(UN)COMMON SPACES

— Time and Space to Shift Art in Public Space

2020

2024

EVALUATION REPORT

in situ

Co-funded by
the European Union

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TIME AND SPACE TO SHIFT ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

Founded in 2003 as a network of six programmers, over two decades IN SITU has drawn its evolutionary path through seven major European projects co-financed by the European commission – each lasting around three-four years, and each conceived as an experiment trying out new ideas and approaches for expanding art in public space.

The network today is the result and record of these overlapping steps, interwoven from the relationships, tools, themes, and working patterns that have stood the test of time. Most recently, the two projects Platform (2014-2017) and ACT (2016-2020) concentrated on putting in place collaborative tools for the network, and on developing a rhythm and cadence for collaboration and creation, laying out a cycle of activities, including small and large-scale laboratories, residencies, pilot projects, and a transnational mobility programme.

Building on this work from a fresh perspective, the (UN)COMMON SPACES "(U)CS" project has centred itself on a desire to reinvent IN SITU's relationship with civil society – and to put participation at the heart of all its activities. (U)CS was designed then to approach this goal from multiple angles. On the one hand, it has tried to engage audiences more closely in artistic works – their creation and execution. But it has also sought to explore the potential of participation to reshape the network itself and the people in it. What if decision-making was shared across a larger group of stakeholders? What if artists and citizens had a say together in how the network was governed? And if they did, where would IN SITU go next?

To try to turn these ideals into reality, (U)CS focused on giving time and space for building deeper relationships – between Associate Artists and network partners, but also between artistic works and the people who visit them, or the environments they play within. To build a closer link to local contexts (U)CS also saw the creation of a new role of 'Associate Citizen', one per partner, with the hope of involving local actors through the whole of the project cycle as outside eyes, mentors, advisers, domain experts, and local fixers.

In light of all these aims, it's important to note that while the (U)CS project was submitted for funding in November 2019 it only launched in November 2020, after being selected in May 2020, during the first year of the pandemic. Spread over four years, it has tracked a time of turbulence and change for society at large and for the cultural sector, including profound disruptions to our relationship with public space, person to person contact, and art in life. For the project, this has presented an operational challenge given the focus on participation, and many activities had to be adapted.

With all this in mind, this evaluation looks at what was learned over the course of the (U)CS project, covering each of its major objectives. Here they are divided across four sections: Space to Relate, Time to Grow, Time to Decide, and Space to Reflect. The evaluation itself is based on an analysis of quantitative data collected by the various partners from November 2020 to October 2024, as well as qualitative surveys conducted following key (U)CS events and other key milestones throughout the project – all reflected on in the context of IN SITU's long history of experimentation and renewal.

OVERVIEW IN SITU (UN)COMMON SPACES

MEMBERS AND ACTIVITIES

MEMBERS & PEOPLE ENGAGED IN THE NETWORK

18
MAIN PARTNERS FROM
13
COUNTRIES
AND
12
ASSOCIATE PARTNERS FROM
10
COUNTRIES

16
ASSOCIATE ARTISTS OR COMPANIES AND COLLECTIVES SELECTED BY THE PARTNERS

20
EMERGING ARTISTS OR COMPANIES AND COLLECTIVES SELECTED BY THE PARTNERS AND FOUR OF THEM THROUGH AN OPEN CALL IN FOUR COUNTRIES (LITHUANIA, GERMANY, PORTUGAL AND BELGIUM)

13
CITIZENS-EXPERTS IN PUBLIC SPACE, TO OPEN THE FIELD TO CIVIL SOCIETY SELECTED BY THE PARTNERS

AUDIENCES AT THE CORE OF THE PROJECT

NETWORKING AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

5
ARTISTIC LABS TO DEVELOP ARTISTIC PROJECTS

1
PUBLIC EVENT WITH MORE THAN
150
PARTICIPANTS ATTENDING

15
ARTISTIC PROPOSALS, AND TALKS FROM MEMBERS OF THE NETWORK

5
INFORMATION SESSIONS ORGANISED WITH ON THE MOVE FOR THE ARTISTS AND BASED ON THEIR NEEDS

MOBILITY SCHEME

TRANSNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISTS TO TRAVEL TO ANOTHER COUNTRY FOR RESIDENCIES OR TO PRESENT THEIR WORK AT PARTNER FESTIVALS/ EVENTS.

2,576
REPRESENTATIONS

455
PROGRAMMING AND RESIDENCIES ACTIVITIES

199
CREATIONS TOURING IN THE NETWORK

98
ARTISTS INVITED IN THE VARIOUS FESTIVALS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

70%
OF THE TOTAL BUDGET OF
4 000 000 €
DEDICATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTISTIC PROJECT

(CO-PRODUCTION FUNDING FOR ASSOCIATE ARTISTS, SMALL SEED GRANTS FOR EMERGING ARTISTS FOR NEW PROJECTS)

7TH IN SITU PROJECT
CO-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
THROUGH THE CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME

OVERVIEW

MOOC - MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE

200 +
MINUTES OF FREE ONLINE COURSES OF THE PRE-EXISTING MOOC CREATE IN PUBLIC SPACE AND
27
NEW VIDEOS FOR AROUND
4
HOURS IN TOTAL OF CONTENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW MOOC " CULTURAL RIGHTS AND ART IN PUBLIC SPACE : INHABIT, COOPERATE, CREATE " INCLUDING
12
INTERVIEWS OF THE IN SITU MEMBERS

IN SITU PODCASTS

3
SEASONS
6
THEMATIC LINES
18
EPISODES
58
GUESTS

RESOURCES

NARRATIVES

59
PIECES OF CONTENT PRODUCED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE NETWORK (ARTICLES, VIDEOS...)

TIMELINE

KEY EVENTS / GATHERINGS

DECEMBER 2020
Online launch

FEBRUARY 2021
1st online meeting
with partners and
the Associate Artists
(1 day - 42 participants)

APRIL 2021
1st online Artistic Lab
(2 days and 66 participants)

NOVEMBER 2021
2nd Artistic Lab
in Tàrrega - Spain
(3 days and
58 participants)

APRIL 2022
3rd Artistic Lab
in Budapest - Hungary
(3 days and 55 participants)

APRIL 2023
4th Artistic Lab in Pristina - Kosovo
(3 days and 54 participants)

OCTOBER 2023
5th Artistic Lab in Milan - Italy
(2 days and 56 participants)

APRIL 2024
6th Artistic Lab in Pelt - Belgium
(2 days and 64 participants)
+ IN SITU Open Day
(150 people, 15 artistic proposals)

SEPTEMBER 2024
Last partner meeting
in Fredrikstad – Norway
(2 days and 35 participants)

2020

2024

RESOURCES RELEASED

MAY 2021
Reopening of the MOOC
“Create in public space”

MAY 2022
Launch of the IN SITU Podcast series

FEBRUARY 2022 TO OCTOBER 2024
Transnational mobility scheme for IN SITU artists

SEPTEMBER 2022
Launch of the 1st IN SITU
Open call for artists from
Lithuania, Portugal,
Germany and Belgium

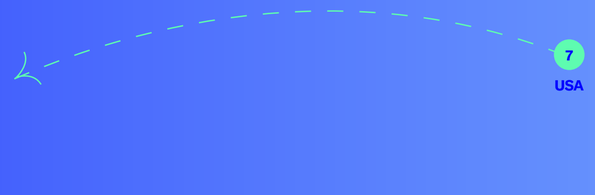
MAY 2024
Release of the publications
“We Believe in public space”
& “Audience development - let’s
get inspired by European practices”

OCTOBER 2024
Release of the evaluation
report “Time and space
to shift art in public space”

OCTOBER 2024
Launch of the new MOOC
“Cultural Rights in public space”
co-created with FAI-AR and RC21

