

HI! MY NAME IS ELENA,
I'M A CURATOR AND RESEARCHER BASED
IN KRASNODAR AND MOSCOW (RUSSIA),
AND THIS IS MY MANIFESTO TOWARDS
NEW MODELS OF HOW WE CAN LIVE
AND WORK TOGETHER IN (AS YET)
PANDEMIC TIMES.

I took this picture of a phrase written with black tape on the wall of Polytechnic School of Athens during *DOCUMENTA 14* in 2017. It was a part of the exhibition *GROSSRAUM C21* which explored the structures of political dominance and ways in which the image of the state of emergency is constructed.

12:00

I look at this image and think that now it's relevant more than ever. All modern western values related to capitalism, individualism, mode of constant production and consumption, personal success that leads to universal welfare – had led us to the state of a permanent crisis.

12:01



12:01

WHAT ROLE *DOES* ART PLAY
IN THIS PROCESS AND WHAT ROLE
COULD IT PLAY?

12:03



THIS IS *BARCA NOSTRA*,
AN INSTALLATION BY *CHRISTOPH BÜCHEL*
MADE FOR 2019 VENICE BIENNIAL

12:06

This fishing vessel sank on April 19, 2015, after a tragic collision with a Portuguese container ship that came to its rescue. Italian Navy estimates that more than 800 migrants died on the vessel, trapped under its deck. Only twenty-eight people survived.

Four years after the tragic event, the boat's hull had arrived in Venice. For the duration of the 58th Biennale di Venezia, the ship was there to bear witness to the thousands who had died attempting to cross the Mediterranean.

12:06



Is it okay for a famous and widely acclaimed white male artist to use the boat on which migrants tried to flee to Europe and died on their way there? Do any migrants or refugees get any profit from this? Does this art influence local government to create social programs for migrants or to open borders for them?

12:17

If not, who gets the benefits?

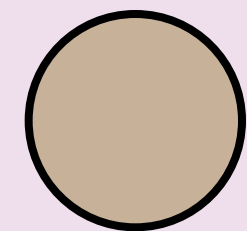
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MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

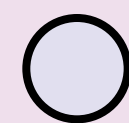
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2019 VENICE BIENNIAL, MAIN PROJECT

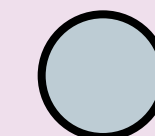
PARTICIPANTS



80% LIVE IN SO CALLED
"FIRST WORLD"



38% LIVE IN WESTERN
AND NORTHERN EUROPE



46% WOMEN

- 3 FROM SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES
- 2 FROM EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
- 2 FROM AFRICAN COUNTRIES



31% LIVE IN USA

12:20

SOMETIMES I FEEL VERY INTO THIS MEME.

12:21



12:22

I think pandemic shows clearly
that this approach just doesn't work anymore.

Who profits from these megalomaniac events besides the biennial public and
sponsors? Let's not forget the ecological aspect here. Imagine how much carbon
footprint they're tracing moving from one art event to another. Think of tons of
installation garbage left after the exhibitions are closed and the parties are finished.

