fieldworks

Focus: [Erased Gazes](#)

Zagreb-based artist, activist and community organiser [Selma Banich](#) was invited by [City of Women](#) to create a collaborative project in 2022 with communities that were already connected to the organisation. Selma decided to work with experiences of erasure. After Slovenian independence in 1992, more than 25,000 people were erased as citizens in Slovenia, meaning they lost their rights to work, healthcare, social insurance and pensions. Selma describes this as a form of “administrative genocide”. She wanted to work with people who had experienced this and connect them with people with contemporary experiences of erasure, such as asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers.

Selma started working with a group of 7 women who either had experience of erasure or we children of parents who were erased in the 1990s. All the participants were given a fee. Selma talked about “holding space for people to share their truth, their experiences.” Through a series of workshops they made a memorial piece. This was a white cloth in 12 sections printed with rusty objects found in sites of past and present erasures from Vinež, Ljubljana and Zagreb. The rusty objects were wrapped in the cloth and soaked first in vinegar, and then

in boiling water, leaving brown and yellow stains on the fabric. The group then embroidered eyes on the cloth (“returning the gaze of the erased back to the world”). The memorial was installed at the [Old Power Station in Ljubljana](#) in December 2022, and then donated to the [National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia](#).

Ana Lorgar (Fieldnote diarist) attended the workshops and wrote a moving account of her experience. Ana describes a moment during one of the initial workshops where some attendees voiced criticisms of Selma’s lack of transparency: “They want to know exactly what these workshops are. They say they are sick of NGO projects that use their life tragedies to make art.” After a difficult and intense exchange, they decided to leave the project. The group that formed decided to continue working together without Selma, forming their own collective called the [SIDE Collective](#). [City of Women](#) then supported them to develop their own project called [Decoding Resilience](#), a series of public interventions, workshops and an exhibition.

Ana reflected on how “It is a very thin line between participatory art and art which uses others’ voices.” She asked if the artists

who left the project had been traumatised by previous NGO art projects. Ana continued working with Selma and the rest of the group, describing how “the canvas is the result of co-creation and an example of an inclusive, decentralised, and partly non-hierarchical process.” She writes how she now has “new friends, friends of different generation with different experiences in their life as I have. We were able to create a constructive dialogue with each other and I am sure this is not the end... sometimes it’s nice to lead and sometimes is also very nice to be led. In my life, I try to do both. That is how I learn more.”

[Erased Gazes](#) highlights the difficulty of approaching a community of potential co-creators with preconceived plans. Some of the participants did not feel listened to because the artist arrived with their own ideas of what the project should be. For others it was an experience of co-creation where they felt very much part of the process. Even if the opening idea is sensitive to the political context, the voices of those represented needed to be heard and included; it needs to be acknowledged that people arrive at a project with different agendas and expectations.

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The Atlas Collective is an overarching Fieldwork of [VIERNULVIER](#) initiated by [Marieke De Munck](#). [Atlas](#) grew from the [STADSATELIER](#), a residency program from [VIERNULVIER](#). The project was envisioned as an artistic and social laboratory, bringing together an intergenerational and interdisciplinary community of artists, students, critical thinkers, and representatives from partner organisations (such as [Manoeuvre](#), [CAMPUSatelier](#), [de Koer](#) and [Kunsthof Gent](#)). [Atlas](#) serves as an umbrella Fieldwork from which other Fieldworks can stem and learn. Rather than starting from scratch with new commissions, [Atlas](#) allowed an approach that connected and supported already existing practices of co-creation, participation and engaged work from across Ghent. A concrete example is the collaboration between [CAMPUSatelier](#), [VIERNULVIER](#) and artist [Kristof Van Gestel](#) with [De Collectieve Collectie](#). The project [Papier van Hier en Daar](#) grew out of conversations between Van Gestel, Marieke De Munck and [Elly Van Eeghem](#) (artistic coordinator of [CAMPUSatelier](#)) about [De Collectieve Collectie](#). *Papier van Hier en Daar* is a long-term collaboration in the form of several residencies in the neighbourhood of Nieuw Gent, happening at [CAMPUSatelier](#), local schools and in public space, leading to a public presentation in 2024.

[Atlas](#) took the form of several study circles where practices and knowledge were exchanged and a sharing fabric was formed. During one of these study circles the collective decided to make a publication that brings together and makes visible a multitude of existing participatory practices and links them with other artistic work, social initiatives of resistance, and theoretical reflections on all this. The publication is activated through several multimedial happenings. An additional aim of Atlas was to change the way projects are commissioned through slower and collaborative processes.

The members decided collectively how to spend the budget. For Marieke, “that’s the next step in the whole idea of co-creation and collaboration.... [it] is more than just me being in the curator role and deciding... I really kind of try to divide the power.” For example, part of the budget went to [CAMPUSatelier](#) and the group collectively decided which artists would go there for residencies. Through this approach they worked with artists and participants across the organisations involved, to create different ways of collaborating. Marieke describes [Atlas](#) as artistically coaching its members: “it’s all co-creation, but it’s going a lot broader than just the artistic col-

laboration. It’s also trying to change the way the policy and the governance really talk about these things together...”.

Marieke is interested in the ways this can devolve decision-making to other artists about “who we should work with and what we should do.” Some of her budget went to paying people to do this work. This model of working is different to the majority of Fieldworks in [BE PART](#) which involved selecting artists to do participatory projects. “Doing this job with a bigger group adds a whole other dynamic, and it’s really influencing the programme and the way we work... bringing them in also in this structure, the institute, you create a lot more understanding for both sides.” Rather than a project-to-project mentality, the collective is working indefinitely. Although members could potentially move in and out, this approach allows for the maintenance and consolidation of trusting relationships.

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4. Analysis

Analysis Contents

4. Analysis

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Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Lumsden, Aberdeenshire, Scotland

Governance: Charity with Board of Trustees
Number of staff: c.6
Assembly: Lumsden Live 2021

Cork Midsummer Festival, Cork, Ireland

Governance: Charity with board of trustees
Number of staff: 5

Artsadmin, London, UK

Governance: Charity with board of trustees
Number of staff: 22

Viernulvier, Ghent, Belgium

Governance: Non-profit organisation
Number of staff: 95
Assembly: Openbare Werken 2022

Festival de Marseille, Marseille, France

Governance: Association with Board of Directors
Number of staff: 10 permanent staff, plus over 100 temporary staff or volunteers for the festival

URB Festival, Helsinki, Finland

Governance: URB is an annual street art and culture festival produced by Kiasma Theatre, which is based at The Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma which is part of the Finnish National Gallery
Number of staff: 3, with an additional 5 Kiasma Theatre staff and 1-4 part-time workers for the festival

Homo Novus, Riga, Latvia

Governance: New Theatre Institute of Latvia (NTIL) organises the International Festival of Contemporary Theatre Homo Novus. NTIL has a Board and Council
Number of staff: 4 year-round growing to 15 paid staff during the festival
Assembly: 2023

City of Women, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Governance: Association
Number of staff: 7

Santarcangelo dei Teatri, Santarcangelo, Italy

Governance: Cultural Association with governing board
Number of staff: 4 full-time staff and 3 part-time plus c.140 staff during the festival.

L'Art Rue, Tunis, Tunisia

Governance: Association with board of trustees - no membership
Number of staff: c.20



Key Themes

Starting Points:

- Beginnings
- Preparation
- Expectations and Agendas
- Place

Dynamics:

- Identities/Roles
- Working Relationships
- Decisions
- Hierarchies

Infrastructures:

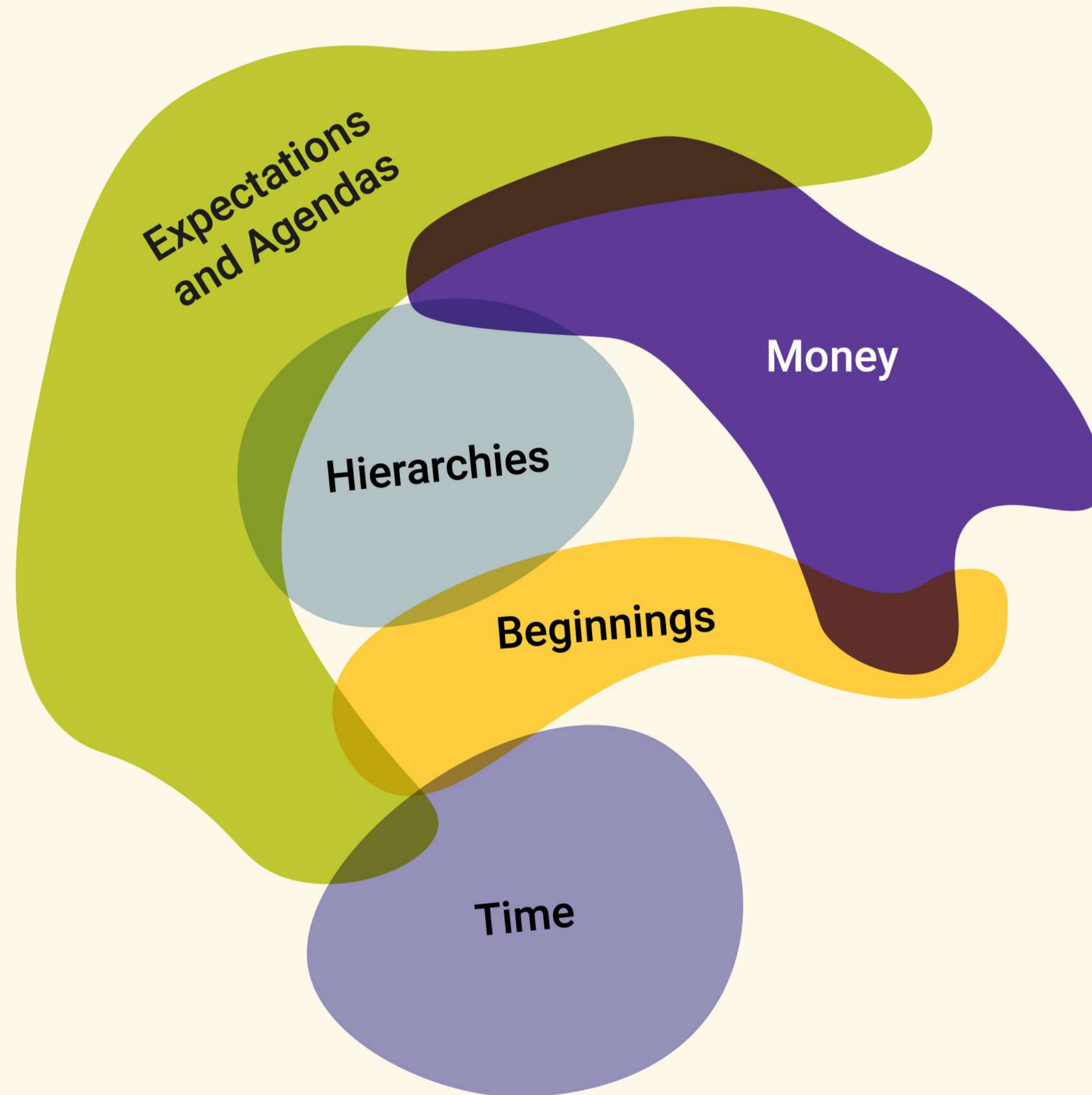
- Time
- Money
- Strategy/Tactics
- Care

Compositions:

- Coming together
- Process vs Product
- Flow
- Check-ins
- Continuation vs Disruption

Artsadmin, London, UK

Themes & Connections



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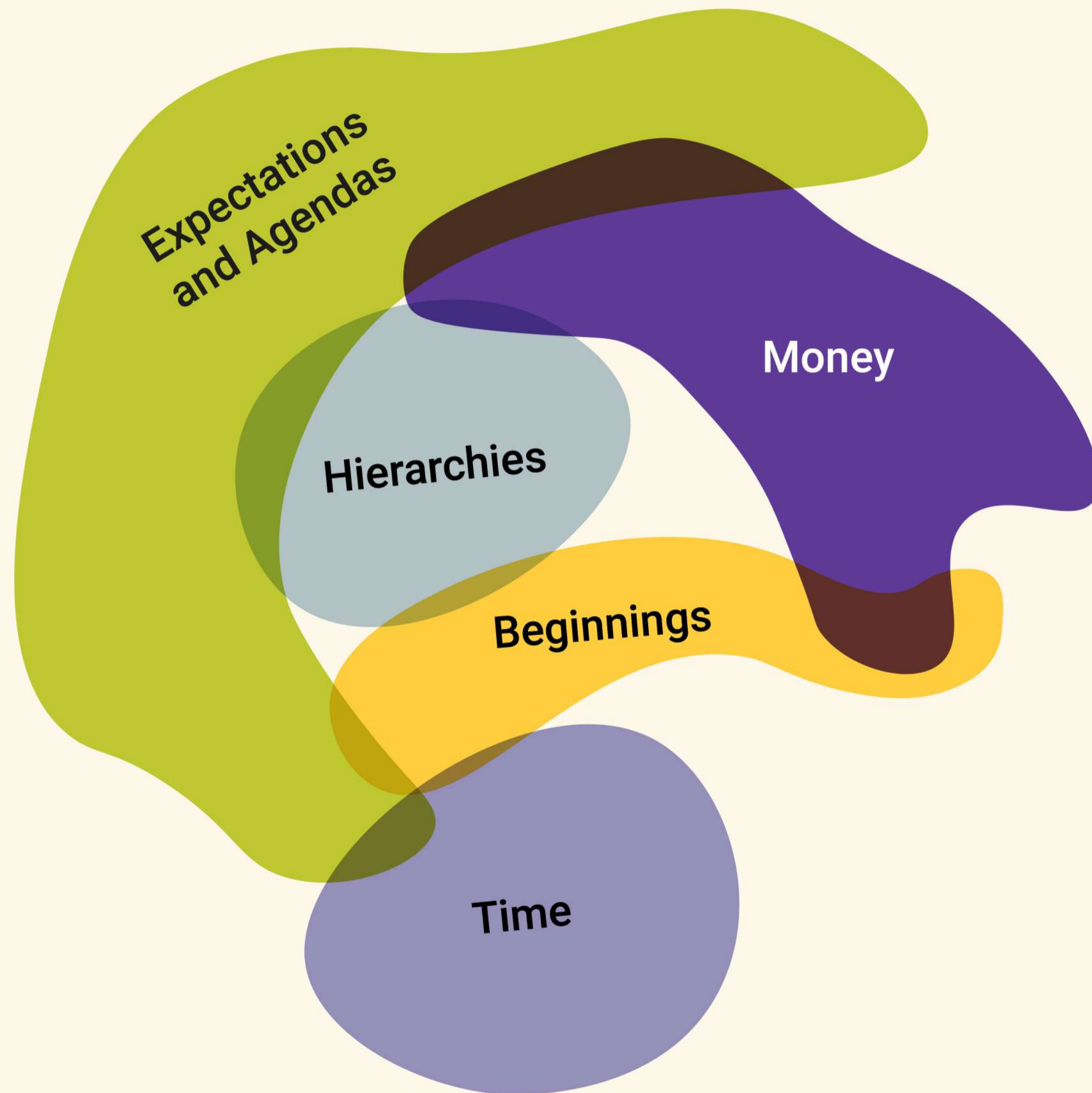
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Fieldworks

- [Artsadmin Youth](#) (2021)
- [Canteen Residency 1: Apocalypse Reading Room](#) – Ama Josephine Budge (2021)
- [Canteen Residency 2: Say Yes to Who or What Turns Up](#) – Jennie Moran (2022)
- [Canteen Residency 3: biome: experiments in radical kinship](#) – Zoë Laureen Palmer (2023)
- [Creative Criminal Justice Project](#) (2019-22)
- [AiR \(Artist in Residence\)](#) (2023-2024)

Artsadmin, London, UK

Themes & Connections



Expectations/agendas “I think for an organisation there are different things to think about, versus what a community would fundraise for or would need.” (staff member)

Beginnings Due to staffing issues at the time, an artist reflects that, “without someone else, without the pre-made connections between myself and the neighbouring schools, it was a bit tricky... I guess if I had had more time, and there was a little bit more engagement and support... I would like to have made nicer connections, or any connections with the school communities.” (artist)

Money “Participants generally aren’t paid, whereas the artist is and I think that when we’re talking about working with communities, that can often be a power imbalance that can be overlooked.” (staff member)

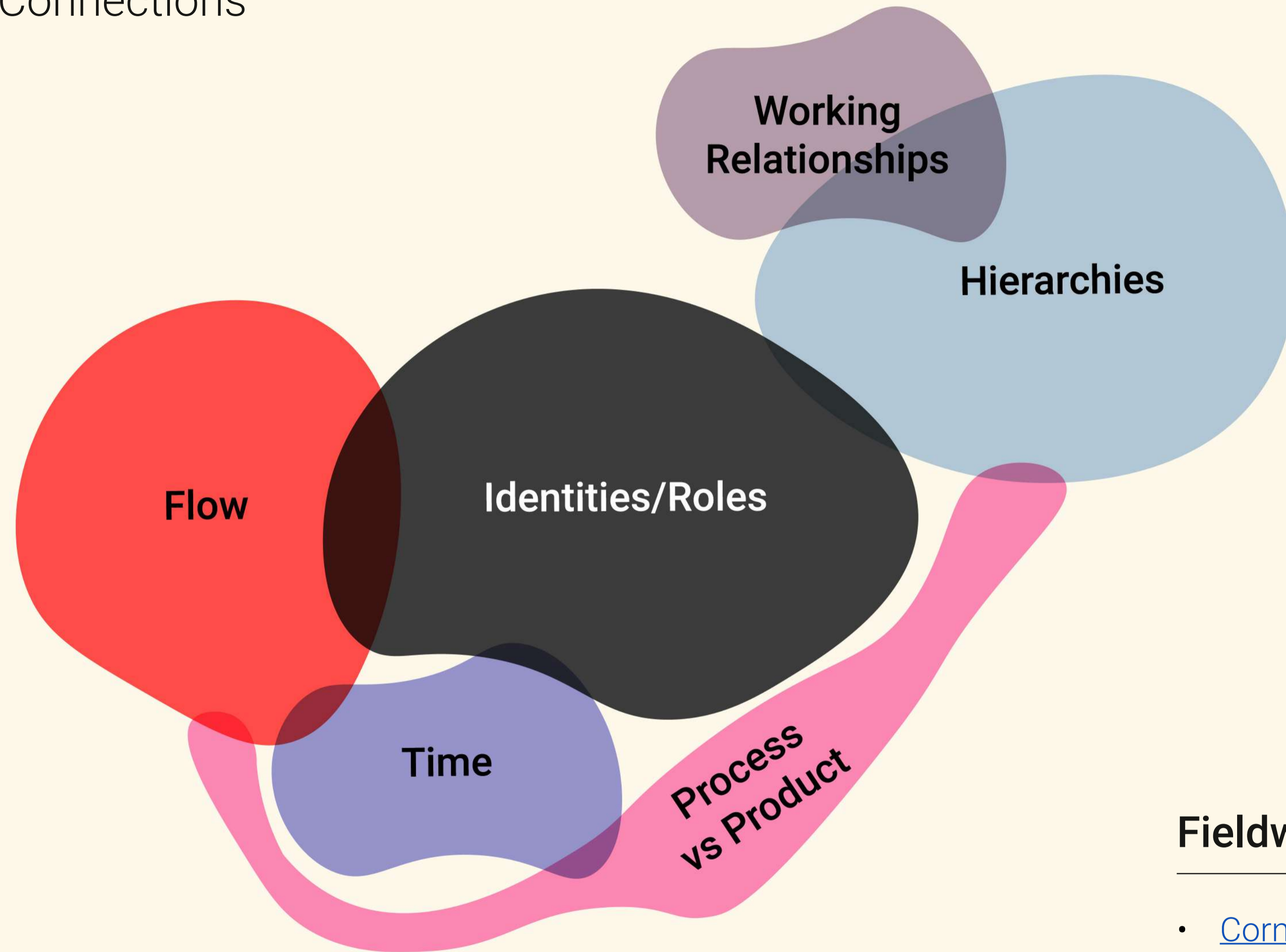
Hierarchies With reference to the Youth Board: “Why would you be interested in joining in when you haven’t really been part of deciding what it is?... we are often designing things with artists that participants would get involved in later on.” (staff member)

Time “Getting to a place of co-creation is actually a lot more complex than we had previously anticipated. It takes a long time.” (staff member)

Identities/Roles “I think [a] very low ego is required. As an artist, you know, it’s different working on participatory projects... It’s not about you.” (artist)

City of Women, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Themes & Connections



