

Annex G: Impact case study template and guidance

Section A		
The fields in this section are mandatory.		
Institution: Leeds Arts University		
Unit of Assessment: 32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Co-Making Economic Cultures		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Bianca Elzenbaumer	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Research Fellow	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: since September 2014
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 31 September 2014- 31 March 2019		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p><i>Co-Making Economic Cultures</i> mobilised participatory social design and feminist approaches to the economy to support individuals, citizen groups, welfare organisations and local municipalities in the development of empowering socio-economic practices. This research has:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Benefitted design practitioners across Europe, supporting them in the creation of socio-economically sustainable cultures of work and organisation. Enhanced the capacity of self-organised citizen groups, community welfare organisations, public administration and cultural associations in Italy, and especially the Italian Alps, to address eco-social issues – such as social segregation, exclusion of asylum seekers, low consideration for the environment – through collaboration and creative approaches. 		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>By mobilising participatory research-through-design methods, <i>Co-Making Economic Cultures</i> explores how designers, drawing on feminist and posthumanist economic practices, can reconfigure their own professional field and support local, regional and national development processes to create economies that take care of the interdependence between humans, as well as between humans and more-than-human others (Franz and Elzenbaumer, 2016; Elzenbaumer, 2018; Elzenbaumer and Franz, 2018).</p> <p>Between 2014 and 2019, the action research format <i>Precarity Pilot</i> (Elzenbaumer et al., 2014; Brave New Alps, 2015) – with focus on the creative industries – manifested as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a series of over 16 Europe-wide nomadic workshops – lasting between three-hours to one week – engaged design practitioners with the question of how to create work cultures that enable designers to produce socially and critically engaged work in the long-run. 		

- b) a growing online platform containing workshop tools, interviews and critical writing that address a wide range of issues – from the transition from university to work, the redefinition of career models, administrative organisational strategies and modes of cooperation and support.[1]

Since 2015, *Co-Making Economic Cultures* also works on taking the insights around transformative work practices, organizational strategies and economic patterns produced from an engagement with the the creative industries into the realm of sustainable and inclusive local development. To do so, a research project titled COMUNfARE (making in common) was initiated in the Vallagarina Valley in the Italian Alps, which has a local focus but never forgets about trans-local connections and embeddedness (Brave New Alps, 2017).

Between 2015 and 2019, the following main activities around local development were carried out:

- A. a pilot project space – QuerciaLAB – was developed in collaboration with the regional agency for immigration (Cinformi) to bring together asylum seekers and local inhabitants through acts of collaborative making (2016-2017); from this developed the collaborative building of a micro-architecture – Hospitality School – in collaboration with the architecture collective Area 527, the migration support network Collettivo Mamadou, the fair trade orange producers SOS Rosarno as well as local inhabitants and asylum seekers, to host a language school, health care and legal advice point in a migrant workers’ ghetto in Southern Italy (2017-2018).
- B. a community academy – *La Foresta – Accademia di Comunità* – has been developed as a replicable approach to how unused railway buildings can be turned into vibrant community academies through the collaboration of a wide range of civic, public and private actors (citizen associations, social enterprises, research centres, the local municipality, the Italian Railways);
- C. the organisation of adult education training courses and roundtable discussions around practices of community economies as part of the international network Eco-Nomadic School (Brave New Alps, 2017).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Elzenbaumer et al., 2014. Precarity Pilot [WWW Document]. URL <http://precaritypilot.net/>.
2. Brave New Alps (Franz, F. and Elzenbaumer, B.), 2015. Precarity Pilot: Making Space for Socially- and Politically-Engaged Design. *Modes of Criticism Journal*, pp.49-57. <https://modesofcriticism.org/precarity-pilot/>.
3. Brave New Alps, (Franz, F. and Elzenbaumer, B.) 2017. Italy: Vallagarina Valley, in: Böhm, K., James, T., Petrescu, D. (Eds.), *Learn to Act: Introducing the Eco Nomadic School*. aaa/peprav, Paris, pp. 197–233. https://rhyzom.net/2017/10/31/learn_to_act_final.pdf.
4. Franz, F., and Elzenbaumer, B. 2016. ‘Commons & Community Economies: Entry Points to Design for Eco-Social Justice?’ In *Proceedings of DRS2016: Design + Research + Society - Future-Focused Thinking*, edited by Peter Lloyd and Erik Bohemia, 10:4015–28. <https://lau.repository.quildhe.ac.uk/17555/>.
5. Elzenbaumer, B., 2018. Speculating with Care: Learning from an Experimental Educational Program in the West Bank. *Architectural Theory Review*. <https://lau.repository.quildhe.ac.uk/17281/>.

6. Elzenbaumer, B., and Franz, F. 2018. 'Footprint: A Radical Workers Co-Operative and Its Ecology of Mutual Support'. *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization* 18, no. 4: 791–804. <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/footprint-radical-workers-co-operative-and-its-ecology-mutual-support>.