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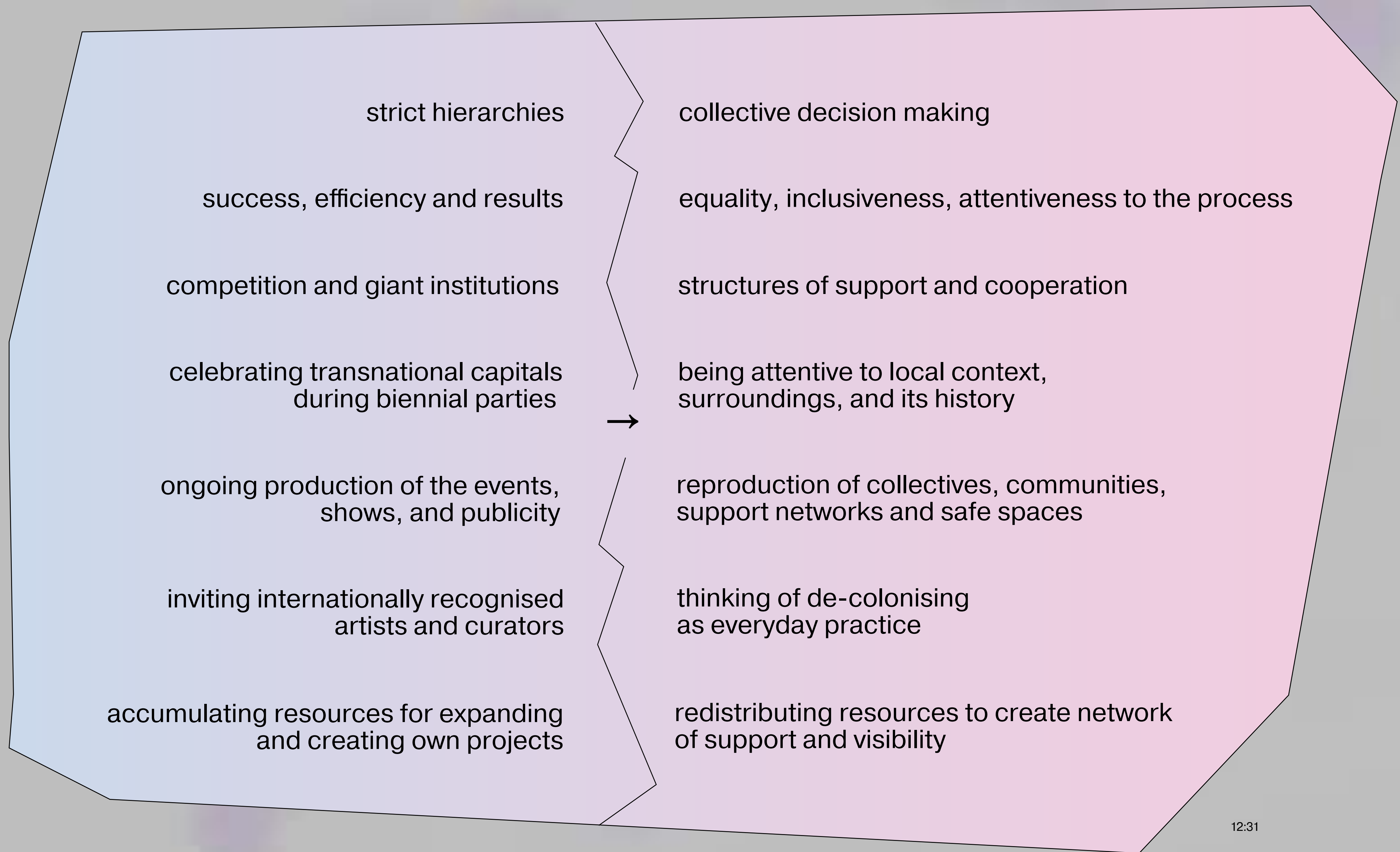


