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On Biennale's Ruins?

Living the void, covering the distance

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Too much love and friendship connect me to many people, working for, and around, the Venice Biennale. Too much admiration connects me to many that, thanks to the Biennale, made Venice a place where to come back to, instead of a “once-in-a-lifetime” tourist destination. These pages will go down as an exercise of speculation and critique not light-heartedly approached., I am participating in the uncertainty of those people risking to lose their jobs, watching their business fail, not getting their contracts renewed, being unable to access the already miserable existing welfare measures. Considering the earnings in monetary terms, room attendants, janitors, technicians, workers, freelancers, researchers, teachers, journalists, tourist-guides, artists, architects, curators, performers, etc. all of them will - more or less - lose something due to a possible (yet hopefully unlikely) cancellation and the certain delay of the events’ programmes linked to the various departments of La Biennale.

Today Venice Biennale appears as a lifeline for the whole city’s financial situation. It must be acknowledged the Venetian art foundation did not react to this crisis as some important U.S public art institutions did, firing part of their staff or erasing their department of education. The Venice Biennale Foundation did not cancel any of its planned events: at present everything is postponed to September. Good news indeed!, Yet, facing Covid19 pandemic, besides resisting, could be the chance for a radical rethinking of the social role of the arts and art institutions.

Populist neoliberal mayor of Venice Luigi Brugnaro, for his part, responds to the pandemic following the well known recipe of the shock economy: once the emergency will be over, the motto will be “as before, more than before”. Meaning: more tourism, more hotels, more cruise ships, more cuts to public services, more events...We must make up for lost time.

I cannot predict the future, I don’t know if anything will ever be as before. For sure something will definitely change. In two, three or four years - maybe once Covid19 vaccine is available, things will go back to “normal”, at least for a while, until “the next big one”, the next global epidemic. “Normal” meaning: more than half a million visitors largely flying in from all over the world, territorial branding, real estate rents parasitizing art sector and the collective symbolic capital of the city, blue chip art galleries influencing artistic choices with their financial firepower, frenetic networking at overcrowded poor-quality-drinks parties, crazy deadlines making it impossible for workers to meet safety standards, massive use of unpaid or underpaid labour, etc.

I do not know if we’ll get back to normality. Yet if that is normality, I hope we won’t.

Reflecting on a different Venice Biennale is no easy task. It is a complex machine, the International Art Exhibition together with the Cinema Film Festival being only the most visible moments of the activity of the Foundation organised in seven departments: Art, Architecture, Cinema, Theatre, Dance, Music and the ASAC (Historical Archive For Contemporary Art).

Even if the main object of my analysis here is Venice Biennale, precisely its manifestation as art and architecture exhibitions, I want to highlight some issues that could be relevant in rethinking large scale exhibitions in general (at least those situated in small and medium size cities) at the time of this crisis. This approach is not based on Eurocentric thinking, nor because Venice was the first of its kind, but mainly because, - as largely analyzed in the last decades - the diffusion of the format follows the neoliberal pattern common to many cities in the era of rampant globalization [1].

The last twenty years of Venice Biennale almost all under the presidency of Paolo Baratta, are considered as **a kind of** leftist management masterpiece. In a nutshell: Baratta and his team were able to lift the Biennale out of both a financial and positioning crisis. They did it not following blindly the classical neoliberal recipes. In fact they alternated cuts and recruitments. For example: in 2009 the Biennale decided to outsource a few dozens of workers mostly employed as room attendants, while in recent years, a massive policy of recruitment bringing full-time staff to the considerable number of 111 employees. Doing so between 2009 and 2016 la Biennale got rid of older, less qualified, unionized workers, making space for younger, more flexible, more qualified and not unionized (!) labor force. It did so updating the tasks of some traditional professional roles: room attendants were partly replaced by the so called “active catalogues”- workers in the function both of overseers and cultural mediators. Furthermore, to avoid the generalized use of illegal employment by many national pavilions, the Biennale invited all national participation to meet at least Italian labor-rights standards or better.

