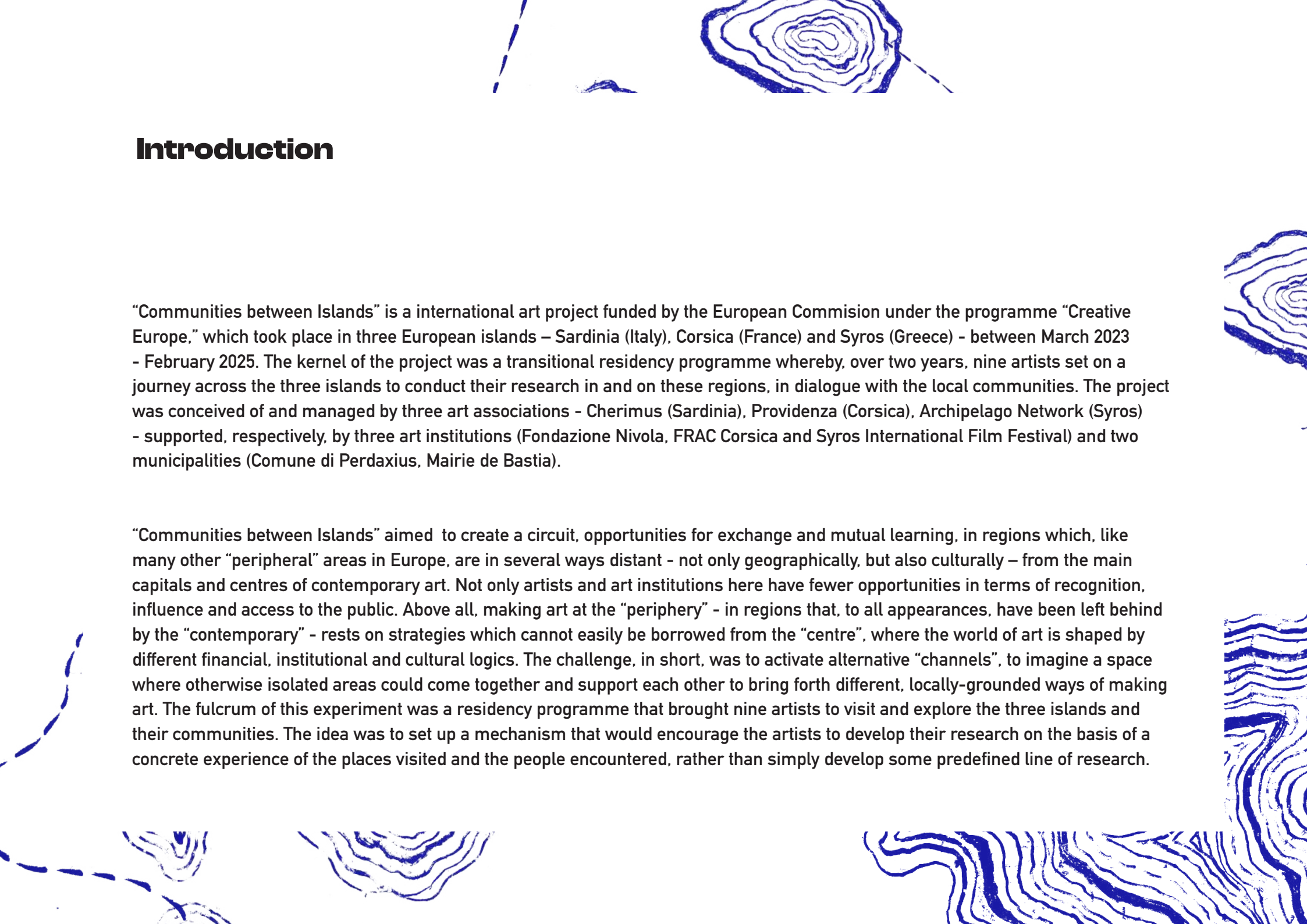




WORKING BETWEEN ISLANDS

**a practical guide for
art collaborations
between independent
art initiatives based in
European islands**



Introduction

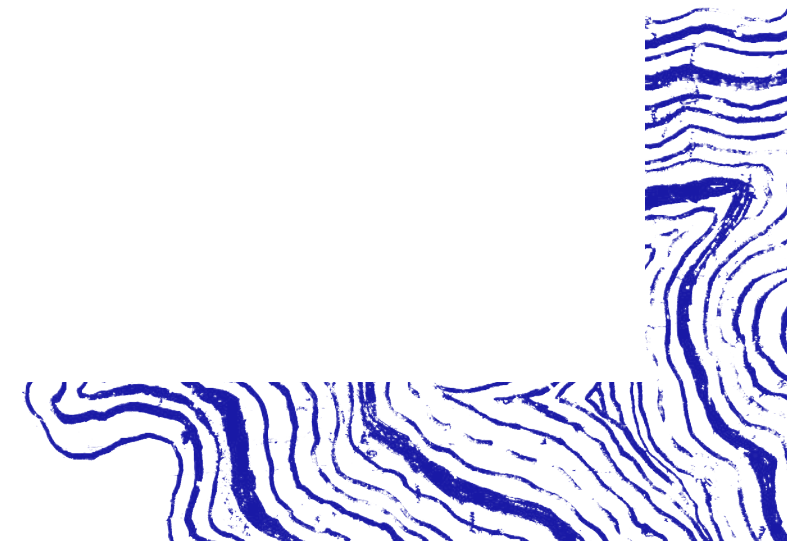
“Communities between Islands” is a international art project funded by the European Commision under the programme “Creative Europe,” which took place in three European islands – Sardinia (Italy), Corsica (France) and Syros (Greece) - between March 2023 - February 2025. The kernel of the project was a transitional residency programme whereby, over two years, nine artists set on a journey across the three islands to conduct their research in and on these regions, in dialogue with the local communities. The project was conceived of and managed by three art associations - Cherimus (Sardinia), Providenza (Corsica), Archipelago Network (Syros) - supported, respectively, by three art institutions (Fondazione Nivola, FRAC Corsica and Syros International Film Festival) and two municipalities (Comune di Perdaxius, Mairie de Bastia).

“Communities between Islands” aimed to create a circuit, opportunities for exchange and mutual learning, in regions which, like many other “peripheral” areas in Europe, are in several ways distant - not only geographically, but also culturally – from the main capitals and centres of contemporary art. Not only artists and art institutions here have fewer opportunities in terms of recognition, influence and access to the public. Above all, making art at the “periphery” - in regions that, to all appearances, have been left behind by the “contemporary” - rests on strategies which cannot easily be borrowed from the “centre”, where the world of art is shaped by different financial, institutional and cultural logics. The challenge, in short, was to activate alternative “channels”, to imagine a space where otherwise isolated areas could come together and support each other to bring forth different, locally-grounded ways of making art. The fulcrum of this experiment was a residency programme that brought nine artists to visit and explore the three islands and their communities. The idea was to set up a mechanism that would encourage the artists to develop their research on the basis of a concrete experience of the places visited and the people encountered, rather than simply develop some predefined line of research.



For this reason, the residencies included a rich programme of events and workshops, where the public actively contributed to the conception and production of artworks. This methodology – whereby it would be the journey itself to define the content of the work – was, together with exhibitions and public events that took place in three regions, the “circuit” that put us into communication, the basis, as it were, of our “communities between islands.”

With this publication, we want to reflect back on this experience - on the motivations that gave rise to the project, the strategies we used to make it work and the prospects for keeping it alive in the future. In what follows, we gathered reflections developed throughout the project and, in particular, during three “methodological and knowledge-exchange meetings” which took place in Sardinia, Syros and Corsica respectively in May 2023, September-October 2023 and May 2024. These thoughts are dedicated especially to individuals, artists and associations – whose number, to our experience, continues to grow – sharing our same need to make art at the “peripheries”, be them geographical or otherwise.



THE PARTNERS

Sardinia

CHERIMUS (project coordinator) is an art association created in 2008 with the aim of contributing to the development of the social and cultural heritage – past and present – of south-west Sardinia through art. Its work promotes the history and territorial identity of the region, by stimulating a dialogue with some of the most advanced international experiences in different artistic fields, to create new cultural spaces and of life in common. The association has been involved in numerous projects dedicated to the dissemination of music, visual arts, theater and cinema in the region, collaborating with both local and international artists. Its approach is characterised by the active participation of the community in the creative processes it proposes, as a way to revive the cultural landscape of the region. In recent years, Cherimus has produced numerous public works, concerts and events, and has organised several open courses and workshops centred on the arts and the enhancement of local culture and natural heritage.

FONDAZIONE NIVOLA manages Museo Nivola in Orani and the adjoining park. It organises exhibitions, conferences and workshops and develops cultural exchanges with Sardinian, national and international institutions. Museo Nivola is dedicated to the work of Costantino Nivola and to contemporary art, to landscape and living traditions. With its activities, it supports the cultural and economic growth of the local and regional territory. The museum is a cultural complex in which art, architecture and nature interact harmoniously thanks also to the park on which the structure stands. The museum hosts exhibitions and artist residences mainly related to themes such as the relationship between art, architecture and landscape, public and participatory art.

