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DISSONANT ENTANGLEMENTS AND CREATIVE REDISTRIBUTIONS

Judith Naeff, Arnout van Ree, Lenneke Sipkes, Cristiana Strava, Kasper Tromp, Mark R. Westmoreland

This chapter aims to better understand how international cultural funding shapes opportunities for organizations to grow as generators of creativity able to provide transformative experiences for local audiences. It analyzes the experiences of four cases located in the Middle East and North Africa region, namely L'Atelier de l'Observatoire (Morocco), Clown Me In (Lebanon), Bantmag (Turkey), and Volunteer Palestine (West Bank). Although the Prince Claus Fund, Hivos, and European Cultural Foundation (ECF) have sought alternatives to the neoliberal instrumentalization of their funding measured according to the rubrics of impact, our research shows that organizations still struggle with the need to appeal to international funding bodies while also focusing on their work as embedded in local conditions. To understand these struggles, we draw on the idea that organizations are entangled in a web of relationships and expectations that can undermine the ethical commitment and affective practices of these cultural actors. Furthermore, they are burdened by the way calls for funding are often addressed around frameworks of global concerns that do not always align with the pressing local issues that organizations want to address. Despite these limitations and the need for them to be addressed, these organizations acknowledge that funding offers crucial opportunities to enrich communities marked by a scarcity of creative and communal activities. We propose that the force of art lies in the potentialities activated by these affective encounters, even if they do not always materialize in measurable change.

Keywords
→ Impact
→ Instrumentalization
→ Entanglement
→ Affect
→ Cosmopolitanism

INTRODUCTION

Research for this chapter has been conducted by a team of diversely trained researchers who share a common concern about the culturally rich and politically complex crossroads that historically define the Middle East and North Africa region—a key site where cultural repertoires of modernity have played out. We collectively aspire to better understand how new aesthetic formations unfold in response to the various forces that constitute a web of affordances and entanglements. The *Force of Art*

initiative provided us with an opportunity to bring together concrete case studies to collectively rework our understanding of the way international cultural funding shapes opportunities for these organizations to cultivate affective relationships and grow as generators of creativity able to provide transformative experiences for local audiences in spite of the draining struggles the organizations routinely navigate.

Recognizing the agency of artwork has led many funding agencies to instrumentalize creative practices and expect organizations to demonstrably effect particular ideological and economic pursuits. While the Prince Claus Fund, Hivos, and European Cultural Foundation (ECF) are notable for their efforts to resist employing 'impact' models designed to measure the effectiveness of creative intervention, these neoliberal agendas still dominate the general discussion among organizations in situ. We have learned from our case studies that these organizations struggle with the sometimes-tricky balance between the need to appeal to international funding bodies and the realities on the ground. Common concerns for timely global issues do not always align with local, more urgent challenges. We have found that the way these global logics get reproduced in funding schemes imposes certain conditions onto local applications of this funding: from the writing of applications for funding with exclusionary vernaculars, to their binding agreements, to the practical implementation of the projects linked to the awarded funds.

We have elaborated each case study in its own breakout section where the respective field researcher qualitatively assesses the organization's effort to inspire critical thinking, develop alternative narratives, and create meaningful connections. These cases help us retheorize the dissonant entanglements of the contemporary field of cultural production and the creative redistributions of affective encounters in particular contexts to offer a model based on how cultural organizations themselves imagine successfully cultivating their transformative 'force of art.' But what exactly is the transformative power of art? Noting the object agency of artwork, anthropologist Alfred Gell argues, 'I view art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it.'[1] Rather than viewing art as a universal concept with a common value, we recognize 'the many different factors that influence the ways in which people experience and understand [art].'[2] In addition to the aestheticization of sensorial experiences, Maruška Svašek's anthropological perspective on art emphasizes the transformative processes of transit (situation) and transition (meaning), whereas Patricia Spyer and Mary Steedly follow 'images that move' through both complex processes of 'circulation, imagination, and reception' and their ability to move people to feel and act in significant ways.[3] These affective movements operate within diverse assemblages—networks of multiple actors, organizations, ideas, and ambitions that dynamically interact—in which NGOs and

1.....Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 6.
2.....Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 4.
3.....Maruška Svašek, *The Anthropology Art and Cultural Production: Histories, Themes, Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); Patricia Spyer and Mary Margaret Steedly, *Images that Move* (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2013), p. 6.

grassroots organizations have become increasingly entangled. Whereas these assemblages may present bottlenecks, delays, and restrictions for organizations, they may also create nodes of possibility for generative initiatives distributed through a complex web of significance. This chapter focuses on how funding agencies can facilitate these possibilities.

In the sections that follow, we argue that several levels of entanglement between funders and recipients, among other actors, produce pressures of professionalization on community initiatives as well as an instrumentalization of culture in the service of so-called universal notions about the developmental power of art. We then advance a theorization of the affective power of aesthetic and performative creations to shift the expectations of art from a tangible impact toward the potential opportunities to redistribute social dispositions and political inter-dependencies. Finally, we adopt the notion of subaltern cosmopolitanism as a way to articulate local strategies for navigating these entanglements. As such, we argue that the transformative power of the cultural initiatives and community practices reside in the affective encounters they enable within marginalized communities and with outsiders.

DISSONANT ENTANGLEMENTS

The cultural initiatives and grassroots community organizations that form our objects of study have become part of global assemblages as they participate in public-private partnerships or pursue social entrepreneurship. This has been described as NGO-ization, where community organizations are incorporated into neoliberal global assemblages. The initiatives under study are moral actors as they are engaged with 'doing good.' This characteristic defined by a system of morals is visible in their projects, the forms of assistance they provide within their communities, and the causes that they advocate. However, this also leads to a point of friction where these initiatives and organizations must be 'good at doing good.'[4] Community organizations must not only be seen as moral actors but also as skilful and professional actors. In their interactions with donors, navigating bureaucratic language of accountability, and adhering to complicated tax laws, a viable organization needs to appear professionally competent. This professionalism consists of 'holding the requisite trainings, attending the seminars, writing the reports, composing the budget, and tabulating the success statistics.'[5] They must demonstrate a certain 'rationality'—characterized by having a hierarchy, budget, meetings, documentation, offices, and everyday routines—in order to be seen as a legitimate partner able to present policy options and conduct effective policy advocacy.