Baratta renewed the formula of Art and Architecture exhibitions: he increased the use of the Arsenale, imposed annual alternation of Art and Architecture exhibitions, intensified the activities of the Foundation And reduced what was not national participation or collateral event to a single curator’s exhibition. Doing so Baratta was able to dramatically improve the Foundation’s financial performance. At the same time Baratta programmatically insisted on two main strategies: First, he rejected any easy managerial rhetoric, to the point of suppressing the marketing department. The Biennale, for example, does not call its audience “the public” This would reduce the event to a mere product. I The institutional communication uses the word “visitors” instead, to convey the highly individual and unique experience of a visit. His attitude, despite presenting itself as anti-managerial, is in reality a very common marketing strategy. Second: Baratta proudly affirms the complete intellectual autonomy of the institution he represents, together with the chosen curators or department directors both from the State and from the commercial art circuit. It could definitely be discussed to what extent this autonomy does exist Nevertheless the main argument in the hands of the Foundation remains its growing financial autonomy essentially due the Biennale’s exponential growth as an event. A good market performance immediately translates into intellectual autonomy. Let’s not be ideological (!). In a country like Italy - where politicians are not shy about using the cultural field as an opportunity for cronyism and consensus building - such an argument has its own weight. If a relatively effective independence from State interference may be true for what concerns the curators’ exhibitions - the Italian participation still being often damaged by direct ministerial management - when referring to Biennale’s autonomy from the market, one could object that, while surely the Biennale not being fair, yet the production money of global commercial galleries and the millions of euros raised by the selected curators coming from the different donors do have a direct impact on what is shown.

The point here is: if not now, then when should we try to push for a radical transformation of art institutions? if not now, then when should we try to abandon the paradigm of growth attached to the neoliberal concept of the event? I have already attempted a critique of the latter as opposed to the event conceived as a radical rupture of linear temporality [2]. The negative effects of a typical neoliberal art event - some of them briefly mentioned above questioning the “normality” of large scale exhibitions - were already evident enough to desire something different. The pandemic simply poses a structural challenge to this paradigm.

In the next few years, tourism, mobility, art logistics will radically change. How do we want to transform what Gregory Sholette refers to as our **bare art world [3]**? We should not leave neoliberalism free to operate its own adjustments, we should not permit it to go back and operate in favor of the business and the markets: an

endless spiral of accumulation at the expenses of hyper-mobile crowds, with privilege, exploitation, precarity and poverty cohabit and overlap. Now we can think of something new!

Do we really want to move towards the nightmare of a rarefied scenario made of: online auctions, where art objects prices rise together with their status of safe-haven assets ?, online art schools, same fees, same debts, yet easier discipline following the slogan of innovation + individualization? where a contemplation *dispositif* like the white cube could change its status from ritual to medical, offering a more exclusive than ever sanitized space welcoming a rich global elite of potential buyers in the name of social distancing.

This pandemic is but the current precipitation of a larger and older crisis that makes this about capitalism as a peculiar ecological regime.

Years ago David Quammen wrote epidemics are becoming more and more frequent because of the increasing pressure on the ecosystem and the increasing violence of extractivism[4], violence that grew parallel to the development of neoliberal globalization. This implies several considerations. First: the need to claim a process of global art system degrowth this not a consequence of Covid-19 outbreak, but something deeply connected to the need of putting an end to extractivism dynamics as recently expressed by millions of people marching in the streets for climate justice[5]. Second: we are facing the uncomfortable critical task of embarking in a critique of globalization, and of art globalization, that does not end up by fueling a nationalistic or neo-reactionary rhetoric, together with its aesthetic companion: provincialism. At the same time we can not accept the simplistic idea of going back to local , to small homogeneous communities, to the dream of an Arcadic proximity that could not be reached if not at the expense of the vast majority of human and non-human beings.

Nonetheless, it is time to recognize that the late 90's "great leap forward" of the art world - whose advantages even some of us may have enjoyed too, with its utopian image of a world as an interconnected archipelago of dialoguing differences as i.e. the powerful assemblage Glissant-Obrist-Utopia Station) - was realized. Yet this achievement happened according to the capitalistic plan, where, -borrowing Maurizio Lazzarato's expression in a recent public talk and insisting on the metaphor of the "archipelago - "a few Islands of abstract labor are surrounded by an ocean of exploitation" and - my add - extractivism

We need a social, political and financial shift. We also need new narrations, we need art spaces to be inhabited by new epistemologies.