COMUNE DI PERDAXIUS is the local administration of Perdaxius, a small town with a community of 1500 inhabitants, situated in South-west Sardinia. It hosts the headquarter of the coordinator 'Cherimus' and has regularly collaborated with it since 2008, both by supporting its initiatives on site and as a partner in numerous regional, national and international cooperation projects.

Corsica

PROVIDENZA is a cultural association based in Corsica whose work revolves on two main activities: on the one hand, a permaculture farm with a highly diversified production that distributes directly to the local community its products (including culinary, medicinal and cosmetic ones) and organizes training and meeting sessions to transmit the practices and knowledge of permaculture to the general public. On the other hand, a multidisciplinary art residency program developed in partnership with European institutions to support Mediterranean and international emerging and established artists.

FRAC CORSICA is the first museum on the island of Corsica registered on a national and European network. It owns and manages a collection of international contemporary art which includes 638 works - the second largest public art collection in the island. Its collection is unique for its focus on works exploring the relationship between nature and art, environmental questions and critical notions of territory and identity. Besides a very active exhibition programme, it is deeply committed to the diffusion of contemporary art in the territory. To this aim, it regularly organises events and creative workshops open to all sections of the population, from children to residents of nursing homes. It also organises art residences, some of which have given rise to workshops in collaboration with the French National Education, different training centres and various communities and institutions in the island and elsewhere.

MAIRIE DE BASTIA is the local administration of the city of Bastia, a commune in the north-east of Corsica, with a population of around 50,000 inhabitants (the second largest in the island). It collaborates regularly with FRAC for the organisation of exhibitions and events.

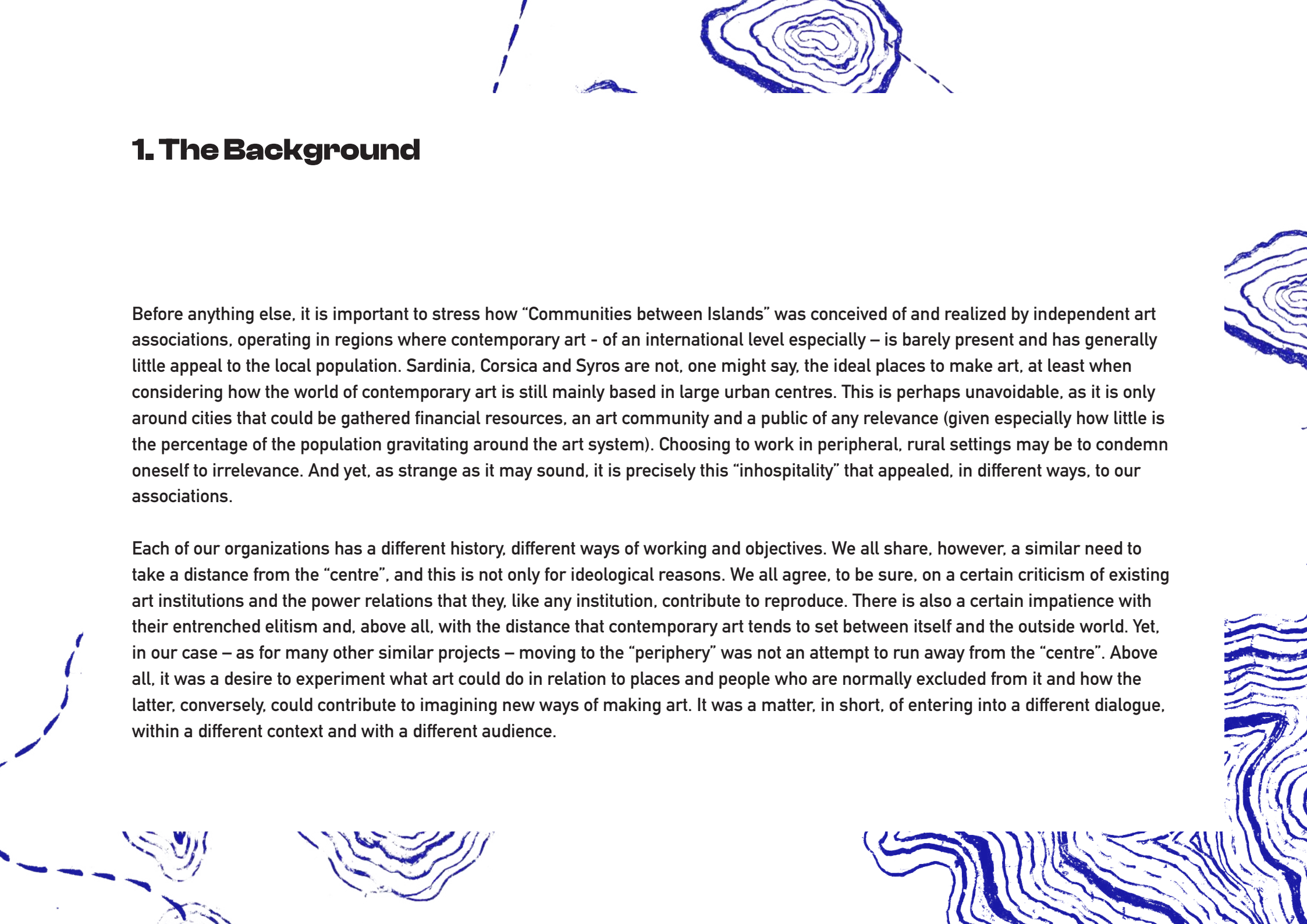
Syros

ARCHIPELAGO NETWORK is an organization dedicated to the preservation, documentation, and promotion of audiovisual heritage, culture, and material knowledge on Greece's Cycladic islands. It involves two central components: the creation of an on-line audiovisual archive, and a research-based art residency. Its scope is to propose an alternative form of preserving the rich and diverse heritage of these island communities in a way that conveys the specificity of their locales, linking them with researchers and artists through a renewable, open-access database.

Funded in 2013, **SYROS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (SIFF)** showcases a wide spectrum of cinema in traditional and re-purposed island sites. Located in the middle of the Aegean sea, removed from the usual demands and hierarchies of the film industry, SIFF embeds events, styles and programs – experimental and narrative, recent and retrospective, Greek and international, workshops and expanded cinema performance – into its unique setting. The festival aims to welcome an array of cinematic and artistic experiences into this immersive dreamscape.