In this context, organizations operate in several levels of entanglement that profoundly impact them.[6] These entanglements can facilitate,

4.....Steven Sampson, 'Introduction: Engagements and Entanglements in the Anthropology of NGOs,' *in Cultures of Doing Good: Anthropologists and NGOs*, eds. Amanda Lashaw, Christian Vannier, and Steven Sampson (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017), p. 12.
5.....Sampson, 'Engagements and Entanglements,' p. 13.

alter, or undermine the projects on many different levels. A cultural organization, even if it has global connections, has to operate within state boundaries and limitations. A state may be unwilling or unable to provide certain basic provisions, or may be decidedly antagonistic towards possible foreign influence potentially channelled through these organizations. Larger organizations may also become entangled in neoliberal processes, as they become semi-state actors or even de-facto governments in the local and global realm.[7] The unequal relationship between a recipient and its donors produces another level of entanglement. The donors can offer an organization resources such as funding, expertise, and a local or international network. Despite the best of intentions from donors who use a language of partnership, an organization remains dependent upon the donors for funding,[8] and cultural initiatives must convince their donors of the importance, meaningfulness, and impact of their work.[9] These entanglements further require organizations to adapt new languages, rituals, and practices when communicating with different partners, donors, and target communities. This also means that organizations and activists constantly need to navigate between different identities and language registers, but the level of flexibility to switch between dissonant registers determines which organizations survive and those that disappear in a competitive market.

6.....Ibid.
7.....Chiara De Cesari, *Heritage and the Cultural Struggle for Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 117.
8.....Sampson, 'Engagements and Entanglements,' pp. 10–13.
9.....Anika Marschall, 'What Can Theatre Do about the Refugee Crisis? Enacting Commitment and Navigating Complicity in Performative Interventions,' *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 23, no. 2 (2018), pp. 158–59.

(1)
VOLUNTEER PALESTINE
Lenneke Sipkes

Volunteer Palestine (VP) is a grassroots volunteer organization that strives to assist a local community with limited resources. The organization is situated in the Aida refugee camp in the Palestinian West Bank, home to 5,500 refugees who fled their villages in the Jerusalem area during the Nakba in 1948. VP was founded by a group of camp youth who felt that Aida was lacking many facilities and services for its inhabitants. The programme focuses on engaging the international community with Palestinian culture, while at the same time providing resources to local organizations and families. International volunteers share knowledge and skills in VP projects, and stay with local families. VP's mission is to 'Support socially and economically viable alternative tourism initiatives that positively educate, inspire and create more active global citizens.'[10] This cultural exchange is combined with the development of political consciousness. △Fig. 1

△ 1
VP staff and volunteers sharing home-made knafeh together, photo: Lenneke Sipkes, 2019

△ 2
An international volunteer teaching children of the camp, photo: Lenneke Sipkes, 2019

Volunteer Palestine is a small player in the dense field of the West Bank aid sector, which has mainly been shaped in response to the Oslo Accords in 1993. Political scientist Linda Tabar argues that before Oslo, support for Palestine mainly existed in the shape of solidarity. Solidarity is a practice from below, created in a context of uneven power relationships, which crosses the boundaries of the nation-state and tries to challenge forms of oppression.[11] Tabar states that the dominant meaning shifted to advancing human rights in the last two decades of the twentieth century.[12] Especially in the West Bank, where an 'NGO-ization of the society' took place as part of the Oslo peace process.[13] Many NGOs settled in the West Bank and shaped an aid sector with individual action as its underlying principle instead of collective action.[14] Solidarity with Palestine became largely conditional, based on financial support that can only be given when the donor's demands are being met. △Fig. 2

Nowadays Palestine is home to many big NGOs such as The Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders, which have large professional teams of employees and work internationally. There are, however, many smaller initiatives as well, like VP, often created by locals, to address the specific needs of their own community. Not having access to the same financial resources as the giants of the aid sector, VP has to turn to foundations that support cultural and community building projects to apply for funds. When VP was just founded, they received a start up fund from the European Cultural Foundation, which enabled them to roll out their project. △Fig. 3

△ 3
VP staff telling the story of Aida camp to international volunteers, photo: Lenneke Sipkes, 2019

The following reflections are based on ethnographic material I collected during two visits to the Aida refugee camp in 2019, while doing research in the West Bank for my Master's thesis in Anthropology. During my visits I lived with a host family in the camp, participated in the VP programme, and conducted interviews with both international participants and local members of staff. It became clear that VP has to keep many different actors satisfied: first and foremost, the inhabitants of Aida refugee camp, who they provide services to through educational, creative, and medical programmes. Many inhabitants want their refugee story to be heard, and hope to get more international support for their cause. Secondly, there are the international volunteers who largely carry out VP's programmes and provide a source of income for host families in the camp; these volunteers have their own—often political—motivations for spending time in the West Bank.[15] VP would like to create meaningful, affective encounters between the international volunteers and the camp citizens, facilitating bonds of solidarity. At the same time, cultural foundations often demand a careful, preferably apolitical wording of funding requests, considering the political sensitivity that the Palestinian cause is surrounded with. These international foundations decide whether VP is awarded with funding. Another actor is the State of Israel, which is in control of all West Bank borders. If Israel views VP as a political project, this might have consequences for international volunteers being allowed into the West Bank. Therefore, VP has to continuously balance their narrative.[16]

The volunteers who are able to make it into the West Bank are offered a rich programme in the Aida refugee camp; during the day, they carry out community-building activities, ranging from teaching children or women of the camp to assisting in the local medical clinic. In the evenings and weekends, volunteers are given political tours, Arabic classes, traditional dancing and cooking workshops, and group outings. Free time is often spent with local host families, giving space to in-depth immersion into local Palestinian life and often creating affective bonds.[17]

Just as describing the plans and intended goals of the project asks for a carefully balanced narrative, describing the outcome demands political sensitivity as well. On the one hand, VP presents an effective community-building project, in which international exchange can flourish through international volunteers who offer skills and services to an impoverished community. But if the apolitical aid sector lingo is stripped, another picture can be painted that matches the objectives of camp citizens and international volunteers. International exchange transforms a focus on 'effects' to one valuing the link to 'affect'—from aid to solidarity; the practice from below crosses the boundaries of the nation-state and is created in a context of uneven power relationships, just as Featherstone described it.[18] A stay in Aida refugee camp often teaches volunteers about the political struggle of Palestine, and many residents hope that internationals will leave in solidarity, spreading support for their cause back in their home countries. Ideally, VP can fully combine its two goals of aid and solidarity. Until then, the careful balance continues.

10.....*Volunteer Palestine*, accessed November 2018, http://volunteerpalestine.com.
11.....David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed books, 2012), pp. 5–6.
12.....Linda Tabar, 'From Third World Internationalism to "The Internationals": The Transformation of Solidarity with Palestine,' *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2016), pp. 414–35.
13.....Ibid., p. 422.
14.....Ibid., p. 422; Jennifer Kelly, 'Asymmetrical Itineraries: Militarism, Tourism, and Solidarity in Occupied Palestine,' *American Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2016), pp. 723–45.
15.....Lenneke Sipkes, fieldwork, 2019.
16.....Ibid.
17.....Ibid.
18.....Featherstone, *Solidarity*, pp. 5–6.