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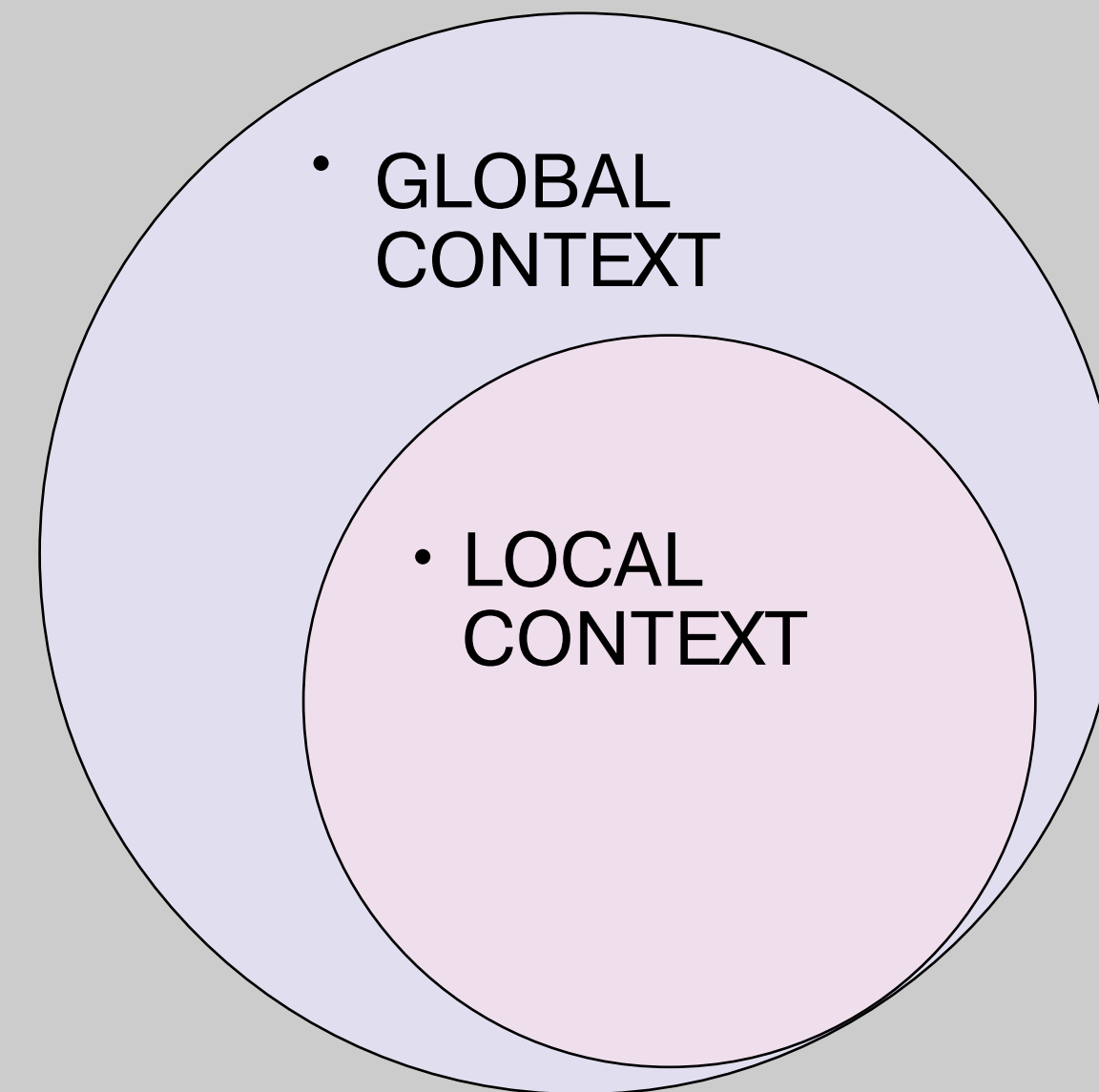
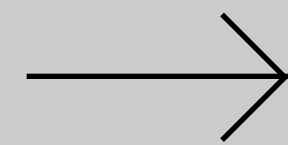
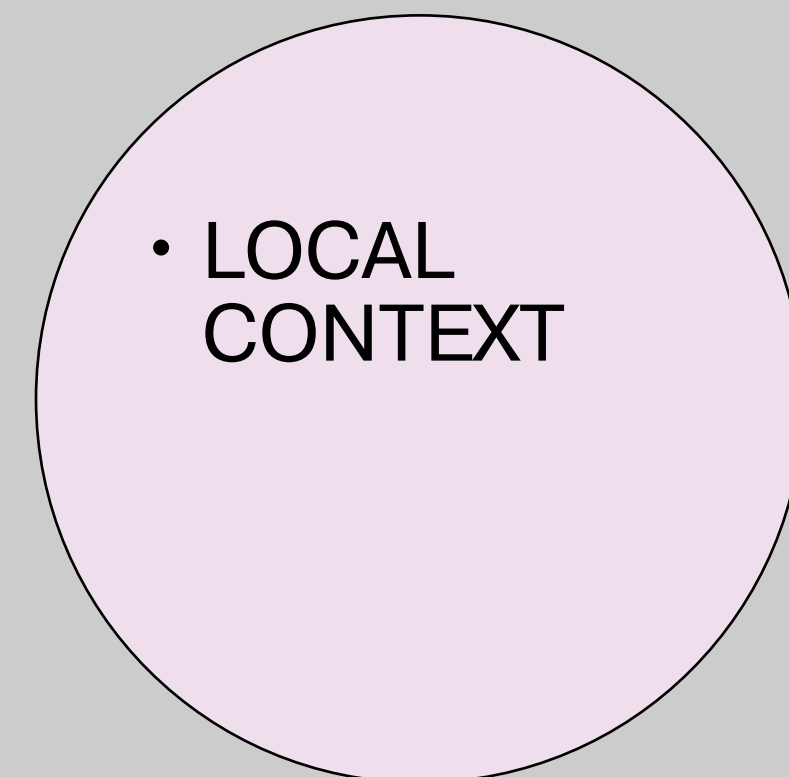
FUTURE FELLOWS