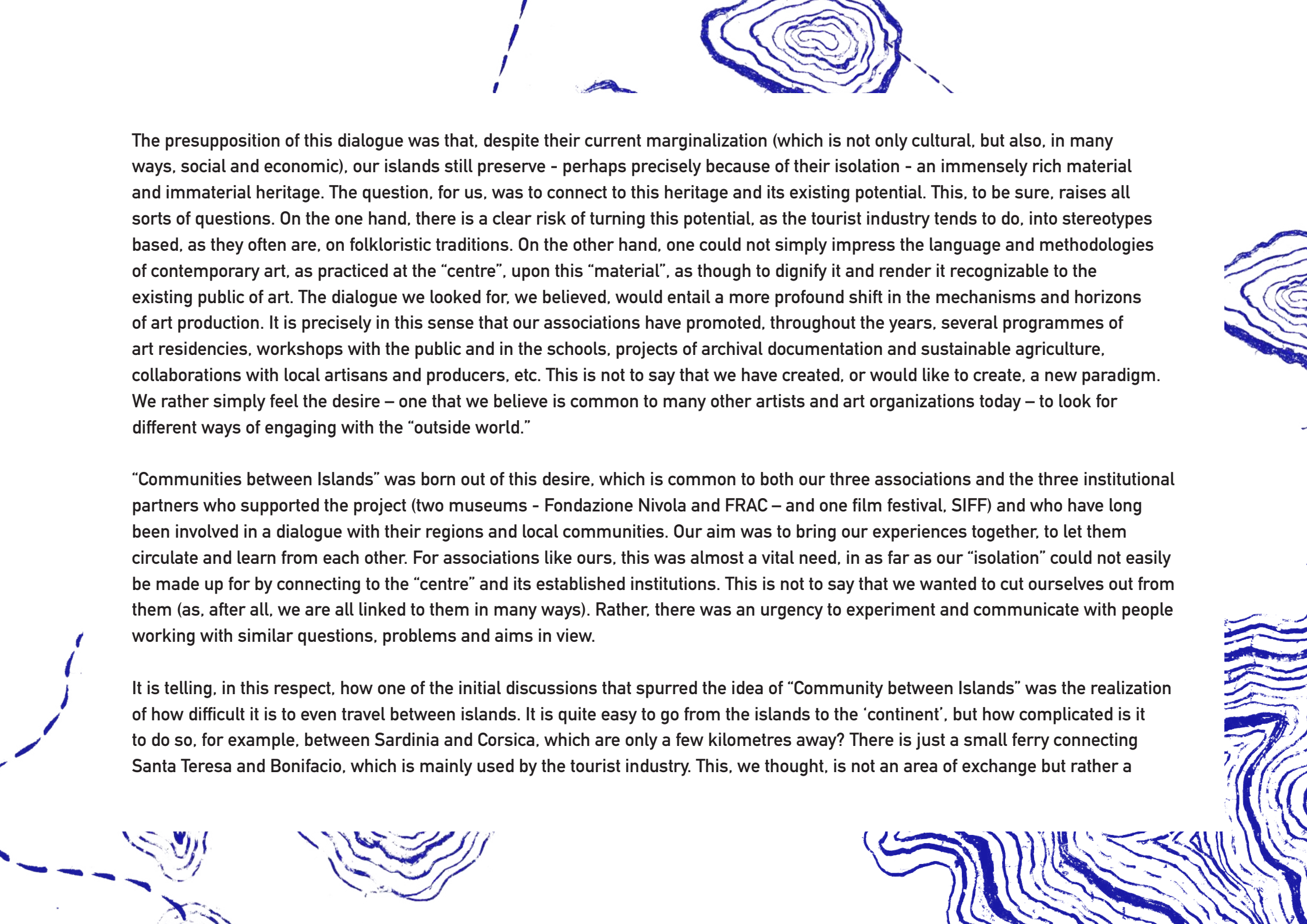




1. The Background

Before anything else, it is important to stress how “Communities between Islands” was conceived of and realized by independent art associations, operating in regions where contemporary art - of an international level especially – is barely present and has generally little appeal to the local population. Sardinia, Corsica and Syros are not, one might say, the ideal places to make art, at least when considering how the world of contemporary art is still mainly based in large urban centres. This is perhaps unavoidable, as it is only around cities that could be gathered financial resources, an art community and a public of any relevance (given especially how little is the percentage of the population gravitating around the art system). Choosing to work in peripheral, rural settings may be to condemn oneself to irrelevance. And yet, as strange as it may sound, it is precisely this “inhospitality” that appealed, in different ways, to our associations.

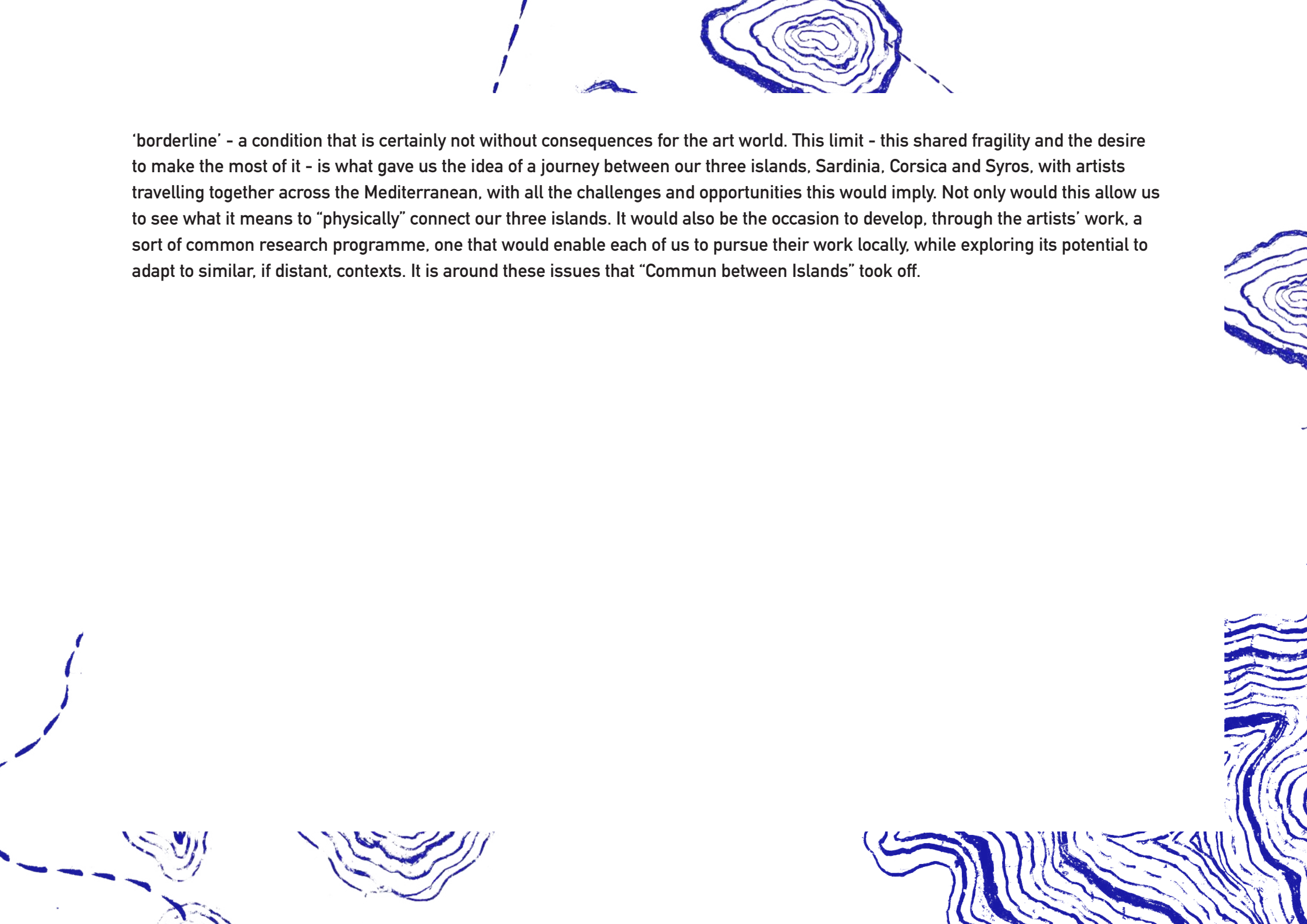
Each of our organizations has a different history, different ways of working and objectives. We all share, however, a similar need to take a distance from the “centre”, and this is not only for ideological reasons. We all agree, to be sure, on a certain criticism of existing art institutions and the power relations that they, like any institution, contribute to reproduce. There is also a certain impatience with their entrenched elitism and, above all, with the distance that contemporary art tends to set between itself and the outside world. Yet, in our case – as for many other similar projects – moving to the “periphery” was not an attempt to run away from the “centre”. Above all, it was a desire to experiment what art could do in relation to places and people who are normally excluded from it and how the latter, conversely, could contribute to imagining new ways of making art. It was a matter, in short, of entering into a different dialogue, within a different context and with a different audience.



The presupposition of this dialogue was that, despite their current marginalization (which is not only cultural, but also, in many ways, social and economic), our islands still preserve - perhaps precisely because of their isolation - an immensely rich material and immaterial heritage. The question, for us, was to connect to this heritage and its existing potential. This, to be sure, raises all sorts of questions. On the one hand, there is a clear risk of turning this potential, as the tourist industry tends to do, into stereotypes based, as they often are, on folkloristic traditions. On the other hand, one could not simply impress the language and methodologies of contemporary art, as practiced at the “centre”, upon this “material”, as though to dignify it and render it recognizable to the existing public of art. The dialogue we looked for, we believed, would entail a more profound shift in the mechanisms and horizons of art production. It is precisely in this sense that our associations have promoted, throughout the years, several programmes of art residencies, workshops with the public and in the schools, projects of archival documentation and sustainable agriculture, collaborations with local artisans and producers, etc. This is not to say that we have created, or would like to create, a new paradigm. We rather simply feel the desire – one that we believe is common to many other artists and art organizations today – to look for different ways of engaging with the “outside world.”

“Communities between Islands” was born out of this desire, which is common to both our three associations and the three institutional partners who supported the project (two museums - Fondazione Nivola and FRAC – and one film festival, SIFF) and who have long been involved in a dialogue with their regions and local communities. Our aim was to bring our experiences together, to let them circulate and learn from each other. For associations like ours, this was almost a vital need, in as far as our “isolation” could not easily be made up for by connecting to the “centre” and its established institutions. This is not to say that we wanted to cut ourselves out from them (as, after all, we are all linked to them in many ways). Rather, there was an urgency to experiment and communicate with people working with similar questions, problems and aims in view.

It is telling, in this respect, how one of the initial discussions that spurred the idea of “Community between Islands” was the realization of how difficult it is to even travel between islands. It is quite easy to go from the islands to the ‘continent’, but how complicated is it to do so, for example, between Sardinia and Corsica, which are only a few kilometres away? There is just a small ferry connecting Santa Teresa and Bonifacio, which is mainly used by the tourist industry. This, we thought, is not an area of exchange but rather a

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'borderline' - a condition that is certainly not without consequences for the art world. This limit - this shared fragility and the desire to make the most of it - is what gave us the idea of a journey between our three islands, Sardinia, Corsica and Syros, with artists travelling together across the Mediterranean, with all the challenges and opportunities this would imply. Not only would this allow us to see what it means to "physically" connect our three islands. It would also be the occasion to develop, through the artists' work, a sort of common research programme, one that would enable each of us to pursue their work locally, while exploring its potential to adapt to similar, if distant, contexts. It is around these issues that "Commun between Islands" took off.