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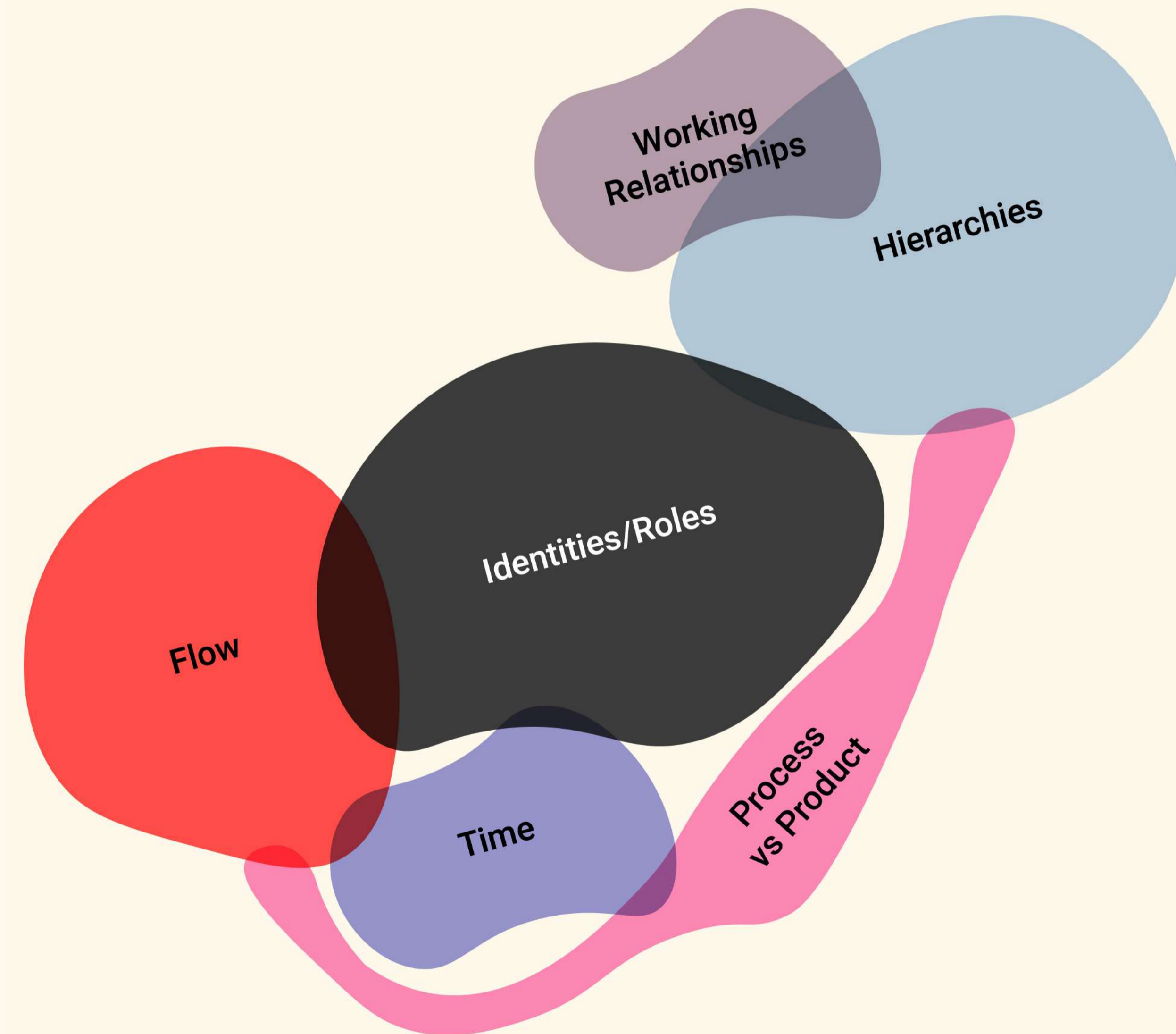
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Fieldworks

- [Corneous Stories](#) – Katja Kobolt (2020)
- [Everything is Alright](#) – Nataša Živković, Sara Šabec (2021)
- [Erased Gazes](#) – Selma Banich (2022)
- [Decoding Resilience](#) – SIDE Collective (2023)

City of Women, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Themes & Connections



Identities/Roles “Maybe you just have to set yourself some boundaries as to where you’re still autonomous and at what point you’re not, you’re just another piece in a big group.” (artist)

Hierarchies “For me the question of co-creation, the relations between the community and the artists has been a learning curve... it’s difficult, you know, when you [invite] an artist to enter, of course, you can’t just turn them into a mentor and say ‘okay, now, your artistic input is not important, only the group’s interest is important’. So I think this relation in co-creation is really fragile and something that we are very much still learning about.” (staff member)

Flow “what I’m experiencing is that this comes from a project logic... the biggest problem is that everything is conceived and structured around a project-based logic... It is very hard to have continuation, you know, accountability to the people that you work with in a project... we are just saying yes to very precarious, financial, social and personal situations because we need to reinvent this project over and over and over again. We are living in a culture of discontinuation.” (artist)

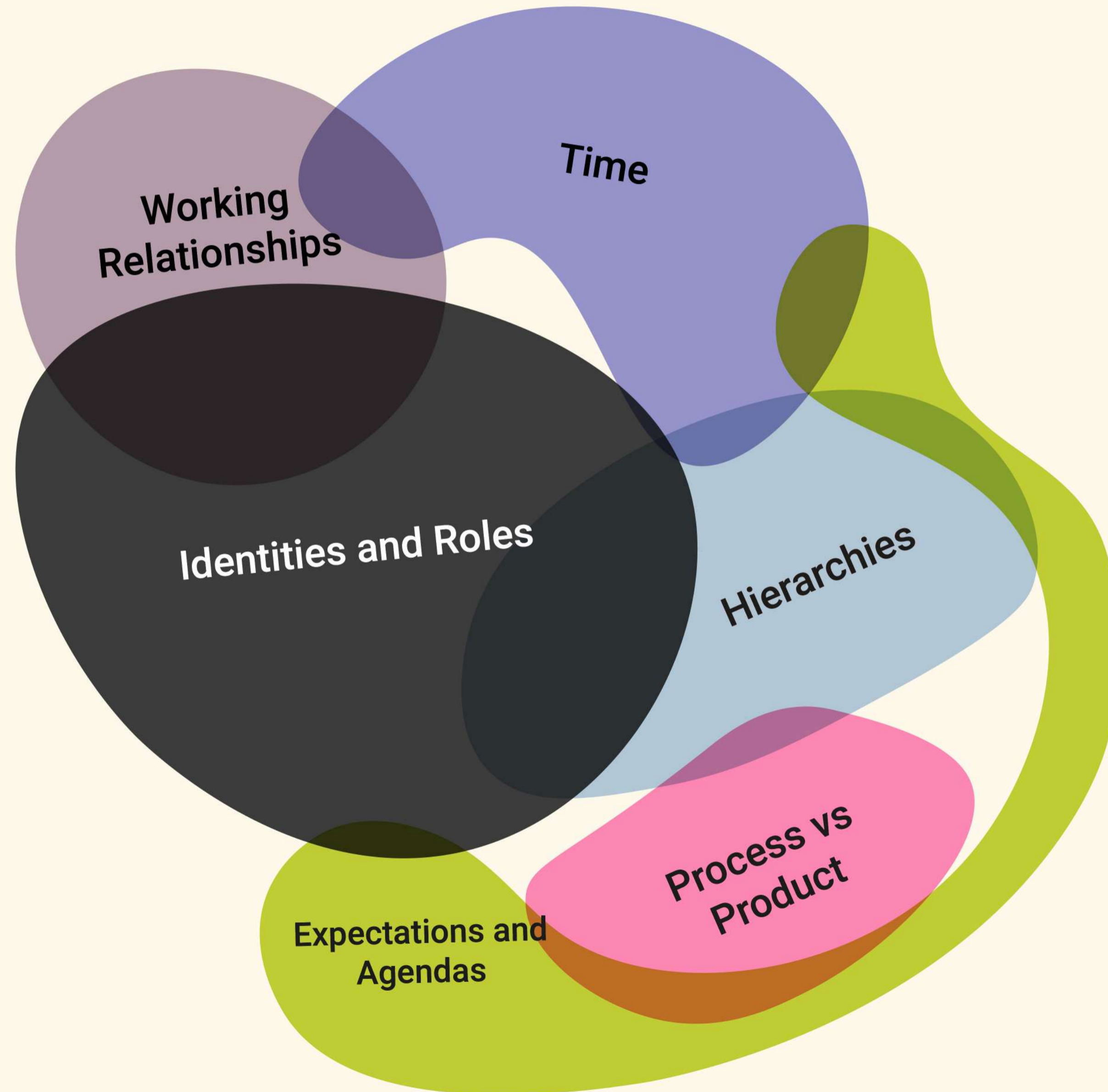
Process vs Product “On the one hand you don’t want it to be a waste of time, but on the other hand it’s nice if it’s a waste of time and you can afford to have this informal invitation to talk, to discuss, to invite others to participate, that it’s something non-committal and not necessarily goal-oriented...” (staff member)

Time “I think we’re always so stretched because these timelines are always so short.....every hour is precious, how are you going to invest it...everybody’s spread out between so many projects so that they can survive, and it’s all a result of too little production resources...” (staff member)

Working Relationships “As a team, we were too idealistic that you just put the people together and they’re all happy to work together and create these beautiful things, but everyone brings their own perspective, their own position... it’s a lot of balancing and discussing and also reflecting about how much autonomy does the artist keep within the process.” (staff member)

Cork Midsummer Festival, Cork, Ireland

Themes & Connections

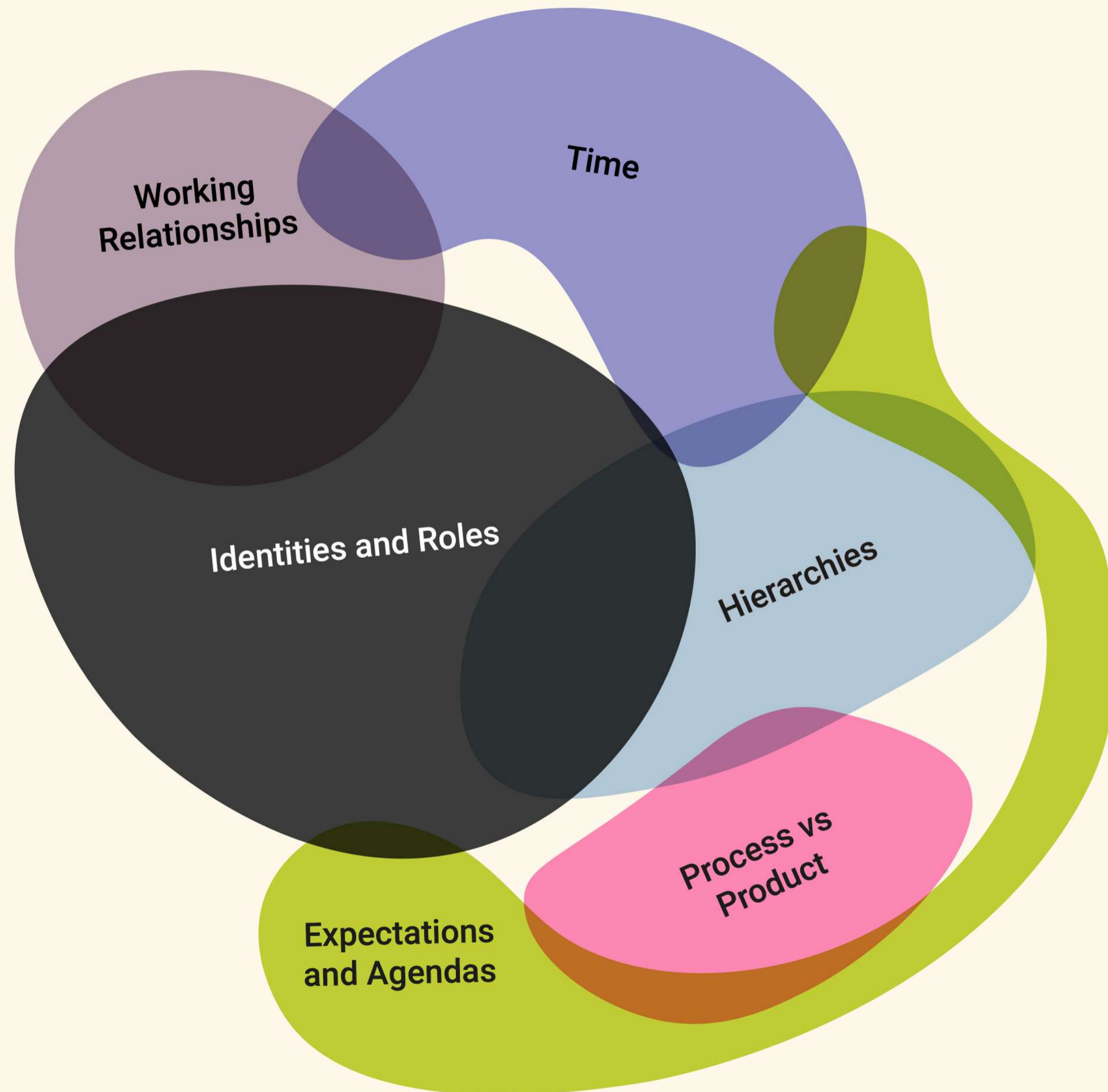


Fieldworks

- [Day-Crossing Farm](#) – Marie Brett. Produced with filmmaker Linda Curtin, composer Peter Power, and lighting designer Sarah Jane Shiels (2020-21)
- [Day of the Straws](#) – Marie Brett. Produced with original writings by Katie Holly and visual designer Lucia Pola (2020)
- Creative Enquiry residency with children from Traveller Families – Julie and Annie Forrester (2021)
- [Creative Enquiry residency](#) – Andrea Williams and Eszter Nemethi (2022)
- [To Be What We Are](#) – Eszter Némethi & Claire Murphy and young Traveller artists (2022-23)
- [Home Sweet Home](#) – Jody O’Neill and Al Bellamy with Suisha Inclusive Arts (11 neurodiverse theatre-makers), supported by critical friendship with Birds of Paradise (2022-23)
- [Fusion Avenue](#) – Youth-led Music Development with The Kabin Studios, Cork Migrant Centre, Kate Donachie (Battersea Beatbox Academy), Raphael Olympio, Andrea Williams, GMCBeats (2022-23)
- [Ode To Joy, in Irish Sign Language](#) – with Amanda Coogan and Dublin Theatre of the Deaf and Cork Community Deaf Choir (2022-23)

Cork Midsummer Festival, Cork, Ireland

Themes & Connections



Identities and Roles Referring to the group of children some artists have been working with, a project worker remarked that: “we’re kind of treating them as a generic group, because that’s the way we have to do our work, but they’re not. They’re all very, very different.” (project worker)

Time In relation to Assemblies and time to exchange with the group, a BE PART partner said: “I think it would be beneficial to have more of those opportunities, or just a kind of a forum to discuss these things a bit more. Everybody is so busy... everyone is so caught up on what they’re doing. It’s hard to kind of make space and time for it.” (staff member)

Hierarchies “It’s about making the space together... just allowing the space to kind of just be and do whatever, which sounds easy but in this case, it’s extremely difficult to hold because everyone seems to have such a clear idea of what these children should be or shouldn’t be or how they should behave or how and what they should think, and what they should be interested in.” (artist)

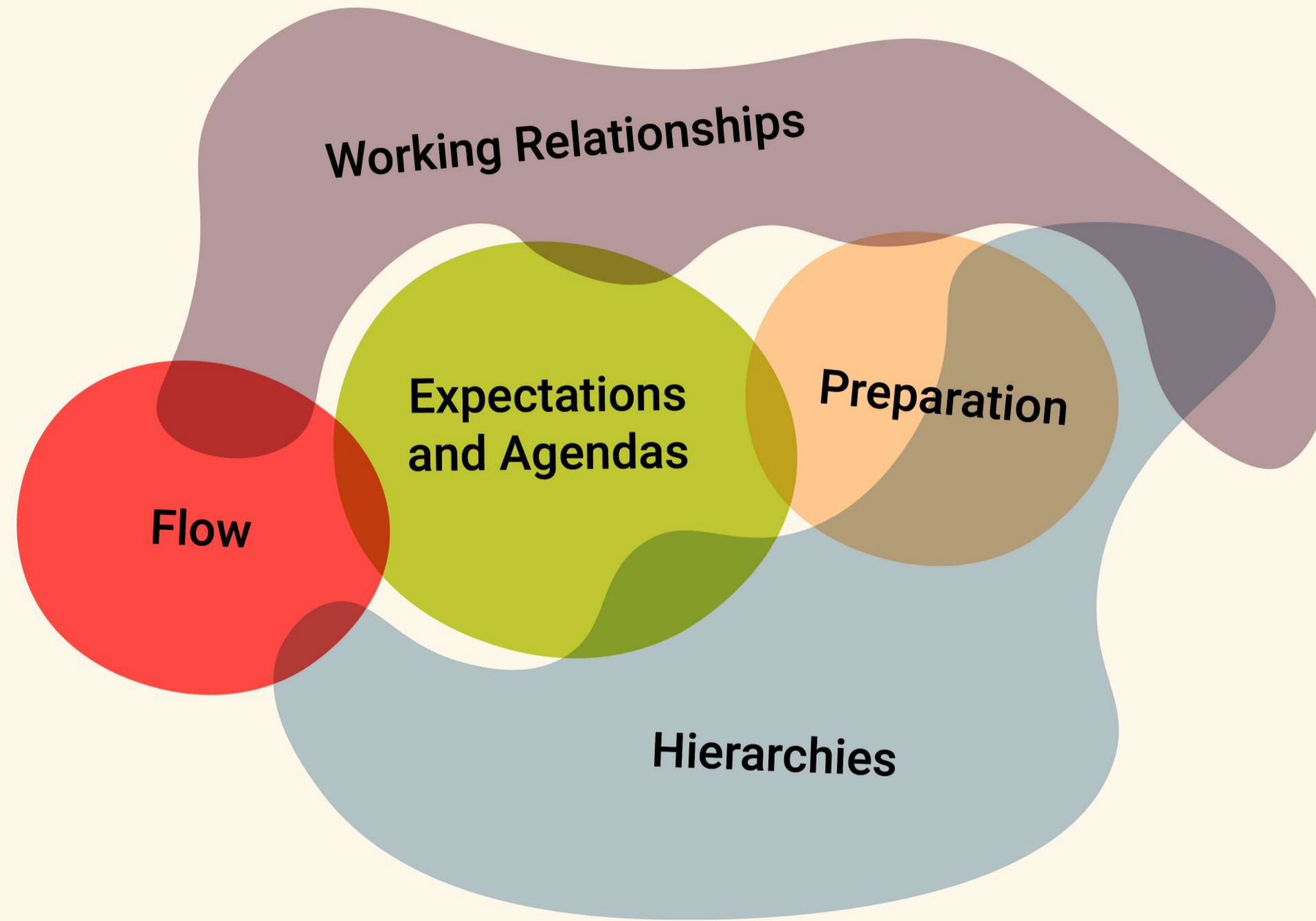
Process vs Product “I have a very playground building practice, in the sense that I tried to create structures. So then people can do whatever they want within the structures... I just do my part, and then see what happens... and remain present in it.” (artist)

Expectations and Agendas “How do we engage children in a way that’s respectful and, you know, puts them at the centre and ensures their participation is what they want, as opposed to us just ticking a box saying we’re engaging with traveller children...” (project worker)

Working Relationships “For us, it’s kind of a journey as well, to see how we can support the development of children without kind of prescribing it. So it’s a bit more open, and they have agency over how the group operates. For us, it’s definitely a learning journey.” (staff member)