MAP OF PARTNERS

1. LIEUX PUBLICS, MARSEILLE
● **FRANCE**
2. ARTOPOLIS, BUDAPEST
● **HUNGARY**
3. ATELIER 231, SOTTEVILLE-LÈS-ROUEN
● **FRANCE**
4. BASE, MILAN
● **ITALY**
5. ČTYŘI DNY, PRAGUE
● **CZECH REPUBLIC**
6. FIRATÀRREGA, TÀRREGA
● **SPAIN**
7. FLYNN CENTER, BURLINGTON,
● **USA**
8. FREEDOM, HULL
● **UK**
9. KIT / METROPOLIS, COPENHAGEN
● **DENMARK**
10. LA STRADA, GRAZ
● **AUSTRIA**
11. NORFOLK & NORWICH FESTIVAL, NORFOLK
● **UK**
12. ODA TEATRI, PRISTINA
● **KOSOVO**
13. OEROL FESTIVAL, TERSCHELLING
● **THE NETHERLANDS**
14. ØSTFOLD INTERNASJONALE TEATER, FREDRIKSTAD
● **NORWAY**
15. PROVINCIAAL DOMEIN DOMMELHOF, PELT
● **BELGIUM**
16. SARDEGNA TEATRO, CAGLIARI
● **ITALY**
17. SCÈNE NATIONALE DE L'ESSONNE, EVRY
● **FRANCE**
18. ZONA K, MILAN
● **ITALY**







A key objective for the (U)CS project was to use artistic creation to “inhabit and regenerate public space”, and to “give meaning to more in-depth and enlarged relationships between artists and inhabitants”. There were two major support actions that addressed this interplay between artist, audiences, and public space: a financial support for Associate Artists to develop new works and creations; and the transnational mobility scheme, which allowed (U)CS artists to visit another country for a residency or to present these works to the audience.

One way to measure the impact of these activities is by their scope. Overall, the (U)CS project involved 455 residencies and programming activities, across 13 countries and more than 50 towns and cities, involving 98 separate artists/companies. 73.2% of these activities involved transnational mobility (with the remainder taking place at a national level, but with artists moving to another city or region). In total, there were 1,423 trips and 2,864 days of presence (around 7.8 years) for on-site activities. The average length of an activity was 6.5 days, but durations ranged from 1 to 124 days. In total, (U)CS events reached 392,550 audience members, part of the more than 1 million reached across IN SITU member festivals and events over the course of the project.

In a sense, this flow of artistic works is what IN SITU knows and does best, as projects supported by the network can tap into the existing resources and programming activities of partners. For (U)CS, though, such headline numbers are only part of the story. What about the ambition of creating deeper relationships with audiences?

GOING DEEPER

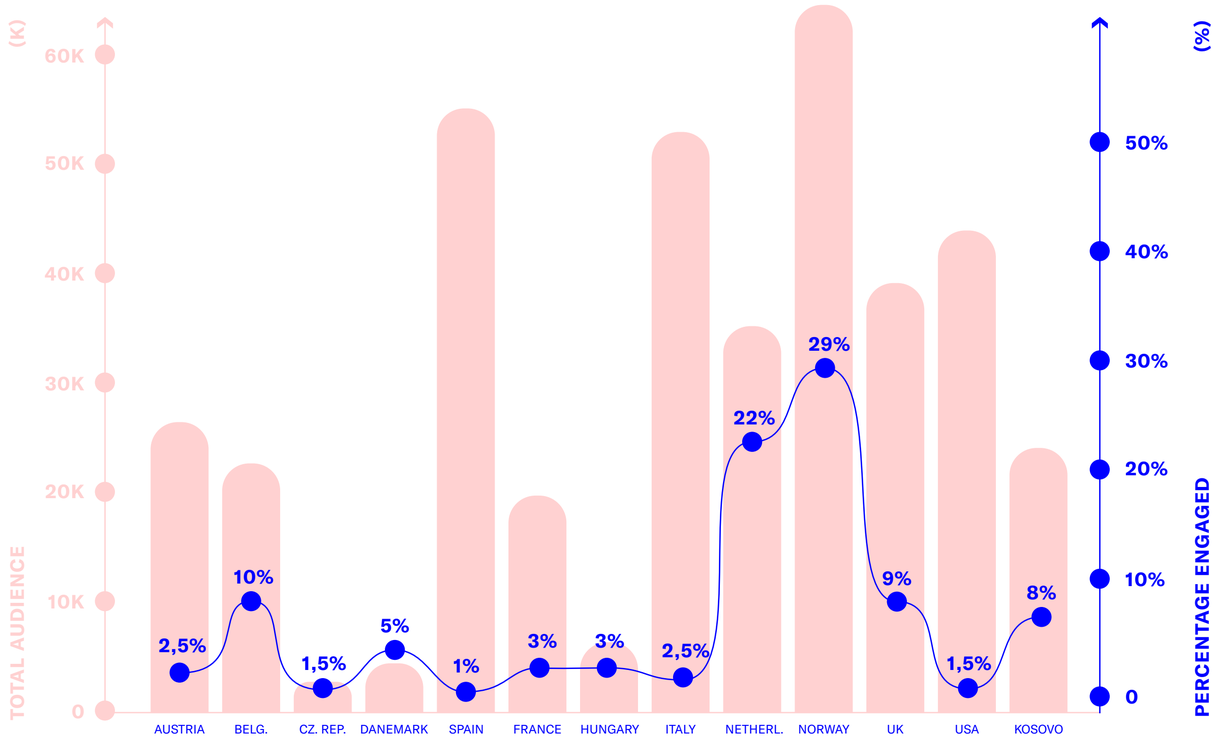
In collecting statistics for IN SITU activities, project partners kept track both of total audience numbers and the numbers of “engaged audiences” – understood as those who actively participated in a project at different levels: by contributing to the creation process, by being part of the production during the presentation, or being involved in follow-on activities.

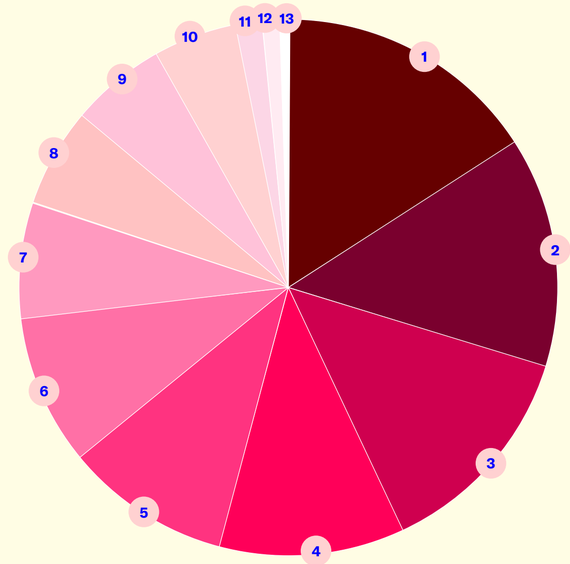
Over the course of the project, 37,121 audience members were counted as engaged audiences within (U)CS activities – 9.5% of the total audience reached through the project. Looking at breakdowns by country there is strong variance, but reflecting the different profiles of the partner festivals/platforms, and to some extent their existing experience working with participatory models. In Denmark for instance, the share of engaged audiences was 67.7%, driven in part by KIT’s focus on site-specific models.

The share of engaged audience also correlated to length time a (U)CS activity spent on-site, backing the decision of the project to concentrate on supporting longer project timeframes. For activities with less than 10 days of on-site presence, only 7.4% of the total audience was considered engaged. For activities of one week or more, the figure was 11.6%. For activities of 10 days or greater it was 14.1%.

Performances that were mobile rather than fixed had a similar proportion of engaged audiences (10.1% versus 9%). In the final count, around three-quarters of (U)CS activities (74.3%) involved adaptation to a local context.