Evidence of the quality of the research:

- All outputs have been peer-reviewed, either through the double blind-peer review (outputs 2, 4, 5, 6) or juries and grant review panels (1, 3)
- The participatory work around community economies and community welfare initiatives in the Italian Alps has been recognised through the 2° Prize of the Hans Sauer Awards for Social Design in 2018, (DE).
- The building of a micro-architecture for migrant workers in Southern Italy has been shortlisted for the TIMES Higher Awards 2018.
- Support from the local municipality (€200,000 for the setting up of a community academy over two years, including the co-design process and the collaborative refurbishment of the space).
- The adjudication of a European Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship awarded 2018 (€185,000 over two years) to explore alpine community economies through participatory research-through-design methods.
- The importance of this work has been recognized by the Polish National Centre for Culture (2014 – commission of four video tutorials Przewodnik Prekariatu).
- The Graphic Design Educators Network (2016 – keynote at annual symposium),
- The Victor Papanek Foundation (2017 – keynote at biannual symposium)
- The Swiss Design Network (2018 – keynote workshop at their biannual conference) and Arch+ magazine for urbanism and architecture (2017-2018 – project commission to critically inquire into the legacies of the Bauhaus).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Creative industries impact between 2014 and 2020

Over 300 design and art practitioners have gained an enhanced understanding of how to create socio-economically sustainable cultures of work and organisation that mediate against negative effects of precarious working conditions in the creative industries through workshops in the UK, Italy, Poland, Germany, Slovenia, Switzerland, Portugal and Finland **[1]**.

Through giving keynotes at design conferences and professional development courses across Europe, over 500 people have been exposed to a critical review of the precarious working conditions of the design field and have been introduced to ideas of how to create more empowering working conditions. Within the design profession, the research has *“provided an important framework to talk about systemic problems preventing the existence of a discipline outside the capitalist logic.”* **[2]** The research findings of Precarity Pilot allow for the possibility of imagining and working towards alternative forms of design practice. It has been called *“a much needed and eye-opening source of information/ theory/ guidance to freelance design work life”* **[3]**.

Through mentoring and coaching sessions the research findings have directly supported the setting up of community enterprises in Italy (such as Comunità Frizzante, a design- and agro-

ecology-led community drinks enterprise, 2018) & Slovenia (Trajna, an eco-social think and do tank, 2017) that are organised to openly challenge precarious working conditions and to create economies that incorporate principles of solidarity and sustainability [4]. The expertise acquired through the research has also been activated to economically support six eco-socially transformative start-ups in Switzerland.

Moreover, the research findings have been built into the structure of the MA in Eco-Social Design, established at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano in 2015 (80 graduates so far). Through these activities the research came to bear directly on professional practice, with a special impact on supporting young designers in the development of economically resilient eco-social design practices [5].

Local development impact (2016-2020)

In the alpine Vallagarina valley, the work on co-creating empowering economic cultures has directly improved the lives of local inhabitants by generating spaces of empowerment, where they can steer the direction of socio-economic local development, foremost by co-creating the community academy La Foresta (since 2017) at the valley's central town's train station and the community garden comun'Orto (since 2016). [6; 7]

As explained by a social worker responsible for developing relationships between locals and refugees, the QuerciaLAB project has benefitted asylum seekers as well as the local community by creating spaces where people from different backgrounds can meet, undo stereotypes about each other, improve communication in Italian and imagine in practice what a solidary, open and resilient community can function like in our times of social and environmental unrest [8]. Over 60 people (25 of them are asylum seekers) got involved in the projects QuerciaLAB (2016-2017) and Hospitality School (2017-2018). €80,000 were raised for these projects in money and through in-kind material and tools donations and over 3000 hours of volunteering work was put into these projects by locals.

The building, in the alpine Vallagarina valley, of a micro-architecture to hosts a language school, health and legal support point in an undocumented migrant workers' ghetto in Southern Italy has supported over 300 people to enhance their possibilities of exiting coercive work relations. A representative from local association, SOS Rosarno, who are concerned with sustainable agriculture, commented that Hospitality School brought practical and material benefits as a space to create social relations. It also brought many activities together under one roof which would not have happened otherwise [9].

The transformation of the train station of Rovereto into a community academy has prompted the Italian network of help centers in train station to rethink and innovate their approach, opening up new possibilities for conceiving help centers as connection points between local inhabitants and vulnerable people transiting through or living around train stations [10]. The work on the community economy has inspired another economic actor in the valley, namely a cooperative grocery store, to build a community space during the refurbishment of the retail space.

Moreover, the co-creation process of the train station has involved 8 recent BA and MA graduates and 2 recent high school graduates in traineeship formats (73 months in total of training) that gave them insights to the creation of empowering socio-economic structures. The projects comun'Orto and La Foresta gave work to 5 recent graduates in agro-ecology, forestry,

social work and architecture, providing a space where they can develop a critically engaged and resilient practice.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of ten references)

[1] Precarity Pilot website <https://precaritypilot.net>.

[2] Feedback from a design critic publisher.

[3] Feedback from a designer.

[4] Feedback from the co-founder of the design practice, Trajna.

[5] Testimony from Director of the MA in Eco-Social Design at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

[6] La Foresta website, <http://www.laforesta.co>.

[7] Piano Sociale di Comunità di Rovereto e della Comunità di Valle Vallagarina 2018-2020 - policy paper for the development of district wide social service, p. 94.

[8] Feedback from a social worker.

[9] Letter from SOS Rosarno.

[10] Letter from Director of the National Observatory for Unease and Solidarity in Italian Train Stations