Festival de Marseille, Marseille, France

Themes & Connections



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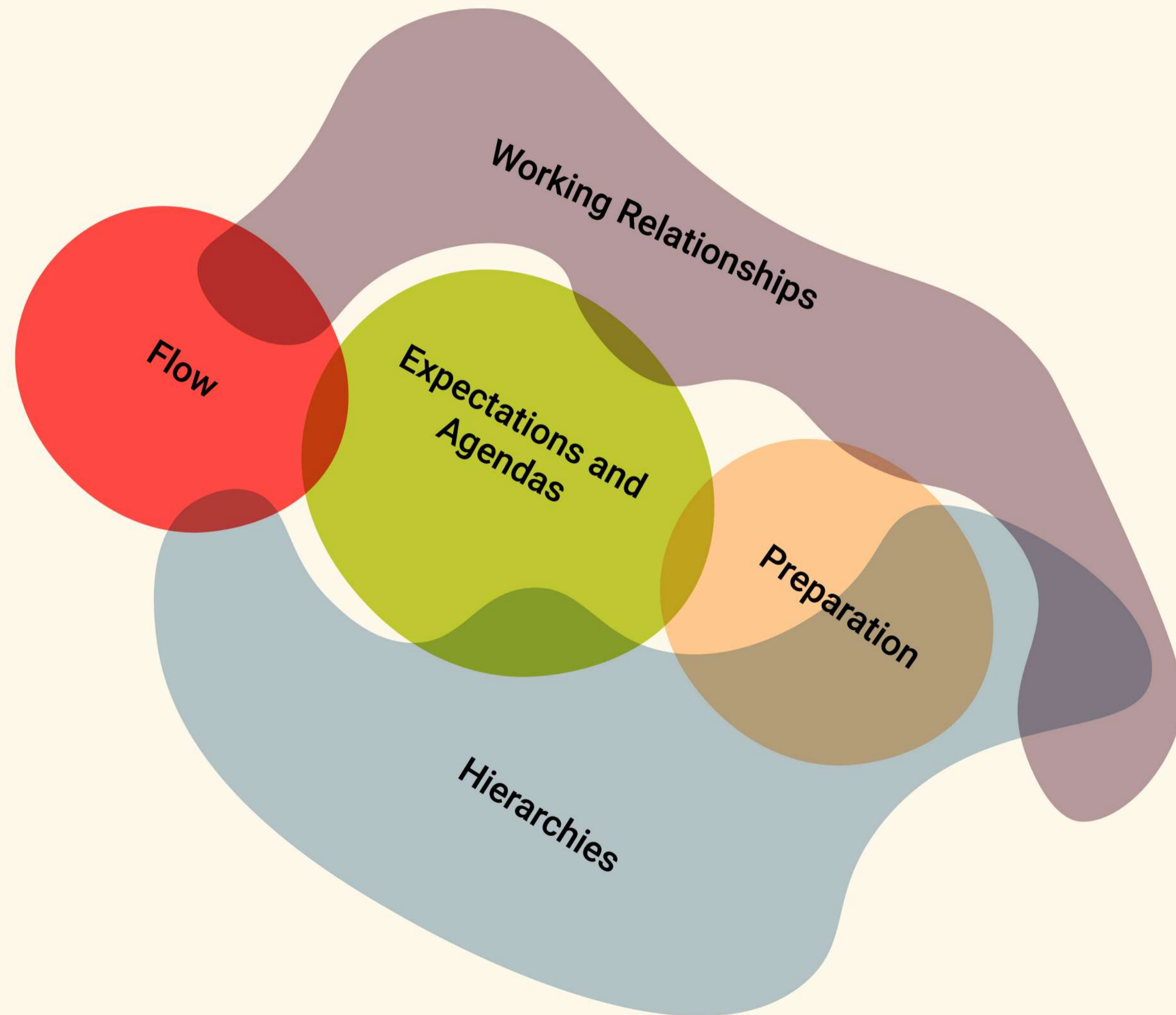
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Fieldworks

- [Moun Fou](#) – Rara Woulib (2019-2020)
- [Rope](#) – Ief Spincemaille and more than 500 inhabitants of Marseille (2021-ongoing)
- [Parade](#) – Andrew Graham and L'Autre maison (2021-22)
- [PARADES & DÉSOBÉISSANCES](#) – Aina Alegre and 80 people from Marseille (2022-23)

Festival de Marseille, Marseille, France

Themes & Connections



Hierarchies “the technical director is legally responsible for the security... We have to think of everything... co-creation is something which could be very simple... with no contracts, no obligations... but we have legal obligations... very often my priority is to co-create, co-create, co-create and my colleague’s priority, is no, it has to be legal...”
(staff member)

Working Relationships “For me, with friends, with lovers, I feel like it’s so easy to end up alone, and to have short term relationships with people. As soon as there is a long term relationship, that can be built, it’s a difficult thing. I think this is part of how we practice our day-to-day life. Maybe that’s why I’m struggling with this project on the long-term... how to pursue a long term relationship, with all the problems that it comes with, you know, this is what is really painful at the moment.” (artist)

Expectations/agendas “For the artist, I think it was a bit difficult to let go. And to let people use [the project in a way] he wasn’t planning... so we needed a bit of time, it took time to make him let go of his baby and let people here use it the way they wanted to...”
(staff member)

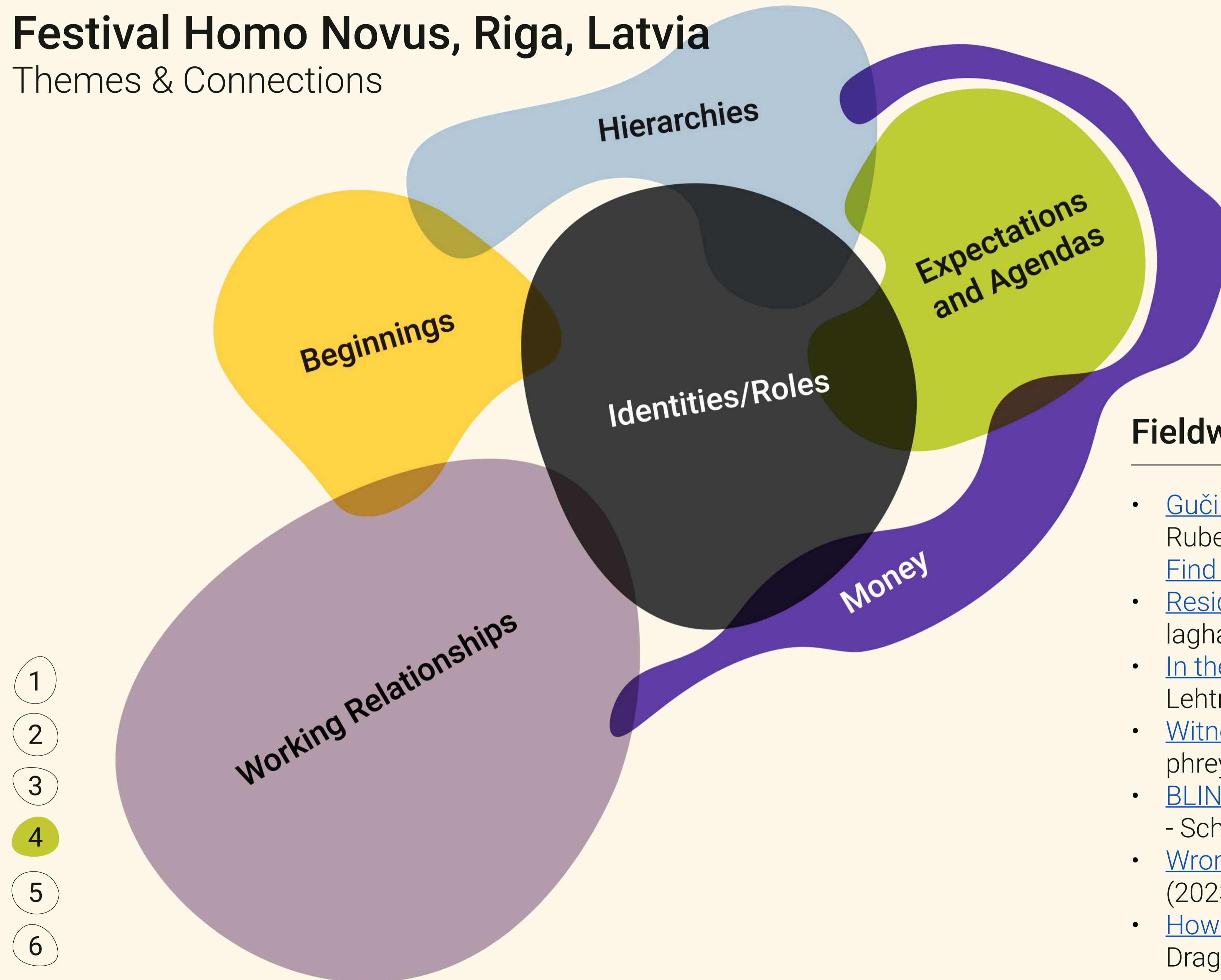
Flow “What’s interesting is that it creates shared responsibility. The responsibility of protecting it is passed on. It’s pretty nice that this role is taken on by people other than us.”
(staff member)

Preparation “With our volunteers, if the project doesn’t fit with them, they won’t be there on the day and they’re not going to help us build it, so it was super important that they had confidence in it... rather than imposing a vision, it was a little tricky, we had to both give them leads while at the same time not give them the answers. It was important that they had their own words and their own idea[s].” (staff member)

Process vs Product “If we arrive with too many expectations, it becomes difficult to create something authentic. It becomes difficult to welcome the magic that comes into the [dance] studio, to welcome the proposals of the dancers... there is also an expectation on my part to want to have a lot of results, to want to change how audiences meet and change our vision of who is legitimate to be represented on the cultural scene.” (artist)

Festival Homo Novus, Riga, Latvia

Themes & Connections



Fieldworks

- [Guči fabrika](#) – Cote Jaña Zuñiga, Anta Pole, Marta Rubene, Klinta Šinta (2021, 2022, 2023)
[Find out more](#)
- [Residency in Aizpute, Western Latvia](#) – Neil Callaghan, Simone Kenyon and Linda Krumina (2021)
- [In the Name of Love](#) – Katrīna Dūka and Barbara Lehtna (2021)
- [Witness Stand](#) – Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey (2021)
- [BLIND DATES Riga meets Bremen \(and vice versa\)](#) - Schwankhalle (2022)
- [Wrong Families](#) – Gob Squad Festival School (2023)
- [How deep is your love?](#) – Queereoke and Baltic Drag King Collective (2023)

Festival Homo Novus, Riga, Latvia

Themes & Connections



Working Relationships "it's okay that things end sometimes... this thing happened and we had a nice evening afterwards and that's that, could also be enough... I do feel a responsibility... I also feel this desire to return but I don't know under what terms or circumstances ... it feels like a connection has been made. That's partly personal relationships and friendships... these little connections, which felt like they could just wither or be kept alive or be strengthened even." (artist)

Identities/Roles "In every collective there are different roles. For example, if one works more to the outside and one works more at the sewing machine it still means we can be equal... different people do different jobs for example." (participant)

Expectations and Agendas "I was a bit overwhelmed at times with the different frameworks that were there... wondering which am I loyal to in my artistic hat, the BE PART funding, Homo Novus Festival, the people here and what their expectations are... just feeling pulled in all these different directions..." (artist)

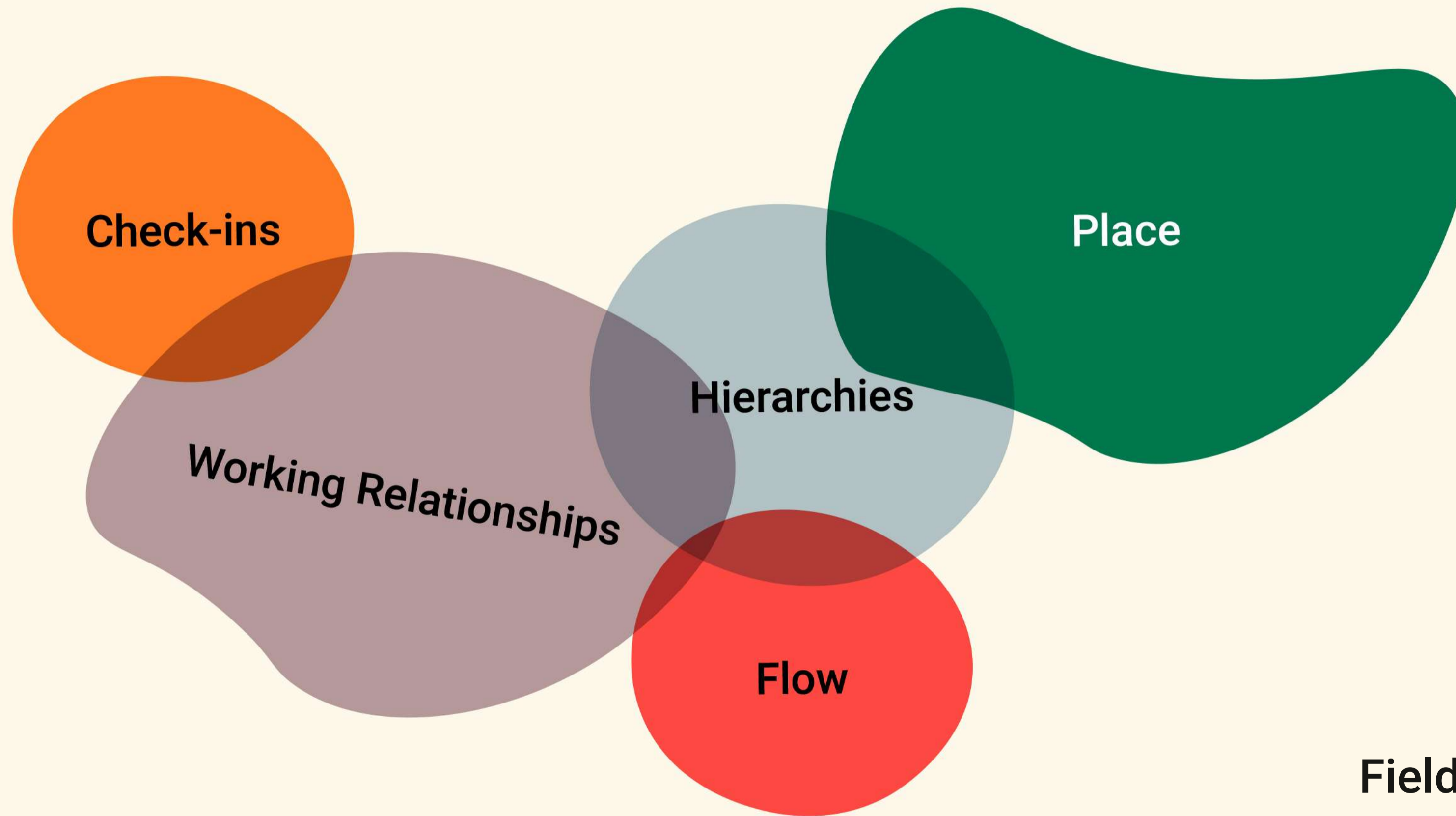
Hierarchies "I was thinking that the goal is, you are an artist and we're just a community... it's how I felt because I didn't feel like an artist... I'm just doing my job... maybe in a few years I will feel like an artist." (participant)

Money "When we talk about BE PART affecting our governance structure, I would say no... However, I know that me coming into this position has affected our governance structure... I financially restructured immediately, so that everyone gets paid exactly the same... if we're all going to get paid terribly we might as well all get paid terribly the same..." (staff member)

Beginnings Referring to their two month residency: "this amount of time can only be a preface to a project...we've operated in a way that artists often work where you come in, you curate, you shape and you're left and trusted to shape a project... Alright, we've made this thing now with the people around the table who were involved in it. But what could the next phase be? It doesn't feel like a collaboration at all, it was just a way of meeting people and showing them the possibilities of something." (artist)

L'Art Rue, Tunis, Tunisia

Themes & Connections



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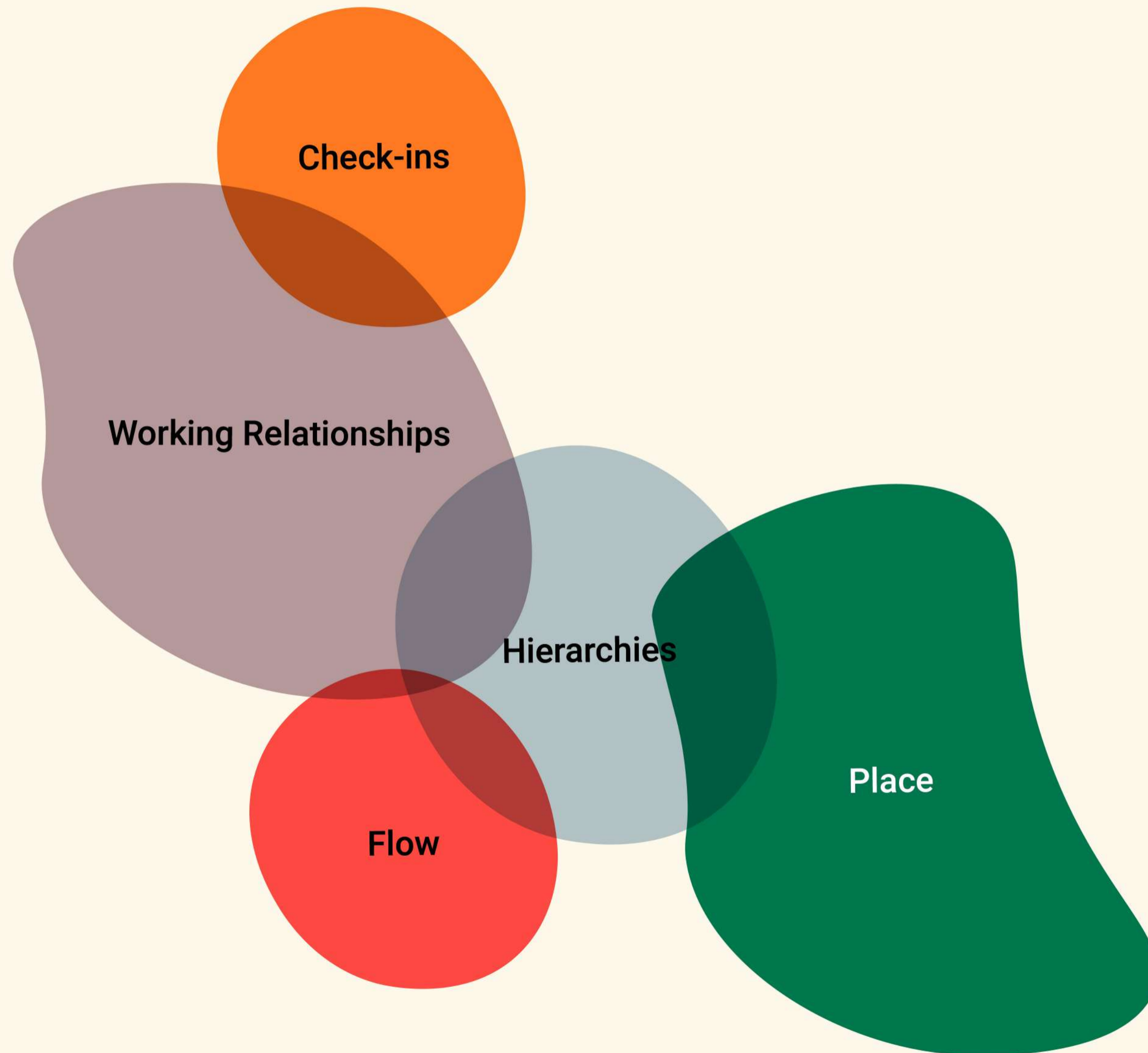
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Fieldworks

- [Cypher](#) – Ridha Tlili (2020-22)
- [A Pact with Waters](#) – Commoning with Sejoumi - Maria Lucia Cruz Correia/Natural Contract Lab (2021-23)
- [Lines](#) – Andrew Graham (2022-23)

L'Art Rue, Tunis, Tunisia

Themes & Connections



Working Relationships “We’re bringing a project onto a territory where there isn’t necessarily any common ground consistent enough to build on. That’s why mediation is very important and why... you have to really involve the community, or more or less the people you want to involve, so that they are really the bearers of the project...to really be the decision-makers, to be heard, to be aware...” (staff member)

Place L’Art Rue is located in the middle of the Tunisian Medina: “the practices that are done in the L’Art Rue are very removed. There is a certain distance, I wouldn’t necessarily say physical, but a certain distance with the reality of the context, even though the organization has tried many times to break and deconstruct this distance. Each time, I have the impression that L’Art Rue is in a bubble and the rest of the medina is in another bubble. Even the artistic practices and the projects that are implemented in the medina are not really connected with the real problems of the medina.” (staff member)