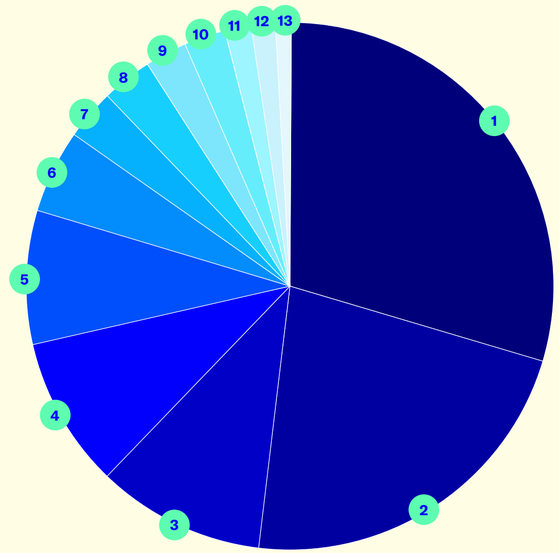
COMPARISON OF THE TOTAL AUDIENCE & THE ENGAGEMENT (BY COUNTRY)





1. **16%** NORWAY (62,524)
2. **14%** SPAIN (54,610)
3. **13,5%** ITALY (52,445)
4. **11%** USA (43,226)
5. **10%** UK (38,706)
6. **9%** NETHERLANDS (35,297)
7. **7%** AUSTRIA (27,100)
8. **6%** KOSOVO (23,960)
9. **5,5%** BELGIUM (21,743)
10. **5%** FRANCE (19,971)
11. **1,5%** HUNGARY (6,680)
12. **1%** DENMARK (4,031)
13. **0,5%** CZECH REPUBLIC (2,257)

TOTAL AUDIENCE BY COUNTRY



1. **29%** NORWAY
2. **22 %** NETHERLANDS
3. **10%** BELGIUM
4. **9%** UK
5. **8%** KOSOVO
6. **5%** DENMARK
7. **3%** FRANCE
8. **3%** HUNGARY
9. **2,5%** ITALY
10. **2,5%** AUSTRIA
11. **1,5%** CZECH REPUBLIC
12. **1,5%** USA
13. **1%** SPAIN

ENGAGED AUDIENCE BY COUNTRY

NEW RELATIONSHIPS NEED TIME.

If audience relationships need time to develop, the same is true for relations between partners, artists and collaborators. (U)CS was designed with this in mind, aiming to give time and space for the various actors in the project to feel out new ways of working.

In practice, this open-endedness created challenges – particularly early on in the process. Early rounds of survey feedback, from both Associate Artists and partners, return often to the feeling that the collaborative elements of the project lacked purpose, or that the direction of travel was unclear. As one Associate Artist wrote following the first Artistic lab (planned to take place in Spain but moved online due to the pandemic): "Projects will be defined based on the partners' context I collaborate with. It is very unclear for me though to define the four years at this point, as I do not see yet which partners I will collaborate with. But from the sessions I could identify ones where we have themes in common." Another wrote: "I always felt that everyone was slightly uncertain about "why" we were doing things. I understand that it must be open-ended and exploratory; but it wasn't clear to me about what we were aiming to achieve."

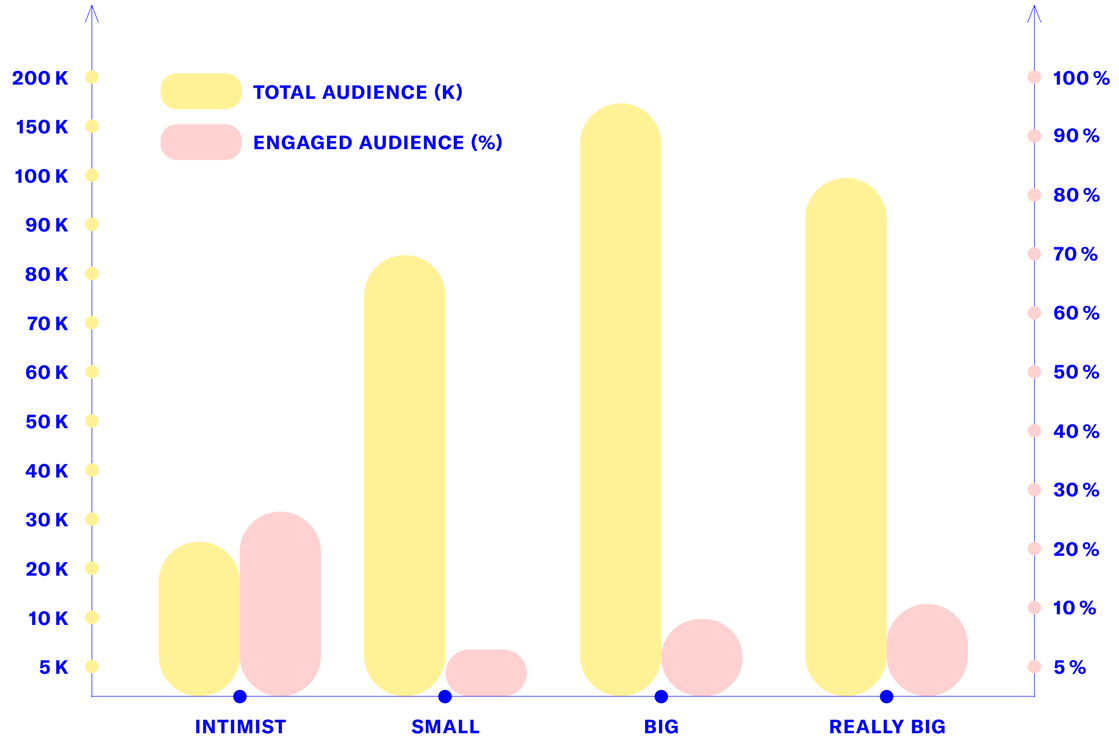
Complicating this, as partners and Associate Artists both pointed out in their evaluations, artists were at different stages with their projects – some in an early concept/research phase, some more or less ready to present a work. While this was not conceptually problematic for (U)CS, which after all aimed to lay the ground-work for collaborative relationships that were unique and tailored to circumstance and context, it made encounters harder to structure, and extended the "exploratory" phase of seeking common ground for work. "I'm concerned that I don't see a way forward", wrote one partner at the first Artistic lab. "I could set up a residency programme and invite a range of artists to visit but this doesn't feel strong enough... I do find the artist/presenter/citizen an interesting proposition."

To some extent, this uncertainty is to be expected: if you want to do something new rather than repeat an established pattern, then a period of searching is needed. And indeed it's coherent with the project's focus on giving more time to the development of relationships. By the final (U)CS survey, most partners felt that deeper relationships had formed. As one wrote: "during the meetings that have punctuated the last four years, the feedback we received from the Associate Artists has demonstrated how vital it was for their work to be hosted in different locations, allowing them to explore new territories and engage with a wide variety of communities and landscapes."

A microcosm of this overall process of searching and defining might be Emke Idema's supported project School of Unlived Worlds. For a session in Stattegg, 10 participants came together over three days to "explore their relations to the surrounding forest and meadows", co-devising ways to disrupt their usual ways of being (in nature) and open up shifts in perception and the senses. When you want to get somewhere new, often you don't know the way.

WHERE TO FOCUS.

Deep engagement can bring many benefits, but a strong finding of the (U)CS project is that it is difficult at scale. The activity data collected shows a link between very small audience numbers and higher proportions of engaged audiences. Activities were split over four categories – Intimist, Small, Big, and Very Big. For activities at the Intimist scale (32.5 mean audience size), 26.3% of audiences were counted as engaged. Taking even a slight jump up to Small scale (77.2 mean), the figure falls to 6.6%. In spite of there being fewer overall activities in the category, the Intimist block also had the largest number of participants from other sectors – both proportionally and in absolute terms.



This challenge of reconciling scale and deep engagement played out across the project more widely – particularly in respect of partner-artist relationships. The original project plan envisaged much greater interplay between the Associate and Emerging Artists, with the Associate Artists developing as mentors to their emerging peers throughout the project. This element didn't unfold as expected, though it was also disrupted by covid : when the first in-person meetings were delayed, the Associate Artists and main partners decided that the regular meetings should focus on their smaller group to develop more meaningful relationships.