La Biennale - despite being on an island - can't change for the best in absence of a complete overturn of national and European answers to the current crisis.

it will be almost impossible for la Biennale to engage in a serious process of degrowth and of re-imagination of its phenomenology and its relationship with the city and the world. If again European Institutions will opt for austerity measures and strict fiscal impositions instead of abandoning logic of debt and reinforcing welfare measures, in the direction of a universal basic income besides the terrible outcomes in terms of poverty and reinforcement of nationalist rhetoric - (in other words: if Europe will fail again -), if

Why so? Because the revenues, - especially those of the Art Exhibition and the Cinema festival - are too important to keep the whole machine running. Because even if the Architecture exhibition has considerably grown through time, its accounts are still structurally in red, and its sustainability is granted by the impressive Art's financial performance. Because royalties are important. Because more national participations, and more "collateral events" mean more hype, more rent, more work, more job opportunities especially for the young labor force that, in the last twenty years, was able, to build a life project around the big event in Venice: an army

of freelancers, small business, cooperatives of room attendants, technicians, workers, deputy curators, location managers etc.[6].

In Marxian terms, this should be the time for this technical composition to turn into a political composition, time to claim for Quarantine income[7] and universal basic income, to avoid a catastrophic race to lowering prices. For this European policies are crucial to determine if art workers will be forced to an individual competition for the survival - not having time or energies to struggle for a radical change of art institutions - or if they will be given the basic conditions to organize themselves to deepen the crisis of the neoliberal apparatus, while not being doomed to sink with it.

More public investments in contemporary art is not enough, money should also be invested in a different way[8].

If in the next few years la Biennale will have to face a forced or - less likely - chosen degrowth, and this process will happen in a climate of austerity, the army of freelancers will be the first to pay its cost, while the shameful group of Venice based space-renting agencies - as cultural institutions- will probably survive dramatically cutting the cost of labor waiting for better times to come.

While we all should be working in the direction of a general shift outside neoliberalism, it is yet urgent to start a collective reflection on how La Biennale and other institutions in the global art circuit, should radically be transformed.

Few years ago in one of my articles I addressed the issue of what I defined as alter-institutionalism. I divide alter-institutions in two main categories: governmental institutions - often temporary and created by artists - and autonomous institutions - often occupied urban spaces or institutes, such as archives, founded by artists and other people during social movements outbreaks -.I also tried to list a series of challenges towards alter-institutionalism isolating seven key problems: capture, subjectivation, governance and juridical structure, political geography and decolonization, binarism between slowing down and acceleration, queering, radical (imaginary) economy[9].

Even if it must be acknowledged that also official art institutions - at least the public ones - with various degree of success or failure can deliberately choose () to trigger processes of self alter-institutionalization (i.e. L'Internationale, a confederation of European museums) there is no time to rely on institutions' goodwill.

For example: La Biennale considerably developed its educational activities (large part of the audience being schools pupils visiting the exhibition during the fall), created a certain temporal continuity of activities (i.e. Biennale College or the Carnival for Kids) and invested some energies in promoting projects in the Venetian mainland. We have the picture of an institution that is certainly not dogmatically profit or event oriented, especially in its effort to meaningfully interact with the city and the regional school system (granting very democratic access standards). Yet, paradoxically, the same reformist nature of its governance makes it work as an important ideological function in the neoliberal Venice, assuring it a critical extension, a space where art is free to express its critical subjective potential in a progressive corporate environment, while avoiding, at the same time any direct role and real attempt to criticize tourism extractivism. Quite a good (public) company, in a very bad city (!)

Under this perspective Venice Biennale appears as an exception in relation to its context: being undoubtedly socially impoverished by forty years of neoliberalism, the Venetian art institution is now perceived as a mere beneficiary of its presence more than as a serious possible interlocutor.