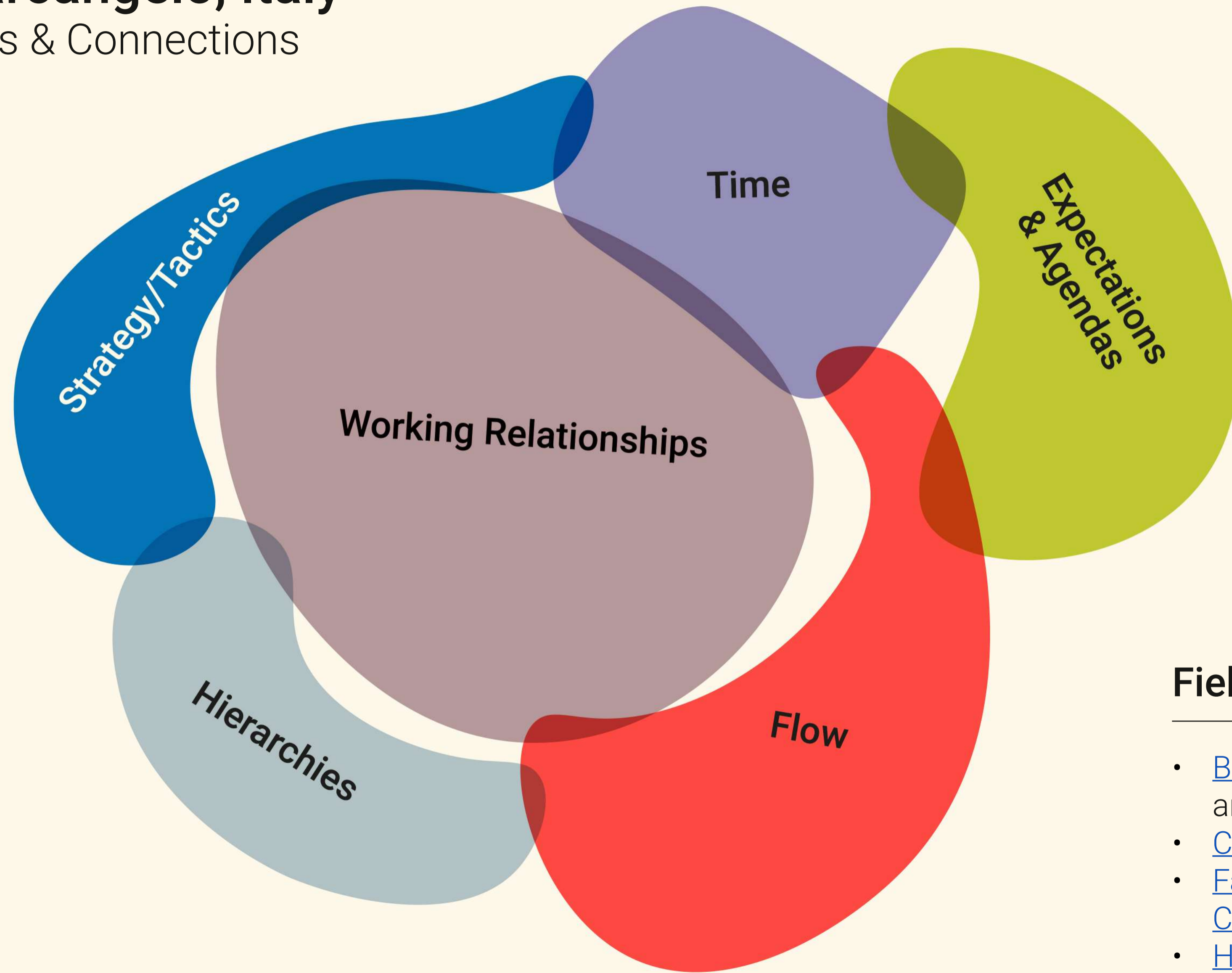
Hierarchies “I would say that it’s a bit surprising when you know that it’s a project on co-creation and participation, I think the fees for the collaborators are quite low, especially compared to the artists’ fees... for example, one fieldwork, a filmmaker is doing a dance performance with five young break dancers... and they have very little compensation for their work.” (staff member)

Flow “There’s always this dynamic in general at work and in institutions, there is this rhythm and this race within the institution. It’s a rhythm that imposes itself on you and that is sometimes oppressive. The institution imposes its rhythm, its temporality, its way of doing things. Sometimes I realise that it’s good to do things, to do things well, to try to do things, but it’s also good to have some time to step back and think about what you’re doing.” (staff member)

Check-ins “The question of mediation is very important. It’s not just communication, it’s really mediation, taking the time to develop, to meet, to listen to the people from the place, listen to its desires, its needs.” (staff member)

Santarcangelo dei Teatri, Santarcangelo, Italy

Themes & Connections



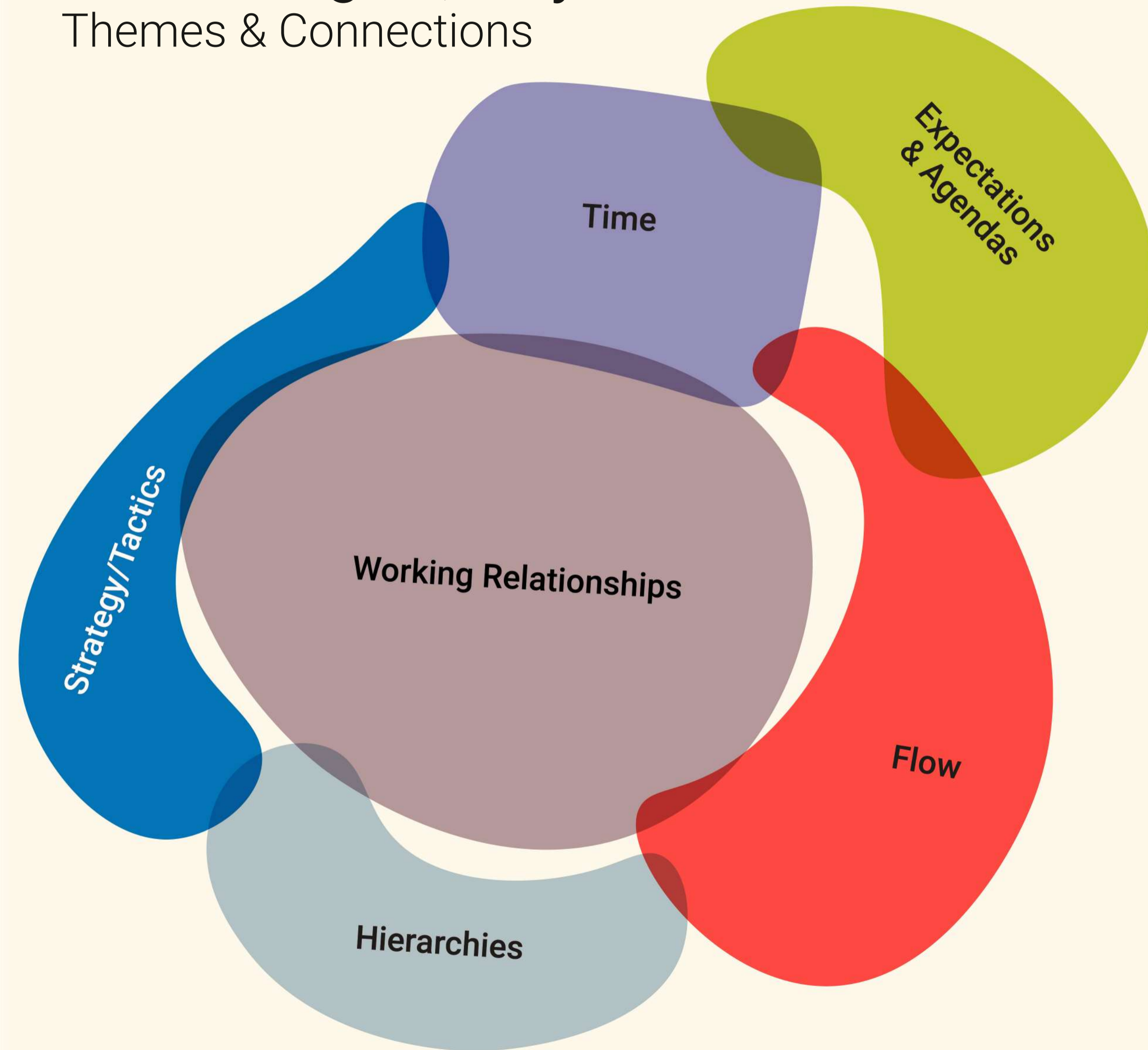
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Fieldworks

- [Be water, my friends](#) – Mara Oscar Cassiani (2020 and 2021)
- [Catalog 2020](#), [Catalog 2021](#)
- [Family Affair Santarcangelo](#) – Zimmerfrei (2020) [Catalog 2020](#)
- [How to be together](#) (2021)
- [New Creation](#) – Anna Karasinska (2022)

Santarcangelo dei Teatri, Santarcangelo, Italy

Themes & Connections



Working Relationships "We need to work together more in order to crisscross and not to feel the loneliness of what we do even though it's specific to our territory." (staff member)

Expectations and Agendas "Our approach was always coming from artists... now we're trying to involve communities as co-creators... we've always done this type of work/research, including the communities from the territory... it's also really interesting to see how different institutions throughout Europe work. [BE PART] has changed how we work... it really starts from the territory, coming from the community. And that's the main focus of the project." (staff member)

Flow "I think our project is more of a flow of ideas. So it just evolves over time. And specifically in the moments we meet everybody, physically. ... And it is really cool because it happens exactly during the performance time. Like we have a lot of things that we didn't expect to happen, because everybody was feeling like it. So I think it can exist only in that precise moment with the specific people that take part in this project." (artist)

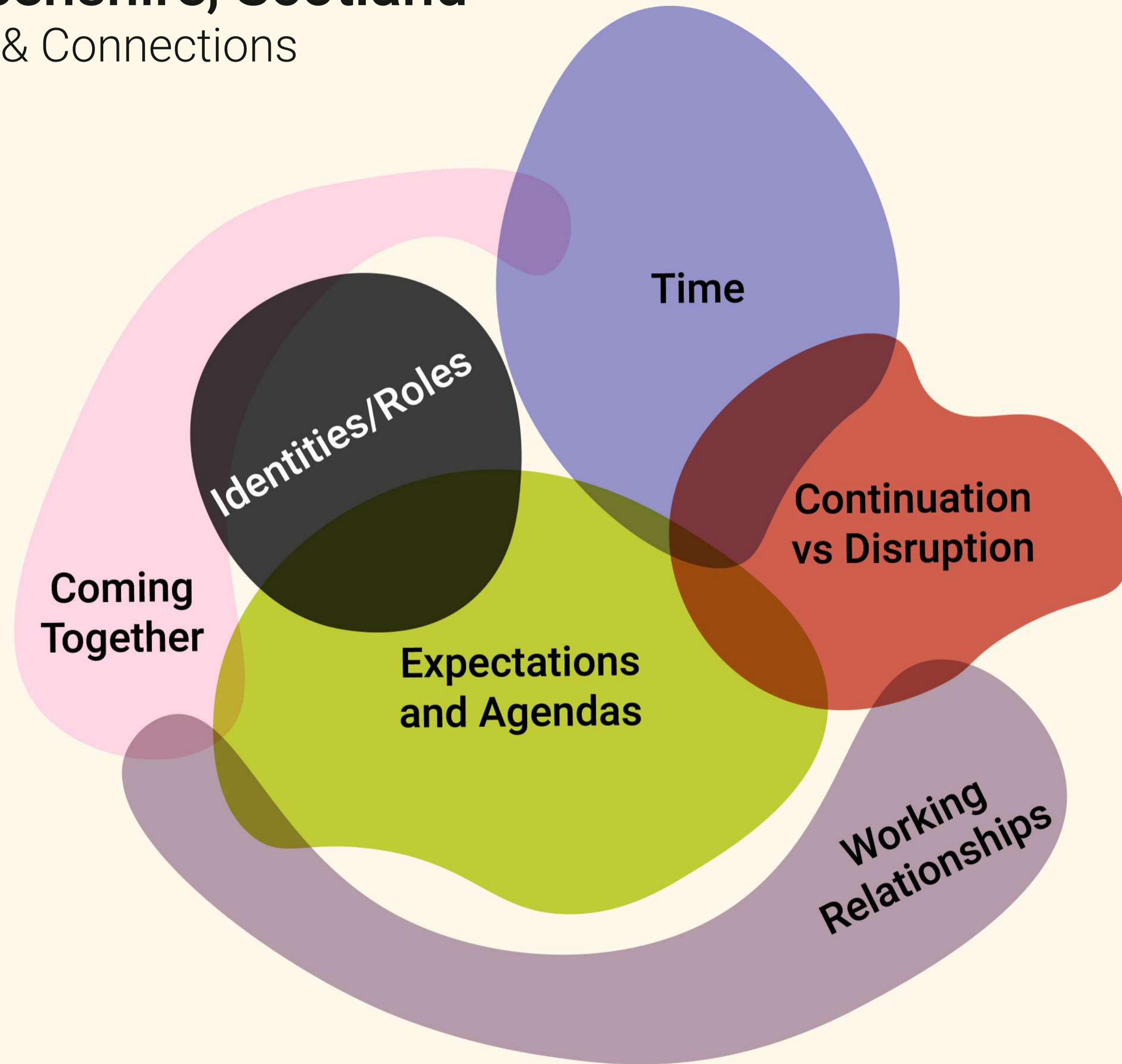
Hierarchies "During the period of the festival, we were not in the organisation group, we were a part that was managed by other people. We wanted to do some things in our performance after the festival during the night. But it was not possible sometimes because of restrictions or people from the organisation that were so cautious of being respectful to those [COVID-19] guidelines." (artist)

Strategy/Tactics "There is a massive shift in the system in general to move from project to people. In the future, I have the same feeling about how this can grow within BE PART and also facilitating exchange." (staff member)

Time "I bring back in this idea that you can fail, there is nothing bad there, nobody's gonna die if their time is wasted. We shouldn't be so attached to the monetization of time just because we are paid based on hours..." (staff member)

Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Lumsden, Aberdeenshire, Scotland

Themes & Connections



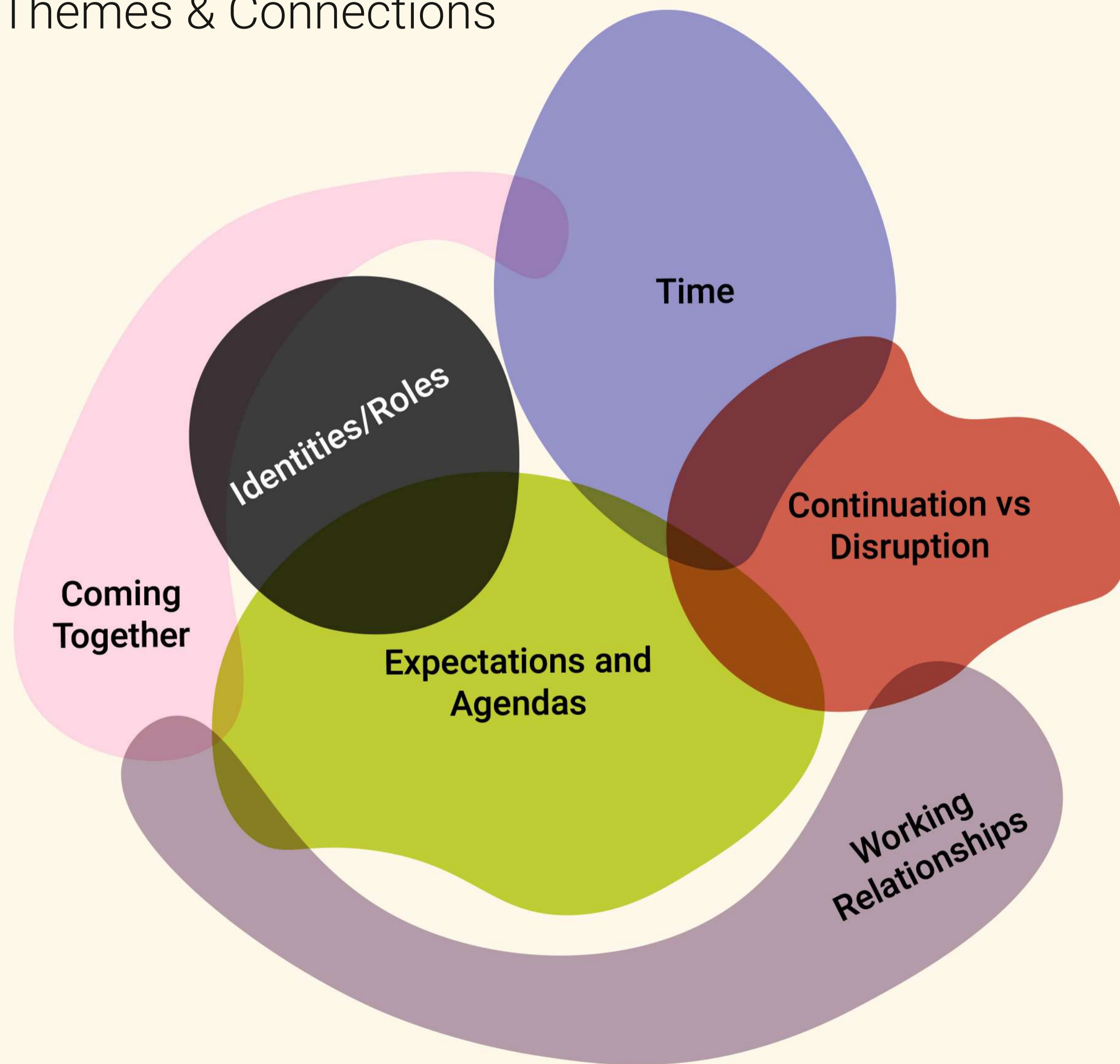
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Fieldworks

- [That's Governance](#) – Gordon Douglas (2020)
- [Devising Governance](#) – Jack Ky Tan (2022)
- [The Rural School of Economics](#) – Myvillages (2020-23)
- [Lumbungsden programme](#) – facilitated by Mara Lewis (December 2022- December 2023)
- [Building the Clay Commons](#) – Eva Masterman (2023)

Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Lumsden, Aberdeenshire, Scotland

Themes & Connections



Expectations and Agendas “[if] you set up a community or community space, you have to be clear that you’re not social workers because they are completely needs led... I think that sometimes it’s good to be honest about it, where your capacity or your competence stops... it will be quite a decision to be completely needs led, it could be done.” (artist)

Time “Interpersonal relationships take a lot of time... like working with people, and how you speak with people, not just feeling that you’re fobbing things off and saying it will come later, things will come later.” (staff member)

Coming Together Referring to developing the new community makers space: “we had this great tension about [if there] should there be an exhibition. It was so good, because everyone had an opinion. It was quite a heavy, heavy discussion, it was loaded. It was good to make it transparent that there is conflict in desire, and who’s going to make a decision?” (artist)

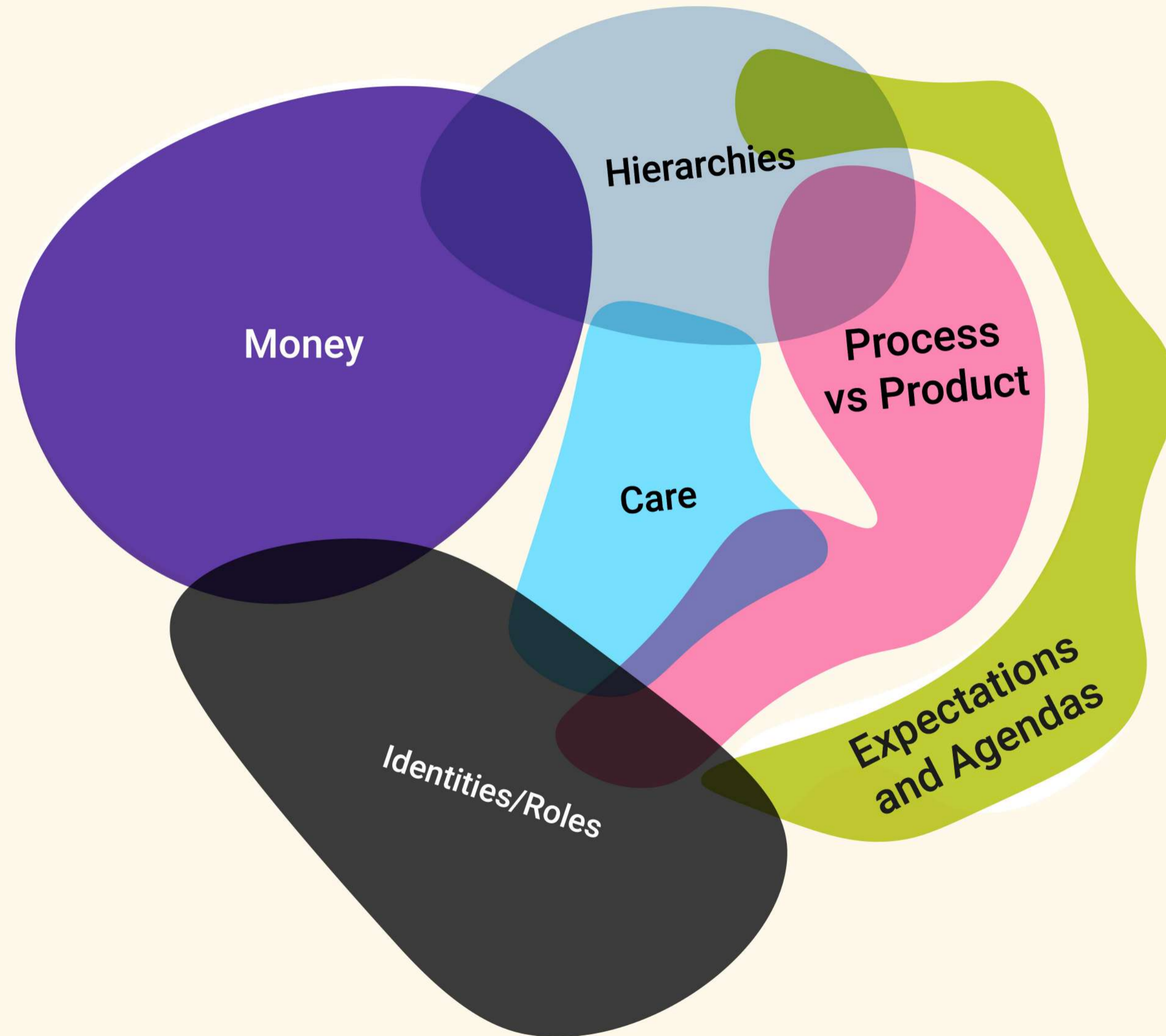
Working Relationships “it was a time of shifting sands, COVID, our capital bid, it’s been a big crunch... it’s the relationship that communities have with arts organisations during that time, and the relationship that artists have with communities over that time. I think a lot of people were really abandoned. It blurred the line of where the role of the art is... we shifted and started doing mutual aid and supporting and getting leaflets out for a couple of weeks... But we could see quite quickly on the ground – it was good to be on the ground – but we also realised the depths of our capacities very quickly...” (staff member)