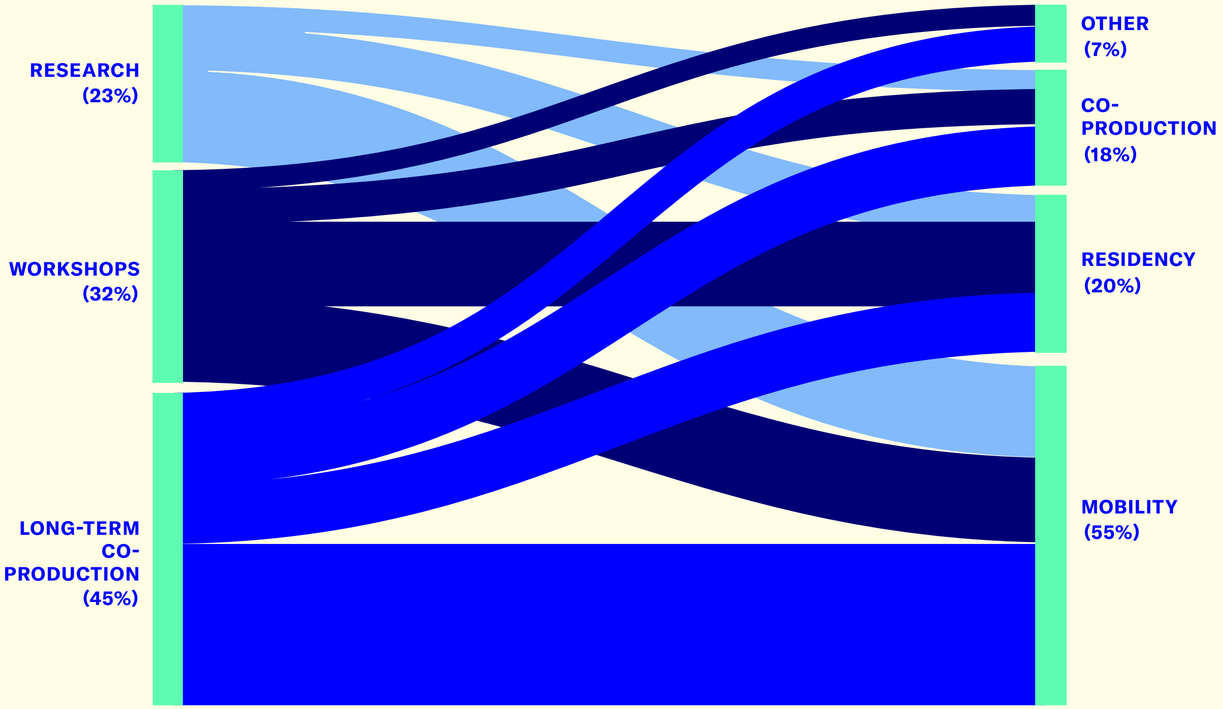
As a result, the Emerging Artists played a smaller role in the project, entering later with an Artistic lab dedicated to them in Pristina in April 2023, co-organised with on-site partner Teatri ODA, which saw the 16 artists selected by project partners joined by a further 4 selected through the first open call launched by IN SITU for four days of exchange and discussion around the development of their project. At the end of these four days, each artist was granted a writing aid of 3,000 € to further develop the ideas/concept they presented during the Artistic lab. Feedback from both Emerging Artists and partners touched on the lack of concrete objectives for the Lab itself, as well as the limited capacity for immediate support.

A key takeaway, as pointed out in the partner feedback, is that it's important to be careful about expectations when inviting artist involvement : "Things take time to develop and that is the beauty and rigour of how IN SITU has worked, let's be realistic about expectations and needs on all sides." Another wrote : "[...] we already have many priorities and commitments to the Associate Artists, plus older IN SITU artists so realistically the Emerging Artists if of interest to partners should expect to seek support over the next few years. Some ideas may be more suited to partners' programmes immediately of course but we need to be careful to be realistic about expectations of what happens next and how partners already have many priorities and commitments with other artists for example."

In other words, the effects of these meetings will be seen later – and long-term (somewhat unpredictable) outcomes are a strong characteristic of IN SITU and its cyclical, project-based approach. One past example is Kaleider's PIG, developed as a pilot project under ACT. The piece returned to tour in (U)CS, while Kaleider themselves were selected as an Associate Artist for the new cycle.

Of the 455 (U)CS residencies or programming activities, 133 (29.2% of all activities) were for projects first introduced through IN SITU workshops for Emerging Artists. Many predate (U)CS, and some go back almost a decade.

DISTRIBUTION OF ARTISTS BY SOURCE OF INTRODUCTION & TYPE OF ACTIVITY



Time will tell the full results, but the (U)CS Artistic lab for Emerging Artists has already produced some concrete outcomes: six out of the 20 artists at the event have been invited on a transnational mobility – with Jade Marie Anderson going to Oerol, Moni Wespi to Zona K and Dommelhof, SVUNG Research group to Zona K, Juan Ignacio Tula to FiraTàrrega and Teatri ODA, Corps Citoyen to Lieux publics, and Scène Nationale de l'Essonne, and Marija Baranauskaite to FiraTàrrega. Some Emerging Artists have also been able to take up national opportunities with their referent partners, including Corps Citoyen in Milan (BASE), Big Bouncers in Tàrrega, La Ville en Feu in Marseille (Lieux publics), and Abhishek Thapar in Terschelling (Oerol festival). The Emerging Artists were invited to the (U)CS Artistic lab and the IN SITU Open Day in Pelt, with nine out of the 20 present for the meeting.

Despite the promise of future activity, evaluation feedback broadly agrees that the (U)CS project raised questions of where to focus. Beyond the balance between Associate and Emerging Artists, some partners felt that (U)CS' deliberate emphasis on artist-partner relationships shifted energy away from cooperation between partners in the network: "Cooperation between the partners was less strong than in other projects as we are now dealing more with the [Associate Artists] rather than with each other." Where the approach worked it was by using the artistic works themselves as a conduit for cooperation and pooling resources – for instance, Atelier 231 funding a residency of Sauf le Dimanche at Teatri ODA in Kosovo and another residency for La Zankà in Budapest, where IN SITU partner Artopolis is located, a strong sign of solidarity and support between the partners.

As a whole, perhaps (U)CS planned to maintain too many long-term artistic relationships, though it is a success of the coordination that the project was adapted, and in some ways scaled back, to ensure its quality. This has also been part of the learning process, and gives some valuable pointers on how to design future iterations of IN SITU and how to carry forward the ethic of deeper, more engaged relationships when potentially working with larger groups.

The contradiction between developing deep and long term relationships and supporting a large number of artists will continue to be addressed in the future. How can relationships be meaningful and multiplied? IN SITU may support more emerging artists so the nature of acting as a stepping stone must be better embraced to take advantage of the power of the network while managing the expectations of artists. It means accepting the fact that the formal support for a defined period of time and that the effects of this springboard cannot be completely controlled. The support scheme will be more strongly defined at the backend: keeping freedom of imagination for the artistic projects, but refining the monitoring framework.



With its focus on adapting works to local contexts, (U)CS hoped also to have long-term impacts on artist careers by helping them learn new strategies for involving citizens in creation processes.

One direct mechanism to achieve this was the co-productions, which supported artists to make new works that could adapt to different places and contexts. Co-production is a core activity of the IN SITU network – something done both in previous projects and across regular programming activities. The network is well equipped for this, with different partners covering different resources. As one wrote in the final evaluation survey: “A strength of the IN SITU partnership is the diversity of members. Some are more focused on development of ideas and the support of artists while others have an emphasis on presentation and public engagement. This played out well in (U)CS with some partners developing residency and long-term creation opportunities, and others providing support for work to reach audiences.”