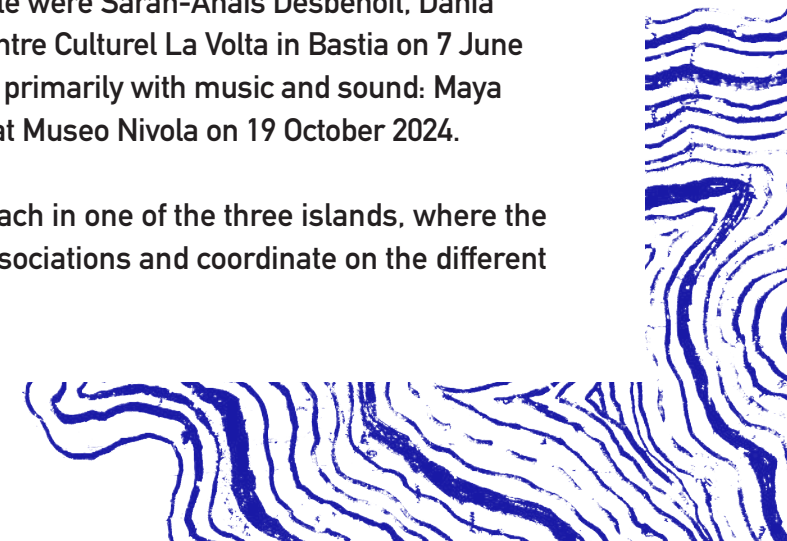
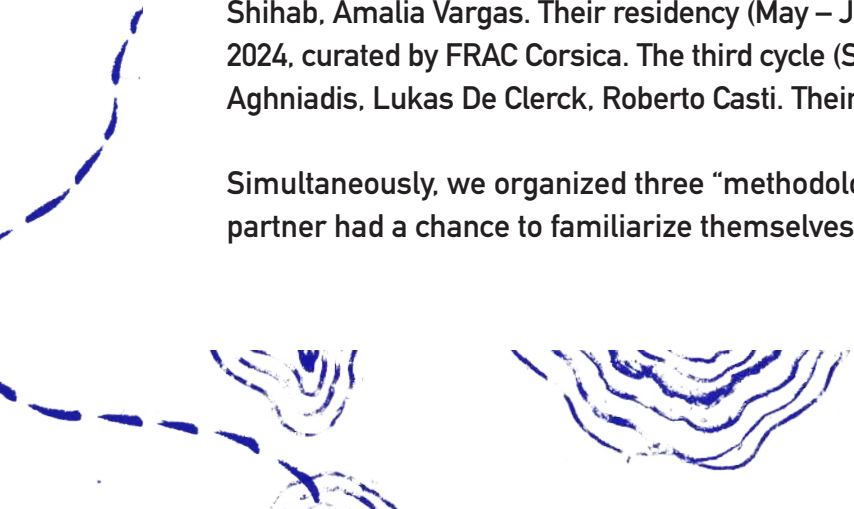
2. The programme

To give a general overview of the project's main activities, these included - besides the programme of residencies just mentioned - one final event in each of the islands involved and three in-person “methodological and knowledge-exchange meetings” between the project's partners.

The programme of transnational residencies was itself divided into three cycles, each of them involving three artists travelling together between Sardinia, Corsica and Syros and spending between ten and fifteen days in each island. Each artist was asked to develop a line of research that could be pursued consistently across the three countries, based on a series of workshops open to the public. Each cycle of residencies was planned so as to end in a different island, where it took place a final exhibition or public event showcasing the results of their work.

The first cycle of residencies took place between September - October 2023 with the three invited artists (Marianne Fahmy, Elke Marhöfer, Latent Community) working primarily with video-making. A final exhibition showing their work was organized by SIFF at the Goethe Institut in Athens in October-November 2024. The artists participating in the second cycle were Sarah-Anais Desbenoit, Dania Shihab, Amalia Vargas. Their residency (May - June 2024) ended with a public event held at Centre Culturel La Volta in Bastia on 7 June 2024, curated by FRAC Corsica. The third cycle (September - October 2024) had artists working primarily with music and sound: Maya Aghniadis, Lukas De Clerck, Roberto Casti. Their research was presented at a final event held at Museo Nivola on 19 October 2024.

Simultaneously, we organized three “methodological and knowledge-exchange meetings”, each in one of the three islands, where the partner had a chance to familiarize themselves with the work and the context of the other associations and coordinate on the different





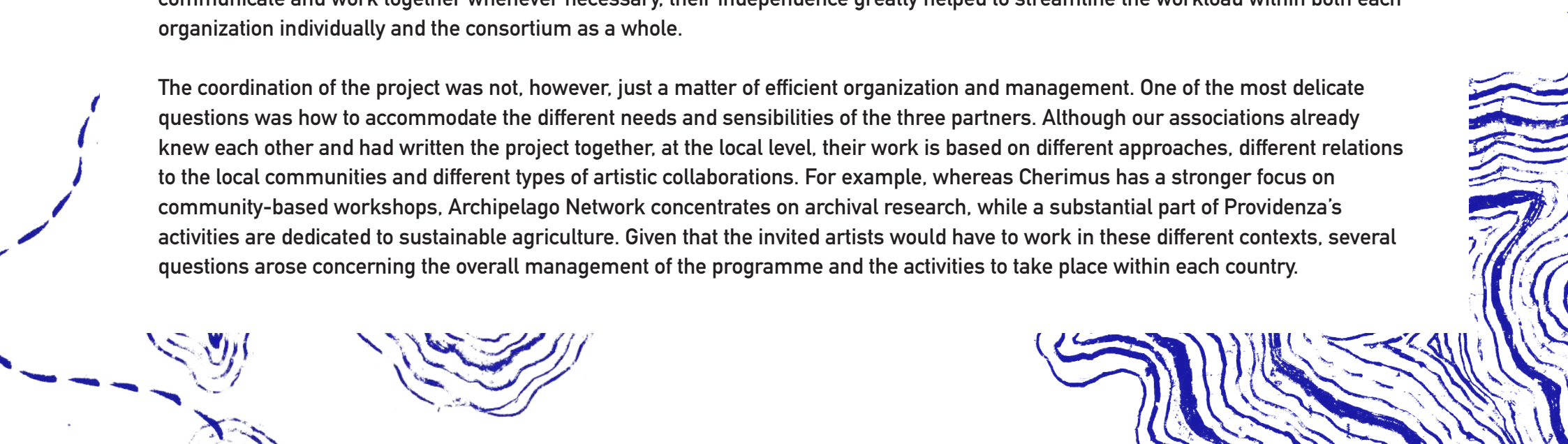
organizational and artistic dimensions of the project.

In this section, we will present some of the strategies and methodologies adopted to run this programme of activities, offering some reflections on their effectiveness and limits in achieving the project's objectives.

2.1. Coordination

Given its nature – especially as far as the programme of transnational residencies was concerned – the project entailed a high degree of coordination between the partners, in terms of both administration/logistics and artistic direction. To deal effectively with this complexity, one of the first steps we took was to form two different working groups (each composed of one member per partner), dealing respectively with the administrative and the artistic dimensions of the initiative. While the two groups were able to communicate and work together whenever necessary, their independence greatly helped to streamline the workload within both each organization individually and the consortium as a whole.

The coordination of the project was not, however, just a matter of efficient organization and management. One of the most delicate questions was how to accommodate the different needs and sensibilities of the three partners. Although our associations already knew each other and had written the project together, at the local level, their work is based on different approaches, different relations to the local communities and different types of artistic collaborations. For example, whereas Cherimus has a stronger focus on community-based workshops, Archipelago Network concentrates on archival research, while a substantial part of Providenza's activities are dedicated to sustainable agriculture. Given that the invited artists would have to work in these different contexts, several questions arose concerning the overall management of the programme and the activities to take place within each country.





In particular, we had to decide on the degree of, as it were, “standardisation” and uniformity of practices and methodologies. On the one hand, we had to ensure that the artists could develop a coherent line of research and have clear expectations about the residency programme as a whole. On the other hand, our goal was not to create a centralized structure or working model but, rather, to establish connections that could help the partners develop their work locally according to the practices and aims specific to their organization. To strike a balance between these priorities, the solution we opted for was to set together some general guidelines (concerning, in particular, the partners’ duties with regard to the material support to artists in their country, the organization of workshops and meetings with the local communities, the management of the logistics of the “methodological and knowledge-exchange meetings”, the organisation of the final exhibition/event, etc.), leaving each partner the freedom to decide independently on how to apply them in their context, on the basis of a principle of mutual trust and accountability. Simultaneously, a regular flow of communication made it possible to adjust and redefine our practices in response to the feedback given by the other partners. In addition, the key responsibilities of each partner, including the financial management of the grant, were defined in detail in a Consortium Agreement signed in the first months of the project. This helped to better define and formalize the associations’ role within the consortium, while clearing any ambiguity concerning the distribution of costs and duties.

Overall, we felt that this approach was effective in giving the partners the flexibility to adapt the project’s activities to their specific context and resources, without them having to alter substantially their established working methods. Retrospectively, this helped us to consolidate our existing structures, while experimenting on new practices and testing their effectiveness in other international contexts.