Nonetheless I see this social impoverishment - the progressive flight of its inhabitants and their homogenization in terms of class and race - as the main reason for re-imagining a possible relationship with the context.

Too simplistic reducing Venice to a city contended on the one side by a reactionary and profit oriented lower class mostly employed in commerce and tourism - and on the other side the petty bourgeoisie of the left, nostalgic of its declining prestige.

From a social point of view it is true that the last years were marked by episodic and weak social attempts to correct Biennale's policies: in 2009 the protest against the externalization of a few dozens of room attendants; more recently the campaign against the Biennale's monopolistic use of the Arsenale.,

the image of the Biennale as an oasis in the desert of the city seems to me pretty much informed by the neoliberal gaze: a gaze recognising agency almost totally to corporate subjects, denying it to civil society; a gaze refusing to acknowledge what Venice is still able to express in terms of social movements, self-organization and resistant forms of life.

Only a social mobilization will be able to modify this institutional mentality.

The revolution of art institutions could only be initiated by, and will only march parallel to, a much wider revolution. A revolution able to make significant steps forward on different yet interconnected grounds: the achievement of a universal basic income and new housing rights; a serious commitment on climate justice towards the end of extractivism the reconstruction of a democratic health-care system, damaged by decades of privatizations; the end of gender, race, class and species asymmetries that structure and permeate the current social, financial and political order.

As art workers we must be aware that we have a role to play, yet this is not a challenge to be faced from within the short horizon of art professionalism.

That being said, the question is: in what direction should we push to deepen the crisis of the neoliberal art event to the point that it turns into something different?

I'd like to suggest a few points trying to start answering this question focusing on the two cases of Venice Biennale Art and Architecture exhibitions - with on my side absolutely no ambition of completeness and with no illusion of universality.

1/ The Context. From the creative to the caring city.

We all know how misleading the "creative city" definition is: just another name for the old neoliberal city.

Here the subcategory of art, in a mono-dimensional way, is understood as a booster for financial growth. Largely proven, the trickle down effect does not work, and Venice is no exception. As mentioned above, Venice Biennale represents an important professional opportunity for thousands of resident cultural workers, yet the ones who benefit the most from it are landlords or private foundations renting spaces to the plethora of collateral events. Though allowing some people to resist in the historical city centre, The Biennale is actually not attracting new residents but capitals much of a bigger opportunity for real estate rent than for labor.

Despite its cultural character, Venice Biennale underlying logic is no different than other tourism-based events: i.e. it increases tourism apartments towards the loss of houses for residents. The result is a unique marvelous city, with a lot of art, and a very little life: the perfect context to place -as regularly happens - private art foundations linked to global capitals. the perfect context for private art foundations linked to global capitals - as usually happens!

Covid19 pandemic invites us to rethink art institutions and art practices: not more boosters for uncontrolled financial growth, but useful aesthetic/political dispositifs to turn our cities into ***caring cities***.

The urge is to re-imagine forms of common life and of commonality out of the techno-authoritarian turn coming along with social distancing.

Art must embrace the challenge to even more places at the center of the political scene - human, posthuman, non-human. -. It can do so by abandoning the global gatherings of networking audiences that characterize large scale exhibitions, big museums, international fairs, etc.

I do not intend to return to classical avant-garde, nor do I intend an art role as that of a possible guide for society.

Here I envision imagination and critical speculation going together with a material process of transformation of the institutional art field: a process where autonomy - as the subjective power of the encounter with an artwork - and heteronomy - as the process of erosion of art disciplinary borders into non art into the social dimension -are both mobilized.

2) The Event. From Exhibition to Habitation

The Biennale should not think of itself primarily as an event centered around an exhibition (even if provided with a public program).

I love exhibition as a form of language, and I am not suggesting that shows should be taken out of the equation - it would be an absurdity and a loss! My question is: do we really need a machine attracting tens of thousands of people for the opening - having to work hard to create an audience for the remaining period of the event?

