

LIVE IN-BETWEEN

[Institutional risings / Artistic practices / Collective processes]

LIVING THE INSTITUTIONS? PROJECT AND GENERAL FRAMEWORKS

Living In-between was a coordination initiative for the Fabra i Coats Contemporary Art Centre, collectively developed between March 2016 and May 2017 by four entities, LaFundició, Idensitat, Sinapsis and Transductores. The project was the result of a call for management proposals as part of an institutional turn-around that aimed to encourage mediation practices that would connect artistic practices and society. At the end of 2015, the four entities created a mixed coordination team and decided to present a joint project that aimed to foster practices of alliance and cooperation.

Living In-between was a programme that mobilised the Fabra i Coats Contemporary Art Centre as a creator and catalyst for interaction between contemporary artistic practices and other social spaces. It aimed to offer the means to collate and respond to the emerging new ways of doing and re-thinking institutions. The initiative understood artistic practices and collective processes to be essential tools for activating transformative strategies that contribute to both the cultural ecosystem and the social context. We proposed collectively to occupy the space, one that was traversed by the crossover between the factory's past, the different territories and networks that inhabit it and the current model of art centre. We also sought to focus on forms of cultural institutionalism with more complex and systematic structures: for example, through an expanded programming committee—with the presence of the four entities—; through long-term collaborative work mechanisms; through processes of involvement and participation in different territories, both Sant Andreu and the rest of the city; through research and alliances with other types of institutions and initiatives, normally excluded from contemporary art ecosystems; and through socialisation exhibitions and spaces where other cultural practices and forms of artistic research could come together. Thus, the programme tried to appeal directly to citizens through ways of doing that combined research processes with those of production, archiving, mediation, participation and debate, and, at the same time, proposed to amplify them by ac-

tivating networks and by socialising contents and experiences.

The first phase of the project, between March and September 2016, was based on four programmes (*Antenna*, *Loom*, *Overflow Culture* and *In Transition - City*) and was developed through exhibitions, research, workshops, long-term collaboration projects, activities, conferences and connections with diverse entities in the local and city contexts. These practices meant a first point of contact and a cultivation of other forms of inhabiting and circulating culture through different initiatives. Based on this background, a second phase was developed, called *Weaving the City* between November 2016 and May 2017. The programme for this phase was approached as a more in-depth study to discover how contemporary cultural practices could be used as a tool to create city. From this viewpoint, what is urban is understood as something diverse, in movement, organic, in transit and in constant mutation. The city is considered the weft on which other forms of building society, of defending rights, of knitting together new alliances between culture, society and territories, can be woven. In short, of positioning, inhabiting and building city among us all. At a methodological level, this phase was based on two aspects. First, on a cross-disciplinary committee called *The Warp*, with the entities and initiatives already involved and in progress, and with other new ones that could be added. Secondly, on dynamic exhibition and socialisation spaces for the processes and results that revealed the complexity of the subjects suggested as catalysts.

LIVING THE PAGES: PUBLICATION STRUCTURE AND POLICIES

This book does not aim to be a catalogue raisonné for an exhibition programme, but more a tool for considering the instituting or fracturing process of the collective management of the *Living In-between* project. During the sessions held to re-think how to document the complexities of *Living In-between*, we realised that this publication was a source of tension. We shifted between presenting a sample of all the processes like an archive or creating a layer of reflection and dialogue between us and between the different people and

discourses that have formed part of this initiative. Furthermore, we decided that this document needed to describe the problems and tensions of certain aspects of the management and substance of the day-to-day of a cultural institution. Faced with this tension, we resolved that this publication should have two different introductions to the work. One that is more reflective with texts, and a second in record form that is more descriptive of the actions, programmes, exhibitions, socialisation spaces and other arrangements. Each part, in turn, has a different style of enunciation and writing.

The first, more reflective and theoretical part is based on five areas or fields that pervaded the work of *Living In-between: Institutionalism, Political Economy, Infrastructures, The Warp* and *Pollinations*. These are the political elements and tools of our work that we have been discussed and questioned from different angles and by different projects. We agreed upon these elements as vectors for conflicts, complexities and forms of rethinking cultural policies. These aspects have, in fact, been present in numerous discussions among the programming committee of the four entities, as well as in talks, debates and other areas we have passed through and inhabited at the Art Centre institution and other spaces. Therefore, these lines of argument have three entries: firstly, a collective own text, where possible by various entities to encourage dialogue among us; secondly, a guest text by an initiative, experience or person, which serves as a point of reference to discuss a subject, open it up, expand it and even question it; and finally, a closing text-dialogue for each aspect by partners involved in the process. We have retrieved their voices from interviews or texts, encompassing an amalgam of profiles, ranging from the coordination team to part of the political team that created the call for proposals, as well as communities and groups that participated in the experience, and art centre educators.