OK, IF CURRENT INFRASTRUCTURES
DO NOT SERVE US,
THEN WHICH STRUCTURES
AND SYSTEMS DO WE NEED?

12:30



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13:38

SELF-ORGANISED?

13:45

Ok, now I'll share my experience of self-organisation.
As a researcher, I started to explore self-organised art initiatives in Russia in 2014.
It changed my whole life.

13:50

These initiatives showed me: everything could be organised in a different way. That we don't need to be a huge organisation with a board of oligarch trustees in order to open a museum or a contemporary art center.

And do we really need all these institutions working as they work nowadays? I think, what we really need, is to realise ourselves as a collective, to find solidarity through our values and goals. There are plenty of us who want this system of contemporary art to be more equal, fairer, more attentive to those who don't have enough resources to be visible.

13:51

And since then I remain strongly into these kind of initiatives.

Back then I was a part of the self-organised open collective of aroundart.org — a website about contemporary art in Russia, which put an accent on covering young artists and initiatives outside capital cities.

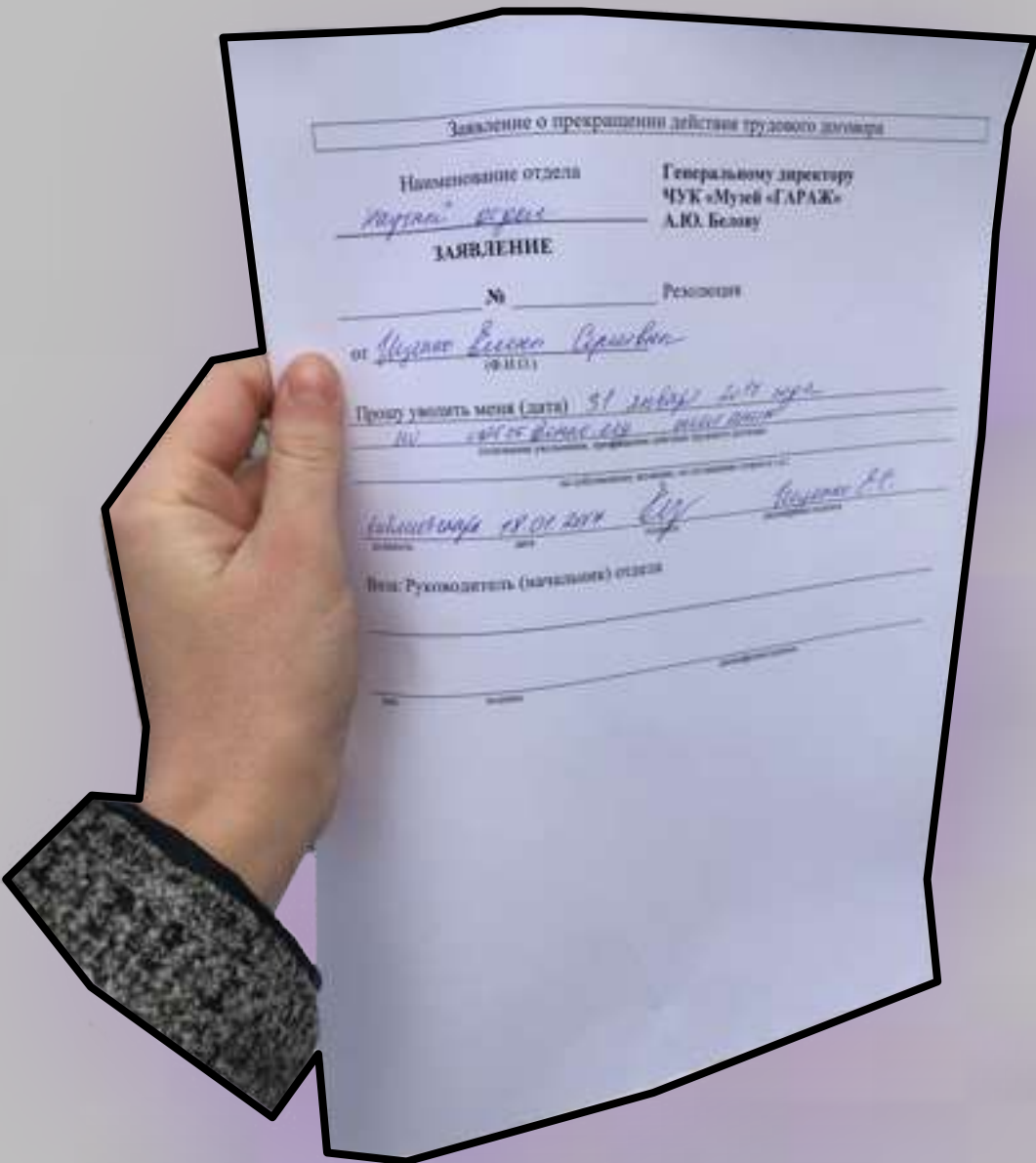
Then I was employed by Garage Museum, which is a giant private art institution. I was working as part of a research group on a project titled Open Systems, devoted to self-organised art initiatives in Russia. While working on this project, i visited lots of initiatives in different Russian cities. One day I decided conclusively that I should quit my job in Garage and cease making projects in Moscow.