Do we really think it essential to have such a large number of artists invited to produce pieces for the exhibition ? Could we not rather think of a ***Curator's Exhibition where the curator invites*** the artists - even in smaller numbers - to intervene in and outside the main venues of the Giardini and the Arsenale) with projects having a longer duration, i.e. two years? The idea far from wanting to turn La Biennale into a huge residency project. Rather to move the accent from showing to inhabiting: allowing a new space-time dimension for projects that want to engage with the context and that too often result in paternalistic and unattended social consulting. Also this model would limit the influence of object driven art directly sponsored by private galleries (even if I don't mean to exalt any easy anti-object rhetoric) and would favor the interactions between art and architecture participants. As la Biennale recently did by inviting national participations to follow the theme chosen by the curator of the International exhibition, it could invite the countries to think of long term projects. This would at least result in a permanent use of the pavilions (and of the spaces of the Arsenale) that are currently kept closed and inaccessible for six months every year. This model, ideally, would also generate a kind of labor less obsessed by the frenetic deadline fever of the neoliberal event, with its concentration around the times of the opening and the ***finissage***, with more professional occasions distributed in time and open to encourage collaboration between local workers, architects, artists, curators, etc etc. It is also true that this proposal could sound contradictory, favoring the diffusion of La Biennale brand through the space-time matrix of the city, a sort of deeper and larger colonization by a powerful institution. The reality is, unfortunately, that this already happened, the red lion of la Biennale looms on almost every door in the city during the exhibition period. But this corporate colonization will be over only when the Biennale would acquire a totally different social function. In the meantime, the "International Art Habitation" should limit the earnings linked to real estate rent, regulating the market of space hospitality for exhibitions. We could hypothetically state that 100 m2 could not be rented for more than 1500 € per month, this would have different possible outcomes: in the

perspective of a family that owns a warehouse or even a building, the amount of money earned by a two years contract would still be a relevant sum. At the same time, with such a regulation, big private agencies, fake cultural institutions that are in fact location managers, would find less margins in their speculations, and local activities would find more spaces to let at cheaper prices. Last but not least, cheaper location prices would allow more independent organizations to access the city and would free resources to directly invest in the projects.

Let's now try to consider a couple of possible objections to this idea. The first would be: would artists still be interested in coming to Venice? My answer is: more than ever if the Biennale were able to lead a change in perspective, to renovate the intuition of its foundation; aren't we talking of a further crisis (local and global), and isn't it time to renovate the criteria by which cities become relevant on the world map of culture? The second objection could come from boredom and empty ritual of social art experiments in a city like Venice, a place that, as discussed above, offers a small and quite homogenous population. A population that, in addition, is used to art and not so available to be the object of paternalistic aesthetic practices. So, is this new version of the International Art Exhibition I am imagining destined to fail? Would the indication to work on the more diverse and inhabited Venetian mainland be enough to save this project from long term boredom and frustration? Well, these are indeed real concerns (and to increase projects in Mestre and Marghera would definitely be important), but they miss the main point. The challenge would exactly be to create a different framework for social art (and for art in general), to push the Biennale, artists, curators and organizations out of their comfort zone. Out of repeated schemes of social art as on demand assistance to subaltern subjectivities, out of participation and dialogue as mediation between conflicting social actors, out of the exotic search for local wonders. The challenge the Biennale should offer the art world, would be to invite some of its members to inhabit for two years the void caused by decades of neoliberal policies, to see that eventually this void is full of resistances, instead of trying to fill it by creating stereotypical local figures to address. If, before Covid-19, Venice, like many other touristic cities, was full of people and empty of life, now the people are gone and life is regulated by social distancing. So if a title (or a program) is needed, that could be: "Inhabiting the void, covering the distance".

3) Mobility: from entrepreneurial nomadism to radical permanence

Radical permanence is a critique of a certain regime of mobility. Is the sum of right to move plus the ability to collectively organize permanence, to build alter-institutions, to create autonomous cultural and democratic infrastructures in the places we live.