In recent decades, funding bodies have increasingly subsumed funding for arts and culture under their developmental goals.[19] This has led to the instrumentalization of arts and culture to address single issue social change, such as creating awareness of social issues or rights, and building socio-political empowerment.[20] This approach has been criticized for ignoring the particular nuances and demands of local contexts,[21] for the false suggestion that quantifiable impact measurement is possible, and for limiting creativity and imagination.[22] In the call for proposals, the *Force of Art* initiative expresses the belief that 'there is a need to critically examine these trends.' With this critical awareness, the donors have been lauded as rare positive exceptions in the field.[23] Polly Stupples' otherwise critical article on the instrumentalization of arts in the development sector for example argues that Hivos and the Prince Claus Fund demonstrate 'a quite distinct conception of the agency of the arts,' valuing 'pleasure, experimentation, curiosity, audacity and intellectual debate' because a thriving cultural sector is seen in and of itself as contributing to peaceful and democratic societies.[24] While aiming to create opportunities for the 'redistribution of the sensible'—a concept developed by Jacques Rancière to theorize the way in which art can put the seemingly self-evident into new light—neither donors nor the recipients can fully escape today's global neoliberal logic. Indeed, the call to conceptualize the force of art demonstrates a desire to capture the elusive contribution of the arts to society in terms of 'transformative power,' itself a form of impact, even if not in conventional developmentalist terms. The aim to stimulate diversity, democracy, and peace in the Middle East is not a neutral universality, but part of particular paradigm that encourages 'post-nationalist, post-socialist, and anti-Islamist ideals.'[25] Most of the cultural actors in the region have moved away from the traditional left and embraced progressive ideals of emancipation. It is not always easy to disentangle these from the entrepreneurial values of global capitalism. They therefore regularly raise moral suspicion among both conservative and more radically progressive actors in the region. Moreover, our research shows that because funding recipients are entangled in multiple fields, dealing with multiple actors, including other donors, the non-instrumentalist approach of one donor has a limited effect. Given the temporary, project-based nature of the funds we researched, we found that this excepxtionalism is on the ground at times perceived as little more than yet another format to adhere to in an endless line of funding applications and reports.

Entanglements also exist between competing cultural organizations, community initiatives, and other activist movements. Community organizations are embedded in networks that influence and facilitate social work, while at the same time these organizations are in competition with each other due to the scarcity of funding and/or resources. The competition for funding leads to an almost Darwinian situation of 'winners' and 'losers' where the inability to effect change, or show relevance, leads to failure to receive funding. This was also confirmed by our interlocutors, who felt that they did not receive funding for certain projects because of their inability to show impact or that funding was not renewed because

of a 'perceived' failure. While such conditions can lead to inventive solutions to address the (structural) issues that led to failure as 'a 'launching pad for alternatives' and prompt the questioning of established models,'[26] failure is often seen as an endpoint and not a productive condition. Most artistic interventions will not directly have an impact on the social and political environments in which they are located. However, like 'failure,' art does have the ability to affect the audience, creating productive conditions to imagine and act in new ways. Approaching these artistic interventions as part of such a process would also allow the inclusion of the preparatory phase before the artistic work is produced as relevant and productive in models of change.

Arguably, the most important entanglement is that between an organization and its target community, which provides the reason and rationale for the organization's work, and ultimately its legitimacy. The target communities of our case studies vary greatly but all include subjects that could be considered subaltern, in the sense that they lack access to material resources, cultural capital and/or societal infrastructure and are therefore excluded from political deliberation. The organizational goals of being agents of change overlap with personal motivations for an activist who also has a history of involvement in these community issues. This affective dimension also requires certain practices to be adopted by organizations and activists. Although this emotional component is part of their engagement and possible success, this affective dimension has been overlooked in earlier studies of NGOs.[27] We respond to this oversight by making the affective encounter enabled by cultural community practices central to our conceptualization of the force of art.

19 .....e.g., Polly Stupples, 'Creative Contributions: The Role of the Arts and the Cultural Sector in Development,' *Progress in Development Studies* 14, no. 2 (2014).
20 .....João Biehl and Peter Locke, 'Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming,' *Current Anthropology* 51, no. 3 (2010), pp. 327–35.
21 .....Matthew Yoxall, 'At the "Frontiers" of Humanitarian Performance: Refugee Resettlement, Theatre-making and the Geo-politics of Service,' *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 23, no. 2 (2018), pp. 222–23.
22 .....Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
23 .....e.g. Achille Mbembe, 'African Contemporary Art: Negotiating the Terms of Recognition,' interview by Vivian Paulissen, *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTC)*, 8 September 2009, https://jhbwtc.blogspot.com/2009/09/african-contemporary-art-negotiating.html.
24 .....Stupples, 'Creative Contributions,' p. 126.
25 .....Hanan Toukan, 'On Being the Other in Post-Civil War Lebanon: Aid and the Politics of Art in Processes of Contemporary Cultural Production,' *Arab Studies Journal* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2010), p. 142.
26 .....De Cesari, *Heritage*, p. 158.
27 .....Sampson, 'Engagements and Entanglements,' p. 16.

(2)
L'ATELIER DE L'OBSERVATOIRE
Cristiana Strava

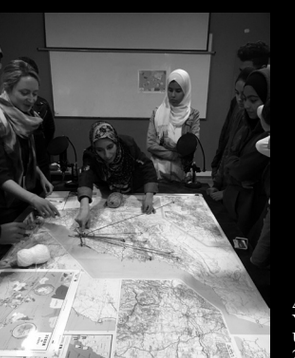
L'Atelier de l'Observatoire (hereafter Atelier) was established in 2010 by artist Mohamed Fariji and curator and independent researcher Léa Morin. Based in Casablanca, Morocco, it is a unique organization structured and run as an artist collective. Originally located on the semi-rural belt of Casablanca, Atelier focuses on different forms of margins and marginality: be they geographical (urban peripheries, rural areas, neglected territories), historical (occluded or repressed accounts), or social (maligned or criminalized communities). Atelier's approaches are intensely participatory and inclusive, striving to bring together groups and actors that owing to local historical and socio-economic fragmentations are unlikely to meet, interact, or co-create. Their methods include archival and ethnographic research, collaboratively run community workshops, artist-curated pedagogical programmes, and restoration work (of films or citizen archives).