Given this strong network, it is no surprise to see some strong projects come out of this strand of activity. Seth Honnor's The Arch – an "installation opera" that builds a freestanding arch from ice and concrete – is one example. Within (U)CS, it went from idea, to research in their studios and in collaboration with their referent partner Freedom Festival in Hull to touring – in summer 2024 visiting VivaCité (Sotteville-lès-Rouen), Oerol (Terschelling), Theater Op de Markt (Provinciaal Domein Dommelhof), Freedom festival (Freedom festival), and the Flynn Center (Burlington) in the IN SITU network.

THE ARCH

An example of coproduction & mobility of an artistic project in the network

1 18 SEPTEMBER 2023
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT,
—
● ATELIER 231, **ROUEN, FR**

PARTNERS
OTHERS

1 18TH MAY 2024
INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE,
—
● VIVA CITÉ,
SOTTEVILLE-LÈS-ROUEN, FR

2 24—26TH MAY,
UK PREMIERE,
—
● MAYFEST, **BRISTOL, UK**

3 31ST MAY, 1ST JUNE,
AUAWIRLEBEN,
—
● BERN, **CH**

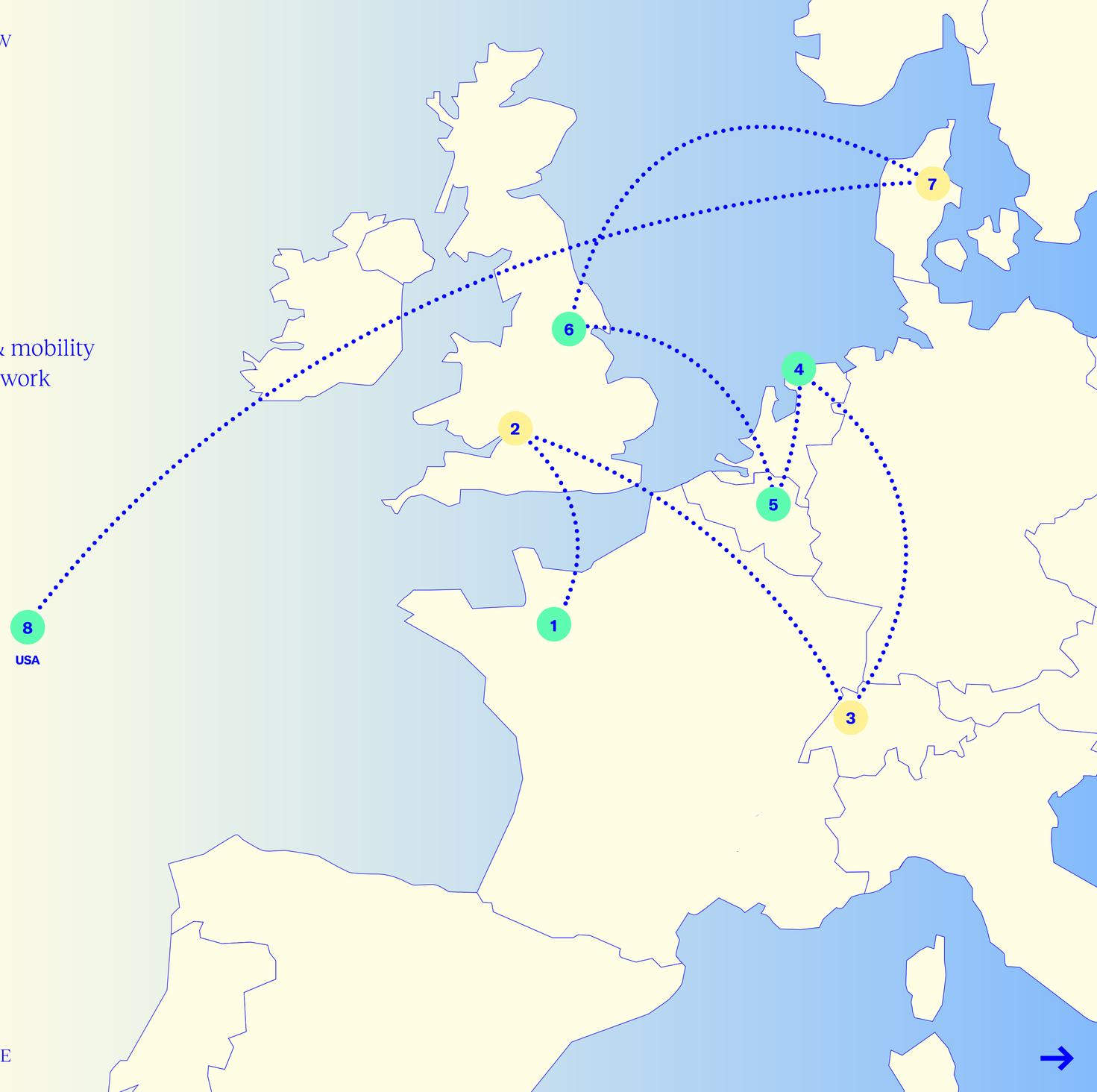
4 7—16TH JUNE,
OEROL,
—
● TERSCHELLING, **NL**

5 9—10TH AUGUST,
THEATER OP DE MARKT,
—
● HASSELT, **BE**

6 31ST AUGUST,
FREEDOM FESTIVAL,
—
● HULL, **UK**

7 4—7TH SEPTEMBER,
AARHUS FESTUGE,
—
● AARHUS, **DENMARK**

8 6TH, 11TH OCTOBER,
THE FLYNN,
—
● BURLINGTON VT, **USA**



Not all co-productions achieved the same level of activity, but this should not be unexpected. As one partner wrote in the final evaluation survey: “[...] it is also important to mention that by the end of the four-year programme, significant differences emerged in the “performances” of the Associate Artists (meaning: how many residency and presentation opportunities they had at how many partners) - but I find it a natural or organic consequence of a long process, and it definitely would not have been healthy to try to “control” or “equalise” this process.”

Alongside the co-productions, (U)CS also took a new path by creating the position of “Associate citizen”, renamed then “citizen-experts”. The idea was that each partner would propose one figure from their local civic society to mentor artists and support their creative processes with new resources and connections.

Conceptually, the citizen experts were a perfect expression of (U)CS’s focus on engagement with civil society, but in practice the idea faced some issues within the pilot implementation. One of the largest relates to the capacity of the citizen experts themselves: partners wanted to select individuals who were prominent, well-connected, active in the community, but then found that these individuals had limited time to give to the project.

Beyond these logistical concerns, the position of citizen expert was also an open one – a new, third point in the established connection between partners and artists.

TIME TO GROW

THIRD PERSON

As with relations between partners and artists, the citizen expert position lacked structure and definition at the start of the project. Feedback from the first Artistic lab was unanimous. “I don't think my role as a citizen is clear and I've felt a bit part in the discussions”, said one. Another: “it is still unclear to what extent [we] will be of any use/work with artists and partners on the production of artworks”.

As with other strands of the project, it was a deliberate trade-off to give citizen experts space to design collaborations to their own strengths and profiles, and to try something new – but the period of uncertainty/searching lasted longer than with other parts of the project. By the third Artistic lab, held in Budapest in April 2022, the position of the citizen expert was still hazy, but more nuanced: “The group is very kind and welcoming, and in that sense I did not have any difficulty to find my place in it however it still complicated for me to concretely define the role of the citizen expert, where should we stand, what position is the good one for us.

BACK TO SUMMARY

What I see today is: a collective will to look for the answers to these questions, the diversity of profiles within the citizens which bring different point of views and expertise, a position of external eye which can be interesting for the artists, the programmers and the network to go further in the conversation and the development of the projects.”

This idea of “going further” expresses the ambitions of the citizen expert position, and echoes the desires of the partners, who expressed that they wanted the citizens to be more involved, while treating the problem of their engagement as a distant one: “And the citizens should be better involved and understand that we need their involvement”. “It would have been interesting to have more citizens present and give them more space to present themselves and let them also propose which kind of connections with artists' work were interesting to them”.