Continuation vs Disruption “what changed through [BE PART] is moving from a project headspace to a long term structure that we’re able to work with... having this community making space that’s a constant, and working with people on an ongoing capacity... We knew we needed a long term way to shift the model, to allow us to do that because the funding model was based on project funding... It was through talking with [the artist] about her ideas of de-projecting that we’re looking to do this.” (staff member)

Identities/Roles “You want to give freedom to the artists and the people you’re working with... but the project has to be managed... where does the organisation step back, and the administration stop [to let the] creation carry on?” (staff member)

Urb Festival, Helsinki, Finland

Themes & Connections



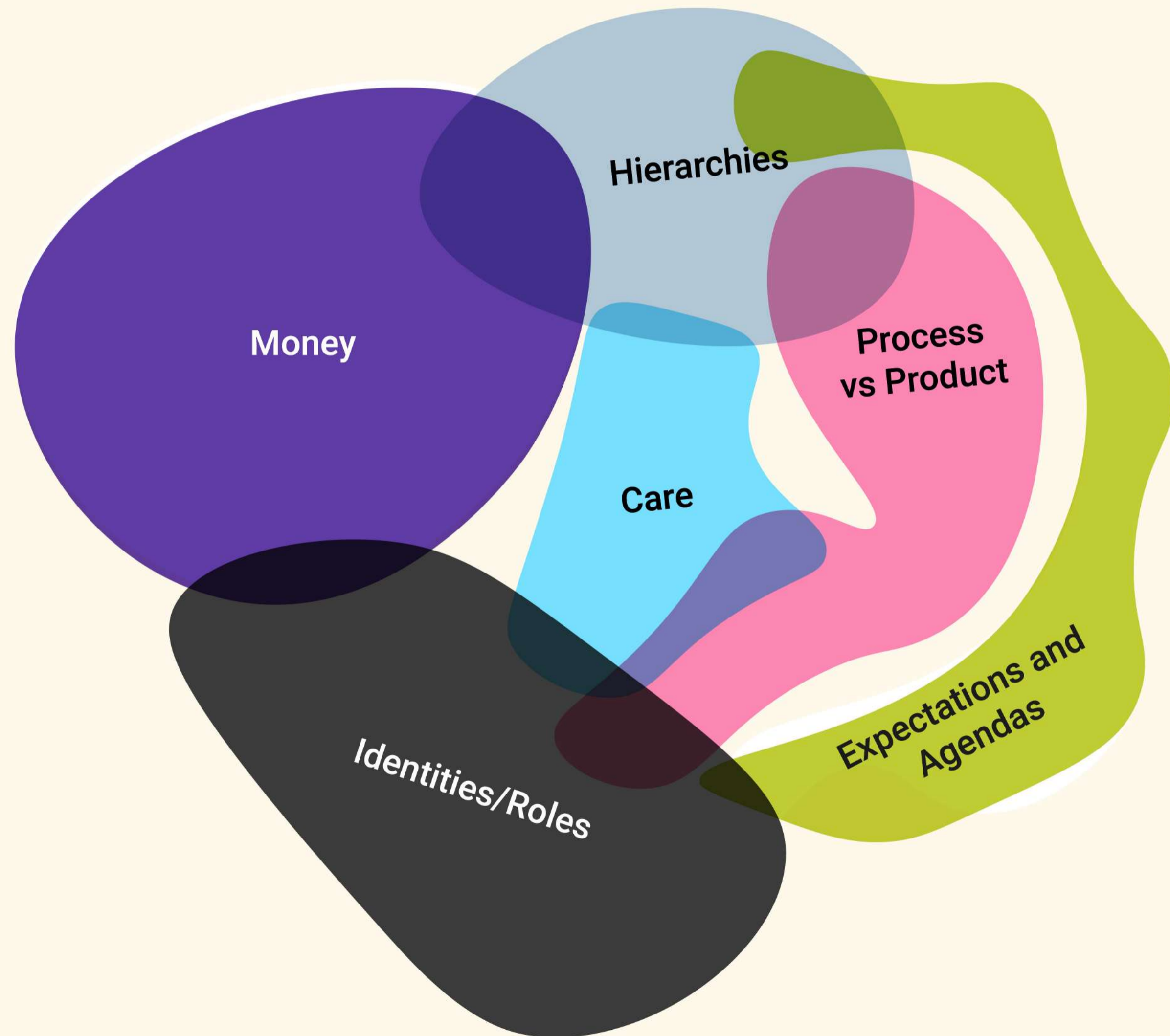
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Fieldworks

- [Loisto Settlement](#) (2020)
- Young Curators (2020)
- Crossover online performance – Ben Fury & dancers (2020)
- [Queer A.I.](#) – Aku Meriläinen, Jyrki Pylväs, Maria Oiva (2021)
- [X•over](#) – Ben Fury, Jeffrey Kam, Hozan Omar, Siiri Korkeamäki, Selma Kauppinen, Andrii Gregul, Joonas Pehrsson, Janne-Kalewi, Sara Hirn (2021)
- [Nordic Hip Hop to the Stage](#) – Art Move Concept, Otto Björkman, Hamis Ahmed, Siiri Korkeamäki, Sathie, Bboy Monk, Fredmar Lopez, Aly Bardan, Arian, Kien Le, Maxim a.k.a. Jerry Metal, Mika Haaranen, Tero Saarinen Company (2022)
[Find out more](#), and [more about residences](#)
- [Kairos](#) – Alexandra Mitiku/Kihwa-Endale, Sophia Mitiku & Karoliina Kasurinen, Saban Ramadani, Landys Roimola, Melissa Linsa, Haliz Yosef, Ataa agency, Ramona Panula, Ajak Majok, Magdalena Sofia, Skábma Idja (2022)
- [Orient Express Yourself](#) – Dafna Maimon (2022)
- [SPACE/HERITAGE](#) – Ben Fury, Jeffrey Kam, Joonas Pehrsson, Mia Jalerva, Sanna Nazimov, Ella Sinervo, Andrii Gregul, Taru Koski, Sara Hirn (2023)

Urb Festival, Helsinki, Finland

Themes & Connections



Money As a salaried arts manager “you grow into that mindset that your only job is to open the doors for people. [Young artists] come to the institution [with] their own projects [and] your job is to engage [with] that project and give it the resources from the institutional place where you’re working, that’s your job.” (staff member)

Identities/Roles “[For] the younger generation it’s more natural to not always be on top of things... it doesn’t mean that you don’t know what you’re doing...quite the opposite, you kind of wait for the magic to happen... with us older people or my generation, they think that professionalism is that you pre-plan everything...you save money, and you’re effective... the two generations are kind of negotiating what actually is professionalism.” (staff member)

Process vs Product “I think this is the richness of the co-creation, that you can kind of be open to things... if the process is good and amazing or something, then you have already succeeded, even if the final outcome of it wasn’t so amazing...” (staff member)

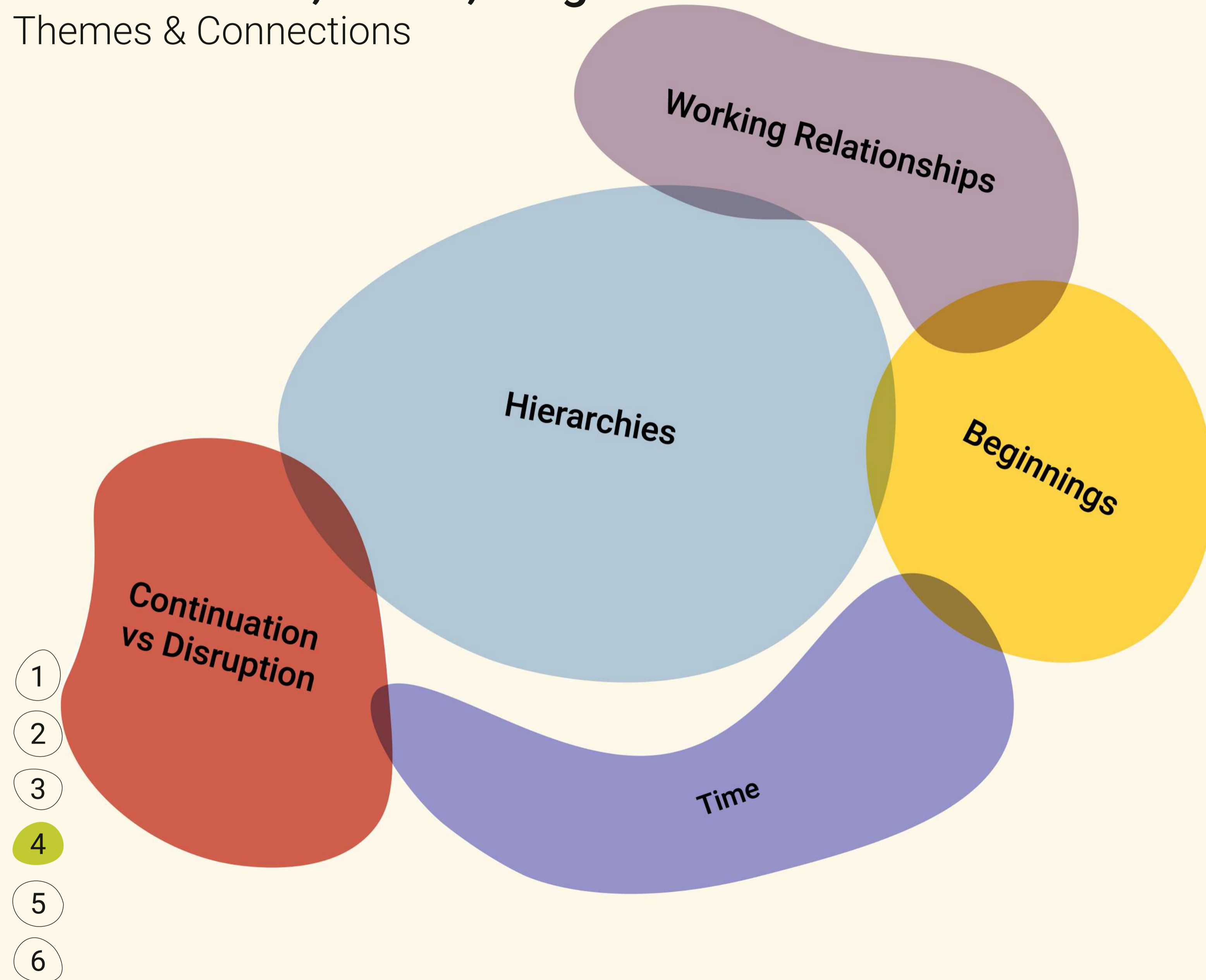
Hierarchies “[There is a need for] the kind of collaboration to support people with different levels of experience, and the need for safe spaces to ask questions, and room for wondering how things work.” (staff member)

Care “[It’s about] taking care of each other throughout the process, when we recognise that someone is having different pressures... be somehow mindful about how we communicate our frustrations, and how we take on other people’s frustrations... trusting that everyone’s doing their best as well and that we all have different thresholds of how much we have to give and how much we’re taking on.” (artist)

Expectations and Agendas Referring to a project where another organisation wasn’t very understanding of the needs of the group: “[From] the very beginning, the atmosphere was already created, through fear, that you need to be afraid of making mistakes, which is ... blocking you from succeeding...you are looked down [on]... you are afraid of asking even the smallest question because it’s seen as a mistake, or unprofessional.” (artist)

VIERNULVIER, Ghent, Belgium

Themes & Connections

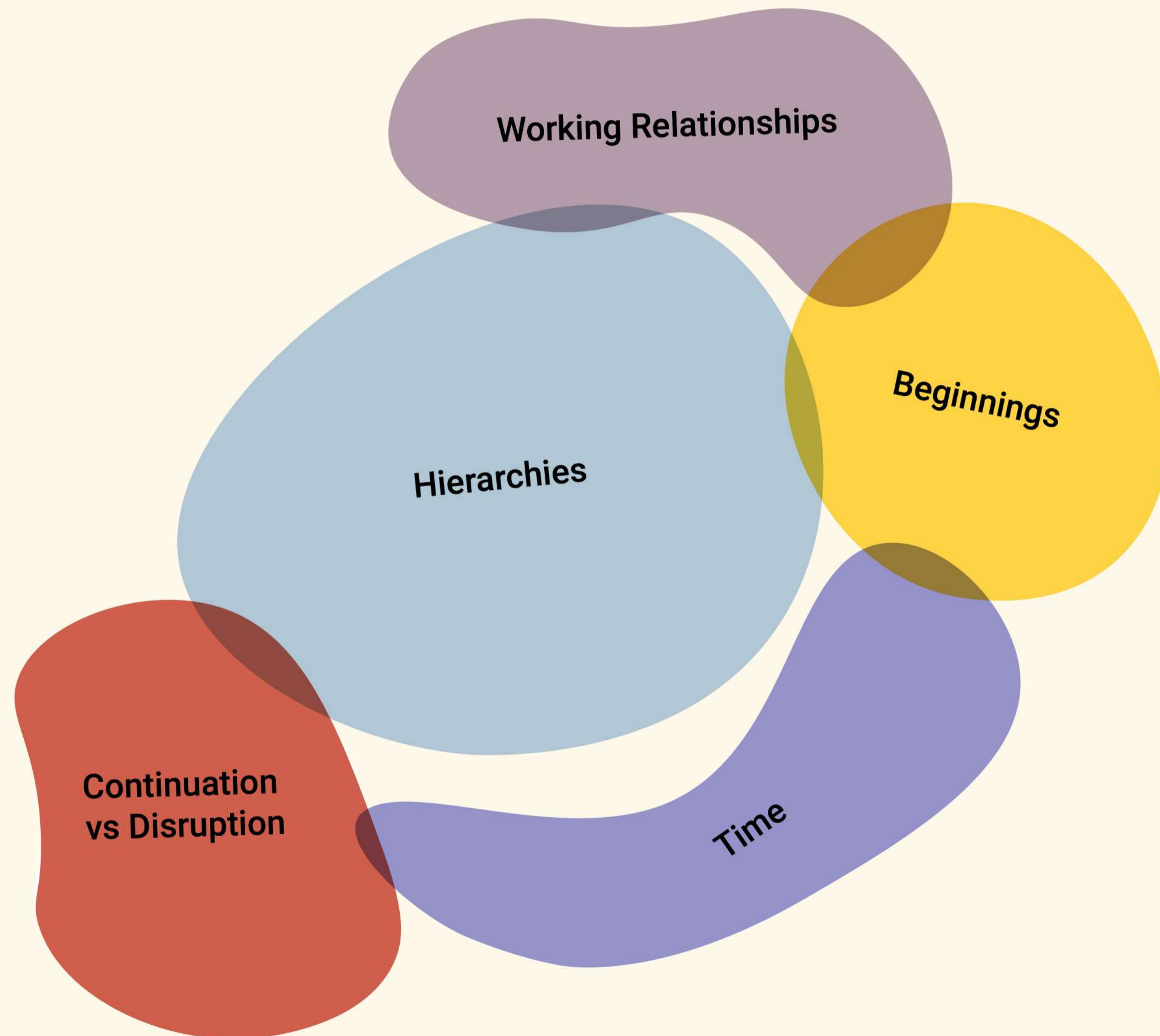


Fieldworks

- [ATLAS](#) (2020-2023)
- STADSATELIER CITY RESIDENCIES (2019-2023)
- Vincen Beeckman: Splendid!
- Samah Hijawi & Mirna Bamieh: Kitchen.Table
- Robin van Besien / The Post Collective: On Recreation
- Collectief Elan.D & Manoeuvre: I think we need to talk
- Par Hasard & Manoeuvre & Villa Voortman: Zet u
- Simon Allemeersch: Rabot II
- Maarten De Vrieze: Desire Lines
- Rita Hoofwijk: Without / You Me Us
- Leentje Vandenbussche: #Tastoe
- Maria Lucia Cruz Correia: K institute
- Rest for the Wicked: Failure
- BEBE BOOKS: The Off Temple
- Bodies of Knowledge: [Bodies of knowledge learning days](#) (2023)
- Elly Van Eeghem: [Publiek Plan Gent N°1](#)
- Fiona Hallinan: Ultimology (Mapping Death: A Tablecloth)

VIERNULVIER, Ghent, Belgium

Themes & Connections



Hierarchies Two artists discuss their roles in the process of working with others: “how do you combine the slowness with the driving position? For me, there’s a paradox there, because you want to be slow, but you are in the position of the person who initiates the action, actually.” “Yeah, I may initiate it, or I ‘infect’ others with my desire to do something... Most of all, I try to instil the desire to do it.” (artists)

Beginnings “I think that says a lot about the nature of many projects: you know you have to do it, you know how it will look, but you don’t fully understand why, and you want to give it the time and attention to understand it.” (artist)

Continuation vs Disruption “we support [the arts organisation Manoeuvre]. Of course, they have their own organisation... we haven’t commissioned that. It’s just like, this is the way I work. I don’t commission anything. It’s more like people do their work and we support it.” (staff member)

Working Relationships “I constantly feel the tension between wanting to have that care and mildness and at the same time wanting to just do things and make things... It’s something I experience frequently in my life. How hard and how soft can you be? Toward colleagues as well as artists... toward myself.” (staff member)

Time “I suppose that’s part of the challenge of making something truly participatory. It’s like, to really participate I think you need the time to really participate. You really need to understand what your role is, what your power is. So yeah, sometimes I was at these meetings, but I was not totally sure why I was there or if I should be there.” (artist)

In this section we focus on key themes that have emerged from the data that refers to both the micro level (Fieldworks) and meso level (organisations). We have clustered the themes into three subsections:

4.2.2	<u>Beginnings/Preparation</u>	57
4.2.3	<u>Process vs Product / Continuation vs Disruption / Flow / Working Relationships / Trust / Care / Identities/ Roles</u>	62
4.2.4	<u>Strategies and Tactics / Governance / Hierarchies</u>	68

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Micro and Meso Findings

Beginnings/Preparation

In this section we look at how and why projects/Fieldworks begin, who invites who, and the conditions and frameworks of the invitation. This often involved processes of getting to know each other to develop trust between artists, participants and arts organisations. The dominant model across the network was for arts organisations to commission artists or invite them for a residency, and for those artists to then work with others in the process of making work. Participants got involved at various stages, which had an impact on the extent to which the project was co-created. Artists would often create frameworks for others to get involved, and direct the process in different ways. This involved the act of ‘holding’ spaces, which was stressful and required resources and its own support structure. We also flag up the issues raised about labelling participants as lacking or needing participation in some way.

Making contact

Most Fieldworks involved commissioning artists or inviting them to do a residency. They then made connections with people in different ways, from open calls to working with established groups. Artists often created spaces to talk, dance or make

together as a way of getting to know one another. As the focus for [BE PART](#) was on participation and co-creation, the question of who, how and why people engaged in a process has been important to try and understand. In most cases the format of the Fieldworks was to invite/commission an artist to develop a project/methodology that then other people would engage with. Once an artist was on board they would either work with an existing group (e.g. [Andrew Graham](#) working with [L'autre Maison](#) and [Arthalie collective](#) in Marseille or [Eszter Némethi working with the 'Groups' who attend an after school art group in Cork](#)); with individuals through one-to-one meetings (e.g. [Neil Callaghan and Simone Kenyon's residency in Aizpute, Western Latvia](#)); with people who responded to an open call (e.g. [seamstresses to work with Cote Jaña Zuñiga in Riga](#)); or by setting up a space/environment for other people to enter and use (e.g. [Jennie Moran's canteen residency at Artsadmin Say Yes to Who or What Turns Up](#) or the [Community Making Space](#) as part of the [Myvillages Rural School of Economics](#) residency at the [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#) in Lumsden). The process of getting to know each other, and therefore building trust, in many of the Fieldworks in-

involved making, moving or just creating situations to be together. Some of the Fieldworks involved sewing together (e.g. [Erased Gazes](#), [Guči Fabrika](#) and Fiona Hallinan's [Mapping Death: A Tablecloth](#) at the [Openbare Werken, Ghent](#)). For [Selma Banich](#) (artist, [Erased Gazes](#)), making the textile with the group was about ‘prolonging the conversation’ with people with current experiences of erasure (“it’s a foot in the door for a conversation about erasure as a political act”). For one of the members of [Guči fabrika](#) “making stuff is joyful for her, like sewing and making something happen.” She referenced the war in Ukraine, and reflected that “how she can be here [sewing] and do something just for her joy, is like an oasis in this crazy situation.” Many of the Fieldworks involved dancing together (e.g. [Be Water My Friends](#), [Lines](#), [Parade](#) and [Nordic Hiphop to the Stage](#)). The [URB Festival](#) diarist Julian Owusu reflected: “I had many discussions about community and how dance is a mode of conversation. A way to share a common language and signify an understanding of common histories.” The Fieldworks often followed the pattern of an artist having an idea, and then creating a situation to meet others through a shared interest, question or experience; this provided a chance for everyone involved

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Micro and Meso Findings

Beginnings/Preparation

to know each other better. The Fieldworks were deeply relational, intersubjective and [intra-active](#). It was in the relations between people that agency was felt.