An essential role in achieving these objectives was played by the “methodological and knowledge-exchange meetings”, in which representatives of the partner organizations had the chance to meet three times in person during the project. Each meeting was organized on a different island (Sardinia, May 2023; Syros, September-October 2023; Corsica, May 2024). This was an invaluable opportunity to witness first-hand and get acquainted with the work, the practices and context of the other associations. Although individual members of our associations had already met in the past, the possibility to come together as a group to discuss the project’s developments, exchange in person on our respective visions, motivations and plans for the future was crucial to strengthening the cohesion of the consortium. Apart from tackling various organizational matters, the meetings proved especially fruitful in advancing

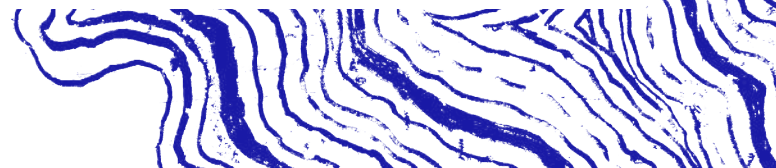
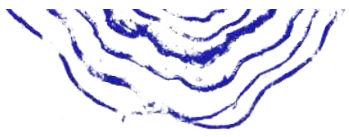




discussions on the artistic direction of the project (selection of artists, format of the residencies, final events and exhibitions), in a way that could not have been possible through virtual meetings only. In this respect, we felt that the informal moments of conviviality (shared meals, visits to cultural and archaeological sites, museums, etc.) were as important as the formal working sessions in building mutual trust and a sense of common purpose.

2.2. Artistic direction

Concerning the artistic direction of the project and, in particular, the selection of the artists in residence, the main challenge was that, as mentioned above, the three associations promote different types of artistic research and are therefore used to different types of collaborations. The question was how to select candidates whose work would be compatible with, and could equally contribute to enhancing each of our three associations. To deal with this issue, we held several meetings on the selection criteria and procedures to adopt. We initially considered the possibility of relying on open calls. This option, however, was discarded for several reasons. If, on the one hand, open calls would have allowed enlarging our networks of collaborating artists, we agreed that some previous knowledge of the candidates and their ways of working would have increased the chances of selecting artists with a profile suitable to the project. Given the quite unusual nature of residencies, we deemed this a particularly important point. Whereas most programmes are based in large art institutions and in urban areas, ours took place in mainly rural regions and was hosted by small independent associations, while also entailing numerous travels, thus requiring a certain flexibility and willingness to work in contexts that are quite different from the usual ones. We therefore opted for the following solution. In order to accommodate our different preferences and needs, we established that each association would in turn (i.e., for the cycle of residencies ending in their country, where the final exhibition/event would also take place) make a shortlist of around ten artists, out of which the three residents would be selected by the consortium as a whole. This gave us some guarantees about the artists' suitability to the programme (as the shortlists would be composed of artists with whom at least one partner was familiar), while also ensuring that each association would be fairly



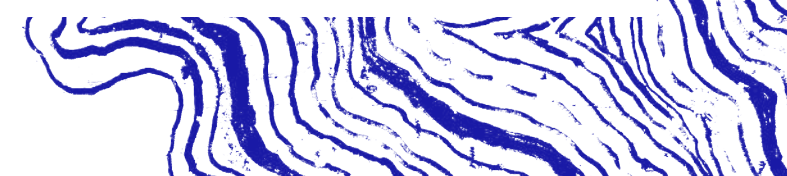


represented and could promote – and make circulate across the three islands – the type of artistic research most in line with its mission.

The supervision of the artists' research also presented some challenges, as it took place in three different countries and, therefore, had to be managed, to a large extent, by our organizations separately. This required a careful preparation of the residencies' programme. In order to ensure the overall coherency of research, it was determined that each cycle of residencies would have one partner in charge of the overall coordination of activities. This would be the same association responsible for the initial shortlisting and the organization of the final exhibition/event of the cycle. Following private conversations with the artists, the coordinating partner was tasked to arrange an initial meeting where each artist would exchange about their research with the consortium as a whole. This was followed by several "one-to-one" meetings between each partner and artist in residence, with the aim of introducing the latter to the local context, the potential places to visit and people to encounter and the different options available to run their workshops and activities with the public. On this basis, each association defined a detailed programme of research and calendar of activities. In line with the project's overall management strategy, this approach allowed to strike a good balance between the need for overall coordination and a certain autonomy and flexibility in the organization of each leg of the residencies.

A similar principle informed the preparation of the three final events/exhibitions. It was primarily the coordinating partner of each cycle to decide, together with the artists and their supporting local art institution, the format and details of the event. This process was accompanied by regular exchanges with the other consortium's members, so as to ensure that the research of the artists, as developed across the three countries, would be adequately represented.

Looking back at the works presented in the three exhibitions/public events, it is fair to say that all the artists engaged seriously with the themes and objectives of the residencies. They effectively developed and adapted their research in accordance with the different contexts and experiences made in the three islands, while attempting to bring to the fore their mutual resonances and points of intersection, to create works that effectively spoke about broader issues common to them. This was without a doubt, in the first instance, a merit of the artists themselves. The results achieved, nevertheless, reassure us about the viability of the methods adopted and their ability to promote genuine forms of transnational artistic research.

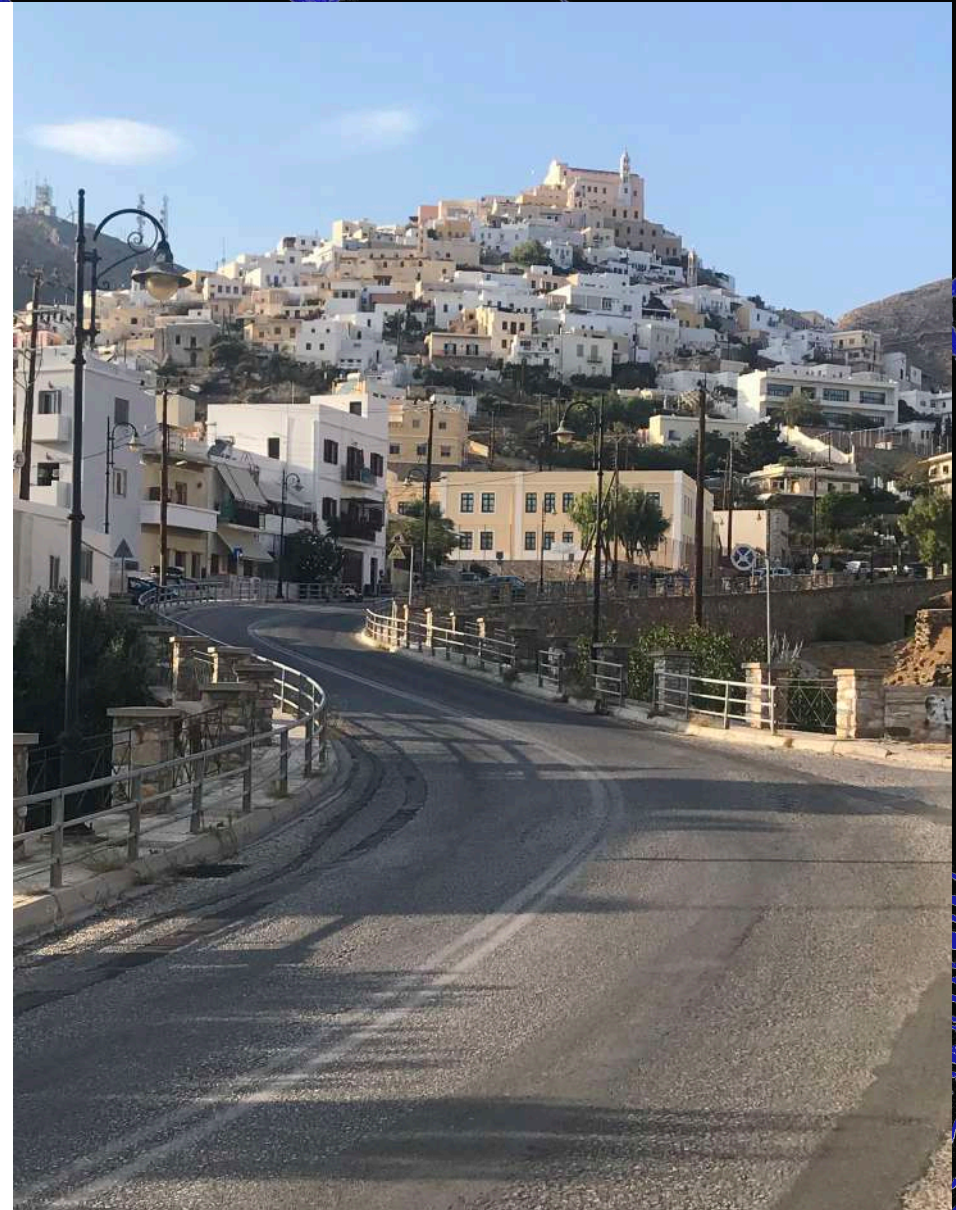




THE ARTISTS

1st cycle: Untraced Passages

The first cycle of residencies took place between 1 September - 5 October 2023, with the artists travelling first to Sardinia, then Corsica and finally Syros. Their works were presented, along with those of the artists participating to the second round of residencies, at an exhibition organized at the Goethe-Institut in Athens between 10 October - 23 November 2024