I couldn't any longer stand the feeling that followed me in the capital: that all projects there were parts of a huge spectacle which changes nothing and only serves the party-goers.

13:55

I do not mean to say that culture workers in Garage Museum or other institutions in Moscow are involved in meaningless activities. I feel that the whole structure renders their attempts powerless.

13:55



The picture of my resignation letter, stating that I would quit my job at Garage Museum on January 31, 2017

13:56

I wanted to work independently after I left Garage. But soon I found myself in the south of Russia working with Typography Center for Contemporary Art in Krasnodar. It was (and still is) a self-organised, non-commercial, and independent space run by a collective of artists and curators.

13:58

While I was planning to work independently it never occurred to me, that being part of a collective is the greatest solidarity source there is.

I love that in a sustainably developing collective you can trace its inner dynamics: how it's transforming with its goals, its participants, relations, and energies.

I appreciate when initiative \ institution is more about its collective than a structure with fixed positions and duties.

In Typography center our main goal is to create such kind of institution: strong and sustainable enough, but flexible at the same time. Attentive to every participant's needs and views and the collective as a whole. I believe that this goal is also the source of tools for achieving it.

14:00



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Haha, of course, there are lots of problems, too.

IT IS AN INSPIRING IMAGE!

However, Russian researcher and philosopher Borya Klyushnikov states that self-organised initiatives are trying to create a system that is supposed to be built by the government. Thus, by taking on this responsibility, they help to maintain the existing order. Instead of initiating change, they end up having absolutely no influence on the political reality.

Borya suggests incorporating into existing institutions to try and change them from within using their resources, their publicity. His strategy is a bit similar to what Claire Bishop is saying when she is critical about the socially engaged art which sometimes replaces infrastructures that should be organized by the state.

14:05

What do you think about it?

14:06

Of course, there won't be just one strategy. However, my experience of working in a big museum with great publicity shows that idea of changing the existing institution from within might turn out to be more utopian than building a whole new one. The publicity of such establishments is strictly determined by the huge list of rules, defined by both inner norms of representation and caution related to various public relations.

I see a matter of great importance in exploring, which institutions, systems, and networks we need. I'm sure that we need to determine and practice these institutions and relations right now.

14:11



14:12

ART CAN HELP US IMAGINE
THAT THERE COULD BE ENTIRELY
DIFFERENT STRUCTURES,
INSTITUTIONS, AND SYSTEMS.

14:15

I would like to add that it is important to see collectives not only as a source of support and inspiration;

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collectives themselves need to be seen as things in need of care, attentiveness, and support.

During the pandemic it is particularly important, that's why I especially want to mention initiatives, that aim to create, explore and maintain collectivity.