Building bridges

Artists and Fieldworks often acted as bridges between community groups and the partner organisations as a way to (re)build relationships and trust. Participants got involved at varying stages; the earlier they got involved the more ‘co-created’ the process became. Fieldworks were sometimes fuelled by a lack of trust and enabled partner organisations to develop, maintain, or rebuild relationships and reputations with particular groups or communities. Feelings of mistrust run deep and might stem from previous experiences (not necessarily with the partner organisations – for example the mistrust of NGOs in general led some of the artists invited to take part in a project with [Selma Banich](#) to leave the project and [start their own collective](#)). One of the staff members at [L’Art Rue](#) referred to how even though the organisation had “tried many times to break and deconstruct” the distance between them and the context they work in, projects “are not really connected with the real problems

of the medina” where the arts organisation is based. A staff member at [Artsadmin](#) referred to the significance of the invitation to others: “it’s about the frame and the way in which it’s done. And then the context of the invitation and the clarity of the invitation.” It was important for the artists and partners working across the [BE PART](#) network that the Fieldworks were not tokenistic forms of participation. For example, one of the people working on [To Be What We Are](#) asked: “how do we engage children in a way that’s respectful and puts them at the centre and ensures their participation is what they want, as opposed to us just ticking a box saying we’re engaging with traveller children.” Ways to gain trust was a key thread that ran through the different layers of [BE PART](#), and started with the framing of the invitation. Who was inviting who into a situation had an impact on the extent to which co-creation was possible.

Being there from the beginning

Meetings were a prerequisite to any planning and preparation for a project to take shape. These were the spaces where agendas were mapped out, ideas were floated, and decisions were made. Who attended these

initial meetings was key when considering what co-creation means in these contexts. [Eszter Némethi](#) stressed the importance of involving the artists and children from the beginning stages of any project so they can help shape the approach: “if the children and the artists are not part of the conversation about the project, it creates something very different than if they are part of the project.” For many, it was important to try and involve people at an early stage, as part of the artistic decision-making process but this was not always possible in practice. Referring to [Artsadmin Youth](#) a staff member remarked: “why would you be interested in joining in, when you haven’t really been part of deciding what it is?” They go on to comment that “we are often designing things with artists that then later on participants would get involved in.” When and how people engage in a process, and the level of experience they brings, impacts the extent to which that process can be considered ‘co-created’ or not. One of the staff at [L’Art Rue](#) also talked about the need to get to know people, to

“try to understand what they feel, how they function, who they are not just throw a workshop at them... if they don’t feel that it’s relevant to them, if they feel

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Micro and Meso Findings

Beginnings/Preparation

that it's just coming from above, sort of out of nowhere, it could make them feel like, 'I'm not interested, I feel used'."

[Parade](#) was a Fieldwork for the [Festival de Marseille](#), where the choreographer [Andrew Graham](#) worked with a mixed ability group of eighteen dancers with different identities (children, people from LGBTQIA+ community, migrant association, professionals and amateurs) to adapt a piece from the Ballet Russe. A dramaturg who worked with Andrew on the project said "this project can only be done because we all met and we took the time to experience each other, to discover each other to achieve something together." One of the producers at the festival reflected on how the dancers and artists "set up a safe space, a place of trust. Without this knowledge of where each is located, to build, deconstruct, co-construct, the project cannot exist." [Andrew Graham](#) (who was also commissioned by [L'Art Rue](#) to do the Fieldwork [Lines](#)) talked about how [BE PART](#) allowed him to be involved at an early stage:

"we had to invent the structures of work, or at least we had to change something to make it more fair. So, as an artist, for me, it was very important, because even

on the structural level... the conditions in which they put us allowed us to have a very interesting conversation."

For the artist-led projects which attempted to move towards co-creation, this took time. The later on in the process people got involved, the less time people had to get to know each other, the less 'co-created' and 'co-owned' the process could be. At the same time, there were various points at which people stepped in and out of a process, and the modes of engagement were multiple. A call out for dancers (e.g. [Parade](#)) or garment-workers (e.g. [Guči Fabrika](#)), for example, might lead to people getting involved who have some interest/skills. However, that doesn't necessarily mean this will lead to a collective way of working. They might want to take on a particular role, but not share responsibility for running things.

Setting frameworks and stepping back

The Fieldworks often involved rules or frameworks that allowed for the unknown direction of a process of working together. This openness to see what happens also requires artists to step back from the centre, to hold that space for others. Many of the people

involved in the Fieldworks appreciated the informal, open-ended nature of the process, whilst acknowledging the amount of work it involves to create that sense of the unknown. A staff member at [City of Women](#) stated how "On the one hand you don't want it to be a waste of time, but on the other hand it's nice if it's a waste of time and you can afford to have this informal invitation to talk, to discuss, to invite others to participate, that it's something non-committal and necessarily goal-oriented...". Others across the [BE PART](#) network also remarked on the importance of doing something but not fully understanding why, physically feeling one's way, in the moment. [Marieke De Munck](#), curator at [VIERNULVIER](#) described how this was like an octopus: "You build it with your hands, your limbs, and only later does the rationale enter the picture." [URB Festival](#) diarist Julian Owusu referred to things happening in a time and space because of the people there:

"In the context of hip-hop and urban cultures (urban as in 'culture in urban areas'), spontaneity and fleeting coincidental moments are central to co-creation. Things 'just happen' when the right people are gathered in the right place at the right time. This also means

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Micro and Meso Findings

Beginnings/Preparation

that art created in the moment stays in that moment and is oftentimes not transferable into another space.”

One of the people working on [Be Water, My Friends](#) stated how the project to him felt “more of a flow of ideas. So it just evolves during time. And specifically in the moments we meet everybody physically.” This openness to see what happens also required artists to step back from the centre, to hold that space for others. Whether sewing or dancing together, this often involved artists holding spaces for others to make, dance or sew. [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#) diarist Angela Main, for example, referred to her role in co-creating the first Assembly. This took the form of a community radio project called [Lumsden Live](#) due to the pandemic and the inability to physically meet at the [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#). Angela wrote how “I remember moments where I was held and encouraged, and hopefully I managed by the end to do that for others.” For choreographer [Andrew Graham](#), “if we arrive with too many expectations, it becomes difficult to create something authentic. It becomes difficult to welcome the magic that comes into the studio, to welcome the proposals of the dancers.” Andrew also talked about the

fear of carrying out a project that you don’t know what it will look like at the end but at the same time “it’s exciting because there are things that are created that we didn’t expect.” Even when artists were creating safe spaces for coming together and experimentation, for some people entering the unknown was difficult. For one of the facilitators of [Artsadmin Youth](#), for example, it was “a step into the dark for the young people, and even for myself.” For [Kathrin Böhm](#), of [Myvillages](#), it was about “creating a space where people don’t feel scared, but feel enabled to talk about these things.” She made a distinction between *prescribing* an experience, and *describing* it to allow people to know more about what they are getting involved in. Holding, describing and feeling your way were carefully considered processes that constructed the conditions for different needs and experiences to come together and create something new.

Holding the holders

Holding space for others was often stressful and required resources and its own support structure. To hold a space so it is open enough for others to feel welcome, safe and able to explore for themselves takes a lot of

skill, energy and administration. One of the artists new to participatory ways of working was “humbled by understanding how much invisible work goes into something like that.” For many of the partners, the issue of workload was raised in terms of the emotional labour required to manage the social dynamics when developing co-created ‘open’ projects. [Marieke De Munck](#), curator at [VIER-NULVIER](#), pointed out that “it’s easier to work top-down, just me as a curator deciding ‘let’s do that, with that group’.” Similarly, for [City of Women](#), the work of holding open spaces takes “incredible amounts of time” and is undervalued and invisible. [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#) diarist Angela Main raised the question of how the main facilitator’s role was supported: “the questions and decisions falling to them, the weight of the responsibility they carried. Especially after the generous and abundance of care, consideration and support they had offered to all of us, to the process and the holding together of the whole programme.” Angela makes an important link between the ways the staff in organisations who are doing that work to actively support the people they work with, and how in turn they are held and supported. The labour it takes to organise and support people who are not used to ‘industry-specific dynamics’

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was felt across different Fieldworks. This was particularly felt by those working to encourage people to attend workshops and also physically getting them there. The diarist for [Santarcangelo Festival](#), Paola Granato spoke to one of the producers/mediators working with the artist [Anna Karasińska](#) on her Fieldwork [New Creation](#), who referred to the struggle to ensure people came to the rehearsals, despite financial compensation and agreements being made long enough in advance to allow people to plan and organise. Paola noted that meeting and selecting people had been a slow process, and that as some of the participants were migrants, “their presence in the project is not guaranteed, and participating with their bodies and their stories can be risky in many ways.” Through the Fieldworks artists and the partner organisations came to recognise what it takes for people, including themselves, to turn up, and be present. Being attentive to the reasons how and why we cannot participate is perhaps as informative as celebrating those who do.

The problem with labelling people

Participants were sometimes labelled as lacking or needing participation in some way. This was problematised by the Field-

works which allowed time for those involved to get to know each other’s intersectional life experiences. Some issues were raised with labelling people, particularly when it was based on their social exclusion. In [Cork Midsummer Festival](#), one of the people working on the [To Be What We Are](#) Fieldwork raised the issue that by labelling the children as Travellers, “we’re kind of treating them as a generic group, because that’s the way we have to do our work when they’re not. They’re all very, very different.” Diarist Amy Begley who followed this Fieldwork also pointed out that an

“amazing painting was done by a toddler, who knows her surroundings and loves to explore. I got lost in her work and you would too. If you were to take away the word traveller or settled traveller, you would just be left with an artwork without the label of traveller. The artwork would be worth millions to me. Labels should NOT define talent. Labels should not define a person’s future. Everyone deserves a start!”

These micro observations are linked to the macro context. [BE PART](#) is situated within a broader European discourse of participation

which tends to see participation as a means to broaden civic and democratic involvement ([Dupin-Meynard and Négrier, 2020](#); [Hammonds, 2023](#); [Robinson and Thinking Practice, 2023](#)). While the Fieldworks did not necessarily unpack these assumptions about art’s role in creating ‘effective citizens’ (indeed, the partner organisations seem to embrace these values), there were many attempts to question where agency lies. This was often done by shedding labels, acknowledging intersecting identities and creating spaces which allowed for differences between people. These unique configurations of people for particular periods of time were the starting points for relationships and creative practices to emerge.

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Micro and Meso Findings

Process vs Product / Continuation vs Disruption / Flow / Working Relationships / Trust / Care / Identities/Roles

In this section we explore themes relating to the relationship between the Fieldworks and the organisations that commission and support them. We flag up how deadlines and performance schedules offered a chance to showcase work but also sometimes clashed with process-based approaches. Many partners were interested in moving from delivering projects to developing longer-term relationships when the artists leave, but this poses potential difficulty when working in an annual festival format. There is often limited capacity and resources that are needed to continue and hold these relationships. It is important to note that working with fewer people over longer timeframes is more resource-heavy. Listening was raised as a key aspect of communication, as was the role of the mediator. While there was a desire amongst many of the artists and partner organisations to move towards long-term working, a project-based logic and institutional rhythms still underpinned the structures they were working with and between. Finally, in this section we highlight calls for the infrastructural change needed for relationships to be at the core, for example a move to redistributing and sharing resources, rather than focusing on participation at a curatorial or programming level.

The show must go on?

Deadlines and performance schedules offered a chance to showcase work but also sometimes clashed with process-based approaches. For Fieldworks commissioned through festival organisations, there was often a deadline to present a performance, or some kind of outcome in the context of a festival programme. This was also an occasion for people involved to come together. While the focus might be on the process, publicly presenting under-represented work was also crucial for some organisations, particularly in terms of showcasing under-represented work. In some cases there was a tension between different assumptions about what a Fieldwork was for – experimenting, making mistakes – or producing something for a public programme. From a producers point of view, the ‘magic’ of co-creation is that “you never know what’s going to happen”, but at the same time, this can be “quite stressful because you never know and you might end up with a bag of bollocks or you might end up with something great” (producer). One of the partners stated how they “quite like this blurring of front and back stage... But it’s also quite hard... the issue is, they expect it to be totally finished and perfectionist, but actu-

ally, it can’t be if we’re going to work in this way...”. One of the mediators of a Fieldwork stated that how the artist they were working with was placing more emphasis on the relational process, “she wanted to listen a lot, even to the detriment of the performance... She chose to devote a lot of time to her relationships with people, and, as a result, the time for rehearsals was affected.” He felt some pressure, as the mediator, as they didn’t know where the process would take them, that they “just need to show trust.” Rather than an agenda that asks for new things on a seasonal basis, partners have started to repeat projects such as [Guči Fabrika](#) and [Be Water My Friends](#). Some partners would like to shift from always delivering new projects to slowing down and developing better relationships over a longer period of time, using [BE PART](#) funds to support long-term relationships and facilitating projects that might not have a clear end or output. This demonstrates some of the tensions between the time it takes to build trust and the desire to produce something together that is respectful of those relationships. Sometimes the process, festival production timeframes and expectations do not align.

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Micro and Meso Findings

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Working over longer time periods

Many partners were interested in moving from delivering projects to developing longer-term relationships when the artists leave. This poses potential difficulty when working in an annual festival format and limited capacity and resources are needed to continue to hold these relationships. Working with fewer people for longer timeframes is more resource-heavy. Relationships take time to build, maintain and grow over time. They are also dependent on both the organisational infrastructures and priorities as well as the macro contexts of funding structures and reporting timeframes. What capacity and resources do arts organisations have/need to continue to hold these relationships? There was an acknowledgement that building long-term relationships was difficult and that continuing to work with someone is challenging, as one of the partners said: “on the first date, you have the sparkle, but then if you come back again and again, you have to be able to learn to grow together to maintain and to do that with an artist and with a group of people within processes takes time and it’s not exciting.” As we have pointed out, many of the conversations we had as part of our research circulated around relationships of trust in and

amongst the Fieldworks, freelance artists and mediators and more permanent staff in the arts organisations. Partners and artists discussed how relationships are nurtured, cared for and maintained, given the often itinerant nature of artists’ engagement in a place. Trust may have been earned between artists and the people they are working with, but this might not have extended to the organisations that commissioned the artists (as one of the artists reflected: “it seems a bit of a shame, really, that they [the participants] didn’t have the opportunity to develop that relationship with the festival beyond us.” Or there may have been long-standing relationships between organisations and community groups but the artists travelling through on temporary projects might not have had the time to earn that trust. In cases where artists were working with existing groups or specific individuals, the commissioning organisation often had long-term working relationships with them (for example, [Cork Midsummer Festival](#) and Springboard had worked together for many years). With or without these existing connections, however, it took time for newly commissioned artists to build up relationships with the people they wanted to work with. It was often the organisations and residents who were (and con-

tinue to be) the constants in a place/territory and the artists were the ones who passed through. One of the artists pointed out how the participants “deserve continuation” in the theme and methodology. She remarked how she just needed to “shift the angle and we have a fresh perspective”, but that they are “still working in the frame of continuing what somebody else started.” For many of the artists involved, the outcome or performance should not be the end; projects should “sustain long term relationships.” For [City of Women](#), for example, one of the people working on Fieldworks stated how after having given people a platform “to be honest, at the end of the project, it pretty much fades away or maybe it’s maintained for a while with some self-initiation, and then it’s diluted.” It was important for them to prevent the feeling that “these groups that we invite to the process... are being exploited because of their vulnerability... we just take their stories, and then we don’t care about them anymore.” A member of staff at [L’Art Rue](#) spoke about the “conflicting temporalities” of the organisation, the artist and the communities:

“it is the confrontation of these temporalities which means that there can be clashes... you come and afterwards,

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you leave. That's where it can create tensions or feelings of abandonment or disinvestment or manipulation in the communities."

Some people wanted to participate in long-term projects, whereas others did not.. During the process of working together, some people became friends, as one of the artists pointed out: "The people who join the project form a family, it becomes stories of love and friendship." Others felt it was important to keep their professional and private lives separate (one of the artists suggested: "you don't necessarily need friendship and pleasure to have a good work ethos..."). However, one of the partners expressed the difficulty of ending a project once friendships have formed: "when it comes to ending a collaboration, sometimes that means ending friendships, whereas actually you didn't want to end the friendship, only the professional relationship, and how do you do that? I don't think it's always so easy in my role." Referring to his Fieldwork with [L'Art Rue](#), [Andrew Graham](#) says that they created a "strong and anchored" network of teachers and that they want to continue working "But, [L'Art Rue](#) cannot hold it by themselves. Teachers can't hold it by themselves." The question

remains – why not? If there is an imperative for relationships to be the core of the practice beyond participation, who is responsible for maintaining these relationships?

[Elly Van Eeghem](#) (working on [Publiek Plan Gent N°1](#), a Fieldwork with [VIERNULVIER](#)) considered the residents' perspective: "as residents, there is much to be gained by always working with the same artists, and I understand that very well... people know the artists, and the artists know the area better and better..." This perhaps points to the type of practices being supported by an organisation, and their relationship to a place. Rather than bringing in new artists to an area, year after year, what would it mean to support the practices that are rooted in a place?

The importance of listening

For many people, communication was key to the process of trust-building, more specifically, listening and the role of the mediator. One of the partners described how "it is not so much up to the artist, but to the person who does the cultural mediation to do this follow-up, to check in regularly, to try to develop relationships." Another spoke of how "The question of mediation is very important. It's

not just communication, it's really mediation, taking the time to develop, to meet, to listen to the people from the place, listen to its desires, its needs." Someone working on [Parade](#) for the [Festival de Marseille](#) described how "listening is about walking the road between what they have to say and express and where I stand." This reflects the significance of exchange and how listening is at least two-way (between artists and the people they are working with, but also the organisations that have commissioned them); "It can't just be one way" said [Andrew Graham](#). One of the dancers working on [Parade](#), Erwan Tran Van Ngoc, stressed how important it was that the artists/choreographers listen: "I am someone who wants to do my best regardless of my abilities and limitations. It's hard sometimes. I am tired. If it hurts from making movements... If they [lead artists] don't listen to what I'm saying, I give up." Andrew reflected that for him "it is really an exchange of experience [...] just to be in the exchange, regardless of the roles of each in the project. Because unfortunately in a project there is always a hierarchy...". Julie Moreira-Miguel, Public Relations Manager at the festival pointed out that "It's true that listening is both between amateurs and professionals, but also between the structure that

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produces [e.g. the [Festival de Marseille](#)] and you. You need to feel listened to by the structure.” For one of the artists working on the [Kairos](#) Fieldwork for the [URB Festival](#) this was about creating an “environment where you can have check-ins along the way.” This centering of care in the process of working with others was not just about action “but sometimes it’s just like sitting in silence... quiet moments to just be within the process.”

The role of the mediator

A significant amount of time was spent managing and negotiating different agendas. The role of the mediator and act of mediation was a key part of the process for many artists and partners. Many of the producers/cultural workers and artists spoke of the significance of mediators in the process of working with others. There were many different cooks and agendas involved in the Fieldworks. Managing these different expectations could be difficult, time-consuming work. For some of the artists there was a sense of being pulled in different directions by the different expectations and agendas. For example, one of the artists stated how “I was a bit overwhelmed at times with the different frameworks that were there and sort of feeling like which am

I loyal to like, my artistic hat, the [BE PART](#) funding the Festival, the people here and what their expectations are... [I’m] just feeling pulled in all these different directions...”. If there were mismatching or misaligned agendas it felt like a struggle to get anything done. Referring to the [Corneous Project](#), a Fieldwork at [City of Women](#), one of the people involved stated how “there were very different organisations involved in this project... It all depends on who you work with and how open they are, what they think, the way they act ... if you’re in a struggle with a certain organisation about how to present what you’re doing anyway, you can end up burning out because of that.” Who did this negotiating and mediating between agendas depended on the organisation and Fieldwork. Often the artists themselves took on this mediation role, for other Fieldworks there were specific roles for mediators. One of the staff members at [L’Art Rue](#) for example remarked that mediation was key in order to “really involve the community, or more or less the people you want to involve, so that they are really the bearers of the project...to really be the decision-makers, to be heard, to be aware...”. For some artists mediation was core to their practice. If artists did not understand their practice in this way, a mediator was needed to lay the groundwork

and establish relationships between the artist and people they wanted to work with. For Sara Hirn, producer for the [URB Festival](#), there was a need for someone who was

“aware of the situation and the chemistry of different people when you have a lot of people involved... somebody that you can speak your frustration to... it would be good if that person would be representing the institution and not like the working group or the artist... just to have somebody in the space to be aware...”.