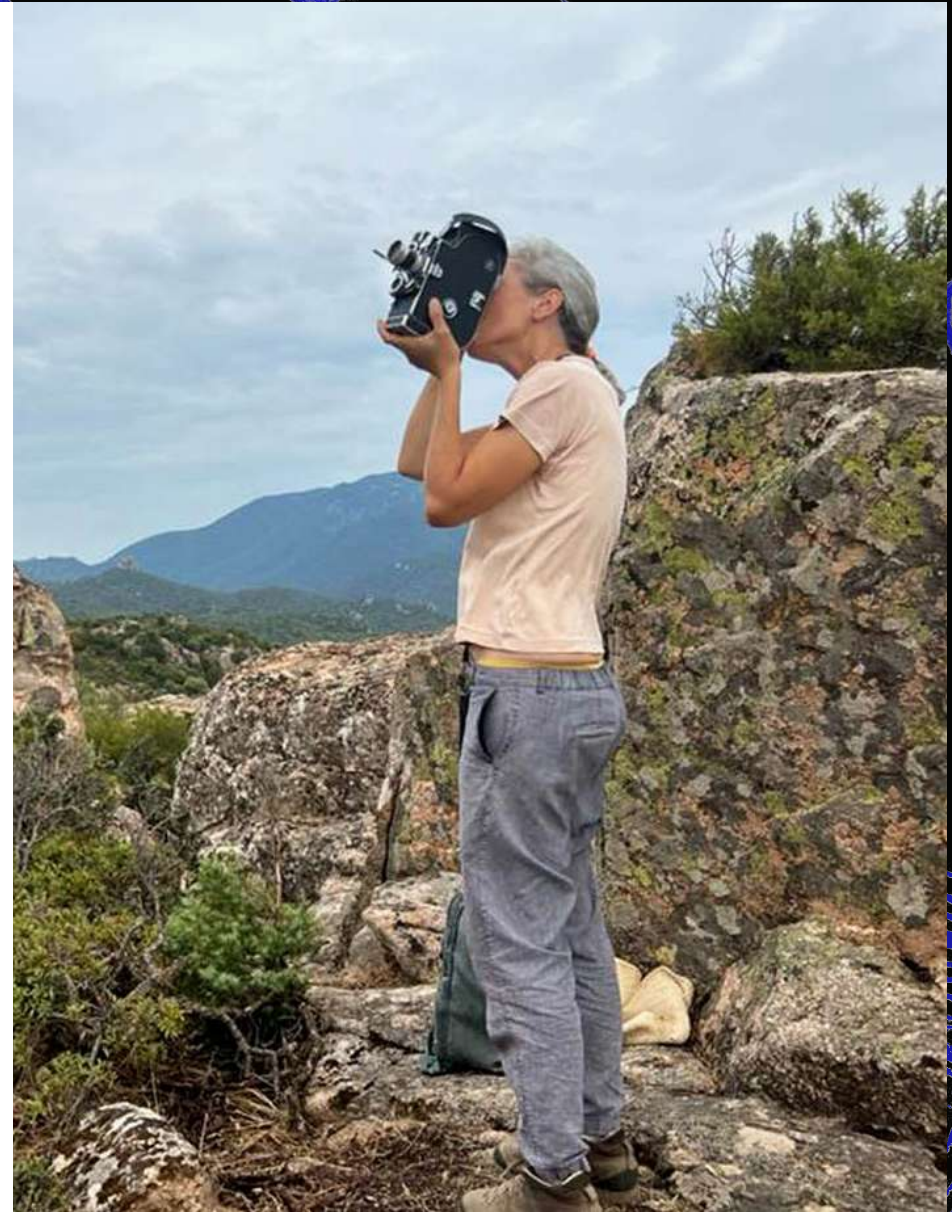
Marianne Fahmy

Marianne Fahmy focused her research on marginalized narratives of sea and water. By investigating various water structures in the three islands, both ancient and modern, that reflect political and social changes, she aimed to bring to light different approaches and knowledge systems in order to secure a sustainable future for the islands, while raising awareness about their history. Fahmy met with architects and civil engineers, visiting and filming at several locations, among which, the ruins of the Orezza convent, the church of Murato, and the abandoned village of Occi (Corsica), the Roman fountain of Sant'Antioco, the archeological site of Antas, Tharros and the Roman baths of Fordongianus (Sardinia); Hermoupolis and Ano Syros (Syros).



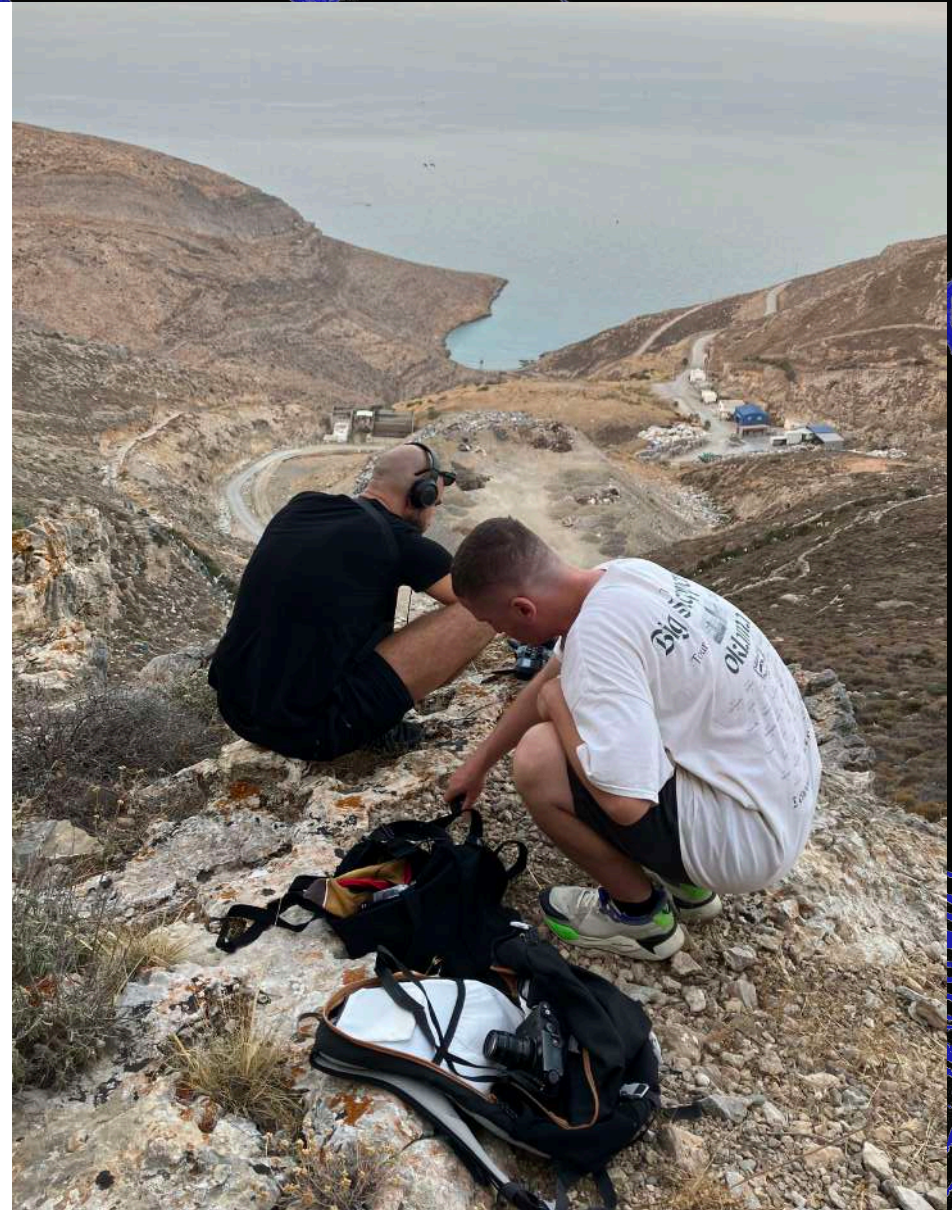
Elke Marhöfer

Elke Marhöfer's work aimed to rediscover moments of indigenous and/or traditional ecological knowledge in consensus with the environments in the three islands, such as chestnut culture in Corsica, the foraging of mushrooms and other edibles in Sardinia, and dry-wall farming in Syros. Working with local foragers, farmers, biologists and activists and filming at different locations, she made a film documenting different vegetation zones, exploring their variously disturbed environments and their current state of resilience, in order to raise awareness of their fragility and vulnerability.



Latent Community

Latent Community (Sotiris Tsiganos and Ionian Bisai) engaged in extensive fieldwork and collaboration with local communities, environmental activists and scientists, to explore how pollution and the tourist, military and maritime industries are affecting social and ecological equilibriums in the three islands. Using military-developed sonic and image capturing technologies, they documented some of the most polluted environments in the regions, among which the Corsican coastal area of Centuri and the surroundings of the military base “Ammiraglio Candiani” in Sardinia.



2nd cycle: Woven by the Currents

The second cycle of residencies, coordinated by Providenza, took place between 7 May – 11 June 2024. The artists travelled first to Syros, then Sardinia and finally Corsica, where they showed their work in a public event held at Centre Culturel Una Volta in Bastia on 7 June 2024.



Sarah-Anaïs Desbenoit

Sarah-Anaïs Desbenoit's work revolved around the collection of myths, stories and memories embedded in three islands, through interviews to local people and the use of historical and ethnographic sources. Using an economic DV camera with magnetic tape, she further explored the relations between the stories she collected and the landscape of the three regions, as a reflection on folklore as a mediation between culture and nature. The result of her research was a collaborative audiovisual work with Dania Shihab, consisting of three "tableaux vivants" and a sound piece.