14:18

FOR EXAMPLE,
(IN RUSSIA)

14:23

KRASNODAR INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART — KICA

Self-organised and self-proclaimed education initiative that was organised by art group ZIP in their studio at a partly abandoned factory in Krasnodar. It was organised as a space for education exchange and production, exhibitions by local artists, and other events.

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In 2014 the Institute, or KICA, transformed into a regular education course — the only education initiative in the field of contemporary art in the South of Russia.

Besides providing a platform for education, experience exchange, and discussions, KICA is a source for community production and reproduction. People who have studied at KICA form the local community, creating an actual structure of support and friendship.

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AERARIY

Aerariy was initiated by a graduate of KICA, artist and photographer Lilit Matevosyan together with artists Olga Egorova, Andrey Kuznetsov, and Oleg Korchagin. Aerariy takes its name after special outside constructions typical for Sochi — resort city in the South of Russia, where Lilit and her colleagues and friends live.

The initiative aims to create situations for communication and collaboration of artists, thinkers, and creative people, united by a similar approach to arts and politics.

Aerariy works with local context and one of its main goals is to develop the local scene. It doesn't have a special place and exists by coming in different spaces from beach construction to factories.

14:42

The Aerariy's slogan is
"WE'RE NOT IN A HURRY, THERE'S NOWHERE TO RUSH TO".



14:45

4413

4413 studio is a place in Saint Petersburg, a laboratory for alternative discourse and interspecific kinship, which was organised in Saint Petersburg by Mariya Dmitrieva and her co-thinkers. The collective is fluid and the list of participants is always changing.

A main goal of the studio is creating a new language and strategies for interspecific communities and unions, which are relevant to today's political situation. Studio's participants are also involved in the transformation of contemporary critical theory into everyday practice, which changes the ordinary way and experience of thinking.

15:00

4413 combines several functions: public space for events (which could be organised by co-thinkers or wide community), art and activists residence, private space for living, and studios.



15:02

KAFE-MOROZHENOE

Kafe-Morozhenoe is a media activist collective that was founded in Moscow in 2020 by Nastya Dmitrievskaya and Dasha Yuriychuk.

Kafe-Morozhenoe organises discussions, laboratories, dinners, and other forms of collective communication around such topics as immaterial labor rights, basic income, resource distribution, etc. These discussions became a very important platform for today's Russian art and activist community to imagine, elaborate, and attempt to implement some new structures into existing systems of hierarchies of immaterial labor.