△ 4
The first iteration of La Serre, photo: Atelier, 2014

The production and contestation of discourses on socio-spatial marginality and actual peripheral neighbourhoods are synonymous in Morocco with colonial experimentation with worker housing,[28] post-colonial repression of political and social dissent,[29] and, in the contemporary era of neoliberalization, with anomie, decaying public infrastructures and growing socio-economic precarity.[30] This is the context wherein Atelier, with seed funding from the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (2014) and Prince Claus Fund (2015), began a sustained programme of activities under the umbrella of a project named *La Serre* [The Greenhouse]. Originally titled *Eco-Jardin*, the project materialized in response to the complete lack of artistic and ludic spaces for communities on the periphery of Casablanca, where Fariji and Morin owned a studio-space in 2014. What began as a bare-bones structure of metal ribs and green mesh quickly grew into a polysemic space: a platform for helping local youth develop skills alongside their ludic pursuits, an experimental space for 'impossible projects,'[31] a sculpture with [the] function 'of revitalizing public spaces,'[32] and a gesture towards imagining desirable futures from

'wounded territories' on the expanding periphery of Casablanca.[33] △Fig. 4

As a platform that has given birth to several related preoccupations and projects at the intersection of artistic practice and civic and environmental intervention,[34] La Serre offers a salient angle for reflecting on the role and affordances of art broadly defined. This brief reflection is based on ethnographic material gathered during three field visits to Casablanca carried out at different points during 2019. During these visits, I met with Atelier's core team and several artists whose projects they had supported. Mirroring Atelier's approach to their own work, my interactions with the core team unfolded as a series of open-ended and multi-vocal conversations held over several days: in their central Casablanca office atop a monumental high-rise from the nineteen-seventies, in *sha'abi* (working-class) lunch rooms,



△ 5
Youth workshop at Initiative Urbaine, photo: Cristiana Strava, 2019

and in the neighbourhood spaces where their activities usually unfold. These conversations were loosely structured by questions on how they envision and understand the consequences and the value of their work at the local and, possibly, national level in Morocco. With Atelier's agreement, I spoke to one of their main collaborators on the periphery of Casablanca, Initiative Urbaine, a neighbourhood association I was already acquainted with and where La Serre had been installed and staged activities twice in recent years. As an anthropologist with several years of fieldwork experience in Morocco, I am both fluent in the local language vernacular as well as familiar with the spaces and networks wherein Atelier moves. At Initiative Urbaine, I also participated in the meetings of a creative workshop on social history and heritage meant for local youth who then generously agreed to speak with me about their encounters with Atelier activities. △Fig. 5

Atelier's answer to my questions sketched a picture of thoughtful reflection and repeated self-evaluation undertaken

at various stages. 'When setting out on a new project phase we first take stock of ourselves as a collective, of where we are as individuals with our own preconceived ideas, and we attempt to have participants from the local community in which we are entering do the same, through various activities,' explained Sabrina Kamili, Atelier's project manager. 'Then we keep doing that at various points. It's not that we doctor numbers [of beneficiaries] in the reports we submit to funders,' she jestingly went on, 'but we are more concerned with how we might arrive at moving (*toucher*, in French) even just one or two of the youths who participate in our activities.' Kamili pointed out that this was a laborious and often emotionally draining process for both artists and communities with which they work. However, she found that through such reflections and documentation of charged and affective encounters, it became possible to identify meaningful changes resulting from their work.

Several people I spoke with in the communities where *La Serre* had been staged, described their encounters with Atelier's programmeing as unlikely meetings, improbable activities, sometimes challenging in content and form, puzzling yet welcome surprises in a context where, as the youths in Hay Mohammadi put it, 'nothing ever happens' (*makayn walou*, Moroccan Arabic). Given this felt dramatic lack of stimulating cultural activities in impoverished, lower-class areas, inhabitants exposed to and co-opted by *La Serre*'s activities appeared to share an initial sense of scepticism ('what can such activities possibly be doing in their spaces?') that slowly gave way to wonder: amazement that such things could take place in their neighbourhood spaces, puzzled realization from acquiring fresh knowledge of the rich social histories marking these spaces, and as a consequence an altered outlook on their place in all of it (Bakkar).

Alongside such affective encounters, recurring frictions and challenges are also strongly present in the work of Atelier. The latter manifest themselves at various scales and emerge from the intersection of varying assemblages of actors, discourses, and institutions. 'We are not interested in being lumped together with some pan-Arab or Muslim world label,' declares Mohammed Fariji in a vehement tone during our first meeting as I tried to describe the details of the other *Force of Art* case studies my team was working on. Like many of their counterparts in Morocco and elsewhere, Atelier navigates a contemporary field of cultural production in which categories and labels can carry unstable and at times undesirable political valences. Therefore, while their work is informed by, and sometimes responds to, conditions and dynamics that can be found elsewhere, their stated primary concern is with the

local in its many manifestations. In this context, several members of Atelier spoke about the delicate balancing act required, at times, vis-à-vis state institutions and their agents, as the limits of what is permissible may shift at any point. In concrete terms this entailed constantly navigating and negotiating across different forms of gatekeeping and censorship that run the gamut from local actors displeased with the 'overly secular' content of an artistic activity, to institutional structures potentially unsettled by the political undertones of a 'cultural' activity.[35] On a different level, the current orthodoxies around funding structures that support cultural actors like Atelier also present their challenges for the work these actors perform. To paraphrase Kamili, operating through project-based funding means 'constantly running on fumes' when it comes to structural costs beyond the lifetime of a single project.

In the context of recent intensified social protests in Morocco, and the repression of many outspoken (cultural) activists, the intensely collaborative and open-ended trajectory of Atelier's project illuminates how vital such critical artistic interventions are for local social and political dynamics. By engaging the imaginations and imaginaries of a broad spectrum of local actors while also interpellating state actors, platforms such as *La Serre* are actively participating in shaping and shifting the distribution of the 'sensible,'[36] from a citizen- and artist-led perspective. While Atelier's experience illustrates some key challenges that are shared transnationally by those engaged in cultural development work—as well as the particular and significant risks of doing this work in authoritarian contexts—it nevertheless testifies to the crucial transformative power of artistic practice and its potential to collectively and collaboratively affect and effect meaningful change.

28.....Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
29.....Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).
30.....Koenraad Bogaert, 'The Problem of Slums: Shifting Methods of Neoliberal Urban Government in Morocco,' *Development and Change* 42, no. 3 (2011), pp. 709–31; Cristiana Strava, 'At Home on the Margins: Caregiving and the "Unhomely" among Casablanca's Working Poor,' *City & Society* 29, no. 2 (2017), pp. 329–48.
31.....Sabrina Kamili (project manager) in discussion with the author, Casablanca, April 2019
32.....Fariji, Mohamed. Artist and Founder of Atelier de l'Observatoire. Conversation with Cristiana Strava, Casablanca, April and November 2019.
33.....Cristiana Strava, 'A Tramway Called Atonement: Genealogies of Infrastructure and Emerging Political Imaginaries in Contemporary Casablanca,' *Middle East* 10, no. 8 (2018), pp. 22–29.
34.....The Collective Museum (*Le Musée Collectif* in the original), is the most prominent of these outgrowths in terms of scope, ambition, and resources needed for its realization. Imagined as a citizen-led and co-curated museum dedicated to the public memory of Casablanca, Le Musée (as Atelier members refer to it) is a living and growing archive of traces that the city and its inhabitants have left on each other until the present.
35.....During one visit with Atelier in April 2019 this emerged as a forceful possibility, as a prominent cultural organization had just been tried in court and sentenced to dissolution after being accused of mobilizing a political agenda under the banner of arts and culture. Mohamed Fariji (artist) and Sabrina Kamili (project manager) in discussion with the author, Casablanca, April 2019. See https://pen.org/press-release/dissolution-racines-unacceptable-violation-cultural-rights-morocco/.
36.....Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010).