Dania Shihab

Dania Shihab focused her research on the recording and collection of sound elements and sonic landscapes in the three islands, at the crossroads of natural and human environments, maritime and terrestrial identities, traditional and contemporary melodies, as influenced, in particular, by immigrant cultures. Based on the digital manipulation of these elements, Shihab produced live compositions centered on the tension between natural and human-made environments, which she used for her collaborative piece with Sarah-Anais Desbenoit.



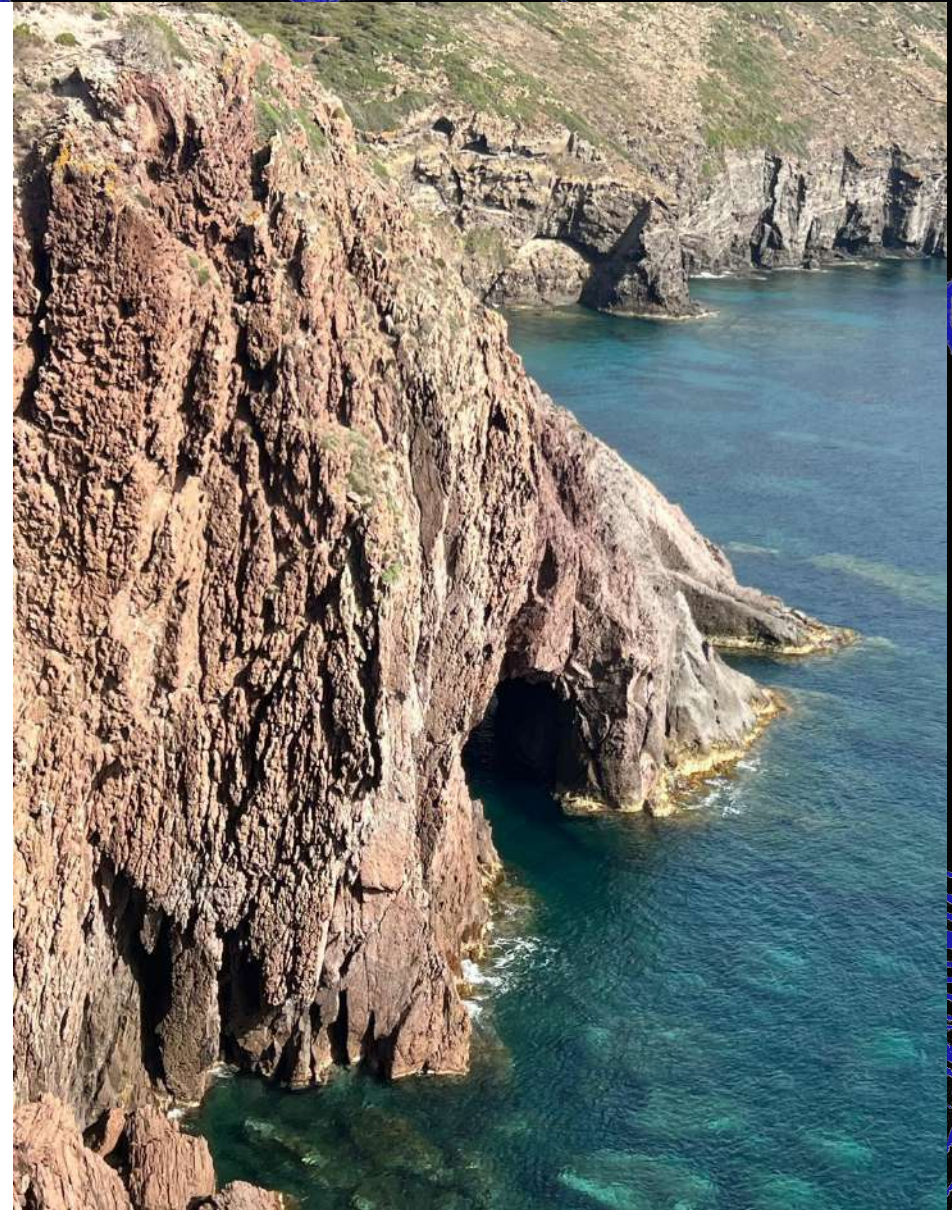
Amalia Vargas

Amalia Vargas delved into the interplay of ancient and modern influences across Syros, Sardinia and Corsica. In each island, she collected found objects and refuse left on the shorelines, turning them into installations inspired by architectural forms and motifs (such as caryatids and balusters) typical of these regions. Her goal was to create a “temple” structure that interrogates the interplay between femininity, architectural permanence, and the ephemeral nature of environmental debris. The result of her research was a two channel video installation and a series of plaster cast sculptures.



3rd cycle: ...and so we'll end up singing

The third and last cycle of residencies was coordinated by Cherimus and took place between 17 September – 24 October 2024, with the artists travelling first to Syros, then Corsica and finally Sardinia, where they showed their work on the occasion of a public event held at Museo Nivola on 19 October 2024.



Lukas De Clerck

Lukas De Clerck experimented on the creative potential sparked by the encounter of the Aulos - an ancient Greco-Roman, double-reed double pipe instrument, which he has reconstructed – with traditional instruments and music from the three islands. His work focused on exchanges and collaborations with local musicians and instrument-makers and experimentations with the sonic features of different local architectural forms, to create new compositions.



Maya Aghniadis (Flugen)

Maya Aghniadis, also known as Flugen, dedicated her residency to the creation of a piece superimposing three different rhythms, each associated to one of the three islands. The three rhythms also symbolically represented three temporal dimensions: the past (Syros), the present (Corsica) and the future (Sardinia). The result of her work, developed on the basis of the work conducted with the participants to her workshops, was Ousura, a sonic narrative delving into the essence of time through rhythmic play and evocative soundscapes.



Roberto Casti

Roberto Casti worked on a sound installation, whose elements (melody, rhythm and lyrics) were each composed in one of the three islands. The research leading to the installation was based on the materials produced with the participants to his workshops. Through the use of prompts, improvisations, dialogues and brainstorming, the artist invited the audience to compose and record the different elements of the piece, each time drawing inspiration and building on the results of the previous workshops.

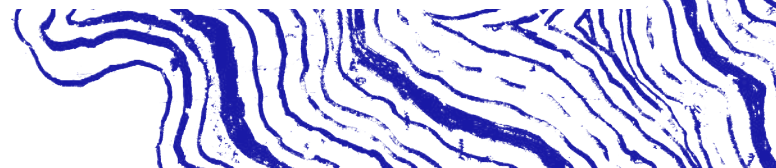
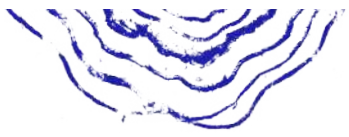




2.3. Organizational issues

In addition to the questions related to the artistic dimension of the project, several organizational issues emerged during its execution. One of the questions which we had not initially adequately prepared for – and which came to the fore in the course of the first round of residencies – was the need to clearly communicate with the artists about the residencies' specific context and working conditions, including aspects concerning food, accommodation, travels, leisure activities, etc. This may look like trivial questions. However, it is important to acknowledge the quite unusual context of our programme. The relative isolation of the places of residence (which, in practice, meant having few transportation, commercial, leisure, food and accommodation options available) may not be an ideal environment for artists to work in, or, in any case, may not match their expectations. Following the feedback from the first residents we realized that it should have prepared them better for the programme in advance of their arrival. To address this issue, each association drafted a document with detailed information about the aspects just mentioned, which significantly helped to set the right expectations for the artists invited to the next two rounds of residencies.