Within the triangle of citizen, artist and partner, the link between citizen experts and artists gave the clearest relationship and outcomes. Even in early feedback, several citizen experts said they saw possibilities in the work of artists. Following the second Artistic lab, one wrote: "I already can imagine collaboration with Cristina Maldonado and a funeral cooperative in Rennes".

This first glimpse of potential eventually blossomed into a collaboration: Atelier 231's citizen expert Fabienne Quéméneur, a coordinator for multiple cultural projects in northern France, introduced artist Cristina Maldonado to funeral directors in Rennes for her project Invisible Bonds: Performativity of Death in the Everyday. Her research led to the performance, or protocol, To Plant a Person, which was shown in September 2024 at the first edition of the Festival de la Mort organised by the Cooperative Funeral Home of Rennes, as well as in Atelier 231's own Weekend Mortel, a programme of performances and talks with members of alternative and regional funeral homes. It also helped spark the creation of another performance, Infinite Game, presented at FiraTàrrega in September 2024.

Brokering local connections is one way citizen experts found they could be involved – but in some cases collaborations were more direct. Marc El Samrani, the citizen expert chosen by Lieux publics and a researcher on new urban public spaces, closely followed 600 HIGHWAYMEN's participatory work A Thousand Ways: An Assembly – first as an audience member, then later participating in the translation of the work and its preparation for a showing in France at Atelier 231, at Lieux publics in Marseille and even outside of the network in Montpellier at L'Atteline, where Marc El Samrani is working.

By the later stages of the project, the Associate Artists had also noticed a shift in the position of the citizens: "I really liked that the citizens were involved and created very engaging activities. In a way it felt like they had found their place by the time we had the meeting in Milan in October 2023, which was lovely to experience". In the final survey for partners, one respondent also saw a path to potential future development: "Through the network of citizens included in the project, there is short- and medium-term potential to undertake cross-sector partnerships at the international level and this brings an added value to our work and an elevated quality for our future initiatives and programmes".

Bringing citizen experts into the network was an experiment and a risk – but it was meant to be. If the programme continued for another cycle, key things to improve would be to make sure to pick individuals who have time to engage fully, and to give more structure and guidance for citizen involvement: space for exploration, but from a clearer start point. One citizen expert also suggested that they could be mobile within the project, alongside the artists: "I think that a residency of a citizen and an artist welcomed by a partner in another country [...] would be a really interesting experience to build a thinking of public space in Europe".

TIME TO DECIDE

(U)CS aimed to make the IN SITU partnership more diverse by redistributing decision making and enacting new forms of governance. To do this it planned to involve artists in the steering of the network, as well as the citizen experts for a closer connection between governance and civil society.

On a formal level, governance of the network itself was broken out into multiple segments, with the steering committee and working groups as the main forums to mix the different project actors:

GOVERNANCE OF THE NETWORK

DECISIONS MAKING

PARTNERS

yearly in person
+ on demand online

To decide on the network main orientations and strategy

—

To implement activities and report to Coordination

EXTERNAL RESSOURCES

SERVICE PROVIDER + EXPERTS

To reinforce the expertise of the Coordination team

COORDINATION TEAM

CONSULTATION

WORKING GROUP

Monthly for the duration of the activity

Partners, associate artists and citizens on a voluntary basis

To provide advice on specific event or activities

ADVISORY

STEERING COMMITTEE

Regular basis, average every three months

4 partners, an associate artist and a citizen expert

To guarantee common values

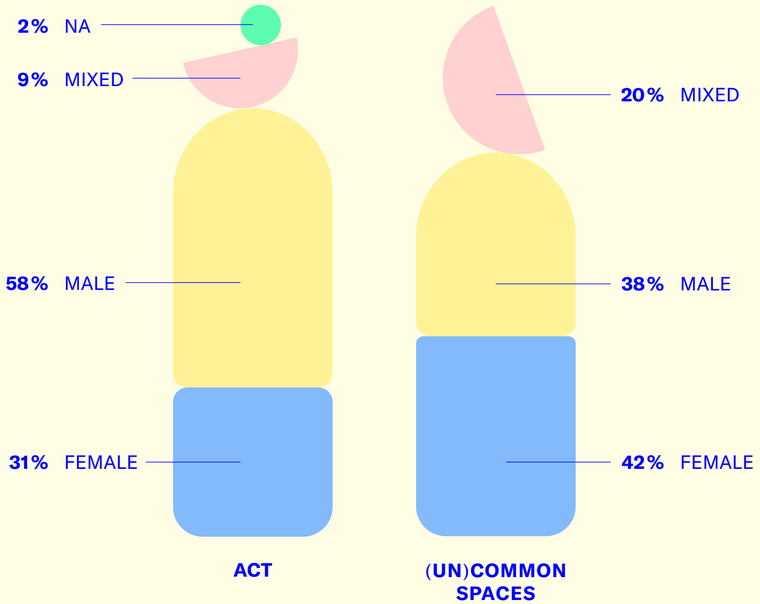
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To ensure compliance with overall strategy

Perhaps the most simple and successful example of a different approach to decision-making was a reworking of the core IN SITU selection process. Whereas in the past each partner independently picked a number of artists who would be supported by the entire network. (U)CS wanted to root itself in, and formalise, the consensus approach which was always at the core of the network. Project participants (Associate Artists and citizen experts) were jointly selected at a plenary session, on the basis of each partners' shortlisted recommendations.

With a better awareness of the big picture, the partners achieved a more balanced gender representation among Associate Artists than in past editions: 42% female, 38% male, 20% a mix (compared to previous project ACT, where the division was 31% female, 58% male, 9% a mix, and 2% NA).

Gender of associate artists
for ACT and (UN)COMMON SPACES



As with other elements of the project, this effort to rework the mechanics of the partnership was an experiment – and led to some of the same issues encountered elsewhere...

BALANCED DECISIONS: GROUP SELECTION LEADS TO BETTER GENDER BALANCE

WHO LEADS?

Comments from the feedback surveys recall that while open-ended processes are necessary if a project is to be navigated collectively, this does mean sacrificing some (initial) clarity about who should lead and where it's all going. "I know we say it a lot but somehow the goals as a community still seem unclear", wrote one partner following the second Artistic lab. "For example, which questions should we be working on in the second year... Perhaps the size of the total group makes this an endless challenge."

Such coordination problems are also reflected in feedback from the Artistic lab event in Pristina, which included an open space event for a discussion on climate change and sustainability. One of the partners reflected after: "In spite of all intentions and good will, a certain hierarchical difference remained between the programmers and artists who met for the first time – thus programmers wanted to leave space for the artists to suggest topics, on the other hand artists felt that we were more passive, because we expected them to come up with ideas (it could have been another situation with the group of the Associate Artists where we already have more established and maybe more balanced connections with each other)".

The fourth Artistic lab in Milan, focused on a discussion on the future of IN SITU network and plans for another project to follow on from (U)CS, reiterated some of these problems. The idea was to allow all to contribute to shaping a future path, but the feedback surveys raise questions of legitimacy and responsibility: perhaps anyone can contribute but who should, and who lives the most in the future that will be collectively decided? "It is really not up to the peripheral actors to define the future of the network", wrote one citizen expert.

Among the Associate Artists, several made reference to the imbalance of power between artists and partners following the Milan session: "I think we should not forget or try to hide that there is a power structure or an inequality between artists and partners within the network. Because in the end it's the partners that decide how to shape the network and if or in what way they want to collaborate, which is fair enough because they bring in part of the funding. I think it helps to be clear about these different roles". The uncertainty of future involvement was another key point for the Associate Artists:

"as I understand, our mandate ends with (U)CS, and I have no clear understanding how we can stay involved"; "it was not so relevant to be part of the thinking on the future of the network, because it was really not easy to see where and how we could be part of it"; "For the partners there is continuity, whereas for the artists there is not necessarily".