CREATIVE REDISTRIBUTIONS

Our approach aligns with James Thompson, a theorist of applied and social theatre, who argues that the ethical commitment and affective practices of cultural actors are not accidental but vital to their projects. Thompson proposes that 'The means and value of socially engaged arts are to be found in a narrative of affect rather than concrete effect … [which] allows for less-defined, less-constricted encounters of publics with the performing arts.'[37] Philosopher Jacques Rancière, too, has argued 'that there is an assumption that art can change politics because it critiques or mocks unequal power relations, and that in its content it can urge viewers into action,'[38] but that the political potential of arts and culture rather lie in their affective qualities.

There is not a stable definition for the term 'affect' as it is embedded in the sensorium of a specific culture and history, but it is usually associated with words such as feeling, emotion, and direct experience.[39] However, it is useful to differentiate between emotion and affect. While the former refers to named and defined sensations of feeling, the latter suggests visceral intensities that are felt but not yet semiotically mediated.[40] In broad terms, affect refers to an emotive domain, but its scope goes beyond subjectivity or the self, as it does not solely refer to the inner domain of the mind but also to the exterior domain of the body. This exterior domain refers to the encounters with human subjects as well as non-human objects that inform behaviour in everyday life.[41] The nexus between interior and exterior is where Grossberg argues affect should be located as everyday practices are not only about material relationships but also about structures of feeling.[42] For example, hope is an affect as it is something that someone feels but also something that someone does, and something that binds subjects and objects in a collective structure of feeling.

37.....Marschall, 'What Can Theatre Do,' p. 150.
38.....Christine Smith, 'Art as a Diagnostic: Assessing Social and Political Transformation through Public Art in Cairo, Egypt,' *Social & Cultural Geography* 16, no. 1 (2015), p. 26.
39.....Nigel Thrift, 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect,' *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 1 (2004), pp. 58–59.
40.....Mateusz Laszczkowski, 'Rethinking Resistance through and as Affect,' *Anthropological Theory* 19, no. 4 (2019), p. 496.
41.....Yael Navaro-Yashin, 'Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge,' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009), p. 12.
42.....Lawrence Grossberg, 'Affect's Future: Rediscovering the Virtual in the Actual,' in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 313.

(3)
CLOWN ME IN
Arnout van Ree

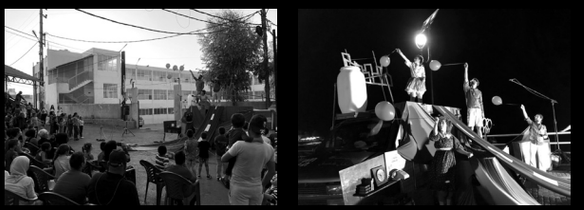
Clown Me In (CMI) is a Lebanese theatre group that aims 'To use clowning to spread laughter and provide relief to disadvantaged communities while exploring human vulnerabilities and helping individuals to accept them through interactive workshops and performances.'[43] CMI is convinced that issues such as the problems refugees confront in gaining access to healthcare, the rights of children, and the issue of pollution in Lebanon are best confronted through laughter.[44] While I have a background in Middle Eastern Studies with an interest in (online) activism and am familiar with the context of Lebanon, the topic of street theatre was new to me. △Fig. 6

△ 6
Young boy at the VAN12 performance in Tripoli, photo: Arnout van Ree, 2019

The VAN12 street theatre performance is part of CMI's larger Caravan series,

> A project that puts children's voices at the heart of a street theatre performance through the use of recorded storytelling audio. It revolves around a travelling troupe of fantastical persons who present stories that teach twelve of the most fundamental protections from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.[45]

Each scene is a comic juxtaposition of reality where the travelling troupe finds the Rights of the Child in the different scenes and shares these with the audience. How can the concept of affect provide insights into the possible impact of these projects? △Fig. 7

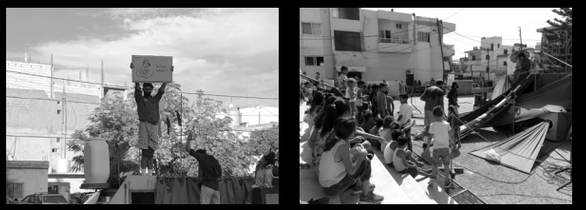


△ 7
The end scene of the VAN12 performance, left: Hasbaya; right: Saida, photos: Arnout van Ree, 2019

The performance creates possible affective intensities in several different ways. These affective intensities impact on and open the imaginaries, the perspectives, and subjectivities of audience members.[46] The first element involves the manner in which the stories are collected for the performance. Sabine Choucair, self-described as a humanitarian clown, storyteller, and performer, works with marginalized communities and organizes theatre, social therapy, and storytelling workshops. This creative intervention into marginalized communities allows her to gain the trust of these communities as well as see what issues affect them. She then asks participants if she can record their story. She selects stories based on whether how they may be indicative of issues or themes that the community in question confronts and their potential for breaking down barriers by creating understanding, allowing for a dramatic twist in the performance.[47]

The next element is the creation process of the performance. Sabine organizes the recorded stories in a certain order and approaches the clowns that will perform the show. The clowns, however, are not given the stories but exercises corresponding to feelings and emotions that are evoked by the stories. In this manner, the street performance is constructed through the affective imagination of the clowns. It is only after the performance has a basic structure that they listen to the recorded stories. However, the performance can be adjusted if the clowns feel that this would do more justice to these stories. The affective intensities, with which the recordings confront the audience, add to the performance on stage practices.[48] The décor is also key for creating a certain atmosphere for the audience and adding an artistic layer to the street performance; as shared by Sabine, this exposes (marginalized) communities to new artistic practices.[49]

The location of the performance represents yet another important element contributing to the affective intensity. Performances take place in the communities where the stories were collected, in spaces that are likely to be crowded (such as the corniche in Saida). This enables recognition through affective intensities as communities can recognize themselves, their community, or others in the performance. Furthermore, complex socioeconomic problems and political tensions are taken into consideration in the selection of the location, with an eye to ensuring that pertinent conversations may be opened up. Finally, priority is given to locations where creative initiatives are scarce like in Hasbaya.[50] Audience participation is actively encouraged through either initiating a debate regarding the stories or, in the case of VAN12, through introducing a game show scene on healthcare. In the latter, the audience becomes actively engaged as they shout the