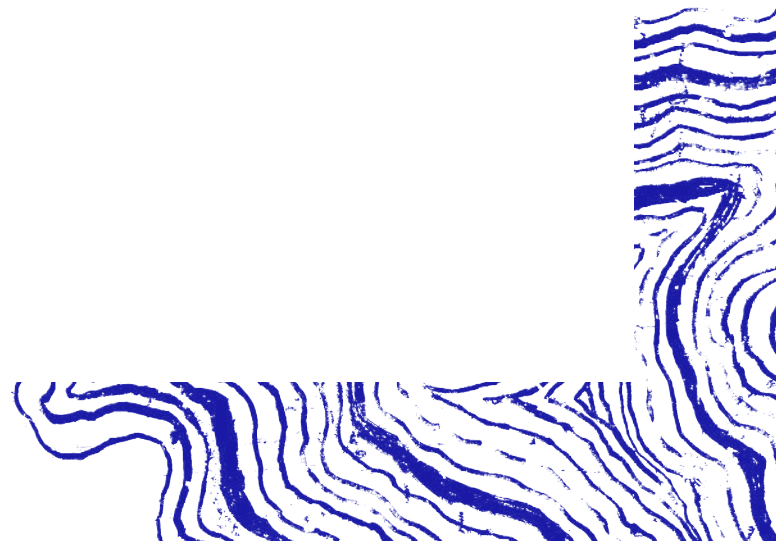
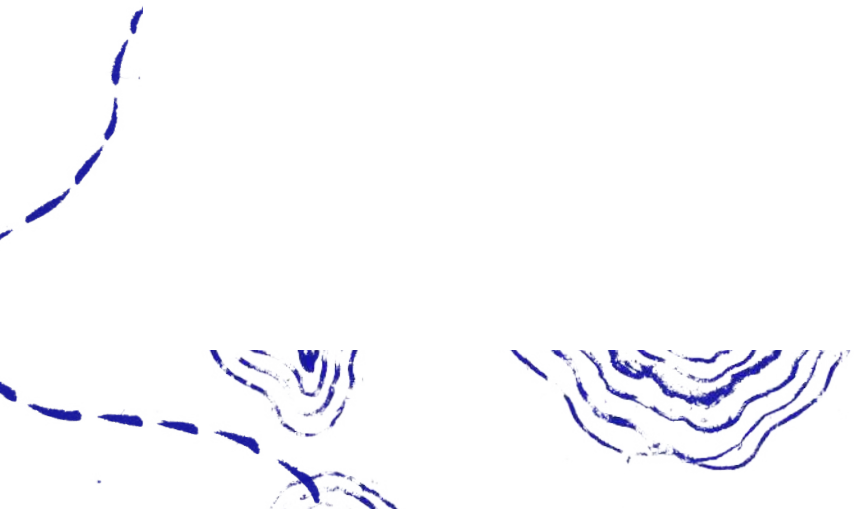
Another important issue we had to deal with was public attendance to the artists' workshops. The latter, as seen, were a crucial part of the project, as the exploration of the territory and the exchange with the local communities were meant to constitute the basis of the artists' research. Generally speaking, the workshops were fairly attended (with an average of 5-8 participants). Yet, some of them attracted less participants (with a minimum of 2) and, in general, we did not notice any substantial increase in participation as the project advanced, despite having tried different solutions (e.g. intensifying the communication campaign, both online and with posters; using more attractive, less 'technical' language in the communication materials; proposing different kinds of settings and locations; holding multiple workshops on the same date/location). Although this was not a major problem in itself – as, by their very nature, the workshops were conceived of as small-group activities – we exchanged at length on this issue, to consider whether to consolidate or not this methodology in the future. The conclusion we came to is that, while still in need of further development, this type of activity effectively enriched and opened new avenues for artistic research in line with the project's long-term objectives. This was confirmed by the central role that the workshops had especially in some of the artists' practices (Casti and Aghniadis in particular, whose research was entirely based on the themes and activities developed with the public), but also, more generally, by the impact they had on our

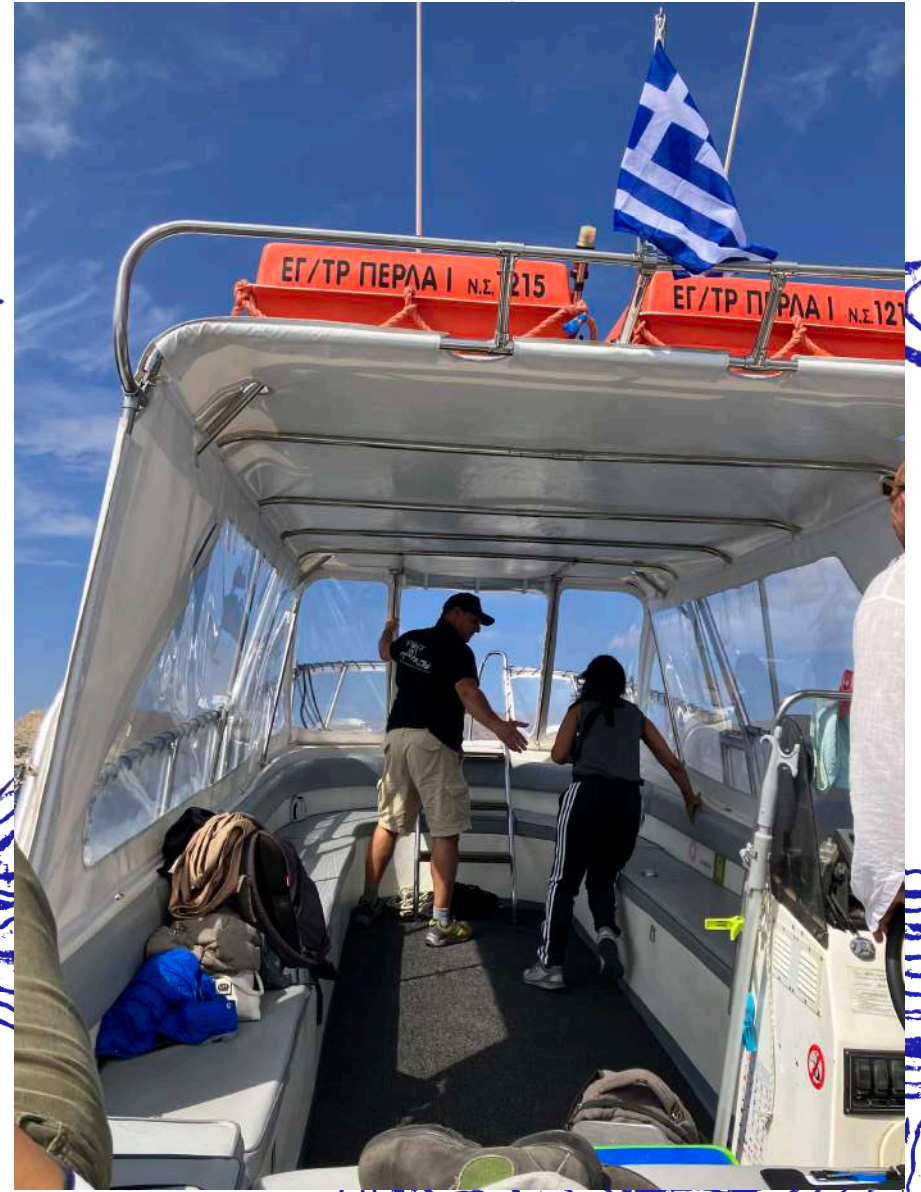




organizations. The workshops effectively served to enlarge our local networks, with some of the attendees starting, since then, to be actively involved in the daily life of the associations.

A final issue that will deserve further consideration in the future is the environmental impact of international travels. This question is particularly daunting for “peripheral” regions like ours - and even more so for islands - since there are no direct flight connections between them and all travels require changing (sometimes multiple times) in mainland cities and capitals. To respond to this issue, one option we considered at the beginning of the project was to organize all travels of artists and staff exclusively by ferry and trains. Yet, while it was possible to do so for the connections between Corsica and Sardinia, it proved unfeasible for the journeys to and from Syros, which would have required, due to the number of changes, between two and three days of travel each time. Considering the already complex logistics of the art residencies (which entailed having three artists available at the same time for a period of around 40 days), this option had to be discarded, as it would have substantially reduced the time spent by the artists in the three islands. Given the existing international transportation network, there is no easy way to bypass this problem. There is however one possible solution that may be worth considering in the future. This would consist in making the travels into an integral part of future residency programmes by, for example, planning research activities to be conducted during the different stops and legs of a journey. This would allow for the use of slower, yet less polluting, means of transportation, while providing a more “concrete” experience of the distances (geographical as well as cultural) that separate and unite, at once, different places.







3. THE WAY AHEAD

To assess the results and prospects of the project, as it is only about to come to a conclusion, would be premature. We are only beginning to understand the impact and benefits of the programme, both for the network we have begun to build and for our organizations individually, and in their relation to the local communities in particular. There are, to be sure, many different ways in which “Community between Islands” has contributed to enhancing our work, many of which we have analyzed above. Yet, at a more structural level, the continuation of the project still requires further reflections. At this stage, then, we could only give some indications as to the general directions that we have begun to discuss about the future of the project.

Given the original aim of “Communities between Islands” – that is, to build and consolidate a network of art organizations based in “peripheral” areas - there is, in the first place, a clear need to enlarge its geographic scope in the future. To the extent to which our ambition was to create, in the long run, a self-sustaining circuit of organizations operating outside the “mainstream” art world, it will be necessary to include as many actors as possible in the project, as a way to multiply resources, in terms of both organizational and financial capabilities and international visibility. The challenge, in this respect, will be to determine what types of actors to involve and, starting from there, to define, as clearly as possible, the mission, activities and methodologies that will form the backbone of the network. This is a long-term objective, which will require a patient work of exchanges, contacts and collaborations with different international stakeholders. This prospect, however, already highlights the necessity to move beyond an exclusive focus on islands, as it is increasingly apparent to us that the problems and questions we are interested in tackling are common to many other regions in mainland Europe.



A related question concerns the scope of artistic and creative disciplines to include. This topic has become especially relevant in the course of the project, as some of the most interesting results have been achieved thanks to collaborations between artists, craftsmen and experts from other (non artistic) disciplines. To the extent that one of the pillars of the project was to enhance and revive local cultures through art, we are convinced that such a dialogue should be pursued further, in order to valorize local practitioners and their know-how, also in relation to traditional, locally-embedded practices and systems of knowledge. As many of the invited artists' works have shown, this heritage is still alive and has the potential to contribute to some of the most pressing social and ecological questions of the present. Starting from these considerations, we are currently exploring the possibility of expanding the programme of exchange to include in a more systematic fashion local artisans working in different fields, such as pottery, weaving, wood and wrought-iron crafts, traditional food and culinary production, instrument making, etc. This contamination may not be pursued exclusively for its cultural and social value, but it may as well be designed in such a way as to foster the economic potentials of these activities, for example, by having international artists and designers assisting local producers in the development of new graphic, formal and creative contents.





Co-funded by
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