Following these feedback from the surveys and some discussions during the Artistic lab in Milan, it has been decided, by building the next project, that it would intend to continue the involvement of some IN SITU artists by making them mentors for emerging artists, trainers during labs, and so on, as experts of art in public space but also as resource persons for their knowledge of the IN SITU network.

Different actors also have different levels of experience to inform their role. One Associate Artist pointed out the benefits of coming into the project with pre-existing relationships: "Maybe the newcomers to the network need to get some extra attention. I noticed that it has been a big advantage for me to already know so many partners".

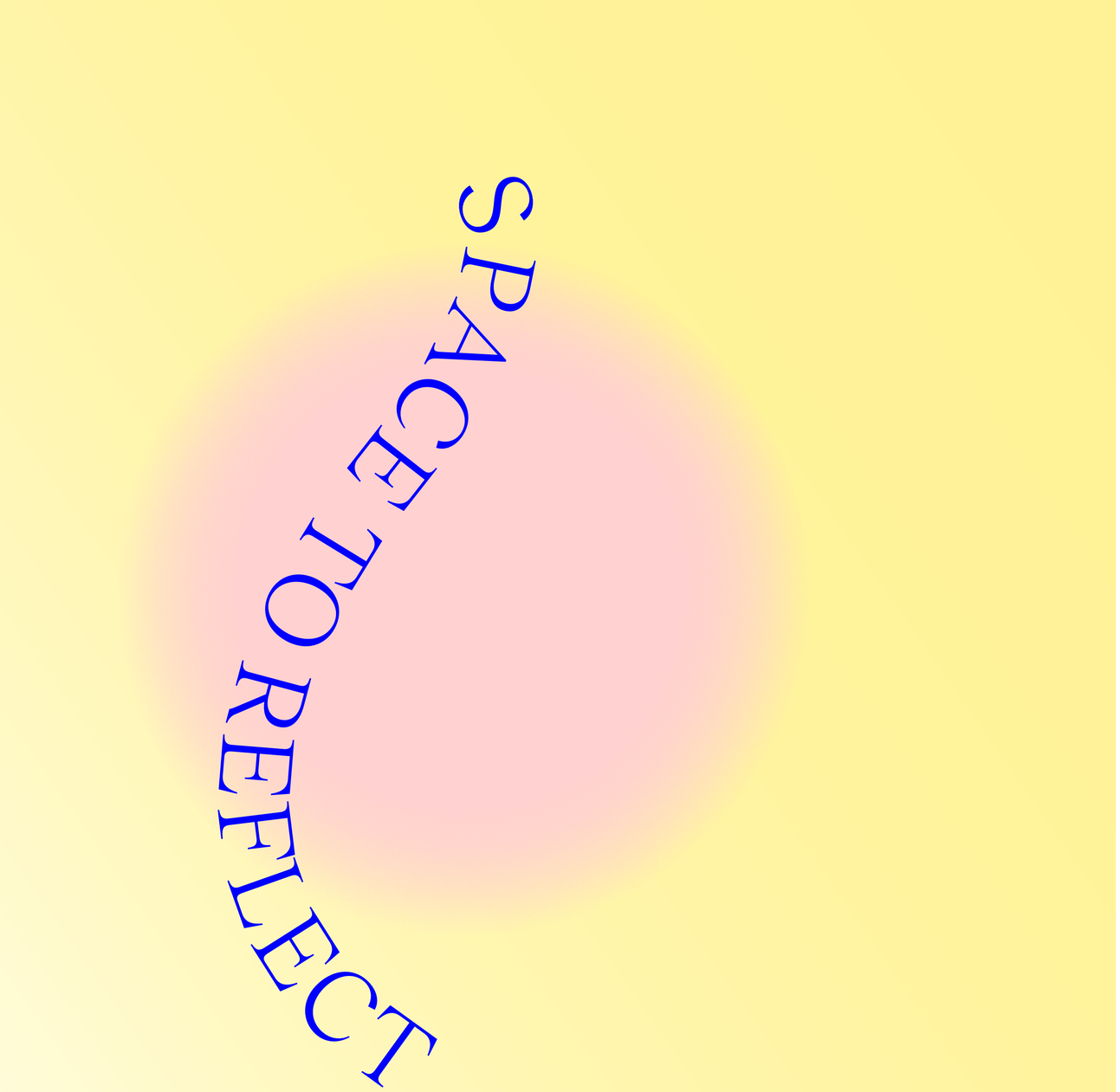
As several Emerging Artists pointed out, imbalances in power threaten the viability of a more horizontal approach. "In general", wrote one, "the equality between artists and programmers could be improved". Or as another put it: "It would have helped to know more about the programmers. It would have helped in creating a more horizontal space between artists and programmers".

In spite of these doubts, the feedback surveys also show signs of perceived progress. At the mid-term review, one partner wrote: "The work feels more collective than in previous iterations of IN SITU. This is particularly visible in the artistic projects of our Associate Artists whose work has been formed and changed by their contact with the various partners and their festivals".

In the final evaluation survey, another wrote:

"One of strengths of IN SITU and (U)CS is the equality of voice and perspectives. In fact, the inclusion of artists and citizens in (U)CS ensured that it was one of the most egalitarian networks I have experienced".

These sentiments were echoed by some of the participating artists, who found the network "highly responsive to the voice of the artists", found a "good vibe" in meetings with partners, and felt that "governance was undertaken [with] a lot of freedom, support and understanding".



A final objective of the (U)CS project was to "provide spaces for reflection and generate expert resources on the topic of art in public space".

One of the central mechanisms for this was a staff exchange programme that aimed to promote exchange between the partners, with a particular focus on how the different structures approach, and understand, audience development. 17 staff exchanges were conducted among the 13 countries of the network. Some of these were captured in the publication Audience Development & Art in Public Space: Let's Get Inspired by European Practices, which puts forward a distinction between audience development (focused on venue/presenter reaching out to target audience) and community engagement (more of a two-way participatory approach), and shares insights around a number of key actions – from partnering with local organisations to using surprise as an audience attractor.

These staff exchanges can be seen as a "space of reflection" because they offered members of staff from each partner the opportunity to reflect on their own practices while exploring the practices of others. These exchanges took place over a few days, framed by the experience of visiting another country, another culture, and focused on ways of approaching and considering audiences and communities. Exchange participants wrote journals before, during and after their journey. The thoughts they recorded highlight the importance of taking time to experiment, to inspire, and to get inspired by other practices.

"This experience reinforced my motivation regarding the care we should have for participants, and audiences in general, the little details that can make their relation to artists and cultural structures meaningful", wrote Bastien Gueriot from Lieux Publics, following a staff exchange in Hull with the team of Freedom Festival.

Darren Cross from Norfolk and Norwich festival felt that during his staff exchange during the festival La Strada in Graz "there was a definite sense the festival belonged to the city, which is something always good to maintain and develop".

What did exchange participants get out of the experience?

"The political commitment that characterises ODA's work – I think it is necessary to generate social impact", wrote Marina Mussapi from BASE, after immersing herself in ODA Teatri's activities and their festival HAPU. Experiencing work made in Fredrikstad by Østfold Internasjonal Teater, Federica Di Rosa from ZONA K saw herself taking away: "Their way of working and thinking about the project, their capability of building relationships on the territory (due to their strong knowledge of the territory and its history) which is important in the field as artistic creation in public space".

Spaces for reflection were also built into the larger meetings that brought together artists and partners. For both the third Artistic lab in Budapest and the session in Pristina sustainability was a key focus, broadly/holistically understood as ecological, personal, economic – for artists, network and audiences. After having explored and sharpened the topic during various discussions in Budapest, the session in Pristina was led by one of the Associate artists, Emke Idema, and took the form of an Open Space meeting, allowing participants to build the agenda together and to form groups naturally afterwards. This session was a proposal made by the working group with whom the Coordination team prepared the meeting. Seven conversations happened simultaneously on the following themes: ability to sustain, ownership of places and projects, collaboration and touring, self-care, silent space to reflect on the meeting, risk of instrumentalisation of artistic creation, diversity and sustainability.