The art system is designed to endlessly move us from one place to the other, better if by plane. As a community, our ecological footprint shades our cultural impact. The ecological unsustainability of the art world, alone should impose a change. But this is not the only problem. We move, or should we say, we have no choice but to be moved. We recognize ourselves in a nomadic and superficially sympathetic (but often ruthless) international community of art workers. It is time to admit (beyond the necessary consideration that many different art worlds exist, with different value systems) that this model of deterritorialized community is part of the problem and not part of the solution. Of course this does not cancel the fact that some, thanks to the arts, are able to move away from countries and contexts where dictatorships and authoritarian regimes are in place. Still, while we move (to the next project, art school, residency, biennial or museum) as individualized entrepreneurs of ourselves, old and new neoliberal art institutions, together with policy makers and highly mobile financial capitals are able to design and dictate urban processes. These are powers that cause long

terms transformation of the places we live, design the development of physical territories and permanently influence the life of millions of people around the world: gentrification, real estate speculation, urban renewal, etc. Despite the growing popularity of critical thinking, the success of activist art and social practices, we lost (did we ever have it?) our grip on permanence. We stay too short in too many places, our good intentions feed the apparatus of neoliberal governance, dialogical and relational practices accepted with enthusiasm to reduce participation to conflict mediation. Instead, we need to participate to conflicts, not to sedate them. This requires time, commitment, organization and care, plus the end of any paternalistic temptation. We feel the tension towards society, but this tension is only effectively realized on the occasion of the outbreak of mass social movements. We must rethink permanence, duration, mobility, we must rethink engagement with our context in political terms. Radical permanence is made of a different temporal matrix and of course it entails a different relation with the space, one that is both within and outside the borders of the protected art space, an affirmation of its autonomy and at the same time a threat to its existence.

Radical permanence does not mean the absence of mobility, on the contrary the right to move of every body (no matter what race, class or gender) is an essential feature. Only, mobility is organized according to a different political point of view (first of all an ecological one). There is no interest in following the art circus of privilege, but (in a moment where in some parts of Italy we are not allowed to cover a distance of more than 200 meters away from our apartment) there is an urgency to disobey the impositions of social distancing. Radical permanence aims at building safe permanent spaces for bodies of all kind to move together, beginning from the same building, to the same block, neighborhood, city, etc. Radical permanence aims at imposing the legitimacy of democratic forms of life, at refusing the state of exception, techno-authoritarianism and a life mediated by digital proprietary technologies, at founding alter-institutions.

Radical permanence doesn't bow to the nostalgia for the local, nor it embodies a primitivism of any kind. If accelerationism very quickly (coherently with its name and program) turned towards a neo-reactionary teleology, we think the creation and use of free digital infrastructure is a key task. If the forced digital mediation of the body is a political tragedy, the coding of digital space against global capitalist platforms should be taken very seriously. Only, the digital infrastructure for radical permanence should work as an instrument to break the individualization of people, to make them physically come together, it should aim at organizing political common encounters instead of depoliticized isolations of individual time.

Now the question is: can a Biennial do something about it? It would really be beyond its prerogative to feel the responsibility to solve this problem, but it could at least incorporate a sustainable concept of mobility (where the exponential growth in the number of artists, national participations, collateral events and visitors are not immediately translated as success), it could allude to a certain type of art practice that engages with communities on longer terms and do not feed real estate rent and, last but not least, could give free permanent access to all Venetian residents.

4) Archive: from the history or La Biennale to histories for the future Biennale.

The archival impulse has been, since the late 90s, impossible to resist. If the end of socialism brought with it the end of history (a joke compared to the end of the condition for history itself, that comes with the current climate crisis), the archive represented the narrative matrix to re-assert an epic of art, beyond postmodern pastiche, neo-lyricism and the aesthetics of art as commodity. If history was disqualified, the archive helped artists to put back art feet in the fertile ground of histories (plural), abandoning teleological violence, reflecting

on the relationship between past, present and future. This archival mode of thinking hasn't exhausted its potentiality, a potentiality of which all actual archives are imbued.

The ASAC is the Historical Archive of Contemporary Art, one of the departments structuring the Venetian foundation. It can count on different fonds documenting the history of la Biennale and a library.

The Biennale has already affirmed its will to develop the ASAC in the direction of adding to its archival mission a research prerogative. This is good news, of course this declaration must be followed by important financial investments and the formation of a research team whose purpose go beyond the mere "valorization" of the archived items and a propagandistic mission.