△ 8
Left: the clowns performing the game show scene in the VAN12 performance; right: children laying roses on the 'road' after listening to the flower selling scene, photos: Arnout van Ree, 2019

correct answers at the contestants and show their disappointment when, for humorous effect, the participants misunderstand them and give the 'wrong' answer. Another instance of audience interaction is when they are asked to put roses on a road on the stage. This scene is based on a boy telling his story of selling roses on Hamra Street.[51] The audience is thus not a passive recipient but an active participant in the performances.[52] △Fig. 8

Humour plays an important role in all the Caravan series. Each performance is a comic juxtaposition of lived realities seeking to make the audience aware of issues through laughter and to encourage them to reflect for themselves on relevant issues. As Marjolein 't Hart argues, humour weakens the defences of the audience and renders them more amenable to listening as well as to persuasion.[53] The humour as well as the drama in each scene makes sense of socio-political issues while entertaining the audience. The stories in VAN12 revolve around children being exposed to violence, abandonment, disease, and child labour. This juxtaposition also enables dialogue as affective bonds and a (temporary) community of feeling are created through mutual participation in the laughter as well as the drama of the street performance.[54] As shared by one interlocutor but echoed by others, 'clowning is about being vulnerable—accepting and laughing about it, a lot is about failures—okay, life is life, but anything gives hope.'[55] It is imagining through comic juxtaposition that another world is possible.

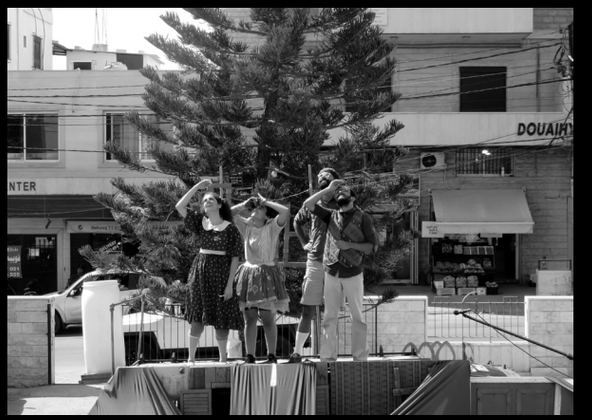
At the closing of the performances, the audience is encouraged to participate in an expression of this other 'possible' world: the end scene is an interactive one between the clowns and the audience whereby audience members, regardless of age, are asked to share their dreams.[56] The clowns write these dreams on red balloons and release them in the air, allowing the audience's dreams to literally fly—reflecting the idea in the show of allowing children to prosper and meet their dreams.[57] The end of the performance creates a space for promises of change to 'blossom.' Though the performance in and of itself does not impact current circumstances, it affects the social imagination and thereby creates the potential for real change.[58] △Fig. 9,10,11

△ 9
Children sharing their dreams with the clowns at the end of the performance, photos: Arnout van Ree, 2019

△ 10
The travelling troupe watching red balloons with the dreams fly away in the sky, photo: Arnout van Ree, 2019

△ 11
Participating artists Hare Sürel and Imad Habbab, photo: Bantmag, 2016

9



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11

43.....Clown Me In, 'The Caravan Series,' https://clownmein.com/performances/the-caravan/ (accessed 13 January 2020).
44.....Arnout van Ree, fieldwork, 2019.
45.....Clown Me In, 'The Caravan Series,' https://clownmein.com/performances/the-caravan/ (accessed 13 January 2020)
46.....Mateusz Laszczkowski, 'Rethinking Resistance,' pp. 491–96; Ernst van Alphen and Tomáš Jirsa, 'Introduction: Mapping Affective Operations,' in *How to Do Things with Affects Affective Triggers in Aesthetic Forms*, ed. Ernst van Alphen and Tomáš Jirsa (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 1–4.
47.....Sabine Choucair (co-founder Clown Me In), interview by author, Beirut, June 2019.
48.....Ibid.
49.....Ibid.
50.....Ibid.
51.....Ibid.
52.....James Thompson, *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 169.
53.....Marjolein 't Hart, '*Humour and Social Protest*: An Introduction,' in Humour and Social Protest, eds. Marjolein 't Hart and Dennis Bos (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1–20.
54.....Majken J. Sorensen, 'Radical Clowning: Challenging Militarism through Play and Otherness,' *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 28, no. 1 (2015), pp. 25–47.
55.....Van Ree, fieldwork, 2019.
56.....Sabine Choucair (co-founder Clown Me In), interview by author, Anfeh, June 2019.
57.....Van Ree, fieldwork, 2019.
58.....Kathleen Stewart, 'Afterword: Worlding Refrains,' in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 339–54.

Rancière posits that art's affective qualities may result in the (re)formation of political subjectivities. His starting point is art's affective (sensory) quality, in which new perceptions of the world convey a sense of wonder at something strange. Mobilization results from an awareness of the source of this strangeness.[59] James Thompson describes how affective encounters with the 'faces' of performance artists 'binds us to them,' making us 'aware of the limitations of our sovereignty,' which inspires a responsibility for the other and draws us to modes of ethical engagement with each other, and the wider world.[60] According to Rancière, dissensus involves the use of speech by those marginalized from a community in order to emerge as (sensible) subjects recognized as part of a community. Rancière helps conceptualize our interlocutors' creative agency to engage a local community through a redistribution of the sensible. The sensible refers to a shared ethos, or worldview, which is taken for granted as real and self-evident by a community. Dissensus is therefore the 'dispute over the distribution of the sensible' (or a partition of the sensible). As such, dissensus, by colliding two formations of the sensible, 'frames a new fabric of common experience' within a community, placing 'one world in another.'[61]

An affect-oriented, rather than an impact-oriented, perspective would allow more time and room for collaboration and reflection instead of pressuring organizations for a one-sided exchange of finished products. This perspective would provide insights into how affects and emotions are crucial in structuring political fields and how art contributes to inter-dependent social imaginaries. Approaching artistic interventions through the lens of affect highlights the modifications of the mind and the body that can occur during encounters with performative and aesthetic intensities. Such modifications and the concomitant redistribution of the sensible open up the potential to act and to be acted upon.[62] This should be theorized as an open-ended process of potential becoming, given structure through narrativization, culture, and personal and collective memories. Theorizing creative interventions as an open-ended process also acknowledges that outcomes do not necessarily lead to a better 'now' or better 'future.' We also question whether such an actualized political result is even desirable, given the highly politicized context of the MENA region, and its disastrous history of European interventions. Indeed, the call for struggle, rights, protection, or change through the artistic intervention may have a potentially paralyzing effect as these are monumental political challenges. In this case, the benefit of aesthetically beautiful art may simply be that it offers a moment of joy and pleasure.[63] In short, art's ability to affectively reorganize our perception of social reality has incredible political potential by opening up the possibility to act without specifically working towards any concrete political effect.