The second part of the publication includes part of the report on actions and processes developed, in the form of descriptive texts. This is divided into two main sections that describe phases 1 and 2 of the process. The first from May 2016 and the second from October 2016. Each phase is based on programmes, activities and spaces for socialisation, and exhibitions. On many occasions, due to the hybrid format of the practices, mixed spaces were created, which we have included in one or other section, but which were developed in an interconnected and cross-practice way: many actions and activities arose from discussions with the progra-

mmes and exhibitions, and many territory processes resulted in exhibitions or research with socialisation spaces. Summarising all the initiatives and cultural and social processes developed has been a complicated task and we have had to leave out descriptions of a number of activities and actions. Furthermore, there wasn't enough room for many nuances and other texts, which are however included on the website. Given the organic nature of the project and its evolution in two phases, we have followed the chronology in this section, which serves as the base architecture for the reader, so that he or she can follow the evolution and mutation of the process.

With this hybrid structure, halfway between an essay, the targeted research of some processes and an inventory of practices and programmes developed, we believe we have articulated a plural publication. A narrative that neither reduces the way of explaining cultural practices to a single register, nor includes just a single discourse or type of subject that can speak. We have tried to be more inclusive of the voices and experiences that populate, inhabit and use institutions. As an 'ensemble' text, we also wanted to open it up to other reflections, fields and contradictions that are typical of culture as a political field with specific material, social and economic conditions. It is under these conditions that we have experienced and co-existed, and on which it makes more sense to reflect in this publication.

IN-BETWEEN WHAT AND HOW WE LIVE? PROBLEMATIC QUESTIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL CONFLICTS

The institutional process of *Living In-between* has not been free of tension, contradictions and limits, both institutional and material. From the beginning, we were aware that the institutional model inherited from the Art Centre responded to a different paradigm of cultural policy. Coordinating four entities and accepting the time and spaces for plural deliberation and negotiation requires more time. These are different rhythms in the production chain of culture. In addition, the specifications of the actual call for proposals posed huge restriction: we only had a year and there was almost no prior background or practices shared with the territory, no established teams or experiences at the institution (in previous editions, there were education programmes and initiatives, but they were branches of the exhibition programme and, due to the cut-off between tenders, they could

not flourish). We were aware that it was impossible to fully roll out the entire series of actions we intended. In addition, this tender was considered a stepping stone to a longer management proposal. This was a significant point because it meant accepting the contradictions between collectively working for a year and activating other culture economies, aware that it would be a short trial run for what really required 4 or 5 years to see structural changes. Despite this, we decided to participate and developed a process that operated in this scenario, being clear about our time lines and responsibilities with the different social partners we worked with. This responsibility did not mean that we were unable to create spaces for practices on cultural institution, nor did it mean renouncing this experimental, provisional and almost prototype nature for another type of institutionalism that has attempted to stir up, transcend and make the Art Centre more porous.

Another of the more interesting aspects of this project was the generation of a hybrid format of knowledge, spaces, practices and very plural models of involvement. This framework encouraged the break with the paradigm of conventional cultural participation and of education and mediation: a framework that involves taking part in existing structures already consolidated by excluded communities, and one which fosters territory and educational programmes based on consensus, access and the literacy of different groups and audiences. This approach ignores whether or not the communities, groups and territories have knowledge, culture and their own tools with which to create dialogue. With this in mind, we tried to challenge the word *mediation* and the *and* between “culture” and “society”. By doubting the *and* as a simple union, we have experienced models where there is no clear and, opening up new paths, new lines for escape. For this purpose, we proposed inhabiting these uncertainties collectively and leaving the *and* as an *In-between*, creating a position of hybridisation, of mainstreaming. A position of agitation by being in the middle of and halfway between a new institution—a stepping stone proposal—, an old patchwork factory and a complex territory where we had to let questions and problems pervade us. The challenge lay in situating this *In-between*, a restless place, a gap that open processes could be launched from, where artistic practice and territory processes in unsettled places, in areas of friction, could be placed. A gap for experiencing initiatives where other working conditions and production and socialisation

models of the ecosystem could be discovered, both the cultural ecosystem and that of Fabra i Coats in general: an old factory complex that houses a multitude of social, cultural, educational and community institutions. This inhabiting has also been a framework for thinking, not so much about the users, audiences or communities included, but more about the forms of living, coexisting and becoming involved in different ways with the programmes and the arrangements of the infrastructures we develop. Not spaces simply for including society or thinking about how to collaborate with cultural workers, but living places where other forms of society and other alliances between different types of social partners can be experienced.