If the digitalization of the archive has definitely accelerated during the last years, the access is still regulated by rigid corporate standards. If, like the Biennale seems to think, the archive has to become a productive source of knowledge, new access criteria should be put in place, beginning with the possibility of free reproduction/use of documents in case of proven non-commercial use. In any case, the archive, as the only department of la Biennale that is currently permanently open to the public, shall be thought as the ideal interface not only between the institution and the academic world, but with the city too, as it preserves the precious memory of a relationship. It is rich in stories and should become the source of counter-histories, beyond the ideological univocal narration of a neoliberal art institution: the archive as the undomesticated memory of an institution, not a cornerstone of its identity, but a mutating virus mining its epistemological normality.

[1] A recent example of the neoliberal framework structuring and (at the same time) threatening large scale exhibitions, is the case of Documenta 14 (2017). Its financial difficulties brought to light a double critique. First, the critique of the curator's idea to bring the exhibition to Athens as a way to increase the institution's cultural capital by "colonising" a city hit by austerity. Second, the curator himself and the CEO accusing the City and the Hessian government of trying to use the bankruptcy as an excuse to reterritorialize Documenta in Kassel. Implicitly, Szymczyk denounces the stakeholders preference towards an exhibition working as a tourism promotion agency rather than as a global critical tool.

[2] Marco Baravalle, ***For a Critique of The Neoliberal Event. Picasso in the Dispositif of Urban Souvenir Formation***, in "Keep Reading Giving Rise. Rogelio López Cuenca", Museo Nacional Centro De Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2019.

[3] "An art world where the interweaving of art and capitalism is self-evident,". See Gregory Sholette, ***Delirium and resistance: Activist art and the crisis of capitalism***. London: Pluto Press, 2017.

[4] David Quammen, ***Spillover***, W. W. Norton Company, 2013.

[5] In Venice, on September the 7th 2019, the activists of the Venice Climate Camp occupied for six hours the red carpet of the Venice Film Festival. The occasion was filmed and became part of Oliver Ressler's "Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart: Venice Climate Camp" (2019)

[6] We don't have clear numbers concerning how many art workers live in Venice, but in an historical city where more or less 50.000 residents are overwhelmed by more or less 30.000.000 of tourists per year, even a few thousand people make a difference, especially if they are not directly employed in the tourism industry.

[7] The Quarantine income is a campaign initiated in Italy by an independent union called ADL (Associazione Difesa Lavoratori), after the pandemic outbreak. It demands urgent welfare measures and has quickly gained national diffusion. Many workers from the art and entertainment business joined the campaign.

[8] If a prominent figure of the art system like Hans Ulrich Obrist recently advocated for an updated New Deal program to support the arts in this difficult time of ours (on a smaller scale, the Swiss curator's appeal could be compared to the recent letter by Mario Draghi, the former president of the ECB who, strong of his status of austerity guardian, dared to ask for drastic war-socialism-style measures), public support should be addressed in the direction of a radical rethinking of the role of culture in contemporary society. It should also be noted that even if la Biennale's activities are largely supported by the different earnings resulting from ticket sales, sponsorships, royalties, etc., (for a total of € 26.107.000, according to the official budget of La Biennale 2019), the institutional balance sheet also includes € 19.192.000 of public contributions for the same year. So, if it is more than likely that earnings will drastically decrease in 2020, a further public financing of the institution would be acceptable on the condition of an overall recalibration of its purposes. First of all, the Venetian foundation should not cut its labor costs, calculated in 2019 around € 7.000.000. Still this would not be enough as this sum only represents a partiality of the value of labor generated around the various events, a labor whose costs are covered by dozens of organizations landing in Venice on the occasion of the different cultural activities. The official budget of La Biennale di Venezia is available on line in the section "Trasparenza", on the foundation website: <https://www.labiennale.org/it/trasparenza>

[9] Marco Baravalle, *Alteristituzioni. Tra governamentalità e autonomia*. In Opera Viva. <https://operavivamagazine.org/alteristituzioni-e-arte/>