59.....Jacques, Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 142.
60.....Thompson, *Performance Affects*, pp. 156, 173.
61.....Rancière, *Dissensus*, p. 141, pp. 37–38.
62.....Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, 'An Inventory of Shimmers,' in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1–2.
63.....Thompson, *Performance Affects*, pp. 176–77.

(4)
BANTMAG
Kasper Tromp

Bantmag (or 'Bant') is a Turkish alternative art magazine and online platform reporting on developments in contemporary art. It was founded in 2004 in the middle class neighbourhood of Kadıköy, Istanbul, where its core audience is based. Bant relies on advertisement for income and generally operates independently of government or private funding. The magazine reports on worldwide issues, interviewing creators behind artistic events, movie releases, and music shows who tend to shun the commercial mainstream and choose to remain independent. Additionally, Bant hosts small exhibitions, performances, and screenings in their gallery space in Kadıköy, and sometimes organizes larger events around the city. Their older readership buys the print version of the magazine and is mostly centred in Istanbul. Bant's younger audience consists of students from across Turkey who follow the magazine online for updates on contemporary art and culture.

In 2015 Bant responded to Prince Claus Fund's open call for organizing cultural projects with refugees, enlisting the help of more experienced acquaintances in writing applications since it was their first application for funding.[64] Using traditional development rhetoric, the resulting proposal pointed to the social marginalization of Syrian refugees among Turkish citizens and emphasized the need to bring the two communities together by creating 'cultural bridges.' With few connections in lower class neighbourhoods, Bant was not acquainted with Syrian artists in Istanbul whatsoever, which posed a major obstacle for realizing their project, proposing collaborative exhibitions between Syrian and Turkish artists, when their application was accepted later on.

Eventually Bant got in touch with the Arthere Istanbul gallery, allowing them to meet Syrian artists and to share thoughts on how to attain their ambitious project goals. Arthere is a gallery in the Rasimpaşa neighbourhood that was initially founded as a workspace for Syrian artists but later developed into a gallery supporting any artistic expression 'away from war and political rivalries.'[65] Emphasizing artistic creativity over national identity, Arthere had become increasingly disturbed by the media constantly framing their gallery as a space for 'refugee art.' Thus, in order to prevent Bant's initiative from becoming 'a Syrian refugee thing,'[66] several meetings were planned in which Bant's staff and the Arthere gallery director reworked the project with a more manageable scope and in less culturally reductive terms. The two parties chose to utilize their respective social

infrastructures, selecting Syrian artists and Turkish illustrators from within their artistic circles, to collaborate at Bant's gallery space in a series of four exhibitions titled 'Mevsimler' [Seasons]. In so doing, Syrian artists were given the chance to interact with experienced art audiences drawn to the exhibitions by the more established illustrators with whom they collaborated. Moreover, by departing from instrumental approaches, the artistic collaboration, exposure to new audiences, and exhibited artworks were now promoted as having value in themselves.[67] Understood within sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's framework of the field of cultural production, Bant and Arthere had organized the 'Mevsimler' exhibitions in such a way that they functioned as an (almost) autonomous artistic field, little burdened by the logic of power or class, and were thus capable of enacting their own logic to the fullest extent possible, having conferred value upon art by other actors operating in the artistic field.[68] △Fig. 12

△ 12
Visitors at the opening of the first edition of the 'Mevsimler' exhibitions, photo: Bantmag, 2016

The Syrian participants in the exhibitions had initially been trained at art academies in Damascus or Aleppo, where they were instructed in art theory and developed their own artistic practice. Some had recently graduated when the civil war broke out and thwarted their career opportunities as artists in their home country. The artist Ali Omar explains that since 2011 he had been doing artistic research in Syria on the intersections between body and soul in his portraits; having migrated to Istanbul did not greatly affect his artistry, but it did secure a safe and inspiring space to continue his work.[69] Indeed, the Syrian participants of the 'Mevsimler' exhibitions went through arduous journeys and lived precarious existences in order to be able to continue to put their artistic practice first.

Not surprisingly, the artists were extremely grateful for Bant's initiative to create an environment in which their artworks took centre stage and where they had the opportunity to interact with interested audiences who kept updated on developments in contemporary art. The artist Imad Habbab found it very meaningful that the audience included many collectors his age that took a genuine interest in his work.[70] Ali Omar, on the other hand, notes that many among the audience had no trained ability for art criticism, 'so they will just say: "it's good".'[71] These observations express

appreciation of the opportunity to meet art professionals who respect the artists for their craft, as well as slight disappointment that not everybody was as 'initiated' into the contemporary art world.

The high standards to which the artists held the audience reflect the artists' commitment to performing their artistry on a professional level. Habbab shares his conviction that artists' intrinsic devotion to developing a personal artistic practice involves establishing a genuine connection with audiences—thereby also resisting potential reductive readings pertaining to victimhood, refugee identity, or nationality.[72] Exhibition participants were able to use the artistic habitus which they had long worked to develop (through education, participation in exhibitions, and continual artistic practice), to establish connections with other peers operating in the local field of cultural production through engaging in a common language, or 'horizon of affects,' as Rancière would have it. This interaction with audiences enables artists to challenge common perceptions by the dominant community that subaltern groups are incapable of sensible speech. By partaking in 'aisthesis,' a shared experience of aesthetic art, Rancière contends that subaltern artists become capable of creating alternative formations of the sensible (within this shared aesthetic experience), whereby they become accepted as part of the community.[73] The artworks Habbab exhibited facilitate such a process by depicting the artist's subjective experiences of the various intensities of Istanbul's neighbourhoods which, evoked by the presence of human faces within the intricately painted cityscapes, place alternative modes of 'being in the city' within a horizon of shared urban experiences. The artworks' potential to affect the audience through such common sensibilities, in turn, opened a space for the audience to engage with Habbab. This, he describes as the greatest takeaway from participating in the 'Mevsimler' project, stating that 'there is a warmth to it … [that] even [in] a new place, human beings feel each other beyond words. These human to human encounters, that's leaving a beautiful trace on oneself.'[74]

63.....Thompson, Performance Affects, pp. 176–77.
64.....Ekin Sanaç (Bantmag art director), interview by author, Istanbul, August 2019.
65.....'About,' Arthere Istanbul, www.arthereistanbul.com/about.html/ (accessed 14 January 2020).
66.....Anonymous informant (Arthere Istanbul), in conversation with the author, Istanbul, December 2018.
67.....Ironically, Bant's initial use of the ambitious development rhetoric in their proposal may not have been necessary to secure the funding, seeing as Prince Claus Fund has a track record of supporting cultural initiatives 'through clearly non-instrumentalized policies.' See Polly Stupples, 'Creative Contributions: The Role of the Arts and the Cultural Sector in Development,' *Progress in Development Studies* 14 (2014), p. 120.
68.....Pierre Bourdieu, '*The Field of Cultural Production* or the Economic World Reversed,' in The Field of Cultural Production, ed. Randal Johnson (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 37–38.
69.....Ali Omar (local artist), interview by author, Istanbul, December 2018.
70.....Imad Habbab (local artist), interview by author, Istanbul, December 2018.
71.....Omar, interview.
72.....Habbab, interview.
73.....Rancière, *Dissensus*, pp. 38, 2.
74.....Habbab, interview.