15:10



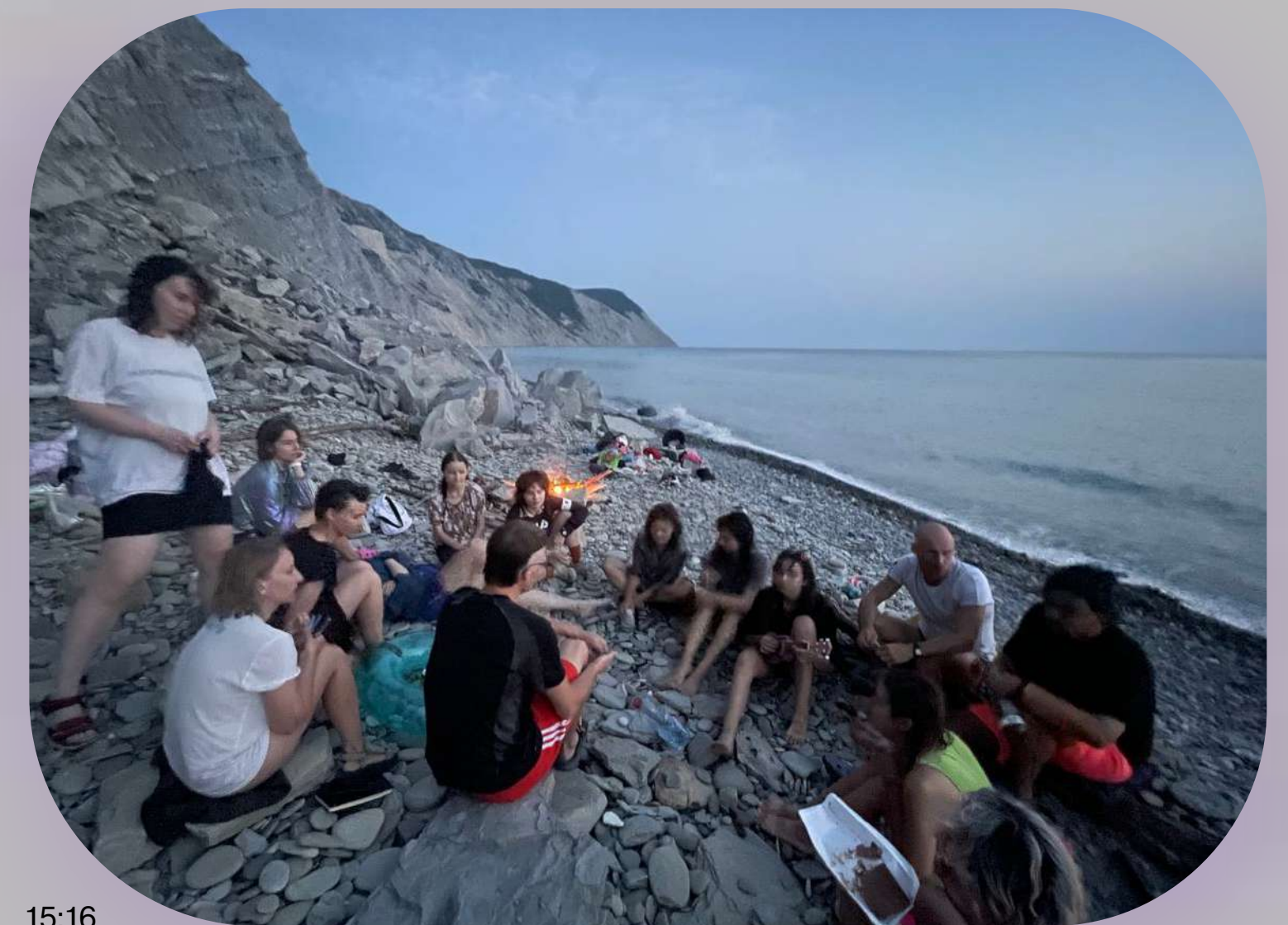
15:10

LEAGUE OF TENDERS

The League of Tenders was founded by my friend and colleague, curator and researcher, Maria Sarycheva and me to produce collectivities, as well as to foster and diffuse the affective dynamics within them. Over time, League of Tenders has been focusing on disability representation, overcoming the alienation of everyday labour, practices of care, and support and friendship in the age of disasters. The League has a variable set of participants, who the organizers choose to invite according to their private sympathies and current interests.

The practices of the League of Tenders include annual Congresses of its participants, breakfasts, lunches and dinners, a telegram channel, online chats, aimless conversations, shared experiences, and subjective and inconsistent documentation kept by the organizers.

15:16



15:16

CHICORY

Chicory is an open creative collective and a self-organised center for contemporary arts in Zheleznogorsk, Kursk region. Chicory community is comprised of young enthusiasts that fell in love with their hometown. This community was appearing naturally in 2016 – 2018 united by faith in arts as the reason to be together and the instrument for transforming reality.

Chicory tries to erase the confines between artistic, curatorial, and institutional practices. Chicory's exhibition projects bound actual discourses in the contemporary art field with a small town's problems. Chicory's team is experimenting with the forms of labor organisation and aims to rethink their practices as pure artistic acts.

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Summing up my experience as a cultural worker in a pandemic reality,
I see that nowadays we are in a desperate need of:

15:31

**STRUCTURES OF SOLIDARITY
INSTITUTIONS FOR AND BY COMMUNITIES
AND NETWORKS OF MUTUAL
SUPPORT.**

15:31

THE FOUNDATION FOR THESE
STRUCTURES AND INITIATIVES
HAVE ALREADY BEEN CREATED.

WE SHOULD AND CAN SUPPORT IT:
BY COLLABORATING WITH GRASSROOT
MOVEMENTS, EXTENDING THREADS
OF COOPERATIONS AND DEVELOPING
WEIRD KINSHIPS IN TIMES
OF CATASTROPHE AND CHANGE.

15:50