Whether artists understand and practice mediation as part of their practice or not, an intermediary who was able to make, maintain and support connections between organisations, artists and various publics seemed a key learning across the [BE PART](#) network. Indeed, the mediators, rather than the projects themselves, were sometimes the bridges between and amongst people who have a desire to work together. For a couple of Fieldworks that we are aware of, artists felt there was a lack of production/mediation support, for example, someone who had existing relationships with local groups they could put the artist in touch with, or who could help circulate information about

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the project. This may have been because of staff shortages or capacity, which is another factor worth considering when developing infrastructural changes to support this way of working. Mediation is a vital role that requires investment, resources and support.

The problem with the project-based logic

There was a desire amongst many of the artists and partner organisations to move towards long-term working, but a project-based logic and institutional rhythms based on logistics and funding frameworks still underpins the structures they are working with and between. For many partners the extra time and money [BE PART](#) offered was used to work over longer periods, extending projects beyond their usual timeframes and having the ability to stay with a project. Partners are used to conditions of scarcity, as a staff member from [City of Women](#) said: “Everybody’s spread out between so many projects so that they can survive, and it’s all a result of too little production resources.” Many partners have to work to cycles of delivery which instils a goal-oriented, project-to-project logic. It should be noted that [BE PART](#) also works to this logic but at a slightly slower pace. The general

pace of project delivery was seen across the network as a barrier to more involved and ethical co-creation and participation. Many found that to work in equitable and careful ways meant doing less, but that doing less does not mean less money is spent. Working over long periods is expensive but also necessary to develop trust. [BE PART](#) offered some reprieve, providing time to collaboratively develop ideas and foster relationships with participants and artists (and between the partners). [BE PART](#) money allowed partners to develop and maintain relationships, share stories, and reflect. Many partners have started to question the logic of new projects delivered within a specific timeframe. Rather than an agenda that asks for new things on a seasonal basis, partners have started to repeat projects. Some partners would like to shift from always delivering new projects to slowing down and developing better relationships over a longer period of time, using [BE PART](#) funds to support long-term relationships and facilitating projects that might not have a clear end or output. Having an open-ended approach, however, can produce challenges for producers when artists/groups are not sure what will happen. There was a shared desire amongst the organisations to keep exploring ways of working that give

people time and space to explore, debate and create. However, [Selma Banich](#) referred to the project-based logic as “the biggest problem” and noted that this makes it hard to have continuation and accountability to the people that you work with on a project. For Selma, “reinventing projects over and over” perpetuates “precarious, financial, social [and] personnel situations.” She stated how “we are living in a culture of discontinuation” ([Selma Banich](#), artist, [City of Women](#)). Similarly, for a staff member at [L’Art Rue](#), “The institution imposes its rhythm, its temporality, its way of doing things. Sometimes I realise that it’s good to do things, to do things well, to try to do things, but it’s also good to have some time to step back and think about what you’re doing.” For [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#), for example, the work and thinking done through [BE PART](#) has shifted their approach. They are no longer working with communities in a project-to-project way and instead starting to focus on longer-term work with the local community through the [Community Making Space](#) developed through the [Myvillages Fieldwork](#).

The need for infrastructural change

Infrastructural change was needed for relationships to be at the core, for example a

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move to redistributing and sharing resources, rather than focusing on participation at a curatorial or programming level. Some of the organisations tried to move away from commissioning artists to do one-off projects, as Fieldworks flowed into one another. This was addressed at an organisational level by extending Fieldworks, to avoid perpetuating a cycle of commissioning new projects (e.g. [Atlas](#), [Rural School of Economics](#) and [Guči Fabrika](#)), but there was also a recourse to framing bodies of work as projects due to budget lines and the desire to present work publicly. A member of staff at Artsadmin reflected: “obviously projects have a sense of a start and a sense of an end. But actually, maybe that’s part of the problem, that from my perspective, maybe it’s trying to think more, more flow... things are happening along the way.” ([Staff member, Artsadmin](#))

An example of avoiding beginning-end thinking is [Scottish Sculpture Workshop’s Community Making Space](#), where the organisation was demonstrating structural change within the organisation so they could “work with people in an ongoing capacity.” For another partner, [BE PART](#) enabled a shift in thinking from project to people, from a production mindset to process oriented mindset, e.g.,

relationships with artists and others were developed over a sustained period of time. This was felt by [Andrew Graham](#) ([Lines](#) and [Parade](#)), who explained that he had been wanting to move away from project-based working for some time. He felt [BE PART](#) helped him to be ambitious in Tunis and in Marseille. But while the work has huge potential, he explained how lack of funding now meant he was unable to continue the work: “my fear now is that the way it can continue is just by the love and the generosity of people who will engage themselves for free. And this is really not what I wanted.” For [Selma Banich](#), this requires change on a systemic level otherwise these strategies of co-creation can remain tokenistic: “We don’t want this to be, you know, a one time thing, we don’t want this to be a trend.” Sam Trotman (Director, [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#)) also acknowledged that “structures can take quite a long time to change... And sometimes you think you’re making a radical shift. And then actually, you’re just making it and it’s a statement of a shift, but the learning and the way you work takes a lot longer to change.” For Sam, it’s also about “changing the infrastructure” so that even if artists are visiting Lumsden for the first time, they aren’t “starting from scratch”. [Marieke De Munck](#) at

[VIERNULVIER](#) perhaps already adopted this approach, as she does not “commission anything”. Rather, “people do their work and we support”. Marieke described how they collaborate with a lot of smaller organisations “who are, in a way, our extended artistic team.” In this sense, [VIERNULVIER](#) acts like a redistributor of funds supporting embedded groups to operate with extra resources. Another partner brings up the issue of the passivity of salaried arts managers and the need to redistribute resources, not just open doors for people (“your job is to engage [in the projects people come to you with]. And, give it resources from the institutional place where you’re working, that’s your job.”) Similarly, Paola Granato the Diarist for [Santarcangelo Festival](#) observed how [Anna Karasińska’s](#) Fieldwork [New Creation](#) “seems to have reached (unlike other participative projects) people who come from different backgrounds and who were not connected to the Festival in any way.” She wondered “whether this relationship will continue in some form.” Paola highlights a key point to have emerged during her observations: “that perhaps one of the tenets of the participative approach should be a long-term vision, not a one-time experience.”

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Micro and Meso Findings

Strategies and Tactics / Governance / Hierarchies

In this section we focus on what people had to say about the power-relations at a micro, project/Fieldwork level and broader meso organisational level. For example, questions were raised as to whose desires and agendas are leading the way for organisations. We also highlight here the paradox at the heart of many of the Fieldworks: namely, opening up a process that is instigated by the desires of an artist or organisation. Recognising the time it takes for co-creation to manifest, some of the Fieldworks built in care and support structures for people to become co-creators. Administration plays a key role in managing processes of co-creation and participation. At times administration was seen as a barrier, and at other times it was seen as a radical part of the creative process. Overall, there were barriers to change at Board/governance levels and difficulties of creating horizontal organisations. We look at how some partner organisations invited institutional critique to address these changes, but that this is also difficult to follow-through. Finally, we explore how the shift from hierarchical to horizontal organisational structures was not shared, desirable or possible across the network. Hierarchies will always be present, we just do not always see or acknowledge them.

Whose desires and agendas are leading the way?

In terms of overall strategies at a meso level, there was some discussion about who sets the agenda for ways of working. Whose desires are being voiced and acted upon? Some organisations were thinking about their role in/as community organisations, while at the same time recognising their arts focus. For example, a staff member at [Artsadmin](#) said “I think for an organisation, there are different things to think about, versus what community would fundraise for or would need.” To what extent are the organisations responding to local needs or led by distinct artistic visions? Can they do both? [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#), for example, discussed how they are not a completely ‘needs led’ organisation. Wapke Feenstra, one of the artists [SSW](#) worked with, observed that it would be irresponsible for an organisation to be needs led if it does not have the capacity to be so.

Setting things up to open them out?

There is often a paradox at the heart of the Fieldworks, between a process being open to others taking the lead, and that process

being instigated and directed by the desires of an artist or organisation. Some of the Fieldworks aimed to create situations (e.g. a youth forum, sewing collective, curatorial collective or play space) for others to join and lead/make decisions and take ownership over a process. Such initiatives, however, were often instigated by the desires of artists or organisations. As Wapke Feenstra ([Myvillages](#), [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#)) reflected, there is always “a power structure if you create the room, because you decide the room. But it’s also something people do not see.” Likewise, Eszter Némethi (artist, [To Be What We Are](#), [Cork Midsummer Festival](#)) stated how she had been trying to “be a person with my eyes closed with the paint brushes pointed at my eyes in the space that I meant to be facilitating...”. She was asking herself how much she could create the space for the children to have agency when she could not remove her own agency, as she was “always gonna be an adult paid in a space with very small people in school uniforms... what could that even mean in that space?” While some Fieldworks involved artists stepping back as participants to take the lead/share responsibilities, other Fieldworks took an approach where artists/choreographers directed participants.

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Micro and Meso Findings

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Some of the discussions reflected on the artists' positionalities and egos in the process of working with others. For example, one of the artists asked another artist on one of the Blind Dates: "Do you ever feel conscious of a necessity to protect yourself...to preserve some aspects of your creative practice, which, you know, you want maybe to keep safe?" For her, there are aspects which are "immovable", core parts of her practice. While there can be flexibility around this, "it's good to earmark and protect the aspects that are you and aren't anyone else." She reflected on how "a very low ego [is] required. As an artist, you know, it's different working on participatory projects... It's not about you, really." While an artist may not feel they can demonstrate their ego, they still have one and artists are often setting the boundaries between themselves and the role they play in a larger group. For example, one of the artists working on [Corneous Stories](#) with [City of Women](#) reflected that "maybe you just have to set yourself some boundaries as to where you're still autonomous and at what point you're no more, you're just another piece in a big group." [Santarcangelo Festival](#) Diarist Paola Granato on meeting [Anna Karasińska](#) writes how the artist "wants to give importance to the process of knowl-

edge between herself, the place and the people she meets along the journey... She wonders what part of herself she wants to put into the work and what it means to come from outside and work in such a meaningful place for the community." The relationship between artists' ideas and the desire to open up spaces for others to change the direction and set the agenda could be witnessed throughout the Fieldworks. This reflects a wide array of approaches to co-creation. In some cases, the spaces were taken over, albeit temporarily by those who were invited in, in other cases the artist kept a tight hold of the space.

Building in care and support structures for people to become co-creators

Many partners felt that young partners in particular would benefit from opportunities for training and paid work, in tandem with using [BE PART](#) money to develop longer-term relationships, many partners felt that younger participants in particular would benefit from opportunities for training and paid work. Rather than participation being something that might have inherent benefits, many people needed opportunities to further their ongoing earning capacity. Several part-

ners have tried to implement youth boards into their organisational structure, offering valuable experience for those involved. Referring to their Fieldwork [Kairos \(URB Festival\)](#), one of the production assistants noted the kind of collaboration needed to support people with different levels of experience, and the need for safe spaces to ask questions. These sorts of spaces were also about finding ways to work together and importantly how to communicate. Being physically (and mentally) present was also key to creating this kind of space. For Sara Hirn, [URB Festival](#) producer, it was important to be "understanding and empathetic towards the young artists, and kind of willing to take their side if there are institutions that they have to fight against." There was an awareness here of care in the process of working together. One of the artists working on the [Kairos](#) Fieldwork with the [URB Festival](#) referred to the importance of taking care of each other. This involved recognising that people were under different pressures, being mindful about how they all communicated their frustrations and "trusting that everyone's doing their best", as well as recognising that "we all have different thresholds and how much we have to give and how much we're taking on." Centring communication between

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people also seemed core to developing a caring approach to working together. Others, like [Artsadmin](#) who worked on developing [Artsadmin Youth](#), realised that getting to a point of co-creation required those involved to have some knowledge of how arts organisations operate with a deeper experience of producing: “I think the key thing us has been around time and around understanding that getting to a place of co-creation is actually a lot more complex than we had previously anticipated.” This raised questions as to what extent organisations have the capacity to build in that training and development for people to become co-creators.

Administration as a barrier and/or radical part of the creative process

Some of the conversations we listened to also touched on the specific role of administration – often an invisibilised and undervalued aspect of the work. For some, administration of timelines and budgets held the creative process back whereas for others it was important to see administration as a part of the creative process. This tension played out in the conversation about [Rope](#), for example, where they had to balance the legal responsibility for health, safety and se-

curity of the co-creators (the role of the technicians) and the desires of the co-creators to take the project in new directions (supported by the artists, producers and mediators). Due to the French anti-terrorist plan, authorisation is required for any meetings in public space at least two months before the event. [The Festival de Marseille](#) regularly has to ask for such authorisations in the frame of its official programme. For them to remain reliable in the eyes of public administration and not risk other applications being dismissed they must continue to adhere to these rules. The very nature of these rules, however, undermined the agility and spirit of the [Rope](#) project. Improvisation by co-creators in the streets with [Rope](#) raises questions about who holds the risk and responsibility in this context of policed public space. For one of the producers, “very often my priority is to co-create, co-create, co-create and my colleague’s priority, is no, it has to be legal...”. She also pointed out that in the context of the festival, they signed agreements with the partner organisations as a way of sharing the risk of the project. This was due to the permissions and authorisation they needed from the City Council “the [partner organisations] have to take the responsibility as we do, because it’s too dangerous for us, even

if the risk is minimal.” They are then also responsible for the work: “it’s a shame for the agility of the project.”

Attempting change at a board level

There are barriers to change at board/governance levels and difficulties relating to creating horizontal organisations. Inviting institutional critique has been one way to address these changes, but this is also difficult to follow-through. The organisations across the [BE PART](#) network have different constitutions but are all non-profit associations or charities with some kind of board or membership that meets regularly. A strategy of the [BE PART](#) project was for organisations to look into their governance structures to see how ideas of participation and co-creation could stretch to the inner workings of the organisations. The issue of governance was more of an issue for some organisations than others: a number of organisations wanted more focus on comparing practices of co-creation across the network. Many partners have started to question the logic of new projects delivered within a specific timeframe. In light of the shift in agendas from delivery to longer-term organisational shifts, however, the position and make-up

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of boards became a central concern for some partners. For example, two of the organisations ([Artsadmin](#) and [VIERNULVIER](#)) experimented with youth boards, and one experimented with a community steering group ([Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#)). [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#) also paid particular attention to realigning what their organisation is and how it should be governed, commissioning artists who would force them to rethink their overall agenda as an organisation. For example, in their Fieldwork [Devising Governance](#) they commissioned Jack Tan to help them rethink governance. They also experimented with a more-than-human board member with Gordon Douglas. This saw them develop conversations around the appointment of a pile of dust to their board, stimulating conversations about what a board even is. In the case of other partner organisations, it was unclear the extent to which people at a board level were involved in the [BE PART](#) process and/or people involved in [BE PART](#) got involved at an organisational board level. An artist from one of the canteen residencies, Ama Josephine Budge, now sits on [Artsadmin](#)'s board; a co-creator of the SSW Assembly, Lumsden Live, now sits on [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#)'s Board; and three artists

(Katja Kobolt, [Corneous Stories](#) and Nataša Živković & Sara Šabec, [Everything is Alright](#)) were already members of [City of Women](#) Association. Apart from this we could not find evidence of co-creators/participants or other artists being offered places on boards. This may of course also be due to restricted resources and capacity of existing staffing structures to support such a role. A practical outcome of this process that other partners also talked about was the notion of decolonising their public discourse by making their websites more accessible and useful to non-art audiences. Partners should want and expect more people to engage with their work, but this requires a concerted effort to become more transparent. This emblemizes a shift shared by many partners to slow down and question their own structure before trying to extend notions of participation and care to others. A major finding of our research has been that for some partners, this requires fewer projects that are done over a longer period of time, perhaps moving away from the logic of annual festival production for relationships that need longer to develop.

Hierarchies will always be present, we just don't always see them

The difference between the desire to eliminate hierarchies and power structures and the realities of carrying this out were brought up at both a project and an organisational level. However, moving from hierarchical to horizontal organisational structures was not desired by, or possible for, all of the network. For [Malaika Cunningham](#) (practice-researcher at [Artsadmin](#)), there are “many different inequalities that exist within any given project, and they're very rarely transparent.” This is also reflected at an institutional level where hierarchies still exist and might lack the cultural literacy to understand or appreciate grassroots cultural practices. Rather than removing hierarchy and power structures, perhaps it is a case of recognising where these lie, drawing attention to the ever-present power relations and discussing these in terms of decision-making. [Kathrin Böhm](#) ([Myvillages](#)) who worked with [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#), stated that ‘decision-making’ is a more accessible term than ‘power relations’, because “even if I'm not, if I'm not in power, now, I should still be able to make decisions... You can't necessarily organise community around power thinking,

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you organise community around decision making.” There was some talk of developing less hierarchical, horizontal structures. [VIER-NULVIER](#), for example, are progressing in this direction. However, as Sam Trotman, director of [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#) pointed out, doing this in practice is not easy:

“I think I probably came in to [BE PART](#) in quite a naive way thinking, yeah, everything should be flatter...So I’m interested to see what happens with the [Community Making Space](#) and how that might impact on the procedures we have in place for people’s voices throughout the programme or the organisation or, and does that start to shift things?...”

Sam also pointed out that there are “reasons why things are set up in these kinds of top down ways, because when shit happens, they’re quite effective...”. The role of a board, for example, offers “an amazing support structure that can give you that kind of oversight from the outside and guidance and support from the outside.” The issue remains, however, that the Board structure in the UK at least is legally based on volunteers, and so diversifying the governance

models is structurally very difficult to change. Fieldworks such as the [Canteen residencies](#) and [Myvillages](#) work through the [Community Making Space](#) at [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#) and the [Devising Governance](#) project grew out of decisions to invite artists in to think differently about how the organisation operates and is used by others. These interventions were useful both internally and for the publics using the spaces; they may have been most effective internally. They encouraged the organisations to think about how they relate to their neighbours, especially how they could be useful to them. For other organisations, institutional change was not a priority, or was not deemed possible. This may also be reflected in the position and priority of the aims and objectives of [BE PART](#) in relation to the rest of the organisation.

Many of the themes in this section have a significant bearing on other areas of the network and the evaluation. It is to be expected that critiques of network-level themes would also have a significant effect on meso- and micro-level interactions and practices. In this section, we outline how partners had different expectations and agendas as part of their involvement, particularly when it came to expectations around touring Fieldworks. Also, resources have been a key concern for all partners, and so we address matters relating to financial transparency and discrepancy across the network in the section called Time and Money. The importance of ‘coming together’ was a significant factor in the project for many partners. This also cuts across all areas, but we have focused on Assemblies to draw out some findings. Finally, we look at the role of the Critical Network and the Protocol and provide some critical reflections on our evaluation methods.

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Macro findings

Expectations and Agendas

This section highlights how some partners were not clear about the project aims from the start. This was mainly due to changes in personnel. The lack of touring projects was also a disappointment to some partners as they understood this as a core aim of [BE PART](#). While there was not the level of cross-partner exchange as many hoped for, [BE PART](#) has allowed some people the time/space/money to question how they organise projects and shifted many partners' thinking towards longer-term working practices.

Differing expectations

Some partners were not clear about the project aims from the start. This was mainly due to changes in personnel. The time when a partner joined the network affected their feeling of involvement. The lack of touring projects was also a disappointment to some partners as they understood this as a core aim of [BE PART](#). For many of those working with the partner organisations, depending on when they joined the network, some of the terminology and aims surrounding the project were unclear. For example, the distinction between Fieldwork and Public Programme and how the two interacted. Many were unclear about the emphasis there

should have been on the exchange of artists across the network. This confusion was felt at the administrative level, with some partners stating that the budgetary lines defined for each category were not always clear. Many saw the lack of touring artists across the network as a disappointment, also highlighting the difficulty touring or 'dropping in' with works that have been developed in more equitable, co-productive ways, that are also often highly responsive to specific locations or contexts. There is potentially a conflict between the desire to share artistic practices across the network and the desire to work less but in more long-term and embedded ways.