Although the affective approach is radically open-ended, the four case studies in the inlays of this chapter show that the potentialities provided by the affective encounters and enabled by these cultural initiatives and community practices are all political in their local situatedness. While images and people are constantly on the move, geographer Doreen Massey argues that place becomes 'an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories.'[75] Literary scholar Minhao Zeng takes up Massey's notion of the historical contingency of such 'unexpected throwntogetherness' of people in particular 'material situations,' to argue that this condition underlies multi-cultural social constellations.[76] The local becomes a 'spatial node' tying together a 'multitude of relational networks of varying geographical reach,' despite the 'uneven resource distribution.'[77] Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz's reading of cosmopolitanism involves the will to gain competence in alien systems of meaning, while noting that this competence suggests a sense of mastery: 'Understandings have expanded, [and] a little more of the world is somehow under control.'[78] Accordingly, we adopt the notion of subaltern cosmopolitanism in order to reconceptualize the affective 'force of art' and reveal the creative possibilities for a redistribution of the sensible in these cases.

Zeng discerns two fundamental questions about subaltern cosmopolitanism and the horizontal engagement between individuals or groups of unequal power relations: the first question is about the prospect of living together with difference and the second about living with 'transnational connectivity and solidarity between the disenfranchized.'[79] This form of cosmopolitanism takes into account our interlocutors' subaltern positions within society and local art worlds, while also emphasizing their agency in adopting various habituses and developing various forms of capital in order to gain better positions in the field of cultural production. Tracing our interlocutors' trajectories foregrounds the ways they dynamically responded to the hegemonic structuring of the multiple and oscillating logics of the field of cultural production.[80] By adopting cosmopolitan inclinations to gain competence in the habituses (ethos?) of foreign communities, subaltern artists may be valued positively on the basis of artistic quality and consequently gain better access to the field of cultural production. Rancière's attention to artists' agencies in engaging the Other through affect, or through shared affective horizons (aisthesis), helps to effectuate a partition of the sensible (ethos) of the community, and thus gain recognition as a sensible subject within that community.

75.....Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 151.
76.....Minhao Zeng, 'Subaltern Cosmopolitanism: Concept and Approaches,' *Sociological Review* 62 (2014), p. 144.
77..... Doreen Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility,' *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 86, no. 1 (2004), p. 44.
78.....Ulf Hannerz, 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,' in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 488.
79.....Zeng, 'Subaltern Cosmopolitanism,' p. 144.
80.....Pierre Bourdieu, '*The Field of Cultural Production* or the Economic World Reversed,' in The Field of Cultural Production, ed. Randal Johnson (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 37–38.
81.....Rancière, *Dissensus*, p. 141.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research indicates that local grassroots organizations enabling affective encounters have to negotiate multiple demands and expectations. Apart from justifying their practices to donors gathered in the *Force of Art* initiative, they often have to deal with other funding bodies each posing different demands and requiring different formats. At the same time, state actors, as well as public opinion on local, regional, or national levels, may look at their practices as well as their European funding with suspicion. Even if the funding bodies never impose political ideology or pose conditions on artistic content, donors and recipients generally align around post-nationalist, post-socialist and anti-Islamist ideals. A term such as 'human rights,' for example, may be perceived as politically neutral by a European donor, but seen as a political threat by an authoritarian regime, or—conversely—as depoliticizing the state of occupation in Palestine; and an overtly secular programme may be seen as advancing a European agenda. Finally, local communities and fellow cultural and community organizations may require yet another set of concerns than those preferred by foreign donors, and communicate them in a discourse with its own set of terms and logic. Our interlocutors show incredible proficiency in navigating the multiple, and sometimes dissonant, registers of these entanglements and perform the delicate balancing act that is required to navigate these entangled fields. By pointing out these tensions, however, we hope to also draw attention to those less fluent in this code switching, who may therefore fail to generate resources, however attuned to local codes and conditions. Moreover, our interlocutors do express fatigue, as the ad hoc and temporary nature of project-based funding can be draining for small organizations.

With this article we have argued that the transformative power of the cultural initiatives and community practices under study reside in the affective encounters they enable among members of marginalized communities or between these communities and outsiders. This is particularly urgent in a region crippled by decades of corruption, authoritarianism, and economic malaise, where the most basic social services are often lacking and where political subjectivity is more often formed by prolonged deprivation than by nurtured critical thinking. The Middle East and North Africa have witnessed a series of unprecedented revolts in the past decade, challenging the political, social, and economic order. Spaces and initiatives that stimulate the imagination and allow for new social relations are vital for such moments of transition. In our case studies, such encounters have helped to shift the distribution of the sensible by weaving 'a new fabric of common experience' within a community.[81]

1. In Palestine, local residents living under occupation and concerned tourists shared meaningful experiences through a grassroots network enabling volunteer aid work.

2. In Morocco, a young man from a criminalized neighbourhood was granted a moment of wonder, when offered a fresh perspective on his situatedness in a specific social and spatial locality.

3. Lebanese children, parents, and elderly publicly discussed issues of public health and education, opened up by carefully constructed moments of play and laughter.

4. A Turkish arts audience was allowed to appreciate the work of Syrian artists outside of the reductive label of refugee art.

These experiences are particularly enriching for communities marked by a scarcity of creative and communal activities in which most of the initiatives under study operate.

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← INTERVIEWS

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Ali Omar, interview by Kasper Tromp, Istanbul, 16 December 2018.

Abdeljalil Bakkar, head of Initiative Urbaine, conversation with Cristiana Strava, Casablanca, April 2019.

Sabrina Kamili, project manager at Atelier, conversation with Cristiana Strava, Casablanca, April and November, 2019.

Sabine Choucair, interview by Arnout van Ree, 20 June 2019.
Bantmag, interview by Kasper Tromp, Istanbul, 18 August 2019.

Mohamed Fariji, artist and founder of Atelier de l'Observatoire, conversation with Cristiana Strava, Casablanca, April and November 2019.