Survey feedback from the event in Pristina shows general agreement on the importance of sustainability as a topic, but also reveals underlying issues with the Open Space format:

DEPTH OF ENGAGEMENT

As one partner wrote: "It was interesting, and founded upon good intentions, but we only began to scratch the surface and we did not have time to adequately discuss beyond our small groups." An associate citizen adds: "Some of the ideas were very un-developed. People should have been asked to prepare for the discussion."

REFLECTION VERSUS ACTION

While some partners felt the session was concrete, most felt that "the discussion was too general". Others were not interested in action but felt that "a clear statement on the collective aims may have been needed".

DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE LEVELS

For partners, there was a mismatch of experience between participants. One wrote: "Our organisation has been trying to focus on sustainability for years, most of the spoken topics have already been realised." While another saw things from the opposite side: "I feel that we have much more to learn than to share."

However, to experiment this format also allowed to create "an extremely rare space for programmers, the general public and artists to meet, talk and sometimes confront each other", showing how important it was to create these moments of meeting within a network as IN SITU and also was a way to share the floor and the responsibility between the different participants of the Artistic lab. As underlined by one of the emerging artists, "I think that this kind of place and discussion can help to improve collaborations, to think together about new systems of production and distribution, and can also help to improve the working conditions of these professions with greater empathy/understanding of where each person is".

To expand its reflections to a broader range of topics, the (U)CS project also published 59 "narratives", articles written by citizens, artists and other actors in the projects, and recorded and released 18 podcasts. Partners in the final evaluation appreciated the efforts put into this strand of work, but tended to see it more as an archive, without a clear immediate use case. Several also commented on the strain of producing this level of content. As one wrote: "This is perhaps the most complicated component of (U)CS. The intentions were both good and relevant. The sheer quantity of materials to produce, in retrospect, was perhaps more ambitious than what could be managed by the partners collectively. [...] The issue for us, and I believe several others, is related to time. The production of these materials needs to be understood as a production. As long as the standard of quality is high, this becomes a conflict of interest between the narratives and the demands of the artistic production activities."

One use for the content will be as a resource that can be shared with the emerging artists who will join IN SITU's next planned Platform project (2025-2028). The Associate artists from (U)CS already report that producing the narrative pieces helped them see their work from a different perspective, and led to collaborations with other Associate artists, citizen experts, and actors from other sectors.

"The articles were very useful to systemize thinking and reflect on our activities and related themes," wrote one. Another saw the material as an ongoing resource and introduction to their work: "I am happy about the contributions and I am using the links to talk to other people about my work".

TIME AND SPACE TO SHIFT ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

Reflecting back on the achievements and challenges of (U)CS in the final survey, the partners recall that the project was reshaped by the Covid-19 pandemic: the "missing year" at the start of the project forced some elements to be reduced, and concentrated activity into the later stages of the project. This would cause disruption for any cooperation, but all the more so for one focused on the "durational commitment" and on allowing relationships to develop organically, at their own pace, and in their own direction. Alongside this, other challenges cited often in the final evaluation include uncertainty around national funding, and the tricky interpersonal dynamics that can arise when working closely with local partners to unusual ends.

In spite of this, in the final survey all partners indicated they were satisfied with how the (U)CS project had unfolded. Asked about the benefits of their involvement in (U)CS they described the opportunity to discover and present new artistic works, the contribution of the project to the national and international development of their organisation, and particularly the relationships formed across the network during meetings and artistic activities. One partner described the expansion of their "regional network", and how (U)CS had led them to "actively engage more than 100 inhabitants as central contributors to the development and implementation of the artistic works and activities".

(U)CS, like other IN SITU projects before it, founded itself on an experimental approach, and it is an openness to taking risks that has defined the project and its outcomes. Associate Artist Emke Idema: "If I wouldn't have been in the project, I wouldn't have dared to jump into the School of Unlived Worlds. It is a "difficult" project in the sense that it is not easy to programme/sell. And it had to grow slowly. But because (UN)COMMON SPACES was about experimentation, I could try this."

In the end some ideas worked as intended, others were adapted, and a few didn't work out – but all were valuable in opening the way to new perspectives and forms of work, and giving participants valuable experiences to inform their future activities. For some this has meant the blossoming of a new interest in site-responsive and engaged work, while for others the project confirms and deepens a longer standing commitment. As one put it: "The impact has led to a gentle awakening inside the organisation and for our local audience of the range of artistic proposals that exist within public space."

CONCLUSION BACK TO SUMMARY

COLLABORATORS

Partners

- Lieux publics, France
- Artopolis, Hungary
- Atelier 231, France
- BASE, Italy
- Ctyri Dny, Czech Republic
- FiraTàrrega, Spain
- Flynn Center, United States of America
- Freedom festival, United Kingdom
- La Strada, Austria
- Metropolis / KIT, Denmark
- Norfolk & Norwich festival, United Kingdom
- Oerol festival, Netherlands
- Østfold Internasjonale Teater, Norway
- Provinciaal Domein Dommelhof, Belgium
- Sardegna Teatro, Italy
- Scène Nationale de l'Essonne, France
- Teatri ODA, Kosovo
- Zona K, Italy

Associate partners

- ANTI Festival, Finland
- Biela Noc, Slovakia
- Bildstörung festival for performing arts in public space, Germany
- Bussola, Portugal
- CIFAS Belgium
- FAI-AR, France
- HSINGHO CO Tainan Street Arts Festival, Taiwan
- Linhai Art Festival & StART Festival, China
- SPOT Festival, Lithuania
- Seoul Street Art Festival, South Korea
- Les Tombées de la Nuit, France

Citizen experts

- Marc El Samrani
- Adàm Kobrisza
- Fabienne Quéméneur
- David Kaspar
- Lluis Nacenta
- JJ Tatten
- Andreas Goritschnig
- Paul Forecast
- Domenica Ghidei
- Marius Gronning
- Stijn Philippe
- Lucile Jauffret
- Lura Limani

Associate artists

- Zineb Benzekri, La Zankà
- Eva Bubla
- Benoît Mousserion, L'Homme Debout
- Cristina Maldonado
- Alina Stockinger, Eléctrico 28
- Michael Silverstone & Abigail Browde, 600 Highwaymen
- Seth Honnor, Kaleider
- Veronika Tzekova
- Nana Francisca Schottländer
- Matt Adams, Blast Theory
- Emke Idema
- Naja Lee Jensen
- Johannes Bellinkx
- Marie Doiret & Emilie Buestel, Sauf Le Dimanche
- Donika Rudi
- Leonardo Delogu, DOM-

Emerging artists

- Sim Perretti, La Ville en Feu
- Naspugar Tromboczky, SVUNG Research Group
- Leo Manipoud, Maison Courbe
- Tomas Zizka
- Anna Rubirola, Big Bouncers
- Driton Selmani
- Pat Dooner & Carl Conway Davis, The Broken Orchestra
- Markus Jeschaunig
- Tora Balslev, Daily Fiction
- Jade Marie Anderson
- Abhishek Thapar
- Live Skullerud
- Kasper Vandenberghe, Movedbymatter
- Juan Ignacio Tula
- Yann Perregaux Dielf
- Anna Serlenga, Corps Citoyen
- Elisabete Sousa
- Jakob Engel & Jascha Sommer, Les Mauvais Jours
- Marija Baranauskaite
- Moni Wespi

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IN SITU is the European platform for artistic creation in public space. It is led by Lieux publics, European and national centre for artistic creation in public space, located in Marseille (FR).

Since 2003, it has supported over 300 artists working outside conventional venues and brings together 18 Partners from 13 countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, The United Kingdom and the Unites States of America.

IN SITU also gathers 12 Associate Partners from Belgium, France and 9 additional countries: China, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Taiwan.

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