Touring projects

While there was not the level of cross-partner exchange as many hoped for, [BE PART](#) has allowed some people the time/space/money to question how they organise projects and shifted many partners' thinking towards longer-term working practices. COVID-19 played a role, but the emphasis given to cross-partner exchange in the original proposal seems to have been lacking and/or misunderstood by many partners.

The [BE PART](#) funding did, however, allow partners to shift ways of working, in some cases taking influence from other network partners. For all partners [BE PART](#) offered extra resources that allowed them to work in ways they would not normally be able to, allowing experimentation and for some partners, the ability to push boundaries of what might normally be affordable within standard budgets. Some partners also tried to extend the money and resources to other people and organisations they work with locally. Some of the partners expressed that, for many, [Creative Europe](#) is nothing new and involvement in such networks is about a set of deliverable projects and outcomes rather than questioning or changing power structures. However, [BE PART](#)'s emphasis on co-learning and collective exchange has allowed many members to ask fundamental questions about how they work, and some have implemented long-term changes to their working practices.

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Macro findings

Time/Money

In this section we focus on the themes of time and money that were raised across Micro/Fieldwork, Meso/Organisational and Macro/network levels. Significantly, there were varying approaches to paying participants/disclosing budgets across the [BE PART](#) network. It was felt that the economic disparity across the different socioeconomic contexts that the network holds was not addressed enough. And finally, many partners would like more financial transparency at an organisational and broader macro/network level for ethical and practical purposes.

Paying participants

There were varying approaches to paying participants/disclosing budgets across the [BE PART](#) network. Particularly when working with younger participants and co-creators, paid involvement, and the ability to gain practical, transferable skills were seen as important. Payment of participants was an example of where hierarchies and power imbalances were made more visible. For example, some organisations did not pay participants, others paid artists and participants the same, and in the case of one organisation participants were paid less than the artists. Some organisations faced legal difficulties in paying

participants (e.g. if they were children and/or undocumented migrants) and found ways around this (see Kate Rich and Angela Piccini's [Radmin Reader](#)), by offering to pay for things they needed when this was possible. The inability to pay people, however, points to wider systemic barriers to inclusion. For another contributor, the [BE PART](#) budget allowed people to be paid fairly and showed what was needed when it came to working in this way so as not to rely on volunteers.

The question was raised as to what extent organisations should be transparent about budgets to those they work with. This links to the process of involving administration in the creative process and also educating participants, co-creators and co-workers about managing budgets. Again, there were different positions on this. Some of the artists did not know the overall budgets or what people were getting paid and so this sometimes created a 'muddy relationship' with the people they were working with. For another partner, being transparent about budgets with everyone means participants might ask "why aren't they paying us?", or that when disclosing budgets to participants "the magic would be gone." One of the contributors referred to a project where a commissioned

artist continued to receive royalties when the work toured (common practice in performing arts) but that the participants did not, as they were "pulled in at a later date." The following important question was raised by one of the partners: "If you're making collaborative co-created work with non-professionals, what is the economic relationship and responsibility to the non-professionals within professional arts practice?"

While it was acknowledged that payments and transparency over budgets is not always the answer to power-sharing this also links to reliance on volunteers. Volunteers can join or leave a project at any point. They may leave due to personal responsibilities. Lack of transparency was raised in terms of not enough communication between staff. In more hierarchical organisations, some staff were not part of decision-making processes or invited to team meetings where things are decided. A member of staff in one of the partner organisations stated:

"I think that we are the last link in the chain, you know, and we are a little bit held back. We know there's a lot going on up there, but we're not told about what's going on. We're just told 'go!'"

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Another member of staff asked whether it is possible for a growing organisation to “preserve the democratic dimension of management?” Deciding on payments for participants and levels of transparency across the organisations and [BE PART](#) network were an unresolved topic of discussion. There may not be a straightforward resolution, but placing money matters on the table for comparative analysis was a step towards acknowledging the hierarchies and power-relations at the micro, meso and macro levels of [BE PART](#).

Economic disparity across the network

The economic disparity across the different socioeconomic contexts that the network holds was not addressed enough. Variation in pay scales was felt to be a significant issue by some partners. This was often expressed in terms of an East/West, North/South divide. With a network that encompasses such a diverse range of socioeconomic variation across a large area, financial disparity is unsurprising. A move towards ‘to: ‘The prospect of a move towards open and accessible pay and accounting was seen by many partners as positive. During the Assembly in Ljubljana, there was a discussion about developing an equality and equity matrix that would

display the economic disparity between partner locations, while also offering a scale of fair pay that could be applied across the network. This task was taken up by the Critical Network but did not materialise.

Financial transparency

Many partners would like more financial transparency for ethical and practical purposes. For all the benefits that [BE PART](#) time and money afforded partners, many still felt that there was a greater need for transparency over money across the network. The lack of clarity at times fed into a feeling of disparity across the network, with economic and geographic differences preventing a feeling of equity. Some structures were clearly defined, but some were not. In relation to power distribution, this leads to the people on the inside who understand the administrative aspects of the network being able to navigate complexities much more easily. It also led to a lack of communication between organisations as it bred an element of defensiveness because roles and expectations were not always clear. The biggest shift felt by many partners has been from being part of a network “on paper” for application and funding purposes to becoming part of a sharing community of

knowledge production. For all the Fieldworks that have been produced in specific locations, the biggest shift on a network level has not been the ability to tour fieldworks, but to hear how other partners describe their ways of working and if possible see this work in practice. Although the network contains hierarchies, sharing questions and concerns, and the ability to voice difficulties and successes from one region of the network to another has formed a community that is better equipped to challenge power imbalances within and between partners. Although it is not fully realised, there is the potential for [BE PART](#) to consolidate the last four years and have more leverage beyond the network itself.

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Macro findings

Coming Together: Assemblies

Here we focus on the Assemblies which acted to connect people across the network. Partner organisations could decide who to invite to the Assemblies, depending on budgets and logistics. For example, some lead partners travelled with other staff members, artists they had worked with on Fieldworks, and in some cases co-creators/participants. However, the expectations surrounding invitations were not always clear. The informal aspects of Assemblies were flagged as very important for strengthening the ties across the network. In what follows we highlight some of the barriers to participation in the Assemblies.

Spending time together

The Assemblies disrupted habits and formulas and made people feel connected to the network. Extending Assembly invitations to co-creators and other participants was seen as a major positive. However, the expectations surrounding invitations were not always clear. Spending time in the same space was cited by almost everyone as important for co-creation. As a theme, ‘coming together’ cuts through the micro, meso and macro levels of this evaluation. There are implicit connections to making time and space

for being together throughout this report. However, the notion of coming together was baked into the [BE PART](#) agenda from the start through the idea of hosting annual Assemblies. While some of the partners and artists spoke of there not being the level of cross-partner exchange they had hoped for, the Assemblies (and to a certain extent the Blind Dates) allowed the time and space to experiment and question pre-existing agendas. [BE PART](#)’s emphasis on co-learning and collective exchange has enabled many members to ask fundamental questions about how they work.

Every year a different partner was tasked with hosting the network at an Assembly. This was a way for partners to meet and exchange, but also for co-producers and people who were not necessarily directly involved with the network to come to experience the works of organisations across the network. Sam Trotman, Director of [Scottish Sculpture Workshop](#) (hosts of the first [Assembly in 2021](#)), commented: “If we hadn’t had those moments factored into the application where we would work on shared themes all together, I don’t know if we would have had a sense of connection because we’d all just be doing our own thing.”

Assembly invitations being open to participants was highlighted by many partners as a positive distinction between [BE PART](#) and other EU networks. However, at times this also problematised how best to facilitate the attendance of extra-organisational people. Some partners wondered why co-producers and participants would want to attend in the first place. Assemblies were moments where partners could ask what they were doing, how they were changing, and what changes were still needed. The opportunity to articulate and share these changes was central to the network as a whole.

COVID-19 made many people feel particularly disconnected from the network and its aims. Assemblies offered the chance to meet and find out how other partners approached the issues central to [BE PART](#). In some cases, it was the first time [BE PART](#) became clear as a project. The second Assembly at [City of Women](#), for example, highlighted to many how much had to be packed into such a short amount of time. Many felt that the schedule was too full, and that time had to be split between practical and administrative tasks relating to the network as a whole, engaging with the Critical Network and Protocol, and trying to see fieldwork

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Macro findings

Coming Together: Assemblies

produced by [City of Women](#). During the third Assembly at [VIERNULVIER](#) network partners had extended periods of informal exchange, which were felt by many to be key to the Assemblies and the network as a whole.

Informal occasions

The informal aspects of Assemblies were important. The opportunity to spend time not working was key to forming a strong network where people felt they could access and share knowledge together. In the beginning, many people found it difficult to understand everyone else's working practices. Over time, the Assemblies offered a chance to really get to know the various working methods that exist across the network. Being together in-person made a significant difference in being able to interact and get past normal working discourse to conversations that allowed personal feelings and experiences to become part of the conversation. Importantly, people at different levels of partner organisations benefited from these exchanges, as did those who worked in hosting locations. Many partners commented that it is highly unusual that everyone in an organisation appreciates and understands what the aims of the network are, and how other organisations in

the network deploy the shared concepts and practices in their own specific locations. Assemblies, through their emphasis on spaces for learning rather than showcasing works, offered such chances.

Having people in a space together allows for more implicit communication and interaction, and this seems to result in more being achieved. People had very different ideas about what the Network was, and relatedly how best to work together. There were also conversations about the meanings of the terms 'participation' and 'co-creation'. Assemblies offered the time to discuss these important terms. For many, while the organised activities were good, it was the chance to eat together, walk together, and have a beer together, that made the biggest difference. It was the informal moments where the network really became real and progress was felt. To break out of the normal habits and rhythms of work, more regular conversations would help. Conversations that can be more relaxed and less structured.

Barriers to participation

Participation in the network and especially Assemblies was at times difficult. Sometimes

this was due to language barriers, a lack of confidence, or difficulties travelling to where Assemblies were being held. The chance for all partners to host, or smaller working groups to meet, would be preferable. Physical meet-ups were cited by many as overall positive experiences. For some, they were also at times anxiety-inducing and difficult. Some partners are louder, more articulate and more confident. Also, existing friendships or working relationships between some members made it more difficult for less connected and less confident partners to engage. Some partners would have appreciated more practical, smaller working groups that could address specific issues and practices in less open environments. Some people found it difficult to have open discussions in large group settings. There is a language factor to this. It could have been more clearly acknowledged that partners were also participants when they were attending Assemblies – and indeed when they were engaging with the network more generally too. The levels of thought and care extended to people who take part in Fieldworks were not always applied across the network. Some comments regarding Assemblies highlighted wider network issues. On a local level, not everyone who worked on [BE PART](#) projects understood the breadth and

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meaning of the network. For example, they knew Assemblies were happening, and they had heard about other fieldworks, but there was not a specific space where people felt they could ask questions.

Some felt there was a low level of interaction between partners, not only in physical meet-ups but also online. This led to less engagement from those liaising directly with the network, which had a knock-on effect on a local level, with [BE PART](#) topics and practices being less understood by those not directly involved. Buy-in across an organisation, rather than just from those that represent an organisation for the [BE PART](#) network, led to a greater chance of serious organisational shift. Those who were not present felt distanced or excluded from the Assembly outcomes. Some organisational and Fieldwork structures were clearly defined, but some were not. In relation to power distribution, this led to the people on the 'inside' being able to navigate complexities much more easily.

Assemblies offered an opportunity for the host to display their methods, but with only four Assemblies, not everyone got that chance. There was perhaps a need for further forums of exchange. In some cases,

people appreciated that they were part of a trans-local network of partners working with similar values. But without the actual contact provided by Assemblies, this connection did not always have much practical impact. Sam Trotman told us “there’s also been times where I’ve just spoken to partners independently because I’ve wanted advice on things... on a really informal level... it’s not the Assemblies, but the point of assembling.” While the environmental cost of flying needs to be a serious consideration, in-person meetings are key to extending and exchanging knowledge and practices across the network.

Macro findings

Critical Network and Protocols

The Critical Network and protocol did not fit into our methods in the way other aspects of [BE PART](#) did. Partners did not speak about the Critical Network's work much through our research methods and therefore we gathered little data on their work. For this reason, we only offer a passing comment on the Critical Network and the protocol.

At its best, the Critical Network encouraged difficult and honest conversations, shifting the emphasis and task of criticality back onto the network itself. Their main output became a working protocol for partners to use when working in participatory and co-productive ways. However, the large and ambiguous task of authoring such a document for such a broad and disparate network proved difficult and, ultimately, this was not satisfactorily achieved.

The Critical Network was comprised of Lotte van den Berg, Marwa Arsanios and Roland Gunst. Some of the workshops they organised during Assemblies when the Critical Network met in person with partners were seen as valuable. They encouraged difficult conversations. For example, in Ljubljana, they asked people to disclose how much money they were being paid to attend. This

was awkward and embarrassing but also cut through to some core issues that sit at the heart of co-creation and rebalancing power concerning the different amounts artists and participants are paid. Also, the move from a three-person network to the whole [BE PART](#) network being the Critical Network, with Lotte, Marwa and Roland serving as facilitators offered a valuable shift in perspective. The task of being critical is on everyone's shoulders, and being part of the network means that partners are automatically involved with a community of critique. The Critical Network were there to help that community of criticality come to the fore.

However, on a broader level, what the Critical Network was there to do was vague. Partners said they did not want the Critical Network to be "a talking shop", which they felt it had become. Importantly, some partners expressed their regret about the lack of clarity over what the Critical Network should or could have been, with partners taking responsibility for the ambiguity of the role. Due to the size of the [BE PART](#) network and the level of interaction needed to work in embedded and co-productive ways, the Critical Network could not engage at the level needed. When they had the space and time

to contribute, valuable interactions took place. A vagueness of what was being asked of the Critical Network meant they could not facilitate the types of critical exchange many had expected. Ultimately, it is unclear if they were there to produce collective artistic expressions of shared values, or to develop tools for working in collective, co-productive ways. Both approaches would be valid, but these questions should have been asked at the start of the process rather than emerge as the project progressed. A major task of the Critical Network became deciding what the Critical Network was.

A major output for those involved in the Critical Network conversations was a [Protocol](#) for working in participatory arts.

Over the course of the four Assemblies and during some extra meetings, the Critical Network recruited a team of people to help them develop an open-access document. Many felt that the process of authorship and the document itself was interesting, but perhaps too idealised. Alenka Pirman, a cultural worker based in Slovenia, introduced the concept of "Hardware and Software" during the Critical Network discussion, and this fed into the first Protocol. Hardware

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Critical Network and Protocols

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refers to the the policies policies, laws and financial structures that cultural organisations and individual artists work within. Software refers to the ethics of participation within such structures, such as ideas of care and shared authorship. A member of staff from [City of Women](#) said “I think [the protocol] was a valuable guideline, but there wasn’t enough autonomy or discussion with the Critical Network on how to materialise it... how to present it in a way that it’s relevant for the context of your organisation, your country, and your audiences.” Many partners struggled to see how they could implement the recommendations or how a centralised document works on a local level with specific socio-political contexts varying so much across the network.

For many the protocol was judged to be too complex and difficult to engage with. One person said it was “like a really long menu.” The call from the Critical Network to engage with the document was unclear, which meant that artists and other people who only worked with [BE PART](#) at a local level could not determine what amount of time was needed from them in order to contribute to such an expansive format. Although the original Critical Network was a clearly

defined group, the protocol authors were not. This also added to the difficulty for some in engaging with the document and knowing who they could speak to about it. People commented that they did not know if the document should be edited or if they were simply called upon to give feedback. With many partner organisations being split into teams and some teams having little interaction with [BE PART](#), a simple document that outlined principles more clearly would have been a valuable tool in sharing [BE PART](#) across organisations and beyond. Ultimately it is unclear if the protocol was an experiment that had resulted in a tool, or a process in and of itself.

Reflection on our evaluation methods

[BE PART](#) has given us the opportunity to apply three methods that allow others to become central to the research process. We tried to create spaces where people can enter critical conversations with peers about what participation means to them. In some ways, we tried to devolve the role of the researcher across the network to varying degrees of success. This move was not to divest or deny the power we held as researchers but to encourage an extension of who can hold that power.

This evaluation has gone some way to get behind the scenes and beyond reviews of a final performance, or the public rhetoric used by partner organisations to describe their practices of participation. However, due to financial, geographic, and temporal constraints, as well as the global pandemic, we had to rely on gatekeepers from partner organisations. Inevitably, this meant partners had control over which people we had access to, meaning it is possible that organisations would choose those they expected to have had positive experiences working with them. However, we are not cynical about this arrangement as the organisations have a duty of care and have to consider the ethical dimensions of inviting people they have pre-existing relationships with into the research process.

Due to the dispersed nature of the [BE PART](#) network, there were many difficulties associated with our methods. This was particularly evident with the *Fieldnote Diaries* where greater support or resources were required. When diarists did follow processes more intensively, and were able to become participants in a process, the diaries were richer for it.

In many cases, [COTT](#) offered an opportunity

to share experiences of working on something together at moments of difficulty or provided a stopgap to re-group and reflect. But again, it depended on the partner organisations finding the time to play.

On the other hand, while the *Blind Dates* were more manageable, they often remained performative spaces where it was difficult for strangers meeting to get beneath the surface.

While the methods opened up the research process, they were resource-heavy. Involving people in time-specific reflexive tasks places demands on already overworked and under-resourced organisations. The way organisations engaged with our participatory methods evidenced the demands placed on them by funding timescales and budgets. We have tried to reframe evaluation as ongoing acts of care rather than something that must be done to satisfy funders. However, this reframing becomes yet another demand. In future, this type of evaluation would require a more significant budget to make sure people were paid properly (while the diarists were paid, the participants in the *Blind Dates* and [COTT](#) games were not). The process has raised the question as to who has the time and space to critically reflect on

the underpinning values of participation, not just how best to ‘do participation’?

We hope that moments of self-analysis, decoding and interpretation, can be read in the methods we have outlined – moments of analysis start at the card table, or in a field-note. We want analysis and interpretation to happen as part of participatory research processes. On reflection, we would like to include people in the reflective process of analysing the data. However, to involve people in the process more thoroughly would not only require a significantly larger budget, but also systemic change on a meso/organisational and broader macro/network or policy level. This highlights a distinct power imbalance regarding who gets to analyse the material we gathered. For any positive move to happen, there must be more time and space for those who work on and are the target of participatory projects to speak for themselves, unmediated or analysed by others outside the experience. We should guard against ambitions for horizontal, participatory arts and research, which, despite sounding promising, may do nothing to challenge the structural constraints that keep cultural participation performative.

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5. Recommendations

Our recommendations fall into three sections followed by a brief summary of key findings and suggestions for future work.

Infrastructure

It is important that the networks understand who maintains relationships and what relationships are valued most. The role of mediation is key to understanding this, as is greater transparency about resources. To know who holds spaces and cares for the carers we recommend the following actions:

- Audit the resources and map the skills, knowledge and financial capacity across the organisations and the network;
- Clarify the values, roles, budgets and processes internal to partner organisations and across the network as a whole;
- Rethink governance and decision-making powers internally and across the network. This could include youth boards or creating paths for participants to sit on boards.

Creating connections

Partners could try to work together more closely, meet more often and develop more opportunities for co-creators and participants. The strength of cross-network social bonds at the end of the 4 years should be built upon and placed at the centre of future working practices.

- Rethink the Assembly model to have more in-person meetings with less formal and packed schedules;
- Develop a shared policy for paying participants equitably;
- Move away from project-based logic. Build on existing relationships and work over a longer timescale;
- Offer greater opportunities for training and paid work – the Fieldnote Diarists could be an avenue to pursue in this respect, but it would need to be viewed as a more embedded role with a longer life span.'

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Evaluations

Unsurprisingly, we see evaluation as a key strain of future shared practice that should be emphasised at the start of any process and given more space throughout a project. Collective, shared learning is an amazing possibility offered by [BE PART](#), but one that needs to be fully resourced to facilitate reflexive spaces at a partner and network level.

- Embed evaluation from an early stage, for example in planning meetings and prior to funding application and be clear about what everyone wants and values in working collectively. Potentially nominate individuals or working groups that are responsible for individual partner evaluation and reflection;
- Research individually and as a network so that learning can happen at local and network levels;
- Hold regular physical meetings for collective reflection. This could be through forming smaller, subnetwork working groups.

Learning in public

All of the above should be done in as open a way as possible. A move to make the work of the network more public will require that partners translate the “artistic concepts” they use into more graspable, usable language. Some partners are likely to need to change the language used on their websites, so that a greater range of audiences can engage with the content. Communications should not be seen as a centralised task but also as a space for collective learning and sharing. This step could lead to organisations making space for new people to enter and to become guardians of budgets and power. Organisations could become spaces that actively benefit the various communities that surround them.

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